

RePORT

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THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THIRD-SECTOR RESEARCH (ISTR) IS PLEASED TO PRESENT AN OCCASIONAL REPORT. THE REPORT IS A REVIEW OF THE PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE FOURTH ISTR ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE (BANGALORE, INDIA, NOVEMBER 2005)

Civil Society and Social Justice: Exploring the Frontiers of Third Sector Participation

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The Fourth ISTR Asia Pacific Regional Conference was held in Bangalore, India from 16th to 18th November, 2005. The Bangalore conference reinforced the keen research focus of scholars from the region exhibited earlier in Bangkok, Osaka and Beijing conferences. The Bangalore University, Bangalore, Acharya Institute of Management and Sciences, Bangalore, and the Third Sector Research Group, India (TSRGI) jointly organized the Fourth ISTR Asia Pacific Regional Conference. The conference was held at the Jnana Jyothi Auditorium on the Bangalore University Campus. The three days' events brought together third sector researchers representing both academia and civil society organisations from across the region and included three countries from outside the Asia Pacific region.

"Civil Society and Social Justice" was the main theme addressed by the conference. Paper sessions, panels and the plenary addressed this theme from various perspectives. There were eight sub-themes relating to Third Sector and Inclusive Development, Inequalities and Empowerment, Impact and Challenges of Globalization, Disaster Management, Philanthropy, Third Sector and Governance issues, Co-operatives and Mutual Interest Groups. There were also papers from other related themes. The first plenary was centered around the main theme of the conference, while the second plenary focused on the Indian Third Sector. The Panel Discussion focused on Internal Governance issues of third sector organisations.

The conference included six parallel sessions (each of them having simultaneous sub-sessions). In all, there were 22 paper sessions with a total of 67 papers being presented. The papers covered a wide array of issues related to third sector. Definitional issues, performance, efficiency and gov-

ernance issues, gender and indigenous groups, developmental paradigms, state and civil society relationships, legal issues and even language and media issues featured in the paper presentations. Reviewing the contents of these papers, it is possible to find issues related to more than one sub theme in some of the papers. Similarly there were no major presentations in some of the designated sub themes, though such issues did figure in panel sessions and during the discussion sessions that followed the paper presentations.

For the purpose of this review we have considered only those presentations where either the full length paper was presented to the conference hosts or detailed notes on presentations were available. Further, the review is done by grouping all the available papers/presentations on six broad themes. This has been done to facilitate a better overview of the way in which the conference addressed the major and sub themes.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:

Social Justice as a condition to seek and reach has always been part of human societies and has greater meaning in the present conflict ridden world. Social justice is a philosophical definition of justice giving individuals or groups their due within society as a whole. Social justice paradigm is no doubt a contested terrain. Nonetheless, academic and policy makers have long been pondering over the questions as to what constitutes social justice? Is it possible to reach such a state? Who are the actors and beneficiaries? and What is the role of peoples' organisations in facilitating social justice?

The main theme of the conference 'Social Justice and Civil Society' helped explore the role of civil society organisations in facilitating social justice in a world that is

increasingly polarized. As Prof. Jenny Onyx, the Conference Chair observed in her introductory lecture, the conference aimed at “addressing Civil Society and Social Justice issues mainly for the reasons of and modes of insecurity experienced by most of the countries, particularly by the countries of the Asia Pacific region.” She further noted that some of the insecurity, if not all, is the reason for marginalization of different sections in the society. This, in turn, is a challenge to peace. She emphasized that “Social justice is a statement of values, a commitment to work towards the rights and dignity of all humans in whatever community they live in. Such a commitment must be underpinned by a sound and shared knowledge base, research, public discussion and debate.” The contemporaneity of the issues confirmed for her that the conference was a step in the right direction.

Prof. Onyx was of the opinion that civil society is the space most of us live in and it is the organisations of civil society that respond first to alleviate social injustice. This is true at the grassroots community level as well as at the global level. As civil society organisations invariably stand for social justice, it becomes all the more important that these organisations be open to scrutiny and critique. With her initial remarks, the Conference Chair set the right tone for further discussion.¹

The views of the Conference Chair were further reinforced by the Keynote speaker Prof. U. R. Ananthamurthy who noted that the poor and the marginalized have talent and energy but this only needs to be nurtured and opportunities provided to them, to achieve equality and justice. He hoped that the civil society organisations would rise to the occasion when the world is passing through a crisis ridden by mutual distrust and suspicion on the one hand and unequal distribution of wealth and resources on the other.²

The major contribution towards the theme “Civil Society and Social Justice” came from a special panel discussion. The focus of the conference theme was problematized and driven home effectively in the presentation of Dr. Abhay Kumar Dubey.³ Dubey argued that “the theory and practice of civil society has been intrinsically linked with the notion of post-Marxist politics.” He remarked that the liberal theorists are trying to establish the possibilities of the existence of a universe of political action without addressing the class conflict. In this process the notion of civil society has an ambit where “well ordered social structure is to be envisaged by letting the forces of international capital participate in it.” This, according to Dubey, has altered the situation completely. “Earlier the concept of civil society was beleaguered mainly due to its narrow geographical contours, and up to some extent due to its apparent inability in enlarging

the scope of democratic representation, but its usefulness in deepening the democratic struggle was never denied. Now, theoretical justifications for its corporatisation are bound to make this concept anti-people from inside out.” He opined that it would erode the liberal contents of its democracy, and ultimately subvert the agenda of social justice. The paper expressed concern on civil society becoming more and more representative of the elite than the poor and argued that “it must be redefined in non-bourgeoisie or non-capitalist terms of references..., and it must try to reach a destination where it can be expected to fill the gap created by the weakening of the institution of the state.” In Dr. Dubey’s view, to address the injustices in society, civil society initiatives should address political dimensions more seriously.

The concerns expressed in Dr. Dubey’s paper were analysed at a macro level by Dr. Samiul Hasan.⁴ Hasan began his paper with an interesting understanding of social justice. For him, the “principles of social justice provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society. It sets out to define an appropriate distribution of benefits and burdens of social cooperation.” The paper stressed the fact that social justice has to be the equal distribution of not only the material sources but also of other forms of social resources. It was further noted that in the modern world social justice is not understood in all its completeness and this gives greater power and hold to a few. The burden of the argument was that “...distributive justice is almost a taboo.” Hasan’s paper looked at the issues of resource allocation and injustices that prevail in societies. Empirical evidence from different countries on child mortality, involvement of mafia in power and resources allocation etc., substantiated his views. He discussed how civil society organisations have space and have continued to address these issues to emerge as an important partner in addressing development issues of each country. Major success stories of large third sector organisations were also referred to along with some successful examples of mass movements in addressing the issues of cause of Social Justice.

