

## Role of Ngos in Rural Development

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### **Abstract**

*Non-Governmental Organisation has usually defined as voluntary, autonomous, non-profit organisations or groups of citizens reputable to address many problems and disadvantages in the society. In this paper, an attempt has been made to study the role of NGOs in rural development and community development. NGOs are predictable to play a vital role in all conceivable aspects of rural reconstruction and development. The primary objectives of NGOs are outlined as, development of women and rural folks socially, economically, politically through income generating activities, education programmes, awareness camps, etc., general socioeconomic development of the people living in rural areas especially in downtrodden areas, encouraging the country folks to participate actively in cultural activities, arts, sports and science activities, development of the underprivileged sections of the society such as fishermen tribes, rural women etc, running educational programmes like formal education, non-formal education and adult education programmes to decrease illiteracy rate and to improve*

*human resources for the development of a nation, protecting the environment, rehabilitating the deprived sections like the handicapped, mentally retarded and orphans, eradicating poverty through generation of employment opportunities, income generating activities, establishing competitions and giving exercise to the youth to join actively in rural development activities, initiating self-employment ventures and coordinating leadership/personality development programmes, creating awareness and conducting de-addiction programmes, formation of self-help groups and to provide financial assistance to the members of SHGs in order to empower them economically and improving health, hygiene and sanitation in slum areas and protecting the interests of consumers and working for prohibition and assisting in housing. The overall analysis of the study discloses that NGOs are very protuberant in real execution of government programmes towards sustainability rural development through the NGOs activities in education, healthcare, women development, aged/elderly, leprosy control, HIV/AIDS, childcare,*

*conservation of environment, youth empowerment, poverty alleviation employment and income generating activities, sustainable agriculture and disabled development in Thoothukudi district.*

**Keywords:** NGO, rural development, multi-dimensional challenges, quality of life, reconstruction.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In a vast country like ours where three-fourths of its population is living in villages, the all-round development of rural areas acquires vital importance. Agricultural growth has been on the critical agenda of the government of India right from the independence. The primary objective of rural development has been to provide an opportunity to the rural sectors and its people for their development.

Rural development in India is a very comprehensive and multidimensional process. Right from the first five-year plan the government of India was committed to formulating various plans on rural-development. In every plan document and every budget speech, it stated that the fruits of economic development should mostly reach the poor, especially the rural poor. The current budget proposals also revolve around the development of the rural sector.

Rural development implies desired positive change in the rural areas both in a qualitative and quantitative sense. The reduction of hunger, poverty, unemployment and inequality constitutes agricultural growth, which in turn improves the quality of life and level of living of the rural masses<sup>1</sup>. Rural development involves extending the benefits of growth to the poorest in the rural areas, e.g. small farmers, tenants, landless and other disadvantaged groups<sup>2</sup>.

They encompass improved productivity, increased employment and thus higher incomes for target groups, as well as minimum acceptable levels of food, shelter, education and health<sup>3</sup>. The very presence of movements and NGOs for social transformation in various spheres of the society indicates the emergence of a creative society<sup>4</sup>. In this paper, an effort has been completed to study the role of NGOs in rural development and community development.

## **ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF NGOs IN INDIA**

The NGOs perform various functions for the benefit of society. The range of NGO activities is vast and is spread in all fields: environment concern,

age care, rural development, health, culture and heritage, women empowerment, child care and upliftment, primary education to all children, animal welfare, disaster management and many more. India, being a mostly populated country, it is not easy to meet all social and human needs by the government without the help of NGOs.

NGO takes efforts to satisfy the needs of an ordinary man and development of the nation by undertaking various projects and thus helps the Government to fulfil its objectives. The government has identified, considering the social pattern of living and needs of citizens, schemes in which NGOs and voluntary organisations can participate. These are broadly: Age Care, Agriculture, Animal Welfare, Art & Craft, Children, Cities & Urban, Culture & Heritage, Disability, Education, Environment, Health, Human Resource, Rural Development, Science & Technology, Tribal People, Waste Management, Welfare, Women Development, Other Social and Cultural Activities.

NGOs deliver expert analysis in the field; assist as early advice agents and help screen and implement international contracts. NGOs also help increase public awareness of matters, play a significant

role in advancing UN goals and objectives and contribute essential information at UN-sponsored events. NGOs advocate many of the reasons of concern to the United Nations. Volunteer resources and implement and oversee development projects.

### **ROLE OF NGOs IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

The parts that the NGOs perform today in India are numerous. They are advocates, educators, catalysts, monitors, whistleblowers, mediators, activists, mobilizers (of both men and resources), and protectors of human rights, conscientious, animators, and conciliators<sup>5</sup>. Notable is the fact that these roles never played in an affable climate in India. NGOs, mainly those that perform advocacy roles and critique government policies, have constraints in their working environments<sup>6</sup>. NGOs are instruments that can use for political support and influence<sup>7</sup>.

NGOs are playing a talented discusses the role in all development activities in existing academic as well as development studies. In recent times, responding to Grass-roots level creativity and voluntary action became necessary to develop the rural areas. The increasing

demands for the NGOs are itself a response to recent trends relating to socio-economic issues and their corresponding development interventions in academic and policy-oriented research<sup>8</sup>.

