

India Development Review

The best reads on development



July 2017

Why Cookie Cutter Models Don't Work In
Development / Selection Bias - Are We Fo
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Giving: The Power Of Many / Size Shouldn'
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IDR's mission is to advance knowledge on social impact in India.

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As a platform for Indian voices, we are committed to reflecting the diversity, complexity, and inventiveness of the sector.

Dear reader,

It gives us great pleasure to introduce the inaugural print issue of India Development Review (IDR)—our country's first independent media platform for leaders in the social sector.

Although the development community in India has a vast trove of expertise and wisdom on advancing social change, that knowledge often resides in silos, either locked in people's heads, or buried within organisations.

We founded IDR as a nonprofit in April 2017, with the objective of surfacing these ideas, experiences and practices, so that together we can do more and do right by the millions of Indians whom we work with and for. Because limited access to learning, insights, evidence and best practices constrains what we can achieve—both individually with our programmes and money, and also collectively as a sector seeking to create impact.

We know that knowledge is only a part of the solution for any complex problem; but we also know that it is a crucial part.

To that end, we promise to highlight voices on issues that matter, regardless of whether they belong to little-known grassroots organisations or big-name funders. We will write about what has worked but we will also talk to our failures. We will showcase the big ideas even as we cover the functional knowledge that helps us improve our programmes and organisations.

In the pages that follow, we have featured 10 of the 60 articles that have been published on www.idronline.org during our first quarter. These represent a small cross section of ideas, approaches and lessons that our sector is grappling with. Written by practitioners, funders, and consultants, the themes in this issue cut across sectors including sanitation, education, healthcare, adolescent girls, and youth.

We want to thank you for your support. IDR was designed and built by a team of four. We did, however, stand on the shoulders of giants—leaders of over 100 social organisations, foundations, and consulting firms—to refine and create what you see today.

In less than three months following our launch, we've had over 12,000 readers visit IDR, 40% of whom return regularly for the insights and knowledge we feature; 75% of our traffic is from India, reinforcing our belief that as a community, we're eager to learn from each other to do more and do better.

- Devanshi, Rachita, Sangeeta & Smarinita
India Development Review

www.idronline.org

Why cookie cutter models don't work in development

The national spotlight on sanitation has resulted in many of us seeking quick fixes to address a systemic problem. But the question to ask is, do they work if you ignore the local context?

Jithamithra Thathachari &
Rishi Agarwal



Development problems are hard problems. Not only are targets ambitious—say, raise entire populations out of poverty—solutions also play out over decades. Since feedback loops are prolonged, it's hard to know whether your solutions are working or not.

Which is why there's a strong tendency to see what has worked in other markets and geographies and try to reapply it. Unfortunately, copy-paste does not work in development.

Rural Sanitation in Bihar

Back in 2012, my colleagues and I at Monitor Inclusive Markets (now FSG India) set out to develop a market-based solution to the rural sanitation problem in Bihar.

What was the problem? Four out of five households in rural Bihar did not have toilets and were defecating in the open. A key element of our analysis was to look at global analogues. After all, why reinvent the wheel? This is what has worked in sanitation in other markets:

- Behaviour change communication, focussed on the health benefits of using toilets, has had a huge impact in reducing open defecation in Bangladesh.
- Extremely low-cost, makeshift toilets (under Rs 3,000) have played a key



Jithamithra Thathachari

Director, Indifi



Rishi Agarwal

Managing Director and global WASH practice lead, FSG, India

“A vast country like India is a collection of several mini-Indias. All with distinct contexts.”

part in driving toilet coverage in low-income countries.

- One-stop shops, where customers can purchase a complete toilet, have shown great results in markets like Cambodia. As an expert said in one of our workshops, “One-stop shops are the holy grail. If that’s not what we’re going to do, what’s the point?”

Except that these don’t work. Not in Bihar. Based on our research and interviews with more than a thousand households, we learned that:

1. Several years of health-focussed behaviour change communication hadn’t worked in Bihar.

Baseline demand for toilets already exists. A lot of people want toilets. And not for health reasons. People desire safety, convenience and privacy (in that order), given the dense settlements in Bihar.

So lack of demand is not the bottleneck. Ability to pay is the constraint. Along with lack of information on good quality toilets.

2. Households in Bihar know what expensive toilets look like. And aspire for them.

Unlike many other developing markets, supply chains in India are very well-developed. Most basic products are available in rural areas.

The toilet subsidy in India (more than Rs 10,000 in recent times) has also pushed the minimum acceptable standard higher. Even in areas where the subsidy is hard to access.

3. One-stop shops are not valued either.

The key benefits of a one-stop shop are (a) easy access to products and (b) convenience. But are they needed in Bihar?

Most products are already available within a 2-5 km radius.

Rural customers don’t value convenience. Lack of time is not really a constraint for most households.

Just because something has worked in other markets doesn’t mean it will work here. And this was not our experience alone.

M-Pesa is an incredible success story in Kenya. Given low bank penetration and high mobile coverage in that market, using phones for money transfer made financial transactions simple. The result: M-Pesa grew at a blistering pace, reaching volumes equal to 43 percent of Kenya’s GDP within six years.

However, when Vodacom tried to do the same thing in Tanzania, it took much longer to scale and required several changes to the business model. This, despite bank penetration in Tanzania being even lower than Kenya. And, multiple attempts to break into the South African market haven’t succeeded.

This is not just about national borders. A vast country like India is a collection of several mini-Indias. All with distinct contexts. Milk cooperatives have been wildly successful in improving farmer incomes in Gujarat. But attempts to replicate the same model in other parts of the country haven’t really worked.

And sanitation is no different.

Sanitation in Bihar vs. Rajasthan

After Bihar, when we looked at Rajasthan for a later project, our findings were starkly different. Unlike Bihar, many parts of Rajasthan are sparsely populated. So, people often don’t find open defecation inconvenient at all. Bihar and Rajasthan may be part of the same acronym—BIMARU (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh)—but the contexts are very different.

And solutions are unlikely to be the same. Supply side interventions such as making toilet construction easy, wouldn’t be enough to raise toilet coverage in Rajasthan. Demand generation efforts focussed on the key need of the local population (which isn’t convenience, but may not be health either) will likely play an important role. ■

Key Takeaways

1. Don’t assume that if something has worked in one place, it will work elsewhere. The map is not the territory; local context is more important than we think.

2. We need to start from first principles: What do customers need? What do they aspire for? And how can we deliver that?

Selection bias - Are we focussing on the most **vulnerable?**

Shireen Jejeebhoy





Shireen Jejeebhoy

Demographer and Social Scientist

“We had failed to reach the most vulnerable.”

Shireen Jejeebhoy talks about how a project she worked on unwittingly excluded the most vulnerable girls in a population; why and how this happened and what can be done to prevent it from happening again.

