

order to meet international standards of project design, implementation and report writing. Although staff members are likely to have substantial field experience, they may not have adequate project management skills.

You may be visiting an NGO in regard to project funding or in a technical capacity. Staff members of large NGOs often meet with aid agency representatives and are familiar with project application and review procedures. However, they may know very little about Canada and Canadian values and attitudes.

Even if you have visited India many times, NGO representative will assume you know little about the local situations and culture. They will suspect your knowledge is based on what you have heard and read. They will presume that you are familiar with the latest international debates.

As NGOs are anxious to please representatives of funding agencies, you will be treated as an important guest. Your visit will give staff members an opportunity to use the language and jargon that they have picked up reading international journals and attending training programs. Uncertain of your reactions, the staff, preferring to play it safe, will usually tell you only what they think you want to hear.

Suggested approach

At the outset, pay attention to cross-cultural cues and take time to adapt to the Indian environment. Begin by building rapport with your Indian partners as follows:

- ◆ inquire about their families and their origins;
- ◆ be receptive to their views;
- ◆ recognize their experience;
- ◆ understand the difficult conditions under which they work;
- ◆ show empathy; and
- ◆ express your appreciation for the work they are doing.

Later, you can directly address the issues related to *your* work.

Familiarize yourself with the different modes of communicating, gift-giving, and socializing in keeping with the Indian tradition of hospitality. You will find it much easier to develop a personal relationship with NGO staff than with government officials. With a government department, you need to seek the support of the highest authority. With NGOs, on the other hand, it is more important to reach an agreement with the field staff than with the chief executive. Try to have meetings with as many field staff and community representatives as possible. Encourage the staff to speak in their own language if they don't speak English fluently. You can ask for