GOVERNMENT – NGO Partnerships :
An idea whose time has come?

by

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Government- NGO Partnerships – an idea whose time has come?[1]

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Abstract

The last three decades have witnessed an increasing volume of activity, number of organisations, and turnover of funds in development actions undertaken outside the traditional purview of governments. In this paper we are interested in these new kinds of development action from a particular angle. Our work may be seen as part of a "second generation" of analysis that examines how different development actors – NGOs, grassroots organisations (GROs), the government – work together. It is motivated by a recognition that scaling-up and sustainability of services on the one side, and the strengthening of democratic processes and deepening of democratic institutions on the other require different development actors to come together in a variety of ways. These joint activities that we call *partnerships* have not, however, been theorised adequately to date. This paper attempts a contribution in this direction by providing an analytical framework, an empirical mapping, and a case-study.

1. Conceptual issues and a framework

The last three decades have witnessed an increasing volume of activity, number of organisations, and turnover of funds in development actions undertaken outside the traditional purview of governments So rapid has this increase been that some have called it a global "associational revolution   In a sense this is of course an exaggeration. Non-governmental development activity, whether in the provision of welfare or other services, or in advocating social reform or political transformation is nothing new; in India, it can be traced back to at least the 19th century. But there are significant differences in both the content and the contexts of recent non-governmental actions. There now exists a · considerable literature describing these, and analysing their implications for development outcomes.

In this paper we are interested in these new kinds of development action from a particular angle. Much of what may be called the "first generation" of recent analysis focuses on the results, methods, constraints, and implications of the work of different non-governmental organisations. Our work may be seen as part of a "second generation" of analysis that examines how different development actors – NGOs, grassroots organisations (GROs), firms, the government – work together. It is motivated by a recognition that scaling-up and sustainability of services on the one side, and the strengthening of democratic processes and deepening of democratic institutions on the other require different development actors to come together in a variety of ways. Inevitably, they do so in practice. For an NGO working in rural development, or any other of a range of sectors in the country, to ignore the government would be a bit like ignoring the elephant sitting on one's living room rug! NGOs, governments, the for-profit sector, and grassroots organisations often work together, and perhaps this has always been the case. The terms on which they have done so have generally been dictated by both the pragmatic requirements of the actions being undertaken, as well as by the ideological stances of the different actors, their relative bargaining strengths, and the larger political and economic

context. These joint activities that we call *partnerships* have not, however, been theorised adequately to date. This paper attempts a contribution in this direction.

The limited literature to date on how different development actors work together has addressed four sets of issues:

- the differences in the motivations, working methods, and control systems of different actors, in particular, governments, NGOs, GROs, and firms (Uphoff 1993),
- the potential for NGO / GRO motivations to seep into and transform the methods and outcomes of government programmes and projects (Korten 1987); and the reverse influence on NGOs / GROs of a relationship with governments and / or donors that may be too close for the comfort of either side (Hulme and Edwards 1997, Society for Participatory Research in Asia 1991);
- the implications of the so-called New Development Agenda (New Policy Agenda?) for a shift in the relative roles of governments, firms, and NGOs, and hence for the new constraints, changed opportunities, and new roles and responsibilities of NGOs /GROs (Clark 1995, Hulme and Edwards 1997, Covey 1995, Brett 1993); and
- a typology of partnerships based on the substantive content of the relationship between governments and NGOs (Robinson and White 1997).

In this section of the paper we draw on this literature to attempt an integrated framework for analysing how NGOs and the government work together, and what tends to happen when they do[2]. Because of the fundamental importance of the historical and political context within which such joint action occurs, our conclusions are meaningful mainly for the Indian context; however our approach and questions have a larger relevance. Our questions can be grouped in three sets:

a) *Context and ingredients:* what is the historical and political context for the emergence of joint action? what implications does this context have for identifying

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[2] Our focus in mainly on the relationships between NGOs and the government. The British bilateral development agency, DFiD has recently sponsored a separate study on partnerships in India where the private for-profit sector is involved. We do not address in this paper the larger question of state-market relations on which there is an extensive literature, most of which is focussed on the production of goods and services for profit.

the ingredients of partnership? how is this linked to ideas of participatory development, accountability, good governance, and citizen empowerment?

b) *Typologies:* what typologies of partnership can address both the substantive content of a relationship, as well as its implications for accountability, empowerment and democratisation?

c) *Evaluating partnerships:* based on the above, what are criteria for good partnership? are there trade-offs among the different possible criteria such as effectiveness, innovation, sustainability and accountability, and how may these be addressed?

1.   a. Context and ingredients

1.a.i. Context

Worldwide, the rise of non-governmental development activity in the last few decades is associated with three forces: a growing importance of participatory methods in development ideas and practices, and the related rise of the "pedagogy of the oppressed"[3]; struggles against dictatorships and growing democratic processes; and the espousal by donor agencies of a New Policy Agenda for development that includes greater privatisation and an expanded role for the non-governmental sector in the provision of development services. These three forces can be somewhat contradictory, even conflictive, in terms of the motivations and approaches of those who espouse them. For instance, while the first two – democratisation and participatory development – are both motivated by a concern to give citizens and especially the marginalised greater voice and say in development processes, their respective supporters have been known to accuse each other of cooption on the one side, and naïve romanticism on the other. Both tend however to set themselves off against the New Policy Agenda whose espousal of NGOs is viewed as part of a strategy to downsize the state and create greater room for private firms and for-profit activity without real regard for citizen participation (Escobar 1995, Fisher 1998, Nelson 1995). The extent of these differences and tensions in different

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[3] The "pedagogy of the oppressed" is terminology associated with the pathbreaking and influential work on participatory education pioneered by Paolo Freire (1970) in Latin America.

countries depends on their particular history. Nonetheless, these contradictory tendencies within the recent growth of the NGO sector and in its perceptions of itself are important defining features of the kinds of partnerships that NGOs enter into, as we shall see later[4].

In India too, as in other countries, similar forces have been at work (Fernandez 1987, Society for Participatory Research in Asia 1991). Although the period of dictatorship in India was relatively short-lived, it spurred significant rethinking in the non-governmental sector, and a rise of new kinds of grassroots and support organisations. Advocacy of different types – to change oppressive social customs and practices based on caste, class and /or gender; to demand greater accountability from the state and private firms for the negative impacts of their activities especially on poor and marginalised people; and to move state policies towards greater economic and social justice – became more important after the Emergency. Many service providers added this to their agenda, and a number of organisations began to be set up almost exclusively for the purposes of advocacy and other kinds of support.

Critiques of the top-down planning methods that had been central to the first two decades of planned development in India led to espousal, particularly by those outside government, of bottom-up approaches, participatory planning methods, and the need for government to learn from the methods and experiences of NGOs. In the 1980s, participatory rural appraisal increasingly became part of the accepted (almost mainstream) methodology for rural development. By the 1990s, the language and ideology (although arguably, not the reality) of consultation and participation had become common currency among funding agencies, both multi-and bi-lateral donors, and private foundations. And NGOs in particular began to be seen as the necessary intermediaries (vehicles?) to ensure that the voices of the poor would be heard by policy makers and planners.

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[4] For the purposes of the discussion in this section, we do not distinguish between NGOs and grassroots organisations (GROs) because the argument is similar for both. We use the distinction later in the paper when discussing issues of accountability.

It is important to recognise that the NGOs that emerged or grew in the 1980s or 1990s in India did so in the context of these three sets of mutually contradictory forces. In the 1990s, for instance, a number of NGOs have emerged as a result of what may be termed a supply-side push - greater availability of funds, a strong push from donor agencies, and more willingness on the part of the government to devolve some aspects of service delivery. Such organisations are sometimes more professional in their approach, but may be driven more by a drive to improve the efficiency of service delivery than by the traditional ideological commitment associated with the sector. They may have few qualms about the nature of their partners or the content of their partnerships as long as they serve the purpose of improved service delivery.

Some other organisations, particularly those that developed in the aftermath of the Emergency, have tended to be more suspicious of, if not openly hostile to, the idea of working with either the government or the private, for-profit sector. The experience of dictatorship during the Emergency is not the only reason for organisations' unwillingness to be anything other than critics of government or of private firms. Sometimes an organisation's work might require it to be in opposition, as if often the case around issues of displacement of people or threats to livelihoods. Or its political ideology might preclude its working cooperatively with government.

Between these two ends falls, what we believe, is the large majority of organisations. These are often suspicious of or critical of government, but are willing to work with it if need be. They are motivated by a concern to improve service delivery, to ensure that the poor and marginalised are not shortchanged by government or private firms, and to work to strengthen and consolidate democratic processes and relations between states and citizens.

Thus the relationships between NGOs and government that have emerged out of this set of forces are of three types:
- **antagonistic**, with the NGO functioning essentially as an external critic of government;

- **uncritically cooperative**, with the NGO working as an implementer of government programmes but without significant challenge to their substance or methods;

- **critically cooperative**, with the NGO working together with a government agency but retaining and exercising the autonomy to criticise if necessary.

The distinction between the latter two kinds of relationships lies in the nature of the challenge that the NGO may be willing to mount vis a vis government. The uncritically cooperative may involve minor complaints or discontent, but not serious challenge to the government's way of doing things. An NGO engaged in a range of development activities, may combine all three of the above, depending on the particular activity. However, for ideological reasons, an organisation may find itself more comfortable with one or the other, and may have the bulk of its activities falling into one category.

