

研究ノート Research Note

Changing Relationships between Rights Holders and Others in Inclusive Aid: A Case Study of Partnerships between NGOs and Identity-Based Associations in Nepal

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Abstract: This article discusses the processes and conditions necessary for “inclusive aid,” with a special focus on identity-based associations (IBAs) established by socially excluded groups. The study defines inclusive aid as aid that establishes IBAs as core implementing partners of development programs. Inclusive aid enables IBAs to be recognized as civil society organizations (CSOs), and to restore human rights by transforming relationships among IBAs, international non-government organizations (NGOs), and local NGOs. As an example, the paper examines Shakti Samuha in Nepal, the first IBA in the world established by survivors of human trafficking. This organization was selected because it is a model for other IBAs formed by stigmatized women and has become an indispensable actor in Nepal.

The article begins with a critical review of the current tendency of development aid to exclude IBAs. Next, it examines prior studies on partnerships and a “rights-based approach”, and those on development partnerships, in which IBAs are paired with international NGOs. Based on interviews with members, staff, advisors of Shakti Samuha and its supporters, and staff of partner organizations, the case demonstrates an evolutionary process of inclusive aid that follows five steps: 1) organizing a group of excluded persons; 2) transforming from self-help organizations to IBAs; 3) mutual learning through networking; 4) working with various actors; and 5) changing relationships between rights holders and other actors. The findings will be applicable in countries where partnership styles and the establishment of IBAs are promoted. The study aims to examine the present conditions for successful partnerships with marginalized organizations and other development agencies, and does not deal with social inclusion of marginalized people in general. The scope of this study is limited to partnership issues in the development aid sector.

Key Words: Nepal, international development aid, NGOs, partnership, women’s rights, human trafficking

I. Introduction

Changing relationships among actors are not new agenda items in international development. The term ‘partnership’ is used in the development sector to describe relationships between organizations based on a long-term vision, shared responsibility, reciprocal obligations, equality, mutuality, and balanced power (Fowler, 2000). Research regularly investigates partnerships between donors and NGOs, as well as NGOs in the North and their counterparts in the South (Edwards and Hulme, 1992; Hulme and Edward, 1997; Hudock, 1999). However, in these studies, partnerships are mostly perceived as bilateral relationships, not as multilateral relationships. Little is known, however, about power relations among different types of local actors, particularly regarding relationships among different types of actors in the

South. Due to power asymmetries in development aid structures, relatively few egalitarian partnerships are available.

There are three reasons why relationships among local partners in the South have not as yet received much attention. First, some donors often ignore delicate relationships with local actors, due to politics between the elite and the grassroots in civil society (Arnove and Pinede, 2007; Domhoff, 2009). Second, local NGOs (LNGOs) wish to present themselves as part of, or proxies for, marginalized people for the sake of their own survival in the developmental aid sector. This behaviour is due to lack of accountability and ignoring voices of the people in need. Third, both donors and NGOs hesitate to acknowledge groups formed by marginalized people as development partners. As a result, previous

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studies on local developmental actors have mostly ended with only generalized views of LNGOs, ignoring their internal diversity.

Expected changes in partnerships are often in line with moves towards ‘inclusive aid’ which ‘demand change to organisational norms and procedures in partnerships, closely linked to changes in personal behaviour, attitudes and beliefs, to enable the inclusion of currently marginalized actors in decision making processes’ (Groves and Hinton, 2006, p.218). In their book ‘Inclusive Aid’, Groves and Hinton propose inclusive aid, which ensures the accountability and effectiveness of aid from a governance perspective. The authors also suggest the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders: primarily poor people, but also elites within society who, among others, have considerable power to make a difference (Groves and Hinton, 2006, p.210). However, little attention was paid to the issue of ‘exclusion’. Emerging actors, such as the groups formed by marginalized people, are not discussed in the previous studies on inclusive aid.

