

# Impact of Voluntary Organizations for Training in Rural Development

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\* Dr Rajeev Singh

\* Associate Professor (Business Management) Faculty of Technology, Etawah  
C.S. Azad University of Agriculture & Technology, Kanpur, U.P.

Email: rajeev.abmcsa@gmail.com

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**Abstract:** Rural development in India has been brought back to focus in the consequences of the economic slowdown. In recent times there has been an improved understanding that the developmental works can be further strengthened by working closely with the voluntary organizations at the workers. Towards this various training programs are being conducted to disseminate knowledge and skills about the needs of the rural development. However there is a requirement to know how the training programs have been perceived by the voluntary training organizations. The following paper looks at the needs in the training programs for rural development as expressed by the participants from voluntary organizations. The paper is intended on a field study done by the author in 2018-19. The paper focus on why voluntary organizations should be trained and how training programs could be better designed for effective use in the work environment.

**Key words** – Rural development, training, skills, voluntary training organizations

## Introduction:

Training-related development activities are a measure of good governance in any country. The voluntary sector has been given due importance in the planning process right from the First Five Year Plan, as the emphasis was given on public cooperation in national development with the help of VOs. It was highlighted in the First Plan document that the “Public cooperation and public opinion constitute the principal force and sanction behind planning. A democracy working for social ends has to base itself on the willing assent of the people and not the coercive power of the State.” In the Second Plan, it was reiterated that public cooperation and public opinion constitute the principal force and sanction behind India’s approach to planning. It was observed that wherever the people, especially in rural areas, have been approached, they have responded with eagerness. In national extension and community project areas, in local development works, in social welfare extension projects, and in the work of voluntary organizations, there has always been willingness and enthusiasm on the part of the people to contribute in labor and local resources have been made freely available.

The recent changes in the economic environment force local governments to initiate changes in development-oriented activities so that they are performed well to satisfy the local needs. The local needs make it necessary for administrative functions to adapt. Towards these changes, it is identified that training becomes a critical input for improving administration so that the functionaries are adequately prepared.

In India, training for rural development has been an essential part of the rural development process and planning. The primary objectives of the training conducted by the government agencies have been to (a) To build awareness, skills, and knowledge of the development functionaries for effective program planning and implementation; and (b) To sensitize policymakers and senior executives of development Departments of Union Government and State governments to emerging needs of rural populations and economic and political conditions through workshops, seminars, and consultation; (c) To make easier attitudinal changes among development personnel through exposure visits, documentation of successful cases and developmental interventions.

### **Voluntary Training Organizations in India**

Voluntary Training Organizations provide an opportunity for face-to-face interaction provided by participation and teaches essential civics skills, such as trust, compromise, and reciprocity, but also binds society together by creating bridges between diverse groups. Increasingly in recent years, the government is looking at various PPP models for quicker growth in the economy, be it infrastructure building or development activities. It has been realized that the government needs to work closely with voluntary organizations in helping to move towards a sustainable rural development model, which works closely with local communities.

As per statistics collected by Society for Participatory Research in Asia, New Delhi, there are about 1.2 million non-government organizations (NGOs, used interchangeably with voluntary organizations) in India, of which, 52% are semi-urban-based. Nearly 50% of all these NGOs are unregistered. It is interesting to note that nearly 80% of the funds used by these organizations came from local sources, that is, from people's and corporate contributions. Only 12% of all programs taken up by the NGOs are funded by the government. As per the report, All India estimates of total receipts of NGOs for 2010 – 2020 was Rs.179226 crores (*one crore equivalent to 10 million*).

Nearly 48% of the voluntary organisations are involved in religious and social service work, while only 20% are in education activity and 6% in health activity. It could be safe to guesstimate that less than 1% of these seek any formal training in their areas of work. The larger organisations, who do work together with the government perform: a) Programming, Planning, and Implementation of government programs; b) Monitor Government Programmes to understand and inform the government of the impact of the development programme; c) Policy Advocacy – Influencing government policies so that development goals can be met effectively and d) Capacity Building of Government Local Bodies, the community on various sectoral and cross-cutting themes.

Therefore it is interesting to note the training requirements of such bodies, working in important economic & social sector areas so as to equip them such that there is better professionalism and a multiplier effect to boost the country's needs.

