



Evaluation Report: William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India



About American India Foundation

The American India Foundation (AIF) is a trusted bridge to channel philanthropy towards India. Its mission is to catalyze social and economic change in India.

AIF mobilizes resources in the United States and India and invests these to improve education, livelihoods and public health for the marginalized in India. Since inception in 2001 it has invested nearly Rs. 240 crore (\$5 million) in more than 100 Indian non-governmental organizations.

President Bill Clinton serves as its Honorary Chair.



The William J. Clinton Fellowship

is a program that builds bridges between the USA and India by sending talented and skilled young Americans to work with select non-governmental organizations in India for a period of ten months. The program serves to provide technical skills and intellectual resources to Indian NGOs to build their capacity to meet their goals, while developing American leaders who understand the nuances of India's development scenario and demonstrate a commitment beyond the ten-month fellowship period.

VISION

“To affect positive social and economic change in India and improve the understanding of development issues in the Indian context among potential future leaders by increasing the connectivity between American professionals and Indian NGOs”.

MISSION

1. To provide technical skills and intellectual resources to assist under-resourced NGOs in meeting their goals.
2. To build the next generation of leaders with an informed commitment to affecting positive social and economic change in India beyond the ten months of their fellowship.

“This program has always been especially meaningful to me, as it blends my passion for India with my belief in citizen service. The 200 alumni of the program are shining examples of how we all have the ability to make a difference.”

■ *Bill Clinton*



Evaluation Team

Team Leader - Tom Thomas

Team member - Pradeep Narayanan, Shahina, Sharmistha Sarkar, Srijan Nandan, Srilata Sircar and Vinita Yadav

Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

AIF	: American India Foundation
CBOs	: Community Based Organisations
CV	: Curriculum Vitae
FGD	: Focus Group Discussion
INGOs	: International Non Government Organisations
NGO	: Non Government Organisation
PIO	: Parents of Indian Origin
SC	: Service Crops
US	: United States
USA	: United States of America



Praxis-Institute for Participatory Practices (www.praxisindia.org) is a not for profit organization set up by ActionAid in 1997 to promote participatory practices in all spheres of human development. Today, the organization is an autonomous entity that has become synonymous with participation in the development sector.

Its vision is a world without poverty in which every woman and man has the right to participate in decision-making processes and to a life with dignity and choices. This perspective colours every initiative that Praxis undertakes in a social development project - be it research, capacity building, documentation, or even an internal self-funded initiative.

Its mission is to strive for the democratization of development processes and institutions to ensure that the voices of poor women, men, girls and boys are heard and acted upon.

Work Profile

Praxis uses participatory approaches in training, action research, systems development and documentation, to bring out the people's perspective. One of its major strengths is its ability to facilitate a dialogue amongst the stakeholders. Praxis conducts multiple stakeholder dialogues in all its initiatives to understand the various perspectives pertaining to any issue.

Research is an important area of focus for Praxis. It undertakes major consultancies for several international clients that include bilateral and multilateral donors, INGOs, NGOs, CBOs, grassroot organisations as well as governments and ministries.

In the course of its research consultancies, Praxis has covered various sectors: health, education, fair trade, disaster mitigation, urban and rural development to name a few. The experiences gathered have led to the creation of a rich knowledge pool that the organization draws upon regularly. As a result, a Praxis report is not just accurate or informative, it is perceptive.

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Executive Summary

The primary objective of this evaluation is to assess how far the William J. Clinton Fellowship Program has been able to achieve the objectives declared in its vision and mission statement.

The objectives being:

- a) To provide a platform for skill transfer to resource deficient NGOs in India
- b) To provide a platform of skill acquisition for the fellow

Fellows have clarity on the program objectives from a “fellow perspective” from the outset. The evaluation reveals that on the other hand, the program appears to view NGOs from a utilitarian perspective; providing space to fellows, and not really as co-partners in the program. There is an absence of systematic consultation or even communication with NGOs across the program. There is no manual or long-term strategy note that currently exists for NGOs to refer to. The evaluation also ratifies the need to maintain a fine balance in information dissemination between NGOs and fellows.

The evaluation team feels AIF needs to fully utilize all resources available for the program. The Fellowship program in India is currently managed by a two-member team who are overburdened, which directly impacts the quality of the program. There is scope for widening the platform by incorporating more players, namely, ex-fellows, ex-host organizations and external experts from relevant sectors. The role of these stakeholders should not only be limited to merely the selection process, matching process etc but rather be developed as a comprehensive and proactive involvement throughout the program.

On the selection process for fellows; the evaluation team feels the selection process is not fully attuned to the program objectives. If the needs of host organizations are important, *skill requirements* should find a place within the selection criteria, although not necessarily as an overriding criterion. The India Country Office needs to play a larger role in the selection process, perhaps as one of the reviewers.

It appears that the program has not yet reached its optimum outreach in terms of being accessible to a large audience of aspirants. The dissemination process in the USA needs to be strengthened so that aspiring candidates from a more diverse pool get accessed.

On the selection of NGOs, AIF currently reviews and selects them in four different ways:

1. The Ashoka fellowship program recommends NGOs and areas where fellows could be placed.
2. AIF considers AIF-partner NGOs that fellows can support in a required area of a specific project.
3. Non-partner NGOs are approached, which also enables AIF to build new relationships.
4. Fellowship alumni recommend NGOs where they have earlier been placed or worked.

Though, the web survey data showed that a majority of NGOs and fellows were satisfied with the matching process, it emerged through subsequent discussions that the results are not to their satisfaction. AIF needs to have a more thorough matching of fellow skills with NGO needs. Either way, creating a "project" is a critical part of the process and should not be overlooked. AIF needs to provide sufficient support to both the NGO and the fellow. This evaluation emphasizes the need to develop a definite process of NGO selection by incorporating specific parameters that will clarify skill requirements, provide clear deliverables and validate ongoing functional programs.

NGOs and fellows felt that NGO participation is necessary at Orientation, enabling fellows to gain a better understanding on development and other issues such as geographical area, nature of work, their role, housing, etc. AIF should review the orientation process from the perspective of the

participating host organizations also. There should be a continuous process of interaction amongst the stakeholders with ongoing engagement between the fellow, host organization and AIF in order that mutual expectations get aligned.

Mentorship at a personal and professional level emerged as one of the key expectations of the fellows. Each fellow joins the Fellowship program to fulfill their own personal needs and these vary from fellow to fellow. Though these are individual aspirations, they can be grouped into some common buckets such as those exploring their roots, smartening their CVs, clarifying and/ or challenging their intellectual thoughts, etc.

AIF needs to restructure mentorship to accommodate fellows' needs, ensuring accessibility.

Though fellows may commence the fellowship with some of the above goals in mind, there tends to be a dynamic change in these goals as the fellowship progresses. This requires the support of a mentor who is able to differentiate the different needs and offer holistic guidance. Mentoring is usually understood in a top down fashion (mentor assigned to a fellow by the NGO leadership), and is considered in singular terms (one mentor). This view ignores the fact that the mentored fellows usually have their own preferences for mentors based on their own assessment of what they need and that they might aspire to have multiple mentors. However, given the time limitations of the Fellowship program, the fellows practically may not be able to figure out who might be able to offer what. It is therefore recommended that a panel of mentors be created based on a broad categorization of needs (as mentioned earlier) from within AIF or a panel of external mentors, who are seen as AIF mentors. However, it will be important for the AIF/ external mentors to be in constant communication with NGO mentors, in order to deliver a more coordinated and holistic mentorship experience to the fellows. A strong mentorship process will help the fellows gain a sense of belonging and bonding with AIF. In addition, AIF needs to acknowledge fellows as an integral part of the AIF community and communicate this to them.