In this study, Identity-Based Associations (IBAs) are defined as membership-based organizations formed exclusively by marginalized groups that suffer social stigma, social exclusion, and rights violations, and also struggle to regain a sense of dignity in their identity through empowerment. IBAs broadly contribute to integrating human rights into the development sector through the promotion of the Rights-Based Approach (RBA) (Figure 1).

IBAs are important platforms for marginalized groups to raise their voices, address their oppression, and promote their self-representation. IBAs are different

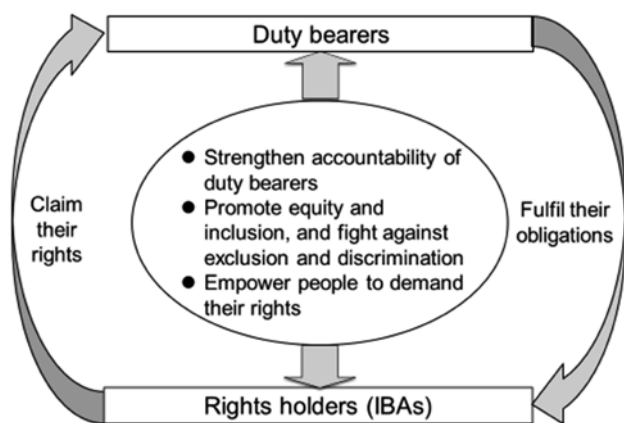


Figure 1 Rights-Based Approach

Source: Modified from Theis, J. (2004)

from NGOs: although both work in the interests of a specified group, NGOs are formed by persons outside of the target population. They are also distinguishable from Peoples’ Organizations and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that, due to their limited geographical scope, are more susceptible to the influence of social binding. Socially bounded groups are often complicit in the oppression of sub-groups such as women, certain labour classes, and persons without land tenure, among others. These marginalized individuals face difficulties forming IBAs, since they are often isolated from each other and not well organized. Therefore, NGOs may play important roles in facilitating the formation of IBAs and their organizational development through external background support and provision of opportunities for empowerment.

As shown in Figure 2, there are many organisational layers in international development, from International NGOs (INGOs), both urban-based and rural-based local NGOs (LNGOs), CBOs and User Groups, to the people in need. IBAs are often excluded from funding chains. There are power asymmetries among them, though all these actors are called Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). There are several barriers for IBAs to develop linkages with other actors of CSOs. First, IBAs are not yet recognized by other developmental actors. Second, some INGOs and LNGOs have reservations about developing partnerships with IBAs. Third, INGOs and LNGOs can be considered proxies or competitors of IBAs that advocate and lobby issues on behalf of a particular set of people (Hudock, 1999).

The article defines ‘inclusive aid’ as aid based on more egalitarian relations among IBAs, INGOs, and other actors that put IBAs as core, implementing partners

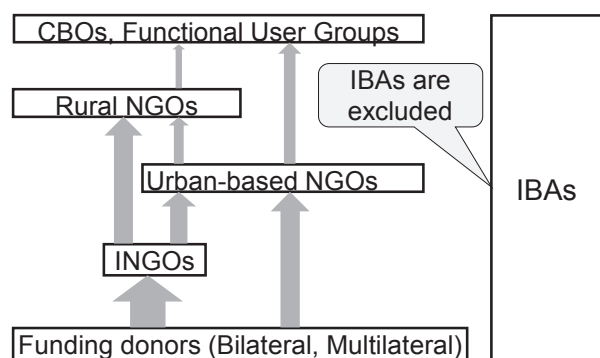


Figure 2 Layers in common funding flow

Source: Modified from Singh, A. and Ingdal. N. (2007)

of development programs. The overall objective of this study is to present conditions for successful inclusive aid, with a special focus on IBAs. Based on the overall objective, there are two specific objectives of the study: to find key points and prerequisites for enabling I/LNGOs to be good partners of IBAs, and to analyse roles played by I/LNGOs in their partnerships with IBAs. This study deals with partnership issues in the development aid sector. Social inclusion of marginalized people in general is beyond its scope.

