

**Author:** Subhajit Ghosh

**Co-Author:** Arabinda Bhar

**Title of the Paper:** Project Management in Social sector: Case study of an NGO operating at Eastern India

**Theme:** Project Management Leadership > To accelerate Economic Growth

**Keywords:** Child development, NGO, Risk Management, Stakeholder Management, Communication Management

**Abstract:**

Sustaining economic growth and competitive baseline for any nation are largely dependent on the mindset, skillset and strength of the future generation. Child development, necessary empowerment with skill set and social adaption are imperatives for economic growth. Up-lifting of under privileged children into the main stream sector have been a key challenge in developing countries like India. 'Not for profit' organizations have taken up numerous programs to extend their helping hands towards the younger generation in need of skill set development. From planning to program execution, from stakeholders' management to risk management – all aspects of project management principles are applicable in program implementation for NGOs working in every remote corners of India. However, unlike the defined structural organizational framework with defined operational framework of PMOs of large Corporates, the programs implementers for NGOs on ground are exposed on diversified challenges in terms of local rituals, societal resistance, illiteracy and host of other constraints, which make the program planning exercise speculative and program execution unstructured. As a result, individual projects are characterized with frequent scope creep, cost overrun and higher risk exposure. This paper discusses some of the specific issues in terms of binding the scopes and in terms of identification and mitigation of risks in planning of projects on child development with reference to a NGO working on remote corners of eastern and north eastern part of India. The paper also recommends specified tools and techniques for scope management and risk management to address the uniqueness of this sector

**Intent:**

Focused and tailor made approach is required to address the uniqueness associated to the managing the projects and programs in development sector. While cultural and micro economic diversity across India offers substantial challenge in bringing out a unified project management framework, this case study highlights some of the salient features that should be taken into consideration for project leaders engaged in social sector. Special emphasis have been given to risk and communications management related process areas to demonstrate the uniqueness that the project leaders should be aware of.

# Project Management National Conference, India

Project Management - *Powering India's Global Leadership*

15-17 September, 2017, Chennai



## Table of Contents

<b>Title of the Paper</b> .....	1
<b>Theme</b> .....	1
<b>Keywords</b> .....	1
<b>Abstract</b> .....	1
<b>Intent</b> .....	1
<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>Background and the Case</b> .....	4
<b>Major Challenges and Constraints</b> .....	6
<i>Stakeholder management vis-à-vis effective communications</i> .....	6
<i>Stakeholder Management vis-à-vis effective handling of risk</i> .....	11
<i>Benefits to the projects in development sector</i> .....	13
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	13
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	14
<b>References</b> .....	15

## Introduction

“We will be remembered only if we give to our younger generation a prosperous and safe India, resulting out of economic prosperity coupled with civilizational heritage.”

--- Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam

As per official website of Government of West Bengal more than 100 registered Non-Government Organizations (NGO) <sup>1</sup> have been actively engaged across the state to extend the help and support to the underserved section of the society to be part of overall economic and social development. NGOs are playing equally important roles in social and economic development in other North Eastern States of India. For example, more than 25 registered NGOs are active in Manipur, Tripura<sup>2</sup> and other states of North East India. Spanning across diversified areas like child protection, shelters for elderly people, de-addiction from drug abuse, women empowerment etc. the NGOs operate in program execution mode utilizing the grants received from various CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiatives and from various schemes floated by governments and charitable trusts. Irrespective of field of operations, the effectiveness of any program is largely dependent on the pillars of project management principles.

NGOs operating in development sector with vast socio economic and cultural diversity experience unique challenges and constraints throughout the life cycle of the project. Executives and field workers on the ground often find it challenging to streamline the projects in development sectors. While all the process groups within project management framework are relevant for this sector; project communications management and project risk management play pivotal roles in determining the success in development sector. The paper articulates a case study where the project coordinators and project leaders have participated in a workshop to share the data points and instances to support the above statement. Managing the project risk and ensuring better communication channel offer unique challenge for the development sector. Addressing these process areas with specific tools and techniques will help the NGOs working in development sector to ensure the project objectives are achieved and will serve prove beneficial to the society.