What India will look like in the next two decades will depend on what we do today—how we invest in our young and the extent to which we close the gap between our girls and boys.

Given that one in five Indians—a total of 253 million—are adolescents aged 10-19 years, policy makers are recognising the importance of developing a healthier, better educated, and skilled young population. And now, more players—foundations, donor agencies, corporates and philanthropists—are joining this effort, committed in particular to empowering India’s girls.

Despite this growing commitment, a question that too few of us are asking is: are we reaching the population of girls most in need of our intervention?

We assume that it’s enough to locate our programme in a poor village and invite any girl interested in participating, to join. After all, we are working in a poor village, within a poor state. Surely that in itself establishes that we are reaching the most vulnerable girls, and girls most in need of our intervention?

Well, yes. And no. It is true that a programme intending to reach girls in poor districts or villages will benefit the girls who are participating. But expecting that the programme will also automatically benefit the most vulnerable among these girls is a false assumption.

To really make a difference, programmes must be designed with an eye on including the most vulnerable.

Some years ago, a project I was involved with aimed to develop the life and livelihood skills of girls in rural Uttar Pradesh. We aimed to raise their awareness of good health practices, change traditional attitudes and build their skills and aspirations for future livelihoods.

Any and every girl between the ages of 13 and 19 years from that village was eligible to participate in the weekly sessions held at the local *anganwadi*. Before the project began, we went house to house, identifying all the girls in these ages.

We talked to the girls and their families about the project, why it mattered, where it would be held and at what time, making sure that we were addressing all their concerns. We then invited all these girls to attend, and many did enroll in the 12 month programme and even attended its sessions regularly.

We measured the effect of our intervention through what is called a quasi-experimental design. Prior to the start of the programme, a survey assessing girls’ knowledge, attitudes and practices was carried out among girls in our intervention villages as well as in similar villages where the intervention was not being implemented. When the programme concluded we repeated the survey, making special efforts to include those who may have moved away in the intervening period.

This design allowed us, upon programme completion, to compare two things:

- The change in the girls in intervention villages who had and had not attended the sessions, before and after their exposure to the intervention.
- The changes so experienced with corresponding changes among girls in villages with similar background characteristics where this programme wasn’t conducted.

Our evaluation found that girls in the ‘project’ villages exhibited significantly higher levels of knowledge, about the minimum legal age at marriage, contraception and pregnancy. They also displayed more positive gender

“Those who are most vulnerable will continue to be excluded unless special efforts are made to include them.”

role attitudes—for example, that boys are no better than girls in studies, that girls should be allowed to decide when and whom they marry, and that girls can take up occupations traditionally reserved for men.

While these results validated our intervention, like many others they also exposed a critical exclusion on our part.

The girls who participated in our programme were a self-selected group. They came from better off, landed and general caste households, and were better educated than the girls who had not joined the programme.

Many of these girls were already displaying greater self-confidence and could communicate confidently with peers in group settings. We had failed to reach the most vulnerable.

What we had been optimistically attributing to the programme was nothing more than a comparison between better off girls in our programme and a representative sample of all girls in the comparison sites. And so the behavioural changes that we were associating with our intervention were skewed. We had unwittingly excluded the most vulnerable—the Dalit, the Muslim, the out-of-school and the married.

So what lessons can a programme implementer and an evaluator draw from this example?

Those who are most vulnerable will continue to be excluded unless special efforts are made to include them. This could happen for many reasons. Parents may not appreciate the value of such exposure for their girls, girls may have other responsibilities such as wage or housework, or they may be more socially isolated and not permitted freedom of movement. For some, caste dynamics may make them feel unwelcome at best, and actively excluded from joining the programme at worst. As programme implementers we must be aware of this likelihood and recruit accordingly.

A quick mapping of the caste and poverty status of the household, and the marital status and school-going status of the girl are good indicators of vulnerability.

And contrary to belief, this doesn't impose a significant additional cost, and can be done over the course of 1-2 days in each project village as demonstrated in the *Meri Life Meri Choice* (MLMC) intervention undertaken by MAMTA and evaluated by The Population Council.

The MLMC project team made a conscious decision to focus on vulnerable adolescent girls, defined as those belonging to economically poor households or socially disadvantaged religious or caste groups. Teams went house to house collecting information on each household's status, and made deliberate efforts to ensure that girls from vulnerable households were not left out of the intervention.

Evaluators too need to be alert to this potential selectivity of participants.

Analysis must explore the characteristics of those eligible girls who opt to participate in the programme and those who are excluded. If the most vulnerable are under-represented, the programme will fail to reach its intended audience.

Evaluations must likewise ensure that when programme effect is measured, statistical methods are used that obtain the 'pure' effect of the programme, after isolating the effects of any differences that may exist between the intervention and comparison in terms of social and economic indicators.

For example, if, for some reason, the intervention group is better educated or contains fewer girls from socially isolated castes than the control group, the analysis must take this into consideration. It must demonstrate that the greater empowerment observed among girls in the intervention site is attributable to the intervention and not to the fact that girls in the intervention sites are better off than those in the comparison sites.

Ideally, effects should be measured at population level, rather than at beneficiary level. We need to show that our programme has improved the lives of all girls in the village and not just those who were exposed to our intervention. This means we need to reach enough girls to make a difference at village level.

Reflections presented here seem obvious, in hindsight, but too often in our enthusiasm to empower girls, we gloss over such issues. Real progress happens only when programmes are truly inclusive. ■



“Traditional results frameworks force you to either continue doing what you have always done or predict exactly what will happen upon implementation. Neither allows you to learn from mistakes, improve, or innovate. What does allow learning, improvement, and innovation is adaptive programming.”

Priyanka Dutt
Country Director,
BBC Media Action, India

“The social sector, on the other hand, has traditionally undervalued service, almost placing it in opposition to the rights-based approach. Which might not be the best thing to do, because the two are not mutually exclusive: the line separating the two isn’t an impervious one.”

Ananthapadmanabhan Guruswamy
Chief Executive Officer, Azim Premji
Philanthropic Initiatives (APPI)

Retail giving: The power of **many**

Ingrid Srinath



Tired of jumping through CSR hoops and navigating foundation mazes to raise funds? Time to focus your energies on individual givers who bring a host of unique opportunities to your nonprofit.

Fundraising isn't easy. Donors often come with their own preferences, systems and bureaucracy. Add to that the new kinds of givers emerging—corporates with their CSR money and short attention spans and philanthropists with a world view shaped by their business histories.

But there is a third group of donors that many nonprofit leaders haven't focussed on: ordinary citizens, or retail givers. And the reason that retail giving has not received the kind of attention it deserves is because it is believed to be hard and complex to execute.

If it's so hard, why should you do it?

