



A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY ON VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

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The remodeling processes of the welfare state have led to the rapid development of the non-governmental sector in western countries. With increasing globalization, the intensity of such processes has increased further. In the 20th century, the globalization makes the people understand the importance of Voluntary sector. At the regional level, 1.5 million NGOs work in India¹ (i.e., non-profit, voluntary citizens' groups organized on a local, national, or international level). This includes temples, churches, mosques, gurudwaras, sports associations, hospitals and educational institutions. Most NGOs in India are small and dependent on volunteers.

The largest number of NGOs are registered in Maharashtra (4.8 lakh), followed by Andhra Pradesh (4.6 lakh), UP (4.3 lakh), Kerala (3.3 lakh), Karnataka (1.9 lakh), Gujarat (1.7 lakh), West Bengal (1.7 lakh), Tamil Nadu (1.4 lakh), Orissa (1.3 lakh) and Rajasthan (1 lakh). More than 80 per cent of registrations come from these 10 states.

Formation and registration of an NGO can be done under any of the following categories

- 1.Trust
- 2.Society
- 3.Company(under section 25

Kennedy (2009), categorises the actors forming the second tier of local governance in to three- (1.)Neighbourhood association,(2.) Community based organisations and (3.) NGOs. Out of these, NGOs are the most important actor as they focus on improving urban environment, identify policy inputs, provide service delivery and connect people with specialised knowledge to address the local problems of the society.

Growth of Voluntary organisations through Five year plans

After independence, traditional welfare activities were replaced by socio-economic or sustainable development. Government of India set up the Central Social Welfare Board in 1953 and Khadi and Village Industries Commission to channel funds to the NGOs and help them in their development. The Policy makers in Indian Government started laying greater emphasis on NGOs. A major step towards enlisting their support for rural development was taken during the Seventh Plan period wherein it was stated that serious efforts would be made to involve voluntary agencies in development programmes more particularly in anti poverty and minimum needs programme. The Christian missionaries backed by foreign funding agencies, have played a significant role in the growth of voluntary organizations in India.

The enactment of the Societies Registration Act of 1860 is a landmark in the history of voluntary organization in India. The Act is still operative with minor amendments and Government of India undertook various welfare schemes under various plans and policies. Social welfare was included as a part of the Five Year Plans. The major responsibility of organizing social welfare services continued with the voluntary organizations. Hence, even today, among others, it is the voluntary organizations that are also taking care of welfare activities (Kumar, 1995). Indian NGOs became prominent after independence, especially after 1970s. The planners in India have considered to the role of NGOs and have recognized services rendered by them in various fields.

A firm foundation for secular voluntary action in India was not laid until the Servants of India, a secular NGO, was established in 1905. After independence, the Government of India increased its presence in social welfare and development but recognized the potential for civil society to supplement and complement its efforts. The first Five-Year Plan stated, "Any plan for social and economic regeneration should take into account the services rendered by these agencies and the state should give them maximum cooperation in strengthening their efforts." The Central Social Welfare Board was established in 1953 to promote social welfare activities and support people's participation programs through NGOs. This additional funding and recognition led to a growing body of professional NGOs. The Government of India decentralized development activities throughout the 1950s. The establishment of the National Community Development Program and the National Extension Service were early steps in this direction. Further decentralization was achieved with the introduction of the three-tier Panchayati Raj system in 1958. Many farmers unions and agricultural cooperatives were founded around this time, and networking became more commonplace in civil society. In 1958, the Association for Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD) was founded as a consortium of major voluntary agencies. International NGOs entered India in



significant numbers to provide drought relief during two consecutive agricultural seasons, 1965–1966 and 1966–1967. Many of them established permanent local operations thereafter. Moreover, foreign funds began flowing to domestic NGOs in India, changing the character of civil society once more.

During the 1970s the government pursued a “minimum needs” program, focusing on the basic impediments to improving the quality of life for the rural poor, such as education, electrical power, and health. Several governmental development agencies were established around this time, such as the People’s Action for Development of India. With community participation as a defined component in a number of social sector projects during the 1970s and 1980s, NGOs began to be formally recognized as development partners of the state.

The 1990s also saw the establishment of several forums to promote dialogue between the government and NGOs. In the second half of the 1990s, the Council for Advancement of People’s Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) was decentralized so that envisaged benefits from NGO activities could also spread to the less explored and extremely poor areas of the country. CAPART was created in 1986 to promote and assist voluntary efforts in implementing rural development programs.