Most of the fellows disclosed that they faced several challenges in logistical management, which manifests in many ways – lack of prior information, delay in responding, not responding to calls, low priority given to many of the fellows' concerns, attitudinal issues of fellowship coordinators, etc. This could be taken care of by paying greater attention to detail, being transparent and cultivating a caring attitude. On the other side, NGOs felt that fellows had a “superior” approach. This kind of difference in perspectives needs to be critically examined as it implies the absence of effective and systematic communication between them. AIF needs to revisit the parameters of choosing fellows and NGOs and develop a selection manual for the same. Detailed parameters have been written in the reports for fellows and NGOs.

The existing communication system is not uniform, which creates confusion and misunderstanding among the NGOs and fellows. The evaluation team recommends that a transparent and systematic communication system be created that keeps a finer balance of information as communicated to fellows and NGOs. The current reporting system should be revised and there should a space for the voice of the fellows and NGOs.

The fellowship program has significantly enhanced fellows' skills; they have learnt hard and soft skills: analytical skills, project planning, local language, ego management, networking etc. NGOs appear to have benefitted mostly in the areas of research and documentation.

The duration of the fellowship program is largely felt to be adequate by both the NGOs and fellows. NGOs believe that the duration compares favorably with other existing volunteer programs.

The fellowship program has an immense scope for fellows to enhance their knowledge and understanding of India's developmental issues and further exploration in India. AIF needs to consider them as potential alumni who can play a significant role in future. AIF should be able to foster the idea of post fellowship commitment by enabling platforms and networking with fellows and grassroots organisations across the country.

1.3 Objectives Of the Evaluation



I. The primary objective of the evaluation is to assess how far the William J. Clinton Fellowship Program has been able to achieve the objectives declared in its vision and mission statement. More specifically:

- a) NGO profile (motivation, receptiveness to fellows, ability to utilize skills, relationship interaction with AIF. The profiles of NGOs have been mapped in order to arrive at a series of critical parameters that constitute the ideal NGO(s) for placement
- b) Fellow profile (emotional readiness, service mindset, maturity, motivation):

The profiles of fellows have also been mapped and studied to arrive at a set of characteristics that constitute the ideal fellow type(s) for the program. (Mapping the changes in perceptions of the fellow, the readiness to conceive new ideas, adaptability, skill development, the capacity for social mobilization, organizational skills, are some of the indicators through which the ideal fellow could be identified.

Mapping of change includes:

- Changes in the global view and perceptions about India and development discourses and paradigms
- Changes in fellows' preconceived notions and perceptions of development issues.
- Changes in career aspirations and goals.
- Extent to which fellows demonstrate a post-fellowship commitment to the development sector and /or India.

- II. **To assess the impact the fellows have had on their projects; NGO capacity, sustainability of the work, community mobilization and its effect on other stakeholders (i.e. community).**
- III. **To identify core indicators of success for the fellows and the NGOs as well as the mentors (NGO as well as AIF).**
- IV. **To examine the core programmatic challenges faced by fellows, partner NGOs and AIF, as well as the strategies adopted to address the same.**
- V. **Potential to develop a sustainable alumni network and a knowledge sharing platform post fellowship**
- VI. **Identifying the core support tools (website, blog, cross-visits etc.) and reporting schedules to make the fellowship experience more productive and meaningful for the fellow and hosting NGO.**
- VII. **To provide strategic recommendations for the development of the program, with emphasis on:**
 - Fellow recruitment process
 - NGO matching process
 - Induction, mid-term and final evaluation process
 - Mentorship (both NGO & AIF)

NGOs sampled for FGD	AIF Partner	Non AIF Partner	Sector of Intervention
SIAP		✓	Public Health
Aid India		✓	Education
Saathi (Chennai)		✓	Public Health
Breakthrough	✓		Gender
Pravah		✓	Education
Saathi (Kolkata)		✓	Health
YRG Care	✓		Public Health
DE	✓		Education
Saath (Ahmedabad)	✓		Livelihood
Khameer		✓	Livelihood
Sewa Mandir		✓	Livelihood

Table 1: Sampled NGOs for FGD

Sampled participants in the evaluation				
Participants	Universe	Sample	Responded	Tools used
Current fellows	All fellows who had participated at end point	100%	100%	Focus group discussion
NGOs	7	12 (based on four sectors, five locations)	92% (Delhi-2, Chennai-5, Kolkata-1, Ahmedabad-3, Bangalore-1)	Focus group discussion, interview and telephonic interview
Alumni	List provided by AIF	100%	20%	Web Survey
	Selected fellows for piloting the schedule, based on sector intervention (list provided by the AIF)	3	2	Email
NGOs	NGOs list given by AIF	100%	21%	Web Survey
	Selected NGOs for piloting the schedule, based on sector intervention (list provided by the AIF)	3	None	Email

Table 2: Sampling & tools used

1.4 Evaluation framework

The evaluation framework is designed in accordance with the objectives of the study, to address three levels:

1. **Personal:** Transformations in fellow understanding of development practices in India, as well as changes in global perspective, attitude and behavior.

2. **Professional:**

a. At the level of fellow the additional skills learnt in terms of tools, methods and theories, and experiences applicable to future work.

b. At the NGO level, the benefit to the organization from fellow skill, intervention and knowledge inputs.

3. **Institutional:** The role played by fellows in institutionalization and mainstreaming of certain practices and changes in the systems and structures of NGOs.

1.5 Sampling and Methodology

Sampling

1. The evaluation team had an interactive focus group discussion (FGD) with the 2008-2009 fellows at the end point in June 2009.

2. A stratified sampling of the FGD was undertaken for both NGOs and fellows based on the following:

- Sectors of intervention (education, livelihood, public health and others)
- Partners & non-partners of AIF. The stratification followed a pattern in which NGOs represented each sector, viz. namely education, livelihood, public health and others.
- Rural and urban
- The methodology of the evaluation was based on participatory approaches. Inputs were taken from all the key stakeholders, including current fellows, alumni, NGOs and AIF team members.

Tools Employed

Secondary Literature Review helped gather information on the Fellows' educational and personal background.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with Fellows and NGOs helped understand their perspectives. Discussions were held with a focus on mutual gains and synergies, challenges encountered and suggestions for improvements.

Web Survey helped gain an understanding of the experience before, during and after the fellowship from both the fellows and NGOs, along with suggestions for improvement of the program. The survey attempted to include all alumni and NGOs in the evaluation process, to share their learnings, experiences and grievances.

Telephonic interviews with NGOs to gain an understanding of the experiences with the fellows and the organizational learning from the fellowship.

Interviews with AIF staff to understand the core ideology of the program and practicalities of implementation. The interaction helped the evaluation team understand how AIF envisioned the fellowship.

