

Partnership and Innovation in Development

by Berthold Kuhn

Governments have to respond to people's expectation of political representation and administrative service delivery. Non-government organisations have to respond to felt needs of their project beneficiaries and to sensitivities of their donors. Entrepreneurs have to respond to ever changing market demands.

DIFFERENT actors in society, the government, non-governmental organisations and the business sector, promote development with different motivations, strategies and projects. Motivations include political considerations, humanitarian endeavours and profit-making interest. Strategies are related to considerations how to best achieve the stated objectives and projects consist of activities with defined responsibilities and tasks for project executives and participants.

On the long way from motivation over strategy considerations to project implementation, common objectives may be overlooked as each actor is busy with day-to-day management and pursuing of its own institutional, organisational or entrepreneurial interests.

Innovation has to do with continuous responsiveness to changing needs and expectations of people: clients, customers, donors, and beneficiaries. Governments have to respond to people's expectation of political representation and administrative service delivery. Non-government organisations have to respond to felt needs of their project beneficiaries and to sensitivities of their donors. Entrepreneurs have to respond to ever changing market demands.

Institutions, organisations and entrepreneurs may define what is their "target group" for claiming support, demanding services or products.

Relations of people are more complex. People, clients, customers and beneficiaries are more than members of "target

groups". They interact with a variety of institutions, organisations and commercial enterprises to manage their life and gain satisfaction.

They look for opportunities and tend to care less who or which organisation or institution provides these opportunities as long as they do not engage in activities which fundamentally contradict their principles. This is all the more true in development.

Institutions, organisations and even entrepreneurs are less flexible, because the process of responding to new situations, demands and trends becomes more complicated when change threatens to challenge established rules, regulations and habits.

How can a distinctive partnership approach create an enabling environment for innovation? Partnership departs from understanding his, her or its strengths and weaknesses and the searching for complementarity.

People expect something from government and government, with limited resources, has the responsibility to cater to the needs of a maximum of people it represents. Government's low-cost service delivery approach in development is oriented towards achievements of targets. The focus tends to be rather on quantity than quality targets of service delivery in order to meet legitimate expectations of people.

NGOs face a different situation. People do not have democratically legitimated rights to ask NGOs for service deliveries. Instead, NGOs voluntarily

offer people their services. Therefore they are also known as Voluntary Organisations. NGOs are, as a matter of contractual relations, more accountable to those with whom they sign agreements for service delivery. These are in many cases donor agencies which believe in the development commitment of their partner NGO.

The comparative advantage of NGOs is that they can select their beneficiaries according to their own ideas and priorities, showing some sensitivity to government which provides the legal framework conditions for their functioning and donors which provide funding support.

Government provides NGOs with freedom if it does not feel challenged by the activities of NGOs. Donors provide NGOs with funds only if they feel that NGO have a comparative advantage over governmental organisations in working in specific areas. The advantage of NGOs lies in terms of quality and innovation. Both need special commitment and energy and cannot be easily achieved by a (governmental) institution which faces short-term expectations of a large number of people. Development of a country has to do with making quality improvements replicable on a large scale, at low costs. This is how to reconcile sustainable quality improvements with growth in development.

Partnership between NGOs and government is the way to achieve this.

Government and NGOs, as non-profit actors, are both supposed to work in areas where market mechanism fail to pro-

vide self-sustained economic development and social justice. Poverty is a dynamic concept and market mechanism may tomorrow work in areas where they previously failed. Last but not least because of successful government and NGO development interventions. When self-sustained growth can be achieved through profit-oriented market mechanism, then the time is over for subsidised government and NGO development interventions in an area. Development can only work if no actor claims exclusivity over territory, people and target groups.

This is why partnership between government, NGO and profit-oriented business is necessary. It all starts with successful innovations aiming to reduce dependencies on subsidies or charity and with making innovations replicable on larger scale. Building trust and translating theory into practice remains a major challenge for development actors in Bangladesh. Government, NGOs, the private sector and donors.

The European Commission-NGO Dialogue Project organises a workshop on "Partnership and Innovation in Development" from September 8th-10th, 1998 at the Islamic Development Bank Bhaban, Dhaka. It hopes to contribute to build such trust amongst development actors in order to build partnerships and promote innovations.

The author is Team Leader of the European Commission-NGO Dialogue Project, Bangladesh. The article reflects only the personal view of the author.

Garment Workers at HIV Risks

by Shahiduzzaman

The country's garment factories are now the main source of export revenues. But the women working at the factories are at risks of getting sexually transmitted diseases as well as deadly HIV that causes AIDS.