Both types of cooperative relationship (critical and uncritical) may be termed partnerships. However, it is important to note here that, while all three types of NGOs (and relationships) exist in the country, the dominant ethos and ideology motivating the majority of NGOs appears to be a critical one[5], even though many tend to be quite pragmatic in their approach (Biggs and Smith 1998). Ignoring the government is simply not a viable option given government's continuing direct and indirect role in development. The dominance of the critical stance implies that, at least in India, the concept of "partnership" has to be located in the context of this critique, and of the need for and attempts by NGOs and others to consolidate a more responsive economic and political democracy in the country.[6]

Partnerships may in this sense be viewed as a necessary halfway-house in the building of more solid foundations for citizenship in the country, one in which intermediary institutions of civil society have a central role to play. Hence, although other criteria such as effectiveness and innovation are also important, the touchstone for a good partnership in our usage is whether and how it helps improve the fundamental democratic relations

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[5] This generalisation is not based on a detailed survey of NGOs, but on the public debates that have been going on in the last two decades.
[6] See Sanyal (1991) for a discussion of what he calls "antagonistic cooperation" in the case of Bangladesh.

between people and the government, citizens and the state. Indeed, a major argument for why government-led development activity has been so ineffective (as well as inflexible and uncreative) in the country is the weakness of its accountability to citizens (Jain 1985). Improved accountability would also lead, according to this argument, to improved effectiveness, innovation, and sustainability of impact and outcomes. As long as accountability remains penned within traditional bureaucratic and legislative confines, the putative beneficiaries of development activities will have little voice in planning, monitoring or evaluating how development resources are spent. Thus, those who are closest to the ground where the activity is occurring, and therefore with the greatest potential awareness of what is going on, end up having the least say over development decisions. This is not to deny that a development intervention working through entirely "top-down" methods can sometimes be quite effective; but it is unlikely to be sustainable over a period of time.

The links (complementarity or trade-offs) between different criteria for a good partnership will be discussed in greater depth in a later section. For the present the argument is that a good partnership is not simply the harmonious working together of an NGO with a government agency or a private firm. The real issue is what this working together means for the empowerment of citizens, and whether it enhances their ability to make government more responsive or accountable in a sustained way, and thereby improves the effectiveness and innovativeness of development activities (Brett 1993).

1.a.ii. Principal-agent relations and accountability

Recent literature on economic development has used the theory of principal – agent relationships to analyse the incentive structure and accountability mechanisms that characterise hierarchical systems involving multiple actors with interests that are not congruent. This approach leads to a useful set of questions about incentive structures and accountability mechanisms that can frame our discussion of development partnerships in the light of the discussion in the previous section.

Principal – agent analysis has been particularly useful in explaining how implementation might diverge from the stated objectives of policies because the incentives of different actors divert it in a different direction. The special focus in this literature has been on the relationship between "principals" (those to whom other actors are nominally accountable) and "agents" (those to whom actions are delegated by the principals). How can principals ensure that their agents act in line with the objectives specified? What incentive structures and mechanisms of accountability are likely to do this most effectively and/or efficiently? At the heart of this analysis is of course the powerful axiom of standard economic theory that individuals behave in their own self-interest so as to maximise their welfare. In our own analysis, we make no particular assumption about the motivations underlying the behaviour of different development actors. While we do not enshrine self-interest as the guiding force of all development action, we do not either assume a distinctive spirit of altruism or voluntarism as marking NGO action (Salamon and Anheier 1996, Uphoff 1993). For the purposes of our argument, the absence of strong assumptions about what motivates NGO behaviour does not vitiate or weaken our conclusions; rather it strengthens them[7].

Principal – agent analysis has been a powerful tool in the economic development literature, one that has been used effectively to argue in favour of downsizing the state. The argument in general is that, since senior bureaucrats or government officials cannot (given the incentive /disincentive systems available to them) really control or adequately supervise their agents in development activities, government provision of services or direct undertaking of development actions is doomed to failure. It is preferable, it has been argued, to leave such direct action to either private for-profit actors, or the non-governmental sector.

We believe that such conclusions are generally based on a partial analysis because they often do not adequately explore non-traditional and non-monetary incentive systems

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[7] Our premise is that NGO actors like their counterparts in government are probably animated by a mixture of motivations – self-interest, voluntarism, altruism, generosity, selfishness, etc. In thinking about accountability it is probably more prudent to err on the side of caution and not assume an excess of altruism on the part of anyone!

based on the building of trust and collective responsibility (Tendler and Freedheim 1994). More importantly, they tend to misidentify principals and agents because they arbitrarily slice the chain of development responsibilities at the wrong points. Contrary to this traditional analysis in which senior government officials are viewed as principals and those to whom they delegate authority as agents, **we believe that a fundamental premise of democracy is that citizens are principals and the government or NGOs should be viewed as their agents**[8]. Majority rules and complex systems of checks and balances between legislative, executive and judicial branches of government are the mechanisms through which this fundamental premise is traditionally operationalised, and decisions made which acknowledge the presence of multiple and divergent interests across different principals (citizens). While the ultimate authority of citizens may be delegated to government or non-governmental agents in a variety of ways leading to further relationships (such as those between higher and lower levels of government functionaries, or between government and NGOs), it is important for our analysis of partnerships not to lose sight of this core relation.

However, principal-agent relations are power relations beyond the obvious sense implied in the traditional delegation of authority in political democracies. The reality is that control over resources (money, information, legal status) often inheres in the opposite direction – agents (governments, NGOs) have more of it than their principals (citizens) do. This is particularly true for those citizens who are poor and/or marginalised. Thus the problem of ensuring accountability by agents to their principals in the context of such asymmetric power relations becomes a more profound one than would be implied by the simple fact of delegation of authority. This fact provides additional justification for placing accountability at the centre when judging the quality of partnerships. How one judges a partnership then depends on whether it addresses this fact of power, and how it affirms and consolidates the rights of citizens, especially those who are poor and/or marginalised.

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[8] Traditional principal-agent theory does not of course require any particular actor to be defined as either principal or agent; any actor can be either in principle. However, whenever the theory has been used for empirical analysis, it has almost always assumed that senior government officials are the principals and their subordinates are the agents.

This recognition allows us to examine the accountability mechanisms that link citizens as principals to the government or NGOs as their agents in diverse circumstances. In a broadly democratic political environment, four distinct types of relations exist linking citizens, government, and NGOs. Each is characterised by a particular mechanism for accountability to citizens. Examining these relations enables us to explore the different contexts within which partnerships occur.

Scenario A is the traditional development scenario in which government directly provides development services to citizens. The main loopholes in the accountability mechanism characterising this type are well known. Electoral processes and Constitutional division of powers are blunt instruments when it comes to ensuring that citizens' representatives in government are actually accountable to citizens. Although decentralisation and devolution of development resources and powers to lower levels of government (elected representatives) can mitigate this problem to some extent, this can be very difficult to ensure in practice (as in the case of Panchayati Raj in India). NGOs and GROs may, in this scenario, intervene directly on behalf of citizens to ensure better service delivery or greater responsiveness, but they are often (especially in the case of NGOs) self-appointed, and have little formal locus standii beyond their ability to inform, conscientise and thereby empower citizens to demand their rights.

From the perspective of partnerships, the question is whether such a relationship, critically cooperative at best, and devoid of any formal agreement between government and NGOs / GROs can be called partnership? This depends on whether the relationship is an entirely antagonistic one as discussed earlier, or involves at least some elements of critical cooperation towards some common goals Although there may be no formal agreement between the NGO and the government in this case, the actual process by which the NGO supports citizens to obtain better services may lead to negotiation and even joint planning between the NGO and government agencies. Thus an informal set of relationships can grow and develop, and may in time turn out to be more flexible than

more formal partnerships. Such cases certainly merit prima facie consideration as partnerships.

The **second scenario, B,** is one where all three actors are overtly present. Citizens delegate authority to government that in its turn funds NGOs to provide services, and evaluates how they do it. NGOs do not have a relationship to citizens independent of their sub-contracting role for the government, and are heavily dependent on the government for funds. The relationship between NGOs and citizens is governed by the relationship between NGOs and the government. Thus, even as service providers, NGOs are not directly accountable to citizens in this case but to government, which exercises the disciplining mechanism of funding, in addition to its standard legal and regulatory powers.

In this case, there is no additional mechanism to ensure that government will be accountable to citizens. The loophole here is that it is entirely possible for the government procedures requiring performance from NGOs to work as sloppily as government procedures towards its own agents, or even for government functionaries and NGOs to collude with each other to milk funds without providing services effectively or efficiently. We are not suggesting here that all such partnerships necessarily involve such collusion or chicanery. Nor that they will necessarily be ineffective at least in the short run. But the problem is that there is no effective oversight mechanism in this case by which citizens can exercise authority over their supposed agents. Even the informal accountability mechanism present in scenario A is absent here because the contractor role of NGOs erodes their ability to hold the government to account, and their credibility with citizens is likely to be weak in the absence of strong prior relationships.

Scenario C differs from scenario B in that NGOs and citizens have prior direct relationships that frame the new contracting relation between government and NGOs. Although the two cases may seem similar insofar as all three sets of actors are formally present, and there is a contracting relationship between government and NGOs in both, the accountability mechanism may be quite different in the two cases. In case C unlike

case B, the NGO is a known entity to local citizens; the history of this direct relationship will have made or marred its credibility; its strengths and weaknesses are likely to be known. The NGO's own concern to maintain the reputation it has with the community which it may have built up over time, and to ensure that its sub-contractor relationship with government not impede its other activities may act as a disciplining mechanism. Such a mechanism may be less likely in scenario B.

