

establishing a National Council and developing a code of conduct for voluntary organisations. A group of individuals, who had dedicated themselves to voluntarism, decided to counter this state-led initiative and created a national forum for the protection, enrichment and growth of voluntarism in India -- VANI. Today, VANI represents the diversity and plurality of India. It has a membership of 240, including 21 state and national level networks, and encompasses about 2500 organisations across the country.

A majority of the voluntary agencies in India rejected the state-led initiative for three main reasons:

1. a code of conduct should be developed and accepted by the affected agencies voluntarily
2. the scope and definition of voluntary agencies was limited to those working for rural development and based in rural areas, leaving out organisations dealing with urban issues and based in cities
3. there was a moralistic tone limiting the earnings of the NGO staff, implying that NGOs are not disciplined and inclined to cheating.

VANI set out to evolve its own code of conduct instead. Several principles were adopted while drafting the code:

- the value of the code should not be seen as a personal application but a contract for sustainable social communication
- the basic objective of value is to communicate, regulate and institutionalise an attitude to ensure an aestheticism and complementarity to a support system
- manifestations and relevance of value are specific to place, period, and people
- voluntarism
- feasibility/realism (VANI confined itself within "Voluntary Development Organisations" making the development of the code and a trial implementation possible)

The users of the code include: the motivators, the managers, and the workers. While the code has to affect all three tiers, its sustainability and continuation depend on the motivators who operate through a governing body. Here, VANI faced some difficulty since the diverse voluntary organisations could not agree to a uniform property of the governing body. Nevertheless, in 1995 the "General Body Meeting of VANI" passed a resolution setting up a task force to develop a draft code. After four months, a draft document was presented at the National Convention of Voluntary Activists (February 1996) and the Annual General Body Meeting of VANI (September 1996). After extensive discussion and input from the members, a document entitled "Voluntary Development Organisation: The Guiding Principles" was unanimously approved in 1997. VANI secretariat was authorised to take necessary action for its adoption by members first and other voluntary organisations later. Subsequently, improvements, including a verification mechanisms, were added. In 1999 the document was presented and released by the Deputy Chairperson of Rajya Sabha to the nation.

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