

Development Discourse Summary of Interaction with Media

Yala Maya Kendra

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ain

Association of International NGOs in Nepal

Key Objective:

Strengthening AIN ties with key media personnel and understanding each other closely to build synergy, coordination and cooperation between the media and development actors for creating a more favorable development environment.

Presence:

Media: 18 Media personalities from various media houses like Nepali Times, Annapurna Post, Karobar Daily, Kantipur, New Business Age, Spotlight, Himal Magazine, Gorkhapatra, Nepal weekly, Nagarik.

AIN: SC and EDP members along with Secretariat Staff

AIN Presentation

SC Member Bharat Devkota made a presentation on behalf of AIN giving an overview of AIN, its structure, governance, INGO functioning and operating system, INGO strength, credibility, accountability, transparency and overall contribution; challenges faced by INGOs and recommended areas for improvement for creating a favorable development space. Bharat Devkota clarified how INGOs are accountable mainly in terms of downward accountability i.e. to people they work with, partners, excluded and marginalized groups. Likewise Upward accountability i.e. to the Government (GA/PA Process, SWC Evaluations), Sectoral Ministries, District Development Offices, Donors, Sponsors, International counterparts and Boards.

Bharat Devkota reiterated that Donors evaluate the outcome and impact of INGOs' work. Donors have their own policies and protocols, which their grantees such as the INGOs have to adhere to he remarked. He also explained the media persons that globally, there are Paris, Accra and Busan declarations with regard to what aid communities can do and cannot. Likewise, there are financial management policies, the internal and the external/statutory audits and International/Donor audits and evaluations along with Social audits (many INGOs do it but is not mandatory) that check INGO work. Bharat Devkota also highlighted on possible ways of working together and improving the relation between AIN and Media.

Opening remarks

Chairperson Ashutosh Tiwari set the background saying that INGOs are there for widening up and increasing social, economic and political choices for people. He remarked that over the fifteen years society has changed and one needs to change its perspectives towards INGOs instead of being stuck in cultural stereotype. He stated that like everything else 'development too is not perfect'; there are many difficulties and hurdles faced during the process. INGOs do focus more on the process since it is believed that if the process is good the outcome will be good. AIN considers SWC as the ultimate national documentation/resource centre for INGOs. It is the centre point for all INGOs. Ashutosh emphasized that people have the right to get information hence INGO and media should work together to create open spaces.

SC members opined that INGOs have not got due recognition of the role they played during the conflict period; at the time when the government was non functional INGOs made contributions to provide basic needs in various nooks and corners of the country. People have developed cynicism towards INGOs hence there is a need to make people optimistic and positive. INGOs respects the independence of media and it can never bribe a media to write good stories on INGOs; furthermore INGOs do not have huge funds to spend on media/advertising.

Though INGO people are proud of their work and feel great when they get appreciation from beneficiaries at grass root and field level, an atmosphere of disbelief and skepticism has been created among the public where one cannot freely speak about ones association with INGOs due to the negative image and dollar farming tag it has gained. Need to stop the blanket approach and opinion towards INGOs. Need to go to the fields to see the real development work.

Remarks and recommendations from media

- Development has become more politicized. All work is development work hence there is no need for separate reporting of INGO work; it can be covered in the front page
- There is a need of more committed and motivated journalists who can go an extra mile for their career progression and for self progression. One should handpick such journalist for in depth reporting.
- Journalist should not be paid for reporting as their credibility can go down the line. Some Donors come after journalist to get written about their work when they need and ignore when not needed.
- Reporters are efficient but what they report are not up to the mark because the source of information/news is lacking
- INGOs are hard to be reached and hard to extract news hence the openness is required and access to INGOs should be strengthened. INGOs should come out and speak
- AIN members have played a significant/dramatic role since the last 30 years to bring social change but they have given up ownership and gave credit to others for the contribution they made for the social advancement.
- AIN members have not fully internalized participatory development at grass root level.
- Development work is done for the neediest level of people but media is read by the elite. One needs glamour to sell media hence there is less news of social development but more news of economic development.
- INGOs do social work but the people are not social, they seem like aliens at times who just do their work without intermingling with the society whom they work for. They tend to look different in society.
- At times INGOs seem rigid and do not speak out. INGOs do big programs and do invite journalist to cover their news but when they come back they just have small news without much quality; which seems like waste of time and energy. Newsroom Chiefs are not convinced hence they are not inspired to publish such news.

- INGOs should change their perspectives towards media
- The accusation about 'Dollar Farming' need not to be taken seriously as it does not have much weight; it is said by certain group of people who do not understand INGOs & development work in real sense.
- AIN can become the source of information and news, AIN can highlight the works of INGOs by pooling resources to provide exposure to reporters to understand overall work of INGOs. Sited UNICEF example.
- Role of INGOs are wonderful but Reporters/ journalists need to understand them. AIN should be more proactive to increase access to journalists. Access and sensitization to media investors should be promoted
- AIN should be proactive on subjects and broad spectrum of areas like local government election, agriculture, tourism, demographic change, local mechanisms, federalisms, HIV AIDs to name a few.
- AIN should make effective use of the Radio networks to reach out to Nepali public at mass level since it is for free and it is much more real
- Maybe INGOs and NGOs should define itself by what they really do, term themselves as CBOs and Charity based organizations to make it themselves meaningful.
- It is natural for a deprived society like Nepal where there is huge economic gap for people to have biased views about INGO people.
- Many Journalists do not know or understand how INGOs work hence there is a need of frequent interactions to understand each other more closely. There is a need to increase the knowledge and broad based understanding of INGO work. At times Journalists become Generalists.
- INGOs do have space to write about their work and it is not only the responsibility of journalists. INGOs should involve more in writing and publishing about their work through media.
- Facebook can be a good source of information for awareness creating and spreading good news. Gave instance of Occupy Baluwatar
- INGOs monitoring mechanism should be strengthened. State should endorse one window policy.

Next Steps

- Need to increase access of media, media needs information and AIN can be a good source of information
- Need for capacity building of media people
- Invite like minded development journalists for skill building on development process as a whole
- Agreed to organize a two day training/workshop tentatively in April- May 2013 for capacity building workshop

Glimpses