In **Scenario D** NGOs directly provide development services to the community and may be funded by private foundations or other non-governmental donors. Like scenario A discussed earlier, D is also a dyadic case. In A, there were no NGOs formally intervening in the relationship between citizens and government (although the informal relationships may be different as we have seen). In D, government does not appear to be in the picture. However, here too there may be a range of informal working relationships between NGOs and governments that evolve as the NGO attempts to provide services to people.

The kind of NGO involved in type D may differ from those that predominate in type A. A might involve more advocacy-oriented organisations while D might involve more service providers. Their trajectories to partnership with government might therefore be different. Accountability systems in both A and D are likely to be stronger than in B, since the NGOs themselves are organically linked to the community and this is part of the accountability mechanism. However, in both cases, it must also be remembered that NGO accountability may itself be dependent on the extent to which it is demanded by the NGO's funders. An NGO may not be directly accountable to citizens even in these cases unless this is demanded by the community or by the funder. This may be different for a membership-based GRO where accountability to its membership may be stronger than in the case of an NGO.

These four scenarios may be summarized as in Matrix 1 below.

Matrix 1:   Principal-Agent Scenarios and Accountability

Principal	Agent	Accountability mechanism linking incentives / disincentives to performance
A Citizens	Government	Electoral processes and Constitutional authority
B. Citizens	Government → NGOs	NGOs have no significant prior relationship to citizens; Government funds and evaluates service-provision by NGOs
C. Citizens	NGOs ← Government	NGOs have prior direct relationships with citizens, but accept specific sub-contracting relations from Government
C. Citizens	NGOs	Citizens accept /reject NGO provided services or activities; private funders evaluate NGO activities (NB: the NGO receives no or little funds from the government)

The cases described above suggest the following implications for partnerships:

- all partnerships between government and NGOs can be viewed as principal-agent relations in which citizens are principals, and NGOs and government are direct or indirect agents;

- accountability mechanisms vary in both type and strength depending on the type of relationship that obtains among citizens, NGOs, and government, and its prior history;

- partnerships may be either formal or informal; a formal partnership is not necessarily better than an informal one;

- conflict and challenge as well as cooperation may characterise a partnership.

1.a.iii. Ingredients of Partnership

In light of the prior discussion, the **ingredients of any partnership,** formal or informal, are:

1. diverse actors with divergent interests, resources, objectives, and methods of functioning;
2. formal agreements or an informal set of methods to act together to achieve a set of goals;
3. a methodology for working together – roles, responsibilities and rights – implying structures of decision-making, information sharing, and authority;
4. accountability mechanisms among partners, and between partners and citizens, implying incentives / disincentives, rewards / penalties, and processes for feedback, review and evaluation.

1. *b. Typologies*

In the previous section, we examined the implications of different kinds of principal – agent relations for the kind of development partnerships that might emerge. We have seen that different kinds of partnerships involving citizens, governments, and NGOs imply different types and strengths of accountability mechanisms, and a distinction between formal arrangements and informal relationships. In this sub-section we spell out three different typologies of partnerships as a way of understanding better their substantive content.

The distinction between formal and informal relationships provides a first basis for a typology of partnerships. All four of the ingredients of partnership are present in both types, but they may be less obvious in the case of informal relationships. The more informal the relationship among the different actors, the less clear the roles, responsibilities and rights, and the accountability mechanisms are likely to be. However

having a formal agreement is not per se a guarantee for clarity about accountability. On the other hand, neither side in an informal relationship may be willing to acknowledge it as a partnership. This may be especially the case in moments of conflict or disagreement.

This raises an additional question. Where does one draw the line between informal partnerships and outright conflictual relations? This is an important issue. While it may be valid not to restrict one's concept of partnership to only instances of formal cooperation, the concept should not be so broad that it includes every type of relation including extremely conflictual ones.[9] The defining characteristic of an informal partnership has to be that, even if the NGO challenges the government, it is willing to work with government towards the overall objective of the programme or project. This rules out those cases where NGOs / GROs and government are fundamentally opposed about the basic objective of the policy, programme or project, e.g., Narmada Bachao Andolan. But it allows the inclusion of cases where the relationship involves a mixture of cooperation and conflict, each of which may be more or less predominant at different moments in the relationship. A large number of NGO – government relationships are of this type, and provide a rich field for study.

A second basis for a typology of partnerships between government and NGOs is provided by the substantive content of development activities (Robinson and White, 1997). Robinson and White provide a 3x3 matrix for co-provision by government and community organisations (COs) that identifies "…three basic processes which underlie various versions of synergy or partnership in the provision of social goods and services, namely determination, financing and production…" (p 26). This matrix identifies those combinations which are usually understood as partnership as well as others that also involve systematic relationships but have not been focussed on in previous literature.

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[9] The relationship between the government of Andhra Pradesh and the People's War Group comes to mind!

Matrix 2: Forms of co-provision between state and community organizations (COs)

COs State	Determination (1)	Financing (2)	Production (3)
Determination (1)	Co-determination (1,1)	Enforced provision (1,2)	Delegation (1,3)
Financing (2)	Devolution (2,1)	Co-financing (2,2)	Contracting / Granting (2,3)
Production (3)	Pressured provision (3,1)	Fee for service (3,2)	Co-production (3,3)

(Source: Robinson and White 1997)

As Robinson and White point out, most previous descriptions of co-provision of services focus on the three cells on the diagonal of the matrix. It is certainly true, as they suggest, that the relationships implicit in these three cells promise a greater sense of ownership, and participation (co-determination), greater care and economy in the use of resources (co-financing), and the mobilisation of additional inputs (co-production). However it is worth noting that reality may diverge from these promises, and each empirical case must propose these as hypotheses rather than axioms.[10] Furthermore, there is no reason for our concept of partnerships to automatically exclude the mechanisms depicted in the other cells.[11] Off-diagonal relationships may be more appropriate depending on the particular case, and may be as good or better than the diagonal relationships in terms of ensuring both effective provisioning as well as accountability.

These cells represent ideal types; the actual relationships between COs and the state might involve a mixture of different elements. Categorising each empirical case

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[10] For instance, in a recent water and sanitation project in rural Karnataka studied by one of the authors, co-financing was not backed up by adequate institutional strengthening so that it is doubtful how much additional care or economy the villagers were able or likely to exercise.

[11] Nor do the authors suggest they should be. For a more detailed description of the contents of the matrix, see Robinson and White (1997).

according to where it might fall in such a matrix can help to analyse the relationships better. Each case will involve a combination of two or three cells (depending on whether it is off or on the diagonal) defining thereby how all three components of provisioning are being handled. For example, a project that is defined by (1,2) and (1,3) is one where the state "determines" the activity and the CO does both the financing (enforced provision) and production (delegation). Another example is one characterised as (1,1) and (3,2) where both state and CO jointly "determine" what is to be done, but the state does the actual production while the CO pays for it through fees for service.

While the Robinson and White typology is useful in categorising relationships according to the content of development activity, it would be useful to be able to distinguish among relationships on the basis of process outcomes such as accountability. For this purpose, we develop below a **third typology based on key elements of accountability.** Accountability depends fundamentally on three things: access to information, the possibility of monitoring, reviewing and evaluating an activity /project / programme, and involvement in the making of key decisions[12]. Defining accountability in this way goes a considerable way beyond both consultation and participation that many agencies currently believe to be the core of accountability (Biggs and Smith 1998, p 241). Consultation and participation (even when genuine) have the potential to make the activity or project more efficient by bringing more and relevant information into project decisions. They can also give those consulted a greater sense of involvement in the activity. But they do not by any means ensure that those affected can have any impact on critical decisions, have access to relevant information in a timely and open manner, or provide critical feedback and suggestions for change. When a provider retains tight control over information, makes all the key decisions, and does all the monitoring and evaluation of the activity, accountability is low.

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[12] The making of key decisions is a subset of "Determination" in Robinson and White's matrix discussed earlier. While cell (1,1) in their matrix refers to "co-determination", this could well be a situation in which the NGO is involved in the making of minor decisions but kept out of the key ones. Accountability depends on how such key decisions are made.

In theory, access to information, responsibility for monitoring, and the making of key decisions may be viewed as a continuum moving from weak to strong accountability; one in which the stronger element (the making of key decisions), incorporates the weaker (access to information, and responsibility for monitoring). In actual practice, this may be contested terrain. For example, the government might agree to an NGO or other external body doing the review and evaluation of a project, but may balk at providing all the relevant information.[13] Thus the presumed stronger element of accountability (review and evaluation) may not automatically encompass the weaker (access to information). Furthermore, right to information may turn out to be stronger than a role in review and monitoring if the former is used by the NGO to mobilise public opinion, or the latter is not taken seriously by government even though it may exist in name. For these reasons, we simply call the three different aspects of accountability without prejudging whether they are weak or strong.

Our third typology of partnerships is based on accountability in this sense and further elaborates on the Robinson-White typology presented in Matrix 2 above. We focus specifically on the production cells of the Robinson-White matrix i.e. pressured provision (3,1), fee-for-service (3,2), delegation (1,3), contracting / granting (2,3), and co-production (3,3). It is also possible to raise similar questions about the planning (determination) and financing of development projects. Since the arguments are similar, we do not explicitly consider these here.

This typology includes three cases depending on whether the government, the NGO, or both are the producers. In this exposition, for the sake of simplicity, we spell out the simplest cases assuming the NGO represents the community, i.e., that accountability by government to the NGO implies accountability to the community of citizens. Reality may and usually is more complex. An NGO may not always share rights to information, review or decision-making with the community in an open and transparent manner. One

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[13] This may happen in particular when the decision to allow external monitoring, and the decision to allow access to information are taken by different branches or different levels of government.

cannot presume a congruence of interests between NGO and community. We do not discuss these more complex scenarios here.

