

## **Samagam 2022**

**Keynote Session:** Importance of having winning coalitions for achieving our SDGs

**Moderator:** Mr. Anoop Nautiyal, Founder, Social Development for Communities Foundation

### **Panelists:**

- 1) Ms. Shoko Noda, UNDP Resident Representative, India
- 2) Mr. S.M. Vijayanand, IAS (Retd.), Former Chief Secretary, Govt. of Kerala
- 3) Mr. Rakesh Ranjan, Senior Consultant (Security Cell/ MOD/MHA/Aspirational Districts), NITI Aayog

Ms. Shoko Noda, commenting about the tagline “One Nation, One Dream” said that the dream needs to come through true partnership. She focussed on ‘listening’ as a key component in coalitions for building a good partnership and understanding each other.

She went on to say that achieving the SDGs requires a joint effort of different sectors and actors especially CSOs, private organizations, academia, communities and the media. These sectors must work together in an integrated approach by pooling resources, ideas, knowledge, expertise, passion; and listening and understanding the community level context. UNDP globally and in India had promoted and encouraged effective public-private sector partnerships with CSOs to work for social goals collectively. UNDP as an integrator of SDGs and a connector to bring different partners together is putting in efforts for working collectively to achieve various milestones of the SDGs.

Ms. Noda drew certain examples of how UNDP had involved CSOs to facilitate accessing of vaccines and social protection skills. UNDP had extended support to communities for minimizing the impact during the pandemic. With the collaboration of Govt. of Karnataka, UNDP had launched a support initiative called ‘Akanksha’, which is a portal providing details of all CSR activities in the state which will help in easy and transparent utilization of CSR funds. The private sector is enhancing interest around achieving SDGs. She said, if India succeeds in achieving SDGs, the world will also succeed. Hence, the role of India is salient and CSOs, private sector, and all other partners play a significant role in the global achievement of SDGs. Corporates, with knowledge in business skills can contribute for development and attainment of SDGs in a diversified way, like, sustainable business practices, investment that responds to government incentives, using CSR funds for development financing and so on. Private sector can also sustain and strengthen coalitions through financial resources, technical expertise and global work. This is the decade of action for the SDGs demanding mobilization of everyone everywhere to generate ideas, innovations, applicable solutions, share experiences, successes and failures, replicate scalable ideas. We need to address the issues that our communities are facing.

She said that successful coalitions need a common shared goal, participation of all stakeholders, listening, and contribution to decision making in a non-hierarchical way. In her opinion, well-functioning coalitions have been able to identify new integrated solutions, promoted mutual understanding, and stimulated learning. The Secretary-General of United Nations had called for “global action, local action and people action.” Ms. Noda ended her address by invoking, “let’s all unite to create an unstoppable movement that will transform the entire world.”

Mr. S. M. Vijayanand started his address by sharing his experience of working for development of rural areas over the last 36 years as an administrator. He pointed out that CSO networks contributed enormously to mainstream programmes and ideas. There have been fairly solid contributions by NGOs in the form of SHGs, literacy movement, watershed management, System of Root Intensification (SRI), care giving, appropriate technology particularly in enterprises, and many more, which the government adopted later. On the other hand, there has been a significant role of advocacy NGOs in enabling the government to come up with right-based laws for issues like mental health or for people with disabilities. And it is since 1970s, through a plethora of flagship programmes, the Government of India has facilitated partnership with NGOs. But, simultaneously there are issues also. Issues related to FCRA, suspicion about some NGOs, a lot of expectation from CSRs, and declining space for advocacy NGOs.

Mr. Vijayanand stressed on identity vs ego, and mentioned that ‘identity’ can be promoted for partnership whereas ‘ego’ affects collaboration if one gets into turf issues. For building partnerships, there are several areas of development like sharing experiences, expertise, geography and looking for new opportunities. As Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) spends about Rs. 8 lakh crores in five years, NGOs must have a focus to facilitate such flexible funds for preparing local plans considering local priorities. Localising SDGs, rather “communitising SDGs” in partnership with Panchayati Raj Institutions, SHGs and CSOs should be a priority and COVID-19 showed us that these partnerships are absolutely possible without anyone’s instructions. Also, taking cue from the ‘Unnat Bharat Abhiyan’, PRIs, CSOs, SHGs partnering with academic institutions in local development for ‘communitising’ or localising SDGs should be facilitated. Taking lessons from our past challenges from the pandemic times, we should be focussing more on community based public health systems, migrant workers, SHGs, and FPOs to enhance their contribution in mitigating similar challenges in future. He shared the example of Amul and how we can organize the farmers on the principles of SHGs and later, be a part of marketing and value addition.

He urged all CSOs:

- To document critically the CSO achievements – an exhaustive platform and something beyond individual newsletters.
- Prepare a people’s register for people’s organizations – documenting details of all organisations working for people’s cause, locally or internationally.

- Form coalitions – pooling knowledge expertise, sharing resources, meetings of all CSOs once in six months at the block level.
- (Big CSOs) Mentor the new/small CSOs in terms of building capacity, system development, accessing funds etc.

In order to maintain the accountability of NGOs, he suggested having social audit which would enhance the soft power of NGOs, increase their transparency and also their funding scope. He ended his address with a message to all NGOs, “If you can cooperate, you will succeed, if you compete you will perish. Look outwards and not inwards.”

Mr. Rakesh Ranjan mentioned about the importance of actively engaging with CSOs by the government for reaching out to its citizens. He shared that the NITI Aayog has anchored a programme at the Government of India level called Aspirational District Programme where 112 districts were identified, at least one from each state to improve governance in these districts, based on some of the key performance indicators like health & nutrition, education, agriculture and water resource management, financial inclusion and skill development and basic infrastructure. These indicators focused on improving the quality of life and economic productivity of a citizen. The districts weren't given additional funds but provided a method, mechanism, dashboard and monitoring system for understanding the area, measuring progress, identifying scope of improvement and ranking the district. Competitiveness among government departments to outperform the other one in contributing to the success of the mission needs to be encouraged. There is a chance of unreliable data being shared and certain people would remain left behind in the programme, but with mechanisms to deal with these issues the larger goal can be achieved. Although, there are inter-district variations, the effort is to adopt the same process of monitoring, better understanding of people's priority and bring more efficiencies into the government system to improve the performance at the blocks level.

He highlighted few aspects of this programme-

- NITI Aayog provides a platform for CSOs, foundations and NGOs to work with government with an integrated approach.
- NITI Aayog worked with big organisations in the first phase who have the required funds and ground presence, and facilitated to improve their interface with the district administration to enhance performance of the blocks.
- There are other organisations with required capacity but don't have sufficient funds. On that aspect, in the second phase, NITI Aayog involved CSRs and Foundations having their own resources, intending to do meaningful development work. NITI Aayog is helping them collaborate with good NGOs, and improve outcomes by adopting an area saturation approach.

NITI Aayog, with help from Piramal Foundation, is creating a platform where, with assistance from NGOs, the Foundation will play the role of a catalyst in local area

development and partner with the district administration. NITI Aayog has initiated a study and an experiment to develop a model at the block level and welcomes collaboration to bring changes in the government system, and which by design engages CSOs to address the block's problems. Understanding their strengths and actively engaging CSOs with district administration can bring transformational change and overcome the challenge of reaching the last mile.