It is resilient

Corporate money can be whimsical. It goes away when strategy changes, when sectors are no longer 'fashionable' or when companies leave the country altogether.

At CRY we had an accurate early warning system of economic trends. Before bankers, government officials and economists could predict a slowdown, we would see it coming because corporate fundraising would get difficult. CSR budgets were (and will always be) the first budgets to be cut and the slowest to recover during a downturn.

Retail money, on the other hand, is far more resilient. In fact, donors are almost sympathetic to bad times. In the wake of the Gujarat earthquake, one of our donors wanted to give us more money, saying, "I'm sure many donors have shifted their attention to earthquake relief; so here is some more to ensure your regular work continues."



Ingrid Srinath

Founding Director,
Centre for Social Impact and
Philanthropy (CSIP), Ashoka University

It gives you autonomy

Retail giving lets you set your agenda and stay mission-oriented. Virtually no institutional donor gives you that kind of freedom. And in a sense, that helps change the power dynamics between a nonprofit and an institutional donor.

Individual donors also have the lowest requirements—they really just want to know that you are honest and doing good work. They are less inclined to pay for critical institution-building costs or your nonprofit's 'overheads', but then neither will corporates. Only progressive philanthropic foundations tend to fund these kinds of organisational costs, if at all.

However, in the programmes that retail money does pay for, you will have the flexibility to adapt your activities to achieve the desired impact, without donor interference or approvals.

It works as insurance

It is much harder for governments or other powerful entities to target an organisation that has a million donors compared to one that is funded by a foreigner or even an Indian corporate or foundation.

It builds awareness

Creating awareness for the cause and the organisation is as important as the money. A fundraising channel that raises money but doesn't build awareness about the issue it is addressing, is not worth the effort. With almost any cause, the shifts in public attitudes are the real prize, not merely more resources for service delivery or lobbying.

The ALS campaign is a case in point. Also known as the 'ice-bucket challenge', it raised more than USD 115 million in 2014 for Lou Gehrig's disease, a cause that not many had heard of until then. To put that figure in perspective, ALS Association's total revenue in the previous year stood at USD 23.5 million.

More importantly, awareness about ALS went up. Searches on Charity Navigator for ALS went up from around 500 to an astounding 68,000 in August 2014 during the campaign.

If it's this good, why haven't more people done it?

It's easier said than done

In the short run, raising funds from retail givers is certainly hard work. Hiring someone to write proposals seems much easier than setting up a system—technology, data handling and customer service management—to raise money from large numbers of people.

It is a communications endeavour. You need to build a brand by turning your cause into a compelling reason for thousands of individuals to trust you with their money. This is not easy to do, especially for issues that appear complex to the public at large.

You need to go beyond the founder. When attempting to resonate with the public at large, you need the organisation's messaging and work to have broad-based appeal. This becomes difficult when founders become surrogates for their nonprofit, making it difficult for their organisation or cause to stand alone.

We don't like to ask for money from strangers

Most people who start nonprofits in India, or work in them, are middle-class and have the typical Indian middle-class squeamishness about asking for money.

We prefer more sanitary ways of asking. We would rather make a presentation with words and numbers or write a proposal than have a conversation with people on the street about why they should give. As a sector we need to overcome this.

It used to be expensive

To build a retail fundraising engine, you needed to invest in building a backend and marketing system that could target and service thousands of individuals.

If you wanted to raise a little over Rs 1 crore, given the average donation amount of Rs 3,500, you would have to convince 3,000 people to give. With a response rate of 0.4 percent that traditional direct mailers achieve, it meant reaching out to around 750,000 individuals. This wasn't easy and required fairly sophisticated skills and expertise.

However, this is changing very rapidly. Digital has changed the economics of retail giving completely. The likes of Dana Mojo, which provides donation management services to nonprofits, have changed the need for in-house skills and expertise.

Unfortunately, what hasn't changed is the awareness around it. Nonprofit leaders still don't know enough about individual giving and it is high time that changed.

What next?

A host of factors are converging today to make retail a very attractive proposition, especially for smaller nonprofits. Avenues such as marathons, payroll giving and, most importantly, digital, are changing the rules of the game and making the playing field more equitable and accessible.

So while retail will not solve all your funding woes, it should form an important component of your funding portfolio. Ultimately, the goal should be a mix of income streams—philanthropic, corporate and retail. It's easier said than done but then again, what is autonomy, sustainability, and resilience worth to your organisation? ■

IDR is published in partnership with Ashoka University's Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy (CSIP).

SIZE

shouldn't matter

Luis Miranda

Scale should not be the only measure of success or impact. Nonprofits and donors must realise that scaling for the sake of scaling is pointless, especially if doing so is at odds with the organisation's DNA and mission.

Over the years I have participated in many discussions on growing businesses. And the main thrust of these discussions has been that organisations have to be large in order to matter. I have a contrarian view, mainly because I have always preferred to work with small teams.

Before looking at the nonprofit space, I would like to start with the for-profit space, where I spent many years. In 1994 we started HDFC Bank, where our objective was, above all else, to build an institution that would make us proud. I left the bank six years later, when I thought it had become big.

Similarly, I exited IDFC Private Equity eight years after setting up India's first infrastructure fund, by when it had become the largest Indian alternative investment platform. Even then, the best performing of our three funds was our first, and also our smallest.

These examples highlight my belief that size shouldn't really matter:

While it did for HDFC Bank, in the case of IDFC Private Equity it did not. In both cases, I left when we had become larger. I prefer smaller teams and organisations as I find them to be more flexible, less burdened with bureaucracy and processes, more entrepreneurial and a lot more fun.

So when I was asked to write on why I believe small is beautiful in the nonprofit world, I thought about why I don't get excited by scale. My conclusion is that the size of an organisation is closely linked to its mission and the DNA of the founder and the senior team.

There is no point chasing size if the leadership is not interested in or capable of managing scale. Size just for the sake of size—or because donor money is available—is pointless. Today, I am involved with a dozen nonprofit organisations of different sizes. And the small ones invariably face pressure from the outside to grow.



Luis Miranda

Philanthropist and
Chairperson, CORO and
Centre for Civil Society

Let us look at the two factors I mentioned: mission and DNA.

Mission

Some organisations are set up with the objective of serving local communities. They do an excellent job by staying closely connected to their beneficiaries or customers; their service is very personalised. If they were to grow too big, this personalised service may get impacted.

Take CORO, an organisation that works with marginalised communities. We were under pressure from a donor to scale up our fellowship programme by expanding to other geographies. But after expanding from Maharashtra to Rajasthan and Delhi, we decided to put a halt on our expansion and focus on the three existing states.

According to Sujata Khandekar, co-founder of CORO, "Scaling is not only about outreach. Our impact model is a satellite model. It is not about the centre getting bigger, but rather that all satellites draw from each other. We work with other like-minded organisations to create networks of networks and, thereby, build capacities mutually. If we can influence policy through this process, the impact can be huge."