Case 1: **Government as producer (pressured provision, fee-for-service)**

NGO has:	Right and access to information	Role in monitoring, review and evaluation	Role in key decisions
Nature of accountability:	**Information accountability** which depends on the NGO's ability to mobilise public opinion and advocate on the basis of the information it has	**Monitoring accountability** where the NGO's role in monitoring and review allows it to push for changes or advocate certain key decisions, but these are still in the hands of the government	**Decision-making accountability** since the NGO has a recognised role in the key decisions affecting the activity or project

Case 2: **NGO as producer (delegation, contracting/granting)**

Government has:	Right and access to information	Role in monitoring, review and evaluation	Role in key decisions
	Information oversight wherein the government can call for information but cannot do systematic reviews or interfere in key decisions	**Monitoring oversight** where the government can monitor and review, and thereby put pressure on the NGO to make changes	**Decision-making oversight** where the NGO cannot make key decisions without the government's involvement

While **case 1** above can help to classify accountability by the government, **case 2** asks how much oversight the government might have when an NGO itself is the producer of services. Such oversight is not the same as accountability to citizens (since it does not

translate automatically into rights for citizens) but it certainly can provide some form of checks on possible malfeasance. However, decision-making or even monitoring oversight can also turn into cumbersome interference and set off rent-seeking behaviour. In addition, one would also need to check whether the NGO is actually accountable to any other body, e.g., its funders, or to a grassroots body. In this context, it is important to go back to our arguments in the discussion of cases B and C in the principal-agent analysis, where actual accountability was shown as likely to be weak or strong in sub-contracting relationships depending on the prior history of interaction between the NGO and citizens.

Case 3: Joint production by government and NGO (co-production)

NGO has: / Govt has:	Right and access to information	Monitoring, review and evaluation	Key decisions
Right and access to information	Mutual exchange of information	Information oversight	Information oversight
Monitoring, review and evaluation	Information accountability	Joint monitoring and review	Monitoring oversight
Key decisions	Information accountability	Monitoring accountability	Joint key decisions

This case is a more complex one than the previous cases. The cells on the diagonal represent strong mutual accountability wherein both partners exchange information, monitor and review together, and take key decisions jointly. Off-diagonal cells in the upper triangle represent cases where, although there is joint production, the government cedes key decisions and monitoring and evaluation to the NGO.[14] Off-diagonal cells in the lower triangle on the other hand represent situations where the government does not curtail the right to information, but does not allow the NGO to be involved in key decisions or in monitoring/review processes. Any partnership may fall in two or three cells (depending on whether it is off or on the diagonal) representing different combinations of the three elements of accountability.

As mentioned previously, the accountability discussed above refers to the relationship between government and NGO but not the larger accountability to citizens discussed in

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[14] Such cases may seem unimaginable in India but are not uncommon in regions of the world where state capacity has been considerably eroded relative to that of large NGOs.

the previous section. The latter is often mediated by the government – NGO relationship; however it can by no means be assumed that if the government is accountable to an NGO, it is automatically accountable to the citizens affected by the development activity or project in question. This issue must be specifically probed in each such case.

Summing up this sub-section:

- multiple typologies of partnerships are needed in order to accurately reflect both the activity content of a relationship, as well as its process content in terms of accountability;
- these typologies complement each other, and make it possible to better understand the nature of a particular relationship;
- accountability in a partnership between government and an NGO does not automatically imply accountability to citizens; this must be probed in each empirical case.

1.c. Evaluating partnerships

Once a partnership has been classified based on the above typologies - the degree of formality, the substantive content of the relationship, and the extent of accountability, we can proceed to analyse how good the partnership is. In our discussion thus far, we have given considerable importance to the issue of accountability, largely because sustainability and effectiveness of development activities can flow from the presence of accountable partnerships, though not necessarily in all cases. The reverse does not necessarily hold. An activity or intervention may be effective in the short run, but this does not ensure that it is accountable to citizens (especially the poor and/or marginalised). Nor, in the absence of accountability, can the sustainability of outcomes be assured.

Our **first** criterion for a good partnership is that, it must be based on effective structures of accountability that ensure that those for whom the development activity is intended are able either directly or indirectly to it to their interest. **Secondly** it must deliver the

services or products for which it was set up, and must do so with a modicum of effectiveness and efficiency. A **third** criterion which is linked to the criterion of accountability but may not be identical to it is the extent to which the partnership ensures that it gives voice to the marginalised, and ensures that their interests are protected and furthered. This may not be congruent with accountability if the project or activity is not specifically intended to affect the poor or marginalised. For example, the provision of a rural water supply system might be accountable in terms of access to information, review processes and key decisions for the village as a whole, and this may ensure that the service is effective, i.e., it is provided on time and with minimal waste or corruption. But this may still not ensure that the dalits in the village will end up with a fair share of water. That is, accountability by itself may address issues of distribution only partially or not at all.

Furthermore accountability only partially addresses the problem of sustainability. Indian development experience has a number of cases where a dynamic and open-minded government official (typically an IAS officer) is able to bring significant improvements to development services working in collaboration with communities, NGOs and the for-profit sector. In many such cases, however, the work collapses once the official is transferred to a different post. The **fourth** criterion therefore is sustainability of the outcomes and processes generated. For this, accountability may be a necessary condition, but may not be a sufficient one.

But what is it that needs to be sustained? There are obvious cases such as disaster relief or emergency management when the partnership itself cannot, by the very nature of the work, be long lasting. But even in other cases, it is not necessary that the actual mechanisms or structures of a partnership be sustained. A partnership is only a means to the ends of effective service delivery, greater accountability, and better distributional equity. Outcomes and processes are what need to be sustained and in many instances, this may not only not need the partnership to last, but may actually require it to come to an end. This is of course linked to the well-known issue of how an NGO phases itself out of an activity by ensuring that other actors take over. As is true for independent NGO

activity, a good partnership is one which ensures that its outcomes and processes are sustained but not necessarily itself.

In sum, the elements of a good partnership are along four dimensions:
- effective structures of **accountability**;
- **effectiveness and efficiency** in reaching the outcomes for which the partnership was set up or developed;
- **distributional equity** in its outcomes and processes; and
- **sustainability** of the outcomes and processes generated.

It may well be the case, however, that there exist trade-offs (as well as the reverse, synergy) among the different criteria, and different partners may attach different importance to the four criteria. Government officials or donor representatives with short time-frames may give considerable weight to the second criterion and much less to the others unless their own incentives system rewards them for doing so. An NGO might have the reverse approach emphasising accountability above the others. Both government and NGO may pay less attention to the question of phasing themselves out than genuine sustainability might require. These differences might surface despite general agreement about the validity of all four criteria. Process documentation of a partnership can track these moments of tension that may appear on the surface as disagreements about specific decisions. **Understanding the strains in a partnership is as important as analysing its positive functioning, since these can provide valuable clues to more fundamental differences, and also to the presence of trade-offs.** Whether and how a partnership can clarify and balance the differences among partners may well be a key to its viability.

Finally, although our discussion has focussed on the relations between partners, it may be difficult to imagine that the external stance of a partner vis a vis outsiders can be significantly different from its own internal mechanisms and methods of functioning. This, however, may well turn out to be the case in more instances than we might expect. Thus an internally hierarchical and non-transparent government agency or NGO may be more open and democratic in its partnerships. This is because the organisation may face

more pressure from its partners than it does within itself. This issue of how the external and internal structures of a partner might be linked or not is one on which relatively little work has been done either in the country or elsewhere.

1.d. Summary of framework

The framework for analysing partnerships that we have spelled out in this section may be summarised as follows:

A. Ingredients of partnership:
- Diverse actors with divergent interests, resources, objectives and methods of functioning;
- Formal agreements and / or informal methods for working together to achieve a set of agreed goals;
- A structure of decision-making, and authority which defines roles, responsibilities and rights (this will be better specified in formal partnerships);
- Accountability mechanisms among partners and between partners and citizens involving information-sharing, monitoring and review mechanisms, and the making of key decisions, and backed up by systems of incentives / disincentives, and rewards / penalties.

B. Typologies:
The ingredients of a partnership will determine where it falls according to three complementary typologies:
- Formal versus informal;
- Content of co-provision in terms of the way in which activities are determined, financed, and produced;
- Accountability in production in terms of rights and access to information, monitoring, review and evaluation, and the making of key decisions.

C. Criteria for a good partnership:

- Adequate mechanisms of accountability;

- Effectiveness and efficiency in reaching agreed goals;

- Distributional equity in processes and outcomes;

- Sustainability of processes and outcomes.

This framework can be used to classify and analyse specific empirical cases of partnership. While we have used criteria appropriate to the Indian context, the framework may with some modification be useful for other contexts as well.

2. Empirical Mapping

The empirical discussion in this section is based on a preliminary review of the secondary literature on NGOs in India, and is not intended to provide an exhaustive survey. It is limited to organisations that were set up during the last three decades, largely because much of the literature has tended to focus on these. Although long-standing partnerships may exist between some older organisations and government, these have not been commented on much in the current literature.