A survey was conducted for a National Institution involved in training various categories of functionaries involved with rural development to understand the impact of its training programs. The national institution conducts about 100 programs annually, with participants categorized among government officials (59%), voluntary organizations (13%), elected representatives (12%), national-level training and research organizations (6%), and others (8%). The survey took into account the training programs conducted in the four years of 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18, 2018-19. The survey covered nearly 4000 participants trained over the four-year period, across India, with a response rate of 15.5%. Further, from among the respondents, selected interviews were also conducted. The survey used a Kirk Patrick Model of evaluation of training programs. The KP model considers an understanding of all the four levels of evaluation, namely, initial or immediate reaction to the training, learning from the training as assessed immediately after completion of the training program, changes wrought about in immediate aftermath of training (up to a period of 9 months) and results of training seen in a period of 3-4 years. A questionnaire was used as a tool to elicit information from the participants on the training programs that they had attended.

It is interesting to note that among the various categories of people trained by the institution, the response rate among the voluntary organizations was 25% with equal representation of males and females trained in this category. The response rate was second highest after the government officials, where the response rate was 60% of the total responses received. However, unlike the government officials, the respondents from the VOs had less than 10 years of experience in rural

development. It was seen that among those trained the respondents from the voluntary organizations were in a younger age group of 31-40 years (41%) and better qualified with nearly 49% of them being graduates and 46% being post- Graduates.

This paper is based on an understanding gleaned as part of the survey that is helpful in understanding the process of training – namely from nominating a person to a training program to the ways training can be further improved for greater efficacy, in voluntary organizations which have shown interest in training. This could further help in framing appropriate training programs such that more voluntary organizations could be brought into the fold of development activities thereby increasing the human capital in the various development sectors.

The paper has four sections. Section A shows why voluntary training organizations should be trained. Section B discusses what the voluntary organization trainees seek training programs and Section C gives how training programs could be better designed, followed by conclusions in section D.

### **Section A**

#### **Why voluntary organizations should be trained?**

A study of the responses of the voluntary organizations (V.Os) shows some interesting features which could be listed as follows: One, unlike the other categories, the V.Os show that an attempt was made to find a suitable person who required training and hence was sent for the program. This is a very significant situation, considering that most times, in the sponsored programs, it could not be inferred whether any specific mode of selection was identified or was in place within organizations. It seemed that in many cases the sponsored candidates were the most related person and hence sent for training, more so where the nominations were sent in the last minute.

Two, it was found that sharing of the learning (96%) by the respondents of V.Os in their back-home work environment was highest as compared to any other category. The respondents found that the training programs were highly effective and took effort to translate their learning immediately into their work environment. The most common issues that was of importance to the V.Os was (i) Establishing linkages with Government and non-governmental organizations; (ii) learning of research techniques and information about knowledge centers and (iii) Creating awareness about various governmental programs.

In comparison, the most common reasons why other categories could not implement what they had seen during training, was (i) most times the sessions were not relevant to their area of work; (ii) tools and techniques shown during the training did not exist in the work environment; or (iii) the training program did not cover issues of ‘how to resolve the problem’ which arose in the field, and (iv) in most cases, after training, the trainee was shifted to another area of work.

Three, the study clearly showed the benefits of training (Table 1) as stated by the respondents from V.Os. When the respondents were asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 standing for ‘extremely useful’ to 1 for ‘not at all useful’, the main benefits accrued from the training were in the following main areas, clearly next only to the benefits gained by the elected representatives -

1. Developing concern for rural development (71%)
2. Improvement in Inter personal relations (62%)
3. New Concepts / ideas introduced (64%)
4. Networking (64%)
5. Increased efficiency in delivery of service (61%)
6. Improved service levels (55%)
7. Efficient utilization of financial resources (46%) and
8. Career advancement (58%)

*Table 1: Benefits of training (%)*

	Govt	Elected reps	Bankers	Natl/state ints	Voluntary orgns	Total
<b>Develop concern for RD</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>New concepts/ideas introduced</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>67</b>
Increase productivity	47	<b>60</b>	54	42	51	49
<b>Networking</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>65</b>
Introduce new schemes	50	<b>66</b>	53	52	53	52
Execution time of projects reduced	41	<b>52</b>	38	37	39	41
Efficiency in implementation	58	<b>68</b>	49	47	60	58
<b>Increased efficiency in delivery of service</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>61</b>
Reduced no. of complaints	43	<b>56</b>	50	37	49	45
<b>Improvement in interpersonal relations</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>68</b>
Increase in no. of beneficiaries	48	<b>73</b>	61	45	52	51
Efficient utilization of financial resources	52	<b>67</b>	53	41	47	51
Improvement in revenue/project viability	41	<b>57</b>	46	37	45	43
<b>Improved service levels</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>64</b>	68	65	58	60
Career advancement	54	<b>68</b>	50	55	60	56

## Section B

### What are voluntary training organizations looking for?

Considering that the training was held for understanding and improving rural development activities, one of the key questions that was considered in the survey was the “extent to which objectives of rural development” were achieved in the various training programs. The trainees on a scale of 1 to 5 measured the various objectives, with 5 standing for ‘completely’ to 1 standing for ‘minimally’. For simpler analysis, scales of 4 and 5 were taken together for completeness, and similarly 1 and 2 were clubbed to understand minimal achievement.

