

## **Role of NGO's In Rural Growth and Development**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In India, the scope of development is not narrow but very wide, as it includes not just the economic development but the growth on social front, quality of life, empowerment, women and child development, education and awareness of its citizens. The task of development is so huge and complicated that just implementing government plans is not sufficient to fix the problem. To achieve this, a holistic vision and collaborative efforts involving various departments, agencies and even NGOs is required. 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. 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.

**Keywords:** government, NGO, rural development, working.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

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. A non-governmental organization (NGO) is a legally constituted organization created by natural or legal persons that operates independently from any form of government. The term originated from the United Nations (UN), and is normally used to refer to organizations that are not a part of the government and is not conventional for-profit business. In the cases in which NGOs are funded totally or partially by governments, the NGO maintains its non-governmental status by excluding government representatives from membership in the organization. The term is usually applied only to organizations that pursue wider social aims that have political aspects, but are not openly political organizations such as political parties. The number of NGOs operating in the United States is estimated at 40,000. International numbers are even higher: Russia has 277,000 NGOs India is estimated to have around 3.3 million NGOs in year 2009, which is just over one NGO per 400 Indians, and many times the number of primary schools and primary health centres in India. Some successful NGOs in Rural Development, through their hard work, dedication, commitment combined with professional competency and integrity

have made their mark in the field of Rural Development during last three decades. The Government also acknowledged the contribution of such NGOs and supported them both by policy changes and financial assistance. This GO-NGO partnership in recent years has yielded very good results. In view of such successful partnership, it was expected that more favorable policies towards NGOs would be introduced by the Government. Strangely, instead, reverse has started happening with the Government policies discouraging the involvement of NGOs. This example of reversal or regression in Government policy is clearly seen in the revised guidelines for watershed development (revised in 2001) by the Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, and Government of India.

## **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 Mahatma Gandhi made a plea for dissolving the Indian National Congress (the political party which came into power upon Independence), and transforming it into a LokSevakSangh (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:

- Optimal utilization and development of renewable source of energy, including forestry through the formation of renewable energy association at the block level
- Family welfare, health and nutrition, education and relevant community programs in the field
- Health for all programs
- Water management and soil conservation
- Social welfare programs for weaker sections
- Implementation of minimum needs program
- Disaster preparedness and management (i.e. for floods, cyclones, etc)
- Promotion of ecology and tribal development, and
- 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 nation-wide 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."

NGOs are organizations by people and operate independently from the government. The term stemmed from the United Nations to refer to organizations that do not form part of the government. The two main attributes of NGOs is that they do not make profit and they are not part of government. They have a wider mandate thus calling for their specialization. Most NGOs today specialize in specific areas like rural development, climate change, human rights protection, governance and disease control among others. This essay discusses how NGOs participate in rural development at various levels.

It is worth noting that NGOs play a fundamental role in enhancing development in rural areas, especially in the developing world. They initiate programs aimed at transforming the lives of people in rural areas from miserable to better status. Because of the positive characteristics of most NGOs, it is easy to feel their impact since they are result-oriented. They put a lot emphasis on self-reliance through empowering people so that they do not remain beggars forever. Thus, NGOs have room for public participation in their activities, to make them effective towards achieving the desired results.

NGOs support different activities in rural areas, in the areas of agriculture, health, education and access to water among others. With agriculture, these organizations engage in research and guiding the rural dwellers on the best practices to adopt in order to improve their agricultural output. For example, many NGOs around the world have developed programs to fight food insecurity in various parts of the world. For example, the Hunger Project and Heifer Uganda offers tangible help to the people of Uganda through training. Through their program, they help people to live sustainable livelihoods. They also give aid to people to boost them in kick-starting agricultural practices. As a result, they have achieve a wide range of successes, including reduction of people are people are able meet their basic lives and lead a decent lifestyle. There is also food security and positive social change as people embrace certain values like self-reliance and not necessarily seeking aid from the government.

NGOs also play a major role in improving the education standards in rural areas. This is common where these organizations identify the needs in the education sector and respond with support action. Often times, NGOs offer awareness on the need to have education before rolling out action-oriented programs. A common trend is putting up schools in remote areas, where governments cannot serve effectively. Through such programs, the empower people in the village and empower them to compete favorably with those who are privileged and enjoy better learning facilities. This forms part of rural development as children go school and acquire skills and knowledge to better their lives. NGOs may also schools through development projects like constructing new classes, paying teachers or purchasing books for students. They also help rural areas alleviate their health sectors. Some people argue that health is one of the sectors of the economy that receive massive support from NGOs. They get involved in the war against killer-diseases like malaria among children, HIV/AIDS, and access to clean water. In essence, they teach residents on how to deal with some diseases including treatment and prevention. For malaria, NGOs provide rural areas with treated mosquito nets. Moreover, they create awareness on how to prevent new HIV infections and help victims of the scourge.

## **2. 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 REDP despite best possible training inputs, because of non-availability of funds from banks to trainees.

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