Addressing the issue of social justice calls for multiple instruments since reaching a socially just society involves multiple processes. In this context, Dr. Sudarshan⁵ discussed the working of Lokayukta in fighting corruption and injustice at the level of the state machinery citing the local example of the State of Karnataka in India. In his paper, Sudarshan narrated how an autonomous entity like Lokayukta can facilitate social justice by launching a crusade against corruption. A strong case was made in favour of civil society initiatives to argue that they have a major role to play in furthering the cause of this form of social justice. The paper

addressed the issue of corruption in societies and its presence penetrating all development related programmes and how civil society is not very seriously addressing the issue. Corruption destabilizes the roots of development and hence civil society initiatives should make fighting corruption at all levels an important agenda.

Taking on the question of corruption in public life, in a later technical session, the role of third sector initiatives in addressing the issues of corruption in the Philippines was brought out by Aries Arugay.⁶ This paper demonstrated that the third sector, including social movements, people's organisations and non-governmental organizations emerged as a robust sphere demanding accountability from the State. The third sector, by taking the role of sensitizing the public on the issues of corruption, has shifted the Philippine's cultural lines towards openness and tolerance. Arugay's paper argued that the third sector was instrumental in bringing about the Transparency and Accountability Network with a wide scope to address the issues of corruption and facilitating social justice.

DEFINITIONAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

Conceptual clarity about third sector becomes a necessity while examining the role of third sector in addressing the issue of social justice. Some of the papers in the conference examined this issue. The definitional issue of third sector was addressed by Sreedhara and Rajarama Tolpady.⁷ The authors, by examining two major schools of thought (Hopkins and the STEP), tried to understand the third sector in the Indian context and identify the gaps in applying these two theories to a multicultural and differently historicized society. The paper briefed about third sector research in Asia and India. Sreedhara and Tolpady addressed the social reform movements and demonstrated how the freedom struggle paved the way for evolution and consolidation of TSOs in India. They argued that "as a consequence of all these, democratic constitution of India was drafted basically as a social document and streamlining the State-Civil Society relationship." Further, they looked at the post-independence Indian situation and demonstrated that the development agenda pursued by the Indian State resulted in the marginalization of different communities. The paper underscored the need for generating an understanding of the third sector within the politico-cultural domain of each society. The Third Sector, therefore, "has a decisive role to play in India and it should mirror the socio-economic cleavages created by new conditions of globalisation. To pursue this role third sector research should indulge in rigorous theoretical self-reflection."

Continuing the search for more appropriate theories on the third sector, Vladislav Valentinov in the paper titled 'Towards a Theory of Public-Benefit Nonprofit Organisations'⁸ argued that the existing economic theories of non-profit are not suitable to explain the presence of public interest promoting non-profit organisations. The diversity of the TSOs, he argued, creates problems in theorizing them. For him the "non-profits of the public benefit type exist because they represent a mechanism whereby individuals holding social values are able to realize them." Valentinov's arguments were based mainly on the proposition that social values are the foundation for public benefiting nonprofits. He further noted that "recognition of the important role of values and culture in general in determining economic performance undoubtedly represents a major step towards a better understanding of economic reality." Another argument put forward was that the public benefit TSOs are dependent to a great extent on the altruistic attitudes of people than the mutual benefit funds, and that the social values also cater to economic dimensions as they attract significant amount of resources to the public benefit nonprofit organisations.

Dr. B. Hariharan's paper⁹ added another dimension to the understanding of third sector/civil society. The paper focused on the power of language in social discourse. Hariharan noted that "cultural and social changes have altered and transformed the perceptions of social narratives that broadly describe civil society." The paper remarked on "how language is used [which] is vital and necessary constituent in narration, which in turn shapes civil society." By drawing attention to the fact that language is a social phenomenon, the paper illustrated the relation between language and group narrations and its relation to civil society. The author argued that the relationship between language and civil society emerges in the background of the fact that communication modes express, mould, and shape social discourse. The paper tried to understand language in "its broad social sense, not necessarily confined to the printed words alone." Using the language of photography, he tried to show the hidden power articulated in social discourses. The paper also demonstrated the use of language as the medium of power and established the "nexus between the language and the agency using it" with illustrations from speeches and writings. Civil society, Hariharan argued, gets constructed and reconstructed across time and space in specific cultural and language domains.

INDIAN THIRD SECTOR

The conference had a plenary session on the Indian Third Sector which featured three papers. Dr. Rajesh Tandon, in his paper¹⁰ introduced the diversity and spread of the Indian Third Sector. He opined that the third sector in India is “wide spread and yet invisible.” Data cited by him put nearly 50% of the TSOs in India as unregistered which creates gaps in documentation and precise calculation of its presence. The size of the sector could only be an approximate estimation of the minimum number. Tandon was of the view that there are nearly 1.2 million TSOs operating in India and they are predominantly small in size. The study undertaken by PRIA from which the present paper was drawn, provided insights into the vastness of the sector. The paper went into the details of how the most important sector that contributes immensely to the Indian economy by way of providing labour, generating income that forms a sizeable chunk in the gross income of the country, translates a big share of government and corporate schemes into reality. This observation highlighted how the issue has always been sidelined with no serious efforts made to give this sector its due place. Dr. Tandon’s paper concluded with an affirmative statement that “civil society in India, considering its contribution to society building, is in fact the first sector and we are not doing justice by calling it the third sector.”

The increasing interest of the government of India to harness the potential of the third sector in reaching the goals of development much faster and also to formalize the sector was evident in the paper presented by Dr. Lalith Kumar.¹¹ The paper dwelt on the issues like the move by the federal government to come out with a National Policy on Voluntary Sector and how different perspectives of different stake holders had been sought and collaborated with in developing the draft of this policy. A case was made to argue that the voluntary sector in India is being much more seriously viewed now by the federal government and attempts are in vogue to map and quantify the contribution of this sector to the national economy. The issues of credibility of the sector, growing academic interest on the sector, need for self regulation and issues of funding were also identified as the contemporary critical issues of the Indian third sector.

Prof. T.N.Sreedhara,¹² steered the discussion pertaining to Third Sector in India to “culture specific embeddedness rather than looking at it from a borrowed perspective outside of the Indian cultural ethos.” His paper noted that discussions in the conference had brought forth three distinct lines of argument on the Indian Third Sector. The first line posited the third sector as an adjunct to the state and would be required to go along with the State to reach the State perceived goals

of development. The second line of argument related to the structural/operational perspective drawn from the framework of the John Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Project. The third view, which was significant but not fully developed and addressed, was the cultural and historical perspective of the third sector. He was of the opinion that the question of framework and its viability occupies centre stage as he looked at the third sector from an academic perspective. Sreedhara noted that the “Indian third sector research needs to go beyond the understanding that civil society organisations are categories with certain ascribed features and functions and look at different organisations and associations in terms of their differential historical and cultural contexts.” The paper emphasized the need to overcome the problem of inclusion and exclusion issues in understanding this space. The presentation was an attempt to explore the possibility to theorize this space (at present called by different names) within Indian cultural philosophy.