1.6 Evaluation Process

1. Literature review and research design preparation - Based on a secondary literature review provided by the AIF, a research design was prepared. Schedules for NGOs and Fellows were prepared and shared with the AIF team and their feedback was then incorporated.
2. Focus group discussion (FGD) with the current fellows and NGOs - this gave Praxis insight into refining fellows schedule for the web survey and a broader understanding on the fellowship program based on the evaluation framework. Twelve NGOs were selected based on the criteria of sector intervention, partner and non-partner of the AIF, urban and non-urban setting NGOs in consultation with the AIF team. Focus group discussions (FGD) with NGOs were held in Ahmedabad and Chennai. Some of the NGOs who did not attend FGD were interviewed via telephone by the evaluation team. Interviews with NGOs - Telephonic interviews were conducted with some of the NGOs across India, places such as Kolkata, Bangalore and Chennai. In Delhi, the team interviewed two NGOs.
3. The tools were tested in a pilot phase with three fellows and NGOs respectively. The fellows and NGOs were selected based on the sector interventions, in consultation with the AIF team.
4. The web-based survey was carried out with all fellows and NGOs, who were part of the fellowship program until 2008. 21% of the fellows and 20% NGOs participated in the web survey.
5. An analysis of findings
6. Meeting with the AIF to share research design, selection of NGOs, interviews, clarify doubts and share findings.

1.7 Time frame

June 2009	Research design prepared and shared with AIF Focus group discussion (FGD) with current fellows Meeting with AIF staff (US and India)
July 2009	Incorporated feedback based on FGD, AIF's comments, (FGD with NGO and pilot) and redesigned schedules Focus group discussion, interviews with NGOs Piloted schedules with fellows and NGOs Uploaded Web based survey
August 2009	Extension of closing date for web based survey Focus group discussion (FGD), interviews and telephonic interview with NGOs Meeting with the AIF Analysis of findings First draft report submission

1.8 Limitations of the study

1. The evaluation team could not meet with the community during the course of the study. Meetings with the NGOs were arranged by AIF in every location, but the NGOs could not coordinate meetings with the community during the given time period. The evaluation team was informed that not all the fellows had worked directly with the community; most were associated with a field based person who was directly involved with the community.
2. The evaluation team could not collect much information from fellows who had dropped out of the program, with the exception of one.

2. Key findings & analysis

2.1 Mission and vision of the Fellowship Program

2.2 Stakeholders in the Implementation

2.3 Selection process of Fellows

2.4 Selection of NGOs and matching process

2.5 Orientation, midpoint and endpoint

2.6 The mentoring system

2.7 Adaptability

2.8 Duration of Fellowship

2.9 Reporting and feedback system

2.10 Networking and building relationships with different organizations

2.11 Skill enhancement and knowledge building

2.12 Post fellowship

2.1 On the mission & vision

- (a) In its interaction with NGOs, the evaluation team found that the broader vision of the program was not known to NGOs. A few were aware of one component of the program -- that fellows to gain a hands-on understanding of the development sector and the culture. Some NGOs believed fellows had been placed in order to contribute to the respective projects with their knowledge and skills.
- (a) Some NGOs believed the fellows are there to learn; this being one of the reasons why NGOs invest in terms of mentorship and exposure, in addition to translation and other logistical costs not supported by the program. They felt that it would not be right to put pressure on the fellows directly or indirectly to contribute to the workings of the NGO.
- (b) NGOs felt that fellows need to have clarity about the fact that they have been placed with grassroots organizations for their own learning. Else, they are likely to adopt a condescending manner towards the NGO and its strategy, which makes it difficult to engage with them.
- (c) On the other hand, some NGOs that were not interested in taking on graduates as fellows as they lack the infrastructure to mentor and train a graduate. It becomes very difficult for them to set aside resources to train graduates. In fact, they do not hire new graduates as their regular staff for the same reason.

Findings

- (a) AIF has a clear belief that the fellowship is an effective way of achieving two significant objectives, unique from its other programs.
- (b) Fellows are made aware right at the orientation that this is an opportunity for them to maximize learning, while ensuring that they bring their existing learning to the project with an understanding that the local contexts are different from their own contexts.

The evaluation team infers the following:

- NGOs have not been able to fully comprehend the vision of the program, even those who have hosted three to four fellows. It appears that so far AIF has looked upon NGOs from a very utilitarian perspective of providing space to fellows, and not really as co-partners in the program. In fact, a major concern of the NGOs is that by virtue of being applicants to the program they have been reduced to being beneficiaries rather than “mentors”.
- Only in the present year (2009) the requirements of NGOs were shared with Fellows by the selection team in the US. Obviously, the roles and requirements of the NGOs was not necessarily the primary input to the program.
- There is an absence of a systematic consultation or even communication with NGOs across the program. There is no manual, or a long-term strategy note. The process is currently guided by the passion and interest of the AIF team.

2.2 Stakeholders in the Implementation

The evaluation team feels AIF has not utilized all resources available for the program. Many of the roles are performed by a two-member team who are over-burdened, which causes the quality of their performance to suffer, thereby directly impacting the quality of the program.

From Praxis's interactions with NGOs it emerged that the NGOs can play a significant role in:

- Selection of Fellows and NGOs
- Matching process
- Orientation
- Mentoring

Similarly, fellows believe they can play a more active role in the following ways:

- Alumni being part of the selection process (both subsequent fellows and NGOs)
- Ensure a more balanced matching process

Stakeholders	Role
US office	Selection of Fellows, selection of NGOs, logistical arrangement to send fellows in India
India Office	Selection of NGOs, Matching Process, Mentoring, Facilitation and organizing orientation, midpoint and end point meetings
Country Director of India	In selection process, midpoint & end point
Two-member project team for SC	Organizing orientation, midpoint & end point meeting, mentoring, coordinating with NGO, logistics, trouble shooting
Other Project teams in India office	Help in recommending NGOs

Table 4: Roles of US and India offices

2.3 Selection process

The objective of the fellowship is to build the next generation of leaders by building connectivity between American graduate professionals and Indian NGOs. The fellowship gives immense scope for meaningful exposure and learning to fellows who are interested in the Indian development sector. It provides a space that exposes fellows to a multicultural environment in order to gain understanding of complex cultural dynamics and help them respond with a sensitivity that he or she gains through the program.

Currently, fellows are selected through a detailed process largely managed by the AIF office in the US. The present process has inherent challenges:

- (a) The US office of AIF selects the fellows, while the India office identifies host organizations. The skill requirements of host organization are integrated into the selection criteria through the role played by India Country Director in the selection process. It is logistically not possible for the same team to choose Fellows as well as the host organization.
- (b) Obviously, the fellowship is not synonymous with recruitment of skilled staff for the host organization. Therefore, it is not possible to get a perfect skill-match between fellows and the requirements of the host organizations; it is not the primary objective either.
- (c) Fellow selection does not focus on (a) Providing a fair mix of candidates from diverse backgrounds, classes and communities; (b) Having a passion and interest for development work; (c) Willingness to contribute without being condescending.

CURRENT SELECTION PROCESS

Fellowship advertised and applications received in the US.



Every application is scrutinized by at least two independent reviewers.



Each provides a score against agreed indicators, and fellows are ranked based on these scores.



The top 75 ranked candidates are interviewed (face to face or telephonically) in five major cities of the US.



Finally, 25 Fellows are identified.

NGOs held the opinion that the fellows carry a belief that they have been selected through a rigorous review process, and therefore harbor very high expectations from the program. At the delivery end, there are some contradictions:

- (a) Many fellows are recent graduates. The mentoring support needed for them is very high, which NGOs cannot afford.
- (b) Fellows take a long time to adjust to the Indian culture -- almost three to four months -- which is too long a period, given the fellowship spans only 10 months.
- (c) While fellows do not have the requisite local language skills, they are eager to spend time with the relevant communities. NGOs felt AIF should support this process with additional mentoring grants.
- (d) NGOs felt they have no role in the entire selection process, even indirectly, and this gap can lead to mismatch in expectations at both ends.