The Planning Commission initiated an NGO– government interface through a series of conferences and, in 2000, was appointed the nodal agency for NGO–state interactions. In May 2007, the cabinet of ministers of the Government of India approved the National Policy on the Voluntary Sector¹² as the first step in a process to evolve a new working relationship between the government and volunteer organizations. Through the policy, the government commits to encouraging, enabling, and empowering an independent, creative, and effective voluntary sector with diverse form and function, so that it can contribute to the social, cultural, and economic advancement of the people of India. It recognizes that the voluntary sector has contributed significantly to finding innovative solutions to poverty, deprivation, discrimination, and exclusion, through awareness raising, social mobilization, service delivery, training, research, and advocacy.

.The NGOs have a major role to play towards the cause of people’s resettlement and are also performing commendable job in this direction from time to time. The projects like the construction of dams, road highways and railways have often made some sections of people, particularly in rural areas, vulnerable and are displaced without being properly compensated. NGOs are also rendering great service in restoring dignity to the deprived and discriminated sections of the people in the society like women suffering from gender discrimination, lower caste people suffering from caste segregation and the status of untouchable, racial and religious discriminations.

Public sector and Voluntary sector

The relation between voluntary organizations and Government authorities have been largely controversial and is difficult to establish as it clearly depends on the nature, geographical area and the magnitude of work carried out by the former. (Kilby,2004) The magnitude of activities carried out by NGOs from the perspective of Governing bodies is subjective and hence the contribution of grass root as well as civilian institutions towards inclusive growth needs an analytical study through multi disciplinary approach to comment on it. A larger section of NGOs in India focus their efforts on education, health, relief, environmental protection, poverty eradication and social welfare with the focus on the areas of tribal welfare, women empowerment, upliftment of the underprivileged and disaster management. The efforts of voluntary organisations have thus triggered a series of questions among academia, such as-

Are such civilian organisations catering to the needs of the community more efficiently than the public sector? Is the voluntary sector working as a parallel system or are they working in compliance with the Government? Are they a better system to entrust the welfare programmes of the Government at the grass root level thus enabling the latter to focus on the priority areas at a macro level? If so, how can voluntary organisations be proven capable of entrusting this responsibility by removing the discrepancies in the organisational structure of NGOs? Can NGOs be carrying out the responsibility of service delivery mechanism better than the State? .

The new relationships between public and private sectors around the world are resulting from a range of political, economic, social transitions and forces (Heathcote 2004). Governmental bodies are experiencing both a decline in fiscal support and in public credibility. The differences in views are also evident as NGOs in recent times have been alleged of receiving funds from abroad for anti developmental activities. Srivasthava (2005) observes that governance is not merely maintaining law and order; it is taking into account the basic needs of human beings and protecting their constitutional and other rights. The governance of third sector refers to the maintenance of relationship between the board members, staff, volunteers and the target groups. It also deals with connecting the organization to the local community, funding agencies, government and the



civil society. Besides, it provides an affirmation that the organization is attached to its purpose, aims and vision. The governance of third sector has received a great deal of concern in India today amongst the intelligentsia, social workers and decision-makers.

The development literature recognising the strength and extensive reach of civilian organisations agree on the views that NGOs are of high relevance in developing countries as they provide an answer to the corrupt, incompetent, irresponsible and repressive governments. Absence of flexibility in delivery mechanism by the government can be overcome by community participation through NGOs. Tondon (2005) discusses the compliancy between the NGOs and the political system of the country to work toward rural development. Vasani (1993), elucidates on the scope and relevance of voluntary organisations in implementing government policies like Rural Employment Programme and TRYSEM and finds that the agencies and collective forums like Village parishad, zilla parishad and other local institutions were incorporating the government policies with the help of civilian organisations like Village development corporation for construction of roads, channels etc .