The secondary literature on partnerships in the country is rather weak. Much of both the published and the "grey" literature consist of descriptions and/or evaluation reports of specific NGOs and their activities or performance. Even discussion, let alone analytical treatment of partnership is limited; sometimes a small sub-section (if that) at the end of an article or report will be devoted to brief comments on how the NGO works with government, and on the kind of problems it confronts when doing so. This weakness of the literature is possibly due to the fact that interest in partnerships, as such, is relatively new. Many of the questions and categories used in looking at NGOs belong to what at the beginning of this report we called the "first generation" of analysis. Drawing inferences from this literature for the specific contours or quality of partnerships is rather difficult. Often one may only get a sense of the existence of partnerships, and of how they came

about. In some instances, it is possible to get a sense of the contents of co-provisioning. In a few cases, it is possible to draw some more (but still tentative) implications for the kinds of issues that arise in the course of partnerships.

Because this section is based on these secondary sources, we have not attempted to do an analytical classification of cases based on the framework developed in the previous section. This will require first-hand investigation since even the ingredients of partnership in specific cases are not very clear from the existing literature. One certainly cannot make judgements at this stage about issues such as sustainability or accountability unless one is able to look into these directly in the field. **Instead, this section does a broad mapping of the existence of partnerships, and then goes on discuss specific cases of trajectories from below or above.** Where possible comments are made relating the cases to the framework. The case study based on SPARC's work in the final section of the paper provides a fuller discussion based on the analytical framework.

Somewhat to our own surprise, partnerships in the broad sense appear to exist across a wide range of sectors and regions in the country. The phenomenon of NGO's working with government on the one hand and people on the other is more widespread in the country than we had initially supposed. There are also cases of village communities working directly with government departments without the necessary intervention of an NGO. The main sectors over which partnerships, formal and informal, are spread include health, education, integrated rural development, watershed management, forestry, agricultural research and extension, microcredit, disaster management, urban habitat, tribal development, and possibly others. In terms of geographical spread, it is well known that NGO activity is stronger in the west and south of the country, somewhat less in the east, and weak in the Hindi heartland. Our preliminary investigation does not contradict this impression.

Recent estimates of the number of NGOs working in the country run into the tens of thousands. The trajectories by which an NGO begins to work together with an agency, department or programme of government appears to include two cases:

- those where an NGO in the course of its own development / advocacy activity realises that it has to "create" a working relationship with the government and proceeds to do so; such working arrangements are usually informal at least to start with, and may or may not become more formal over time; we call this the **trajectory from below**;

- those where the government decides it needs to draw upon NGOs to support a new or ongoing programme, and the initiative comes from its side; this is the **trajectory from above**.

Prima facie the first case represents stronger accountability since it derives from an NGO with an existing history of work in the community, while the latter allows for newer sub-contractors who may have professional expertise but not the same level of experience with the community. However, while it may appear on the surface that these are opposite types, in fact they may come together. Recognition of the need for or value of working together has sometimes come from both sides – government and NGO - although not in all cases.

Although informal working together between NGOs and different levels of government – taluk, district, or state – has probably existed for a longer time, the Central Government's willingness to give formal recognition to NGOs in development activity has been relatively recent and fraught with misgivings on both sides. However it has been growing. In 1982, the government issued directives that NGOs should be involved in implementing the Minimum Needs Programme and also anti-poverty programmes. In 1984 the National Health Policy gave NGOs an important role in delivering health services, and this was reflected in the Seventh Five Year Plan (Sundar 1994). The government's Private Voluntary Organisations in Health Programme began to fund NGOs to do this. Soon after, NGOs were given a major role in the Total Literacy Campaign country-wide, at both the national level and at local levels. In 1994, the government initiated a watershed programme which supports NGOs and state agencies to carry out small-scale watershed development activities. In addition to these, government has formally or tacitly relied on NGO support in programmes such as Joint Forest Management and micro-credit, as well as urban sanitation, and disaster relief and

rehabilitation. It is probably safe to say that there are few NGOs (except perhaps very small ones) in the country that have not at some point attempted to work with some level of government, except of course for those who consciously refuse to do so for ideological reasons.

2.a Partnership trajectories

A preliminary, descriptive classification of these attempts along the following lines is a useful starting point to look at cases of trajectories from both above and below.

i. **NGO assists a community organisation (CO) to negotiate with government:** this is a case of a trajectory from below. The NGO has been working with the community for a number of years and this relationship has been formalised through the creation of separate community organisations – unions, cooperatives or registered societies. The NGO provides a range of technical support services to the community organisation which is membership based. In the course of their work together they interact with different levels of government in a variety of ways. The NGO may help the community organisation to access governmental resources (finance or access to programmes or services), support its advocacy efforts, and pressure the government to accord the organisation the status of a formal partner. Three good examples are the following: the work of the Self Employed Women's Association - SEWA especially in relation to the government's DWCRA programme; the work of Developing Initiatives in Social and Human Action - DISHA through state-level budget advocacy in favour of tribal development; and the work of the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres - SPARC in supporting the Slum Dwellers' Federation to negotiate improved urban housing and facilities with the government. In all three cases, there is a separation between the support activity of the NGO and the work of the membership-based community organisation. All three cases started with more informal linkages to the government including significant elements of advocacy, which have in some instances become more formal. All three are

examples where, whether or not the government is willing to enter into a formal relationship, it treats the NGO and its linked community organisations with a modicum of acknowledgement and even respect.

In terms of our framework, the ingredients of partnership appear to exist in all three examples. However, the elements of co-provisioning appear to vary considerably and over time even for the same organisation. Furthermore, accountability in terms of the right to information, to monitor the government's actions, and to be involved in key decisions, appears to be the most contested terrain. As is to be expected, clarity about the roles and responsibilities improves if the partnership graduates from informality to greater formalisation.

ii. **NGO links the community to a government programme:** This is also usually a trajectory from below in which an NGO that has been working in a community attempts to link it to an existing or new government programme. However, this is different from (1) above in that (1) implies a distinction between the NGO and the community organisation that it supports.

Box 1: DISHA –Budget Analysis and Advocacy

DISHA consists of a group of 14 registered organisations working among tribal people in the state of Gujarat since the 1980s. The work of these organisations covers a range of livelihood issues ranging from the rights of forest workers to support for women tendu leaf pick sellers etc. These organisations are membership-based with a systematic set of structures linking them to each other and to the community. Much of the early work of the DISHA organisations involved both advocacy and struggle against perceived economic and social injustices.

In the mid 1990s, DISHA decided to shift its advocacy to a new level through providing systematic analysis of the state's annual budget. This analysis was done through its research wing – Pathey, consisting of a small number of professionals. It is clear that this new activity was viewed by DISHA at least as a way of creating a partnership between people and the government.

> *"The NGOs and voluntary agencies in general have never addressed the whole field of 'governance'. The role until recently, had been on receiving, either 'finance' or 'information' from the government. The budget analysis creates a situation of playing the role of a partner (emphasis added) in formulating the budget, and also suggests that the state collects information and provide it to the people." (Source: Pathey, Report on Activities, 1997-98, pp 22-23)*

This is a classic trajectory from below. When Pathey started doing the budget analysis, the government was certainly not welcoming. However, by making its budget analysis timely and engaging in effective advocacy with legislators, DISHA was able to earn their interest, to spread its analytical work to lower levels of government, and to effectively challenge the culture of secrecy and technical expertise that surrounds the budget. This is no ordinary partnership between the executive arm of government and an NGO. Instead it is an informal relationship between the representative arm of a set of community organisations on the one hand and the legislature on the other. The actors are diverse but they have a common goal – better understanding of the political economy of the budget. They work together informally but the partnership is one that has enhanced accountability of the executive to citizens.

(Source: Disha – Annual Reports, various years; Budget Analysis and Advocacy Work of DISHA, Foundation for Public Interest, October 1997)

In this case, there is no membership-based grassroots organisation, and hence the structures for accountability of the NGO to the community are weaker than in the previous case. However, the NGO may have established its credibility through long years of work with the community. In this case as well, the relationship between the NGO and the community on the one side and the government on the other is likely to start more informally but may become more formal over time. The NGO provides the community with information about available services, supports people to access those services, and negotiates with government to modify the services to be more appropriate to local realities and more responsive to local needs. The work of a range of NGOs such as MV Foundation, PRATHAM, MYRADA, AWARE, and others in areas such as child labour eradication, education, micro-credit programmes, DWCRA groups, IRDP belong in this category. One may also include here NGOs that work to support community – government interactions in the Joint Forestry Programme in some states.

Apart from the difference in the NGO's accountability to the community, this case is similar to the previous one in terms of the elements of our framework that were identified.

Box 2: MV Foundation and Pratham – Child Labour, Street Children and Education

> **MV Foundation:**
>
> In the short period in which it has been working, MV Foundation (registered as a trust in 1981 but actually began substantive work in 1987) working in Ranga Reddy district in Andhra Pradesh has established itself as a model for working towards the eradication of child labour through education. MVF operates on the basis of a non-negotiable opposition to child labour, and a belief that by strengthening the governmental school system, social mobilisation to build support from parents, panchayats, and school teachers, and by providing bridge courses, developing a system of volunteer para-teachers to support the existing teachers, as well as training and advocacy, children (both girls and boys) ...