GOVERNANCE AND THIRD SECTOR

In the recent past, discourses on governance have received increasing attention from researchers, policy makers and international agencies. Governance today has not only taken central stage in the development dialogues, but it is also considered as a crucial element to be incorporated in the development strategy. Akin to this has been the view that issues relating to governance need to be addressed by the State as well as the non-state actors. Governance issues of corporate entities have already come to the fore. The role of the TSOs is increasingly seen to be important in facilitating good governance of both the State and the Corporate sector. In the past decades the disintegration of centrally planned economies and the need for safeguarding cohesion in democratic market societies brought the civic associations to the centre stage. The crisis in the traditional welfare states also compelled the policy makers to think of more planned and increased use of the non-state actors to guarantee welfare and to reduce the cost of public welfare. With the declaration of Millenium Development Goals (MDG), the space for TSO activities widened and is now more pronounced than ever. They have a crucial role to empower people to participate in the democratic political processes and be part of the decisions that have bearing on their lives. Therefore, while addressing the question of social justice, the internal governance issues of civil society organisations also become very significant. It is against the backdrop of this situation that the papers presented in the conference addressed the issue of governance.

The paper presented by Allen Guilloux¹³ looked at the

response of international humanitarian organisations to the emergencies caused by natural disasters, from a multi dimensional concept of governance. Governance he noted is the “set of systems by which actors and organisations of various kinds (state, market and civil society) interact, both domestically and internationally. These interactions are on the terms of widely accepted norms and geared towards delivering relevant outputs and achieving specific outcomes.” Taking the case of the Tsunami, Guilloux elaborated on the role played by state, corporate and the non profit humanitarian organizations, both international and local. For him a disaster like Tsunami was both crisis and opportunity. The examples of countries and regions which were not cared for much before the tsunami, though they were in perennial disaster situations, suddenly got global attention due to this crisis and the living conditions of people of this region during the post tsunami, he claimed, is much better. Similarly, the crisis situation becomes an opportunity for the warring groups to talk of peace and for the political forces to play it right. International agencies try to pursue their agenda and there are a good number of businesses and vested interests at work. Guilloux argued that a disaster situation brings in many institutions to play multiple and diverse roles and examines the actors, processes, and the outcomes in relation to the handling of the crises of the tsunami.

He then cautioned the humanitarian civil society organizations not to forget their original agenda and get carried away by forces that pursue their own agenda in such a situation. Sudden flow of money and other resources for relief activities or the need for competing for a share in limited resource availability might put humanitarian organizations in a spot. In a situation of this kind, the issue of global governance may not be of importance. Guilloux argued that “it would be an issue to think that the concept of global governance can dissolve the inevitable tension between moral imperatives and political motivations.” A global crisis is therefore a situation which the small and local humanitarian organizations will have to carefully handle, so as not to compromise their original mission.

Priya Anand and Pooran Pandey, in their ‘Summary Report on Voluntary Sector Coordination and Transparency’,¹⁴ noted that the sudden influx of funds created a situation where the organisations’ utilization of funds and related information were not properly handled. This paper, while throwing light on empirical details pertaining to the impact of resource flow and the TSO’s ability to coordinate the resource flow and maintain transparency, tried to build a case for examining the internal governance issues of TSOs. The outcome of their study needs to be addressed within the larger

concerns of governance of the Third Sector.

Dr. Ledivina V. Carino¹⁵ in her paper ‘Alternative Regulatory Mechanisms for Ethical and Fair Trade: A View from the South’ highlighted the issues of alternate regulatory mechanisms tried out by the Philippine’s third sector organisations as the government abstained itself from such a responsibility. She noted that TSOs using the international standards are checking on the global corporations to abide by fair trade and labour treatment. They have been quite effective and vigilant in their role. The global as well as the local civil societies, she argued, face ‘problems of scaling up.’ The study indicated that the state has to use its power to make corporations follow the law of the land. And in doing so the state has partners to go with in civil society.

Governance discussions in the conference were centered on the different dimensions of internal governance issues of TSOs. It emerged that the discussions of governance mainly addressed the issues of internal management, accountability, openness, financial management and other related issues. Aarti Madhusudhan in her paper related to functioning of boards¹⁶ looked at the qualities of the boards which she called the ‘working boards.’ The paper observed how board members have to be clear of what is expected of them and also articulate such expectations. Case studies were used to highlight how a proactive board could bring in results that are effective and thus lead to a better performing TSO. Aarti found that board members believe in the vision of the organisation and the commitment of the board to reach the mission is most often a passion. All board members are informed of important developments as and when they occur and this has helped keep them involved between meetings. Consensus is the preferred approach to decision making in the board room. She also illustrated through the findings of her case studies the strategies that helped in engaging the boards effectively. The paper indicated that the contribution of a board member has often been enhanced when opportunities to engage with the stakeholders and the directly served communities/individuals of the organisation have been created and nurtured. Her argument underscored the point that an effective strategy lies in understanding every board member’s individual motivations to serve on the board and help engage the individual appropriately, as engagement is a continual and not an ad hoc process. Aarti concluded that boards of most Indian TSOs are formed through contact and not ‘contract.’ Board processes tend to be largely informal irrespective of organisational/board size or growth stage.

The paper ‘Role of NGOs to Empower Women in Nepal’ by Paudel¹⁷ raised an important issue related to the question of governance by arguing that “the mission and

vision of the organisation ought to be part of the ideology of the organisation rather than the availability of funds and be influenced by the populist fad.” With the role of TSOs on the increase, there is greater need for focusing on their credibility. Paudel noted that in Nepal there is an uneven distribution of TSOs working for women, with very few of them operating in those areas that are considered underdeveloped regions. The concentration of the NGOs is mostly in the urban region.

A similar line of argument was found in the paper by Sandeep Joshi.¹⁸ His paper primarily looked into the structure, role, programme and performance of the development voluntary organisations. Sandeep’s paper highlighted the organisational mission and the goals set very often which are dependent on the availability of funds and the requirements of funding sources. The attempts by voluntary organisations of developing their mission, vision, and goals based on specific projects have very serious implications on the governance issue. The third sector, he noted, is emerging as a cut throat competitive arena with fighting for funds. This definitely is a serious situation that needs to be addressed by researchers in the field. Interestingly the paper by Udaykumar and his co-researchers¹⁹ also narrated how a development NGO over a period of time creeps into a constant dependence on external agencies even though internal leadership had developed pretty well. These observations become very critical for the governance process and credibility of third sector organisations.

Harish D and Srikanth A.P²⁰ used the case study of one of the ISO certified NGOs (an institute of rural development) to advocate the need for Quality Management System (QMS) for NGOs. The authors held the view that non government organizations need to focus more on quality management, especially because they work in socially sensitive areas. It is common for these service organizations, especially in countries like India, to suffer from problems such as lack of professionalism, recognition, second line leadership and clarity in implementing ideas. The paper argued that pursuing QMS has many benefits for the NGOs. In particular the authors mentioned benefits such as enhanced accountability and transparency, effective communication and reduction in customer complaints that were visible in the organization they studied. The paper recommended that today’s NGOs need to integrate themselves with the global environment and therefore it is necessary that they pursue QMS in earnest.

