Funding Report Form
Global Standard for CSO Accountability – Extension Phase 2018/19

SECTION 1: General Information

Name of organisation that received funds: Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)
Project title: Strengthening Civil Society in India and South Asia: Promoting Accountability and Building Positive Narrative
Funding period (start and end date): October 2019 – November 2020 (Report Preparation in December 2020)
Grant Amount: Euros 19,988

Main contact person
Name: Mr. Harsh Jaitli
Position title: CEO
Telephone: 9717473474
Email: harsh@vaniindia.org

SECTION 2: Achievements and Impact

1. Purpose of funding request:

VANI had proposed to take forward the following objectives of the Global Standard in the second extension phase:

- Strengthen the CSOs capacity to engage with Global Standard
- Create a knowledge pool on Global Standard and Dynamic Accountability
- Promote the use of Global Standard
- Inspire and nurture Global Standard and Dynamic Accountability

2. Summary of project accomplishments during grant period:

The period witnessed one of the most successful promotion of Global Standard through extensive and continued use of Social Media (an opportunity in disguise due to ongoing restrictions due to the global pandemic COVID-19). Over a period of 12 months, 39 Social Media posts on Global Standard were shared by VANI with stakeholders on Facebook. These posts were received and liked by 15,181 and about 150 shares from followers in 10 countries including Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan, United States of America, United Kingdom, Austria, Canada, France and India.

VANI Prepared a Compendium of Case Studies entitled, “Global Standard, Accountability Practices and Indian CSOs in times of COVID-19”, reflecting the accountability practices based on the 12 Commitments of Global Standard, adopted by
Indian CSOs in general and during the times of COVID-19. This I envisaged to serve as a strong tool to build a positive narrative of the sector in the coming months.

Global Standard Commitment focussed digital discussions (on context related critical commitments Number 5, 6 and 12 of people driven work, strong partnerships and Responsible Leadership) undertaken were very well received. They helped in collectivising CSO nationally, regionally and state-wise, thereby expanding to outreach to CSOs at grass-root levels, who could not reach physically in the past due to resource constraints.

Through our participation in Global Dialogues (organised by ACFID and during the Global Accountability Week) VANI was able to promote Global Standard among networks including AGNA, Forus and ADA.

Following our past engagement with BTI Bhutan, VANI has been invited by to support in internalising of Global Standard amongst CSOs in Bhutan. The Workshops on Global Standard are being planned by BTI in mid-December.

VANI’s CEO, Mr. Harsh Jaitli was invited by Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India to be a Member of Advisory cum Technical Committee on development of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Exchange Portal which the Ministry has constituted in February 2020. Thereafter, he was also invited as a member to the sub-group re-constituted by Niti Aayog, a think tank set up by Government of India. VANI is leveraging the opportunity and has been promoting Global Standard with concerned officials with the Ministry.

3. List of activities during the grant period:

Following are our activities undertaken in the second extension phase to meet the above objectives

A. VANI played a very active role promoting Global Standard and Dynamic Accountability practices amongst CSOs. In this year of restrictive movement (both nationally and internationally), VANI made use of digital media extensively to spread the message about Global Standard throughout the year. Innovative collaterals (capacity building social media posts, compendium of effective case studies) were prepared and rolled out on social media as well as shared directly with Stakeholders via e-mails. The stakeholders include over 611 VANI’s member Indian CSOs and estimated 8,000 others (including non-members, CSOs & networks in South Asia, members of AGNA, ADA and Forus). Digital meetings were held at National, Regional and State Level.
1. **Audio-visual clips for YouTube, Facebook & Twitter**

   ![YouTube link](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4mLwkvTsVg&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1yU5HwSszrW48GRrzrYS3_Z8Xt6xbMAGYn07F_rBjhEOq-Q2wolf4dAs)

   ![YouTube link](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WteHBYPkoCA)

2. **VANI promoting Global Standards on Twitter**

   VANI's Journey with Global Standard and its relevance to Indian CSOs and those in South Asia.

   [https://twitter.com/vani_info/status/1179626093524840448](https://twitter.com/vani_info/status/1179626093524840448)

3. **Facebook Posts**

   - Linking Facebook Posts to relevant contexts for better receptivity.

   For example - Our Facebook Post linked 150th Birth Anniversary (2nd October 2019) celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi and message to be accountable and further creating a linkage of the message with Global Standard.

4. **E-Brochure** prepared on VANI and its work on accountability and association with Global Standard, shared via e-mails to over 560-member CSOs and about 2,500 non-member voluntary organisations and some CSOs in Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan.
5. **Factsheets on Global Standard for CSO Accountability on Facebook**

6. **Global Standard on VANI's Website and on VANI's Strategic Plan**

In November - December 2019, VANI revamped its website to make it look vibrant. Since promoting of Accountability and Transparency amongst Indian CSOs is the key focus area of VANI, information about Global Standard and write-up about our association with it since its conceptualisation has been added along with the link to Global Standard website.


Our recently revised Strategy Document 2019-2022, having reference to Global Standard was also added to the website and is available on the following link: [https://www.vaniindia.org/admin-latest/images/STRATEGIC%20PLAN%20OF%20VANI%202019-2022.pdf](https://www.vaniindia.org/admin-latest/images/STRATEGIC%20PLAN%20OF%20VANI%202019-2022.pdf)

