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**REVIEW ARTICLE**

**ASSESSMENT OF NGO INTERVENTION AND  
ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT**

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# Assesment of Ngo Intervention and Role of Civil Society Development

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## INTRODUCTION

Broadly speaking civil society is commonly defined as "the area outside the family, market and state", encompassing a spectrum of civil society actors and entities with a wide range of purposes, structures, degrees of Organisation, membership and geographical coverage. While descriptions vary across Institutions and countries, the "civil society ecosystem" typically includes NGOs, non-profit organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) that have an organized structure or activity and are typically registered entities and groups.

India is a land of villages and the Government of India has been implementing numerous rural development programmes for the upliftment of rural Communities. Non-government organizations with their advantage of non-rigid, locality specific, felt need based, beneficiary oriented and committed nature of service have established multitude of roles which can effect rural development. A number of NGOs have been playing a vital role in rural community development, besides government interventions. Realizing that the government alone was not able to meet the challenges of the massive enormous tasks in the process of rural development, the non-profit, voluntary and non-governmental organizations had to be involved in different phases and activities at the global, regional and local levels. Thus, in later phases, both the GOs and NGOs have been actively involved in transforming the lives of the rural poor. No doubt, NGOs have been constantly working day-in and day-out to solve various problems concerning children, women, senior citizens, environment etc.

The NGO sector effectively works towards uplifting the socio-economic status of the poor. However, for a significant impact in the present era of liberalization and globalization wherein market forces adopt a key role, it becomes essential for the NGO sector to take a lead in helping poor fight the challenges posed by the system. NGOs can help the poor by providing access to the system, information on market opportunities, training facilities, information on sources of credit, etc. in order to meet the aspirations of rural poor, a unique

set of training programmes are expected to extend for the officials of for better management of the organization and developmental initiatives. Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) are playing a very critical role in the process of managing development initiatives of various kinds at the rural level. Even the Government of India has recognized the critical role of the NGOs in the Five - Year Plans, as they have commitment, credibility with the masses and professional approach to the people's issues unlike the charitable organizations of earlier days. However, despite their good intentions, a large number of NGOs find it difficult to sustain in the long run i.e. sustainability of organizations as well as sustainability of projects.

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### ***"India lives in its villages" - Mahatma Gandhi***

Literally and from the social, economic and political perspectives the statement is valid even today. Around 65% of the State's population is living in rural areas. People in rural areas should have the same quality of life as is enjoyed by people living in sub urban and urban areas. Further there are cascading effects of poverty, unemployment, poor and inadequate infrastructure in rural areas on urban centres causing slums and consequential social and economic tensions manifesting in economic deprivation and urban poverty. Hence Rural Development which is concerned with economic growth and social justice, improvement in the living standard of the rural people by providing adequate and quality social services and minimum basic needs becomes essential. The present strategy of rural development mainly focuses on poverty alleviation, better livelihood opportunities, provision of basic amenities and infrastructure facilities through innovative programmes of wage and self-employment. The above goals will be achieved by various programme support being implemented creating partnership with communities, non-governmental organizations, community based organizations, institutions, PRIs and industrial establishments, while the Department of Rural

Development will provide logistic support both on technical and administrative side for programme implementation. Other aspects that will ultimately lead to transformation of rural life are also being emphasized simultaneously. The Government's policy and programmes have laid emphasis on poverty alleviation, generation of employment and income opportunities and provision of infrastructure and basic facilities to meet the needs of rural poor. For realizing these objectives, self-employment and wage employment programmes continued to pervade in one form or other. As a measure to strengthen the grass root level democracy, the Government is constantly endeavoring to empower Panchayat Raj Institutions in terms of functions, powers and finance. Grama sabha, NGOs, Self-Help Groups and PRIs have been accorded adequate role to make participatory democracy meaningful and effective

### **HISTORY OF NGO'S:**

International non-governmental organizations have a history dating back to at least 1839. It has been estimated that by 1914, there were 1083 NGOs. International NGOs were important in the anti-slavery movement and the movement for women's suffrage, and reached a peak at the time of the World Disarmament Conference. However, the phrase "non-governmental organization" only came into popular use with the establishment of the United Nations Organization in 1945 with provisions in Article 71 of Chapter 10 of the United Nations Charter for a consultative role for organizations which are neither governments nor member states—see Consultative Status. The definition of "international NGO" (INGO) is first given in resolution 288 (X) of ECOSOC on February 27, 1950: it is defined as "any international organization that is not founded by an international treaty". The vital role of NGOs and other "major groups" in sustainable development was recognized in Chapter 27 of Agenda 21, leading to intense arrangements for a consultative relationship between the United Nations and nongovernmental organizations. Rapid development of the non-governmental sector occurred in western countries as a result of the processes of restructuring of the welfare state. Further globalization of that process occurred after the fall of the communist system and was an important part of the Washington consensus. Globalization during the 20th century gave rise to the importance of NGOs. Many problems could not be solved within a nation. International treaties and international organizations such as the World Trade Organization were centre mainly on the interests of capitalist enterprises. In an attempt to counterbalance this trend, NGOs have developed to emphasize humanitarian issues, developmental aid and sustainable development. A prominent example of this is the World Social Forum, which is a rival convention to the World Economic Forum held annually in January in Davos, Switzerland. The fifth World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2005 was attended by representatives from more than 1,000 NGOs. In terms

of environmental issues and sustainable development, the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 was the first to show the power of international NGOs, when about 2,400 representatives of NGOs came to play a central role in deliberations. Some have argued that in forums like these, NGOs take the place of what should belong to popular movements of the poor. Whatever the case, NGO transnational networking is now extensive.

