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**BUILDING INTERCULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS**

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# Working with an Indian Partner

A Guide to Establish Effective  
Cross-Cultural Communication and  
Working Relationships in India

**IN - COUNTRY**

**ORIENTATION**

**PROGRAM**

**(ICOP)**

**NEW DELHI,  
INDIA**

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**CENTRE FOR INTERCULTURAL TRAINING (CIT)  
CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CIDA)**

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# Working with an Indian Partner

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## **FOREWORD**

*Working with an Indian Partner* is one in a series of guides designed to help Canadians and Asians work together effectively. The idea for the series came from years of experience preparing Canadian technical advisors for work in developing nations and their foreign counterparts for missions to Canada as part of Canada's international development assistance programs. Although many guides were available to help them prepare for culture shock and learn the practicalities of living overseas, there were few good resources to assist them in developing effective working relationships; one of the most challenging and critically important aspects of their overseas experience.

The guide is modeled after *Thais Do Business the Thai Way*, which was produced by the SVITA Foundation of Bangkok for CIDA.

*Working with an Indian Partner* is for Canadians who work with Indians in a business, official, or development capacity. It offers practical advice on forming partnerships and alliances based on trust, understanding and effective communication.

The guide was written by Rita Ratnam, Cross-Cultural Advisor, CIDA India Program, with the assistance of Georges Mailhot, Director of CIDA's India-Canada Cooperation Office in Delhi; Dr. Surendra Kumar Vettivel, Consultant; Professor A. N. Pandeya, Indian Institute of Technology; and Raj Sharma, Consultant, Alberta Government Trade, Tourism, and Investments. It was edited by Stiles Associates Inc. of Ottawa.

We welcome your comments, suggestions and insights for subsequent editions. Please write to us or send us a facsimile message. We hope your stay in India is rewarding.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Canadian Development Cooperation Program in India reaches beyond bilateral aid to broader relationships based on private initiatives and institutional partnerships. Development assistance programs and joint ventures increasingly involve Canadians and their Indian partners. Today, cross-cultural sensitivity is a prerequisite for successful partnerships and the cornerstone of productive relationships. Canadians who want to promote understanding and build long-term relationships must learn to manage cultural diversity.

Culture has a strong influence on the way people behave. Every culture has its own characteristics which provide a framework for day-to-day conduct at home and at work. Traditions, beliefs, values, language, religion, family and more are part of a people's culture. India comprises a kaleidoscope of cultures as diverse as its landscape,

some dating back to the dawn of civilization.

Canadians working in India must be sensitive to its cultural diversity and guard against over-generalizations and snap judgments. Canadians should learn as much as possible about India and its people before they come. They must learn to treat each culture as distinct, and avoid judging one better or worse than another. Cultural awareness, tolerance, open-mindedness, empathy and a willingness to socialize with Indian partners will help Canadians adjust to their new environment (Kealey 1990). Cultural sensitivity will help Canadians develop the attitudes essential for cross-cultural interaction and effective working relationships. Understanding Indian behaviour and management styles will greatly increase their effectiveness and improve Indo-Canadian cooperation.

## **UNDERSTANDING INDIAN CULTURE**

If you are open-minded and accepting of India's cultures and the changes that have propelled the country into its

present state, you will discover opportunities to build meaningful partnerships.

### ***Unity in Diversity* ♦ ♦ ♦**

"Unity in Diversity", the creed of the common people, is one of the many paradoxes with which you will have to come to grips. India is a land of fabulous wealth and abject poverty, palaces and hovels, *sadhus* (saints) and scientists. It is a country where the sweet fragrance of incense mingles with the stench of sewage, where the rich and poor live side-by-side, and where rural villagers, steeped in ancient tradition, coexist with westernized urbanites. It is a place where individuals revere gods and goddesses, yet condone bride-burning. This country that brought Mahatma Gandhi

and his creed of non-violence to the world suffers from on-going communal violence.

Despite its outward appearance of infinite variety and diversity, there is an underlying unity among India's people which has held for ages and is strengthened whenever a common enemy threatens. In the last 200 years, new factors—a national government, a unified civil service, and a centralized judicial system—have begun to soften the edges of diversity, increasing people's sense of community.

### ***Indian Society* ♦ ♦ ♦**

India is a collectivist society which is caste- and class-conscious. The extended family, one of the pillars of Indian society, includes the father, mother, sons and daughters (with their husbands), and everyone else who is directly or indirectly related by marriage. Families provide members with identity and protection in return for life-long loyalty. In most Indian families, the patriarchal head exercises strong moral authority over other members.

Indian society supports widely divergent lifestyles. Farmers plough fields in the countryside, using the bullock and single-furrow plough as their forefathers did 2,000 years ago, while scientists conduct complex experiments in one of the world's most sophisticated space programs. And yet each has a foot in the other's world. The peasant gets the weather forecast on a transistor radio; the scientist worships the image of the family god

and may well consult an astrologer before making a major decision.

Religion plays a key role in the lives of most Indians, be they Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians or Jains. Though conflict occurs between religious groups, generally, people of different faiths live in harmony, each person proud of his or her religious beliefs, yet tolerant of others.

India's constitution recognizes two languages, Hindi and English, although there are 15 major languages

and over 1,600 dialects. Although Hindi is prevalent, most people believe that English is necessary for a good job, a high standard of living, and mobility. In the south of India where several regional minority languages are spoken, people favour English over Hindi because they believe it offers Indians equal opportunities. Although your Indian counterparts will likely be fluent in English, knowledge of the dominant local language would be helpful in establishing good rapport with the people of the region.

## ***Traditions and Norms***

### **Respect**

The Indian tradition of obedience and deference to elders and other authority figures is inculcated at an early age. Children are taught to honour their parents. The grandfather or father, the highest authority in the household, commands the greatest respect. School-aged children revere their teachers. Later, as young adults entering the workforce, they show similar respect for their bosses.

### **Hospitality**

Hospitality has always been associated with Indian culture. Indians extend a spontaneously warm and sincere welcome to guests, whether they be old friends or strangers. Indians expect the same hospitality from others. Canadians sometimes find Indian



hospitality overwhelming. There are, however, no negative intentions underlying the hospitality. Whenever possible, accept whatever is offered, be it a cup of tea or an invitation to dinner.