This study examines Shakti Samuha, a trafficking survivors' organization in Nepal where a certain number of IBAs already exist. In addition, the national policy of Nepal obliges foreign aid agencies to have partnerships with local organizations. Shakti Samuha, an IBA formed by trafficking survivors, was formed by the most stigmatized people. Finally, Shakti Samuha has had multiple partnerships with various actors that help it compare different experiences of working with different partners.

This study is based on a literature survey of previous research on development partnerships in Nepal, international guidelines on partnership, and publications by Shakti Samuha and its partners, as well as extensive field visits and interviews—conducted between 1996 and 2013—with members, staff, leaders, board members, supporters, and partners of Shakti Samuha.

II. Identity-based Associations as Emerging Actors in the Civil Society of Nepal

In the past, NGOs in Nepal—as in other countries—were led almost exclusively by ‘elites’ who were well educated, grew up in a so-called urban high-class culture, and provided their expertise for the short-term projects of others, while IBAs commit to their own constituencies in self-instigated, self-directed, long-term movements. Some NGOs support so-called ‘beneficiaries’, generally comprising socially excluded populations whose rights are denied.

The formation of IBAs became possible after Nepal's 1990 Constitution ensured the rights of citizens. Many indigenous people's organizations, organizations for people with disabilities, Dalit organizations, and women's organizations were established after 1990, following the formation of other IBAs of socially stigmatized persons (e.g. sexual minorities, sex workers and trafficked persons). Though statistical records are unavailable, the number of IBAs seems to be steadily rising in Nepal, where the RBA is widely applied and practiced in the development sector.

IBAs in Nepal have played a number of different roles, not only in service delivery for their own constituencies, but also in lobbying for the drafting of a new constitution. There are certainly differences between IBAs based on ethnicity, caste, and religion, as well as other IBAs formed for different reasons (Figure 3).

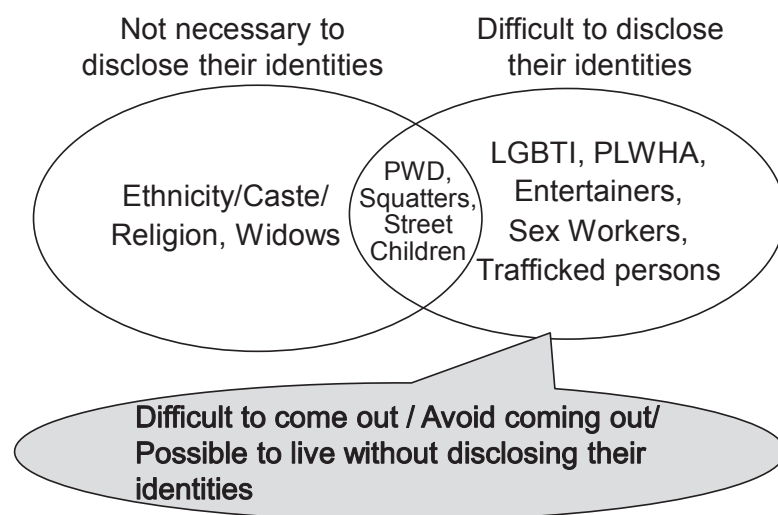


Figure 3 Differences in risk of disclosing identities, according to types of stigma

Note: PWD indicates persons with disabilities.

LGBTI means lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

PLWHA refers People living with HIV/AIDS.

Source: By author

The members of the latter have difficulty disclosing their own identities, and often avoid being a part of particular groups. There are both advantages and disadvantages to being members of such IBAs. On the positive side, members of IBAs do not need to hesitate sharing their concerns with their peers, can develop collective identities, and can get specific services. On the negative side, they need to disclose their identities if they would like to join IBAs. Members must take a risk to call themselves members of IBAs.

Ⅲ. Partnerships between Identity-based Associations and International NGOs

As shown in Table 1, based on reports of the Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN), 18.8%, or 19 out of 102 AIN members of INGOs had 55 partnerships with IBAs in 2012, while 20%, or 10 out of 50 AIN members, had 17 partnerships with IBAs in 2004. While there were a few cases of changing partners and partnerships, the ratio of partnerships with IBAs did increase significantly. ActionAid Nepal, one of the strongest advocates of RBA in Nepal, has selected a squatters’ organization as its partner instead of an urban-based LNGOs.