Dr. Ghashghai in her paper “SWOT analysis of Iranian Women’s NGOs (IWNGO)”²¹ noted that women in Iran have faced human rights problems and social constraints in

different eras of the country’s history. The paper looked at the history of the Iranian Women’s Movement and Voluntary Work and traced it back to 1906. The paper provided operational and governance related discussions even though it addressed IWNGOs. Based on the activity type, the paper categorized the IWNGOs into three groups, namely: Supply Side, Gap Filler, and Demand Side NGOs. Ghashghai also noted that most of the IWNGOs fall on the Supply Side and address the issues of charity and micro-credit and have always demonstrated immense capability to address the issues very quickly. The study noted that the NGOs operating on the lines of the North are rather new in Iran though the country had traditional women’s organisations. The new era IWNGOs, she noted, are in the growing phase. The paper offered suggestions after putting the organisations under study to a SWOT analysis. The author had prepared a model for the organisations so that they could perform and address the issues of the organisation better. TEAM strategy, she noted, helps develop controllable and uncontrollable factors which will help the IWNGOs to effectively manage their activities.

Financial discipline is an important area that has implications for governance process. Situating themselves within this broad theme, Dr. B. Mahadevappa and Mr. S. Shankarappa²² tried to look at the generally sidelined issue of financial disclosure. Their paper primarily focused on the dimension of information needs of the contributors to the non profit organizations. It is natural for one to normally get carried away by the legal compulsions on accounting statements and see whether a non profit organization actually follows it or not. On the other hand the paper started off identifying the information needs of those who fund the nonprofit activities and prioritizing such needs to suggest which type of financial information and disclosure would be better for the non profit organizations.

This study was based on the empirical data gathered from 60 contributors who had contributed to ten different non profit organizations. The authors used the Hyndman’s a priori model as the basis and improvised it further in their study. Having prioritized the information needs of the contributors, this study classified such needs into financial information and non financial information. They rightly observed that “many of the most important types of information sought by the contributors (individual donors) are non financial, while the most usual information disclosed is predominantly financial.” The paper further suggested that since the contributors primarily contribute with an altruistic objective, they would be more interested in knowing how well their money is spent and how much is achieved in terms

of fulfillment of objectives than having curiosity about the financial solvency of the organization or legality of accounting records. Mahadevappa and Shankarappa thus added a new dimension to the governance practices and suggested that while disclosing financial information the non-profit organizations should focus more on the information needs of the contributors and add non financial information that highlight the end use of funds.

Yun Ching Tseng's paper²³ highlighted yet another dimension of internal governance issues of third sector organisations. Knowledge Management (KM) and its importance to the community based organisations was the main theme of the paper. The author noted that "KM is the process of digging out personal knowledge and transferring it into organizational knowledge. Because of this process of transferring personal knowledge into organizational knowledge, individual knowledge includes capabilities such as ambition, skills, behavior and experience. Once the knowledge is transformed organizational memory can continue even after staff members have left an organization." According to Tseng knowledge acquisition, creation, accumulation and knowledge sharing becomes very vital for the internal governance of the organisation. Therefore KM helps organization workers gain more professional ability and facilitate the transformation of the organization into a learning organization.

An issue closely interwoven with governance is funding. Funding TSOs is in turn dependent on the incentives given to the donors. It is in this context that Dr. Govindappa's comparative study of the Tax Incentives offered to the non profit organization in India and the USA may be seen.²⁴ In this paper, the author has tried to compare the provisions of the Income Tax Act in India with that of the Internal Revenue Code of the USA. Specifically, the paper compared the legal provisions in the two countries with reference to the purpose of the organizations that are eligible to get tax exemption, mode of application for such exemption, filing and disclosure requirements, and provisions with regard to violation of such provisions.

Govindappa argued that there are lots of similarities in the tax laws of India and the USA. The two countries started their tax exemption policies more or less at the same time. The reason for introducing income tax to tide over the financial crisis due to war was the same and in both the countries strict regulations were introduced in the 60s and 70s. The paper also noted some important differences. In the US the federal government has attached greater importance to the third sector organizations than that of the central government in India. Further, the Internal Revenue Code had recognized very early and quite clearly the possibility of non profits be-

ing used as tax shelters by vested interests. Therefore the US tax provisions are clearer, quite strictly implemented and the penalties for violations are very high which seems to be not so much the case in India. Govindappa observed that the income tax provisions in the US are more liberal and facilitating both to the contributors (donors) and recipients (non profit organizations) with very heavy punishment for violations. In case of India, there are facilitating provisions but the monitoring and adherence to the provisions needs leaves a lot more to be done.

Apart from the papers presented in the technical sessions, a panel discussion also focused on the issue of TSO governance. The panel was based on a cross country study covering six countries (Asia's Third Sector: Governance for Accountability and Performance, a study coordinated through University of Technology Sydney, covering China, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam). The panel discussion was moderated and the introductory presentation on the research project was made by Dr. Samiul Hasan.²⁵ His presentation dealt with the broad framework of the study that addressed issues like (a) expansion of knowledge and understanding (approaches to third sector governance), (b) encouragement in self-evaluation and adopting best practices (governance and accountability issues), (c) expansion and consolidation of a network of third sector governance researchers/experts, and (d) entrenching academic interests in the third sector (in the participating and other Asian universities).

Hasan's introductory note was followed by two country presentations. The Philippines' presentation by Dr. Ma Oliva Domingo²⁶ looked at the shifts in understanding the concept of governance. Her presentation focused on indicators of good governance as perceived by different key informants and representatives of TSOs covered in the study. Policies, procedures and mechanisms, flexibility of structure, degree of transparency, extent of accountability, nature of management of finance or other resources, clarity of vision, mission and objectives, organisational values/culture, certification and accreditation, etc., were some of the major indicators of good governance suggested by the key informants in the Philippines. Dr. Domingo's paper narrated the experience of TSOs in the Philippines in terms of governance practices. The registration/accreditation process followed through the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) was also examined in this paper. The presentation also referred to the establishment of the Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC) in 1997, as a measure to ensure better governance of TSOs. "The PCNC is a private, non-stock, nonprofit corporation registered with the SEC which serves as a self regulation

mechanism for the Philippine third sector.” Dr. Domingo’s paper built up a case for a self regulation mechanism among the TSOs in order to ensure better governance.

The legal framework governing third sector organisations and its implications on governance was the main theme of presentation from the Indian team in a joint paper by Yashavantha Dongre, Shanthi.G, Srivalli A.J and Rajeev I.N.²⁷ This paper analyzed the specific provisions of incorporation and fund supporting legislation and the extent of compliance with the provisions of legislation in the process of governance. The paper, while examining the legal scenario, noted that legislation in India goes into operational details and gives enough space for the general public to watch and raise issues of compliance in relation to the activities of the TSOs. The paper also noted that even though TSO laws in India provide for tremendous scope for judicial activism, there was no regular state monitoring. Addressing the compliance of TSOs (under study) to the legal provisions, it was noted that the constitution and functioning of the Board focused more on the ‘letter’ than on the ‘spirit’ of law. The study also observed that there were many unregistered TSOs that do not come under any specific legal frame work but could be regulated under wide generic laws of the land.