### **Cleanliness**

Foreigners have accused Indians of double standards with regard to personal and public cleanliness. Although most Indians are fastidious about personal and household cleanliness, in public some follow the dictum, "Out of sight, out of mind." They may, for example, dump garbage in the street or spit the juice of chewed betle nut, *paan*, onto the streets and the walls of public buildings. Such behaviour is, however, not the accepted norm.

### **Tolerance**

India is the land of Buddha, tolerance, non-violence and peace. "What cannot be changed must be endured," is an Indian creed. By nature, Indians prefer to tolerate rather than confront.

### **Manners**

Some westerners regard Indians as less well-mannered. They notice, for example, that Indians often omit "please" and "thank you" when speaking to a spouse or domestic helper. From an Indian's point of view, westerners over-use these words. In India, the closer the relationship, the fewer courtesies one uses. Indians consider the frequent use of "please" and "thank-you" too formal for a family relation. Close relations might take such formalities as an insult. Don't misinterpret informality as disrespect.

Canadians normally make appointments before visiting friends. Indian doctors, lawyers and other professionals make appointments, but most others don't because it builds a formal barrier. As a result, it is not unusual to hear the doorbell ring at odd hours and be greeted by friends who happen to be passing by.

### **Time**

Most Indians place a different value on time than Canadians. Indians take time, not only for themselves, but also for their extended family, community

and society. Social responsibilities take up much of one's time. Unfulfilled social obligations can cause disharmony within the family and one's society, something few people will risk.

The western view that "time is money" is not ingrained in Indian society. Delays are common, often the result of external circumstances such as, poor infrastructure and a lack of modern facilities. Your Indian counterpart may be equally concerned about deadlines and be quite prepared to make up for lost time by putting in extra hours. Your sensitivity can help avoid misunderstandings and lead to more productive cooperation.

Indians usually spend their evenings socializing with extended family members, friends and acquaintances. Generally, they are more comfortable in the company of others than alone. When Indians go abroad on business, they prefer not to stay alone in their hotel rooms after work. They look forward to returning home to the companionship of family and friends. By contrast, Canadians who travel to India on business often wish to spend their free time alone, relaxing or unwinding after a busy day. Canadians value time for solitude and reflection. Wanting to be sociable and not recognizing the cultural difference, Indians sometimes program every moment of their counterparts' spare

time, something the Canadian counterpart may regard as intrusive. Such cultural insensitivity on both sides may lead to unpleasant situations.

Canadians are punctual and expect the same from their Indian counterparts. A Canadian who arranges a tight schedule of meetings with Indian bureaucrats, technocrats or business people soon learns, as the schedule breaks down, that each person visited has his or her own concept of punctuality.

### *The Modern Outlook* ♦ ♦ ♦

The impact of British, French and Portuguese colonialism is waning. In the past, the brown Indian held the white foreigner, who ruled over his destiny, in awe. Although a *Gora Sahib*, white man, may still receive deferential treatment, he is no longer revered. Indian attitudes toward themselves and foreigners have changed as the country has forged ahead politically, socially, economically and technologically. Indians are now confident they can match non-Indians in various fields and surpass them in some. Unfortunately, some westerners still think India and her people are backward.

Indian culture is now at a crossroads. Although most Indians wish to retain

In Canada, meetings usually begin on time. Not in India. An early appointment might be set for "nine-ish," meaning that it should take place sometime before 10:00. Be patient, for your own sanity.

Some Canadians complain that their meetings with their Indian counterparts take twice as long as anticipated. You can reduce your frustration and have a more rewarding experience in India if you give your meeting schedule some leeway.

their values and traditions, many young urbanites are on the fast track and show little interest in their cultural traditions. Modernization has affected urban centres much more than rural areas.

The country has changed because of increased world-wide travel and exposure to foreign media. As a result, some of the traditional moorings of Indian culture are gradually changing.

Your Indian partner may be conservative and place great importance on traditional values, or liberal and adopt western norms with the changing times. Then again, your partner may be one who selectively combines both the old and the new.

### ***Status of Women*** ♦ ♦ ♦

Indian women have had to work hard to establish themselves in the male-dominated world outside the home. They have had to perform better than their male counterparts in order to prove their worth. There are now more women's activist groups than ever taking up the cause of women's rights. Indian women have to demand equality in the workplace. Like women in the West, they have had to fight sexual harassment and systemic discrimination. Although there is still wide-spread discrimination, women

have made their presence felt in almost every sector, including public affairs, business, education, science, medicine, defence, and law.

Some women work to supplement family income; others serve as volunteers with organizations that help the disadvantaged. Women volunteers derive great satisfaction from the way they use their time, education and skills. Many are devoted to development work as much, if not more so, than their male counterparts.

## ***THE INDIAN WORK ENVIRONMENT***

It is important for you to understand the cultural dynamics of the Indian work environment. Just as the physical environment varies from office to office, the work ethos differs from one organization to another. The degree of difference depends on the region and ethnic group as well as the individual's

family background, education, age, sex and exposure to other cultures. You need to understand these cultural differences and make allowances for them if you are to build harmonious partnerships. It is, therefore, important to check your assumptions and avoid generalizations.

### ***Relationship-building***

There are social relationships between employers and employees and among peer groups in the Indian work environment. Employees expect their organization to look after them as a family would. It is not unusual to find an employer interested in his employees' social well-being and concerned about their family and personal matters. The employer socializes with his employees to strengthen the bond between them. Indians hesitate to change jobs. An employee always weighs offers from other firms—even those with a much higher salary—against the social security his or her current organization provides.

Indians rarely discuss business with potential partners without first establishing close rapport, trust and confidence. Indians rarely divulge business information before they are certain their counterparts can be trusted. Relationships are more



important than contractual obligations; a relation-based approach yields better results than a task-oriented one.

Westerners sometimes misinterpret the informality and casual atmosphere found in most Indian organizations as rudeness. It is, for example, uncommon to knock on someone's office door before entering. It is common for an Indian to announce his presence with a "good morning" or a cheery "hello" after entering the office. Not a sign of disrespect or a deliberate intrusion of privacy, it is merely the Indian way of treating the office—a place where one spends eight hours each day in the company of colleagues—like a second home.

Intelligence alone does not command respect. Respect also depends on one's status and authority. In India's "sir culture," respect for the boss is a deeply embedded tradition. It should

not be misconstrued as servility. Subordinates generally expect a boss to assume the role of a watchful patriarch. Should you choose to adopt a different management style, your subordinates may have difficulty adjusting to it.