7. **Global Standard Publication – Compendium of effective Case Studies:**

In the initial project proposal, VANI had proposed two training of trainers, which could not take place due to prevailing restrictions due to COVID-19. Foreseeing the situation, VANI immediately planned a Social Media Campaign in early April, to build CSOs capacities as well as reinforce the message for adherence to the 12 Accountability Commitments. This was followed up by sharing of a consolidated deck of slides about Global Standard commitments with various stakeholders via e-mails. To make the exercise involving and engaging for CSOs, the creatives were shared in the form of power-point presentation with scope for seeking
feedback about different accountable practices adopted by CSO them in general and during COVID-19 times. In total over 10,500 e-mails in total were sent from 25th April to 20th May. The reminder mails served dual purpose of re-iterating the message and seeking feedback. This exercise was initiated to collate case studies of good practices. 31 case studies were received. out of which a compendium 18 strong case studies entitled “Global Standard, Accountability Practices and Indian CSOs in times of COVID-19” (attached along-with) was developed. This is being used as an effective tool to further Global Standard within India and outside. The Publication is attached along-with the report as Annexure 1. The publication is being disseminated. Till the time of report preparation, it has been shared with 5,000 stakeholders. Feedback received from the CSO is attached as Annexure 6. We intend to share it with approximately 5,000 stakeholders including members, non-members, Government Officials, Academicians, Accreditation Agencies, CSR Professionals, Corporate and so on.

8. Four Digital Meetings over Zoom:

In the wake of Covid-19 and prevailing travel restrictions, VANI organised four digital meetings, linking India’s current CSO context with the different Global Standard commitments.

The first dialogue in the series was an National Level e-dialogue entitled, The Changing Nature and Challenges of Governing Board of Non-Profits “(in line with Global Standard Commitment Number 12 – Responsible Leadership) organised on 11th September. With consistently growing competition for funding, high demands for transparency & accountability, increased regulation for non-profit organizations and additional challenges posed by COVID-19, the dialogue focussed on tremendous pressure faced by boards. Over 60 National level Leaders and Chief Executive Officers of NPOs and representatives from CSOs participated in the discussion. Actual and expected Composition, Engagement and Contribution of CSO Board Members and how they can support in driving the overall mission and vision of organisations towards sustainability, solidarity and social transformation was discussed. A detailed meeting report is attached along with as Annexure 2. Feedback received from participants during the discussion is attached as Annexure 8.

The other three digital discussions, in line with Global Standard Commitment Number 5 – People Driven Work, were undertaken at Regional (CSOs of South India) and State Levels Networks (CSOs of Maharashtra State Network - MAHAVAN and CSOs of Jharkhand State Network – Jharvan).

These dialogues were organised subsequent to the passing of FCRA Act 2020 by the Government of India in September 2020. Besides other regulations, the law impacted
CSOs (majorly those working at grass-root levels) by completely putting to halt sub-granting of foreign funds. This shall severely impact People Driven Work undertaken by CSOs. In order to prepare the grass-root level CSOs and strengthen collaboration at state and regional level, VANI organised the following three dialogues, urging CSOs to become resilient is by strengthening our People Driven Work by strengthening existing relationships with stakeholders including communities, staff, peers, media, donors and government.

The first in the series of dialogue at State Level, VANI organised an e-dialogue entitled, "Changing Landscape and its Impact on People Driven Work”, on Saturday, 17th October. 62 CSO Heads and Representatives from CSO from the state of Maharashtra, members of MAHAVAN network, participated in the meeting and discussed on ways to become resilient through strengthening collaborations, local fundraising through enhanced engagement, creation of friends outside of the sector and building of positive narrative about the sector. Detailed Report attached as Annexure 3.  

On similar lines, the second State Level E-Dialogue on People Driven Work was organised with the CSOs of Jharkhand on 5th November. 54 CSO Heads and Representatives from CSO from the state of Jharkhand, members of JHARVAN network, participated in the meeting. Need for continued dialogue and connect, upscaling of sustainable models developed locally, enhanced engagement with new stakeholders like Banks, financial intermediary organisations, Corporate and community and enhancing of Accountability and Transparency for enhanced crebility and trust were accepted as the need of the hour. Meeting report attached as Annexure 4. The feedback received from participants during the E-Dialogues is attached as Annexure 9. 

The third digital dialogue was with the CSOs of South India Regional Network, organised on Monday, 9th November. 67 participants from the five southern states including Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana participated in the meeting. Need for collectivisation, strengthening of state, regional and national level CSO networks was
mentioned. As also the need to strengthening collaboration to take forward people driven work. Meeting Report is attached as Annexure 5.

9. Five Social Media Campaign:

VANI undertook five social media campaigns on pre-identified special days. Social Media posts were shared over Facebook, Twitter, Linked-in.

i) On World Environment Day – 5th June, VANI brought to focus Global Standard Commitment Number 3 and 4 about the need for Healthy Planet and Lasting Positive Change and the ways of achieving them. The Social Media Post was shared on VANI’s facebook page, Twitter and sent via e-mail to about 5000 stakeholders.

ii) On the occasion of World Humanitarian Day, on 19th August, 2020, VANI, through its Social Media Post, yet again drew attention of Stakeholders on Global Standard Commitment Number 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 9. Through the caption explaining Humanitarianism, which is based on a view that all human beings deserve respect and dignity and should be treated as such. VANI tried to contextualise Global Standard and make the commitments relatable to them. This post too was shared on Social Media Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn. Direct Mailers were sent to 5000 stakeholders.

iii) On the Occasion of International Day of Democracy, on 15th September, a Social Media Post linking Democracy to Global Standard Commitments. Through its message, “Democracy feeds on argument, on discussion as to the right way forward.
The reason why respecting the opinion of others belongs to democracy", Richard von Weizsäcker, Former President of Germany...

The message was shared with a message urging CSOs to reaffirm their true spirit of democracy, participation, feedback seeking, responsive decision making, responsible leadership and more in our organisations by adopting Global Standard for CSO Accountability" adherence to Global Standard Commitment Number 8,9,11 were urged.

iv) On the occasion of Universal Access to Information Day, VANI urged CSOs, through Social Media Post, to enhance trustworthiness by adhering to Global Standard Commitment Number 8,11, 6 and 7. The Social Media Post was shared on Facebook, LinkedIn. Direct mails were sent to over 5000 stakeholders.

v) 2nd October is a very important Day for Indians, as it marks the Birth Anniversary of our Father of the Nation – Mahatma Gandhi. He is known for his strong values, determination and connect with people. Through this relevant and impactful picture, an attempt was made to relate to his values with those of Global Standard. An urge for organisations to become responsible organisations was put forth, through Facebook, LinkedIn. E-Mails were sent to over 8000 stakeholders over two days (1st and 2nd October).