Findings

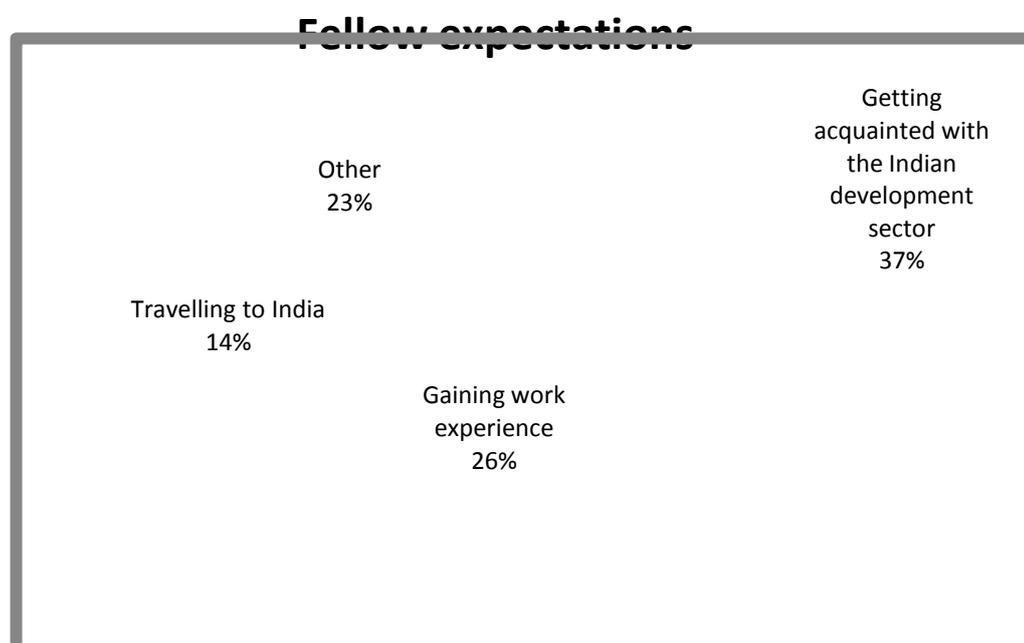
Fellows come to India with deep expectations for personal and professional growth. By establishing close contacts with a community and working under challenging situations in under resourced NGOs, they seek to add new dimensions to their personality. For them this is also an opportunity to learn about and understand Indian hospitality, religion, spirituality and culture for an inward journey. For children of Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) this is an added opportunity to explore their roots and connect with their families/ ancestors.

Fellows as well as NGOs felt that at present the program excludes those belonging to economically weaker sections. NGOs said the selected fellows do not reflect a cross-section of all classes of the population in the country.

In previous years, NGOs were not a part of either screening or finalizing process of selection. They are provided with CVs of fellows only after the fellow list has been finalized. For the first time in the current year, AIF adopted a more transparent approach. Three NGO project descriptions were provided to the applicants shortlisted for interview; similarly, three fellow CVs were shared with each NGO to widen choice.

Recommendations

- The evaluation team feels the selection process is not fully attuned to the program objectives. If the needs of host organizations are important, skill requirements should find a place within the selection criteria, although not necessarily as an overriding criterion.
- The India country office needs to play a larger role in the selection process, perhaps as one of the reviewers.
- There is a large possibility that the program has not yet reached its optimum outreach in terms of the 'right' fellow. The dissemination process needs to be strengthened so that the candidates from lower and lower-middle income groups are included. (The evaluation team has not reviewed the class profile of the fellowship program. This inference is based on perceptual data collected from NGOs and Fellows).



2.4 Selection of NGOs and the matching process

At present AIF selects NGOs through four different sources:

1. The Ashoka fellowship program recommends NGOs and areas where fellows could be placed.
2. AIF considers partner NGOs that fellows can support in a required area of a specific project.
3. Non-partner NGOs are approached, which helps in building relationships.
4. Fellowship alumni recommend NGOs where they have earlier been placed.

The AIF India office identifies NGOs and shares the list with the US office. Fellowship staff then visit NGOs to finalize fellow placements.

In the selection of NGOs, AIF primarily goes by two parameters:

- Where non-partners are being considered, required skill sets and project description are kept in mind.
- Where partners are hosts, the technical needs within specified projects are the basis of selection.

Findings

1. 42% of the fellows who participated in the web survey said they were regularly in touch with their selected NGO even before the commencement of the fellowship.
2. 61% of the fellows felt there was perfect match between the work they desired and the NGO's project intervention. However, 39% said there was a mismatch and NGOs were not fully aware of the fellowship objectives. They felt fellows were treated as international volunteers and not given specific responsibilities. Many of them are not satisfied with the kind of work provided.

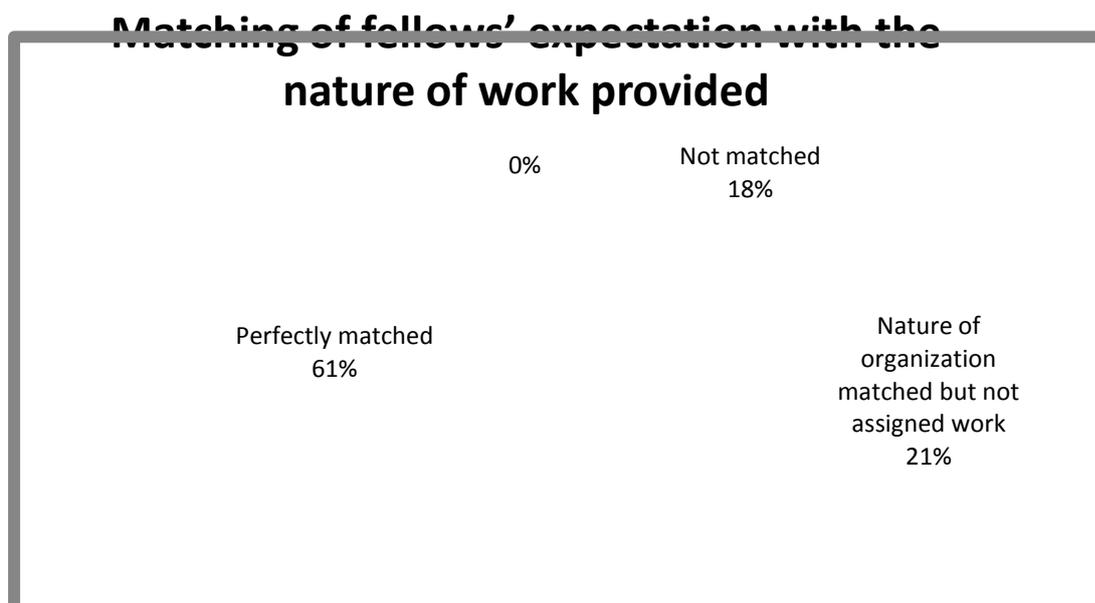


Table 6 : Fellows' responses on matching process (web survey)

3. 71% of the NGOs did not find a mismatch between the backgrounds of the fellows and the project intervention identified for them. However, during the FGDs NGOs expressed the feeling that they were not provided the opportunity to choose their fellows, and were not comprehensively involved in the selection process. (For detailed findings please refer to annexure 3).