Mohinder Singh (1992), also share the same view and consider that non- government organizations are best stimulants for rural development. Many of the government programmes like TRYSEM, IRDP, JRY, etc, have failed for want of rapport with beneficiaries. On the contrary the NGOs ensure not only successful implementation of schemes but also timely recovery NGOs, in this light could identify the local needs and attempt to answer the questions of “who, where and how” to direct the concerned authorities. The tasks like promotion of self employment through asset creation, training, providing basic infrastructure, supplying inputs, financing loan and acting as a link to micro finance institutions can be best served by NGOs. The need and relevance of NGOs in developing countries where the government is over burdened, the problem of overpopulation persists and the human resources are untapped and wasted (R.Shankar 2003). A developing society rapidly moving from tradition to modernity would experience a variety of social & economic tensions. A sensible voluntary organizations working at the village level could help to reduce their tensions. These activities are seldom accounted and acknowledged at the administrative level. Also the help rendered during the times of distress are much faster, efficient and trusted than the Government support mechanisms. These initiatives help the needy to become economically and socially secured and finally empowered .V.Desai (2005) mentions the unaccounted work performed by NGOs in psychological aspects. The activities like counselling, support services, guidance, legal aids, and providing information as well as relief camps, disaster management activities are carried out by NGOs in remote places where the people have less access and knowledge concerning government support.

The development programme undertaken with the active involvement of people have a greater chance of success when compared to development programmes undertaken by Government where people became passive observers (Baruah,2012). It is here the role of voluntary organization is crucial in creating awareness about such programmes among the rural people & in motivating them for actively participating in such programmes. Majority of the schemes did not take into account the local needs & initiatives as well as feasibility of projects. Services of the NGOs can be of great use for mobilizing local financial resources from within the community to make them self-reliant, they play vital role in monitoring and data about the implementation of these programmes and help in the process of providing needful feedback on the part of government, their flexible innovativeness can also provide new directions to rural development(M.Singh,1992). Critically examining the role, relevance and need for NGOs, M.Shirley (2008) throws light on the impact of foreign funds by international voluntary organisation on the economy of developing countries. NGOs also pose a threat in the form of hindrance to political organisations by forming alternative power houses and pressure groups. Petras (2005) also finds conflicting interests among them . Some of the NGOs attempt to break the current practices and introduce innovative methods whereas few others support the current structure and help the government perform in an efficient manner. NGOs classified into three types, (i) radical (ii) reformists and (iii) neoliberal, out of which the first two are considered as progressive NGOs. Neo-liberals on the other hand reject the role of government in bringing about welfare. National Policy for Voluntary Sector and finds it deficient in one of the most important aspects of voluntary organisations -state relations which is its ability to play complementary roles based on a unique identity rather than replacing or replicating the state. While the policy has addressed the more easily identified and rectifiable constraints to this ability, more complicated and problematic issues have been overlooked.

Unveiling the persistently existing exploitation of dalits ,Waghmore (2002), shares his experience encountered with the NGOs, only to reveal that unless the government do not interfere, the civil organisations cannot perform to fulfil its objectives. It is suggested that the only means to uplift dalit from social seclusion is to ensure state participation. Throwing light on the contradictory nature of NGOs with respect to the political governance at the present scenario .

The implementation of Foreign Contributory Fund Regulation also cripples the NGOs as the decision was made without significant consultation from NGOs .The NGOs which employ professional social workers and claim to be working for the



cause of dalit welfare are not free from the caste bias and prejudices against dalit community. Hilhorst (2003) makes a bold statement that, “The sole gainers from indulging the activities towards tribal upliftment are the NGOs themselves and not the target groups”.

Lack of transparency and accountability also coexists among the voluntary organisations in developing nations. The State is sceptical about receiving foreign aids by developing nations from INGOs as it may lead to corruption among the volunteers. Adding to economic issues like price instability, foreign aids can also yield misappropriation of funds as civilian organisations of such are not developed enough to absorb lump sum foreign aids. Except a few, most of the NGOs are lacking commitment and motivation to work towards taking up sensitive issues concerning dalits. Nor the members of such civilian organisations are trained to face and take up the challenges.

The argument in favour of NGOs which the bureaucracy oversee is the power of voluntarism opposing the sense of responsibility. Clearly, the state has commitment towards the people but nonetheless, volunteers without a motive of economic gain are what it needs. India has possibly the largest number of active non-government, not-for-profit organizations in the world. A recent study commissioned by the government put the number of such entities, accounted for till 2009, at 3.3 million. That is one NGO for less than 400 Indians, and many times the number of primary schools and primary health centres in India¹. This abundant human resource accumulated under NGOs is overshadowed and they need to be channelized and tapped by for community development in UDCs.