Indians demonstrate respect for seniors in some ways that are different from Canadians. Indians rarely contradict their bosses. They rise from their chairs when their bosses enter the room, and observe respectful silence when their bosses address a group. When conversing with their boss, they use a more formal manner of speech than they would with their peers. For example, they would not greet a boss with a casual "hi." However, the degree of formality varies from organization to organization and

depends largely on the boss. Those who have had exposure to western work environments may accept greater informality than those who have not.

It is customary for Indians to offer a chair to visitors who call at their offices. Indians consider it rude to keep a visitor standing. It is common to offer visitors a glass of water or refreshments before getting down to business. Canadians in India would do well to adopt these customs.

The casual atmosphere in which Indians work may strike some Canadians as unprofessional. If you believe that all business transactions should be conducted in a formal, business-like atmosphere, you may find the Indian manner of conducting business frustrating. Here is an example:

*A Canadian went to discuss some crucial business matters with the director of a reputed organization. To his annoyance, the phone constantly rang during their discussion and office employees kept interrupting in order to speak to the director and get documents signed. The Canadian doubted he would successfully conclude his meeting. However, by the time the meeting ended (albeit later than expected), the director had brought everything to conclusion, much to the Canadian's satisfaction.*

You will often come across people, such as this director, who have mastered the art of dealing with many matters at the same time.

Despite the casual nature of the work environment, there is a high level of professionalism in the Indian workforce. Many top Indian bureaucrats, professionals and business people are graduates of prestigious western universities and have good analytical minds. Don't expect instant decisions when negotiating with Indian officials in the public and private sectors. They will take time to critically analyze the situation before making a decision.

Indians prefer to avoid conflict. They place great value on harmony and saving face. As in other collectivist societies, group harmony is valued and respected. Indians prefer to have a

### *Introductions*   ♦   ♦   ♦

When introducing you to his wife, your Indian host may simply say, "Meet my wife," without telling you her first name.

Indians show respect for seniors by introducing them as Miss, Mr. or Mrs. It is not unusual to hear a person say, "Meet Chief Executive, Mr. so-and-so." The person's position is stated before his or her name. Informal introductions, using only the first

third person act as a go-between in order to resolve a conflict rather than "having it out" directly. Outsiders are not encouraged to mediate; Indians prefer to keep conflicts within the walls of their homes and organizations.

If your Indian partner is silent following a misunderstanding, it may signal only that he or she does not want more conflict or any further deterioration of the work environment. Your partner may be putting up a facade. Issues affecting dignity, respect, prestige and face-saving have a great influence on Indian behaviour.

Because Indians are class-conscious, they don't normally use polite expressions such as "please" and "thank you" when speaking to their peers or people of lower rank. They reserve them for people of senior rank.

name, are rare at official levels. Your partners may not address you by your first name until they know you well and have established a close relationship with you.

It is common for Indians to shake hands when they are introduced. Understand, however, that Indians are often more tactile than westerners. They may offer a friendly tap on the back or some other physical contact.

An Indian handshake can go on seemingly forever, causing some visitors discomfort. Simply view a prolonged handshake as a sign of Indian warmth.

Sometimes a handshake is followed by a traditional Indian salutation, *namaste*, where the palms are pressed together and the hands held in front of

### ***Gift-giving*** ♦ ♦ ♦

It is common in India to communicate with gifts, especially during festive seasons. A gift can be an expression of joy or thanks for a favour. It can be a token to help pave the way for an upcoming request. Sweets and dried fruit are common gifts.

The tendency to give expensive gifts, such as video players and televisions, is on the rise. Some people go as far as giving air tickets to foreign countries

the chest. Although most women in the private and public sectors shake hands, many prefer to say *namaste* instead. Some Canadians have experienced embarrassing moments, stretching out their hands to a woman only to find that she acknowledges their offer with a *namaste*. Take your cue from her and reciprocate in a similar manner.

as gifts. The kind of gift offered depends on the position and function of the recipient.

For foreigners unaccustomed to exchanging gifts with anyone other than close family members, the practice can be embarrassing. Remember that gift-giving is not universal; some Indians neither promote nor accept gift-giving.

### ***Communication*** ♦ ♦ ♦

#### **Verbal communication**

With 60 million Indians fluent in English, you are unlikely to experience major problems communicating with your Indian partners. Although accents and

pronunciations may differ, don't presume an Indian's English vocabulary is limited. A recent incident during a workshop for managers illustrates the point:

*An American facilitator, unaware of the managers' proficiency in English, frequently tried to simplify his words. Out of courtesy and respect for the visitor, the workshop participants allowed him to carry on in this vein. Finally, when the American tried to find a simplified alternative to the word "conciliatory," the managers piped up with a list of synonyms and antonyms. The American was embarrassed. He realized he had under-estimated their language skills.*

When Indians discuss a deal, they rarely give a definitive "no" because they don't wish to offend clients or make them feel uncomfortable. You will often hear a vague remark such as "we'll see what we can do." Indians take this approach in order not to be perceived as unkind or harsh. The younger generation of technocrats and business people appear to have less time for such niceties. Feeling pressure from competition, their

communication with you may be more direct, a sign that traditional business culture is giving way to modernization.

### **Non-verbal communication**

Non-verbal signals can mean one thing in Canada and something completely different in India. The following episode illustrates the need to avoid certain non-verbal signals without first explaining their meaning.

*A Canadian once told an Indian colleague that the Canadian team leader and his Indian counterpart were "like that," holding up his hand with his middle finger crossed over his index finger. The colleague was aghast. While the Canadian intended to convey that he and his counterpart were very close, the Indian understood crossed fingers to mean the two were crossing swords.*

Indians tend to shake their heads from side to side to convey "yes," while in Canada it would be interpreted as "no." Similarly, when an Indian repeatedly nods his or her head during a discussion, it means "yes, I'm listening," not "yes, I agree." When in doubt, clarify what is being communicated non-verbally.

### **Eye contact**

Long ago, Indians made eye contact only with people of equal status. Today, they generally prefer to look everyone in the eye when speaking. People of lower social class and those who are low in an organizational hierarchy sometimes avoid eye contact with superiors out of respect for authority. However, as a general rule, failure to establish direct eye contact is a sign of untrustworthiness.