There are two types of partnerships between INGOs and IBAs. In one type, INGOs seek bilateral partnerships with IBAs, through direct funding, for the sake of effective outreach to the excluded groups. In the other type of partnership, INGOs and IBAs engage in joint advocacy as members of issue-based networks. The above-mentioned figures from the AIN membership show only about bilateral relations, while joint advocacy is not described as partnership.

The importance of promoting and supporting IBAs is not yet fully understood among international development actors. As a result, IBAs usually struggle to obtain adequate recognition and resources, even relative to

NGOs. This is a cause for concern for many reasons, including their framing: NGOs and IBAs should not see each other as competitors.

Several reasons explain why International and local NGOs (I/LNGOs) may not select IBAs as their partners. First, I/LNGOs may not know about IBAs and never contact them. Second, many I/LNGOs believe IBAs are not suitable as their partners, due to weaknesses in governance and management. Third, some I/LNGOs perceive the activities of IBAs as ‘political’. INGOs in particular wish to avoid ‘interference’ in local politics. The above-mentioned AIN members that have partnerships with IBAs are partnered with selected Dalit organizations and socially stigmatized women’s organizations (e.g. trafficking survivors, widows, and migrant women), but are partnered with few indigenous people’s organizations established by ethnic groups. Likely, INGOs wished to keep their distance from the on-going debate on issues over ethnic autonomous regions of Nepal.

Ⅳ. Promoting Self-representation among Trafficking Survivors

It is estimated that 7,000 to 12,000 Nepali women and children are trafficked each year (Terre des homes, 2010, p.18)¹⁾. While some work as domestic labourers or factory workers in Nepal, many trafficked women and girls also end up in brothels, circuses, and sweatshops abroad.

The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare of Nepal prepared a National Plan of Action against Human Trafficking in 2001, followed by enactment of the Human Trafficking and Transportation Control Act in 2007. The National Human Rights Commission has published a report called ‘Trafficking in persons especially women and children in Nepal’ almost every year since 2005. Alongside the work of an IBA, Shakti Samuha (lit. ‘Power Group’ in Nepali), 12 NGOs are

Table 1 Partnerships between IBAs and INGOs

Year	2004	2012
(1) Number of INGOs affiliated with AIN	50	102
(2) Number of INGOs with partnerships with IBAs	10	19
(3) Ratio of INGOs with partnerships with IBAs among all members of AIN	20%	18.80%
(4) Number of partnerships between IBAs and NGOs	17	55

Source: Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN). (2004): *Membership Report 2004*. AIN, Kathmandu and AIN. (2012): *Membership Report 2012*. AIN, Kathmandu.

working on this issue as of 2012. However, human trafficking is still pervasive in Nepal.

A 1996 event involving the repatriation of trafficked women from Mumbai brothels added momentum to the women's movement in Nepal. NGOs went to great lengths to support the re-integration and rehabilitation of 168 trafficked young women and girls under 17 years old.

With the assistance of anti-trafficking NGOs, engaged in supporting repatriated women and girls in 1996, Shakti Samuha was formed in 1997 as the first organization established in the world by trafficking survivors. Shakti Samuha envisions that trafficking survivors can be empowered to lead dignified lives in society. Its goal is to establish a progressive society devoid of trafficking and other kinds of violence against women. It works directly with communities in the Kathmandu, Makwanpur, Bara, Rautahat, Nuwakot, Sindhupalchok, Kaski, Jhapa, Kailali, and Bardiya districts, as well as in Eastern and Midwestern Nepal, through its two regional networks.

