

## Role of NGOs in Rural Development

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### **Abstract**

*Role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in rural development was analysed through a study conducted on NGOs. Major rural development programmes of the NGOs are agricultural programmes, health programmes, human resource development programmes, community development and industrial and trade programmes. Majority of the beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, workers of NGOs and workers of other development agencies considered rural development works of the NGOs as effective for rural development. The objectives of the study are to analyse the role of NGOs in promoting sustainable agriculture. To find on what extent NGOs are promoting awareness programmes and upgrading development facilities. In this paper few NGOs have been selected randomly for detailed investigation and relevant information was collected by personal visits. Some NGOs had involved successfully with organic farming system. The overall analysis of the study reveals that NGOs are very prominent in effective implementation of government programmes towards sustainable rural development through the third party activities in education, health, agriculture, community development, energy, environment, and waste, moral upbringing, youth empowerment and poverty alleviation.*

**Keywords:** *NGO, Rural Development, Empowerment, Production, Generation, Migration, Strengthen, Agriculture etc.*

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## **Introduction**

***“India lives in its villages” - Mahatma Gandhi.***

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.

The rural areas are usually grossly neglected as far as development projects and infrastructure are concerned. As a result of the relative underdevelopment of the rural areas when compared with the urban centres, rural areas are usually zones of high propensity for our migration. Superficially, rural development seems to be a simple task but, in reality, it is not. Post Independence era has seen many rural development programmes through different five year plans. Alleviating poverty, employment generation, more opportunities for generating income, and infrastructure facilities are emphasized through the policies and programmes of the government. Along with this, the panchayati raj institutions have also been initiated by the government to strengthen the democracy at its grass roots level, but in spite of all the efforts rural poverty, unemployment rate, low production still exists.

The fight is still on for the basic facilities such as livelihood security, sanitation problem, education, medical facilities, roads etc. Still there is a huge gap in terms of infrastructure that is available in urban and rural areas. The basic rural development should include all these apart from employment, proper water supply and other basic facilities. 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, and empowerment of women, child development, education and awareness of its citizens. To achieve agencies and even NGOs is required. Owing to such great need, the number of NGOs in India is increasing rapidly and at present, there are about 25,000 to 30,000 active NGOs in India.

## **Meaning and Concept of NGOs**

We can say that NGO is an independent voluntary association of people acting together on a continuous basis for some common purpose other than achieving government office, making money or illegal activities. NGOs are difficult to define and classify, and the term ‘NGO’ is not used consistently. As a result, there are many different classifications in use. The most common use a framework that includes

orientation and level of operation. An NGO's orientation refers to the type of activities it takes on. These activities might include human rights, environmental, or development work. The term "non-governmental organization" was first coined in 1945, when the United Nations (UN) was created.

India has a long tradition of social service, social reform and voluntary agencies. Many Gandhi followers established voluntary agencies to work closely with the governmental programs on social and economical issues. These agencies organized handicrafts and village industries, rural development programs, credit cooperatives, educational institutions, etc.

### **Type of NGOs**

NGOs adopt different vision, work styles (approaches), composition, and funding partnership. Based on these, different authors have classified them differently. While World Bank's operational directive (1989) classified NGOs into two broad categories; a. Operational and b. Advocacy types depending on its perspective. NGOs can be classified into following categories from the Indian perspective:—

#### **a. Grassroots NGOs**

These work directly with the marginalized rural people. Along with charity and relief, they engage in following activities:

**Welfare:** Providing facilities for education, health, drinking water, roads, etc.

**Services:** Building up infrastructure in backward areas, facilitating credit supply of seeds and fertilizers, providing technological know-how, etc.

**Status of socio-economic Development:** Covering all people or concentrating on the poor in an area. Implementing projects related to income-generating activities, small saving schemes, micro-credit, adult education, mother and child health, etc.

**Development of human beings:** Making people aware of rights, providing legal safeguards, checking corruption and exploitation, protecting human rights, and enabling the poor for their development.

