

Summary Evaluation of the GE Education and Community Leadership Conference

New Delhi, India • Taj Palace Hotel • April 18-20, 2003

One-hundred thirty executive directors and deputy directors of Indian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) came together from April 18-20, 2003 for The GE Education and Community Leadership Conference, a unique opportunity for NGO Directors to discuss and build their skills in fundraising, strategic planning and financial management, as well as to refine crucial leadership and management skills and renew commitment. A diverse group of NGO Directors shared their successes, challenges and insights into how to run an effective non-governmental organization. This NGO leadership initiative has been 100% funded by the GE Fund. In addition, significant volunteer support has been provided by Elfun, GE's staff volunteer organization. Tony Silard conducted site visits and provided executive coaching to over 25 NGOs in and around Chennai (Madras), Bangalore and Delhi, which were coordinated by Yamini Kumar, Asia Coordinator for GE Elfun. Yamini also assisted Tony with all of the conference planning and logistics.

THE RETREAT'S EXPERIENTIAL METHODOLOGY

Conference facilitator Tony Silard, a leadership development consultant specializing in experiential leadership workshops for NGO executives, provided oversight of the conference design and implementation, with particular attention to applying an experiential, participatory methodology to every workshop. Tony's philosophy of empowerment and facilitation is the following:

'In any decision-making process, it's the person or people who participate in making the decision who gain power from the process. For participants to get anything at all out of a workshop, they should be sharing their own expertise, making decisions with respect to what they want to learn, and engaging each other in dialogue and other interactive exercises around issues that they consider to be important. This is particularly important in the case of leaders, who don't like to be led.'

Tony applied an experiential methodology to the NGO Leadership Conference as follows:

- In a pre-conference questionnaire, the 130 **NGO Directors selected the skill areas** they wanted to work on at the GE Education and Community Leadership Conference, which were covered in skills workshops facilitated by local Indian consultants Anupama Kocchar (Fundraising), Meenu Venkateswaran (Financial Management) and Natasha Ramarathnam (Strategic Planning). There were also additional fundraising workshops facilitated by Robert Walker, Executive Director of The Management Center in San Francisco, California. Additional consultants who served as resources for the NGOs included Venkatesh Raghavendra of Ashoka Innovators for the Public (Organizational Development) and James Figetakis (Marketing).
- For each of the four skills workshops, four or five NGO Directors participated on a **panel** based on their self-reported Strength Areas. Each Director spoke for approximately five minutes about their Best Practices and 'the secrets of their success'. Directors shared their expertise and then engaged in a dialogue with each other in order to distill Best Practices that they could take back to their NGOs after the conference.
- Each Director worked through specific organizational challenges during one-hour **Breakout Sessions** where 3-4 other Directors and a consultant helped them develop new strategies to move their organization forward.

- Conference facilitator Tony Silard facilitated **interactive leadership workshops** on the characteristics of effective NGO leaders, vision-alignment (aligning an organization's core values with its practices), and balancing work and life. All skills and leadership workshops were participatory and included experiential, interactive exercises including presentations, case studies, dialogue, Q&A, 1-on-1 interviews and group projects.
- The Directors engaged in a candid ninety-minute discussion with a **Funder Panel** of 4 Program Officers from the America India Foundation, Save the Children and two other Delhi-based foundations about Best and Worst Practices in fundraising. The funders shared what they respond well to and what turns them off when approached by NGO Directors seeking funding.
- Each Director was paired with a **Co-Mentor** to meet with after the conference based on complementary Strength and Challenge Areas.
- Each Director had the opportunity to customize two hours per month of **organizational development support/executive coaching** with a local Indian consultant, based on their organizational needs (at no charge) for the six months following the conference.
- Each Director was able to **share** their **learnings** in the various skill areas of running an NGO on a post-conference **Best Practices Website** funded by the GE Fund.