Shakti Samuha, as an IBA, has three principal tenets: 1) Trafficking survivors should have the same rights as any other members of society; 2) Trafficking survivors should lead the movement against trafficking to ensure their own rights and the rights of others; and, 3) No member of Shakti Samuha shall be discriminated against in their service to the organization. Moreover, the organization states that the following is crucial to carrying out their mission: 'Trafficking survivors and women and children at risk of trafficking will be organized, empowered and made aware, which will enable them to contribute to campaign against human trafficking, as well as protect women and girls living in vulnerable conditions' (Shakti Samuha, 2013).

Shakti Samuha is an IBA run by rights holders themselves. As shown in the organization chart (Figure 4), more than 70% of the 50 staff members, and all eight board members, are survivors. Today, the organization is run by survivors and serves more than 500 trafficked women and girls across Nepal. In the context of human trafficking, family members do not accept their own daughters or wives once they were trafficked, and exclude them from their own families, instead supporting their recovery process. Often these close family members' attitudes stigmatize the survivors. As a result, survivors must get support from non-family members. Therefore,

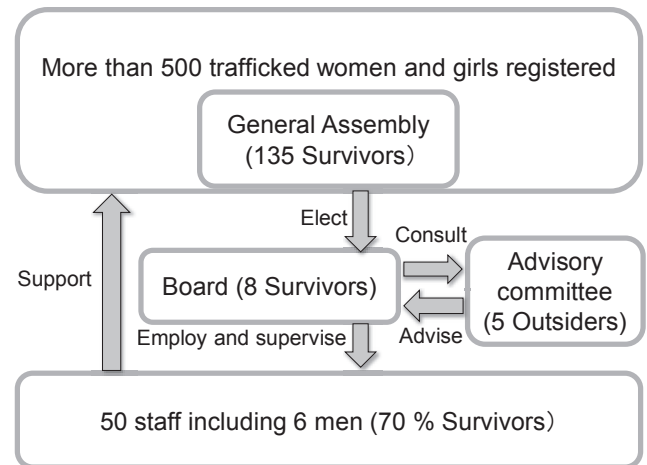


Figure 4 Organization chart of Shakti Samuha as of 2012

Source: Shakti Samuha. (2013)

Shakti Samuha staffs serve important roles as supporters between the survivors and their families, as well as between survivors and the neighbourhood communities in which they live.

Shakti Samuha's activities are of two main types. First, Shakti Samuha supports rights holders who were already trafficked and women and girls at high risk for trafficking (Figure 5), through rescue, repatriation, protection, rehabilitation (including employment support), and prosecution against perpetrators. Shakti Samuha's other role is supporting families, duty bearers, government staff and policy makers through counselling for reintegration, prevention, awareness raising, training, and advocacy.

Shakti Samuha has contributed to changing the public image of the 'Bombay-returned girls'. Though initially stigmatized, the images of the girls were soon changed as survivors and agents of change responsible for pro-actively addressing trafficking and the best

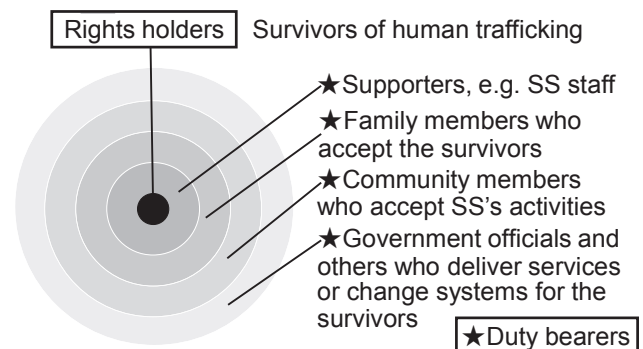


Figure 5 Stakeholder relation with trafficking survivors in RBA framework

Source: By author

interests of their peers. Self-representation by trafficking survivors makes a difference for three reasons. First, it means that Shakti Samuha can better reach its target population, since members, through their own experiences with trafficking, more correctly and deeply understand the issues affecting their constituency. Second, it helps Shakti Samuha bridge ideological gaps among some women's NGOs, divided by party politics. Third, it bolsters Shakti Samuha's ability to address the issue of trafficking explicitly as their highest priority, unlike other non-IBA organizations that engage in multiple issues.