Role of Voluntary Organisations: A Global view

NGOs across the world have made a significant movement with participation from 142 countries in the form of “Global Forum” a parallel conference consisting of 17,000 members from 2400 NGOs to protest against “Rio Conference” attended by world leaders in 2011. The strength of civilian organisations in changing the political scenario of a country is evident from the case of Nepal (Sukarko,2007)The uprising for the restoration of democracy in Nepal backed by NGOs has a deeper impact on the monarchy than the public civilian movements. The organised movements under NGOs show a visible positive result than otherwise. However, the NGOs in developing countries unlike their western counterparts are still lacking in leadership and decision making abilities. Most of the development literature draws a distinction between Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations in the development process, observes Riker V. James (1995). Increasing claims have been made that NGOs, both indigenous and foreign can contribute to promoting a more responsive and sustained approach to development activities, especially at local levels.

The study by Aota and Murosaki (2006) is on the impact of the activities carried out by NGOs during earth quakes across the world. The authors have taken four case studies of earth quakes in (Gujarat) India, Japan, Taiwan and U.S.A to examine the significance, impact and effectiveness of the activities carried out by NGOs. Professional NGOs which consists of doctors, planners, architects and engineers along with community based NGOs had addressed the needs of the victims in a practical and efficient manner where the governments deliver mechanism failed. The contribution made by Foreign organisations to the NGOs and association and mutual trust of the community has pointed towards a new prospect in the field of disaster management by government –NGO participation. Suharko (2007) gives case studies of NGOs functioning in Indonesia and India to examine the poverty alleviation programmes launched by NGOs in their respective countries. As mentioned in Clarke’s Theory (1995), both supply side and demand side needs to address poverty for a sustainable solution. The financial crises in Indonesia during 1996 was solved due to the direct involvement of NGO with public support. The activities at the micro level include advisory services, building infrastructure, providing employment training, education, building shelter and forming SHGs. However, the author has not studied the impact of the rural poverty alleviation programmes in an empirically.

The effectiveness of NGOs in forest management has been discussed in detail by M.Tiwary (2003) citing cross country evidences to point out that NGOs has an upper hand in environmental campaigns like activities like afforestation programmes, deforestation, protection of tribal and forest produce etc. The partnership between forest inhabitants, villagers and NGOs can lead to a informal organisation with active stake –holder relationship contributing to the efficient management of forest. Nearly one third of the youth in African countries are unemployed. The employment schemes designed by the NGOs could bring a drastic decline in the rate of female unemployed population. The NGOs focused on skill development and micro finance programmes thereby promoting the creation of income yielding assets (Christina, 2003).

Bebbington(2005) attempts the targeting of Non Governmental organisation aid across countries in a multivariate regression frame work, based on a dataset for 61 important international NGOs from various OECD countries, analyzed the targeting of NGO aid across a large number of recipient countries by jointly considering major determinants of NGO aid in a multivariate regression framework. While the results show that NGOs are more active in the neediest countries, the authors reject the hypothesis that NGOs complement official aid through engaging in so-called difficult institutional environments.



These are in contrast to the studies by Yan and Zhang (2008), based on interviews with 31 NGOs officials in China, they note that the progress in organising educational campaigns and specific conservation projects, civic environmental organisations have been less successful in influencing government decisions and official behaviours. David and Kanji (2009), also find that Nongovernmental organisations have attracted growing criticism for being unrepresentative of and unaccountable to the poor people for whose well-being they claim to work. Research on Dutch and Peruvian NGOs suggests that this happen in part because the chronic weakness of popular organisations also occurs because trends within the aid chain have made increasingly difficult for NGOs to understand livelihood dynamics or new organisational possibilities among rural population. The activities of International NGOs towards environmental protection have made the heads turn and even question the quintessential reasons of their existence due to their involvement in third world countries. But, it has been undeniably agreed that the such civilian organisations and mass movements can even change the jurisdiction(Haritha Tribunal and Chipko Movement to name a few) for a greater common good.

Indian experience of NGOs towards inclusive growth

According to the survey conducted by Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), 73.4% of NGOs have one or no paid staff, although across the country, more than 19 million persons work as volunteers or paid staff at an NGO. 5 The PRIA survey also reveals that 26.5% of NGOs are engaged in religious activities, while 21.3% work in the area of community and/or social service. Only 6.6% work in the health sector. Development literature is flooded with empirical studies investigating the impact of NGOs on their beneficiaries. Shankar(2005) has attempted to assess the activities of a foreign funded NGO named ASA functioning in Indian states. ASA (Activists for Social Action), is a NGO aiming at the social inclusion and upliftment of Dalit women, jointly funded by UNDP and ICICI bank under the scheme of Micro Financial Credit loans. Mapping of Gender division of labour has been carried out by measuring the outcome of income generation programmes on female headed households. The results show a clear indication of increase in income among the 161 Dalit women of 40 different groups out of 200 samples.

