

Meeting with the members of Evaluation Team
Evaluation Team Members: John Cunnington and Dr Jimmy Dabhi
SBSS Team: Dr. Shailendra Awale, John, Vikram and Elizabeth
(September 14, 2007 at CNI SBSS, New Delhi HQ)

With regard to SBSS' evaluation, the first meeting with Dr. Jimmy took place in July and very briefly SBSS' team shared on the need and the purpose of SBSS' evaluation. During the time after this meeting SBSS could find out John Cunnington as one more evaluator as the team needs at least four members in which two would be looking into the development programmes of SBSS, one finance and resource administration and the other would look into the gender concerns. At present SBSS is in the process of finalizing other evaluators. Meanwhile, a meeting was arranged on September 14, 2007 which both Dr Jimmy Dabhi and Mr John Cunnington attended.

After a warm welcome, John and Jimmy had a detailed discussion with Dr Shailendra Awale, Chief Coordinator & Secretary. As they both shall be a part of four members' team that would carry out CNI SBSS' evaluation, Chief briefed them about the organisation i.e. SBSS, its vision, mission and policy along with the organisational structure, resource centres, partners and the work. This briefing was helpful for both John and Jimmy to develop a better understanding about the organisation they will be evaluating in coming days.

Chief gratefully shared with them that SBSS - the justice and development wing of the CNI has EED, Bread for the World and Christian Aid as the funding agencies. Till few years back, even ICCO also financially assisted the SBSS programmes but then due to some reasons it withdrew. Chief candidly admitted that at that instance funds were underutilized, secondly changes at international arena on humanitarian and development aid had been shifting, thirdly ICCO thought that it had informed SBSS about its process of withdrawing from its partnership with SBSS.

Chalking out the journey, Chief told that in the year 2004, SBSS celebrated its silver jubilee and during the same period an extensive evaluation was also carried out. SBSS entered a new phase of renewal and rededication with processes like organization development and learning appraisal. The ten-year's perspective and programme plan (2005-2015) was developed followed by the Strategic Action Plan for three years (2005-2008).

Impact assessment, retrospection and reaffirmation were also responsible for the paradigm shift in SBSS. Issues, themes, core-concerns and perspectives were built and developed. SBSS moved on from general interventions to the issue-specific and thematic initiatives, becoming a resource sharing partner with cost reimbursement approach from funding agency's grant approach... Further Chief explained them about the collective forum of cooperation, issue-based four CNI resource centres, diocesan – implementing partners and the pattern of the board.

Chief stated that though SBSS carved a unique space emerging with new alternatives, the Church looked upon SBSS as a professional development organisation rather than an institution carrying out church's mission haphazardly. He admitted that the bishops and the diocesan staff including coordinators too have greater say and space in the Board and in the decision-making process.

Having an overview with Chief's account, Jimmy said that he sees this evaluation process more as an assessment process that would seek what was set to be done and what has been achieved referring to the existing set of objectives with a cursory glance on the components. As two and half years are a little time to gauge the impact or output, it would be better to concentrate on the outcome rather on impact.

John supported him saying that the evaluation team must be cautious about sending the messages to the outer circle. He suggested that it would be helpful to see if SBSS is heading in right direction rather than measuring the output from the activities/ programmes. He also voiced his need to compare the earlier and existing organogram. His query regarding the nomenclature of the CNI RCSAs with particular issue was settled with a clarification that achievements in that particular area and the need of the time served as the factors to name the RCSAs...

Responding to John's query on the inclusion of the finance expert in the evaluation team, Chief justified that it is essential for ensuring the transparency and accountability and to identify the areas of growth and also for the cost-reimbursement modules' effectiveness and credibility assessment. He also informed the team about the plan of evolving two new resource centres - Orissa and North East India from the existing Ranchi and Tezpur centres respectively.

Jimmy asked for the guidelines for evaluation that would help the team to assess and assist, to understand the objectives so that they could analyze the trends and strengthen the shared understanding. Chief agreed to it saying that evaluator's approach will help the staff in assessment and analysis which would alter the programme if needed for improvisation and effectiveness. The guidelines will be handed over to the team over the period. Need to develop proceedings, drafts and terms of reference (ToR) were also discussed. The ToR should detail on the methodology, concerns and areas of focus for evaluation (as SBSS has taken several shifts and changes), places and people to be visited. On the whole Jimmy said the evaluation should be able to trace out the trend of the changes which are taking place. (The evaluation team's remuneration/ honorarium are yet to be decided.)

Chief also informed about the concept note passed in the Board Meeting held in August 2007. He suggested the plan of action/ road map for the team – Mid-January onwards meeting with the apex bodies, Field visits by February end, Reporting completed by March so that it could be presented in the Annual Round Table Meeting taking place in April. He assured them of all the administrative and secretarial support with the logistic arrangements.

The next meeting is scheduled on Wednesday, September 26, 2007 at 9am. Venue will be chosen near the airport.