4. AIF believes all NGOs were given the choice to select suitable fellows on the basis of their profile and need. AIF sends the fellows' CVs on the basis of the organization activities and fellows' expressed needs. There is no previous discussion though with the NGO on the envisaged profile of the fellow.

Point of view of Evaluation Team

- Broadly, there is exchange of information regarding the requirement and availability of skills, between the NGOs and AIF, but this is not enough to facilitate an ideal matching process.
- Though the web survey data shows most NGOs and fellows are satisfied with the matching process, it emerged during discussions that the results are not to their satisfaction. AIF needs to do a much more thorough matching of fellow skills with NGO needs. Either way, creating a "project" is a very important part of the process and should not be overlooked. AIF needs to provide sufficient support here and if fellows are working on AIF-funded projects the roles of each party in the project design and implementation need to be very clear.
- The CVs of all fellows are not provided to the NGOs to give them a voice in selecting appropriate fellows according to their needs. The organizations accepted whatever CVs they received but did not find this a desirable practice.
- There is a lack of consistency in the matching process. This is because AIF does not have a policy on the selection of NGOs nor the matching process.
- The collective concern expressed over the web survey, focus group discussions and telephonic interviews, indicates the role that AIF needs to play in terms of participation, communication and information dissemination.

To sum up AIF needs to review:

- Level of participation of NGOs in selection (matching) and orientation.**
- Facilitating a platform for NGOs to come together for collective sharing and growing the network.**
- Roles and responsibilities of fellows and mentors.**
- Improving communication between stakeholders, and appropriate information dissemination to fellows and NGOs to bring them on the same page.**

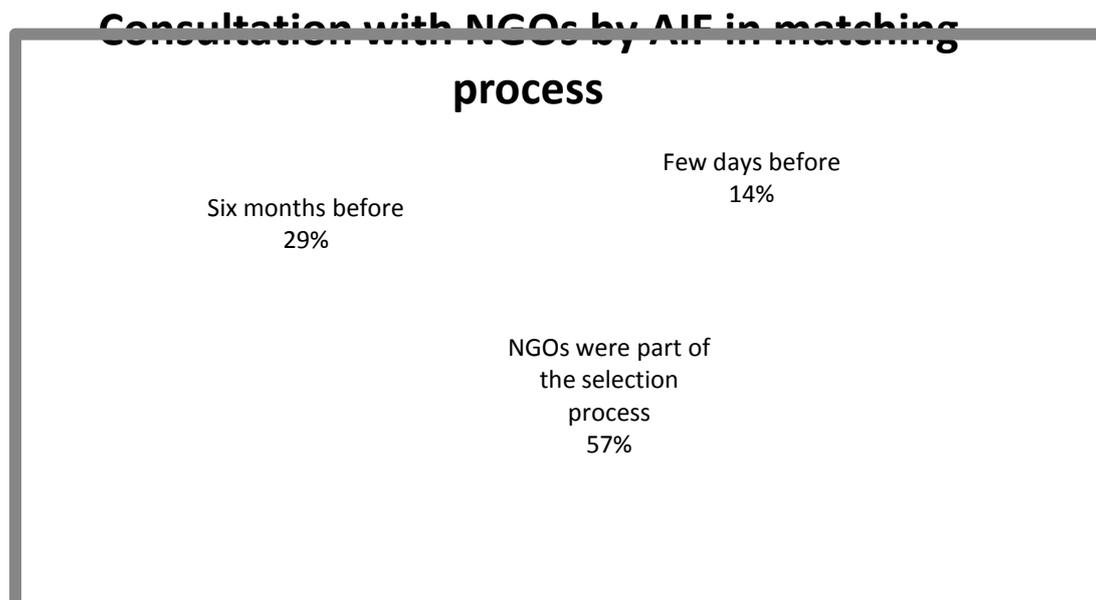


Table 7 : NGOs involvement in matching process

2.5 Orientation, midpoint and endpoint

The purpose of the orientation is to acclimatize the fellows to the Indian development scene and make satisfactory logistical arrangements for their placement.

The orientation takes the shape of a 10-day workshop in which fellows are introduced to various aspects of Indian polity, development and governance to facilitate their immersion in the program. Experts from the respective sectors facilitate this process.

Findings

- a. Fellows equivocally feel interaction with NGOs should be a part of the orientation with enough time provided for a better understanding of issues such as geographical area, nature of work, their role, housing, etc.
- b. Another need expressed by fellows' was for a meeting with alumni during the orientation itself. They felt this would help improve preparedness for the fellowship.
- c. The web survey reveals that a vast majority of fellows did not receive any orientation from their NGOs upon arrival. Amongst those who did, many said that the session was not of much help in providing comprehensive information about the NGOs to the fellows and also in breaking the ice to help them fit in with ease
- d. The NGOs that participated in the FGDs commented that AIF should review the orientation process from the perspective of participation of the hosting organizations. They shared a concern that when fellows reach them, they have different expectations from what the organizations have been led to believe. The difference largely pertains to the nature of involvement in community-based work.
- e. The concern stated by the NGOs in the web survey as well as in the FGDs is that there appears to be no such space or platform where information can be shared easily between the NGOs and fellows (as stated by 72% of the NGOs in the web based survey).

Recommendations

- It appears that fellows are overwhelmed with too much information in the beginning. It might be more gainful to let them "wet their feet" a bit before inundating them with material. This would give them more time to comprehend complex developmental issues. At the beginning, more attention to practical issues and legal requirements, such as Foreign Office Registration, may be more useful.
- In this context, Midpoint could be utilized better, as an extended orientation phase, along with its a sharing session.
- Orientation should also cover cultural dos and don'ts.
- The crucial missing piece in the orientation process is a discussion with the NGOs, which would help fellows understand the nature of the project they would be undertaking during their placement.

2.6 The mentoring system

The mentoring system is practiced at three levels. There is an AIF mentor, an NGO mentor and in some instances, if staff is available NGOs designate a second peer mentor. The peer mentor provides support to the fellow in terms of work culture, the portfolio of the organization and helping to understand whom to approach and how to approach. As far as the NGO is concerned, the peer mentor is the point of contact in keeping informed of the fellow's well-being. The supervising mentor provides guidance in terms of fellowship deliverables.

However, AIF disclosed that they had been unable to carry out mentoring effectively. The interaction between the host organization mentor and the AIF mentor rarely happens.

Core challenges in the present practice

1. The mentor-fellow relationship in general is weak in communication, which adversely affects the quality of output from the program. Due to the differences in culture, attitude and perceptions, fellows said they do not receive sufficient emotional support from their organization.
2. FGDs and web survey data draw attention to the issues and challenges in understanding and adherence to the "cultural norms" in the Indian context. These norms have been described as "binding" and issues pertaining to gender identity, identity as a foreigner and identity as an Indian have been recurrent. This seems to have been the dominant challenge on a personal front and has reportedly resulted in "passive/aggressive" interactions at the work place. The rigid hierarchy maintained in the work environment was another commonly cited instance of a restrictive cultural norm.
3. Another significant challenge that is currently being faced by fellows is the time lag in communication due to the prevailing hierarchy within the organization. Fellows have mentioned in their monthly reports the circuitous protocol involved to reach a message to the right person. The fellowship needs to examine how to cross the boundaries of protocol.

Findings

- a. Fellows have reported to not receiving much emotional support from either AIF or their host NGOs. 42% fellows stated in the web survey that they received no emotional support at all, where as 27% said they received some emotional support on a few occasions.

