

Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in Rural Development: A Case Study

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Abstract

Role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Rural development was analysed through a case study conducted on two NGOs in Jorhat district of Assam. Major Rural Development Programmes of the NGOs were agricultural programmes, health programmes, and community development. The study reveals that the role of NGO has a significant effect in Rural Development.

Key words : Evaluation perception about NGOs, NGOs in rural development, Role of NGOs, Transfer of technology.

Introduction :

"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 and 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,

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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 organisations, community based organisations, institutions, PRIs and industrial establishments; while the Development 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 realising these objectives, self-employment and wage employment programmes continued to operate in one form or other. As a measure to strengthen the grass root level democracy, the Government is constantly endeavouring to empower Panchayati Raj institutions in terms of functions, powers and finance. Gram 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" came into popular use only 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".

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 centred 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.

Meaning and definition of NGO :

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 is 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. An NGO's level of operation indicates the scale at which an organization works, such as local, international or national. "Confronting the Classification Problem: Toward Taxonomy of NGOs", one of the earliest mentions of the acronym "NGO" was in 1945, when the UN was created. The UN, which is an inter-governmental organization, made it possible for certain approved specialized international non-state agencies - or non-governmental organisations - to be awarded observer status at its assemblies and some of its meetings. Later the term became used more widely. Today, according to the UN, any kind of private organization that is independent from government control can be termed an "NGO", provided it is not-profit, non-criminal and not simply an opposition political party. Professor Peter Willetts, from the University of London, argues that the definition of NGOs can be interpreted differently by various organizations and depending on a situation's context. He defines an NGO as "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." In this view, two main types of NGOs are recognized according to the activities they pursue: operational NGOs that deliver services and campaigning NGOs.

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 are 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 favourable policies towards NGOs would be introduced by the Government. Strangely, instead, reverse has started happening with the Government policies discouraging the involvement of NGOs.

Non-government organisations with their advantages of non-rigid, locality specific, need-based, beneficiary oriented and committed nature of service have established multitude of roles which can effect rural development. In this context, the need to analyse how far the NGOs, are effective in rural development, what their roles are, components of their development work, their consequences etc.

were evident. With this objective, a case study was conducted in Jorhat district of Assam.

Materials and Methods :

Two well-established NGOs of Jorhat district, NEADS (North East Affected Area Development Society) and Resources Development Institution (RDI) were selected and their programmes and coverage were identified.

A sample of 50 beneficiaries from each of the organisations was selected through proportionate random sampling procedure to make 100 beneficiary respondents for the study. From the functional area of each NGO, a sample of 30 non-beneficiaries was selected as respondents following purposive sampling procedure. Thirty NGO workers selected at random from the two NGOs and 30 workers of development agencies other than NGO, in the selected area were identified as respondents.

Based on discussion with the implementation officials and authorities of NGOs, the major programmes and components of the programmes of these NGOs in rural development were identified. The effectiveness of the NGOs was measured in terms of the reflection of the evaluation perception of the different respondent categories about their experiences and roles played by the NGOs in connection with by measuring the Evaluative Perception Index (EPI). The index was formulated and standardised through identifying the major components of the programmes of NGOs, which consisted of 120 statements (on five point continuum- very strong, strong, neutral, weak and very weak) reflecting the components of the programme. The scores obtained by each respondent were summed to get the individuals over all evaluation.

EPI= Actual evaluation perception score obtained by an individual ÷ potential evaluation perception score.

The evolved consequences of the programmes were also identified in relation to the major components of the programme and were measured by developing Perceived Consequence Index (PCI). The beneficiary respondents were asked to rate the components from their experience or on the basis of the benefits either as positive or negative. A score of one for each positive consequence and

a negative score of one for each negative consequence were assigned. The sum of the positive and negative scores was taken as actual score of consequences. The ratio of the maximum possible desired score and the score actually obtained by the beneficiary was taken as PCI.

PCI= (Score for positive consequences + score for negative consequence ÷ maximum possible desired score. Using a structured and pre-tested interview schedule, relevant data were collected for the selected respondents. The data were then statistically analysed.

Results and Discussion :

Table-1. Shows that the major rural development programmes of selected NGOs are agricultural programmes, health and hygiene, human resource development and community development programmes. Both the organisations put considerable efforts for rural development. A perusal of their programme activities provides a view on the combination of delivery and service activities and employment generating activities in both the NGOs. It is to be mentioned that both the organisations have taken location specific activities, which were formulated after analysing the needs and priorities of their target.

The study indicated that majority of the programme activities ultimately lead to progress in health and hygiene, education, employment generation, self-reliance, economic development and behavioural changes. Importance of ecological preservation, safety and security feeling and community development was also there.

Table-2 depicts the distribution of beneficiaries of NGOs based on their consequences index of rural development efforts of NGO, which reveals that none of the respondents had considered the programmes of NGOs as least beneficial and less beneficial. 90 percent of the beneficiaries had considered the programmes of NGOs as most beneficial for them. This whole hearted acceptance of the programmes of the NGOs can be equated with the acceptance of the NGOs themselves in the sense of rural development.

The high acceptance of NGOs, voluntary organisations have special qualities in their style of functioning such as flexibility in operation, sensibility

to changing needs, high level of motivation of the functionaries and innovations.

Table-3 presents a comparison of the evaluative perception by the different categories of respondents about the effectiveness of NGOs. About 73 percent of the beneficiary respondents and 30 percent of the non-beneficiaries and 90 percent of NGO workers and 70 percent of development workers had high evaluative perception regarding the effectiveness of NGOs. These highlight the simple fact that the non-governmental organisations are accepted by the different sections as an effective machine for rural development.

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Table-1

Major Programmes for the rural development of selected NGOs.

Sl.No.	Programmes	Activities	
		NEADS	RDI
I	Agriculture Programme.	Distribution of planting materials. Distribution of dairy cattle, poultry, ducks. Etc. Demonstration of firm.	Distribution of planting materials. Distribution of dairy cattle, poultry, ducks etc. Demonstration of farm.

II	Health Programme.	Free medical camp. Safe drinking water providing drinking water filter. Smokeless choola. Sanitary latrines.	Immunization of children. Health Education. Family counselling centre.
III	Community Development Programme.	Village development projects. Training Programme. Education programme.	Village development projects. Training Programme. Education Programme.
IV	Human resource development programme	Vocational training programme.	Vocational training programme.

Table-2

Distribution of beneficiaries based on the Index of consequences of rural development efforts of the NGOs.

Group	Class	Frequency	Percentage
Least beneficial	0.0 -0.2	--	--
Less beneficial	>0.21 - <0.6	--	--
Moderately beneficial	0.61 - <0.9	10	10.00
Most beneficial	0.91 and above	90	90.00

Table-3

Distribution of Respondents based on the Index of evaluative perception of effectiveness of NGOs.

	Least effective		Less effective		Effective		Highly effective	
	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%
Beneficiaries(n=100)	--	--	--	--	27	27	73	73

Non-beneficiaries (n=60)	--	--	11	18.33	31	51.67	18	30
NGO workers (n=30)	--	--	--	--	3	10	27	90
Development workers(n=30)	--	--	--	--	9	30	21	70

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