NGOs in Himachal Pradesh are directly contributing to the state's social welfare, economic and social development. The condition of women and children improved, income generation and youth activities enhanced as a direct consequence of NGO activities (Sharma and L.R.Varma2012).The comprehensive study by Sathe(2004), inspects the impact of NGOs on the primary education sector of Maharashtra by surveying 20 districts out of 30 districts of the state.. On the whole, 7,867 students were surveyed,. Among students belonging to higher standards, the story-reading ability is much higher among children belonging to pilot talukas (at 80 per cent) while only 66 per cent from non-treated talukas could read a story.

Gurulingaiah, M. (2002) in his study discussed the effort made by an NGO to empower the tribal women in Tumkur district of Karnataka. The author found that, the NGO has been organizing the women to form Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to meet their felt needs and enable them participate in planning and implementation of their own developmental programmes. The level of satisfaction is measured by Suresh (1990), who reveals that only 38 percent beneficiaries have satisfactory level of participation. 62 percent of beneficiaries have attained desirable degree of participation in the developmental programmes initiated and implemented for their upliftment. The beneficiaries are found, to be not keen in getting represented in decision making bodies and planning process. However, the institutional arrangement for participation and the participation score are found to be directly correlated .

Citing the example of Andhra Pradesh, the Kennedy (2009) reveals that the NGO specialised in health, appointed by the government in order to train its civil servants resulted in a financially cheaper but self driven mechanism. Santhakumar (2003) analyses the impact of citizens' actions for protecting the environment in the context of the institutional features of developing countries. The enforcement of environmental regulation is likely to be weak in developing countries, and thus their citizens are being compelled to sue the polluters or take direct actions that are costly to the polluter by forming mass movements in the form of NGOs and other committees of voluntary organisations. The theoretical and empirical analysis, based on 25 cases of citizens' action from Kerala , show that their impact is influenced by the institutional deficiencies of the country.Venkitaraja and Indira (2011) attempt to analyse the contribution of NGOs to human development in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka state based on micro level data using Sen's capability. Human development being multi-dimensional in approach, consideration has been given to five functioning of development such as economic, social, political, organisational and environmental. Results of the study show that people of NGO villages have higher rate of achievement of functionings but the people of Non-NGO villages have higher rate of deprivation of functionings.

Through the study by Khadei and Pandey (2010), emphasis is being laid on bringing the tribal and backward remote pockets to the mainstream of national development through the joint effort of public & private extension efforts in India. A summated rating scale has been developed through five steps to study the attitude of tribal farmers. NGO operational area was selected



for study including 220 tribal's selected through stratified random sampling from 23 Villages. Dharam Ghai, (1994) used participatory method by forming tribal forest groups to protect the forest resources as it provide them with an opportunity to develop themselves through the implication of successful livelihood creation programmes. Lakshmilatha. Ashokan and Thomas (2009), had found that NGOs are an essential medium for transferring the scientific advancement and technological application to the rural poor. Deshingkar, Farrington, Rao and Reddy (2011), discuss study involving 360 households from Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Livestock farming provides job opportunities without disturbing the ecological balance and also empower the rural households. The authors have proved the increase in income level with a multiple regression model.

On the other side, NGO had been conducting social awareness and health awareness campaigns to reduce superstitious customs, attitude and thinking related to poverty and child birth which are obstacles to the progress of tribal women. The author observed that training is an important part of economic activities and through these processes it can grow self confidence among tribal women and help participate in various social awareness camps etc.