This approach is reflected in CORO's grassroots leadership development programme, through which 180 fellows (who belong to various other organisations) are trained for 18 months. These fellows, in turn, impact 2,000 people in their communities on an average, resulting in an amplified impact on 360,000 people.

Vanessa DeSouza, CEO of SNEHA (Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action), believes that "you need to grow what works. SNEHA's strength is in the creation of evidence-based models. We want to scale models/components of models that work. We don't necessarily want to scale ourselves, instead we want to partner with nonprofits and government health systems to share our technical expertise. This way, our knowledge can be leveraged to scale impact in a cost-effective manner."

SNEHA has built an excellent reputation in the areas of child and maternal care and prevention of violence against women by focussing on its mission and what it does well. It has resisted the temptation of scaling up just for the sake of scaling up.

DNA

Looking at the DNA of the leadership team is also important. I have been in some organisations where

the founder is not capable of scaling up significantly. But at the same time, the organisation functions well in its niche.

Parth Shah, founder and president of the Centre for Civil Society (CCS), has this to say about his experience with scaling his organisation: "After many attempts to have standard processes, we realised that this is not who we are and our personalities prefer us to remain small and agile. At the same time, how can we create impact in our large country and change the hearts and minds of Indians? We believe scale can be achieved by helping other CCS-like organisations grow and by working together in some form of cooperation to create impact." CCS, though small, continues to be a top-ranked think tank in India as per the rankings of the University of Pennsylvania.¹

After many discussions regarding growth at another organisation I work with, we concluded that the management bandwidth and funding required to go national would impact the soul of the organisation. We decided to achieve scale through partnerships, instead.

However, most donors want scale.

They want to fund larger nonprofits either because they have too much money (and, therefore, need to make larger commitments to be able to manage their portfolio more efficiently) or because they believe that impact can happen only if the organisation has scale. There are some donors though who prefer to work with smaller, efficient organisations.

Regardless of the model of scale a nonprofit chooses, it is important to invest in training and processes to ensure that the organisation remains effective when it scales up. Though it can be difficult to get donors to fund these activities, scaling without first strengthening the organisation's backbone could prove suicidal.

Ultimately, scale should not be the only measure of success or impact. The ability to work with networks and partners can be a more cost-effective way to create impact; smaller nonprofits, in fact, can often be more efficient and driven than larger ones.

Size should not really matter. ■

What social businesses are getting **wrong**

Swati Chaudhary



Few social businesses have managed to scale despite offering products and services in 'underserved' markets. Why won't customers buy what these organisations are selling?

Inclusive business has received much attention and investment over the last decade, yet the question persists: Why do so few inclusive models scale?

While it is hard to generalise findings—several factors can prevent a firm from scaling, from leadership to financing to regulation—many products and services seem to struggle because entrepreneurs and funders significantly overestimate consumers' adoption of solutions.

Bad options aren't the same as no options

In most instances, low-income consumers across geographies actually have existing solutions in healthcare, sanitation, education, energy, or any of the other areas the impact community actively looks to address.

Visiting rural UP to see my grandparents and numerous relatives, I've seen development happen over time—the transition to *pukka* or brick houses, increased prevalence of hand pumps, wider electrification in varying degrees, ubiquity of television (at times powered by car batteries), and more in-home toilets.¹

Customers evaluate new and superior products against existing solutions. Yet, even in households where toilets do exist, customer research shows that facilities are not always used. Instead, many family members pass them over for a seemingly superior choice of defecation in the fields. The fields, it would appear, offer greater ventilation, more light, and for men who tend to spend time in the fields, greater convenience. In fact, even women, used to the nightly walk with their friends, in places where safety is not a concern, may continue this



Swati Chaudhary

Project Manager,
Dalberg, Mumbai

practice even as they use the toilet during the day.

Customers, quite rationally, measure new and 'superior' products against existing solutions, factoring in the cost and benefits of switching over.

Switching-over costs for the customers matter

The field of health care is a good example of where the cost of switching over can inhibit scale. Customers assess the quality of healthcare services primarily by how quickly they feel better. Rational healthcare² providers may therefore encounter significant challenges in getting customers to switch over.

This became clear while travelling in rural India to identify viable primary care models for a project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. We visited various rural medical practitioners (RMPs)³ who operated out of small, often dark, rooms which had curtained partitions that served as both consultation and treatment rooms.

Many of these rooms appeared to be veritable dump sites for used glucose drips. Through this surprise discovery we found that glucose drips and steroids were the treatment of choice for a variety of conditions, from general malaise, to a cough and cold or a fever.

Speaking to doctors and RMPs alike, we found a fairly pragmatic attitude and even some impatience with our questions. Low-income customers are often day labourers and prolonged absence can lead to significant losses in income. Therefore, waiting for the illness to take its course is not a viable option, though it may be the rational treatment, and beneficial to the patient.

In the absence of regulation, or the adoption of a similarly pragmatic approach by most customers, customer education therefore becomes critical.

This can be a long-drawn out and expensive undertaking, and at times, a linear escalating cost across geographies. It can also mean that the time horizon for adoption, and thereby overall model viability, is longer than what entrepreneurs and funders may have initially anticipated.

Value is subjective

Understanding what customers value and what existing profit-driven providers are responding to can be critical

in ensuring competitiveness of a social enterprise and hence its ability to scale.

Impact-driven providers of affordable education may debate pedagogy and curriculum but the market is dictated by existing providers who sell the low-income parent on attributes like technology and their child's ability to speak English. The former may in reality be nothing more than a tablet per classroom while the latter often translates into students reciting poems from rote memory with little ability to understand and actually speak the language.

Quality is often a nebulous idea to low-income parents who may not be educated themselves and therefore end up looking for proxies, which are reinforced by existing providers. It is therefore important to address existing expectations and respond to customer perceptions of quality.

Knowing how to market and what to communicate to the customer, i.e., what the customer is likely to value, can make the difference between a push or pull product.

Competitor analysis is therefore key, even if the competition is not up to the mark

Both funders and entrepreneurs stand to benefit greatly from recognising that most problems are often already being addressed in some form, even if they may not meet the impact community's idea of an ideal solution.

Studying existing solutions and undertaking competitor analysis may unearth findings that lead entrepreneurs to:

Tweak product/service design and key attributes

Tailor communication messaging and channels

Factor in additional costs for the business model (due to the switch-over costs for the customer). This could be in terms of upfront costs such as customer education and/or delays in adoption that lead to longer times to cost breakeven.

Funders, as well, benefit from this analysis: it may mean a significant alteration to return expectations and timelines. Business models grappling significant switch-over costs may require more patient capital as adoption may see a tipping point much later on. ■

The views expressed are personal.