### **MAJOR ROLE SEEN FOR NGO'S IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT:**

As economic reform and liberalization saw the Government vacating several areas to let private sector entrepreneurship flourish and contribute to the high growth rate of the economy in recent years, a similar paradigm shift is needed to transform NGOs from their dependence on aid and grants from within and outside for transforming the rural scenario in the country. This is sought to be achieved for the NGOs through engaging them in micro-finance, micro insurance, and micro-entrepreneurship activities for the overall development of the rural areas and to promote the welfare of the people of rural India.

### **BETTER CREDIBILITY:**

As NGOs get finance generated through their own activities, their credibility vastly improves and their service to rural people gets reinforced. CNRI is an apex body with over 2,000 member- NGOs engaged in multifarious activities ranging from self-help group formation, income generation, marketing, agency work for insurance companies for life and non-life products and for banks and financial institutions to environment protection, watershed management, handicrafts, textiles, traditional medicinal plants and HR development. It is completing one year of its existence. To mark the celebration of one year of its service to NGOs, CNRI is hosting a three-day national meet - 'Advantage Rural India' - from April 17.

### **INDIA AND NGO'S:**

India has a long tradition of social service, social reform and voluntary agencies. NGOs emerged in India soon after Independence when Mahamata Gandhi made a plea for dissolving the Indian National Congress (the political party which came into power upon Independence), and transforming it into a Lok Sevak Sangh (Public Service Organization). This plea was, however, rejected; nevertheless, it did not halt the formation of non-governmental organizations in India. Many Gandhi followers established voluntary agencies to work closely with the governmental programs on social and economic issues. These agencies organized handicrafts and village industries, rural development programs, credit cooperatives, educational institutions, etc. The second stage of growth of NGOs in India was around 1960 when many individuals noticed that the governmental programs seemed to be inadequate to deal with the deprived sections of India. These groups formed organizations

that worked on behalf of the poor, the landless, the tribals, the bonded labourers, and many other social groups that were being discriminated against by the policies of the state and social structure. These grass roots organizations work at the micro-level and work with limited resources and lack of coordination. Since Independence in 1947 until around 1980 there was little effort on the part of the Indian Government to define the role of a voluntary agency or to recognize its importance. In 1980, however, with the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-1985), the government identified new areas in which NGOs as new actors could participate in development. These areas included:

1. Optimal utilization and development of renewable source of energy, including forestry through the formation of renewable energy association at the block level
2. Family welfare, health and nutrition, education and relevant community programs in the field.
3. Health for all programs
4. Water management and soil conservation
5. Social welfare programs for weaker sections
6. Implementation of minimum needs program
7. Disaster preparedness and management (i.e. for floods, cyclones, etc.)
8. Promotion of ecology and tribal development, and
9. Environmental protection and education.

This plan, nevertheless, was to become the first of a series. Under the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-1990) the Indian government envisioned a more active role for voluntary organizations to aid in making communities as self-reliant as possible. These groups were expected to show how village and indigenous resources could be used and how human resources, rural skills and local knowledge, grossly underutilized at present could be used for their own development. NGOs because of their situation and interaction with local people can be very effective in bringing change since they are able to address issues that governments are often not able to comprehend. That is, because these organizations work at the grass roots level they are able to sense the urgency of issues and prioritize into the problem solving mode at a quicker pace.

This advantage has also been noticed by the Indian government. In the Eight Five Year Plan the importance of NGOs is further enhanced, paying particular attention to the role of these agencies as

participants in rural appraisal for drawing up development plans at a very low cost and involving the rural community. The plan document states, "A nationwide network of NGOs will be created. In order to facilitate the working of this network, three schemes relating to the creation, replication, multiplication and consultancy development have been worked out by the Planning Commission."

Today, India has a vigorous NGO sector. Although there has been no complete census of NGOs, it is estimated that about 25,000 to 30,000 are active in India. In fact, as of December 31st, 1989, there were 12,313 NGOs registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) 1976; furthermore, 726 NGOs are unregistered but under the prior permission category. One problem with NGOs in India, as with NGOs anywhere else in the world, has been the increasing dependency on governmental funds or donations from external (foreign) donors like the World Bank. This dependent relationship has resulted in a lack of flexibility on the part of NGOs to pick their missions and objectives since many are expected to perform certain tasks in return for funding. But, further still, it has also created structures that have become more bureaucratic in nature and, hence, less effective in development. Nevertheless, NGOs are here to stay and will continue to work in India on political, economic or social issues, the task before them is how they will manage to produce change while keeping track for governmental documentation. A new actor has emerged on the international stage, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) are increasingly making their presence felt. A decade ago, NGOs were fairly peripheral to major international diplomacy. Today, however, NGOs participate actively in various political, economic and social matters. NGOs work on their own, in conjunction with individual governments or with international organizations. As former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and other UN officials have noted, the involvement of NGOs in making decisions on the environment, sustainable development, human rights and women have increased the legitimacy and transparency of intergovernmental deliberations. NGOs come in all sizes, shapes, ideologies, nationalities, organizing structures and styles. Some focus on nothing but local issues. Others, address issues that span whole continents, and some like Amnesty International span the entire globe. Their very diversity reflects the complexity of these organizations. NGOs encompass everything from charities and relief agencies to political parties; think tanks and academic centers to community organizations; cultural associations to continent wide farmers' networks; women's groups to environmental federations; social movements to human rights and religious groups. NGOs are usually formed among