Middle- and high-ranking female employees in the public and private sectors now look directly at the people they address and expect the same from their male colleagues. This was not the case in the past. Practices have changed as a result of education and women's exposure to, and demand for, equal status. You may, however, still find a woman behaving differently at home if she comes from a family that is bound by tradition.

### **Personal space**

It is essential that you understand the limits of your Indian partner's

personal comfort zone. Desmond Morris (1978) says that it is a finger tip distance in Western Europe, a wrist distance in Eastern Europe and an elbow distance in the Mediterranean. In India, personal space varies according to status and gender. When talking to a member of their peer group, Indians normally stand in close proximity. This distance increases when they address their boss, as a sign of respect. When addressing subordinates or those of a different social class, people maintain an even wider distance. Generally, you should avoid close proximity, an indication of familiarity, when communicating with an Indian woman.

### **Terms and terminology**

Try to minimize misunderstandings by avoiding unfamiliar terminology, jargon and idiomatic expressions.

Financial terms should be communicated in writing. Always indicate amounts of money in words, as well as in figures to avoid misunderstanding. Indians use lakhs and crores to demarcate large sums, while Canadians use hundreds, thousands and millions. The different conventions can cause confusion. For example, Indians write Rs. 24,00,000, and read it as "Rupees twenty-four lakhs." Canadians write the same amount as Rs. 2,400,000 and read it as "2.4-million Rupees." Take extra caution in such matters to avoid error.

## **WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUR INDIAN PARTNER**

Understanding the structure and culture of the sector you are working in is the first step in developing an effective relationship with your

partner. It is useful to have a broad understanding of all the sectors since they intermesh and influence each other.

### ***Government Departments and Agencies* ♦ ♦ ♦**

#### **Context**

The organization of government in India is similar to that of Canada. India has a national government, 26 state governments, six union territories, and local governments composed of municipal corporations and councils. The union territories are directly administered by the president, the state governments by state cabinets headed by a chief minister.

As in Canada, powers are divided between the national and state governments. There is a multi-tiered system of taxation. The national government gives a portion of its tax revenues to the state governments based on an annual state plan consisting of state and centrally-funded programs. The annual state plans form part of a nationwide Five-Year Plan. At the time of writing, the government is implementing the Eighth Five-Year Plan (1990-1995).

The *Panchayati Raj*, a three-tiered system of village self-government, is a

unique form of participatory democracy. At the first tier is the village *Panchayat* where a third of the seats are reserved for women members and presidents. The *Panchayat Samiti*, the union of *Panchayats*, is at the second tier, the block level. At the third tier, the district level, is the *Zilla Parishad*, the district development council. An elected body exists at each tier.

A team of specialists under the block development officer undertakes community development, program planning and implementation at the block level. Each technical department, such as agriculture, animal husbandry and public works, prepares and implements its own action plans. Originally, a *Panchayat* was formed for a population of 1,000, and a block for 100,000. Presently, there are about 220,000 village *Panchayats*, 53,000 *Panchayat Samities* and 351 *Zilla Parishads*. These figures indicate the magnitude of the Indian rural administration.

The government reserves up to half of all public service jobs and admissions to educational institutions for the “backward classes, scheduled castes and tribes.”

The cabinet secretary is on the highest rung of the administrative apparatus. He or she heads the cabinet secretariat which coordinates the activities of 35 ministries. Each ministry has one or more departments headed by a secretary. Under this secretary are additional secretaries, joint secretaries, directors, deputy secretaries and under-secretaries.

A joint secretary in the Government of India is equal to a senior secretary in the state government. At the state government level there are departments that correspond to the central government’s departments, with the exception of External Affairs, Defence, Aviation, Railways, Communication, and others under the jurisdiction of the Government of India. A similar hierarchy exists at the state level. The chief secretary is the highest ranking officer in the state government.

The central government is the key player in controlling, regulating and promoting social and economic development. With liberalization, the private sector is becoming increasingly independent of government regulations and control.

Many agree that the Indian administrative system is top-heavy and unsustainable. The government has embarked on a number of measures to reduce expenditures, both at the central and state levels. Most Indians believe the government bureaucracy is inefficient, unprofessional and corrupt. It takes a long time and great effort to get anything accomplished in the bureaucracy. One has to bring political pressures to bear in order to reach a decision. Without the right contacts, it is best to avoid dealing with the government, especially at the state level and lower.

### **Administrative system**

Within the national government, each department has the authority to make routine operational and policy decisions pertinent to its mandate. The cabinet has responsibility for major policy decisions. The chief minister of state governments is responsible for most policy decisions.

Government officers “put up” files to superiors for decision-making. As a result, the additional or joint secretaries in the national government make most executive decisions. At the state level, even after making a policy decision and signing an agreement, the concerned secretary must issue a Government Order and have it cleared by the finance department and, in some instances, by an Empowered Committee, before proceeding. The

Government Order specifies the activities, responsibilities and authorities for the initiative and stipulates the budget and the correct expenditure accounts. Any later modifications require a separate Government Order.

Whether at the national or state level, governmental organizations operating under appointed boards have much more operational autonomy than the ministries and departments controlling them, even though the concerned ministry/department must approve their policies and budgets and vet all major decisions. There are two kinds of governmental organizations: independently registered corporations or authorities, and autonomous institutions. The former have the most independence.

A committee chaired by the district collector/magistrate usually coordinates government programs at the district level. A district collector controls all non-judicial activities in the district such as development, revenue collection and law and order. District collectors, some of whom are women, enjoy great respect. Between them and the state secretariat, there are deputy commissioners who control two or three districts in some states.

National ministers have the authority to form partnerships with outside organizations. The chief minister has the authority at the state level. State

proposals must be forwarded to the national government for approval. Most departments of the Government of India have a section that coordinates international cooperation. However, each department must channel proposals for international development projects through the Department of Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Finance. Proposals must also be approved by the Planning Commission before execution.

### **Your government partner**

The Indian bureaucracy inherited its structure and culture from the British who established the Indian Civil Service in 1853. You will be dealing mainly with members of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the post-independence form of the Indian Civil Service. IAS bureaucrats occupy key positions in the national and state governments and their organizations. While it is common to find some female officers in the senior ranks of the IAS, women make up only a small percentage of the overall IAS workforce.