## Background and the Case:

A non-governmental organization (NGO) is a not-for-profit organization that is independent from states and international governmental organizations. They are usually funded by donations but some avoid

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://wbsc.gov.in/ngo/ngo.htm> accessed on May 23, 2017

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.kiran.nic.in> accessed on May 23,2017

formal funding altogether and are run primarily by volunteers.<sup>3</sup> This is one of the major factors for the instrumenting growth to uplift the social development. According to World Bank Data, 21.9% (2011) people are living below poverty line in India.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is more relevant to Indian perspective where total NGO count reported is over 3.3 Million (2010) – one NGO per 400 people<sup>5</sup>. In Indian context, it is extremely important that these all non-profit organizations should function to fullest so that they can significantly contribute to the development of the overall economy.

Majority of the problem in this region are related to child and youth poverty, education, empowering for employment. These NGOs are facing number of problems in the execution level when they operates. Let us look at the problems in much deeper way. According to Kakumani Lavanya Lathaa and Kotte Prabhakar (2010) research,<sup>6</sup> major list of the challenges for NGO's in India include lack of funds, lack of dedicated leadership, inadequate trained personnel, misuse of funds, monopolization of leadership, lack of public participation, lack of volunteerism/social work among youth, modernization, target orientated and time-bound programs and area of Interest. We are analyzing if project management methodology or project management best practices can help to overcome some of these problems. Project management can definitely help to improve against the problems quoted above – Lack of Dedicated leadership, Inadequate Trained personnel, monopolization of leadership, lack of public participation, lack of co-ordination etc. Again according to Nwaiwu (2013) study, the significant challenges are - inadequate finances, lack of expertise (especially in risk and stakeholder management), significant and multi donor reporting requirements and insufficiency of baseline data.<sup>7</sup> Thus Project Management especially Risk Management, Communication management and Stakeholder management surely can play significant role to fight the problems faced by the NGOs at ground level. We need a real life case study to test our hypothesis.

One of India's prominent NGOs, who have been working in the areas of child education, life skill development, child protection and disaster risk reduction, had approached the PMI West Bengal Chapter for a capacity building training on project management. The objective was to help its implementing team

---

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental\\_organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental_organization)

<sup>4</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/country/india?view=chart>

<sup>5</sup> <http://southasia.oneworld.net/news/india-more-ngos-than-schools-and-health-centres#.WRI4Hno9nyQ>

<sup>6</sup> K.L. Latha and K. Prabhakar, "NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS: PROBLEMS & REMEDIES IN INDIA", Serbian Journal of Management 6 (1) (2011), 2011, pp. 115-118

<sup>7</sup> Nwaiwu, B.C. (2013). Critical Management Challenges Facing NGOs - Examining the Impact of Legitimacy and Human Resource Issues on NGO Effectiveness [online]. Available at: <http://www.cedefoundation.org.uk/uploads/images/publications/1.4-Legitimacy-and-human-resources-Exermining-some-critically-management-challenges-facing-NGOs.pdf> [Accessed on May 15, 2017]

to improve application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques of project activities. The workshop was scheduled for two full days during January 2017. The training session was attended by 11 participants. The organization is a leading independent NGO and child rights organization with a network spreading across 120 countries across the globe and 20 states in India. A number of popular skill development and employment generation program have been initiated by this organization focusing eastern part of India, since 2008. All these programs aim at building economically viable life and technical skills amongst adolescents and young people (who are vulnerable to, or victims of, exploitative, hazardous and worst forms of child labour).<sup>8</sup> Another follow up session focusing on risk management and mitigation strategy was also organized during February 2017 where core project management team of the NGO participated in rigorous brain storming sessions where the volunteers from PMI West Bengal Chapter acted as facilitators.