FEEDBACK FROM THE POST-CONFERENCE EVALUATION

A three-page evaluation form was distributed on the last day of the conference. The Directors spent approximately 30 minutes responding to the questions. Below is a summary of their responses:

Facilitator

The NGO Directors offered praise for Tony's facilitation:

Shaheen Mistri, ED of Akanksha wrote, *"Tony's sessions were practical, relevant, thought-provoking and clear. Would have enjoyed more time with him."*

Viswanath Ranganathan, ED of Vidyarambam commented, *"Tony gave an excellent performance in New Delhi. I would not like to hide that I got a new insight into the functioning of our NGO, Vidyarambam. Tony has provided many tools to be used."*

One NGO director wrote, *"Tony's session gave me a direction to go ahead in a formal way as we didn't have any experience in organization management."*

Rasmi Misra, ED of Vidya Integrated Development for Youth and Adults commented, *"We all really enjoyed and absorbed the lessons Tony shared and will try and implement these in our everyday lives."*

Another NGO director commented, *"I learned a lot from Tony's presentation/talks. Our NGO and I personally lack skills in human relations management and in that area I learned a lot from Tony. I am sure it will help me to run the voluntary organisation I work with better."*

Harry Sethi of CARE/India wrote, *"It was a very well planned and organised workshop. Tony and Yamini brought together an amazing group of NGO leaders and managers and it was a great opportunity to meet all of them and learn from them."*

Prem Khilnani, ED of Institute of Road Traffic Education commented, *"Tony's workshops were great and brought out our strengths and weaknesses."*

Philosophy of Leadership

The Directors were asked ‘**Has the ED Retreat affected your philosophy of leadership? If so, how?**’ Responses included:

Leadership:

- *“It has helped to clear paradigm of leadership, shown me a clear path how to be an effective leader, and how to make others leaders.”*
- *“Yes, deeply. To lead a cause is not easy. I have seen myself as an evangelist trying for a cause and felt it was enough. It is not. Deep inside, I feel a new confidence where there is a method and others to teach me.”*
- *“Maybe as a leader (founder) it is difficult to imagine that somebody can fulfill your vision but now I feel I should motivate people so that they can step into my shoes and then carry the vision.”; “Yes! It re-installed my belief in leadership as a backstage artist.”*
- *“Yes. Now I am more clear about the concept and philosophy of leadership as it does not mean only to develop key relationships but also to sustain them.”*
- *“Yes. I now appreciate the importance of delegation and team work.”*
- *“Passion is great at the inception stage but trust needs to play a greater role as it gets larger.”*
- *“The conference has made me more sure of myself and my priorities of life. What I always felt has been spelled out so the whole is clearer now.”*
- *“The best thing that I achieved by attending this conference was the self evaluation capacity to judge where I stand as a leader and where I can go from here.”*
- *“I have to articulate my problems as a leader...and think out the solutions. It is better to have the collective wisdom of a group of people in any problem-solving exercise.”*
- *“Yes, be more participative.”; “Move to a more coaching role.”*
- *“Yes it has. Take people more into confidence and also give them more ownership.”*
- *“Yes, we need to be more democratic and adopt professional methodologies.”*
- *“Yes, I want to learn a lot more leadership skills.”*
- *“Some concrete take aways to work on at all levels.”*
- *“Yes, it has made me more focused and has inculcated in me the need to evaluate self and learn from time to time.”*
- *“Yes, it has brought fresh ideas and concepts. I’m more committed to the delegation of responsibilities.”*
- *“It has immensely reinforced my faith and conviction learnt from my own experiences.”*
- *“This conference helped so much our organization.”; “Yes, change of attitude.”*
- *“Yes, in planning and aligning the things with our staff and management in a more planned manner.”; “It has helped to see my weakness in leadership area and will look into improving it. It has also enhanced my managerial skills.”; “Yes, to have a systematic approach.”*
- *“Yes in many ways. While I practiced core values, I did not verbalize it. There was also confirmation to many things I was doing passionately. It also captured what is possible for now.”*
- *“The conference has confused what was already churning in my mind. I had a managerial approach to leadership and this is evolving towards motivational/transformational/inspirational leadership.”*
- *“Yes, I can see a new way of defining leadership and what it means to me.”*
- *“Yes, I have learnt many things which I would incorporate in my working style.”*
- *“Yes, strengthened my abilities and showed me positive ways of rectifying small gaps in my leadership.”*

- *“Yes, it has affected. It has made me think in terms of sustainability; planning; budgeting.”*
- *“It certainly has affirmed my belief in empathetic/partnership oriented style of leadership.”*
- *“The importance of involving your board members.”*
- *“Yes. It has provided a watershed to pause, reflect, reinforce and discard thoughts leading to practices which will refine basic values. This will surely impact vision.”*