> ...can be turned away from child labour onto the track of education. While the MVF approach is a pragmatic, problem-solving one, it believes that it is the public schooling system that has to be made to work for the majority of people. And it has therefore successfully initiated a partnership with the governmental education system in the district to show how this can be done.
>
> **Pratham**
>
> Where MV Foundation's raison d'etre is child labour, the work of Pratham is driven by the need to better the lives of Mumbai's street children through regular education. Pratham also aims to help poor learners to overcome their difficulties and also addresses the needs of pre-schoolers. In organising balwadis for small children, bridge courses for older dropouts or street children who have never been to school, remedial classes in municipal schools, and innovations such as computer-based learning, the NGO works through advisory educational committees that have received the strong support of the Mumbai municipality. These committees are actually set up by the municipality and each includes the school principal, parents, and representatives of the municipality and of Pratham. Their objective is to increase student enrolment, and to change the school's environment by working together.
>
> Pratham in an urban metropolis and MVF in a rural district have created solid working partnerships to address the most seemingly intractable problems in the Indian context – child labour, street children, and quality education through the governmental education system.
>
> (Source: MV Foundation – Annual Reports, various years; Hallak and Poisson (1999))

iii. **Government initiatives in which NGOs participate:** We now move to cases which represent a trajectory to partnership from above. The best known example of this is the Total Literacy Campaign under the National Literacy Mission in the late 1980s, and its spin-offs in the early 1990s. An NGO, the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Kendra played an important national function supporting the coordination of the Campaign, while other local and state-level NGOs supported its implementation. In the state of Andhra Pradesh, the Campaign set off the anti-arrack movement of women, which then spun off into self-help groups and savings schemes that have been supported by other NGOs. NGOs have also worked with government officials in supporting urban clean-up in a number of metropolitan and smaller cities, such as Mumbai, Calcutta and Surat. Usually, in such cases, the government is in charge of the overall programme while the NGO's role is specifically to support by motivating and building awareness in the community.

These are cases where all the ingredients of partnership are present including formal clarification of roles and responsibilities as well as rights, and terms of reference for the NGO. The substantive content of co-provisioning varies from case to case, as do the elements of accountability. In some instances, as with the BGVK, the NGO had considerable access to information, monitoring and even some key decisions. But even in the case of the National Literacy Mission, it was clearly the government that was in the driver's seat of the partnership. However, the extent of room given to NGOs and the innovative nature of the campaign itself generated considerable enthusiasm and innovation on the ground. Despite this, these are cases where accountability to the community is not clearly structured and may vary widely from case to case.

iv. **NGO takes over, modifies (?) and runs a government programme or facility:** This is probably best viewed as a mixed case, neither purely a trajectory from below nor from above. Instead it is a coming together from the two sides in response to felt need. Again, as in the previous case, the division of roles is

clearer being more formal. Two major areas in which this has happened are primary health centres (PHCs) in the government's health infrastructure, and Integrated Child Development (ICDS) centres. A number of well-known NGOs such as Sewa –Rural, Vivekananda Girijan Kalyan Kendra (VGKK), SEWA, Voluntary Health Services (VHS), as well as the KEM hospital in Pune, to name only a few, have done this. In watershed management, NGOs such as the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) and Sadguru Water and Development Foundation have been named as Programme Implementing Agencies under the new national watershed programme. NGOs such as CINI have been designated as "mother NGOs" in the government's new Reproductive and Child Health Programme. In some of these, the government has handed over the entire running of the facility (say the PHC) to the NGO in addition to providing funds. In other instances the NGO gets only the technical tasks while the government retains administrative control. The latter is usually more difficult for the NGO to work in. The structures of accountability are not easily definable and may vary significantly as in the previous case.

Box 3: SEWA – RURAL's Community Health Project

SEWA – Rural was set up in 1980 in Jhagadia in the Bharuch district of Gujarat. Its Community Health Project began in 1982 with early funding from Oxfam (UK) and Community Aid Abroad (Australia), and collaboration with the government. SEWA-Rural persuaded the state government and the district panchayat to place community health volunteers, anganwadi workers and dais under its technical and administrative control, while the government continued to pay their honoraria, and provide drugs and other supplies. These three groups of workers were seen as the first level of a three-tier health care delivery system. The partnership with government has been viewed by the NGO as central to its work.

"Rather than create a new infrastructure of staff and organisation to parallel the government's, we have sought to set up an innovative model of collaboration between a voluntary agency such as ours, having commitment and concern for the poor, and the government with its ample material resources as well as the necessary mandate to reach the poor." (Dr Anil Desai, Project Director)

From small beginnings this partnership grew with the decision by the state government to hand over control over all health care services in Jhagadia block including the running of a government Primary Health Centre, all the infrastructure of health sub-centres, and supervision of health personnel. In return the government continued to pay for salaries, drugs and other recurring costs, while exercising oversight, monitoring and evaluation. In addition, SEWA-Rural was also delegated the responsibility for running the ICDS programme in the same area.

Although there have been the usual strains in the partnership brought about by the focus of the governmental framework on reporting and accounting procedures, and the nervousness of government personnel having to work under an NGO's supervision, these have generally been overcome with persistence. For SEWA-Rural's part, its leadership is clear that such a partnership is the only option if health services are to be provided on the required scale, and if duplication and confusion are to be avoided.

(Source: Sohoni (1994))

v.   **NGO provides training or other support to government programmes:** Such formal partnerships can also be found in a range of areas such as education, child health, women's health, disaster relief and rehabilitation, soil conservation and watershed management with organisations such as Child in Need Institute (CINI), CHETNA, People's Science Institute (PSI), SARTHI, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) involved. One can also find a number of newer NGOs that set themselves up primarily to be sub-contractors in government programmes. This is likely therefore to be either a mixed case or a trajectory from above. One can find in this case NGOs that have been working for a significant period of time with communities and step forward to play a support role in a government programme. One can also find NGOs that have not had much experience on the ground but set themselves up to be contractors on the basis of professional expertise. Needless to say, there is often an ideological distance between the two types. The ethos of accountability is also likely to be different between the two types with one feeling the need to be accountable to the community, and the other to the government that provides it with a contract.

In terms of accountability between government and the NGO, the NGO is likely to be in a somewhat weak position to the extent that its formal position is that of being the provider of a specific, defined service on contract rather than being a representative or advocate on behalf of the community. Despite this, NGOs can manage in some cases to get the government agency to agree to a greater sharing of information and a greater voice in key decisions and monitoring than strictly required by the terms of the contract.[15]

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[15] The case of CHETNA in the ICDS programme in Rajasthan is a case in point.

Box 4: CHETNA – Working to support the ICDS Programme

CHETNA is a support NGO which was started in 1980 with the stated mission of "contributing towards the empowerment of disadvantaged women and children by assisting them to gain control over their own health and that of their families and communities". In its two decades of existence it has grown into a multidimensional organization working on a range of issues with training as a major activity.

In addition to working with NGOs, CHETNA has attempted to work with government in both Gujarat and Rajasthan. In Gujarat, their main work has been in training NGO organisers who are funded by the Central Social Welfare Board to organise women's awareness camps at the village level, some work with the Mahila Samakhya programme, and some training for motivators of the Adult Education department. Despite these efforts, CHETNA has not in general been able to make much headway with the government of Gujarat, largely because of a less than open attitude among the government officials in the state. By contrast, in Rajasthan, CHETNA's attempts at partnership have been more welcomed and sustained through the ICDS programme of the government. CHETNA has regularly been training large numbers of ICDS supervisors and trainers each year, has developed training manuals and guide-books for trainers, and provided on-going support to ICDS trainers in the form of materials and follow-up activities. The feedback from NGOs who work in the Rajasthan districts where ICDS personnel have been trained by CHETNA suggests that there has been tangible impact in terms of practical improvements in services, knowledge base of the ICDS personnel and their attitudes. CHETNA has also worked with the Government of Rajasthan and UNICEF to train Child Development Programme Officers and supervisors on the health concerns of adolescent girls using a gender perspective and addressing issues of sexuality.

(Source: CHETNA, annual report; personal interviews by Gita Sen)

vi. **NGO and government co-determine the programme jointly:** There are few examples here that we know. Probably one of the best known (and currently a partnership that has gone sour) is the Women's Development Programme (WDP) of Rajasthan which started as a tri-partite partnership between the government, a research institute, and an NGO. This partnership is probably one that bears close study in order to draw lessons for the sustainability of such relationships. The WDP started as a model experiment in which all three parties to the partnership provided inputs to the making of key decisions, shared information, and monitored the working of the programme. For a number of years the programme was highly innovative and effective in developing new methodologies for empowering women. However the fact that ultimate power and control over programme resources still rested with the government meant that when significant controversies and differences arose, the structures of mutual accountability tended to break down. Although much has been written about the controversies around the WDP, there has been little writing that has stepped back to assess the trajectory of the partnership.

Each of the trajectories listed above has advantages and disadvantages. The empirical cases suggest that the interest in making a partnership work often comes from the NGO side. Given the size and power of the government, and its control over resources, it is often the NGO that has to work to make things move forward. This requires tenacity, pragmatism, as well as a clear recognition on its part of the value of the partnership. However, from an NGO perspective there are also irritants and difficulties. Some of the most common that appear to come up in many of the cases are the following:

- Governmental inertia even when there is a formal agreement with an NGO
- Foot-dragging and hindrances at the lower and middle levels of government even if the top level is supportive of the partnership
- The tendency to treat the NGO as a contractor providing a narrowly defined service, and an unwillingness to listen to the NGO's concerns

- Unwillingness on the part of government officials to share administrative control leading to the problem of dual control, poor coordination and non-smooth functioning

- Onerous reporting requirements, red-tape and administrative bottlenecks even when only a small amount of funds are involved.

Some of these difficulties and the need for creativity and tenacity become clearer in our discussion of the partnership between SPARC and various government departments below.