A dedicated team of volunteers from PMI WB Chapter developed a customized training material on project management. During the first day, the coordinators interacted; how best practices of project management from PMI's PMBOK could be tailored to meet the challenges faced by the participants in their day to day work, while serving the community. In the second day, the participants formed groups and presented case studies.

## Major Challenges and Constraints

### Stakeholder management vis-à-vis effective communications

Most of the programs in development sector are largely dependent on funds received either from various charitable trusts or on funds generated by CSR initiatives of corporate sectors. The key objective here is to utilize the fund through proper planning, monitoring and execution towards the target community ensuring economic and social development of the community. From the previous statement it is evident that an organization engaged in utilization of fund is at the core of stakeholder matrix with diversified portfolio of the stakeholders. The NGO, in this case, is an umbrella organization extending the support towards life skill development for under privileged children. Apart from the field executives and program coordinators, the NGO needs to operate with funding organizations, partner NGOs, local government bodies, and local communities like social organizations, technical institutes, clubs and village empowerment groups (also known as gram panchayat). Volunteers from PMI West Bengal chapter organized focus group discussion and have mapped the identified stakeholders in a matrix as depicted below.

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ngosindia.com>

Influence Power of Stakeholders 	<b><u>Meet their needs</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations offering employment after training</li> <li>• Partner NGOs working with the parent NGO</li> </ul>	<b><u>Key Players</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents of the children</li> <li>• Local Clubs</li> <li>• Ward Counselor or elected representative</li> <li>• Member of gram panchayat</li> </ul>
	<b><u>Less important</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donors</li> <li>• Alumni members</li> </ul>	<b><u>Show consideration</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding organizations</li> <li>• Technical institutes offering life skill development</li> </ul>
	Interest of the stakeholders 	

Table 1: Stakeholder mapping as perceived by the Project Team

Program coordinators and the field executives associated to each project put substantial emphasis on establishing rapport with the key players, who belong to one of the four quadrants of the metrics. Key challenge is to establish effective communication channel with all the stakeholders belong to all the quadrants. It has been observed that the realization on the effectiveness of the stakeholders belonging to the quadrants other than 'Key Players' is felt only at the matured stage of the project or program execution and the getting back to the planning table for bringing out separate communication management plan often prove challenging in terms of schedule and scope management perspective.

In order to address the challenge, each project should follow a formal communication plan since project initiation stage to align the stakeholders through the project life cycle. Key success factor is to determine whether a common communication plan to be established on the basis of the quadrant in which the stakeholders belong or whether to establish separate communications management plan for each stakeholder. Formalization of communication management is important and a template solution as given below (refer Table. 2) as a sample can be put in place for each of the projects in development sector.

Sr. No.	Name of the stakeholder	Perception (as per stakeholder mapping matrix)	Type of recommended communication	Language of communication	Frequency	Responsibility

Table 2: Sample template of Communication Management Plan for development sector project

It is imperative for the project managers in development sector to keep stakeholder mapping matrix in sync with the communication management plan as both the documents are of pivotal importance for achieving the key objective of social development. The objective function for the project coordinators and project managers is to follow communication management plan effectively so that most of the stakeholders move towards the 'Key Players' quadrant as the project enters into matured stage of execution. Subsequently, the communication management plan should be reviewed and updated. An illustration on the recommended approach for effective stakeholder management in development sector projects with the help of communication management plan is given below.