#### **b. Support NGOs**

They provide services to strengthen grassroots NGOs and other agencies like Panchayati Raj institutions and cooperatives for Rural Development preparing project proposals providing training, disseminating information through publications, conducting research, and making evaluation studies. Occasionally, they provide financial support to grassroots NGOs. Some examples of such NGOs are Participatory Research in Asia, Voluntary Health Association of India, Xavier Institute of Social Service, etc.

### **C. Funding NGOs**

These provide financial support to grassroots, support, and network NGOs. Such NGOs are national (CAPART in India) and international (IGSSS, USAID, FORD Foundation, etc.) agencies.

### **Meaning and Concept of Rural Development**

The word 'Rural' means an area which is marked by non-urban style of life, occupational structure, social organization and settlement pattern. Rural is noticeably agricultural, its settlement system consists of villages or homesteads ; Socially it signifies greater inter dependence among people, more deeply rooted community life and a slow moving rhythm of life built around nature and natural phenomenon; and occupationally it is highly dependent on crop farming, animal enterprises, tree crops and related activities. The term 'Development' means quantitative as well as qualitative change. Since it means change, which has meaning only when seen against something at a particular time, it carries a meaning which is not only relative but also subjective. Only a given type of quantitative cum-qualitative change is considered to be development in a positive sense. If the change is not of appreciable quality, and quantity, it is either mass-development or negative development. Rural development means noticeable changes in all these components.

The concept of rural development was born in the context of agriculture and for a long time it encompassed agricultural development Since 1970s, the concept has become more definite in its interpretation and it is being regarded as a design to improve the economic and social life especially, by extending benefits of development to the poorest, small farmers, tenants and landless. Now, rural development is not exclusively restricted to any single activity or area, it travels many or all areas which anyway affect upgrading, enlisting and petrifying improvement of transformation in socio-economic lives of rural people. Rural development means overall improvement of die quality of life for rural people. It is about reduction of poverty, increasing productivity, providing basic services like health, education, drinking water, sanitation, extending infrastructure, attempt to reverse distorted land distribution and ownership and host of other aspects redressing inequality, exploitation and deprivation in any conceivable sense. The general credence is that for breaking the 'interlocking log-jam' and disadvantages, it will surely require attacking several barriers through concerted action and multi pronged strategy.

Meaning of development is growth or evolution, stage of advancement in the context of rural background it means developing better physical, social and economic conditions of a specific group of people, the rural poor living in the rural areas.

### **Role of NGOs in Rural Development**

NGOs in India perform a variety of activities that would benefit the public basically because they do not have any commercial interests or profit motive. The important objective of NGOs is to serve the people who are suffering out of poverty or some natural calamity. Though NGOs are often criticized that they are wasting public money, they counter those criticisms by identifying the social problems systematically involving in finding a solution for them. As NGO in India runs mainly with the support of the funds that are raised, they plan everything carefully so that each programme that they execute is executed in a very cost effective way. The Seventh Plan recognised that government alone could not handle the task of rural development. It enunciated a clear-cut policy for involvement of voluntary organisations in rural development in a big way. It stressed the need to enlist voluntary agencies in accelerating the process of social and economic transformation through their participation in the planning and implementation of programmes of rural development. The accent in the Seventh Plan was on introducing.

The essence of nongovernmental organizations remains the same: to provide basic services to those who need them. Many NGOs have demonstrated an ability to reach poor people, work in inaccessible areas, innovate, or in other ways achieve things better than by official agencies. Many NGOs have close links with poor communities. Some are membership organizations of poor or vulnerable people; others are skilled at participatory approaches. Their resources are largely additional; they complement the development effort of others, and they can help to make the development process more accountable, transparent and participatory. They not only “fill in the gaps” but they also act as a response to failures in the public and private sectors in providing basic services.

#### **Community development programs:**

The community development programs like adoption of villages for development, moral support during natural hazards, 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.