3.   Making Partnership Work: a Case-study of SPARC

In this section of the report, we first provide a detailed description of an in-depth case study of partnership, based on the work of SPARC and the Railway Slum-Dwellers' Federation (RSDF) in Mumbai. This case study is based on a field visit to Mumbai, discussions with the leadership of SPARC and RSDF, and internal documents to which we were given access. Following the description, we will analyse the evolution of the partnership in light of the framework developed in the first section of this report.

3.a. A description of the partnership

The Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) was chosen for in-depth study not because it is necessarily representative of the average partnership, but because of the depth and innovativeness of its work. Most importantly, almost from the beginning, SPARC's leadership has been committed to working in partnership with government or donor agencies in order to make these more accountable and responsive to people. Since its inception, SPARC has spun off into separate organisations working in urban and rural areas but linked through consultation, mutual support, and collective learning. Our case focuses on the work SPARC has done with the urban slum-dwellers' federation to negotiate better services and a recognition of the rights of slum-dwellers.

3.a.i. The Transport Issue

Mumbai is one of India's largest metropolises with a population of over ten million. The transport needs of the city are met primarily by the metro rail system along its five corridors. Each day, the metro system carries some 5.5 million people. In the last 40 years, the number of passengers have increased five-fold while the capacity of the metro rail system has grown only by 2.5 times, leading to overuse of capacity, frequent delays and break-downs. It has also become commonplace in Bombay for irate passengers to vent their anger by destroying railway property. Given subsidized fares and low revenues, the Department of Railways is unable to pay for the upkeep and maintenance of the system. Increasing fares is something that no elected government likes to do for fear of its electoral implications.

In the 1970s, in order to ease the exploding transport problems, the state government under BUTP I (Bombay Urban Transport Project I) got a $25 million loan from the World Bank, with which it added 700 buses and three fly-overs. A sequel to this, BUTP II, which proposes to build two additional rail corridors, is now under negotiation with the World Bank. Even as this mega-project is in the pipeline, the Railways are confronted with the question of immediately improving the existing system.

While adding two more corridors to the system is one way of expanding capacity, the other option is to increase the speed and the functional efficiency of the trains. A major reason for poor utilization of the existing capacity of the rail system is the presence of slums along the railway tracks. The problem is acute since there are places where slums are located within three feet of the track. The Railways Safety Commissioner requires trains to reduce their speed to 5 km/h in segments where slums are within 30 feet of the track. Railway authorities have calculated that if the slums along the tracks could be cleared, allowing trains to operate at their normal speed, the total number of train journeys could be increased by 40 per cent. In monetary terms this gain would be equivalent to the cost of laying a new track.

The removal of slums however is not an easy matter. In Bombay, there are about 25,000 households living along the railway tracks. These settlements have mushroomed over the last few decades with the growing migrant population. Initially, the Railways ignored them assuming that since they were illegal, they could be forcibly demolished, and the residents evicted if the department ever required the land for its own use. (While this has remained the official position, *informally* railway staff collect rent from the residents.) Secondly, since the slums are also 'vote banks', they are constituencies that politicians seek to protect and defend. Thus, although these slums have no real security of tenure, most of them have been provided basic amenities by their political patrons, and more importantly, protection from demolition. As a result, they continue to exist indefinitely. This has resulted in a kind of status quo whereby neither can the Railways make any headway in improving their efficiency by relocating or clearing the slums, nor can the government take any initiative to tackle the problem. Against this backdrop, in general, relocating slums is seen as a Herculean task, and very often even as impossible.

3.a.ii. SPARC's Approach

SPARC is a non-governmental organisation established in 1984 by a group of professionals concerned about the housing problems of the poor in Bombay. It began working with people living on pavements who at that time were officially estimated to be 125,000 in Bombay.

Pavement-dwellers are seen both by the government and the better-off as 'encroachers', 'trespassers', and a public nuisance. From time to time, the government demolishes these makeshift tenements using force, but very soon they are filled again either by the same people or by newcomers. SPARC's argument has been that the fact of people living on pavements should be seen not as a 'law and order' problem, but as a housing problem of the poor. People live on pavements not because they like it, but because they have no choice. Given a better choice, they would not live on pavements.

3.a.iii. Community Mobilisation

As a first step to organising these people, SPARC formed women's collectives called *Mahila Milan* which started as savings groups but soon undertook collective action for ration cards, access to public hospitals, police stations, and other civic institutions. SPARC's next step was to undertake a *comprehensive survey* of the pavement-dwellers, both because they believed that the official estimate was an undercount, and because they wanted to involve the people themselves in the collection of data, thereby demystifying the process and empowering them. Furthermore, in the absence of authentic information on pavement-dwellers, the government argued there was no basis for any positive action such as provision of services.

The SPARC initiated survey showed that the numbers of pavement-dwellers were more than the official estimates. These results and the analysis of the survey were shared with the concerned departments of the government. After this, SPARC undertook another major survey of the Dharavi slums. This time it went a step further, installing large hoardings at different places in the slum displaying all the demographic details of their survey. Government officials faced several embarrassing occasions when they were asked by people to prove the validity of the official statistics about the slum. Given the inaccurate and outdated information that the government had, the concerned officials were compelled by people, who had also participated in this survey, to accept the validity of SPARC's data. This raised SPARC's credibility in government circles and goodwill in the community.

About their surveys, Sheela Patel, SPARC's director said, " *For us, the survey was not an academic exercise, though we did it in a very professional manner. It has been a tool for organising people and creating a basis for negotiation with the government. By possessing this data, we gained access to important government officials. Our staff was instructed to keep regular contact with all the officials concerned with slums. This not only made SPARC visible but also gave it access to information on policies and decisions of the government.* "

3.a.iv. Partnership with Government

In 1988, SPARC learned that the state government and the Railways were planning to conduct a census of the slums alongside the rail tracks. When the task was about to be assigned to the Collector (Encroachments), SPARC approached the Slum Development Authority (SDA), a government agency with specific mandate to administer slums, and offered to conduct the survey in collaboration with the Collector. Given its track record and proven ability to conduct slum surveys, SPARC was an obvious choice even for the SDA.

Having made its way into the ring, SPARC now strategically converted the survey work into a participatory process that also initiated discussion and debate within the community on the issue of relocation. The survey entitled, *'Beyond the Beaten Track: Census of Slums on the Railway Tracks'*, established that there were 18,000 families living on the rail tracks, and that the majority of them were willing to be relocated provided they were assured alternative housing and security of tenure. This was a revelation to the government because so far no attempt had ever been made to dialogue with the community in an atmosphere of trust. For the first time, SPARC created such an atmosphere and thereby opened a new channel of communication between government and the community.

During the survey, SPARC also helped in the formation of a community-based organisation called the Railways Slum-dwellers' Federation (RSDF) to articulate the concerns of the people living on the rail tracks. This was later affiliated to the National Slum-dwellers Federation (NSDF). They also organised Mahila Milan groups in these slums. As a follow-up of the survey, SPARC was quick to identify five areas suitable for pilot relocation projects, and the RSDF agreed to the Railways' suggestion that walls be built separating the settlements from the tracks. However, once the survey was over, despite the urgency of the matter, and their having been given a clear list of suggestions, both the government and the Railways appeared to lose interest.

Despite being frustrated at the government's inaction, SPARC started working on the next steps of the relocation process. It mobilised people to form housing cooperatives, to start saving, and to formulate plans for alternative housing. The idea was that, whenever the government and the railways decided to wake up, the people would be prepared at their end.

3.a.v. Jan Kalyan Project

A major opportunity to move the process forward emerged in 1990-91, when the Railways decided to extend the fifth rail corridor. This extension required relocation of a settlement called Bharat Nagar, which had about 800-900 households along the railway tracks. SPARC was already present in this community working through RSDF and Mahila Milan. As part of the government's rehabilitation programme the slum-dwellers were offered government-built houses, a short distance away, for Rs. 58,000 each. Barring 150 households, which could not afford the government houses, the others accepted the offer. These 150 households were given a piece of land on which they could build their own homes.

Construction of these 150 houses was SPARC's first experiment in housing construction. With the help of SPARC, RSDF and Mahila Milan, the slum-dwellers identified vacant land and meticulously planned the project.

Box 5: Jan Kalyan - Basic Features of the People's Rehabilitation Project

- A housing cooperative called *Jan Kalyan* was formed. Suitable by-laws were formulated in order to adapt the housing cooperative law to the needs of the poor. A contract was drawn up to prohibit resale of the house, because in the past there were instances of some relocated slum-dwellers selling off their houses. The government often justifies not providing housing to the urban poor on these grounds.

- Every household had an account in the bank, and since they had been saving for 18 months prior to the time when the project began, they had together about Rs.10 lakhs in the bank.

- People themselves designed a low-cost house for as little as Rs.13,500. Each family was asked to contribute Rs.2000 and the rest was to be borrowed from the bank at a low interest rate. A detailed plan for financing and repayment was worked out.

- The cost of basic amenities was to be provided by the Railways as part of the normal compensation that is given to the displaced people.

- SPARC offered to bear the expenses towards technical assistance for design, supervision and quality control of the construction process.

- RSDF made a full size model house and displayed it in a public space. Slum-dwellers from different parts of the city were invited to see it. The NSDF sent slum-dwellers from different parts of the country to see this design. The event was widely covered in the media.

The Jan Kalyan project was a major success, and its houses were ready by early 1994 **This project demonstrated that if the government or its agencies provided land, infrastructure and subsidized finance, the communities had the capacity to develop their own housing solutions and manage them efficiently.** But if SPARC expected that the state and the Railways would see this as a viable model, and respond appropriately to the inter-linked issues of improving the efficiency of urban transportation and relocation/ resettlement of slum-dwellers, they were disappointed. To the contrary, the Government and the Railways regressed into inertia. After completion of construction and then people

moving into their new houses, it was another three years before they got water supply and the other amenities to which they were entitled.