10. Engagement with Global Standard Project Partners
Mr. Harsh Jaitli, VANI’s CEO was invited by ACFID on 26th August, to talk about Global Civil Society Perspectives in 2020. During his deliberation, he spoke about Global Standard initiative and the need for enhanced collaboration and strengthened accountability practices amongst CSOs, in order to build the much-needed positive narrative of the Civil Society Sector. This caught the attention of the fellow speaker from Japan, who expressed his interest in the initiative. We will be happy to collectively with ACFID and CCC take forward the talks with him about furthering Global Standard in Japan.

VANI in Global Standard Newsletters


VANI’s Testimony in Global Standard Newsletter #6 – October 2020

11. Global Accountability Week

VANI’s CEO, Mr. Harsh Jaitli participated as a speaker in two sessions on Day 2 and 5 respectively, at the Global Accountability week, where he spoke about need for collaboration, building of positive narrative and strengthening of accountability practices.

https://www.facebook.com/CIVICUS/videos/2774190999506010/UzpfsTEyMjA2NjQxMTE3MjA4MjozNjA4MDQ0MDg5MjQwOTQ2/?t=n=2Cd=2Cp=R&eid=ARCaEioLAaL6g3daEIOoG4IQVVRkowSMGrAAtNwpc8RPUsL9-QLmD-uVQKh47QF2ij4wHECMFvs4c
12. Advocacy with Government of India: VANI has been advocating with the Government of India for its endorsed regulatory framework for Indian CSOs. Mr. Harsh Jaitli, CEO, VANI was invited to be a member to an Advisory Cum Technical Committee for development of CSR Exchange portal, set up by Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India. Leveraging the opportunity, a note on reinforcing our demand resonating with Global Standard, was submitted to Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs in April 2020. Mr. Jaitli has also been invited to the Sub-Group reconstituted by Niti Aayog, a think-tank set up by Government of India.

4. Progress of outcomes (refer to original outcomes proposed in the application):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Achieved? (Yes/No)</th>
<th>Achievements and measurements of success</th>
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<tr>
<th>Increased CSOs capacities With Global Standard</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<td>Contextualised Social media campaign undertaken by VANI in early April (during the nation-wide lockdown) relating Global Standard Commitments to COVID-19 helped us in showcasing the relevance and easy adoptability of the standards by CSOs.</td>
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Case Studies shared thereafter by CSOs, ranged from large ones to those operating at a micro level. They showcased organisations valuing views of team members and adopting ways to co-create projects for the benefit of vulnerable communities. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 and its impact on the lifestyle, it was heartening to see organisations particularly the small ones continued to follow good practices.

Similarly, the digital dialogues helped VANI to draw attention of CSOs on individual commitments, for instance, the need for responsible leadership and ways of increasing the effectiveness of Boards, drew attention towards Global Standard Commitment number 12 – Responsible Leadership. Similarly, the regional and state level dialogues stressed the need for continued focus towards People Driven Work (Global Standard Commitment No. 5) through strong partnerships (Commitment Number 6). Annexure 8 and 9 for feedback on State and National Level Digital Dialogues.

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<tr>
<th>Use of Global Standard promoted</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<td>Yes, as mentioned above, the social media posts were designed towards the different commitments and about the ways to adopting them. For example – Social Media Posts on Global Standard Commitment Number 2 – during COVID-19 urged CSOs to think about reaching the benefits of schemes offered by the Government to reach the women amongst their communities; it also drew their attention towards ensuring that their women employees ensured adequate support in trying times of COVID-19. The case studies shared by organisations reflect the message was well received by organisations.</td>
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5. Who has benefited from this project? Direct and indirect?

**Civil Society Organisations (CSOs):** Capacities of Indian CSOs and those of networks like AGNA, ADA and Forus was built. The Social Media campaigns and digital connect helped us reach the unreached, especially members of the regional and state level networks, who could not be accommodated in physical dialogues at national level due to resource constraints, could be accommodated in regional, state and national level digital dialogues. Also, through the social media connect, we were able to reinforce different commitments and the ways to adopt them through contextualised messages. The follow-up information docket after social media campaign served the dual purpose – it helped build capacities and fed into a powerful compendium of best practices which will serve as a reference tool for many CSOs to follow food accountability practices.

**Donors:** The compendium of accountability practices have been and shall be shared with different stakeholders. This will go a long way in building a positive narrative of the sector amongst different stakeholders.

**Government:** VANI has shared its Code of Conduct and Global Standard for CSO accountability with the members of the sub-committee of Niti Aayog, Ministry of Corporate Affairs etc. Going forward, VANI shall be interacting further with the government officials to further to discussions.
Accreditation Agencies: As reported in past, VANI has been and shall continue advocating with the accreditation agencies for identification of common accountability parameters, their universal recognition and streamlining of assessment indicators to make them relevant for the changing Indian context. This shall benefit the small and grass-root level CSOs and the corporate (who are in need to credible voluntary organisations as part of CSR initiative). Representatives of Accreditation agencies were a part of the National Level Dialogue organised by VANI in September. The compendium on Global Standard case studies has been shared with them.

Media: There is an urgent need for the sector to sensitize media about the accountability practices adopted by civil society in order to seek their support in building a positive image of the sector. Compendium of effective case studies is being shared with media personnel to build a positive narrative of the sector.