As per Table.1, donors and funding organizations are perceived to be important stakeholders during initiation phase of a project for life skill development project for children residing at remote corner of Sundarban Delta of West Bengal. Due to socio economic uniqueness like local language, low income, paucity of modern infrastructure and health care; local gram panchayat and local clubs are the key players in influencing the poor family to provide consent to enroll their children for life skill training program. Corporate donors and funding agencies, who are the main source of support for monetary expense for the project belong to other quadrants of the stakeholder matrix. An effective communication management plan since the beginning of the project is essential to keep the donors and funding organizations informed and updated on the continuous value addition or benefit that are being achieved through the local gram panchayats. Mobilization for additional funding requirement at the later stage of execution can only be achieved only if the project managers are able to move the donors and funding organizations towards the quadrant of 'Key Players' though effective communication management plan.

Sample communication management plan for the donors and for funding agencies during project initiation stage is depicted at table.3.



Sr. No.	Name of the stakeholder	Perception (as per stakeholder mapping matrix)	Type of recommended communication	Language of communication	Frequency	Responsibility
1	Donors	Less Important	Fund utilization report	English	Fortnightly	Project coordinator
			Future activity projection report		Weekly	Project Manager
			Perceived risk log		Fortnightly	Program manager
2	Funding Organizations	Show considerations	Fund utilization report	English	Weekly	Project coordinator
			Future activity projection report			Project Manager
			Perceived risk log			Program manager

Table 3: Sample section of communication management plan during project initiation

The objective function for the project management team is to bring the stakeholders towards the quadrant of 'Key Players' during project execution. Table 4 below depicts the objective function with the progress of the project phase.

Influence Power of Stakeholders 	<b><u>Meet their needs</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations offering employment after training</li> <li>• Partner NGOs working with the parent NGO</li> </ul>	<b><u>Key Players</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents of the children</li> <li>• Local Clubs</li> <li>• Ward Counselor or elected representative</li> <li>• Member of gram panchayat</li> </ul>
	<b><u>Less important</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donors</li> <li>• Alumni members</li> </ul>	<b><u>Show consideration</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding organizations</li> <li>• Technical institutes offering life skill development</li> </ul>
	Interest of the stakeholders 	

Table 4: Stakeholder mapping matrix during project execution

At this stage of the project, communication management plan for donors and for funding organizations should be updated accordingly. Revised communication management plan (sample) is given in the table.5

Sr. No.	Name of the stakeholder	Perception (as per stakeholder mapping matrix)	Type of recommended communication	Language of communication	Frequency	Responsibility
1	Donors & Funding Organizations	Key player	Fund utilization report Future activity projection report Telephonic discussion on risk log	English	Weekly Weekly Fortnightly	Project coordinator Project Manager Program manager

Table 5: Sample section of communication management plan during project execution

### Stakeholder Management vis-à-vis effective handling of risk

Source of fund for majority of the development project are either corporate donors (as an outcome of CSR activities) for other funding organizations like local or central government, social trusts etc. On the other hand, utilization of fund is largely dependent on alignment of local society, local influencers like gram panchayats. Moreover, to ensure societal benefit to reach at every remote parts of a region with infrastructural challenge, ability of the field executives to prepare for an uncommon challenge is also a key success factor for NGOs to plan and to execute a project effectively.

Traditional risk analysis tool like probability-impact analysis matrix are difficult to deploy in development sector of eastern part of India due to challenge in availability of historical benchmark data for qualitative and quantitative analysis. Volunteers of PMI West Bengal Chapter organized a focus group discussion session with the program coordinators and project leaders of an NGO engaged in life skill development programs for children and youths. Discussion outcome conclusively indicates risk tolerance level of the key stake holders are single most driving factor, which should be addressed through a structured approach. While project risk log is one of the elements (refer to Table 1 of this article) for communication management plan, risk tolerance matrix of the stakeholder would serve as additional tool for the project management team of NGO to devise a proactive strategy to articulate the risk to individual stakeholders

especially towards donors and funding organizations, who would likely to have most diverse risk tolerance characteristics.

A tailored template for risk tolerance determination matrix of the stakeholders are given in Table 6. Once of the key components of the matrix is the perceived influence level of a key stakeholder.