1. Western UP (the "sugar belt"): a region which on average has higher provision of/ access to basic amenities, infrastructure (driven by agriculture and industrialisation and a corresponding higher net domestic product) to other parts of UP.

2. Rational treatment/use of drugs as per the WHO is when 'patients receive medications appropriate to their clinical needs, in doses that meet their own individual requirements, for an adequate period of time, and at the lowest cost to them and their community'.

3. Rural medical practitioner- an often-untrained health provider prescribing medicine and other treatments, who may have apprenticed as a pharmacy assistant or a doctor's assistant.

How the social sector is **failing** India's youth

Manak Matiyani



Despite the growing focus on youth and their development, are we really including their voices and politics in how their future is being shaped? Manak Matiyani shows us what the world looks like from that side of the table.

“What do you want to be?”

Throughout my childhood and early youth, I had no definitive answer to that question. I remember feeling nervous each time it was asked. ‘Pilot’ was my first reply and the second, less interesting option—‘IAS officer’.

I didn’t end up becoming either of those, and now work with The YP Foundation, an organisation that runs youth leadership programmes to advance the rights of young women and girls, and other marginalised young people.

The young are important now.

The demographic dividend has brought young people into focus more quickly and sharply in the last five years than any work done by youth-led and -focussed organisations.

At The YP Foundation, we therefore

often find ourselves in consultations, donor meetings, trainings, and other platforms for youth organisations to come together to consult, collaborate, or co-learn.

Between vision, mission, elevator pitch, and indicator tables, people always want to know our past record and future plans. And so I find myself back in my childhood, speaking to ‘adult’ organisations about what is it that we want to do.

But our voices don’t really count.

The development sector calls on youth organisations to mobilise young people for #MeaningfulYouthParticipation in the #SustainableDevelopmentGoals because #YouthVoicesCount.

There is a seat for youth in each meeting, but little or no room for them to lead the agenda. Political stance-taking, critical



Manak Matiyani

Executive Director,
YP Foundation
Feminist queer activist

questioning and pushing for rights based development continues to remain the turf of 'adult' organisations.

I was at a meeting on the 'future of youth', coordinated by a reputed international agency in 2016. It was interesting to see how the overarching focus of the meeting continued to be on skill development and vocational training even though most young people spoke directly and eloquently on the need to change the education system to create critical and questioning leaders.

With the internalised as well as imposed role of being the repositories of energy and hope, and, of course, being seen as leaders of the future—always the future—the switch from #YouthPower to youth politics is not that easy.

Asking the questions that matter...

At The YP Foundation we realised this when we undertook a strategic planning exercise in 2015. We asked ourselves 'who we want to be', instead of what.

What are the repercussions of articulating a firm belief in the right of young people to give consent, while working on issues of sex, sexuality and violence with children and youth? How does one talk about rights of young women and girls and articulate a stance on sex work without losing sight of the diversity and the commonalities among those sets of people?

Re-examining and affirming our organisational values through questions like these was just the start. It has taken conscious effort to remember them and negotiate organisational sustainability and growth.

...And the implications of answering them

Surviving:

Sticking with values in the era of #CSR, #PPP and #scaling is not easy. For young and youth-led organisations, the decision to let go of a big funder who is not bought into the sex work issue or declining government funding so as to be able to continue critiquing policy is many times also a question of sustenance and survival.

Negotiating:

The grants for youth work are large, but those for young youth organisations are small, and usually short term. For young organisations working with donors, larger nonprofits, or influential professionals, there is often little room for negotiation. The dotted line for signing is straight and inflexible; you either sign or don't.

Young people and organisations have little control over the questions they are asked and so can only hope to do what they are asked to do while being who they want to be.

“The grants for youth work are large, but those for young youth organisations are small, and usually short term.”

Risk-taking:

The burden of risk is always on youth-led organisations, whether one speaks the language of impact investment, or the return per rupee of CSR. The onus of risk however, must be on the larger environment, to invest in youth-led organisations for the long haul.

What India's young really want

Embrace their politics and include their voices

In an era where 'shrinking space' is an oft repeated phrase, larger organisations and donors cannot shy away from politics or turn away from movements. To the contrary, they must contribute to creating a safer environment for new and youth-led organisations to engage with movements and the politics behind the issues.

Forge 'equal' partnerships

They must acknowledge and fund the many spaces where young people are already engaging with politics and leading the way, and endeavor to learn and forge meaningful partnerships with them.

This is particularly relevant in the field of sexual and reproductive health and women's rights in India, where young people, and particularly young women, have been at the forefront of public movements to claim autonomy over their rights and their bodies.

What the young can do

To the young leaders I would simply say:

- Grab the token seats at the table and make them count.
- Go beyond being thankful for being included.
- Ask the critical questions, speak the uncomfortable truth.
- Don't stop at the fuzzy warm feeling of bringing 'the target audience/community members' to the table as a showcase.
- Place your identity and politics beyond the amorphous categorisation of youth upfront.

Finally, if large, established organisations and funders really care about creating youth leadership for the future, today is the right time to start giving them that place at the leadership table and start listening—really listening—to their voices.