6. How were different stakeholders engaged?

Due to prevailing restrictions due to COVID-19, Constant engagement with stakeholders was ensured via:

A. E-Mails: Sharing of event reports
B. Social Media Platforms: Facebook, Twitter and VANI’s website
C. Telephone calls

7. Which steps have been taken to ensure the sustainability of the project?

VANI has tried to build capacities of CSOs and state and regional level networks on Global Standards and Dynamic Accountability. We are trying for possibility of funding from other donors and corporate for taking the initiative forward.

8. How were gender-specific objectives achieved in the implementation of the project? What worked well, what did not?

Yes, gender specific issues and programming were included in all VANI’s activities. The Social Media post developed as part of Social Media Campaign urged organisations to look into activities and interventions through gender lens. It drew attention to meeting the needs of women at two levels – external and internal. Also, VANI ensured representation of women in all the interventions through the year.

On International Women’s Day, VANI launched a study on Status of Gender Centric Policies and Practices amongst CSOs of India (commissioned by another donor). The report prepared carries the poster prepared
for Global Standard and carries information about the initiative and Commitment number 2. Report prepared is attached as Annexure 7.

9. How did you manage environmental implications of the project? What worked well, what did not?

As part of internal system strengthening, VANI generates awareness amongst Indian Voluntary Organisations to adopt environment friendly policies and practices. Through Social Media posts VANI encouraged responsible use of water during COVID-19 times. The compendium of case studies developed carries examples of use of environment friendly practices like organic farming, use of local material, discouraging packaged food as some of the examples towards saving the planet. In addition, VANI has been encouraging paper-less/digital work culture, reducing carbon footprints by using public mode of transportation, conserving electricity, rain water harvesting, encouraging reuse of water, pooling in of resources. VANI will continue to focus on this critical area in our interventions including the trainings and other interventions.

10. Identify any risks that did occur during the implementation phase, how you dealt with them and any impact on the organisation and team as well as on the outcomes of the project. Please refer to the risks identified in the project proposal as well as any risks that may came up during the implementation of the project.

During the project implementation phase many risks some foreseen (changes in regulation especially around Finance Bill 2020, proposed amendments to the CSR Act, FCRA Act 2020) and others not (COVID-19 its uncertainty, restrictions and its impact) were witnessed.

Changes in Regulation

The Government of India, in February 2020 announced amendments to the Finance Act. The changes are likely to impact 2.20 Lakh institutions exempted under the Income Tax Law of our country. They were to file for a revalidation of their registration between June-August. 2020, which has been deferred to the next Financial year due to prevailing COVID-19 conditions. The move has not just increased the administrative obligations on NGOs but put their very existence at stake. As the financial implications by way of heavy penalties in case of non-renewal may be way beyond the paying capacities of NGOs who already work on meagre resources. VANI immediately got in to action to create awareness and build capacities of CSOs to be ready to comply with the changes (in case the changes were to be implemented from June).

The next blow to the sector came in March with the proposed amendments under the CSR Act mandating CSR spend (2% of their profits) by companies on development initiatives. The proposed amendments implied exclusion of registered charitable Trusts and Societies from CSR ambit. In India most of the CSOs are registered under Societies and Trusts. As the voice of the sector VANI immediately collectivised the sector and
encourage them to raise their concern with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, opposing
the proposed move. The decision has been out on hold for the time being.

Thereafter, in latter March of March, a Trust in the name of PM Cares Fund was set up
as a dedicated national fund, with the objective of dealing with any kind of emergency or
distress situation, like that posed by COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in diversion of
funds received by CSOs towards the PM Cares Fund. As it is the CSOs were facing the
resource depletion towards COVID-19 focussed intervention.

The last blow came in the form of FCRA Act 2020, which has increased restrictions on
receipt and use of foreign funds by CSOs. Amongst other things, the major changes
proposed that affect the sector big time are - The Act has completely halted sub-grant of
monies between (FCRA holding organisations) within India. While an FCRA holding
organisation may receive money directly from a foreign source, sub-grant of the same
within India is not possible. The second major change was regarding the change in
proportion of money towards Programmatic and Administrative expenses (as per defines
rues) from a 50:50 to 80:20. The third change was receipt of all foreign funds into a
specified branch of a specific bank (that will serve as a gateway for all foreign funds
received by any organisation). While VANI is not affected much by the proposed change,
because the funds received by VANI are direct and it neither accepts or disburses sub-
grants to CSOs. The programmatic and administrative expenses fall in the specified
range, but VANI, as a network of CSOs initiated the task of creating awareness about
the changed act to CSOs at grass-root level and supported them, through digital
dialogues at state and regional level to encourage compliance and explore ways to build
resilience.

Challenges due to COVID-19

With over 9.5 million positive cases and over 138 thousand fatalities, India stands at
second position amongst the most COVID-19 affected nations. Despite predictions for
situation improvement there has been a continuous increase in the incidence ever since
March 2020. Despite the initial nation-wide lockdown, which began in latter half of
March, lasted for almost two months, and staggered opening up of economy (following a
substantive drop in GDP due to COVID-19) thereafter, the restrictions around organising
of large physical interventions prevailed. VANI was not only quick enough to adapt to the
‘new normal’ itself by going digital, it encouraged its member organisations to adapt to
the new normal as well. By bringing out facilitating toolkits, VANI supported small and
grassroot level organisations to participate and organise digital meets over Zoom and
other digital platforms. In addition, VANI played a critical role in dissemination of critical
information and guidelines issued by Government of India, to CSOs. Through its e-
newsletter, VANI helped in building a positive narrative of the sector by showcasing the
exemplary work undertaken by the sector.