Balance:

- *“The thought of balance is not known to me. The conference has taught one this new aspect.”*
- *“Yes, it has – I won’t feel so guilty for taking time off for myself. Also, seeing a preparatory phase for bringing in other leadership levels in the organization.”*
- *“Need to balance between work with board, staff and field.”*
- *“Yes, this conference helps me to balance between the personal life and the professional life.”*
- *“Balance is important, it is the foundation of all actions.”*
- *“It taught me to strike the balance between work and life. Conference also helped me to introspect on various organizational issues. It also gave me a few management skills which I was lacking.”*
- *“Yes, not to be a workaholic, to take time off for oneself.”*
- *“In that one needs to take a more balanced approach from a broader perspective in order to be more effective.”*

NGO Director Tenure

Increasing **NGO Director tenure** was one of the most significant goals of the GE Education and Community Leadership Conference. Burn-out among NGO Directors in India is very common given the limited resources of most NGOs and the overwhelming demands of the impoverished in India, where 50% more people are living in poverty than there are people living in poverty in all of sub-Saharan Africa¹. Participants were asked **‘Has the conference affected your outlook on how long you see yourself continuing as an ED?’** Responses included:

- *“It pumped more energy so that I can continue as an NGO leader for long.”*
- *“The conference has completely changed the attitude of life regarding working with NGO.”*
- *“The centrality of my role slowly should phase out, once the organization grows and becomes strong. It would be a slow process. Delegation of responsibilities and decision making is the way.”*
- *“The importance of the organization achieving its mission/goals, the leader must prepare the next line of leaders, and be prepared to pass over major responsibility to other leaders.”*
- *“Definitely. It has been able to clarify my strengths (some have been strengthened further realizing that I have them in me). At the same time weaknesses as a leader have been confirmed and knowledge that one has to work on and develop.”*
- *“Yes. By reinforcing my confidence at a very crucial time.”*
- *“It has reinforced my belief to continue my mission as NGO director for 5 more years and contribute my level best for the development of society, by the way of work I am doing.”*
- *“It has definitely equipped me with better skills to plan and manage my time and organization’s finances and programs, therefore, increasing the likelihood of my continuing as NGO director for a longer period.”*
- *“I hope to continue for another decade and also build second level leaders in my organization.”*

¹ National Sample Survey, 1987-1998, The World Bank, 2002.

- *“Yes. It is clearer now to see the importance of grooming leadership qualities in others on the board to provide sustenance to the NGO.”*
- *“It has motivated me to improve on my skills and to be charged up in my work.”*
- *“I’ve always wanted to actively practice principles of democracy and decentralization. The conference helped me strengthen my resolve.”*
- *“I have given myself a time span, so as not to burn out.”; “Yes, ‘Live, leave a legacy’.”*
- *“Yes. Plan succession is an important part of leadership and one should let it take place for new ideas to flow.”*
- *“Yes – to develop second line of leadership, to have a succession plan and to develop withdrawal strategies in the program areas.”*
- *“I head a for profit organization also and I have decided to discontinue my engagement with the profit sector after completion of succession. I plan to work as a founder/director in the organization I founded for at least 10 more years.”*
- *“Yes, I would like to continue only until the level I am able to contribute effectively toward core value of organization and pass it on to others sharing the same vision of organization.”*
- *“It taught me the importance of taking a break in between so that I prevent ‘burning out’ too fast.”*

Lessons Learned

Participants were asked, **‘Please write down the most important lessons about NGO leadership you feel you have learned from the conference.’** Responses included:

Vision-Alignment:

- *“Despite the size of the organization and different areas in which different NGOs are working, yet the core values and important characteristics of good leadership remain the same”*
- *“Vision alignment.” (numerous times)*
- *“The importance of aligning a vision to your people.”; “Alignment with mission.”*
- *“To have the core values in mind whenever we start any NGO.”; “Need to verbalize ideas (be it core value, objective, etc.) to ensure that the whole organization share the same ideas.”*
- *“To clarify the vision/mission/goals to all members of the team.”*

Leadership:

- *“That all leadership skills get categorized into the three core skills of passion, empathy and trust.”; “Leadership skills.” (numerous times)*
- *“A new insight into my own self as a human being and as an NGO Director...An ability to lead the core team of my NGO in a more systematic and motivating manner...An understanding about the true meaning of leadership.”*
- *“Role of a natural leader and the vision of the NGO should have a meeting point, and a professional approach is very necessary for successful NGO management.”*
- *“Leadership is not just charisma—it’s solid, hard core ground work.”*
- *“Has motivated me to take on my leadership role more seriously and develop an insight in dealing with matters and people.”*
- *“The content of leadership was very good. I learned not to take our own staff for granted and be much more patient.”*
- *“The reinforcement of my belief that the organisation or NGO is ‘people’ and that multiple relationship building both within and without are basic to its sustenance.”*
- *“Learnt and shared a lot. The sessions on specifically leadership and balance were very interesting.”; “We have learnt more about leadership and planning.”*
- *“The importance of trust in sustaining the NGO.”*

- *“Leader is the person who is very passionate about the cause to initiate others to feel passionately about it.”*
- *“The importance of sharing/involving other members of the team in decision making.”*
- *“I learned about sharing responsibilities within my organisation.”*
- *“NGO leader must lead the team and take them together.”*
- *“Need to communicate effectively rather than steer the organization only on intuition.”*
- *“Enhanced ability to look at ones self.”*
- *“I have learned to ‘walk the talk’.”; “Not to stare at the closed door and move ahead.”*

Balance:

- *“Balance in personal and professional life is very important for you to carry on.”*
- *“Balance. It stressed the need for balance not just for the leader, but also that it’s a leader’s responsibility to make provisions for staff to try and get some balance!!”*
- *“Balance.” (numerous times); “Value of staying/being balanced.”*
- *“Reinforced the need for balance and rejuvenation.”*
- *“That balance is important to avoid burn out.”; “Learning to balance/prioritize.”*
- *“Attention to issues such as work-life balance/vision-alignment, hitherto unaddressed needs.”*
- *“Balancing life and work.” (numerous times)*
- *“Re-think balance and its importance.”; “Disengage for a day every week!”*

Strategic Planning:

- *“Engage in strategic planning at least once in 3 years. I had been leading mainly from the heart, got to do it from the mind too!”; “Need for more structured planning.”*
- *“I need to step back and plan for the medium/long term and not let fires derail plans.”*
- *“Strategic planning for activities.” (numerous times)*
- *“Definitive direction in strategy planning.”; “NGO should have clear cut idea of area of work.; “Ideas for strategic planning/evaluation.”*
- *“That planning is very important.” (numerous times); “Good strategic planning tools.”*

Empathy:

- *“I have learnt that the opinions and thoughts of staff is essential in achieving mission as well formulating vision. If they are also co-opted in budgetmaking it will be positive.”*
- *“Empathy for my staff.”; “Listen to everyone, no matter how much you know.”*
- *“Be patient even while pursuing your passions, it will take you a long way.”*
- *“To keep having conversations with our constituent stakeholders to stay in touch with needs.”*
- *“Try to seek support from within.”*

Time Management:

- *“Behind every NO is a deeper YES.”*
- *“Distinction between urgent/important.”*
- *“Better time management especially where the urgent/not important tasks are concerned.”*
- *“Importance of planning/time management.”*
- *“Time management.” (numerous times); “Better time management.”; “Self management.”*
- *“I learnt that I have not used my full potential so far; I must learn to say no sometimes.”*

Fundraising:

- *“Fundraising.” (numerous times)*
- *“The fundraising component was well addressed. I feel empowered to fundraise.”*
- *“Fundraising—to get one has to give.”*
- *“I must ‘ask’ for my organization (nothing to be ashamed of).”*
- *“Innovative ways to raise funds (numerous times); “Fundraising methods.”*

Peer Networking:

- *“My own experiences, observations and learning have taught me exactly what the conference here emphasized. My faith and conviction has been strengthened. It was heartening to see so much sincerity and commitment in all the participants and organizers, panelists, etc.”*
- *“It was wonderful to meet so many NGO leaders and find out what they are thinking and that all of us are grappling with similar issues.”*
- *“Interacting with other NGOs was enlightening in many ways. Increased our morale and commitment.”; “The importance of partnership/participation.”*
- *“Networking with other organizations extremely important for leaders.”*
- *“To network and build partnerships in social change.”*