Prof. Jenny Onyx’s paper²⁸ based on the cross country field survey data provided a comparative picture of internal governance practices of TSOs in Asian countries. The TSOs under study, she noted, showed all the indications of a North Model B the board centric governance model of the formal organisations of the west. She noted that such a trend may have been seen due to the fact that the sample cases were mostly drawn from urban regions. The value of smooth interpersonal relations occurs in most countries in the South and in South East Asia. Prof. Onyx’s paper noted that it was therefore difficult for the board to call the staff to account. The survey outcomes, she noted, need to be compared with a similar examination of the organisational practices of small, grass roots organisations, particularly those operating at village level. Those organisations which are most visible to the international community, and which have a reputation for being high performing, are the ones that tend to imbibe the corporate governance practices that are the bench mark of western organisations.

TSOs AND EMPOWERMENT

Development discourses have been time and again stressing the issues of access to resources and its equitable utilization. It has been well demonstrated that such access and distribution is facilitated better through people’s action. A good number of papers presented in the conference focused on these aspects.

The role of civil society initiatives in empowering people, especially the marginalized, was the main theme in many of these papers. Specifically these papers addressed the issues of Gender, Development and Service Delivery.

Irrespective of the level of development of the economy in the countries around the world there still is a need for TSOs to seriously address gender issues. For example, gender equity has become a very important dimension in development discourse. Due to the impact of globalisation and destruction of regional support systems, deprivation levels of women have been constantly registering a rise. The international and local TSOs have effectively risen to the occasion addressing issues related to gender justice.

In this background, the paper by Shripathi Kalluraya²⁹ addressed the issue of TSOs and empowerment of women. In his paper, the author highlighted the impact of the TSOs on women empowerment and evaluated the degree of the success of the TSO by considering the parameters like the extent of awareness about the TSO initiatives and the participatory role of the target group. The paper noted that the TSOs under study were rated highly where the involvement of the target group in identifying the goals is concerned. Shripathi also attempted an evaluation of the impact of developmental schemes taken up by TSOs under study as against the schemes implemented by the government and those schemes delivered jointly by the TSOs and the government. The point made was that though the asset position of the target group under the TSO delivered group indicates greater change, the change in income and expenditure pattern show that those target groups covered jointly by the TSO and the government are better positioned. This study thus strengthens the case for partnership approach to development.

The importance of group approach to address any issue related to the marginalized and the role of Self Help Groups (SHG) as a tool in women’s empowerment is now an accepted paradigm. The conference saw four papers surrounding this issue. The study by Dr. Rekha Gaonkar³⁰ was an attempt to compare the present life situation of women SHG members with that of their situation before becoming the members of SHG. Rekha’s paper identified the strength and empowerment level of the members. It is held that SHGs have been able to eliminate the rural middle men and reduce the bonded-labour problem to a great extent. She demonstrated that the informal yet cohesive SHGs have been effective agents in capacity building of the members. Rekha noted that in the Indian family even though women are the main support system, their access to the family resources have always been secondary and many times dismal. However the formation of SHGs has provided its members (women) better access and

control over household resources and better individual and collective identity.

The role of TSOs in poverty reduction and empowerment of women was the main theme of the paper by Geetha Rajaram.³¹ Keeping micro-finance as the central theme of discussion, she highlighted the need for establishing effective micro-finance institutions to take care of the requirements of the poor who do not have access to formal financial institutions. Geetha argued that the Year of International Micro-finance (2005) gave an impetus to formal financial institutions to look at TSOs' role in reaching the poor through micro-finance. She also tried to bring forth through case studies how TSO initiated micro-finance in India is more effective than the formal financial institutions as TSO's approach are need based. The paper noted that the outreach of the formal financial institutions is uneven and they are very rigid in their approach thus leaving the majority of the Indian population out of the credit facility. The paper asserted that there is wide scope for the TSO initiated micro-finance institutions in filling these gaps. However, the author cautioned that in the absence of an effective regulatory mechanism the TSO run micro-finance institutions would be difficult to monitor even though they have large scope for intermediation.

With the concept of micro-finance emerging as a possible alternative to the formal financial institutions, the debates on the pros and cons of such alternate institutions have also increased. The paper by I.N. Rajeev³² linked the issues raised by Rekha and Geetha, and looked at micro-credit and SHGs from a different perspective. The paper acknowledged the initial process of empowerment of women by SHG formation and linkage of micro-finance institutions with SHG. However the main focus was on the possibility of SHG federations emerging as an alternative to formal financial institutions to provide financial resources to SHGs. Rajeev noted that development issues, if not internalized by the groups, fail to reach the real goal. If the credit linkage function is performed by a formal or state owned financial institution, the SHGs become dependent and many times become a subject of exploitation by such profit seeking institutions. Instead, SHG federations that have overcome the initial 'teething problems' could be tried as an alternate. With this, the interest charged on the loan when it reaches the individual members of SHGs will be less, and the self help concept gets proper meaning. Rajeev quoted cases of such federations, where sufficient quantum of capital has been generated and such federations are able to not only inter-lend but have grown strong enough to lend to other SHGs too.

The SHG movement in India has now lived long enough to demonstrate the results. The initial years have seen a

tremendous growth of SHGs. It is natural for one to expect that the stages of maturation and empowerment achieved within the smaller circle should have translated into the larger circles too. But there are many doubts emerging in this direction. Sujatha K.S., has addressed this concern in her paper 'Women Empowerment and Beyond'.³³ Sujatha's empirical study looked at the economic empowerment of women through self help groups. "The mainstream approach to women empowerment followed in India is an economic approach and is based on the assumption that economic empowerment is the key to real 'empowerment' of women. Guided by this assumption, policies and programmes are devised to give the marginalized and underprivileged women easy access to credit through different credit dispensation linkages since credit is believed to be the vital input for their economic development. One of the widely known links in these linkages is Self Help Groups (SHGs) as they are considered to be a very powerful pro-poor, socio-economic welfare instrument in helping development of women." Against this background, the author has studied select SHGs, promoted by five different facilitating agencies and made an analysis of the roles played by SHGs promoted by different credit dispensation linkages.

The study found that SHGs of women exhibit a sound governance practice and the accounting records are generally well maintained. The decision making, especially those related to credit dispensation within the group are participatory in nature. However, the participation is limited only to SHG activities and the women seem to be not empowered to extend this quality in their family decisions. The author noted that there is a change in the economic, social and political status of women involved in the SHGs but had reservations as to whether it can be equated with empowerment. The study concluded observing that "we are essentialising and simplifying the concept of empowerment by just giving importance to savings and credit management. This has neither resulted in women becoming economically empowered with income generating and sustainable economic activities, nor have they become socially empowered in terms education, training, attaining better social status and self-esteem."

The papers by Mamatha and C. Lang explored other dimensions of the issue of empowerment. Mamatha in her paper 'Women's Movement in Andhra Pradesh'³⁴ analyzed the historical reasons for the emergence of women's movement in two districts of Andhra Pradesh and the level of deprivation and the expressions of violence on women. Her paper traced the growth of revolutionary women's movement and the consequences of the same on the society in general and women in particular. She described the larger society's feudal-

istic attitude and sex based discrimination that kindled the fire of revolutionary forces and how large numbers of women joined the movement facing all odds. While Mamatha felt that women were mainly responsible for the move of the government to implement the amended Rape Laws and opening of Women Police Cells to address the expressions of violence against women she also opined that there are possibilities that the TSOs also have within themselves the inherent unjust expressions of the larger society.