AT 18 Marjina — not her real name — works as a helper at a garment factory. She has a passion for cinema. But she can't save enough for the entertainment. No problem.

Her male supervisor at the factory buys tickets for her favourite films and keeps her company. Even though he is married — his wife and two children live in a village outside Dhaka city — the man one night took Marjina to his rented room and they had sex. The young girl, fresh from a remote village in southern Bangladesh, tried to say no. But how could she displease a man who showers her with favours such as buying cinema tickets?

Marjina's tale is typical of many of the unmarried women who work at the country's garment factories. More than 800,000 people work at about 3,000 garment factories in Dhaka and some other cities. Nearly 80 per cent of the workforce is female.

And an estimated 20 per cent of unmarried female garment workers engage in sex, according to a new study on the sexual behaviour of women and men in garment factories in Dhaka. The study, conducted by ActionAid Bangladesh, a UK-based development organisation, covered workers at 93 garment factories.

When a group of women at a factory was shown a condom

most of them said they have seen it, but only a few said they use it.

And Marjina and her supervisor partner have never used a condom.

While an estimated 20 per cent of unmarried female workers are having, they are alarmingly poor in their knowledge of safer sex practices, the study revealed.

During one discussion session one woman told the researchers that her husband has a swollen penis with an occasional discharge of pus. The man, a truck driver, was recently released from jail, and told her that his condition was due to maltreatment by the jail police. She does not know how to recognise Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) and so believed his story.

This lack of knowledge has made the garment factory workers specially vulnerable to acquire any form of STD or the virus that causes the fatal AIDS. This is highly alarming as the threat of HIV/AIDS epidemic looms over Bangladesh.

According to official estimate available until 1996 Bangladesh has about 2.3 million cases of STD. So far 95 cases of HIV infection have been reported in the country since 1989, of which have developed into AIDS, seven of which have been fatal.

Garments women engage in extramarital sex mainly because of poverty and in the hope

of earning some extra bucks or gifts. Even though the garment industry has provided thousands of poor women with jobs, the salary is poor. A helper's average monthly take-home pay is only Tk. 900 — not enough to rent a house and buy food.

One of the study findings: "At least 15 per cent of the women having sex with co-workers are doing so for small gifts of cash, and with the hope of security."

The financial situation of female factory workers is critical, particularly that of the helpers who get the lowest pay and thus suffer from job insecurity, a situation exploited by male colleagues who want to have sex with women. Thus even though a woman sometimes engage with more than one partner they cannot be categorised as commercial sex workers.

Workers attending clinics are reluctant to seek help in cases of STD for fear of exposure.

The report found that a large number of young male workers are also engaged in homosexual practice simply for additional income, raising the risk of STD. But they believe that sex with another male partner is risk-free from the point of STD and HIV/AIDS.

"Do something for the garment factory workers to save them from the threat of HIV/AIDS and STD," said Dr. Nafesur Rahman, Head of Dis-

ability & AIDS Coordination Unit of ActionAid. "It's also a big threat for the flourishing economy"

About the working atmosphere in garment factories, he said they work in an unhygienic environment. The water and sanitation situation is precarious in the factories, especially the toilets facility is very poor.

This unhygienic situation compounds the risk of STD and HIV/AIDS.

In terms of HIV/AIDS, Bangladesh is a low prevalence but high risk country," said the report adding, "urgent emphasis therefore needs to be given raising awareness of transmission and prevention of STD and HIV/AIDS."

Ton van Zupthen, Country Director of ActionAid Bangladesh, said "relationship between work, health, poverty and sexual behaviour of workers in this key industrial sector in Bangladesh will continue to receive attention."

The garment industry is the major foreign currency earning sector in addition to generating employment opportunities to thousands of poor women, said Rita Afsar, team leader of the study group. "So, the government as well as the private entrepreneurs should give special attention to this sector to ensure proper medical support for the workers", she said.

- News Network

Handling Technology with Care

Claude Martin writes from Gland, Switzerland

EVER since man began to make tools, his belief in his ability to invent his way out of trouble has steadily increased. Such confidence is not entirely misplaced. From the wheel and the stone axe to the internal combustion engine and the computer, technology has been crucial to the evolution of human society, increasing the capacity for action and intervention in terrestrial processes and helping to solve many problems of health, shelter, and the general conditions of life.

But as our reliance on technology has increased, so the ambivalence of its effects has become more apparent. For machines and technological processes can damage and destroy the life of our world even as in some respects they save and enhance it.