Level of satisfaction of the relationship with mentor	(b)	Percentage
Unsatisfactory personal relationship with the NGO Mentor	(c)	52%
Unsatisfactory professional relationship with the NGO	(d)	64%
<i>Source of information: Fellows web survey</i>		

i. Table 8 : relationship of fellows with the NGO mentor

- b. 64% of the respondents reported being unhappy with the professional relationship they shared with their mentor, while 52% said they were unhappy with the personal relationship they shared with their mentor. Some desired characteristics of the mentor from their point of view 1. Teacher 2. Friend 3. Supervisor 4. Counselor 5. Extension of AIF support system.
- c. There is a need for more communication between fellows and NGOs prior to the beginning of fellowship and also greater involvement of the fellow in the placement process to ensure better understanding of the organization.
- d. It has been stated by the fellows that AIF should treat them as part of the family, so that they can access anyone in AIF whenever a clarification of any sort is required. At present fellows are unaware of who works in the programmatic sectors at AIF.
- e. 91% of the fellows in the web survey admitted to having faced challenges in regards to cultural and attitudinal differences.

Inference of the evaluation team

- a. Mentorship at a personal and professional level emerged as one of the key expectations of the fellows from the fellowship experience. This is reflected both in the web survey as well as FGDs.
- b. Mentorship was found to be unsatisfactory both at the fellow level and the NGO level. AIF too agreed there is lack of understanding on how to managing mentorship.
- c. The current mentorship practice does not meet the expectations a fellow has in the beginning phase of the program. Conflicts are created, which may adversely affect output. The lack of emotional support has several implications on the emotional well being of fellows. It may also have a significant role in the time it takes them to acclimatize.
- d. NGOs do not follow a structured format in the mentoring process. There are no written guidelines or manual guiding the mentoring system. It has been carried out broadly on the basis of past understanding and certain set practices. Some NGOs designate one mentor (probably an administrative person) to provide logistical support (etc. accommodation and medical assistance), and another to take care of the programmatic aspects. On the other end of the spectrum, there are NGOs that have created a specific position in the organization for the purpose of mentoring.
- e. Strengthening communication between AIF and NGO mentors is a possible solution in bridging the communications gap.
- f. A comprehensive manual needs to be created, with inputs from NGOs and fellows, to give a direction to the process.

2.7 Adaptability

The web survey for the fellows was designed to enquire into the personal dimension of the fellows' learnings from the program and the contribution to the host NGO. The first criterion taken into account was the fellow's adaptability. This is constituted by the fellows' motivation behind taking up the fellowship, ability to adjust within an alien work environment and the degree of involvement at the NGO level.

Challenges

As stated earlier, about 90% of fellows have faced challenges with regard to cultural and attitudinal differences. This needs to be seen in conjunction with the fact that nearly 80% took up to three months to adjust to the functioning of their assigned organizations. For a group of self-motivated people, this comes across as an unusually high period of time. It constitutes about a quarter of the entire fellowship period and definitely affects the productivity of the fellow and the fellowship process on the whole.

Findings

- a. The web survey revealed that over 70% of the fellows seem to be self-motivated in taking up the fellowship as they have been previously introduced to the Indian development sector through work, volunteering, internship, study and other experiences and are eager to explore further. Thus the fellowship in most cases is a channel for realizing certain aspirations that fellows already harbor. In the case of PIO, they establish connections with their families, come to terms with their own identity as Indians, and also learn to maneuver their ways around gender roles and other cultural specificities in the Indian context.
- b. In terms of self-discovery, fellows in some cases have come to rethink their own positions on issues such as cultural sensitivity and have also learnt to value solitude and time with themselves, by their own confession.
- c. There seems to have been a consistently high level of interaction between fellows and their colleagues in the host organization. In the web survey, close to 50% of them talked about wanting to interact with their colleagues outside the office setting too.
- d. 71% of the NGOs that participated in the web survey said fellows have acclimatized well. According to them, the two factors that adversely affected adaptability were local language and health.

Views of the evaluation team

- While most NGOs observed that adaptability skills are relatively high among fellows, fellows themselves have a different perspective. 91% of fellows who participated in the web survey disclosed they met with several challenges -- ranging from language to cultural differences, conservative mind sets of colleagues (which resulted in compatibility issues) and non-access to information records.
- This difference in perspective between NGOs and fellows needs to be critically examined as it implies the absence of effective and systematic communication between them, as well as AIF. However, the study has not explored this aspect in depth.
- One crucial factor that came across in discussion with NGOs is what they termed as hegemonic attitude of fellows, particularly in the first phase of the project. Some NGOs commented that knowingly or unknowingly, fellows had a superior approach. The AIF team clarified that the program both aspects (contribution as well as learning) are equally important, but the current situation reflects the lack of proper orientation in terms of the roles and responsibilities of the fellow. The FGD (with NGOs) data indicates that both NGOs and fellows need more clarification and orientation in terms of the roles and responsibilities, the rationale of the program, the system of mentorship, etc. It demands more transparency and participation as well as better communication systems to be in place.

Who is an appropriate fellow?

The evaluation calls for revisiting the parameters for choosing fellows; in terms of passion to the development sector, professionalism, attitude and desire for learning. Only half the sampled fellows took up the fellowship to get better acquainted with the Indian development sector. The number of fellows who come with a desire to achieve 'some kind of work experience' is not significantly less. The manual (which is recommended) for selection process should explain the multi dimensional aspects of an eligible fellow, without loopholes.

The parameters that emerged out of discussions are:

1. Graduate /experienced

Some of the NGOs disclosed they do not prefer new graduates. Both categories have advantages and disadvantages. This must be addressed in the selection/matching process. Fresh graduates may be placed with large NGOs (that can provide a committed mentor) whereas experienced fellows may be placed with smaller NGOs with less staff.

2. PIO/Non PIO

Fellows who are of Indian origin (PIO) may be more familiar with cultural aspects. At the same time the target group of the fellowship may not necessarily be from the PIO category only. Hence the fellowship should include non-PIOs too.

3. Direct action with local community or documentation/research

Some fellows are interested in working directly with the community, while others prefer to engage more in documentation and research. It is found that the majority of fellows have been engaged in documentation and research. In the first phase of the program, fellows are exposed to working at the community level, but found to withdraw due to the language and cultural barriers, thus leading them to spending more time working in the area of in documentation and research.

Besides, fellows prefer to have a concrete output for the work they implement, to ensure there is something substantive to add to their CVs. Documentation and research tends to be most significant method of doing so. The selection team should be able to make clear a distinction between the aspirations of the fellow and whether to have more community interaction or more focus on documentation and research. The matching should be done accordingly.

4. Attitude/adaptability

Fellows should:

- a. Respect and be able to cope with multicultural settings and diverse life situations.
- b. Be able to address the skill requirements of respective NGOs.
- c. Be open to learning new practices to develop a healthy engagement with the NGO and other individuals/groups in the respective work zones.

Box 1: Characteristics of Ideal fellows and NGOs (Source: Web survey)	
For fellows	For NGOs
Flexibility, genuine interest in India, committed to the 10 months, self-motivated, career oriented, team workers, patient, passionate, open minded, flexible, eager learners, able to cope in challenging situations and major cultural differences, independent, creative, possessing good listening skills, responsible, take others' work seriously, see others as a resource, Should definitely have international experience in developing world countries and not be fazed by different work cultures, living arrangements, erratic water and electrical supplies, heat, etc.	Flexible, capable of providing good mentors, professional, accepting of the idea that this could be a year of just documentation (i.e. flexible), humble and modest, willing to take on responsibility for someone who will need a lot of support, possessing good internal communication mechanisms, have effective links to community, experience with outsiders, clear goals, tangible projects, accommodating, has an agenda or objective for the fellow or is able to develop one with the fellow upon their arrival

Who is an appropriate NGO?