Sr. No.	Name of the stakeholder	Level of influence	Type of impact on the project	Risk Tolerance/ Threshold	Mitigation plan	Responsibility

Table 6: Risk tolerance determination template for stakeholders

It is important to note that level of influence (in Table 6) is not dependent on the quadrant (Refer Table 1 & 4) in which the stakeholder belongs, e.g. at project initiation stage, donors can be perceived as 'less important' player but can have high level of influence if the risk tolerance level is low. Hence, appropriate mitigation plan needs to be put in place throughout the lifecycle of the project. A sample risk tolerance matrix in relation to current context of the case is depicted below.

Sr. No.	Name of the stakeholder	Level of influence	Type of impact on the project	Risk Tolerance/ Threshold	Mitigation plan	Responsibility
1	Donors	Medium	Cost Management Schedule Management	Moderate	Share risk register in every fortnight	Program manager

Table 7: Sample section of risk tolerance matrix

## Benefits to the projects in development sector

Stakeholder management is one of the key aspects in managing projects in development sector especially in remote corners of Eastern India, which offers a number of unique challenges to the project management team of NGOs on ground. Tailor made project communication management plan and risk tolerance matrix in alignment with stakeholder mapping matrix are essential for ensuring the success of the project. Appropriate enablement with structured training program is recommended for all the project management teams to handle communication, risk and stakeholder management aspects, which are often overlooked while comparing with cost, schedule and scope management. To ensure constant fund flow against the project budget, managing the stakeholders in development sector plays pivotal role.

## **Conclusion**

Social and economic development of every corner of India is the mantra for all of us. Much of the success is dependent on numerous programs and initiatives at the grass root level being organized by NGOs with support from corporate donors and other funding organizations. While effective utilization of fund on timely manner and with quality outcome are the visible measures of the success of projects in development sector; some of the underlying pillars of project management like efficient stakeholder management with effective communication and better risk mitigation strategy hold the key to ensure the overall objective of social and economic growth of our society is achieved. We, as project management professionals, should continue to work closely with NGOs working on development sector to enable them with tailored solutions and techniques to execute the projects efficiently.

*"Each one of you has fire of love and compassion to make this world a better place" ~ Kailash Satyarthi, Nobel Peace Laureate*

## List of Tables:

Table 1: Stakeholder mapping as perceived by the Project Team	7
Table 2: Sample template of Communication Management Plan for development sector project	8
Table 3: Sample section of communication management plan during project initiation	9
Table 4: Stakeholder mapping matrix during project execution	10
Table 5: Sample section of communication management plan during project execution	11
Table 6: Risk tolerance determination template for stakeholders	12
Table 7: Sample section of risk tolerance matrix	12

## References:

- [1] <http://wbsc.gov.in/ngo/ngo.htm> accessed on May 23, 2017
- [2] <http://www.kiran.nic.in> accessed on May 23, 2017
- [3] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental\\_organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental_organization) accessed on May 15, 2017
- [4] <http://data.worldbank.org/country/india?view=chart> accessed on May 15, 2017
- [5] <http://southasia.oneworld.net/news/india-more-ngos-than-schools-and-health-centres#.WRI4Hno9nyQ> accessed on May 15, 2017
- [6] K.L. Latha and K. Prabhakar, "NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS: PROBLEMS & REMEDIES IN INDIA", Serbian Journal of Management 6 (1) (2011), 2011, pp. 115-118
- [7] Nwaiwu, B.C. (2013). Critical Management Challenges Facing NGOs - Examining the Impact of Legitimacy and Human Resource Issues on NGO Effectiveness [online]. Available at: <http://www.cedefoundation.org.uk/uploads/images/publications/1.4-Legitimacy-and-human-resources-Exermining-some-critically-management-challenges-facing-NGOs.pdf> [Accessed on May 15, 2017]
- [8] <https://www.ngosindia.com> accessed on May 15, 2017
- [9] PMBOK Fifth Edition