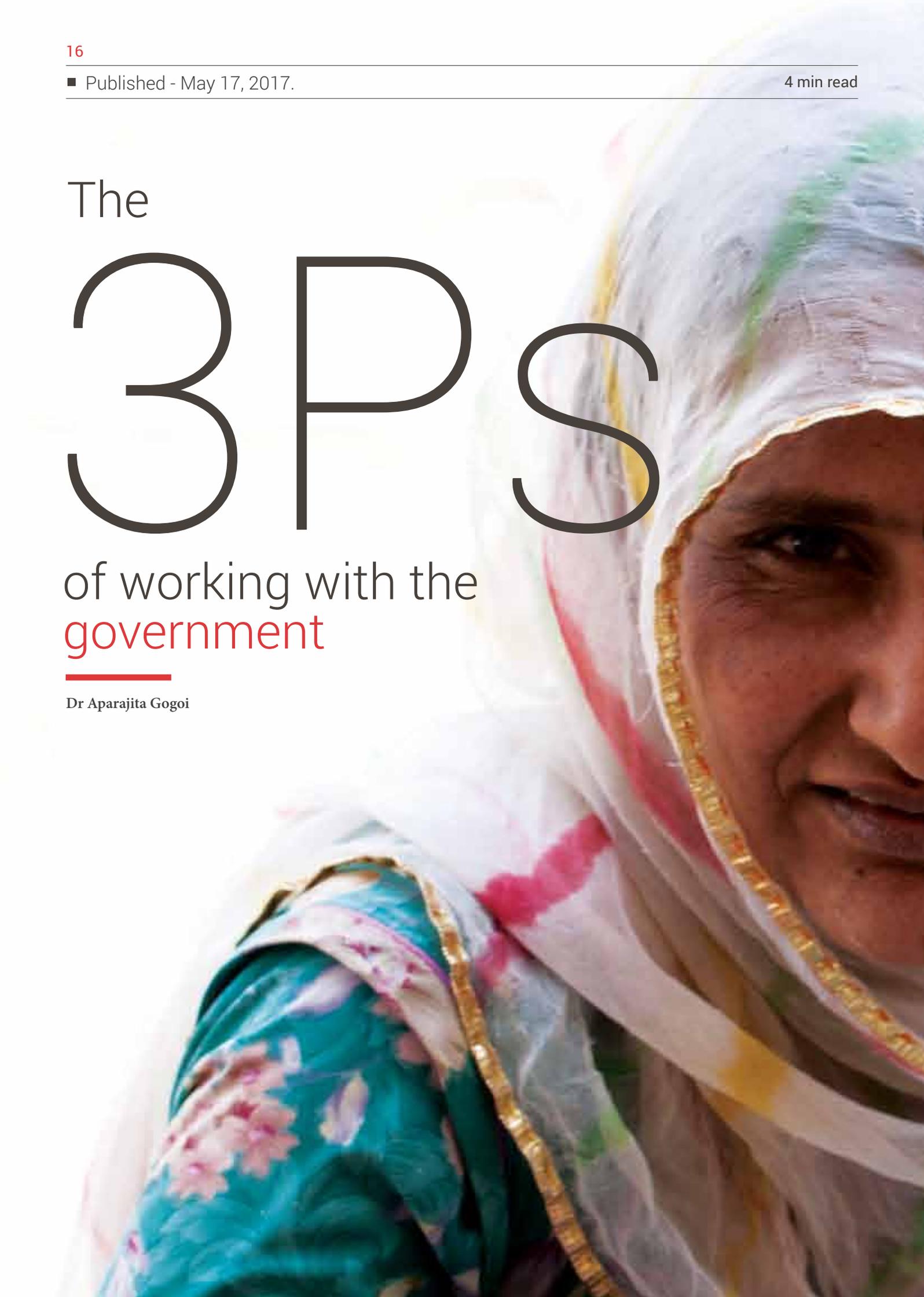
That is the way this sector can become an enabler for stronger, more politically aware, and intersectional youth leadership of social change. ■

The

3PS

of working with the
government

Dr Aparajita Gogoi





Dr Aparajita Gogoi

Executive Director,
Centre for Catalyzing Change

“Never approach the government with an unproven model”

Scaling impact in India is impossible without partnering with the government. Yet, knowing how to go about it is not easy. Here are some practical steps nonprofits can take to engage successfully with the government.

There is no rulebook. There are no evidence-backed best practices on what works. If you are a nonprofit partnering with the government, the only thing that is certain, ironically, is the promise of uncertainty.

We learned this early on when the organisation I work for, Centre for Catalyzing Change (C3), joined hands with state governments to run programmes aimed at empowering adolescent girls. We knew that because the government plays an important role in scaling impact, understanding how to navigate the system effectively becomes crucial for any organisation doing development work.

In this article, I highlight the lessons we have learned from engaging with the government over the past two decades. While they're not formulaic, they might offer ideas for other organisations to adopt or build upon.

What you need to do before you engage with the government

Identify your window of opportunity

This involves recognising when and how your organisation's priorities might align with those of the government. For instance, the current government's focus on improving employability in the country has dramatically expanded partnership opportunities for organisations working on skill development. In fact, even if you are a nonprofit working towards the empowerment of adolescent girls through imparting life skills such as

negotiation and resilience, you could make the case that your work enhances the employability of these girls. What matters is the overlap between your outcomes, and those that the government seeks to achieve.

Timing matters too. There is no predicting how long or how soon an agreement will be signed and sealed. Sometimes your proposal may sit on various tables and your project may get delayed getting off the ground. At other times, unexpected exigencies lead to things moving very quickly.

Recently, the review of a national flagship programme in a state revealed little progress for two years straight. This led to a discussion on strategies to catch up, which presented opportunities to work with nonprofits. Agreements were signed with nonprofits very quickly. Thus, while it is impossible to predict the timeline for the government signing an agreement—it could take weeks, months, or years—sometimes such developments can crunch the timeline.

Do a policy scan

You need to know which state and national policies support the need for your intervention. Like many of our peers, we make sure that any document, presentation, or conversation we have, begins with a mention of all the relevant policies; this sets the context for the intervention we are proposing. It also adds credibility and relevance to our work, as it establishes that it is

“Assess your capacities, restrict your geographies.”

aligned with national priorities. And finally, stating plainly how our intervention contributes to the local or state government’s fulfillment of its mandate builds a stronger case overall.

Collect evidence and build the rationale

No government official will consider your proposal in the absence of evidence—ideally from India—supporting your intervention. So never approach the government with an unproven model. A government’s investment in a particular programme has massive implications, and we should be careful not to lead them up a path that is not backed with evidence. The good news, especially for smaller nonprofits, is that you need not bank on your own evidence alone. You can scout around for evidence generated by your peers.

One can also approach the government to generate a second level of evidence. For example, C3 recently concluded a research project with Population Council, which aimed at leveraging existing structures and platforms to prevent violence against women and girls. There is evidence that working with men and boys, or women’s groups, does lead to reduction of violence. We presented that evidence to the government to emphasise that the model works; we also said that new evidence needs to be generated to evaluate if such models can deliver outcomes through government systems such as health workers or self-help groups. Articulating the rationale and the additional value this programme could bring made a huge difference.

Do your research

Make sure you have done all the necessary research before you walk into a department or a room ready to propose a partnership. Since there are often so

many factors that play a role in securing a government partnership, at C3 we make sure we cover all our bases before going into a meeting. It’s important to plan meticulously, researching the department’s priorities, and scrutinising their publicly stated priorities. Because so little of this process is within our control, as nonprofits we must attempt to make the most of what is.

Nonprofits are often berated for promising too much and failing to deliver. So, make sure you deliver what you promise. Assess your capacities, restrict your geographies. Often, it is smarter to do multiple programmes with different departments in the same geography; this helps you build relationships, as you do end up working with the same officers who, despite rotations across departments, remain in the state.

Further, given the general climate of distrust towards nonprofits, it helps if your nonprofit has earned the government’s trust and has a work history with them or within that geography. Being invited to be a part of technical assistance groups and such other state government advisory roles indicates your nonprofit’s acceptance by the system.

These are the areas you must pay attention to before you start working with the government. Agreed, they are not easy. But if we want to work and impact at scale, the best way to do so is to collaborate with the government. ■



“What nonprofits define as core development issues, such as social justice and rights-based approaches, will not be embraced easily by companies, not because they lack importance, but because measuring outputs, efficiency, and the metrics that companies understand is difficult.”