V. Local NGOs: From Incubators to Partners

During the foundation phase of Shakti Samuha, WOREC—a local NGO promoting women's rights—played a substantial role. WOREC acted as an incubator from 1998 to 2000, when WOREC provided a room for Shakti Samuha in its building. WOREC has also provided safe spaces for survivors, and encouraged transformation of stigmatized girls and women from victims to change agents. Members of Shakti Samuha had access to advice and support from WOREC whenever these were needed (WOREC, 2001, p.29). After its formal registration in 2000, Shakti Samuha gradually became an independent organization, but it still received capacity building supports by WOREC through trainings, joint advocacy and access to funding during the development phase of Shakti Samuha (Tanaka, 2014).

WOREC's trainings are not limited to the field of capacity building—such as leadership development and management—but also extended to strengthening knowledge on human rights, labour rights, human trafficking, safe migration, and sexual and reproductive health. These practices instil IBA leaders with the confidence they need to work with specialists and counsel their own members.

Other LNGOs have worked together for joint advocacy with Shakti Samuha through networks actively engaging in trafficking issues in Nepal: for example, the Alliance Against Trafficking of Women in Nepal (AATWIN)²⁾ (WOREC, 1998, p.11). Shakti Samuha's leaders have also realized the effectiveness of networks and have succeeded in gaining the support of various LNGOs. WOREC was not the sole organization responsible for capacity building of Shakti Samuha.

Organizations belonging to the AATWIN alliance against trafficking also provided continuous support.

VI. Roles of International Partners

Both the Global Fund for Women (GFW) and Save the Children Norway (SCN) contributed overall capacity building to Shakti Samuha, together with OXFAM-GB, the first international organization that supported Shakti Samuha before its formal registration. Such joint efforts by international partners were used by Shakti Samuha to reduce administrative burden.

Others supported Shakti Samuha for specific reasons. Terre des Homes Foundation (TDH) and Asha Nepal collaborated to conduct a study on reintegration of trafficking survivors, which contributed Shakti Samuha's activities for survivors as well as for their families. Shakti Samuha has been trying to coordinate geographical demarcation between donors and to replicate good practices into newly initiated projects. International Migration Organization (IOM) utilized job placement experiences provided by Asha Nepal in its project with IBAs including Shakti Samuha.

The following three points are listed as key contributions to IBAs by international partners. First, contracts need to be flexible when an IBA is not yet registered. Second, capacity building is appreciated more than project funding at the foundation stage of IBAs. Third, IBAs appreciate co-funding by more than two partners to decrease less administrative burden.

VII. Five Stages of Actions for Inclusive Aid

Table 2 is a summary of the set of necessary actions for IBAs and their local and INGO partners to realize inclusive aid.

1) Organizing a group of excluded persons

As shown in Figure 3, the formation processes of every IBA is unique according to the type of stigma that the members are expected to overcome. Excluded persons who have difficulties in disclosing their identities are vulnerable and need safe spaces to gather. In the case of Shakti Samuha, WOREC provided a space for members of Shakti Samuha and protected the members from people approaching them with only curiosity. Not all IBAs must go through this step if they are already well organized.

Table 2 Actions for inclusive aid by IBAs and their partners

	Steps	Actions by IBAs/ Excluded persons	Actions by Partners
1	Organizing a group of excluded persons	-Inviting fellows -Identification of common concerns	-Providing safe spaces -Facilitating the formation of SHO
2	Transformation from SHOs to IBAs	-Proactive participation in opportunities for HRD	-Providing opportunities for HRD -Providing funds and supporting fundraising
3	Mutual learning through networks	-Participation in issue-based network(s)	
4	Working with various actors	-Addressing advantages and <i>raison d'être</i> as IBA	-Minimizing the managerial burden of IBAs through coordination with others
5	Changing relationships between rights-holders and other actors	-Collaboration with non-survivor staff -Confidently approaching the outer world	-Changing their relationship with IBAs from guardianship to partnership

Source: By author

I/LNGOs, as external supporters, are expected to provide safe spaces for excluded persons, and to facilitate the formation of IBAs while persons from excluded groups invite and motivate their fellows to join their meetings. They identify their common concerns and form their own groups as Self-help Organizations (SHOs) with external supports.