Other:

- *“I was a therapist. This workshop has brought in me an inner confidence to face the world in a different way. To bring in an element of ruthlessness and never say die attitude to face hardships. I do not feel lost anymore in a myriad jungle of politics, aggression.”*
- *“This is for the first time I realized my exact role in my organisation.”*
- *“Financial management.”; “Financial planning is as important as other planning.”*
- *“Risk taking characteristics.”*
- *“Breakout sessions were a good idea—good inputs on HR.”*

Workshop Ratings

The participants were asked to give each workshop a rating of either ‘Poor’, ‘Good’, ‘Very Good’ or ‘Excellent’. Haresh Kumar, India Coordinator of GE Elfun, compiled these results from the evaluation forms. For each workshop, the percentage of NGO Directors who gave the above ratings are as follows:

Workshop	‘Poor’	‘Good’	‘Very Good’	‘Excellent’	‘Very Good’ or ‘Excellent’
Leadership Session #1: The Effective NGO Leader	5%	22%	43%	30%	73%
Leadership Session #2: Vision-Alignment; Time Management	3%	26%	40%	31%	71%
Leadership Session #3: Balance	1%	18%	31%	50%	81%
Skills Workshop #1: Fundraising (4/18/03)	5%	34%	43%	18%	61%
Skills Workshop #2: Fundraising (4/19/03)	4%	39%	43%	14%	57%
Skills Workshop #3: Strategic Planning	5%	33%	48%	14%	62%
Skills Workshop #4: Financial Management	3%	42%	40%	15%	55%
Breakout Sessions	7%	36%	33%	24%	57%
Funder Panel	10%	40%	36%	14%	50%

Director Favorites

The NGO Directors responded to the question, ‘**What were your favorite things about the conference?**’ as follows:

Peer Networking:

- *“Wisdom of the senior NGO leaders, energy of the junior NGO leaders.”*
- *“The class of NGOs—strong, clear and committed.”*
- *“Bandwidth of participants (diversity by age/scale/sector or organizations/richness).”*
- *“‘Round table’ was a great way to manage such a large group.”*
- *“Authenticity of participants. Wholehearted participation by all—group members, facilitators, consultants, organizers—GE Elfun volunteers.”*
- *“Opportunity to meet NGOs working with different models and with different goals.”*
- *“Opportunity to share and learn from other experiences.”; “Sharing my experiences/worries with others.”*
- *“Networking and learning from inspirational leaders of other NGOs.”*
- *“Met a few outstanding individuals that really inspired me.”*
- *“Occasion to interact with NGOs/consultants.”*
- *“Hearing the other participants, meeting many new groups and learning about their work.”*
- *“Mingling with ‘giants’ of person with multiskills and enormous commitment.”*
- *“Opportunities to meet the other NGOs.” (numerous times).*
- *“Frankness and openness of the participants and fellowship among the participants.”*
- *“It was amazing to network with so many other groups and so many issues.”*
- *“Getting to interact with such a diverse group of NGO leaders and become more familiar with their problems and working and sharing of similar problems, challenges.”*

GE Elfun/Change Acceleration Process (CAP) Session:

- *“GE CAP.”; “CAP tools.”*
- *“CAP workshop was excellent.”*
- *“CAP (change acceleration process).”*
- *“Behavior and presentation of Elfun volunteers was really appreciable.”*
- *“GE Elfun assistance of being in the background appreciated.”*
- *“Thoughtful, caring organization by GE Elfin and Yamini Kumar.”*
- *“Professionalism of the corporate sector.”*

Leadership/Balance:

- *“Session on balance.” (numerous times)*
- *“The session on leadership style.” (numerous times)*
- *“Session on time management.” (numerous times)*
- *“Tony Silard’s sessions—I like the one on NGO leaders.”*
- *“Tony’s presentations/sessions.”; “Quotable quotes by Tony Silard!!”*
- *“Tony’s sessions were the ones that particularly interested me because of the variety of content.”; “Understanding of leadership.”; “Leadership insight.”*
- *“I personally have started thinking about a successful leader along with balance in the personal life.”; “Importance of core values.”*
- *“The Balance workshop – very important as this is always lacking among us.”*
- *“Balance was really crucial and Vision Alignment helped me focus my work/initiative.”*