Shankar Venkateswaran
Chief, Tata Sustainability Group

“The government does not expect the nonprofits to scale dramatically.”

Anil Swarup
Secretary,
Dept. of School Education and
Literacy, MHRD Government of India



The second-mover advantage

Harvey Koh

Although everyone talks about impact at scale, few have cracked it in reality. Harvey Koh, Managing Director at FSG, walks us through the two-step process of 'scaling out'.



Harvey Koh

Managing Director,
FSG

Poor menstrual hygiene causes 70 percent of the reproductive diseases among Indian women. Not surprising, considering more than 300 million menstruating women in India do not use any modern menstrual hygiene products. Or, they use unsanitary alternatives such as cloth, ashes, sand and husk.

Lack of access to menstrual hygiene products also disrupts schooling among adolescent girls, thus affecting their education outcomes. To a great extent, this problem is caused by lack of access to reliable sanitary pads.

In 2005, Arunachalam Muruganatham founded Jayashree Industries in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, with a pioneering idea for manufacturing low-cost sanitary pads. Using his machines, women in villages could make, sell and use quality sanitary pads in a cost-effective manner, dramatically improving menstrual hygiene in the rural areas. His own journey is a remarkable one and has been featured in news media outlets across the world.

But what makes it even more interesting (and impactful) is that a diverse range of entrepreneurs have adopted his idea, spreading it across the rest of India, the Middle East and Africa (as illustrated here).

Example of scaling out—low-cost sanitary pad manufacturing



These ‘followers’ have adapted Muruganantham’s idea and applied it to their own contexts, making changes to product design, materials, machinery, even the business model itself. Some, like Jaydeep Mandal of Aakar Innovations, have been more intentional about building a scaling business than Muruganantham, and have brought more of the business skills needed for that.

Scaling Out

While ‘following’ or ‘replicating’ are convenient terms to describe these endeavours, they run the risk of considerably understating the degree of challenge involved: many of these entrepreneurs will still need boldness and ingenuity as they adapt, and often improve on, the original ideas that inspired them.

For this reason, we used the term ‘scaling out’ in a recent report to describe this process of taking ideas far beyond their original progenitors.

Why is this interesting? For us, it’s because we continue to be frustrated by the lack of large-scale, population-level benefits from impact enterprise and investing, a concern shared by many funders, intermediaries and investors.

Scale = Pioneers + Followers

We believe that in order to really support scaling we must consider one question: Who comes after the first pioneers and what role do they play in taking promising models to scale?

“Scaling Out describes the process of taking ideas far beyond their original progenitors.”

Instead of creating entirely new models or solutions, these entrepreneurs build on existing breakthrough ideas that have yet to achieve their scale potential. They can often bring a stronger set of skills and experience than the original pioneers, and thus be more strongly positioned to build for scale.

They can also play a role in taking existing models to new customers and new geographies, particularly as the markets that serve the poor tend to retain stronger elements of local differentiation, compared with the increasingly interconnected markets serving richer communities around the world.

We do not have to look far to see how this has played out in the past. Consider the story of the microfinance institution (MFI) model here in South Asia. Many of the later MFI entrants in India were able to establish themselves much more quickly, with Equitas and Ujjivan taking just one and four years respectively to reach operating break-even, compared with Grameen Bank in Bangladesh which took 17 years.

While some of this reflects the benefits of learning gleaned from the pioneer’s experiences, it is also important to note that later entrepreneurs tended to have more of a commercial background and brought a stronger suite of business skills and experience to their efforts.

Scale = Matching Proven Ideas to Great Talent

Must we rely only on serendipity to make this work? The deep information asymmetries in this sector mean that great ideas and great talent do not naturally coincide to the extent that they do in the mainstream commercial world.

We believe that this not only results in too few businesses being started with strong ideas, but also keeps many talented individuals with valuable commercial experience outside the impact space because they feel compelled to come up with a good idea but are unable to.

Over the coming months, we will be exploring how we can build more effective vehicles to intentionally scale out ideas, solutions and business models that have already been tried and tested. We will be drawing on our own experience over the past decade, but also learning from others who have been doing this in India (such as Aravind and SELCO) and around the world. ■



Listen to nonprofits

Unnikrishnan T.S, Nirja Sheth & Prabhir Correa



Unnikrishnan T.S

Project Head,
Great Eastern CSR Foundation (GECSRF)



Nirja Sheth

CSR Executive,
GECSRF



Prabhir Correa

CSR Executive,
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“We had a small team and limited funds—we wanted to make the most of both.”

Starting CSR from scratch can be challenging, especially when you have more questions than answers. In this piece, Great Eastern Shipping documents its giving philosophy, lessons, hits, and misses while giving through CSR.

Corporate giving for us was born out of The Companies Act, 2013. Yet, what began as an earnest effort at compliance quickly grew into something bigger and more meaningful.

As a shipping company, we had some advantages starting out. Unlike our manufacturing peers, we weren't geography-bound. Nor had we any CSR legacy, which meant fewer constraints around strategy (other than those that accompany complying with The Companies Act, 2013).

This also meant that we had lots to learn. At first we tread cautiously, giving grants to established nonprofits with large budgets and reputed funders.

Our ultimate goal was to economically empower people from disadvantaged communities, so we zeroed in on education and livelihoods as our focus. We had a small team and limited funds—we wanted to make the most of both.

Looking back, we've learned a great deal. Our lessons have informed how we give as well as how we work with nonprofits as equal partners.

What we learned by doing

Good things come to people who wait.

Year one was about learning, stumbling, iterating, and refining. We didn't have all the answers and were prepared to be patient if it rewarded us with insights on using our funds well.

During this time we realised two things: a period of one year demands an unrealistic pace of change on the ground, and, it is not enough time to learn about the sector. So, we extended our timeline to three years, by

which point we hope to have a nuanced understanding of the mix of programme approaches, partnerships, time frames, and metrics that make sense for Great Eastern Shipping (GES).

Not jumping into building a rigid comprehensive strategy also allowed us to course correct. For instance, we included health and nutrition as a focus after we learned from one of our grantees the critical role it plays in children's school attendance.

Our learning has also guided how we approach grantee agreements. Our partnerships now account for longer-term horizons so that nonprofits can prioritise program outcomes over fundraising and contract renewals.

This helps us too, allowing greater flexibility in grant planning as well as a more realistic definition of what change to expect. Moreover, a longer partnership term incentivises both parties to be more invested from the start.

Nonprofits know what they're talking about. If you want results, listen.

Nonprofits understand the business of changing lives better than we do, so we take our cues from our grantees. We allow for institution building/M&E expenses up to roughly a third of the budget—in other words, we pay what it takes to create impact.