Nowhere has this technological dilemma been better explicated than in the growth of the environmental movement during the past 35 years or so. Environmentalists have drawn attention to the disastrous consequences of industrial pollution, of the slavish reliance on chemicals to boost food production, of the profligate burning of fossil fuels, and of many other effects of the human obsession with tool-making.

Yet even within the environmental movement there is disagreement over the pace, scale, and future possibilities of technological development. Some would argue, for example, that the rapid spread of electronic communications — telephone, television, the Internet, and e-mail, will ultimately reduce dramatically the world's demand for paper, thus allowing the replacement of forests we have lost during our years of dependence on the printed word.

Others, more pessimistic — or merely realistic — point out that many, perhaps most people in the world today have never seen a telephone, much less a television or a computer; they have yet even to reach the stage of the thoughtless consumption of paper and other resources about which the advanced industrialised world is now finally beginning to have a conscience. The possibilities offered by technology, for the basic quality of life, alone for environmental improvement, depend very much on where you live.

Moreover, the demands of technologically advanced societies have so far tended to increase rather than diminish pressure on dwindling natural resources. That fact not only increases the imbalance between the rich and poor countries but also raises grave doubts about what will be left for the future if "progress" continues at its current frantic pace.

My own view is that there is a place for technological solutions to the problems of over-consumption, pollution and environmental degradation, and unsustainable use of resources. But if such solutions are really to work, we must design them appropriately and make sure the technology is the best we can devise, rather than committing ourselves blindly to the first new discovery that comes to hand.

To illustrate my point, take the case of DDT, once seen as the miracle pesticide that would not only increase food production but also combat killer diseases spread by mosquitoes. Widely used in agriculture, DDT was identified by the mid-1950s as the chief weapon against malaria, one of the main causes of death in developing countries. The

World Health Organization made the chemical the centerpiece of an ambitious campaign aimed at nothing less than the total eradication of malaria.

At first, it appeared to be an outstanding success. Spraying with DDT certainly saved millions of lives as malaria was wiped out or dramatically reduced in 37 countries. But agricultural use of the pesticide was already leading to serious concerns about its safety, as demonstrated forcefully in 1962 by Rachel Carson's seminal environmentalist book, *Silent Spring*, which first raised the alarm about the deadly effects of indiscriminate use of highly toxic chemicals.

Among such chemicals is DDT, one of a group of what are called Persistent Organic Pollutants, or POPs, resisting degradation by light, chemical reaction, or living organisms. These highly toxic substances dissolve much more easily in fat than in water, accumulating in the fatty tissue of all living things, with serious consequences for long-term health. And because they evaporate at relatively low temperatures, POPs can be transported atmospherically to cause damage far away from where they are actually used.

Over the years since Rachel Carson's book, a body of evidence about the harmful effects of DDT has been collected. It is highly toxic to fish and invertebrates, can cause sex changes and eggshell thinning in bird species and damage the heart, liver, and nervous system in mammals. DDT has also been associated with reduced lactation in human mothers and is thought to cause cancer.

As a result DDT is banned from agricultural use virtually

worldwide. Yet, although it failed actually to eradicate malaria — which currently still kills up to three million people out of 500 million annual clinical cases — and in spite of the availability of more sophisticated alternative techniques, DDT remains in many cases the weapon of choice against the disease. Some 30,000 tonnes are produced each year in countries such as Russia, India, Mexico, and China.

The eradication of malaria is no longer an aim of the World Health Organization: local control of the disease is the order of the day and this can be achieved by more benign chemicals and by biological methods such as the introduction of predators to reduce mosquito numbers. The continued use of DDT is a classic example of an inappropriate technological solution that survives because it is seen as an easy way out of what is, admittedly, a desperate problem. WWF has set out to create the conditions in which the production of DDT can be phased out by 2007 at the latest. If that is achieved, it will have taken 45 years to replace a clearly harmful technological solution — and one that in any case was bound to become ineffective because of evolving resistance among the insects it was meant to wipe out — with another technological approach that is both more effective and more sustainable.

If we are to put our faith in technology to overcome the range of environmental dangers that beset us, then at least let us avoid the sort of carelessness in the use of tools that led to so much of the degradation of our environment in the first place.

The writer is Director General of WWF International, based in Gland.

Green Reporting

by Yoga Rangatia

WHEN it comes to disclosing environmental performances, Indian companies take a backseat. The Bhopal gas tragedy is an extreme example of a company's inability to handle a crisis. Despite the catastrophe, there's a Bhopal waiting to happen in almost every corner of the country.

When quizzed about making their performance public, companies usually go on a defensive. The first reaction one should expect: the information is confidential. And the alibi: regulatory authorities could crack down on us.