The paper by Christina Lange³⁵ discussed the efforts towards establishing gender equity in Europe. She discussed the gender policy and identified four paradoxes that exist and the lessons learnt out of them. “Women represent the majority in social civil society organizations, but mostly men are in leading positions. Gender and civil society are important issues at the European political level, but they have not been interrelated: European gender mainstreaming efforts have not affected social organizations in the Member States. The issue of gender equality is one of the most regulated areas in the labor market, but gender equality has not been achieved in the European countries. All EU-Member States have accepted Gender Mainstreaming, but the implementation is very slow (path-dependency of gender regimes).” “Pressure from outside/below, from social movements like the women’s movement is necessary, even if the legal basis already exists (bottom up). A strategy like GENDER MAINSTREAMING promoted only in a ‘moral’ sense by a UN-body like the Women’s World Conference, can be transferred into hard law—if the respective actors in the supranational institutions use it wisely (top down). Committed individuals inside the political administrative system are very important: they know and make use of the formal and informal procedures as well as build coalition networks also with civil society organizations. A strong movement from outside/below, with committed actors inside plus a ‘moral’ obligation (vision) can bring about progress in gender relations.” The paper thus demonstrated that gender issues are a challenge even within the advanced economies and suggested that the civil society alternatives have a significant role to play in realizing a better gender justice.

TSO AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Different dimensions of the service delivery role of TSOs were the subject matter of some of the papers presented at the conference. Ashwini’s paper³⁶ explored an important social issue: the problems of children with learning disability. “Learning disability is often known as a ‘hidden handicap’.” Learning disabilities might force even otherwise bright children to lag behind in class room and formal learning. NGOs in

India are instrumental in mobilizing social support for the universalization of elementary education. Therefore some of them have also taken up the task of addressing the problem of learning disability of children. Ashwini highlighted the different measures of learning disability and explained the different methods of enumerating such disability. The learning disability and the consequent disinterest in formal learning is one of the important contributing factors for the number of school drop outs. The intervention of civil society organizations in such cases has contributed positively and therefore, Ashwini suggested that this area need to be increasingly addressed by such organizations.

The possibilities of TSO initiatives for facilitating rights related to knowledge properties, under the Intellectual Property Rights regime was addressed by Ishwara Bhat.³⁷ Bhat gave an historical overview as to how collective and group efforts were in vogue in different parts of the world, as a measure of protecting the rights of holders of knowledge. The evolution of the concept of intellectual property in the early mercantilist days and the role of guilds in protecting such property rights were narrated as a background for the modern IPR system.

Discussing the possibility of collective efforts to protect the intellectual property rights, the paper cited the example of the Copyright Societies, which are the registered societies under the Copy Rights Act. These societies are self help initiatives of those holding the intellectual property rights such as the writers. The paper also briefly looked at the working of such societies in India. Noting that the legal regime in India is “quite facilitative for the functioning of copyright societies,” Bhat points out that in practice such societies are very few in number. However, given the success stories of some of the NGOs collectively fighting to protect the interest of farmers and initiating legal steps against the grant of international patents for neem, haldi (Turmeric) and basmati rice, the paper argued that there is ample scope in India for TSO initiatives like Copyright Societies to be actively engaged in collective endeavours of protecting the rights related to intellectual property.

TSO AND DEVELOPMENT

The kind of space and importance that the third sector occupies in societies while extending support to people to lead a dignified life, has time and again been demonstrated. The conference provided a platform to demonstrate this fact again. The issue of development, especially the idea of inclusive development, not only underlines the role of TSOs but also raises questions related to our understanding of what the third sector is all about and how such initiatives are governed

(both issues being addressed in separate panel discussions). The following papers tried to address this domain.

The development model adopted immediately after Indian independence was more an economic growth oriented model seeking immediate results. This approach, as noted in the paper by Udaykumar and others,³⁸ resulted in lopsided development. Consequently, the communities who were independent and lived with dignity were reduced to highly marginalized groups and receivers of alms through the development programmes doled out by the government. Therefore, the role of TSOs, the paper argued, is more vital in bridging the gaps of development. Udaykumar and his co-authors brought forth through the empirical study of a TSO engaged in empowering the indigenous people, the struggle, pains and joys of the community in overcoming oppression.

Harnessing values like 'nyaya' (justice) system of the tribe the authors showed how a TSO can strengthen the just and equitable values of group life to overcome the modern forms of oppression and marginalization. Thus, the inclusive and horizontal structures of the organisation have been able to incorporate the traditional leadership and the knowledge of the elders with that of women and youth. This has helped to address the requirement of the community as a whole rather than in piece meal programmes of the government.

Amenomori Takayoshi³⁹ presented the case of Japan where civil society organisations have played an important role in addressing the issues relating to the immigrants, more often the ethnic minorities. During the post World War II period, Japan witnessed a devastating socio cultural break down. This was true of most of the countries in the world and Takayoshi observes that during this period the problem of ethnic minority intensified in Japan. But it was not until late 1970s that TSOs emerge from grassroots level to tackle the issues of discrimination. TSOs in Japan were mainly responsible for the establishment of equal treatment to foreigners and domestic citizens. They provide health insurance coverage for those not covered under the health insurance scheme. Thus with effective intervention of TSOs the migrant population were able to have access to basic survival requirements like housing, education and health. Takayoshi contended that still suffrage rights to immigrants have not been given in Japan and TSOs have been battling in this direction for a long time but have not been successful.

Empowerment issues have many dimensions. In most of these issues TSOs have a major role to play. Surendra Kumar's work⁴⁰ on the Sri Lankan situation dwells on a host of issues related to the role of TSOs in addressing conflict situations. His paper addressed the most crucial issues relating to TSO

and government relations and also the ideological clashes between TSOs themselves. The paper explored multiple angles of relations of minority and majority and the ideological stances of TSOs in conflict ridden situations. This situation is not an isolated one. We have instances of Afghanistan, Rwanda, and Religious TSOs in India which have time and again brought forth such dilemmas in TSO discourse.

A little different but equally interesting observation was presented by Geeta Bharadwaj.⁴¹ "When terrorism holds sway, the values of faith and trust are shattered and the ambience of uncertainty and deception gets entrenched." Geeta argued that faith and trust are the foundations for any TSO. They should be able to infuse moral capital through the educative methods adopted by each organization and should work for ensuring peace in the society.