11. Identify and discuss any challenges related to the project funded and how you
dealt with them.
In addition to the challenges mentioned above, based on proposed prediction of a situation improvement in latter part of the year, VANI had planned a small physical meeting of 5-7 CSO Leaders in Delhi in October/November. Despite the incremental increase in incidence of COVID-19 cases in Delhi in November, following the festive season, VANI planned for a meeting of 5 CSO Leaders on 30th November. However, the meeting had to be called off at the eleventh hour, following advise by participants quoting health as well as safety concerns (following an ongoing large-scale farmers agitation against the passing of Farmers Act).

12. Are you satisfied with your current results? What would you like to do differently in the future?

Yes, we are completely satisfied with the current results. Despite extremely trying times and conditions, VANI was able to meet its commitments towards preparing a strong and effective civil society. In future, we hope for situation improvement and look forward to a hybrid model to make our interventions even more effective.

SECTION 3: Financial Reporting
Please provide us with
• a detailed financial report based on the budget provided with the project proposal
• a narrative to the financial report, explaining key changes, challenges or highlights that affected expenditures

SECTION 4: Comments
Please share any additional information you believe is relevant to this grant.
Annex 2

The Changing Nature and Challenges of Governing Board of Non-Profits
An e-conversation with CSO Leaders

Friday, 11th September, 2020; 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Meeting ID: 858 0425 4218 ; Passcode: 574216

A Report
Changing Nature and Challenges of Governing Board of Non-Profits

Context

With consistently growing competition for funding, high demands for transparency & accountability, increased regulation for non-profit organizations and additional challenges posed by COVID-19, boards of non-profit organisations in India are currently under tremendous pressure to become more effective in their governance role. The increasing board diversity within the sector’s governance with inclusion of members from varied domain including corporate, entertainment, sports and so on, has set out a need for redefining expectations from and by the boards. Also, there have been amplifying regulatory demands in terms of increased disclosures from not for profit organization’s board members be it for FCRA, Income Tax or Darpan purposes. Board members in the civil society sector serve in organisations in voluntary capacity. Increased compliances, resulting in additional administrative requirements, have reportedly resulted in mid-way drop out of many time-constrained key valuable members, from many voluntary organisations. Another reason for opting out is concern around sharing of too many personal details. VANI has been working towards strengthening of internal governance of CSOs and has been a part of a Global Accountability initiative – Global Standard for CSO Accountability. The standard set out 12 Accountability Commitments, that are comprehensive and are being acknowledged world wide as a way to establish credibility and strengthen trust amongst stakeholders. One of the commitments under Global Standard is Commitment Number 12 – Responsible Leadership, that stresses on the accountability of Governing Body and about ensuring responsible, visionary and innovative leadership. To further this dialogue and strengthen the capacities of CSOs on this aspect, VANI organized a National Level Digital Dialogue entitled, “Changing Nature and Challenges of Governing Board of Non-Profits, on 11th September 2020. The meeting witnessed participation of 60 participants, which included Senior Sector Leaders, CEOs and representatives of CSOs from across the country. Amongst the speakers were eminent personalities including Mr. Amitabh Behar, CEO Oxfam India, Mr. Binoy Acharya, Member Secretary, Unnati, Mr. Harsh Jaitli, CEO, VANI, Mr. Jagadananda, Member and Co-Founder, CYSD, Ms. Puja Marwaha, CEO, CRY India and Dr. Rajesh Tandon, Founder President, PRIA. All the speakers are senior sector leaders and have represented VANI’s Board at different times.
Mr. Harsh Jaitli, CEO VANI welcomed that participants and introduced the topic for discussion. He mentioned about the changing nature and composition of boards over the last few years which has led to change in expectations from and of the board members. He opined that due to change in composition the type of interactions within organisations varying due to changed orientation of people towards process and/or result. He further expressed his concern over the rising scrutiny and demand for disclosures from Governing Board Members by Government and how it has resulted in their declining the offer to join organisations or leaving them mid-way, resulting in an opportunity miss and/or loss of talent.

Reason for change in composition and nature of boards, especially in the last about a decade was due to change in source of funding from traditional sources to CSR and corporate money was mentioned by one of the speakers. As per a paper of Harvard business school, the main function of the board is strategic business advise. Whereas the UK’s charity commission focuses on the purpose. Another role identified is relationship with other stakeholders in society to be transparent and accountable.

Another speaker shared a checklist of where CSOs are and what is the changing nature of boards was shared.

- Integrity with organisations mission
- Need to ensure relevance and evolve with the needs of organisations beneficiaries
- Having the right technical skills, connections
- Agility and participation
- Understanding of legal, statutory and fiduciary responsibilities
Challenges faced

Some of the challenges laid out by the speakers included continuous increase in scrutiny, despite earnest efforts on the part of civil society organisations to showcase compliance and adherence, which they felt is stricter in comparison to those for other sectors. They also raised concerns about the size, skill and operational diversity amongst the CSOs. They questioned the universalities of professionalization demand even at village, taluka or block level, may involve local people, where organisations may ill-afford them. The movement in boards being strategic boards or solidarity boards or empowerment boards to becoming accountability (procedural and not substantive accountability relating to vision and mission) boards or even worse, compliance boards, was also a matter of concern. They also expressed concern around the lack of communication from statutory authority on holding of on-line board meetings during the time of ongoing pandemic. The sector has developed accountability and impact indicators as science for the last 25 years and yet allowed this impression to build that we are not accountable organisations and that everything is intangible.