The IAS holds national competitions to recruit its officers, most of whom come from state governments. The IAS selects only the most competent and highly recommended candidates, most of whom are well read. Following an extensive two-year training program, they begin their careers in the district as sub-collectors. Seven to

10 years later, they are eligible for promotion to the ranks of district collector. In the districts they are exposed to local situations. However, most never become familiar with the living conditions of the masses because their positions bring them power and prestige.

Since most senior IAS officers have attended training programs overseas, mainly in the United States and the United Kingdom, they are likely to have some knowledge of the latest theory and practice in your subject area. They may, however, be unfamiliar with your management style and your systems for design, approval, monitoring and decision-making. They may be unaware of your expectations and requirements.

IAS officers working in states are frequently transferred to other departments. At the national level, however, they generally keep their posts for a minimum of three, and a maximum of six, years. Officers at the middle level develop interests in a particular field, such as health, finance and agriculture, but only occasionally maintain responsibility in any one field for long periods of time. In such cases, officers may become technically knowledgeable and take a personal interest in a particular sector.

Officers at the state secretariat have responsibility for the entire state.

Those in the Government of India have responsibility for the whole country and the authority to deal with international agencies. Your project is likely one of several under an officer's supervision. Most senior officers travel very little to project sites; in fact, officers at the national and state levels are required to remain at headquarters when the legislatures are in session. Their knowledge of your project—and the time and priority they give to it—may be limited.

There are, however, technical advisers in the Government of India and the state governments who have a good deal of experience and up-to-date knowledge of the local situation. They brief the bureaucrats. Still, technical advisers have very little influence on policies. Bureaucrats make administrative decisions in accordance with the procedures and policies of their departments.

India's economy is expanding quickly. More and more funds are allocated to ministries and departments each year for planned expenditures, but funds are scarce for individual programs, particularly at the lower levels. All ministries and departments attempt to expand their budgets to include new projects. Your project should be of sufficient size and have acceptable terms, concept, and design, if you want to secure the attention of senior administrative officers.

The Indian bureaucracy and technical staff are generally receptive to foreign advisors. They are willing to meet and talk with you. They are polite and hospitable, particularly at the state and lower levels of the bureaucracy. Government officials assume you have scant knowledge of the local situation. Don't tell them your solutions to local problems as soon as you meet them; they won't expect it and may resist collaborating with you. They are more interested in seeing how your assessment of the Indian situation fits with their own experiences, plans and projects. They may want to know if you are able to fund their priority proposals for which they, themselves, have scarce funds. They will want to know how flexible your procedures and funding regulations are.

Generally, they expect you to have access to large sums of money and the authority to make decisions on the spot. They prefer that you follow existing procedures or those of other international agencies. They expect conditions that are as favourable as other international agencies and with fewer strings attached. Don't dismiss their critical comments. Officials are generally appreciative of innovative methods to implement projects with overseas funding, but if your proposal is far from their expectations, they may quickly lose interest.

### **Suggested approach**

Your first task will be to check your Indian partners' expectations and dispel any unreasonable demands. Help them understand your priorities and procedures, preferably using documents. Strive for agreement on project objectives and a work plan. Next, establish your credibility. Tell them about your expertise in, and knowledge of, initiatives in India or comparable work elsewhere.

Ideally, you should collaborate with local experts to bring about a synergy of your strengths and theirs—your skills, their field experience and local knowledge. This will allow your Indian partner to establish some ownership in the project.

When your project involves a policy issue, meet with an additional or joint secretary or the state government secretary. Organize your meetings so that you will arrive at a firm agreement after two or three sittings. For operational matters, meet with the Government of India's director or deputy secretary. This can be achieved with the assistance of an Indian associate.

At the beginning of your mission, meet with key Government of India officials, such as the joint or additional secretaries in the department your work relates to and in the Department

of Economic Affairs. It is essential that you be a good listener so that you get to know the officials' perspectives, their ideas, priorities and needs. Work out a broad agreement on the objectives and work schedule, without emphasizing specifics. A letter in advance to the Government of India, which includes a one-page summary of the project and its objectives, will facilitate matters. Provide copies to all concerned.

If you require field visits, ask the Government of India to inform state governments and their relevant institutions about your intended visit, so as to improve your chances of assistance from key officials. Take with you copies of your correspondence with central government officials and other relevant individuals. Lower level officials generally need written documents to initiate action.

At the state government/organization level it is often easier to reach a consensus on specific objectives and action plans than it is at higher levels. If you cannot reach an agreement on certain issues with the Government of India, try for an agreement at the state level, and vice versa. Document the outcome of your discussions in a brief memorandum and circulate it to reach an agreement.

Negotiating to reach mutually acceptable solutions is vital. At times you may think your Indian partner is irrational. You may require a particular approach to funding, planning or implementing that runs contrary to the Indian way of doing things. You may encounter a partner with a conflict of interest. Don't compromise your interests, but try to accommodate your partner's reasonable requests.

At the end of the mission, arrange for a debriefing session with senior department officials and the Department of Economic Affairs. It would be helpful to get the Government of India to invite key state government officials to this meeting so that decisions can be made collectively. At least one day in advance, circulate a brief note of your assessment of the situation and your recommendations, indicating the specific points on which you require agreement. At the meeting, try to arrive at specific agreements. After the meeting, follow up with confirmation letters. Your objective should be to secure firm commitment to the policy or program at the highest level. You want to arrive at clearly defined and mutually acceptable objectives and a good action plan. In subsequent visits, you should review the progress made and suggest new inputs.

It is sometimes advantageous to conduct business in an informal setting, such as over dinner. Informality can help develop personal relationships. Humour helps, too.

Your success depends on whether you can reach an agreement with senior government officials. Once achieved, the entire hierarchy is likely to work to ensure that your project is successful.

## ***Business Organizations***     ♦   ♦   ♦

### **New opportunities**

*The Economist* of London wrote in its May 4, 1991 issue, "Indians are fond of saying that, whereas Japan, South Korea, and the other thriving economies of East Asia are tigers, their own country is an elephant: immense, cautious, slow-moving, but also sure-footed, strong, purposeful." Three years later (March 13, 1994), Andrew Neil, editor of the *Sunday Times*, London, wrote a article on the Indian economy. The headline was, "India's Elephant Sets Off After The Economic Tigers."