Skill Areas:

- *“Fundraising session on 4/19/03.”*
- *“The removing of the aura around concepts like fundraising*
- *“Fundraising component was informative.” (numerous times)*
- *“Fundraising – mock interviews and mock strategy development sessions.”*
- *“Financial management.”*
- *“Session on strategic planning.” (numerous times)*

Experiential Methodology:

- *“Interactive nature of the sessions.” (numerous times)*
- *“The interactivity and free flow of ideas and opinions during all sessions.”*
- *“Excellent opportunities given for audience participation.”; “The participation!”*
- *“The friendly atmosphere and the free vocalization of all Directors opinions.”*
- *“I thought the break out sessions (with 4 persons, one talking of his problem and 3 others guiding) was very very nice. Being in group with diversity in social causes being pursued by each of us, the solutions were so much out of the box that it assisted us in viewing things/issue with a fresh new perspective.”*
- *“Breakout sessions.” (numerous times); “The sharing and breakout sessions.”*
- *“Breakout sessions a super idea to get to know other organizations.”*
- *“The Break-away sessions – These allowed for building rapport as well as discussing and reasoning challenges.”*

Facilitation/Handouts/Other:

- *“Ideas on how to effectively manage a 100 plus audience and still leave them feeling they have learnt something.”*
- *“Good range of issues.”; “Interesting topics.”; “The opportunity to learn and imbibe.”*
- *“Capturing necessary skills in short period of time.”*
- *“Well-planned components of the whole conference.”*
- *“A good realization for adhering to the time schedule.”*
- *“Time consciousness maintained by the facilitators.”*
- *“The way such a large group was so well managed, how the organizers played host with managerial skills”*
- *“Facilitators being patient and subdued calm opposed to the questions posed by the group”*
- *“The coordinators made all the efforts to give us all a high ‘comfort level’ in all aspects.”*
- *“Anupama and Tony’s way of talking.”; “Excellent language command of all the speakers.”*
- *“Empathic speaker and consultant.”; “The courteous and gentle manners of organizers!”*
- *“The friendly atmosphere among participants as well as organisers.”*
- *“Everyone was made to feel very comfortable.”; “Very good organisation.”*
- *“Well informed “experts”/consultants – they knew their subject.”*
- *“Case studies.”; “Having a good mix of speakers.”*
- *“Slide presentation backed by handouts.”; “Media used, materials provided.”*
- *“The literature and the transparency material that was given to us during the conference was very well prepared.”; “Handouts.”; “Accompanying notes for each session.”*

Location:

- *“Good, relevant topics presented and discussed in a great physical location.”*
- *“For once a professional environment!!”; “Boarding facilities.”; “Comfortable stay.”*
- *“Excellent backup and logistical support.”; “Hospitality.”*
- *“A very important space for learning—thanks!”; “The environment.”*

There was much **additional praise** for the conference from the NGO Directors, such as:

- *“Laudable job, I heard this is the first Indian conference held for NGOs in such a massive manner, could see no confusion anywhere, team effort is great.”*
- *“A great effort! Establishment of a platform to encourage further interaction! Well done!”*
- *“A really well thought through schedule and topic.”*
- *“This was a great experience, I learnt a lot.”; “Sessions were fantastic.”*
- *“The conference was well organised, very participatory and useful to NGO’s.”*

- *“GE Elfun volunteers are very kind and smart, thank for them and Tony and all the consultants were very friendly.”*

Improvements for Future NGO Leadership Conferences

The NGO Directors were asked, **‘What did you feel most needs to be improved about the conference?’** Based on their responses (italicized below), future NGO leadership conferences will include:

1. More Unstructured Time/Improved Timekeeping:

- *“Somehow the way sessions are planned—back to back—doesn’t give any time for reflection.”; “Time keeping.”; “Sessions to be started on time.”*
- *“Time table is very taxing, needs to be good/compact not necessarily long.”*
- *“Time for sessions to be respected so that there is no compromise on other sessions.”*
- *“Maintaining time schedules.”; “Better time management.”*
- *“Some of the NGO directors did not keep to time/struggling with time was an issue.”*
- *“More time for sessions and networking.”; “Hectic schedule.”*
- *“Time—enough time to act and react. Allot some leisure time. Little more time given for clarity of doubts but I guess it’s difficult to satisfy 100% NGO under one platform.”*