While the role of NGOs has accepted in adding legislative effort, still there is general confusion and lack of understanding on how best they involve themselves directly in the mainstream of development process. Now, this is a turn to recognize the changes that have taken place in the society that there are many other economically and socially vulnerable groups like small and marginal farmers, agricultural labours, scheduled castes and tribes, bonded labours, rural artisans, rural women, etc., who also need to bring in the mainstream of development process<sup>9</sup>.

### **Role of NGOs in Rural Reconstruction**

India has a predominantly agricultural base, and nearly 70 percent of its population lives in rural areas. Almost after the introduction of new technology in every field of human life, there is a visible change even in the thinking pattern and understanding, but, it is apparent that we need a conforming change in the rural areas too. Such changes bring about a better standard of living and better overall economic, social and cultural environment, where a country folk can grow up, get

educated through the formal and non-formal system and be good citizens of India is named Rural Reconstruction<sup>10</sup>.

In India, rural reconstruction poses multi-dimensional challenges and also offers opportunities for the emancipation of the rural masses. The problems are too multi-dimensional, because in India most of the rural areas have unique social structures, involving very thick community concepts to hard-core conflicts in which considerable vested interests are operating, and in many times, they function at other purposes also. Under this scenario, meeting the challenges of rural reconstruction becomes a formidable task<sup>11</sup>.

The objectives of rural reconstruction are manifold and encompass improvement in socio-economic conditions, removal of poverty and indebtedness, regeneration of village and cottage industries, health, nutrition, family planning and sanitation, education through the formal and non-formal system, local administration, etc.<sup>12</sup>

An attempt is made to explain the significant role need to be played by the NGOs in rural reconstruction, and they indicated follows<sup>13</sup>:

- To complement government efforts in implementing various

programmes relating to rural reconstruction and development projects,

- NGOs are expected to mobilise their local resources initiative and promote self-employment activities in rural areas;
- Organizing and assembling rural people for social action to create awareness among them,
- They should build self-reliant for sustainable society by acting as an intermediary between people and government,
- To help the specific target example women, children, SCs and STs, landless agricultural labours and downtrodden people,
- Act as a supporter and partner of government programmes in activating the delivery system and in implementing rural development programmes etc.,
- To promote appropriate technologies and conducting demonstrations, where and when there is a need,
- To generate self-confidence, self-help and to enhance decision-making capacity among the rural communities,
- Activating social legislations

Acts like Dowry, Minimum Wages, Abolition of Child and Bonded labours, and Abolition of Female Infanticide and AIDS,

- The factor of transformation, concretisation and improvement of the living standards and welfare of the poor,
- They should act as a facilitator of development, education, training, professionalisation, etc.,
- Dissemination of needed information especially information about modern agricultural technology as well as appropriate technology for promoting eco-friendly industrial activity.
- To promote rural health, sanitation, population control family planning activities.

The NGOs role is that actual function played by an individual or organisation in the relevant unit of society. NGOs are predictable to play a vital role in all conceivable aspects of rural reconstruction and development. Since India is a country of varied cultures with different languages, religions, castes, customs, traditions and mores across different strata of different societies of various states, considerable achievement is not possible if the basics of development

regarding the socio-cultural aspects ignored in the real event of people of a nation<sup>14</sup>.

### **NGO and Community Development**

The policy for greater decentralisation to the local-level government, under the Panchayat Raj Act of 1992, has resulted in growing numbers of local-level NGOs. The population for each village Panchayat is now 5,000 people while at the same time village government is now responsible for a more substantial budget and a broader range of activities including water supply, village roads, community amenities and more general development activities. It has provided NGOs with the opportunity to be not only service providers but also monitors and mediators of the process and in themselves facilitators of local-level activism and local level power politics through their empowerment programmes.

Because local NGOs are less visible than their national-level counterparts, they can take on some of the more sensitive advocacy roles, albeit at a local level. What has emerged is a large area of overlap, in which NGOs can meet social change objectives such as empowerment through service delivery<sup>15</sup>.

While the Indian state has kept NGOs efficiently out of many broader

political debates, at the local level there are more significant opportunities for NGOs to use modes of intervention that enable both service delivery and empowerment, mostly free of state scrutiny. The hostile state can also have the effect of forcing NGOs to be fewer spokespeople for the poor, and more mediators or facilitators to enable the poor and marginalised to speak for themselves.

This is something that if left alone NGOs are generally not good at, as they can exacerbate rather than mitigate the exclusion of the poor from the political processes by fostering a level of dependency on them to carry out this role; raising the obvious question of the extent to which these small local groups can be empowered if they cannot pose a threat to the more substantial NGO<sup>16</sup>. It is an essential outcome for the empowerment of the poor, as NGOs can deflect state scrutiny away from themselves to the small, informal and locally based representative organisations they may be working with<sup>17</sup>.

The discussion of the pressures that Indian NGOs have been under over the past 20 years highlights the point that for many the values base of social change for many NGOs has been threatened by the imperative for survival and income.



Arguably, the move to smaller local-level NGOs provides an opportunity for the flexibility for active empowerment programme and stronger accountability links to their constituents. However, the pressures from local-level governments and donors place limits on this process for a fragmented set of NGO players.

## CONCLUSION

The overall analysis of the study discloses that NGOs are very protuberant in real execution of government programmes towards sustainability rural development through the NGOs activities in education, healthcare, women development, aged/elderly, leprosy control, HIV/AIDS, childcare, conservation of environment, youth empowerment, poverty alleviation employment and income generating activities, sustainable agriculture and disabled development in Thoothukudi district.

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