The *Sunday Times'* perception of India's economic transformation is accurate. The country is responding to the challenges of globalization by reforming its economy, business and trade. It is rapidly liberalizing the national economy and making a determined bid to modernize its technological base and business culture. With rapidly growing markets and increasing participation in international business transactions, India and China are becoming major players in the world economy.

India's long tradition of business and trade, its democratic political system, independent judiciary, and energetic entrepreneurial class make it attractive to business investors. Now that India's "caged tiger" has been released, it is an opportune time for joint ventures and new enterprises. The government has made a conscious decision to encourage direct foreign investment and to allow the private sector to lead economic recovery. Its objective is clearly to open up channels for the transfer of new technologies, know-how, technical data and information, new management styles, and new forms of networking to succeed in the global marketplace.

These far-reaching transformations in India coincide with similar developments in North America and Europe, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the economic integration of the European Union and the successful negotiations of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

The new economic opportunities in India warrant the attention of Canadian business interests. The Indian economy requires diversification. Canadians can support areas of business previously neglected and ensure complementarity so that Canadian and Indian business interests benefit equally.

Canadians should consider the following factors when considering new business partnerships in India:

- ◆ The changes leading to deregulation of the economy are extensive. More are coming as economic reform gains acceptance.
- ◆ The newfound trust and cooperation between governments and the corporate sector are releasing new energy for enterprising investors, managers, and marketing professionals.
- ◆ Structural reform of the financial and banking sectors, the creation of the national Stock Exchange, the revitalization of urban centres and the new regulations governing taxation, tariffs, and foreign currency exchange have set the stage for increased foreign investment. Some financial analysts believe that India's economic growth rate will equal or surpass that of G-7 countries and other Asian giants such as China.
- ◆ With its substantial purchasing power, India's rapidly expanding

middle-class—now over 300 million strong—is attracting local and foreign investors.

- ◆ While there are more than 300 giant corporations in India, some of them multinationals, small- and medium-size firms are leading the country's economic growth. As in Canada, small- and medium-size enterprises boast expanding profits and market reach.
- ◆ The central government and the governments of industrialized states, such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana, are actively seeking investments, using well-planned strategies, identical targets, modern advertising methods and promotional activities inside and outside the country.

Keep in mind that about 90% of new investment in India goes to infrastructure development. Canada can play a significant role in such areas as oil and gas development, aerospace, telecommunications, forest management, food processing, and the environment. The marketing and promotion of products are equally promising investment areas.

Knowledge-intensive industries, such as informatics, computer software development, and information transmission, are growing faster than

businesses in most other sectors. The government has helped create industrial parks and export zones for new industries. It has provided infrastructure and ancillary facilities and has reduced red tape for investors.

### **A changed business culture**

India's system of business and trade is the result of a mixed economic strategy which the central government has followed since Independence. During the present period of economic transformation, it is prudent to do business in accordance with India's evolving business culture.

Many events have helped alter India's business culture, including the infusion of information-and knowledge-based technologies, professionalization of management, adoption of time-saving procedures, co-operation between government and business, corporate mergers and global expansion, and the emerging sense of confidence resulting from business success.

### **Your business partner**

In India, old forms of ownership and business practices operate side-by-side with new ones, requiring chief executives to be confident and at ease in both worlds.

Don't be deceived by appearances. For example, the business partner dressed in the traditional *dhoti* from the South

or in the *kurta* from the North, may match you in shrewdness, business acumen and decision-making skills. Meanwhile, a partner dressed in western attire is just as likely to be rooted in India's inner cultural and spiritual ethos.

### **Suggested approach**

Learn as much as you can about India and its evolving business culture before leaving Canada. Get as much information as you can on local resources and institutions. Arrive in India with an open mind. Adopt the Indian system of doing business and strive to conduct your affairs so that you and your Indian partners benefit together.

The Indian market, which offers attractive business opportunities, is not virgin territory. Most advanced western countries have recognized its huge potential and are actively carving out niches in the highly competitive market.

To enter this arena and succeed, you need to undertake a careful appraisal of the market and the available resources in the region where the proposed enterprise will be located. Do your research to ensure that you will have access to the infrastructure, facilities and trained workforce you require. Initially, it might be wise to work in partnership with a well-run

Indian enterprise. Build a relationship with the people you will be doing business with through face-to-face interaction. In India's business culture, personal relationships are the foundation of enduring professional and business associations.

Civil servants at the state and central level play a crucial role. Their professionalism and competence can be put to constructive use now that there is a conscious effort on the part of government to support business relationships. Indian business executives are trained, highly motivated,

and capable of responding to international challenges. For best results, establish a relationship of cooperation between government and business functionaries.

Adjust yourself to the Indian pace of doing business, even if it means slowing down more than you wish. The procedural jungle, for which India is notorious, is slowly improving. Learn your way through its web, especially at the state level. It is a small price to pay if you wish to emerge as a successful player in India's business world.

## *Academic and Research Organizations*   ♦ ♦ ♦

### **Context**

The central and state governments fund most of the universities and the research institutions located in them. Private organizations, industry, and trusts also fund a growing number of high-quality research institutions, such as the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Bombay.

The British founded universities in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay in 1857. Now there are over 220 universities and more than 5,000 colleges. They vary widely in quality and achievement. Generally, they fall into one of three categories:

- ♦ affiliating and examining;
- ♦ teaching at the graduate and post-

- graduate levels, with affiliation of private colleges; and
- ♦ teaching at the post-graduate level, with focus on research and the advancement of learning.

The majority of Indian universities are state institutions; the central government charters and funds about a dozen. There are about two dozen privately-funded institutions, called deemed universities, that receive supplementary grants from the central government.

Many members of the Indian scientific community and research organizations are involved in comparative research,

donor-sponsored research projects involving bi-national or multinational collaboration, and market-oriented research and development. They are active in cooperative programs involving NGOs in such fields as community development, social work, education, health and environment. There are extensive faculty exchange programs with European, North American and East Asian countries under Commonwealth and bilateral funding arrangements.

### **Administrative system**

Universities are governed by two bodies, the Academic Council and the Executive Council, which deal with academic and administrative matters, respectively. The vice-chancellor, the chief functionary of the university, presides over both councils. The Court, which consists of representatives from major sectors of society, the alumni and distinguished academics, reviews overall performance. Together, the three bodies preserve and promote the autonomy of the universities even though government provides most of the funding.