Way forward towards building an effective CSO Board

The participants unanimously agreed on the importance of having elected transformative board that is diverse and having members from the community, indigenous people and like-minded ‘comrades’ to increase the organizations’ effectiveness. The speakers urged the sector to undertake a fundamental re-think on the whole question of accountability, conflict of interest. They called for a greater alignment of values and strategic vision amongst the board members. Where democracy is getting reshaped, they urged the board members to instill courage in the entire team, in the organisation, to hold on to values that CSOs talk about. There is a need to bring on people who are committed to CSOs cause and keep the power dynamics in the board balanced.
The participants agreed that one of the key things CSOs have to do is to hold accountability above all to the people in whose names they exist, in whose names they raise money and work. They agreed that diversity needs to be accompanied by competency else it will become tokenism. Encouraging the culture for risk taking and experimentation, identifying and mentoring second line leadership, managing external linkages and accountability are critical. Value promoting, strategic guidance and review of board performance were identified as critical to boards. A need for Board to maintain a 360 degree relationship and perform the function of ensuring the organization’s Vision and Mission are met and safeguarding its relevance; Role viz-a-viz accountability of programming to mission; was stressed.

**Key Action Points**

- There is a need to study what is happening elsewhere in other sectors and how Indian CSOs can move forward
- Need for a detailed study to co-relate the challenges with boards was expressed.
- Need to assess the accountability models of those seeking accountability from us.
- Documentation of good practices in CSOs and propose them according to size and nature of organisation.

**Conclusion**

The meeting ended with a Vote of Thanks by Mr. Harsh Jaitli, CEO, VANI.
A Report

Changing Landscape and its Impact on People Driven Work
E-Discussion with MAHAVAN Members
17th October, 11:00 a.m.
Meeting ID: 891 9027 2892; Passcode: 967444

Session Facilitators

Mr. Harsh Jaitli, CEO VANI
Mr. Datta Patil, DG VRA
Changing Landscape and its Impact on People Driven Work  
A Dialogue with Maharashtra CSOs

Context

The year 2020 has been particularly challenging for the Indian CSOs. Ever since the onset of the pandemic COVID-19 in India in the first quarter of the year, CSOs had put in their heart, soul and even resources (whether funded or out of their own pockets) towards mitigating the effects within the communities that they have been work with, their staff and other stakeholders.

To add to our woes, changes were announced restricting their operational space, through the Finance Act 2020 and FCRA Act 2020. The Finance Act 2020 added to our administrative obligations including revalidation of 80G, 12A, 12AA and 10(23)C certifications issued under the income tax act and its subsequent renewal after every five years. The FCRA 2020 put a halt to the sub-granting of foreign funds severely impacting social projects at the grass-root level with immediate effect (since September). With an economy running low due to COVID-19, there is little hope from the CSR to fill in the fund resource gap to cater the social development needs on which CSOs work.

In order to build the collectivise the CSOs at state level, and build their capacities, VANI organised a digital meeting entitled, Changing Landscape and Its Impact on People Driven Work, on 17th October, with the CSOs of State Network of Maharashtra – Mahavan. The aim of the meeting was to support CSOs in becoming resilient by strengthening their People Driven Work (Global Standard Commitment Number 5). This implies strengthening existing relationships with our stakeholders including communities, staff, peers, media, donors, government and so on. 62 CSO Heads and Representatives from CSO from the state of Maharashtra participated in the meeting.

Challenges

New work culture of work from home, resource depletion and stricter legislation have been affecting CSOs work especially amongst the small and grassroot level organisations. The concern around the sector uniting at the time of crisis and disintegrating soon after the issue was resolved was shared. The participants shared that the economic slump will reflect in CSR spend in coming times. As it is, the low proportion of CSR spend reaching the grassroots level, since the Act implementation over five year back, was discussed. The participants were reminded of the contribution of the sector in setting up the development model to analyse social problems and find ways to address the gaps. However,
regardless of the contribution, they shared concern around survival of organisations and sustenance of employees in shrinking operational space and depleting resources.

**Way Forward**

VANI’s board has decided to raise Indian resources so that we have flexibility for raising such issues. The participants agreed for a need to be pro-active rather than reactive in approach. Need for strengthening collectivisation was also shared. In the larger interest of small and grassroot level organisations, strengthening of CSO networks at State, Regional and National level was stressed. Strengthening relations with local administration like Block Development Officers was mentioned with the vision to leverage relationship in the long run. Engagement with industrialists, corporate and politicians was also stressed. The participants stressed on the need to make CSR more sector friendly. Some of the participants political leaders. Some of the participants suggested CSOs to address the situation with a twin approach of Adoption and Mitigation. Through Adoption, they were referring to capacity building of small and grassroot level organisation on compliance and mitigation through advocacy with Parliamentarians. With regard to resource mobilisation, the group felt the need for exploring alternate mechanisms like becoming a social enterprise was a suggested option. Collaboration with different stakeholders was including influencing of media – to put forward friendly media to reflect good case studies and raise funds from individuals was another way suggested. The group further recommended Consolidation of national level, regional and state level networks to create
a network of networks as a part of mitigation strategy is necessary. Coming together of networks like VANI, AFARM, MAHAVAN to play a collective role for unified efforts.

Key Action Points

- Need to design a strategy for drafting a demand charter
- Explore possibility of initiating a CSO Care fund
- Consolidation of sector and strengthening and collaboration between networks
- Engagement with advocates for legal and political strategy
- CSO policy needs to be resuscitated

Vote of Thanks

With this VANI’s CEO, Mr. Harsh Jaitli extended a formal vote of thanks for all members.
Annex 4

A Report

Changing Landscape and its Impact on People Driven Work
E-Dialouge of Jharkand CSO
Thursday, 5 November, 2020
3:00 - 4:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting id: 830 2891 6433; Password: 714667

Session facilitators

A.K. Singh
Director,
LEADS India

Kanchi Jyoti
VANI/Jan

GLOBAL STANDARD ACCOUNTABILITY
Changing Landscape and Its Impact on People Driven Work

Dialogue with Jharkhand CSOs

The operational landscape for Indian CSOs has changed very fast in the year 2020. On one end, there was the challenge the organisations faced due to the ongoing global pandemic - COVID-19, which resulted in change in the workstyle of organisations, change in the work area. In some cases, there was an observed shift in donor preferences towards COVID-19 focussed activities, which led to a decrease in resources for organisations to carry out their routine interventions. The end were constant challenges inflicted on CSOs with changes in legislation (Finance Act 2020, FCRA Act 2020) brought out by the Government of India, that posed serious existential challenges for many CSOs operating at the grass-root level.