Issues faced by Voluntary Organisations

NGOs in Uttarkhand face many challenges and problems ranging from lack of finance, professional help and guidance, psychological issues such as problem of identity, insecurity and inhibitions of the beneficiaries. Infrastructural difficulties like lack of accessibility, problem of isolation, beaucocratic limitations and hindrances etc. They also face many internal conflicts like lack of commitment, encouragement, and resentment towards NGOs (Shah, 2002). Due to these financial, administrative, psychological, social and internal issues, the NGOs, the new positive promise towards a bright future, which were in huge number (4000 NGOs in every district in Uttarakhand) are not able to deliver any substantial result. Gomes (2012), points out local NGOs are facing a series of problems such as insufficient funds, no technical manpower, lack of leadership skill, poor people's participation in plans as well as programmes, knowledge gaps in rural development etc entails stumbling block or progress in the rural development sector. Vasan (2004) has pointed out that many times women employees are exposed to sexual harassment. Besides, the women have to face many conservative and traditional objections due to non-day time working hours, working and travelling, mixed gender environment they share and so on. Moreover, the regional, national and international NGOs are well off and they must cooperate and share their resources with local based NGOs to activate their rural development projects to ensure fruitful results in the rural development sector.

Overcoming the Challenges

The most appropriate philosophy for NGOs to overcome their main hurdles would be perhaps one of cost sharing between NGO, government project and community. Heathcote (1998) in her work forecasts the futuristic transformation of NGOs into multiple forms. The discussion is on changing the nature and framework of the organisation, keeping the objectives of it the same. The future according to her marks the closing of NGOs and their transformation in the form of a share company, Micro finance institution or as a non-banking financial intermediary. The advantages of such a transformation are to encourage massive participation of the public as share holders and ensuring transparency of the system. The proposal is to transform NGOs into a licensed private trust run by the citizens with legal support whose function is to accept deposits for meeting the set targets of the voluntary organisations. The share holders purchasing equities or shares are contributing to the organisation by being a part of it without pursuing financial returns. Zohir (2004), takes into cognisance the possibility of a 'non-for-profit' organisation transcending into one which undertakes commercial ventures, giving priority to economic efficiency; and yet continues to subsidise programmes with social objectives.

Alan Hudson (2003) argues that effectiveness, legitimacy, accountability and governance (and evaluation) ought to recognize explicitly the values that make an NGO what it is. Edwards, Hulme and Wallace (2003) reiterate that NGOs must be exemplars of the societies they want to create and work much harder to mainstream civic values into the arenas of economic, social and political power longer term. Vasan, (2009) is of the view that the NGOs are to make longer term funding commitments which will enable them to work more closely with governments on developing services in countries where infrastructure is weak, health status is poor and poverty level is high. Regarding cost sharing, the NGOs need to develop clearer guidelines for field staff and projects and provide a range of options which will protect the interest of the poor. Ghate (2007) stresses on the need to combine Micro finance institution with Non Government Organisation to form a Non Banking Financial Company. The need for doing the same is justified as it would promote livelihood creation programmes, skill development programmes and commercial ventures in a better and efficient manner. He suggests that the already established NGOs can merge with a MFI to build a new platform with financial aids contributing to social reforms. Such an attempt can be promoted by other apex bodies leading to the formation of co operative institutions also. However such a system may fall prey to weak governance as altruism and financial activities may not coexist under the same roof. Ronald (2014) familiarising one with the concept of social accountability, argues for the need for tools to measure the same. NGOs



should prove their accountability to the society by using three tools of social accounting can be used in the case of NGOs to attract public trust and cooperation. 1. Social audit, 2. Social accountability standards and 3. social accountability report. The author also mentions some best practises which would be helpful in maintaining records, promoting job ventures and inspecting as well as auditing the records. He suggests to appoint an accountant or an auditor depending upon the nature of works of organisation in every NGO. Kumar (2004), NGOs considers as an agent of change and they can play a significant role to meet the needs of the society. Government policies should facilitate the work of NGOs and other agencies of change

Conclusion

The fundamental question facing all NGOs is how to move from their current position-as unhappy agents of a foreign-aid or charity fed system in decline- to being vehicles for international cooperation in the emerging global arena. Global trends challenge all NGOs to rethink their mandate, mission and strategies; this requires major organizational changes and a degree of self-sacrifice in the short term, but it will be a force for liberation in the future. The ideal strategy should be a movement towards a balanced approach of matching the supply-driven menu with a set of demand- driven activities. Peoples' participation, involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions, local user groups and NGOs(supply side) alongside institutional support from different levels, viz. the Union Government, the state, the district and block levels should be ensured to make the programme more participatory, interactive and cost-effective, as well as economically efficient, financially viable, technically feasible and socially acceptable while ensuring equity.

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