3.a.vi. World Bank Project

The issue of rehabilitation came alive again a year later, in 1995, when the World Bank project BUTP II came up for discussion. The Urban Development Department (UDD) that formulated the project was responsible for its implementation. One of the major conditions of the World Bank has been that the state should formulate a Resettlement and Rehabilitation policy (R & R policy) and relocate slums before undertaking any construction work. And, that NGOs must be involved in the rehabilitation process. The UDD set up a task force comprising of the following government and other agencies:

- Urban Development Department
- Municipal Corporation of Greater Bombay
- Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority
- Additional Collector (Encroachments)
- SPARC

As a first step in the rehabilitation process, the UDD requested the Railways to seek the assistance of SPARC and explore the possibility of moving at least two slums about 30 feet away from the track. When SPARC held discussions with the communities, they agreed to move and also allow construction of a wall between the slum and the tracks. This came as a pleasant surprise to both the government as well as the railways, who expected people to resist and extract a price for it. Without letting this opportunity slip by, SPARC took the initiative to raise funds, and actually constructed a 920 feet wall between the slum and the tracks along the Borivali – Dahisar line. Following this, the Railways constructed walls at two more places by moving people away from the tracks.

The BUTP II got bogged down in arguments and counter-arguments between the Government of Maharastra and the World Bank. Interestingly, even as these unending discussions were going on, the Railways and the Government decided to go ahead and

start work on the sixth railway corridor without waiting for the World Bank loan. Moreover they also agreed to implement the rehabilitation plan formulated by RSDF. The extension of the sixth corridor along the Central Railway track affected close to 2000 households who lived by the side of these tracks. The rehabilitation plan envisaged the following:

Box 6: The Kanjurmarg Relocation Plan

- the state government to provide land;
- the Railways to help develop the land;
- the Municipality to provide off-site infra-structure and allot land to community cooperatives;
- 22 community cooperatives to design, construct, and finance their own housing;
- HUDCO to provide loans through SPARC;
- Each family to contribute between Rs.3000 and Rs.5000, and the total cost of the house was estimated to be Rs.20,000;
- SPARC, NSDF, RSDF and Mahila Milan would execute the entire project.
- The proposed structure was to have ground plus three floors, and all the additional land would be sold to outsiders, and the proceeds from this to be used for the project; if any profit is made, it will be put in a Trust for the community cooperatives as a Maintenance Fund.

Named the Kanjurmarg Resettlement Project, this has been the biggest project ever that RSDF and SPARC have undertaken. The land was handed over to SPARC and RSDF in early 1997. By early 1999, about 1400 families had been shifted to their new houses.

3.b. Analysis of the Partnership

The partnership described above is a classic example of a trajectory from below. Much of the energy and impetus appears to have come from SPARC and RSDF with the government departments being slow and somewhat lethargic partners. Even when they were convinced about SPARC's motives and credibility, their responses appear to have

been slow.[16] Despite this, the partnership did evolve from informal beginnings to a fairly sophisticated current situation with clearer definition of roles, and rights.

<u>3.b.i. Ingredients of the partnership</u>

The actors involved in the partnership included the following: SPARC, RSDF, Mahila Milan, the Railways Department, the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai and its Urban Development Department, the Slum Development Authority, and the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority. Their larger goals were clearly different. While the aim of the Railways was to improve the efficiency of use of the track infrastructure at minimal cost, the objective of the Municipal Corporation and of the Urban Development and Housing departments was to provide alternative housing and acceptable conditions for rehabilitation. The overarching objective of RSDF and Mahila Milan is to ensure the rights of the slum-dwellers and the best possible terms for their rehabilitation, while the aim of SPARC in this case has been to create negotiating spaces for poor communities at different levels in the administration. The effectiveness of the partnership can be judged from the fact that each of the parties involved has been able to attain their goals. This has happened through the key role played by SPARC in facilitating and establishing a negotiating relationship between RSDF and the different departments of the government. SPARC essentially catalysed the alliance of SPARC-RSDF-Mahila Milan so that it was not operating as an isolated NGO. Today, this alliance is perceived by the administration as an arbitrator between the government and the communities of slum-dwellers. This is amply demonstrated by the fact that the alliance has played a significant role in shaping the current Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy of Maharastra state. As important in concrete terms, the process of relocation that has now gained momentum has provided decent housing to slum-dwellers.

The Railways have gained through this partnership in terms of improving their functional efficiency as well as being able to implement their expansion plans. Finally, the

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[16] It is possible of course that these views are somewhat one-sided since we did not interview government officials. However, in general our sense of the perceptions of SPARC and RSDF was that they tended to be quite fair and objective.

Government has been able to fulfil its responsibility of providing housing space to the slum-dwellers. As per the Development Control Regulation Act No.33 (10), enacted in the state of Maharastra, the state bestows on slum-dwellers a right to free housing to be provided by the government. This law applies to those slum-dwellers who have been residing in any notified Bombay slum prior to January 1, 1995.

As the partnership has evolved, roles and responsibilities have also changed and become clearer. The boldness of the SPARC strategy lies in the fact that it did not take the division of roles as given, but has continually challenged them. Thus, it has taken away from the government both the responsibility for surveys and thus control over critical information on the basis of which key decisions are made, and later on the responsibility for designing, planning and executing the construction of alternative housing which was handed over to the community via RSDF and Mahila Milan.

Some key elements of the SPARC strategy bear re-stating at this point. In the first place, the entry strategy of SPARC by means of creating a database on slum-dwellers where none existed prepared a solid ground for its subsequent intervention. This also ensured that its advocacy was not seen as 'typical NGO rhetoric' but as one based on facts.

Secondly, once it established contact with the government agencies, SPARC always talked about solutions that would benefit **all** the stakeholders. In doing so, it adopted the path of strategic and creative engagement rather than the familiar path of confrontation. Because of its strong research base, its articulation of a problem has been strategic as well as technically sophisticated.

Thirdly, SPARC has been strongly rooted in the community by means of its various mobilisation strategies. It has been quite sensitive to the community process, and continued work in the community despite being disappointed with both the government and the railways at various stages. In addition to the mobilising and savings activities, SPARC also undertook a major task of capacity building of the community through training programmes. As a result, the community process was kept alive at all times. This

has turned into a major advantage because whenever the government woke up to act on the rehabilitation issue, it found the community was well prepared, and ready to work with it. It has also made it possible for the roles of the different partners to change over time as stated earlier.

3.b.ii. SPARC in relation to Partnership Typologies

This partnership is interesting in that its location within any of our typologies has also changed over time. As with other trajectories from below, the partnership started informally with SPARC attempting to create a space for itself and the slum-dweller community in generating reliable information. From this innocuous beginning, SPARC has graduated to becoming a formal member of relevant government task forces as we have seen, and as a credible negotiator on behalf of the community.

In terms of substantive content, the partnership has moved from one of pressured provision (cell (3,1) of the Robinson-White matrix on p 17 above) where the government was expected to provide alternative housing, to one that appears to lie on the diagonal of the matrix, i.e., co-determination, co-financing, and co-production.

In terms of accountability as well, there has been considerable change. The pre-partnership situation was one where the government department conducted the survey on the basis of which the rehabilitation and compensation decisions were made. All monitoring and evaluation was also done by the government that naturally made all the decisions. This situation has changed considerably. By insinuating itself into the information gathering process, SPARC was able to break this monopoly and the culture of secrecy that often surrounds government information and decisions. Secondly, by shifting from pressured provision to co-production, key decisions about the actual housing came into the hands of the community. Thirdly, the government had to acknowledge SPARC's credibility as a negotiator in good faith, and therefore one that could not only not be ignored, but one whose partnership had considerable value in

assuring the government departments' goals. One could argue that the partnership now belongs to case 3 of the accountability typologies (p 20).

3.b.iii. Criteria for good partnership – are they met?

As we have seen above, the structures of accountability are quite dense in this case. Not only has the relationship between SPARC and government departments become a more responsible one, but also the relationship of the government to RSDF, the community organisation, and through it, to the community. As a result, the partnership has been a strikingly effective one in terms of meeting both the individual and collective goals of the partnership in a highly effective way. We were not able to explore the question of distributional equity in depth, but the central role of Mahila Milan means that gender equity was probably better than the norm in this case. Finally, the partnership has genuinely empowered the community by ensuring its having a central role in decision-making. To this extent, its outcomes and processes stand a good chance of being sustainable. SPARC has demonstrated through this partnership that, given the right atmosphere, ordinary people are capable of coming up with creative solutions to their problems. Furthermore, that the government has a better chance of implementing such solutions because people not only cooperate but also take ownership of these solutions. SPARC has proved through this experience that 'demolitions' and 'forced eviction' are poor and unworkable solutions as compared to a responsible rehabilitation policy with community participation.

We need to recognise, however, that in this partnership story, the government has been more or less a reluctant partner. It sought partnership only when it was forced to act by the circumstances. When it had to act, it hardly had a choice but to partner with SPARC because of its competence and proven ability in mediating with the community and professional execution of projects. In the process, SPARC became an indispensable partner in urban rehabilitation programmes.

In summary, the success of SPARC lies in the way it positioned itself so that the government was compelled to enter into a partnership with it. Government being what it is, perhaps this is the best way one can engage with it, and make it accountable to people.

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