Grant decisions result from in-depth conversations with nonprofits—understanding needs, what it takes to achieve objectives, and where our money will be put to best use. This has allowed us to build long-term grantee relationships that go beyond funding.

Initially, as we began receiving proposals, decision-

making was prolonged due to how infrequently the CSR committees of both companies in the Group—The Great Eastern Shipping Company Ltd. and Greatship (India) Limited—were able to convene.

To avoid delays, our management created an internal CSR committee, headed by our Deputy Chairman and Managing Director, and comprising senior leadership. We meet monthly—to share learnings and allow the committee to ask questions, but more importantly, to have them learn as we learn.

While these meetings began as a means of acting quickly, they've had the added effect of addressing information asymmetry between the CSR team and the senior leadership; and in so doing, improving the quality of decisions around corporate grants.

“CSR has given a new dimension to the profits we strive for as managers. Now, the more that we make, the more we can give! I've communicated to all our managers to look at profits, not merely as a return on investment, but as an enabler to changing people's lives.”

– Mr. Bharat Sheth, Dy. Chairman and Managing Director

Be realistic about what's achievable.

In our experience, understanding the limitations of your funds is fundamental to how you measure success. At GES, we focus on outcomes; yet, we recognise that what we achieve will depend on the strength of our investment. We don't expect to shift policy or create population-level impact.

Likewise, we're realistic about what we demand from nonprofits. While corporate practices can be efficient, not all are directly transferrable to nonprofits.

For instance, standardisation works well in the private sector; in development, challenges and contexts are too varied for standardised solutions to stick.

Take education, where approaches that seek to improve attendance and learning outcomes are plenty. Depending on whether you are working in urban or rural India, in early childhood or secondary education, building curricula or working with school administration, your approach and what you measure must adapt to your

context and its characteristics.

Find the mid-point between where your money is needed most, and what works for you.

We started out giving to established nonprofits. Over time we realised that the greatest need is among smaller organisations doing impactful work; many lack access to funding and are often too small in size—with project budgets of Rs 5-20 lakh—to be considered by most funders.

A corporate that supports nonprofits with smaller budgets will necessarily have more organisations in its portfolio. This presents challenges including managing reporting, varied outcomes, measuring and articulating impact.

It's therefore tempting to select larger nonprofits and avoid the managerial and administrative challenges of a large portfolio. But as funders we must go where our money is needed and can have real impact, rather than doing what is most convenient to us.

At GES, we're a small team with a CSR philosophy that's grounded in building partnerships with nonprofits that go beyond funding. And so we're evaluating what the right balance is, such that we're going where we're needed, but can also engage meaningfully with organisations while achieving outcomes on the ground.

So, where do we go from here?

We will be approaching year three in 2018, which is when along with our leadership, we will take stock of all that we've learned, and build a long-term CSR strategy.

Our portfolio will likely comprise a mix of small and large nonprofits. With the former, we might commit to longer-term grants that help seed programmes and develop solutions. We'll bring in experts to build nonprofit capacities.

With the latter, we will exit some of our early investments and instead support initiatives that help spread solutions to benefit the broader sector. Most importantly, we will keep learning. ■

Budget & Focus Areas

Rs. 8 crore annually for education, livelihoods and skills development and healthcare

Great Eastern Shipping CSR Portfolio

3.2.1 Education Foundation

Antarang

Ashoka University

Helen Keller Institute for the Deaf and Deafblind

Inga Health Foundation

Lend-A-Hand India

Mann Deshi Foundation

Masoom

Muktangan

Pratham

Tamarind Tree School

Teach For India

SHEHA

SWADES Foundation

Swayam Shikshan Prayog

Xavier's Resource Centre for the Visually Challenged



“For the first time in the history of banking in India, it is possible for financial services to reach every individual and small business at an affordable cost.”

Veena Mankar
Founder and Chairperson
Swadhaar

“All of us understand the risks in social development and, therefore, the need for flexibility. There is no guarantee that known and recognised strategies are a fail-proof means of achieving impact.”

Vidya Shah
Chief Executive Officer,
EdelGive Foundation

An insider's guide to surviving conferences

Karan Malik



Karan Malik

Programme Manager – India,
British Asian Trust

Conferences—the familiar world of chief guests that don't turn up, boisterous panels and terrible coffee—are an integral part of the sector. Here's how to brave them with your sanity and sense of humour intact.

We all know the major seasons of India—hot, hot and rainy, sweater-in-Bombay (aka normal Bangalore), and sweater-in-Delhi. But there is another essential season for those in the know. And like Fight Club, you don't talk about it—at least publicly.

I am referring to, of course, the conference season. Strangely coinciding with the cooler time of the year, the conference season is as eagerly awaited as the Indian monsoons, and is discussed even more.

For those lucky enough to break into this world, the initial experience can be bewildering. With that in mind, here is a handy field guide to understanding and surviving conference season.

Punctuality

Showing up on time displays too much eagerness—a rookie mistake. Delhi conferences helpfully provide an hour-long window for attendees to stroll in, greet each other, catch up with old friends (who they haven't seen since the last conference three days ago), have a cup of tea, and then get to the inevitable hour-long wait for the delayed (bureaucrat/Minister) chief guest—who usually sends a deputy.

Welcome to the Jungle

Said deputy makes all the right noises about how the chief guest is absolutely so sad to be missing this wonderful event, and that only the most urgent unplanned event made them send someone else. But everyone should know that they are firmly, 100% behind the spirit of this event—that water/nutrition/sports is critical. Absolutely essential—and they have always believed it.

There is a welcome address, an opening remarks session, and sometimes an introductory speech. They all are at once exactly the same, and completely different.

Sessions

Each conference has between three and five sessions that try to convince the already converted about the

criticality of health/education/empowerment/nutrition/etc.—while being careful to not overemphasise on how to achieve better outcomes. That would be in poor taste.

Sometimes, there are presentations on actual evaluation studies, with numbers, graphs, charts and references to impact. This is the most popular time for networking sessions and catch-ups, and hurrying your funders out of the room.

Essential facts

The Limca Book of Records' record for the most number of attendees in a panel discussion currently stands at 16 people packed onto a stage to speak about setting up a fund (no one can recall what for)—with 1.5 minutes to speak per participant. Rumour has it that Arnab Goswami watches the tape every Sunday to pump himself up.

Everyone who speaks in the dreaded post-lunch 2:30 pm slot always makes the same joke about having to wake people up after the lunch session. No one ever laughs. They're usually asleep after lunch.

The closing remarks are usually the opening remarks, with a "To sum up a thought provoking day..." added at the beginning.

The most important thing

As with a wedding, sometimes conferences are remembered for the quality of the food they served up. One thing is uniform though across all conferences—the coffee is always terrible. ■

“Rumour has it that Arnab Goswami watches the tape every Sunday to pump himself up.”

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