In order to build the collectivise the CSOs at state level, and build their capacities, VANI organised a digital meeting entitled, Changing Landscape and Its Impact on People Driven Work, on 17th October, with the CSOs of State Network of Jharkhand – Jharvan. The aim of the meeting was to support CSOs in becoming resilient by strengthening their People Driven Work (Global Standard Commitment Number 5). This implies strengthening existing relationships with our stakeholders including communities, staff, peers, media, donors, government and so on. 54 CSO Heads and Representatives from CSO from the state of Jharkhand participated in the meeting.

Mr. A.K. Singh, State Anchor, Jharkhand and Director of Leads, initiated the dialogue by welcoming the participants. He introduced five experienced state CSO leaders - Ganesh Reddy, Kumar Ranjan, C P Yadav, Arvind and Satish Girija, from five different districts across the state of Jharkhand as speakers for the day. He thereafter invited Mr. Harsh Jaitli, CEO VANI to set the context of the meeting. Mr. Jaitli, set the context and focussed his deliberation on the changing context and stressed the need for collectivisation of the sector. He
further opined on the urgent need for building a positive narrative of the sector. He shared his concern around the sector consolidating at a time of crisis and returning back to silos as soon as the crisis gets averted.

A K Singh, thereafter deliberated on how the FCRA Act 2020 would severely affect different kind of people, as halting of sub-grants would mean halting development projects beneficial of marginalised communities, shutting down of operations and many people from the poor and vulnerable communities loosing out on employment of tribal and marginalised communities. He further mentioned how it would hamper the spirit of collaboration and collective synergies built over the years.

The next speaker focussed on the implications of the legislative changes on India’s achievement of Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Another speaker questioned the lack of participatory approach while introducing of the changed amendment. The legislation has affected our trustworthiness which is completely baseless was a shared concern.

One of the speakers remarked, “Having transparency, desired outcome of projects, honesty in finance, timely reporting, good feedback from beneficiary, publishing of case studies, good relationship with local media, and getting good work and events published, extending peer support are key to sustainable organisations….. Make NGO Sector Credible and Reputed”

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**Way Forward**
So, we will need to remain connected in these trying times. We will need to promote grass-root and smaller organisations to help them with resource generation. The need to conduct evidence-based advocacy was stressed. A proactive approach towards accumulation of resources to ensure sustainability was mentioned. A need for stress on strengthening of Accountability and Transparency mechanisms within small and grass-root level organisations was stressed. The use of new technology to share about our good work and the challenges with the communities amongst which CSOs work was mentioned. Constant dialogue amongst the civil society organisations to maintain the momentum and continue with work is required. Another speaker reinforced the need for going back to previous methodology of community engagement. Another speaker stressed the need for alternative model and continue to work in peoples movement and promote relationships. With regard to resource generation, need for organisations to be self dependent rather than donor dependent was stressed. The participants were urged to explore alternate of raising local resources for fundraising through online and offline medium including developing link with online fundraising platforms, start receiving funds through their own websites, second impressions shops etc.

Key Action Points

- Fulfilment of need for information percolation through continued dialogue
- Capacity building of grass-root level organisations.
- There is a need to strengthen the organisations involved in raising people’s voice. There is a need to create a joint/collective voice of organisations.
• Upscaling of sustainable models developed locally may be explored.
• Identifying resourcing organisations like NABARD, TISS, Corporate etc. and supporting their linkage with CSOs was stressed.
• Strengthening of State and National Level Networks for putting forth collective voice.

Conclusion

A vote of thanks was delivered by VANI’s CEO.
Meeting Report

Changing Landscape and its Impact on People Driven Work
E-Dialogue of CSOs
Monday, 9 November, 2020
3:00 - 4:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting id: 845 2754 7480; Password : 330957
Changing Landscape and Its Impact on People Driven Work

A Brief Report of Dialogue with CSOs of South India

Ever since the onset of the pandemic COVID-19 in India in the first quarter of 2020, CSOs have put in their heart, souls and even resources (whether funded or out of their own pockets) towards mitigating the effects within the communities that they work with, their staff and other stakeholders.

To add to their woes, changes have been announced restricting their operational space, through the Finance Act 2020 and the FCRA Act 2020. The Finance Act 2020 added to administrative obligations including revalidation of 80G, 12A, 12AA and 10(23)C certifications issued under the income tax act and its subsequent renewal after every five years. The FCRA 2020, amongst others things, has put a halt to the sub-granting of foreign funds severely impacting social projects with immediate effect. With an economy running low, there is little hope from the CSR to fill in the fund resource gap to cater the social development needs on which CSOs work.

Thus, the only hope to that the sector has in these extremely challenging times and to become resilient is by strengthening its People Driven Work. This implies strengthening its existing relationships with stakeholders including communities, staff, peers, media, donors, government and so on.

VANI organised a digital meeting with CSOs in South India entitled, "Changing Landscape and its Impact on People Driven Work", on Monday, 9th November. The agenda for the meeting included: Informing participants about the amendments brought about in Finance Act, 2020 and FCRA Act 2020; Discussion its implications on CSOs work with People (both outside and within organisation) and Strengthening People Driven Work - Way forward - especially key action points on multi-pronged strategy in the coming times for tackling the situation and becoming more resilient.