Admission to the universities and research organizations is based on merit. Anyone can apply to attend university, but the selection criteria, as well as standards of instruction and examination, are fixed by national

bodies. For mainstream universities, the Universities Grants Commission performs these functions and disburses grants for the advancement of teaching and research. For professional and technical education, the corresponding bodies are the Indian Council for Medical Education, the Indian Council for Technical Education, and the Indian Council for Agricultural Research and Education. By law, the governing bodies reserve 22.5% of the seats for special groups such as tribes and scheduled castes. They regulate fees and other related student expenses.

The number of women faculty members has increased rapidly over the last four decades. Although women are in a majority in some departments of the humanities and sciences, overall, they are under-represented.

Most large research institutes, which are funded by the central government and by private corporations at the state level, are rigidly formal. Often, they are difficult to deal with because of their many procedural rules. They restrict sharing research results with the public because of security or commercial interests. Researchers from abroad require good connections and sponsorships to gain access to these organizations.

### **Your academic/ research partner**

Teaching universities in India provide quality education in all the major areas of modern endeavour as well as the classics, arts and cultural traditions. They provide quality training for the major professions, including law, medicine, engineering, architecture, and business management. Research and higher education studies are closely linked. There are centres for advanced studies and research in areas of special interest to the community and the nation.

The traditions and work culture of academic and research organizations are very different from the world of commerce and government. Universities select their members on merit in open national competitions. Once confirmed in their positions, staff enjoy tenure until retirement at the age of 60. Outstanding professors and teachers are entitled to employment for an additional three to five years. Job security, together with the strongly rooted university tradition of independence, enables them to express ideas without fear of repression. On the other hand, assured tenure has led to stagnation and indifference toward maintaining high standards of teaching and research.

Overall, academics have reasonable salaries, working conditions and

opportunities for promotion and professional advancement. With the increasing importance given to young and creative minds, a growing number of young lecturers, readers and assistant professors now occupy top positions in centres for higher education and research.

Many teaching and research centres are linked to similar centres in North America, Europe and East Asia through graduate study programs, faculty exchanges, collaborative research and consultancies.

Don't judge the quality of an Indian university or research institution by its physical appearance or the state of its technical facilities. Dilapidated institutions with poorly maintained equipment may employ faculty members who are international leaders in their fields.

Students generally show respect by standing when teachers enter the classroom. The atmosphere is less formal in tutorials and seminars. Whether in a lecture hall or a small classroom, students freely intervene, question and ask faculty members to clarify their statements.

Indian universities attract a growing number of foreign students and researchers who are housed in international hostels on campus. Free

speech, debate and discussion flourish in India's academic circles. Young Indian students, 18 to 21 years of age, are entering the system and actively participating in politics. They vote for local, state, and national assembly representatives, as well as for student union leaders.

When you arrive in India, the faculty will treat you with warmth and respect. Your Indian counterpart will likely extend all possible help and cooperation to you. Your partner's primary interest will be to help you assimilate the relevant elements of the Indian situation which tie in with your project. Your Indian partner will be keen to learn about Canadian life and academic society. Once you have established your credentials and assurances of good faith, you are likely to receive your Indian colleagues' cooperation and assistance whenever required.

### **Suggested approach**

Before leaving Canada, do some preliminary planning regarding your choice of university or research organization. Once you arrive in India, speak slowly and clearly in order to be understood since pronunciation and intonation differ between Canada and India. Communicate your purpose and objectives as clearly as possible and establish your credentials. As a visitor, it is important that you seek to understand the ethos of your selected institution. You will discover diverse regional cultures and traditions. Keeping an open mind and heart will help make your stay a richly rewarding experience.

Participating in meetings with experts and professionals in your chosen field will help you develop good contacts. Your personal and professional ties will lead to enduring partnerships that will bridge institutions, cultures and state boundaries.

## ***Non-Governmental Organizations*** ♦ ♦ ♦

### **Context**

The Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) sector has a long history in India. There are no exact estimates of the number of NGOs although there are directories of NGOs published by various interest groups in such fields as health, environment and rural

development. One estimate puts the number of voluntary organizations at about 300,000.

NGOs are normally registered under the Registration of Societies Act. However, there are cooperatives and

tens of thousands of unregistered village councils, women's associations, and youth clubs formed under the aegis of the Community Development Program. To be recognized by the Government of India, NGOs must be non-political, non-profit, secular bodies. Under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, NGOs are also required to register with the Home Ministry of the Government of India if they intend to receive overseas funding. The Home Ministry monitors the receipt and use of overseas funds to ensure that NGOs are accountable for the funds they spend.

The earliest NGOs focused on social reform. They strove to change discriminatory practices against particular groups, such as *Harijans* (Untouchables), women and children. They lobbied for legal measures to protect human rights and to establish service institutions to provide such things as education and medical services. The Gandhian and *Sarvodaya* (development of all) NGOs supported sustainable and self-reliant development, including the formation of *Gram Sabha* and village *Panchayat* (both meaning village organization and self-government), economic development based on indigenous technology and local resources, voluntary land reform based on *Gramdhan* (gift village) and *Bhoomidhan* (gift land) principles and non-formal adult education.

The social action groups that emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s called for political change and dealt with issues of poverty and social injustice. They wanted bottom-up, alternative approaches to development, not top-down economic development and service-oriented programs that reinforced dependencies. They worked more on creating demand from the people, educating, mobilizing and organizing them to go after government benefits. However, this led to conflict with government functionaries. Many NGOs began implementing economic development programs because of pressure from government agencies and the need to fulfill local communities' expectations. They received government subsidies and grants as well as bank loans.

Since the 1970s, there has been significant growth in the number and size of NGOs, particularly in Southern India and the states of Gujarat and Orissa, the latter being the poorest state in spite of being richly endowed with natural resources. The growth produced several different kinds of NGOs. Many of the large, city-based NGOs focus on specialized fields such as the environment, health, rural development, agriculture and non-formal education. The rural-based NGOs undertake integrated programs, with each NGO implementing several program components.

A few NGOs are headed by women. Many employ women, but women are rarely in the majority. A number of NGOs undertake programs that address gender issues.