The survey was done on eight objectives-

- Understanding of concepts, definition, planning, and implementation of rural development programs,
- Understanding institutional mechanisms
- Role of IT in RD
- Awareness of personal and institutional role in RD
- Analysis of strengths/ weaknesses of various anti poverty programmes
- Appraisal of rural development projects
- Develop new skills for a sustainable approach to RD
- Bringing about attitudinal change towards RD

The results show that the training programs are able to achieve a near sense of completeness of (Table 2).

**Table 2: Completeness of objectives of RD achieved category wise (%)**

	Govt.	Elected reps	Bankers	Natl /state trg insts	Voluntary orgns	Total
<b>Understanding of concepts</b>	<b>73.9</b>	<b>69.6</b>	<b>78.8</b>	<b>67.2</b>	<b>67.4</b>	<b>74.4</b>
Understanding institutions	56.1	43.2	58.0	46.7	56.2	55.2
Role of IT in RD	48.4	40.0	37.2	40.0	54.8	48.7
<b>Awareness of role in RD</b>	<b>62.1</b>	<b>64.2</b>	<b>60.8</b>	<b>58.3</b>	<b>71.7</b>	<b>64.4</b>
Analysis of strengths/ weakness	51.1	58.8	51.9	40.6	56.2	52.4
Appraisal of RD projects	54.3	58.1	57.4	50.0	59.8	55.7
Develop new skills	54.3	52.9	57.7	65.5	62.3	57.1
<b>Attitudinal change towards RD</b>	<b>58.7</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>76.0</b>	<b>58.9</b>	<b>57.6</b>	<b>58.8</b>

When analyzed category-wise, it can be seen that government participants (73.9%) said that the programs helped them in understanding the concepts, together with the participants from banks who gave a higher rating (78.8%). The attitudinal change was most evident among the trainees from banks. In the case of elected representatives, the programs helped in understanding their roles and responsibilities. Among the trainees from voluntary organizations, awareness of role in RD (71.7%) ranked high. It shows that the training programs help them in placing their work in the rural environment. It is interesting to note that the objective “developing new skills”, relatively scores higher among national training institutions and voluntary organizations which seems to indicate that if there is a greater emphasis on skill development among participants of these two categories, there may be a higher chance of higher field application in the work environment.

Among all the categories of participants trained, some of the lowest scores for the objectives have been given by the respondents from national/state level training institutions, who are primarily trained to become the master trainers, who go on to train others in the states. This is a fact that will need to be looked at in some depth, as the linkage to other trainers is a very critical one in the chain of rapid rural development.

On the issue of the duration of the program, there was no one definite answer. This was a difficult question to compute, with many blanks or different ranges given for different programs. The survey data shows that the duration of the program is dependent on the type of training program. It could be for a short period of 3 days for awareness and exposure programs. It could extend from 15-30 days if the training included capacity building as one of its main objectives, comprising practical orientation and skill development.

**Section C**

**How to design the training programs?**

The study clearly helps in identifying the ways a successful training program can be designed.

i) Nominations-

- a) It is seen that the selection of participants is to be done in an objective manner by the organizations, so that the training is relevant. It is critical that the rural development functionaries belong in the younger age group capable of more years in service.

- b) Training should be given to larger number of people of the same organization so that the learning curve peaks up in a shorter period and help in improving performances in the home environment.
- c) Elected representatives and voluntary organizations can be clubbed together for training programs, so that they can learn to work together in a complementary manner in the field.

ii) Training Program-

- a) Every training program would be well served if there is a program guide from the organization to help participants understand the program contents correctly.
- b) Women participants should be encouraged since they were working in a more pro-active role in the development of rural areas.
- c) Local language issues have to be resolved so that participants especially, elected representatives and the staff of voluntary organizations are better able to understand the program content. Communication is the key.
- d) Designing of the duration and content of the training program has to be based on the knowledge levels of the participants. Training program should be for a minimum period of 15 –30 days with both theory and practical applications.
- e) The program has to give an in-depth knowledge rather than trying to cover all the subjects at a macro level.
- f) The learning levels should be assessed based on the trainee’s performance during the course of the program.
- g) Training programs should be given more prominence to help in improvement of training skills locally.
- h) Need to develop easy modular training material which is shared with the participants for quicker dissemination.

iii) Use of tools

Training programs use a variety of tools in terms of lectures, group discussion, case studies, project work and field visits. When asked as to which of the tools used are most effective (Table 3), it came out quite clearly that group discussion was the most effective, followed by lectures and field visits, in comparison to both case studies and project work.