The parameters are:

- a. Working at a grass root level
- b. Rural/Urban areas
- c. In need of skill development/lacking resources for skill development
- d. Size
- e. Advocacy based/service delivery based
- f. AIF partner/non-partner
- g. Direct community involvement/research and documentation/ advocacy
- h. Able to provide effective mentoring

2.8 Duration of Fellowship

Findings

57% of the NGOs that participated in the web survey are content with the present duration of the fellowship (10 months), but 29% expressed the view the duration should be extended to one year, while a few NGOs even suggested to extending the period up to two years.

NGOs largely believed that the duration compared favorably with other existing volunteer programs, which usually last 3 months. However, many NGOs stated that since half the fellowship period is actually spent on exposing fellows to the program, local issues and the local context, they find it difficult to maximize the fellows' presence. Having said this, they stated that given that this is a fellowship and not an employment program, a longer tenure is not desirable.

Extension of Fellowship

At present there are two kinds of extensions provided for -- short term and long term. A short-term extension is up to the expiry date of the visa and the latter is for 6 to 10 months.

There are instances where the NGO has requested for an extension of the fellowship and is willing to support part of the fellow's remuneration.

However, many of the NGOs are unaware of the provision for an extension in the fellowship duration, which once again points to a communication lapse on the part of AIF.

2.9 Reporting and feedback system

There exists no uniform system for feedback to AIF from the NGOs but a structured format exists for the fellows, which they send monthly to AIF. The NGOs mentors send reports every two months. The feedback is synthesized and analyzed by AIF staff. The synthesis is sent to the fellows, and to the US AIF office. Presently, there is no practice of sending brief reports to the participating NGOs. AIF has not received any requests either from NGOs for feedback.

The challenges

The inadequacy in the current format has resulted in an information gap between the stakeholders. The NGOs are not as informed as well as the fellows and there is lack of transparency in the system. In this context, the role of AIF appears to be that of a coordinator. Given the present staff strength, further use of the monthly reports is not possible.

Findings

- During the FGD fellows stated that AIF does not use fellows' reports, and on occasion, these reports are not even read. This reveals an unprofessional attitude on the part of AIF. A suggestion given by the fellows is that AIF should utilize the learning of the fellows in a structured way; i.e. a published document.

- Web survey data shows 43% of the NGOs share the feedback in a non-structured form, where as an equal number of NGOs follow a structured pattern. 71% of NGOs believe that AIF is receptive to their feedback.
- Some of the NGOs that participated in the focus group discussion asserted that there is a need for more open dialogue and transparency between AIF and the hosting NGOs, including report-sharing. NGOs are not invited to the midterm review either. Meanwhile, fellows communicate with each other and tend to compare their host organization with others and their experiences with those of other fellows.

Observations

The evaluation team found that lacunae exist at various levels of interaction between NGOs, fellows and AIF. This cannot be viewed as an incidental flaw in communication. On the contrary, the evaluation team finds a limitation in the very structure of the program. For instance, AIF has not provided a platform for NGOs to come together and share their learnings and experiences. The program has developed a pool of fellows via online interaction of alumni members, but such collective sharing does not happen between NGOs. It gives an impression that NGOs are not treated equally. Some of the NGOs expressed the view that AIF should facilitate a platform for cross learning. AIF has said that this year they will organize a mentor conference with fellows and AIF staff during the orientation week.

AIF's available human resource is not sufficient to manage a program which consists of 20 -25 fellows and the same number of NGOs. Two persons are currently designated exclusively to handle the program. The country director dedicates 10% of his time to the program. One option is look within the fellowship space and find additional resource.

There is no capacity building activity for the AIF staff nor has any review been done so far to address deficiencies within the fellowship program. AIF feels the staff should undergo training to build their capacity. The study does not gather sufficient information in this regard.

AIF should review the program at the culmination of every fellowship year, using the review to improve systems, overcome hurdles and difficulties and prepare better for future programs.

2.10 Networking/ relationship building

The NGO web survey implies that fellows have not contributed significantly in helping their host organizations build networks with other international or national organizations. 43% of NGOs said fellows have in some way facilitated the process of networking either during or post the fellowship. However, the web survey indicates that 71% of the NGOs are unable to make a significant impact through their intervention.

No initiative is taken by AIF to facilitate NGOs in strengthening the networking component. The web survey reveals 86% have not received any assistance from AIF in this regard.

2.11 Skill enhancement and knowledge building

A significant objective of the fellowship program is to enhance the capacity of NGOs, especially in area where donor support is not forthcoming.

Findings

88% of the fellows stated that the program had not only enhanced the skills that they previously possessed but had also imparted new skills to them. Some of the hard skills learnt by the fellows and attributed to the fellowship are web design and online development, documentation, project planning and project design. They have also agreed that their analytical skills were honed during the course of the fellowship.

Similarly, a majority of the fellows (91%) worked directly with the community, out of which 73% stated this was the major learning platform and where they developed new skills.

S Box : Skills acquired during the fellowship (<i>Source of information: FGD with the fellows</i>)	
Hard Skills	Soft Skills
Technical skills Web development Analytical skills Planning/project design skills Training	Language skill Patience Managing egos Networking

The web survey indicates that research and documentation were the two areas in which the NGOs had benefited the most from the fellowship program.

- About 29% of the NGOs observed that the fellows have made significant contribution in documentation and research.
- A few of the NGOs are able to make use of certain other skills such as project management skills, computer skills and presentation skills.
- 13% of the NGOs were able to build their capacity in terms of strategy development and methodologies.
- 8% of the NGOs have been able to make use of the capacity of the fellows for web designing. In general,
- 86% of the NGOs observed that fellows' contribution is substantial and commensurate with the available resources (technical and financial).

Box 2: Cross learning (fellows)

Fellows spent roughly 10% of the time cross learning from each other. In the existing system, they spend time together during the orientation, midpoint & end point meetings, holidays (some of them) and cross visits, where they get the opportunity to share and learn from each other's experiences. AIF needs to better structure this informal and formal learning, because the present system does not formally address this cross learning aspect. The midpoint and end point meeting time period should be increased, so fellows can get more time to share and learn from each other. These learnings should be documented as they could be of use to future fellows. This could be a platform for fellows to develop stronger and productive relationships for their future, and for the AIF to strengthen the alumni network.

The FGD with NGOs corroborated the finding that not being well versed in local language leads to the fellows spending a significantly longer time in office in the first few months. NGOs are not able to make investments (like providing translators) to help fellows interact with community. Therefore, after sometime, fellows tend to spend more time at the office performing support functions and documentation tasks.

In some cases fellows did not know what skills and resources would be required, and hence arrived unprepared. For instance one of the fellows had to postpone editing of a documentary shot by him due to lack of required software. The issue of careful skill matching is something that has been commented on by alumni as well and will be taken up in greater detail in the section on institutions.

According to AIF, the fellowship is a cost-effective way of addressing certain technical and programmatic needs of grass-root NGOs. Some of the needs met are organizational development, skill development, effective documentation and knowledge management.

2.12 Post fellowship

The fellowship has on more than one occasion influenced the future career decisions of the fellows.