Lately, there has been a significant change in the government attitude towards NGOs. Seeing NGOs as alternative agents of change, the Government of India has allocated substantial funds for NGO development activities. The Planning Commission publishes a long list of government programs that support NGOs, including programs for environment, rural and urban development, water and sanitation, agricultural extension, gender and development, health, non-formal education and so on. The Rural Development Ministry formed the Council for the Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology to channel government and overseas funds to NGOs and to monitor their progress.

These changes have taken place because of pressure from international agencies and the government's realization that it alone cannot improve the conditions of the poor. Some successful NGOs are headed by distinguished personalities such as retired senior government officers, scientists, professionals, philanthropists and industrialists.

At the state government and lower levels, there is, overall, a negative attitude toward NGOs, although the view differs from state to state and from one official to another. For example, in the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, there are many established NGOs that have a good rapport with the government. On the other hand, in Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar, the state governments do not favour NGOs. In Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh, there are fewer NGOs than in other states.

When a department is headed by an official who is "pro-NGO," the department involves NGOs in its programs. The general tendency in the government is to involve "good" NGOs, as determined by the district staff.

The most visible NGOs are engaged in environmental and Women in Development activism. Many of these NGOs and the distinguished individuals associated with them have received national and international recognition. Often their advocacy work attracts media attention. Health and education NGOs have been able to experiment with innovative ideas that have influenced national policies and programs. It is common to find NGO

representatives sitting on government advisory committees.

To coordinate the activities of the NGOs with those of the government, there have been efforts—sometimes not very effective—to form NGO coordinating committees at the ministry, state government, state department and district levels. In some states, the NGOs have formed committees at the district, and state levels. Indian NGOs are, for the most part, individualistic and don't work together easily.

The local communities, with whom the NGOs work, view the NGOs as an alternative to the government. NGOs earn the most respect from local communities in places where government programs are weak and where NGOs have good links with senior government officials. This helps them gain access to government development funds.

The main sources of NGO funding are the Indian government and overseas organizations. Other sources include foreign missions and Indian and overseas public and multilateral agencies. Increasingly, some large, well-established NGOs have become involved in bilateral and multilateral programs, undertaking training, design, and project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Some of

these function as “nodal” NGOs which coordinate NGO networks and influence funding programs, often state-wide.

Funding is the greatest barrier faced by NGOs, especially the smaller ones. They often receive support through linkages with nodal NGOs which many funding agencies find more convenient to support.

A number of international NGOs or private voluntary organizations (PVOs) implement projects indirectly through their Indian partner organizations. The large PVOs have their own offices or agents in India to monitor their projects. Many contract independent consultants to carry out activities. A large number of Indian NGOs receive funds from international PVOs. Although each PVO may have a sectoral focus, they usually provide funding for varied development initiatives, ranging from relief to social and economic development.

### **Your NGO partner**

Most NGOs operate around one key individual, often the founder who has nurtured the NGO from its infancy. His or her ideology greatly influences the organization and its activities. The NGO leader is often a volunteer chairman or president or a paid secretary or director. In smaller NGOs, power is highly centralized in the

founder/director. As a result, the field staff is less effective because it must check constantly with the chief before making decisions. Small NGOs generally have informal work environments and flexible office hours. However, when there is something to be completed, staff often work long hours.

In contrast, large NGOs, which are city-based and work across districts and states, have departments for each development theme. Their office environments are formal compared to the work environments of small, rural NGOs. Large NGOs have staff hierarchies and project approval mechanisms. Department heads often distance themselves from the general staff, as in government bureaucracies. In the absence of the chief executive, who is frequently required to attend meetings, seminars and conferences both in and out of the country, departmental heads have substantial operational powers. The chief executive and directors generally decide on important policy matters.

Low-level workers and field staff have direct contact with the local communities. As a result, they often have the best understanding of the local situation and up-to-date knowledge of projects, issues and problems. They keep their department heads well-informed. The heads, in turn, guide the chief executive.

Most NGO workers have good qualifications. Many have university training and some hold graduate degrees, although not often directly relevant to their work. NGO workers may not be fluent in oral or written English but can express themselves well in their regional language. After a few years of field experience, they know which programs are most relevant and which implementation strategies are most effective in their regions.

NGO staff members are generally ideologically committed to what they do. They believe the projects they implement benefit the people and the country. While they are satisfied with their social status as supervisors and coordinators, they are sometimes frustrated with their low salaries, insecure jobs, heavy work schedules and inability to influence decisions.

Many staff members attend short-term training programs. Most chiefs of large NGOs attend training programs outside the country and have access to newsletters and periodicals on development themes. Consequently, they are usually aware of the latest national and international development debates. Low-level staff are likely to be less aware of current development issues.

NGOs increasingly feel the need for professional and management skills in

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

simultaneous translation. Use the same translator throughout your visit.

Reassure field staff members that their openness will help improve project management and not lead to their reprimand or termination. Ask frank questions when you need clarification. Give them frequent feedback in order to check your responses and theirs for accuracy.

Don't jump to conclusions. An apparent lack of appreciation or understanding of your point of view should not be construed as unwillingness to cooperate. It may occur as a result of language difficulties, cultural differences, or unfamiliarity with technical terms.

Many NGO staff members are action-oriented and don't assign much importance to report writing. Their reports may not portray their activities

clearly. Encourage them to write detailed, analytical reports in their own languages and have them translated when necessary. To guide them, provide a list of key questions. Your recommendations to improve project efficiency and effectiveness should be within the bounds of what the field staff regards as feasible.

At the end of your visit, communicate your assessment of the project to the field staff, directly. Specify the outcomes of your visit. Commend field staff members for their strengths. Be careful not to highlight negative points unnecessarily because you could offend staff members and discourage them from continuing their work. Where possible, weaknesses and negative points should be cast as recommendations. Your sensitivity in this regard will strengthen your partnerships.

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## **CONCLUSION**

Through this guide, we have provided you with insights into the cultural aspects of working with an Indian partner, an area which is often neglected to the detriment of mutually beneficial partnerships.

As a guest in India, a positive attitude toward the country, its people and your relationships with them is essential. If you are willing to learn, understand and adapt as you explore this immensely

diverse country, your stay will be enlightening and enriching.

Although this guide has focused on many of the differences between Canadian and Indian cultures, people from both countries have many things in common with which you can build a bridge for better communication and understanding.

May your stay in India be enjoyable and rewarding.

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