**Table 3: Effectiveness of learning tools (%)**

	Govt	Elected reps	Bankers	National\ State Training Institute	Voluntary Organization	Total
Lectures	(59.1) 23.6	(4.0) 1.9	(5.2) 26.3	(5.3) 24.8	(26.3) 22.6	(100) 23.4
<b>GD</b>	(59.1) 26.1	(5.1) 27.2	(4.0) 22.4	(4.6) 23.6	(27.2) 25.8	(100) 25.8
Case studies	(58.9) 17.1	(4.1) 14.6	(4.5) 16.4	(5.4) 18.2	(27.1) 16.9	(100) 16.9
Project work	(57.7) 9.9	(4.8) 10.1	(3.9) 8.6	(4.5) 9.1	(29.0) 10.8	(100) 10.1
<b>Field visits</b>	(57.3) 21.2	(5.6) 25.3	(5.2) 24.3	(4.8) 20.6	(27.0) 21.5	(100) 21.6
Others	(50.7) 1.9	(6.8) 3.2	(4.1) 1.9	(8.2) 3.6	(30.1) 2.5	(100) 2.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

(Row percentage is given in the brackets in the row showing ‘%’, while the column percentage is shown in italics.)

The respondents during interviews also added a need for more in-depth relevant case-studies, which identified clearly both the best practices and failures for better learning. In many cases, it was suggested that the programs could use more of role plays, brainstorming sessions for

identifying local solutions. What is of utmost interest is that the trainees wanted homework assignments during the program period.

iv) Topics for future training programs - the respondents identified topics the following

- a) Fund raising, preparation of project proposal and report writing
- b) Networking with similar V.Os
- c) Monitoring and evaluation of the rural development programs
- d) Sustainability in agriculture and livelihoods
- e) Formation and strengthening of self-help groups and CBOs
- f) Gender issues and women empowerment
- g) Application of GIS in rural development
- h) Water conservation, irrigation and watershed development
- i) Waste land development and management, social forestry
- j) Disaster management
- k) Application of IT in rural development
- l) Establish linkages between government and other organizations
- m) Management and development of livestock
- n) Rural planning (participatory) and management
- o) Social audit and accountability
- p) Awareness of biodiversity, biotechnology, gene bank, seed banks, food security
- q) Develop low cost rural technology
- r) Vocational training program for unemployed people
- s) Ethics, value based development
- t) Negotiation skills
- u) Team building exercises
- v) Tribal studies

## **Conclusion**

Voluntary organizations can play a crucial role in rural development by supplementing Government efforts as they are close to the mind and hearts of the rural people. In the changing scenario of the liberalization they can experiment new approaches to rural development and self employment training. Now a days, there is huge investment by voluntary organization in rural development and self employment training in rural area. Here, there is scope for researchers to measure efficiency of fund utilization by the voluntary organizations in contrast to the Government. There is need to evaluate voluntary organizations owing to their changed role. Efficiency measure would help us to evolve an appropriate auditing / accounting model for voluntary sector.

There is a much felt need for quality training in various facets of rural development. It is to be recognized that training is repetitive that needs to be done continually over long periods of time. Efforts need to be put into recognize the new needs of the society so that new inputs are incorporated in frequent intervals to keep pace. There is much scope and need for new agencies to take up training as their main agenda. It is encouraging to note that overall 60% of the trainees from the various categories had become aware of new needs after attending the training, and nearly 70% of those trained continued in the work environment. In fact among the V.Os, the training programs also helped in further career advancement. This in the long run would help in having more trained personnel who are aware of rural needs.

The rapid changes in economic environment and issues of globalization forces us to recognize that human development is about putting people at the centre of development. It is essential that people

realize their potential, by increasing their choices and enjoying the freedom to lead lives they value. So this can be fruitfully achieved only by training.

The study strongly brings out that the voluntary organizations can be trained to be the catalysts for improving the rural sector. Master trainers have to be identified in specific areas and sectors to design and systemize the processes whereby they regularly organize training sessions as per the local needs.

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