At a workshop, organised by the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Clean Technology Initiative (CTI) and International Resource Group (IRG), to find a way of encouraging disclosure

of companies' performance on the environmental front, it emerged that companies were not forthcoming about their environmental management procedures.

In India, about six years ago, the Company Law made it imperative for a company's balance sheet to include two more statements — one on energy conservation measures and another on the company's research and development efforts — in addition to its financial audit. But a company reports the former as if it is an intrusion into their privacy, pointed out an eminent industrialist.

Companies usually perceive that what is good environmentally may not be good economi-

cally. The price of resources, like water and energy, are not taken into consideration while accounting for the environment.

The obvious costs, according to most, are the cost of setting up and maintaining an effluent treatment plant (ETP). They often fail to realise that they spend a lot more than what they perceive. For instance, certain industries incur heavy expenditure in treating water for a product. However, a fair amount of the water comes out as industrial waste. This is an example of money lost due to wasteful use of resources.

"If an environmental engineer can translate these hidden costs to the losses incurred by

the company, it would be news for most CEOs," says Daryl Ditz, director, Environmental Risk Institute.

Banks and financial institutions play a major role by making it mandatory for companies to disclose its performance while availing of loans.

Russ Thirkell, consultant and Regional Programme Manager, United State-Asia Environmental Programme (US-AEP), speaking on the role of FIs says, "There is magic about the improvements banks achieve when they integrate environmental issues along with the other issues contained in their evaluation process. Not only does a bank 'look good' to its clients and investors, it 'feels good' to know the bank is in control of its destiny, even on those days where something goes wrong."

CSE/Down To Earth Features

The Education Revolution

by Mahjabeen Hassan

LET me clear the air right now. When I say education Revolution, I am trying to focus your minds to foreign education systems in Bangladesh, and mainly secondary school education.

With the advent of the '80s, English-medium schools began to emerge and the concept of smart, English-speaking children became increasingly popular with the parents. Every mother, worth her salt, enrolled her boy or girl into an English-medium school. Others followed suit. It was the "in" thing.

At that time, there were very few English-medium schools but soon (by the late eighties) each and every corner in Dhaka city had an English-medium school. Students in numbers have graduated each year after doing their O'LEVELS. While some went on to do A'LEVELS, others opted for intermediate, the humble Bengali-medium equivalent to A'LEVEL. Come to think of it — not many schools taught A'LEVEL back then.

Enough of the past, let's shift

our attention to the present. Today, Bangladesh, (actually Dhaka) not only has English-medium schools but also English-medium universities such as North South, East West, Stamford etc.

One aspect remains nebulous though. All the English-medium high schools in Dhaka follow the British education system (with the exception of the American High School) and the standardised tests such as O'LEVELS are handled by the University of London via the British Council. However, the English-based universities are mostly affiliated with American universities. Pretty interesting!

The classes in almost all these schools and universities are taught by the locals. Very few schools have teachers conducting subjects in which they specialised. In some schools, Biology and Physics are taught by the same teacher. The same is with Geography and Literature. Many teachers are not even graduates! Fortunately, undergraduates are usually

employed in elementary schools.

Most high school teachers know very little about what they are teaching. A person with a degree in Math cannot teach Chemistry to O'LEVEL or A'LEVEL students. No wonder experienced private tutors, who know their stuff, are so much in demand. However, this is a problem established schools usually don't face. Because most old schools dated back to the mid-seventies, have experienced teachers, impressive backgrounds and excellent results, along with a good international reputation.

Hardly any school these days follows the overall British system. High schools don't look and feel like high schools. There are no lockers, no drama or music clubs, no school sports teams. So, when they say that they follow the British system, they only mean the education part.

Many faculties in English-medium universities consist of teachers recruited from the Dhaka University or other Ben-

gal-medium universities. The biggest joke of all is the atmosphere and the premises of the universities. I know of a university, which is a few-storey tall and is in the middle of a road. The university building is squeezed between shops on either side of it. There is no campus!

The lack of proper English-medium universities are the cause of hundreds of students going abroad for higher studies. Most students opt for universities colleges in the United States require TOEFL and SAT tests for admission. This is where coaching centers come in.

They guarantee high scores, but how much this is true? Very little.

In conclusion, I would like to say that this piece is impersonal. It was not written to offend any organisation or any individual, so nobody should take offense. Furthermore, all opinions expressed here are general and have been verified by a survey.

— Mandira
The writer is a former Vice Chancellor of Delhi University.

Garfield®

by Jim Davis