The need for the TSOs to address the requirements of the marginalized was further stressed by Mustiary Begum in her work on Muslim women.⁴² Begum embarked on a sensitive topic related to empowerment of Muslim women. She noted that "It is unfortunate that the present day Muslim society has denied to its women what the Quran concedes so gracefully. It is the male chauvinism that has hurt the female ego and has made her look covetously to the status of women in other religions." However, the hard fact remains that "it was Islam, which for the first time recognized and bestowed upon women a status of respect and dignity in the family life, by granting her the right of inheritance to divorce and to remarry." The paper argued that to deliver the true callings of Quran the role of TSOs becomes necessary. In her analysis, Begum finds that Muslim women need support to get social and economic strength. The paper recommends that both government and civil society organizations need to take up this agenda and facilitate empowerment of Muslim women.

Chandrika Rao's paper⁴³ tried to look at the role of networking of TSOs in effectively addressing problems of the society. She demonstrated her point through an empirical study of TSOs addressing the problem of street-children in Mumbai to arrive at the base of the issue of interdependence and networking of TSOs to reach the set goals of each TSO. Through the results of the empirical analysis the paper recommended that networking of TSOs working on similar themes and creating a nodal agency can be very helpful in terms of providing feedback of information to all the TSOs. Chandrika felt that such networking can empower the TSOs and make it easy for them to reach the targets set for each TSO.

The interaction and networking aspect was approached from a very different perspective in the paper by Chen Jie.⁴⁴ The paper made an interesting analysis of the impact of interaction with International Civil Society/International

NGOs of Chinese and Taiwanese NGOs. Jie actually covered a large canvas of international civil society vis-à-vis domestic social, economic and political climate of China and Taiwan. The ideological rivalry and the consequent political differences in the two countries have brought forth differing emphasis in the nature of interaction of NGOs of those countries with that of transnational civil society.

The paper noted that essentially the Chinese NGOs limit their interaction with the international organizations to social activities such as women empowerment, rural problems, issues connected with migrant labour, etc. However the NGOs in Taiwan seem to have their ties with transnational civil society initiatives in relation to social movements and activities that strengthen the democratic base on the island. Given the nature of relationship between mainland China and Taiwan, it is of interest to note how the two countries are selective in establishing relations with transnational civil society or in drawing support from the international NGOs. Jie noted that both China and Taiwan have benefited a lot due to their increased interaction with transnational civil society. The specificities of benefits vary based on the area of interaction and the primary location of international NGOs. For instance there is a big difference in the approach and nature of working of German and US NGOs in China. Further, the apex body of monitoring and supporting NGOs, a GO-NGO, has in fact gained significantly due to the almost competing nature of support provided by such international NGOs. Jie's analysis helped understand the nature of interaction among TSOs and their impact in economies with closed operations.

Discussion related to development and empowerment has an obvious linkage with the issue of partnership. This was amply demonstrated by many papers that were presented at the conference. The GO-TSO, Local Self Government and TSO, and Corporate and TSO partnerships were discussed by many scholars.

Veneetha Patnaik in her work 'GO-NGO Partnership Outcomes'⁴⁵ observed that GO-NGO partnership is gaining greater popularity in India especially in the areas of welfare, education and health services. Patnaik illustrated the GO-NGO partnership advantages in the case of the health sector. Her paper studied the health policies of the government and its implementation mechanism without involving TSOs and juxtaposed it with that of the situation where the government invited a TSO to be part of the policy development and implementation of programme in relation to controlling blindness.

Patnaik's study highlighted the gaps in the policy developed and gaps in implementation of the policy. The

study revealed that the gaps were more pronounced where TSOs were not part of the programme and once the TSOs and government partnered to address the issues, such gaps were plugged. It is held that involving TSOs in the service delivery system provides continuous interaction with the beneficiaries, which is the most crucial element in development programmes. Patnaik's paper showed that there is tremendous scope for partnerships and the need of the hour is to harness them.

Siddaraju⁴⁶ also spoke in favour of GO-TSO partnership in sustainable agricultural development. Through a case study he argued that the success of sustainable agricultural development through partnership can reduce deprivation faced by the farmers due to shifts in agricultural trade and its related issues. The study further demonstrated that integrating the traditional agriculture related knowledge of farmers into modern agricultural practices reduces the dependence of farmers on external agencies thus leading to sustainable farming. His paper highlighted two major issues, namely, TSO partnership with government, and extensive networking and dissemination of information among TSOs.

Continuing the discussion on partnership Krishna Kothai presented the case of the TSO and the local self government (LSG) partnership in India.⁴⁷ The state and third sector interplay in India has its roots in early kinship groups and Kothai observed that the decentralized governance practices that existed in India were gradually lost under the rule of British regime. Independent India, by introducing the Panchyati Raj System tried to revive the decentralized governance practices. He argued that the Panchyati Raj System, effectively works as a bridge between the government and the third sector. "As Panchyati Raj System and third sector institutions recognise people's power they have similar views on development issues. This proximity should lead to effective and meaningful linkage between the two." Kothai, in his study, illustrated how even though LSG and TSOs have similar ideological background, they were found to be operating in isolation. Maybe the third sector's tradition of looking at government with mistrust has kept them apart. Panchyati Raj System in India is the expression of local self government but to a great extent it is controlled by the main political groups. However, the author opined that there is a need for Panchayati Raj System and TSOs to work in collaboration and pursue a partnership approach to facilitate effective delivery of services.

In his exploration of corporate and TSO partnership, Sudhir⁴⁸ noted that this is the most popular and dynamic among different kinds of partnership programmes. "Partnership between these two sectors, each having expertise in

different aspects needed for development, will yield the most effective results. However, this kind of partnership if not designed properly will be problematic since more often than not the corporate sector is the fund raising partner and their values and missions get more pronounced in the TSO's activities." The paper highlighted the fact that most of the TSOs under study indicated that they preferred partnerships for short periods so that the goal and values of one organisation do not try to overpower the other. The study also indicated that the effective communication and openness on both sides results in effective and positive partnerships and hence could contribute better to societal needs.

The conference addressed yet another related aspect through the papers that focused on issues of philanthropy and giving. While Rosemary Leonard and John Bellamy discussed the contributions of members of Christian churches in Australia to their communities and the level of social capital generation, Moodithaya looked at corporate philanthropy in human resource management and how this helps the corporate bodies earn social capital.

Rosemary Leonard and John Bellamy⁴⁹ indicated that "people who attended Church had high level of involvement in their communities and made significant contributions to the communities' social capital." The authors noted that "Christian churches due to their large membership in Australia are well placed to make contributions to the social capital of their communities." The results indicated that becoming more involved in a Christian church is likely to increase the involvement in the wider community. The authors noted that the results were consistent with the Christian belief and teachings. The social capital dimension that is generated by the organisational structures was seen as an important input for realizing development goals.

Dr. M.S. Moodithaya's paper,⁵⁰ based on an empirical study in the state of Karnataka in India, looked at philanthropic values of the corporate houses in retaining employees and building the trust that is most vital in human resource management. The continued support of the institution to its employees, the study indicates, could help in increasing the morale of the employee and had resulted in an increase in the productivity of the employee. The paper noted that those organisations that support the employee's voluntarism as an HRM strategy have been able to go beyond accomplishment of business objectives. They have been able to generate and harness higher levels of social capital for the organisation.