2) Transformation from self-help organizations to IBAs

Once I/LNGOs decide to work with IBAs, these partners need to provide opportunities and resources for capacity building. Human resource development (HRD) with groups of excluded persons is particularly necessary, as it enables the group to transform itself from SHO to IBA and provides support to people beyond its memberships. Capacity building is essential for fostering IBAs, not as subordinate to NGOs, but as partner organizations. Support provided during the development phase is comprised of three core elements: training, joint advocacy and facilitating access to funding. Members and staff of IBAs need active participation in such opportunities, particularly training for HRD: for instance, English language classes for smoothing communication with international agencies and training in advocacy at global level (Tanaka, 2014).

3) Mutual learning through networks

Formation of an IBA creates challenging new issues. An issue-based network, AATWIN, was established in 1997, the same year as the formation of Shakti Samuha.

These types of issue-based networks are often formed through strong leaderships by IBAs and their partners. They provide all member organizations with mutual learning and allow joint advocacy to be conducted.

As long as NGOs and IBAs maintain purely bilateral relations, their unequal footing is difficult to remedy. Thus, alliance building by IBAs serves as a useful strategy to empower single IBAs. Primarily alliances help IBAs address their common concerns with greater vigour and strength. In addition, IBA members engage in individual exchanges to learn from each other and improve their understanding of the root causes of their problems, such as patriarchy and globalization.

4) Working with various actors

IBAs have three advantages, as demonstrated by Shakti Samuha: capacity for reaching out to target populations, the ability to bridge ideological gaps, and the ability to address relevant issues. It is not difficult for IBAs to approach various actors instead of relying on a sole partner if IBAs appeal to these advantages. Multilateral partnerships encourage sharing and coordination between partners and minimize the managerial burden of IBAs.

5) Changing relationships between rights-holders and other actors

This is the most important step for creating inclusive aid, for two reasons. First, relationships motivate individual behaviour changes in staff members of partners who do not share the same social stigma that staff members of IBAs have. Second, relationships change

staff members' attitudes towards IBAs as organizations. Often, the staffs of partner organizations, whether LNGOs or INGOs, behave as guardians of IBAs, resulting in an 'un-equal' relationship.

At the same time, the members of IBAs also need to change their attitude toward the non-survivor staff members in their own IBAs, staffs of partner organizations, and outsiders. Persons struggling against social stigma may not be able to collaborate with non-survivors due to their lack of confidence. Partnerships between IBAs and other partners may contribute to changing their perceptions of non-survivors and encouraging them to approach the outside world.

VIII. Conclusion

This study presents a case study of inclusive aid, focusing on Shakti Samuha, an IBA formed by survivors of human trafficking. It finds key points and prerequisites for enabling I/LNGOs to serve as good partners of IBAs, as well as analysing the role of I/LNGOs in partnerships with IBAs.

Three ideas are prerequisites for inclusive aid. First, the concerns of partners towards IBAs (e.g. about their weak governance) can be overcome if IBAs get enough support for to build capacity. Second, inclusive aid can occur through multi-stakeholder support, instead of through bilateral support. Third, inclusive aid can occur through collaboration in advocacy, in addition to project funding.

The case presented in this paper stands as evidence that IBAs can be empowered to address their own issues if NGOs and other supporters provide adequate inputs. In addition, bilateral and multi-lateral donors will be able to channel their aid to I/LNGOs that support IBAs, so as to better contribute to the promotion of self-representation for inclusive aid.

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【End Notes】

- 1) These figures have been used for over 15 years, due to the difficulties associated with obtaining reliable data.
- 2) There are 30 member organizations affiliated with AATWIN as of 2014. <http://www.aatwin.org.np/index.php/aatwin-member-organisations> (accessed on 6 October 2014)

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