

Seven Myths of OD

- *Jeevan Karki

Over many years in the development field, I have come across various misunderstandings about Organisational Development (OD). In this article, I discuss seven of those key myths.

Myth 1: OD is to do with organisations

Organisations exist to serve their beneficiaries. Organisations, their donors, their services and the target communities are intrinsically connected. OD should not be treated in isolation. OD should not limit its scope within the four walls of one organisation. It is much broader than that.

Myth 2: OD is system, process and structure

This is true, but it is not the whole truth. Systems, structure and process, no matter how excellent they are, do not work if people are not willing or able to change. The key of any OD intervention is the people inside and also outside the organisation. The behaviour, attitude, knowledge and skills of people are crucial in any OD process.

Myth 3: The career path of OD is very narrow

The career path of OD is not limited to NGOs alone. Some OD staff from NGOs have diversified their professional careers and applied their OD knowledge and skills to a wide range of organisations.

Myth 4: There is a limit of OD in organisations

OD never ends. There is always an opportunity to improve. An organisation should never think its OD is sufficient. OD is a life-long process of learning and improving.

Myth 5: Community and projects are more important than OD

Sometime people think that development projects are all that matter and OD is secondary. But the efficiency of delivery or implementation, the quality of services and the sustainability of projects depend on the organisations and their OD.

Myth 6: Communities do not benefit by OD interventions

The capacity of organisations is proportional to community impact. As organisations become stronger, it is likely that they can provide more and better services to the target beneficiaries. There is a close relationship between OD interventions and community benefits.

Myth 7: OD people only care about OD

Some international NGOs may recruit specialist OD staff to support partners on OD. There is a temptation for programme staff such as Livelihoods or Education Officers to see OD as not their responsibility. But OD should be the common concern for all the staff.

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