2. More Breakout Sessions/Group Work:

- *“There should be more opportunities for NGOs to interact with each other as it happened in breakout sessions.”*
- *“More discussions and breakout sessions need to be included.”*
- *“The format could be changed to include more breakout sessions, and would be good if we had experienced facilitators for the breakout sessions. Each breakout sessions could address specific NGO leadership issues.”*
- *“More scope for experience sharing/learning.”; “Time for bonding and networking required.”; “Lot of time for interaction with others needs to be given.”*
- *“One or two organizations which have grown up substantially could share the process of their growing up and challenges they met.”*
- *“In participatory work, give group work more time, perhaps flip charts so that group presentations can have a visual aid.”*

3. Smaller Groups:

- *“Groups should be smaller to ensure better participation and interaction.”*
- *“Thought a slightly smaller group would have been more interactive.”*
- *“Smaller number of participants—30-40 would be ideal.”*
- *“Participants at the same level of understanding/experience/maturity.”*
- *“Smaller groups, perhaps sector specific. Reduce the number of participants.”*
- *“A closer conference with a qualified ‘mentor’ to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of my own organization.”*

4. More Session Choices/Changes in Format/Other:

- *“Would like to have the option to choose sessions relevant to me.”*
- *“More problem related issues for NGOs.”; “Discussion/analysis of different models of NGOs.”*
- *“Future topics: human resource, evaluation; not enough inputs on HR—case studies, problem solving exercises would have helped. More usable tools on HR management. More on HR issues.”*
- *“Simulation or activity-oriented.”*
- *“All mental work—sitting in one chair is tiring. Games/exercises are necessary.”*

- “Could have incorporated more room and scope for enhanced participation leading to the sharing process (through case studies, best practices, etc.).”
- “Could be held at a lower cost in an academic institution.”
- “Could have a creative post-dinner setting (e.g. cultural stuff/dance).”

Follow-Up Questionnaire: October 2003

Six months after the retreat, participants will be contacted to evaluate how they are applying the skills they learned at the GE Education and Community Leadership Conference in practice. Many letters have already poured in since the conference, such as the following:

Dear Tony,

I was the ED representing 'Sevalaya', the Chennai-based NGO, at the GE conference last month. After the conference, Mr. Saravanan and I held two meetings, one with our field staff (like the wardens at our children's home and the teachers of our school) and the other with our Board of Trustees, discussing in detail all that happened at the conference. Almost everyone seemed to agree that the most interesting point we had gathered was the identification of passion, empathy and trust as the three essential qualities of NGO leadership. We all agreed that the empathy with the poor (our clients) was of fundamental importance to all of us, leaders and workers alike. I wrote an article in our newsletter on the importance of such empathy as preached by Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda and the Tamil poet Bharati; and the article appears to have been well-received. The session conducted by you on the topic 'The Effective NGO Leader', I consider to have been the most useful.

Ram Mohan [Executive Director], Sevalaya

Conclusion

It is clear from the above feedback that the GE Education and Community Leadership Conference has made a significant impact by providing a forum for NGO Directors to share ideas around leadership, distill Best Practices in the crucial skill areas for running an effective NGO, and access an invaluable peer support network. Continuing these NGO leadership conferences and expanding them to new locations is very important, as there are so many committed NGO Directors who have never had the opportunity to attend such a workshop where they can refine their skills, renew their vision and return to their organizations energized and able to sustain their social commitment. As an indication of the strong demand for the GE Education and Community Leadership Conference, **85% of the NGO Directors said they would attend a second leadership conference the following year.**² Additionally, **94% of participants said they would recommend this conference to other NGO Directors.**³ Based on the feedback in this evaluation, the benefits to NGO Directors will be enhanced and expanded upon in future leadership conferences.

² An additional 8% of Directors said ‘maybe’ they would attend a second leadership conference and 7% said they would not.

³ An additional 5% said ‘maybe’ they would recommend the conference to other NGO Directors; only one NGO Director out of 130 said he would not recommend it.