67 participants from the five southern states including Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Telangana participated in the meeting. Initiating the discussions, Mr. Harsh Jaitli, VANI’s CEO informed the participants about recent changes in the landscape including the challenges confronted by the sector in past one year due to the global pandemic and the changes in legislation, as also the opportunities (of extensive digitization, its cost effectiveness and scope of wider connect which was restricted due to resource constraints in physical meets) that the trying times brought with them. He stressed the need for strengthening solidarity, collaboration, engagement and inclusion (by use of simple and easy to understand communication). He further urged the need for lesser dependency on third parties and focussed effort by CSOs themselves on building of a positive public narrative.
Mr. V K Shivakumar, VANI's former board member and anchor of South India Regional Hub of VANI thereafter presented about the latest changes in FCRA and how they are going to affect the sector. He also informed the participants about proposed change in the State Registration Law. He applauded VANI's contribution in strengthening voluntary agencies and representing their views to the government. He informed the participants about the changes, their likely impact and urged them to comply with the requisites.

Dr. Panchaksharam VANI's current Member of Board and a revered leader of CSOs in South especially amongst CSOs in Tamil Nadu, spoke about the recent changes in legislations affecting all NGO in the sector. He urged CSOs to carefully go through the changing situations and take support from networks like VANI.

Mr. G Placid Placid also a current Member of Board of VANI, and a noted Civil Society Sector leader from the state of Kerala raised concerns around the challenges faced by the sector including availability of funds, priority of interventions, increasing involvement of Government agencies in the name of regulating CSOs. He urged for a need for collective action and partners by sharing resources for uplifting common man. He opined that the enhanced regulatory demand for personal disclosures has resulted in decline in availability of experts, professionals and other people to come to the board of CSOs. He requested for development of mechanism to overcome this current situation.
During the open discussion, the participants agreed for need to collectivise at state level to study the draft changes proposed in state law that has been passed by the assembly. The participants agreed on the need to strengthen state, regional and national level networks.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks by Nivedita Datta, Programme Manager, VANI who reiterated that the discussions happened in line with what has been mentioned in Global Standard for CSO Accountability, a set of 12 commitments that focus on the need for people driven work. But the presence and involvement of VANI’s Former and current board members, in line with Global Standard Commitment No. 12, reflected that the organisation practices what it preaches.

Glimpses from the discussion
FEEDBACK ON COMPENDIUM

From: Rijit Sengupta
Date: Thu, 3 Dec, 2020, 6:57 pm
Subject: Re: Compendium of Case Studies showcasing Accountable Practices by Indian CSOs during COVID-19 times.
To: info VANI <info@vaniindia.org>

Dear Harsh ji,

Thanks for sharing this extremely useful information.

CRB would be very keen to understand how we strengthen accountability further in our organisation.

Perhaps, it would be useful for us to set up a call with you and/or your relevant colleagues to be informed about this.

with best regards,

Rijit

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Rijit Sengupta
Chief Executive Officer
Centre for Responsible Business (CRB)

From: Jyoti Nagarkar <jyoti.yra@gmail.com>
Sent: 03 December 2020 15:45
To: Nivedita Datta <nivedita@vaniindia.org>
Subject: Re: Compendium of Case Studies showcasing Accountable Practices by Indian CSOs during COVID-19 times

Dear Nivedita Ji,

Thanks a lot for sending me the document.

Very happy to receive this document and it is very well documented.

Congratulations to the whole team of VANI.

Warm Regards

Jyoti Nagarkar
Chief of Operations
Mob: 9373108468
E-mail: jyoti.yra@gmail.com
http://www.yraindia.org
Greetings from VANI!

As you are aware, VANI has been striving towards building a positive narrative of the sector amongst the key stakeholders. One of the best ways to establish credibility is through showcasing of Accountable Practices. VANI has been a part of Global Accountability Initiative - Global Standard for CSO Accountability (https://www.csostandard.org/) an initiative initiated by nine Accountability initiatives from across the globe, along with the International Centre for Civil Society.

If you may recall, in April this year, VANI had undertaken a Social Media Campaign, reinforcing the message for CSOs to ensure accountable practices (based on 12 commitments under Global Standard initiative) while rendering services during COVID-19. We are thankful to all the organisations who responded and shared about their accountable practices.

We are happy to share a compendium of 18 such strong case studies, that reflected stakeholder-engagement and adherence to the above 12 Global Standard Commitments. We are sure, you must be already following many practices from the examples, and would surely improve upon the ones you feel there is a scope for betterment.

We will be happy to interact with you further and hear about your accountability practices and help each other with systemic improvements through mutual learning.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

With best regards,

TEAM VANI
Feedback Received During the National Level E-Discussion
Changing Nature and Challenges of Governing Boards of Non-Profits

11th September

17:03:05 From Kailash: Excellent webinar. Eye opener. There is the requirements of more light on issues related to board of smaller organizations.

17:04:03 From Sumitra: great last words Rajesh Bhai

17:04:08 From Nitika: Thank you Amitabh and Rajesh bhai..

17:04:18 From Nitika: Thanks all the speakers and VANI

17:04:28 From Narendranath: Thanks., Rajesh, Amitabh!

17:04:31 From Meenu: Thank you everyone... and for those last words Rajesh bhai...

17:04:32 From Narendranath: Thanks VANI

17:04:43 From Meenu: Thanks VANI

17:04:55 From Dr.Potturi: Thanks VANI

17:04:55 From Gita: Thanks so much VANI for this conversation.

17:05:44 From Basant: Excellent webinar

17:07:30 From DR. HARISH: thank you all, wonderful celebrations
Feedback Received During Jharkhand Level E-Discussion
Changing Landscape and Its Impact on People Driven Work

5th November

16:33:35  From  VANI: Thank you Satish Ji.. you have incorporated all the points which VANI has been promoting through Global Standards for CSO Accountability - 12 commitments towards improving CSO credibility

16:34:15  From  VANI: Please visit - www.csostandard.org for details

16:57:40  From  Anjani: Thanks LEEDS and VANI for a good initiation

17:04:13  From  Rekha: Thank you very much for a very motivating discussion.