

Information request 7 Consumer information on the effectiveness of not-for-profit organisations

We are a small NFP NGO registered as an Incorporated Association in NSW, with Deductible Gift Recipient and Charitable Organisation status.

We work amongst the rural population in Bihar, India in the areas of Family Planning and Reproductive Health, as well as Literacy for Illiterate Adolescent Girls

Whilst we appreciate the need for equity, we are concerned that parameters for evaluating effectiveness and success of a particular programme will be adversely affected by institutionalised reporting and evaluation methodologies.

The success of a programme is dependent upon the strategies implemented by the delivering organisation, but are importantly also dependent upon the cultural beliefs of the recipient community.

Organisations working to update cultural practices and beliefs in conservative populations face significant difficulties in delivering successful outcomes, which delays uptake until the population as a whole can make a shift in its' beliefs and practices.

For example, we are working in the field of reproductive and child health in a rural region of India that is conservative in nature, partly due to its' isolation from mainstream awarenesses and partly due to its' long-standing conservative belief systems. Family planning legislation in India is contemporary and aligned with world best practices, however the implementation is severely lacking. As an NGO we are endeavouring to close the gap, but the obstacles to success are constant.

As part of our overall programme we advocate for male vasectomies in preference to tubal ligations for women, predominantly due to the significant difference in the level of surgical intervention required. The Indian government offers financial rewards for vasectomy greater than that offered for tubal ligation, but still the uptake rate of vasectomy is perhaps 2-3% of the interventions at the most, whereas tubal ligations make up the other 97-98%!! Cultural beliefs of the men mitigate against our endeavours, the cultural beliefs of the women accept the dominance of the male voice and in the end it is the women who must take physical responsibility for contraception.

If we were to receive accreditation or be evaluated on the level of successful vasectomies, our funding capacity would be severely compromised!

Further, we are supported through donations by an organisation that works through transactional giving. This organisation has a system whereby they evaluate a programme using "Impacts". Each impact is a finely tuned breakdown of costs to deliver the programme relative to an individualised outcome or "impact" to the recipient. Our programme is not individualised in this manner, so the our reporting of individual "impacts" is tenuous to say the least.

As such we believe that without due care, different evaluation methods will favour some organisations above others. Larger organisations have the resources and the presence to garner undue influence in any particular evaluation system.