

NGOs work it in corporate style

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THEY MAY tug at your heartstrings while aiming for your purse-strings, but the new breed of non-government organisations (NGOs) are more level-headed than ever before. More and more, they are running their organisations in a manner that's usually to be found in the corporate sector. It's not just a question of partnering with companies, it's all about functioning as efficiently as one.

Take the case of Parikrma Humanity Foundation which was started just a few months ago to help slum, street and orphaned children in urban India to get equal opportunities. According to founder CEO Ms Shukla Bose, "The uniqueness of our approach lies in managing the entire 'circle of life' of an under-served child. This holistic, end-to-end programme touches all the four key facets of a child's life — education, nutrition, healthcare and home."

Ms Bose was previously CEO of Christel House, an NGO funded by the US-based Christel Foundation, where she set up corporate practices such as financial auditing by an external auditor (Ernst & Young), health auditing of the children by well-known hospitals etc. At Parikrma too, the management practice of end-to-end solution has been put in place, even though the end result of the entire programme is qualitative. "Eventually we plan to have a placement system so that the children get jobs. We are not just into providing education and then leaving them to their fate," said Ms Bose. Currently catering to 160 children, the aim is to reach out to as many as possible.

Parikrma also will follow third-party auditing in several areas: finance, health practices, and even the mental health of each child will be assessed every term to see if there's been any progress. Said Mr V Raghunathan, president of ING Vysya Bank, "I was amazed

when Shukla brought me a business plan for Parikrma — it was very corporate and detailed about its objectives and how they were going to achieve them. I thought it would work." Work it did: the first round of finance has come from UK-based Royal Resorts.

Ms Lata Krishnan, formerly associated with Smart Modular Technologies, a US-based IT firm, is now president of American India Foundation (AIF). Said Ms Krishnan, AIF will act as a venture capitalist and monitor the progress of funds usage. "Milestones are set, just as in the corporate sector, quantitative and qualitative targets are measured and further funds released on the basis of the progress," she said.

According to Mr Shankar Venkateswaran, executive director — India, AIF, "Earlier donor organisations did have logframes or logic frameworks by which to measure whether funds are being used well or not, but now it's more than that. Manage-

ment systems are being mented within NGOs; they run efficiently too."

The Spastics Society of nataka (SSK), meanwhile seems to have achieved stone further than most NGOs. In association with India, the children at SSK launched a mailroom service the corporate sector and the general public. Bulk mails such as greeting cards, wedding newsletters, annual reports can be handled from this. Said Ms Rukmini naswamy, technical director SSK, "An important objective of the mailroom project is to contribute to the children's vocational skills and make them self-reliant."