#### **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, candle making, beedi rolling, agarbathi manufacturing, printing press etc.

**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.

**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 check-up camps etc. will improve the health conditions of the human and non human beings.

**Rural Reconstruction and Role of NGOs**

India has a predominantly agricultural base and nearly 70 per cent of its population lives in rural areas. Practically 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 very clear that we need a corresponding 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 rural folk can grow up, get educated through formal and non-formal system and be good citizens of India is called Rural Reconstruction. In India, rural reconstruction poses multi-dimensional challenges and also offers opportunities for emancipation of the rural masses. The challenges are also multi-dimensional, because in India most of the rural areas have different 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. The objectives of rural reconstruction are manifold and encompass improvement in socioeconomic conditions, removal of poverty and indebtedness, regeneration of village and cottage industries, health, nutrition, family planning and sanitation, education through formal and non-formal system, local administration, and etc.

The following are the important activities should take up for the development of the weaker:

1. To supplement government efforts in implementing various programmes relating to rural reconstruction and development projects.
2. To help the specific target example women, children, SCs and STs, landless agricultural labours and downtrodden people.
3. Act as a supporter and partner of government programmes in activating delivery system and in implementing rural development programmes etc.

4. Factor of transformation, concretization and improvement of the living standards and welfare of the poor.
5. To generate self-confidence, self-help and to enhance decision-making capacity among the rural communities.
6. Dissemination of needed information especially information pertaining to modern agricultural technology as well as appropriate technology for promoting eco-friendly industrial activity.
7. To promote rural health, sanitation, population control family planning activities.
8. Water management and soil conservation.
9. Social welfare programs for weaker sections

Since India is a country of diverse 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 in terms of the socio-cultural aspects are ignored in the real development of people of a nation.

#### **Challenges to NGOs**

One of the major challenge that face NGOs is lack of resources, both financial and human. Since most of the activities under taken by them are in the nature of extension work, they cannot become self-supporting. They are dependent for funds on the government, whose procedures are often slow and time-consuming, on foreign donor agencies and industries whose grants may not be available on regular basis. Often, voluntary agencies do not have information about the government resources earmarked for the development of the area in which they operate, nor about the methods and procedures to be adopted to avail themselves of these resources. It is, therefore, not unusual to come across a situation where, on the one hand, the voluntary agency complains of lack of funds and, on the other, the government provisions lapse for lack of suitable projects to utilise them.

NGOs have also weaknesses that include a. limited financial and management expertise, b. limited institutional capacity, c. low levels of self-sustainability, d. lack of inter-organizational coordination, e. small scale interventions, and f. lack of understanding of the broader socioeconomic context. Professionals from rural development, management, medicine, and allied disciplines dominate some NGOs. These professionals have desired knowledge and skills, but their attitudes towards grassroots are not unquestionable. They have deadened the activist edge of NGOs and made the NGOs cold, calculating, and 'business-like' in approach. Some other

NGOs gather funds to implement projects beyond their capacity. Being close to the corridors of power and pampering the officialdom for pushing files, making deals, and failing to achieve project objectives in the field, these NGOs are near moral bankruptcy. In 1998 CAPART blacklisted 65 such NGOs and put 262 NGOs in the 'further assistance stopped' list in the state of Bihar alone.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The overall analysis of the study highlights that the third sector (NGOs) has an important role in promoting and implementing different development activities. NGOs are very prominent and effective in implementing Sustainable rural Development programmes. The overall analysis of the study reveals that NGOs are very prominent in effective implementation of government programmes towards sustainability rural development through the NGOs activities in education, health, agriculture, community development, energy, environment, and waste, moral upbringing, youth empowerment and poverty alleviation.

So we can say that in this way the NGO's can bring the awareness among the poor rural people. It is now the need of the society as well as the nation to make these rural area and people competent to be aware about their fundamental rights. NGO's are the only organizations that could make the rural area developed.

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