Findings

- Nearly 45% of the fellows would like to continue work in the development sector.
- 55% fellows said they were willing to return to work in India after completing their studies.
- 40% fellows said returning was a possibility but were unsure.
- 57% NGOs are in regular touch with the fellows who worked with them and 43% are in touch but not for program related work.

Box 3: Some thoughts of the fellows about this fellowship program

(Source of information: Fellows' web survey)

"Because of my fellowship, I remained in Microfinance, expanded my career in India, and now have started a company which was largely influenced by my original experience".

"Yes, I have been working with underprivileged communities in the USA and still in India".

"Greatly, the single most important work experience of my life"

"Gives me "India" and "overseas" experience. As one of my first work positions, I learned how to deal with difficult personalities and situations".

"I was never too interested in India specifically for development issues but now I am".

"I have to say it made me more inclined to work in the United States after the Fellowship".

Evaluation team's inferences

Despite the challenges, fellows said the program gave them immense scope to enhance their knowledge and understanding of Indian developmental issues, as well as the opportunity to explore India.

AIF staff sees current fellows as 'present stakeholders', not as a future resource. AIF handholds them and provides support but without a vision for the future. AIF needs to look at them as potential alumni who can play a significant role in the future.

AIF can utilize their potential in the present program structure, for example:

- A core team from among the fellows can lead to better co-ordination with other fellows and alumni, facilitating e-group discussions for sharing, learning, answering queries, etc.
- A task management team can be set up from among them to deal with fellow issues. AIF would then need to only provide direction to help them resolve their problems with minimum effort, allowing for the organization's time to be managed more effectively.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Objectives and vision of the program

3.2 Stakeholders in the implementation

3.3 Process of selection of fellows

3.4 The eligible fellow-criterion of choosing the fellows

3.5 Selection of NGOs

3.6 The matching process

3.7 Orientation process

3.8 Mentoring system

3.10 Reporting system

3.11 Duration of the fellowship

3.12 Post fellowship commitment

3.1 Objectives and vision of the program

AIF is very clear about the rationale, the objectives and vision of the program. The AIF team has categorically stated that the two core objectives of the program are not in contradiction to each other. The program is both for contribution and for learning.

The evaluation team, however, finds room for conflict and contradiction (between the two objectives) unless AIF ensures more transparency and participation, as well as a better system of communication.

Adequate participation of NGOs in the selection and orientation process also needs to be ensured.

The rationale behind the program and the roles and responsibilities of fellows need to be formally documented.

AIF also needs to restructure mentorship to accommodate fellows' needs, ensuring accessibility. The evaluation also ratifies the need to maintain a fine balance in information dissemination, between NGOs and fellows.

In brief, an implementation system should be developed in such a way that primacy of both the objectives are not compromised.

3.2 Stakeholders in the Implementation

AIF teams in US and India, the NGOs directly involved in the program and fellows are the primary stakeholders in the current practice. There is scope for widening the platform by incorporating more players, namely, ex-fellows, ex-host organizations and external experts from relevant sectors. The role of the stakeholders should not be limited to merely selection process, matching process etc.

They should be encouraged to develop a comprehensive and pro-active involvement throughout the program. Ex-fellows and former-host organizations can play the role of resource personnel, while the external experts and alumni may provide mentorship.

AIF should actively consider organizing a stakeholders' meet to seek creative inputs with regard to suggestions made by the evaluation team, in order to enhance the quality of the program.

3.3 Selection process of Fellows

a. Including the excluded

In order to reach the goal of sensitizing tomorrow's policy makers, it is imperative to ensure the representation and participation of young professionals from diverse backgrounds. The program should enable a fair mix of fellows who come from different classes and communities. Needless to say the primary criteria is the level of passion and interest towards the development sector.

In order to enhance entry to the fellowship, the call for applications should appear in local newspapers, newsletters and other similar other media with a large community following in the US.

b. The selection committee

FGDs with fellows revealed that there is lack of transparency in the selection process. Putting a selection committee into place, comprising competent professionals from diverse areas, is one way of addressing the issue. Bringing in non-AIF members will help bring about objectivity. AIF should also actively consider co-opting NGO representatives in the committee.

The evaluation team recommends having written guidelines for the constitution and composition of the committee that can be structured as follows:

Chairperson: Country Director

Team: Senior AIF staff, non-AIF experts, fellowship alumni, NGO representatives.

The decision making power may rest either with the Country Director or with the AIF members together. The combination of experts who represent diverse interest will help to add value to the program. The committee should:

1. Be aware of the skill requirements, which have been collated from NGOs prior to the selection.
2. Ensure that these skills become part of the selection process.
3. Ensure that these skills get reflected in the “fellows as a whole”.

3.4 The eligible fellow: Criteria for selecting fellows

The evaluation calls for a revisit to the parameters for choosing the fellows, in terms of passion and commitment to the development sector, professionalism, attitude and desire for learning. Only half the sampled fellows had taken up the fellowship to get acquainted with the Indian development sector. A number of fellows came with the desire to acquire work experience. Well-defined guidelines for the selection process would help in selecting candidates more suited for work within the development sector. The manual (which is recommended) for selection process should clearly list what makes for an eligible fellow.

In brief, he/she should:

- Respect and be able to cope with multicultural environment and diverse life situations.
- Be able to address the skill requirements of the respective NGO without being in teaching mode
- Be keen to learn and develop a healthy engagement with the NGO and other individuals/groups in the respective work zone.
- Possess a high level of adaptability to different and unexpected life situations.
- In addition the fellowship should not provide room for CV builders. Those who are looking only to enhance their careers cannot contribute to the core objectives of the program.

3.5 Selection of NGOs

At present AIF does not have a written policy on the selection of NGOs participating in the program. It is arbitrary, yet following a set of customary practices. This evaluation emphasizes the need to develop a definite process of NGO selection by incorporating specific parameters that will clarify skill requirements, provide for clear deliverables and effective program functioning.

For instance, there is a perception that this fellowship is compatible only with service delivery based NGOs. It is indeed necessary to have a manual at hand to address such concerns.

a. Selection committee (Of NGOs)

The evaluation team recommends having a separate committee for the purpose of NGO selection. The committee may be constituted following the same principle as the fellow selection committee. Its composition could be as follows:

- The committee may be headed by the Country Director or another senior official nominated by the Country director.
- 50% of the committee members should be non-AIF representatives
- Heads/Directors of NGOs which are not applicants in the relevant year
- Ex-fellows based in Delhi who are willing to be engaged with the program
- Representatives from NGOs who focus on community mobilization and advocacy

b. Dissemination of information

This study finds the need for more proactive involvement from AIF in order to expand outreach and make the program available to the neediest, grass root NGOs in the country. At present the information about

the fellowship is available to NGOs mainly through websites and networking with other NGOs. AIF should consider vernacular and language media to expand the reach of the program.

AIF must also ensure that it provides sufficient time for local NGOs to prepare and respond to the fellowship call.

c. The short-listing process

The number of NGOs short-listed must be proportionate to that of the fellows. A fine balance needs to be maintained in this regard, primarily for the purpose of providing optimum choice to both NGOs and fellows in terms of skill matching, areas of interest, nature of work, and so on.

The final list of NGOs needs to be a diverse mix of grass root organizations representing the well being of heterogeneous communities across the country. The selection committee must ensure sufficient representation of community based groups and advocacy based NGOs along with service delivery NGOs.