COOPERATIVES

The cooperative movement in general and operational issues of cooperative enterprises in particular has been of signifi-

cant academic curiosity in Asia and especially India. This is only natural, since India houses the world's largest number of cooperatives (more than half a million) and cooperative membership (about 250 million individual members). Cooperatives have been considered part of the third sector even though the degree of state intervention in this sector is much larger than that of NGOs and self help groups. With their focus on rural credit dispensation, retailing of agricultural infrastructure, public distribution of state subsidized food items and support to the poor under various state sponsored programmes, cooperatives have always stood for social justice and equity. However politicized and inefficient they may be (with lots of exceptions), cooperatives have always been evaluated in terms of their contribution to social needs. It is therefore of interest that many researchers presented their papers on cooperatives, linking them to the main theme of the conference. These papers may be broadly classified into two categories—those focusing on cooperative delivery systems and those addressing the issue of strengthening of cooperatives in terms of efficiency and governance.

Mokbul Morshed Ahmad⁵¹ in his paper "The Cooperatives in Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects" analysed the cooperative movement in Bangladesh. The historical details discussed in the paper indicate that the experiences of the cooperatives in Bangladesh have been very similar to that of the Indian cooperative movement. This is obvious for the reasons that though these countries had inherent characters of cooperative values, the modern cooperative system was introduced in the sub-continent by the British regime. Like many state directed developmental programmes the cooperatives also followed a top down approach. Ahmad notes that with independent Bangladesh emerging, the cooperatives started registering a downward trend as the new government introduced through the Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) a two tier structure of cooperatives.

The paper also elaborated on the working of BRDB cooperatives and traced the reasons for the failure of the two tier cooperative system by addressing the major issues like organisational structure, legal issues relating to the cooperatives, and management. The paper stressed the point that "lack of coordination and proper understanding of the concept of cooperation has led to the overlapping of different types of primary cooperatives in one region leading to the situation where it is nonviable to run the cooperatives. This has led to individual centered clouts cutting at the very roots of cooperative movement."

Cooperatives are member driven organizations. Their strength and their ability to be socially relevant essentially depend on how well the members' needs are addressed and

how well the members participate in the cooperative activities. Sudha K's⁵² paper on 'Member Development in Cooperatives' addressed this issue. She underlined the importance of member development programs in cooperatives and argued that cooperatives being member driven and member centered organizations could serve their agenda only when the members are enlightened and participative and when the cooperative develops its activities based on members' needs. One of the main problems of cooperatives in India is member apathy. The member development programs initiated by macro level organizations do not yield desired results. Therefore, the paper favoured member development activities to be taken up at the micro level, that is to say, at the level of primary cooperatives. And so the argument was that one of the ways of facilitating member involvement in cooperative activities at the primary level is to develop need based activities. Here Sudha identified activities related to business development as well as those which in general contribute to member involvement. She cited examples of such activities carried out by various cooperatives in different parts of India and argued that their success is the result of developing activities based on member needs. The paper also demonstrated that the degree of member awareness and the member participation is much greater in the cooperatives that conduct micro level member development activities than those which do not or those where the cooperatives send members to the activities conducted at the macro level. She suggested that member development should be a continuous activity and provision should be made for such activities at each cooperative's level.

The paper by Dr. T. Paranjothi and Ravichandra⁵³ argued that the effectiveness of the cooperative depends on the nature of collaboration of the government and cooperatives in rendering services. The authors demonstrated this with the case of the women dairy cooperative societies (WDCSs). Their argument was based on the comparison of two WDCSs, one supported by the government scheme identified as STEP (Support, Training and Empowerment Programme) and the other not covered under STEP. The study findings indicated that the STEP supported WDCS showed marked shifts in the member capability and had a long lasting impact on the lives of the women members, whereas the WDCS not supported by STEP did not show such member development.

An issue closely related to the ability of the cooperatives to respond to social needs is their competitive ability. This is particularly important since the state is withdrawing from the social sector in a big way and market centered economy is fast emerging in India. In this context, Jayaprakash and Indira have made an empirical study of competitiveness of cooperative Banks.⁵⁴ The authors analysed the competitiveness

of cooperative banks against the backdrop of economic reforms in India. This empirical study attempted a comparative analysis of one Urban Cooperative Bank and one Primary Cooperative Agricultural and Rural Development Bank, to demonstrate how they respond to the changing economic policy in terms enhancing their competitive abilities.

Taking managerial competence as a function of business turnover per employee, Jayaprakash and Indira presented an estimation of comparative competitiveness. The paper dwelt on various functional aspects such as trend of deposit mobilization, credit dispensation, diversification of business, purpose wise distribution of credit, and degree of managerial competitiveness. They argued that there is a visible attempt in both the cooperatives to enhance their competitive abilities, but the members of the board are not competent and skilled enough to cope with the demands of the changing market structure. In case of urban cooperative bank the situation is better, compared with the rural agricultural development bank since the later is bogged down by problems such as lack of professional management and too much government intervention. The paper suggested that the cooperative banks need to focus on enhancing professional abilities of the board members as well as the staff which calls for greater emphasis on training. Further, they underlined the point that the policy changes with an eye on micro variables, cost analysis, and enhancement of operational efficiency are some of the factors that the cooperatives need to attend immediately.

In tune with the need for enhancing efficiency and profitability of cooperatives and to make them real agencies for social well being, the paper by Narayanaswamy⁵⁵ attempted to develop a statistical model to evaluate the performance. Like other sectors the cooperatives also have been looking for corporate modes of evaluation. These borrowed methods have time and again proven insufficient to understand the non-corporate values of transactions of the cooperatives. The author therefore tried to put forward a new method for cooperatives. The scaling techniques the paper described are helpful in measuring the performance of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS). The author identified the problem areas in the traditional model to show that the new scale has been able to overcome those gaps and could be replicated with PACS anywhere in India.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The role of the TSOs is increasingly seen to be important in the last decade. The liberalization of economies and internationalization of markets created the need for safeguarding cohesion in democratic market societies and brought the civic associations to the centre-stage. Even though

the Asia Pacific region has had a long cultural history of group responses to the community needs, the contemporary social and economic needs seem to be compelling the policy makers to think of assigning greater responsibility to and partnering with the non-state sources especially in the activities related to public welfare.

With the declaration of Millenium Development Goals, the space for TSO activities has widened and has become more pronounced than ever before. They have a crucial role to empower people to participate in the democratic political processes and to be part of the decisions that have bearing on their lives. They have to be the vital agents of facilitating better and equitable economic and social status across various strata in the economy. However, there are still very large gaps in their acceptance and many have also questioned the credibility of these initiatives. What is their capacity to exercise vigilance and to share the responsibility? How important are they as facilitators of social justice? The vital issue therefore, pertains to the governance pattern of TSOs which address issues like democracy, participation, and accountability.

The papers presented in the IV ISTR Asia Pacific Regional Conference rightly dwelt on most of the major issues related to civil society contribution towards social welfare. By specifically addressing the issues of perception about civil society, third sector governance, service delivery and inclusive development, the papers tried not only to address the conference theme but have succeeded in capturing different trends related to the third sector in the Asia-Pacific region.

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