private groups of individuals sharing specialized interests in regards to issues that can be local, national or international. While a few such organizations had existed from the early beginnings of the nation-state, they were to proliferate in the transnational era and increased even more dramatically after World War II. This change can be attributed to technological developments, industrialization, and urbanization. Further still these factors are likely to continue to make the presence of NGOs felt in global arena. The industrialized democracies in recent years have accounted for well over half of all memberships in international NGOs, and have been headquarters for almost 90 percent of all these organizations. For example, the term NGOs is used to refer to such organizations as the International Red Cross, Oxfam, Care, Amnesty International, International Chamber of Commerce, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, International Criminal Police Organization, Salvation Army, World Federation of United Nations Associations, etc. Hundreds of NGOs are permitted direct involvement in the activities of several UN agencies. Their tasks involve sharing information and advancing proposals as part of a web of governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental efforts aimed at global problem solving. NGOs, then, are an indispensable organ of international importance.

### **RURAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES AND NGO:**

The important schemes available from Government of India for Rural Development are:

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREG)

Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY)

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY)

Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY)

National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)

Department of Land Resources-DoLR

National Land Records Modernization Programme (NLRMP)

Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP)

### **AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF NGO'S IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT:**

The NGOs have taking active participation in rural development. The rural poor and socially depressed classes are mainly depending upon the operations of NGOs. No particular job is particularly meant for the NGOs. Thus, there is a huge competition among the NGOs to extend the services for the benefit of the poor. At the same time we should not forget the

mushrooming of the NGOs for their welfare. The following are the important activities should take up for the development of the poor.

#### **1. Agricultural related programs:**

Numerous activities can be undertaken under agriculture sector. The jobs/projects like distributing planting materials, cattle, poultry, minor irrigation, free medical care for cattle's, safe drinking water for animals etc.

#### **2. Health programmes for human and non-human beings:**

The works like pit drainage, housing, creation of smokeless environment, good drinking water for animals and human beings, regular health checkup camps etc. will improve the health conditions of the human and non-human beings.

#### **3. Community development programs:**

The community development programs like adoption of villages for development, moral support during flood and famine period, supply of food and drinking water during flood, common well, training programs for the rural youths, housing projects, repair and renovation of houses etc. will satisfy the basic necessities. The important program like training programs for the rural poor will hold the youths from rural exodus. Even this type of training programs may also be extended for the rural women, so that we can expect self-sustenance among this community.

#### **4. Human Resource Development programs:**

The personality development programs, skill development programs, educational programs, integrated development projects etc will enable the rural poor to earn bread and butter.

#### **5. Trade and industrial promotion:**

The important problem in the present context is availability of the market for the products of rural enterprises. Therefore, an NGO has a direct link with the government for marketing of the goods. Apart from this, NGO can also go for training the rural youths in fabrication works, wood works, beedi rolling, agarbathi manufacturing, printing press etc.

#### **6. Government support:**

The government (central, state or local) support at all level is inevitable for rural development.

NGOs alone cannot do miracles overnight. Therefore, the government should watch and ward the working of NGOs at phase wise manner. Thus, the fund or whatever may be directly should move to beneficiaries. The NGOs should accountable for the funds.

### **SOME OBSERVATIONS ON NGO'S:**

1. A few NGOs have been operating without proper direction, organizational development, good management practices and specific mission.
2. It is also observed from the existing literature that, some NGOs are very lack in the areas like decision-making for right kind of developmental intervention, managing socio-economic change and attaining sustainability,
3. There is a direct correlation between the donor funding and the continuation of the projects undertaken by NGOs in rural areas.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Unless the NGOs are developed, prepared to face the new challenges like shortage of funds, stoppage of funds, it would be difficult for them to sustain. Rural India continues to suffer from lack of employment and self-employment opportunities owing to its narrow economic base. In the recent past, considerable success has been achieved in developing rural poor through entrepreneurship development approach which focuses on selectively utilizing local talent, appropriately developing them through training intervention and linking them with relevant business opportunities. EDI implemented Rural Entrepreneurship Development (RED) Approach, in collaboration with NGOs by training their development workers. One of the major hurdles faced in the process is non-availability of required and timely financial support to trained entrepreneurs. It was, therefore, felt that the desired success rate could not be achieved in REDPs despite best possible training inputs, because of non-availability of funds from banks to trainees.

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