



## NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THIRD WORLD : AN ANALYSIS

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### **Abstract**

*In a democratic system, the role of the state is primary and most crucial in formulating and implementing the social and economic development programmes. Development does not only mean economic development but also includes promoting social equality, gender equality, improving quality of life etc., It is not possible for government alone to effectively undertaking such complex development activities. The NGOs have immense role in bringing about social change and development and it is being experienced from different parts of the Globe. Development, as we have read earlier, is a multi- faceted process, which essentially involves the participation of the people that would not be possible unless they are educated, awakened and motivated. NGOs that are taking up this job sportingly and successfully. In this context this Article is going to discuss the role of Non-governmental organizations in the development of third world.*

**Key Words: Democratic System, Development, Participation, Educated, Third World.**

### **Introduction**

The continuing poverty of developing countries has led the poor to degrade their immediate surroundings in order to survive. Citizens have grown increasingly frustrated with government and eager to organize their own initiatives. With the end of the Cold War, "development policy and aid transfers have come to be dominated by a new policy agenda. Such a policy agenda "is driven by liberal economics and liberal democratic theory." Also, recent developments in economic and political thinking about roles of markets and states in promoting economic development have been heavily influenced by neoliberal economic and democratic theory. As a result of such thinking, markets and private sector initiatives are considered the most efficient mechanisms for achieving economic growth and providing most services, including social services (via privatization) to most people. In contrast, governments whose role within the economy is being reduced, are expected to create an "enabling environment" or a legal and policy framework for the private sector provision of goods and services. Under the New Policy Agenda, NGOs are seen as vehicles for democratization as well as for providing goods and services in Third World countries where markets are inaccessible to the poor or where governments lack capacity or resources to reach them. In the eyes of the international donor community, NGOs are both cost-effective in reaching the poor and are considered "the preferred channel for service provision, in deliberate substitution for the state. In addition to the post-Cold War considerations, the declining aid levels to the Third World have forced the donor community "to ensure that the developmental impact of scarce aid resources is maximized." According to the 1998 World Bank Report: "Net official development finance, consisting of loans and grants from government agencies and multilateral institutions, has declined by almost 50 percent in real terms since the early 1990s." The decline in aid has been due to several factors including "the pressing need for fiscal consolidation in most countries, the declining strategic and military importance of development aid since the end of the Cold War, and weak public support for aid in some major donor countries, due in part to skepticism about its effectiveness." Increasingly, many donors "want to fund projects and programs that have a greater chance of being sustainable and of standing on their own." As a result, capacity building and sustainability are now the watchwords for donor-supported development projects.

### **Generations of NGOs**

A number of observers have pointed to a gradual shift in the activities of development NGOs, from a welfare orientation to a more development approach. Many of the large international NGOs such as CARE, Save the Children, and Catholic relief Services began as charitable relief organizations, to deliver welfare services to the poor throughout the world. Relief efforts remain an essential and appropriate response to emergency situations that demand immediate and effective response.



But as a development strategy, relief and welfare approaches offer just a temporary alleviation of the symptoms. The shift is inevitable. Various factors have been cited as contributors to this shift. One is recognition of the inadequacy of trying to deal with symptoms while the underlying problems remain untouched. It reflects the constant challenge to voluntary organizations to re-examine their strategies in a rapidly changing environment.

### **Role of NGOs in Globalizing World**

NGOs nationally and internationally indeed have a crucial role in helping and encouraging governments into taking the actions to which they have given endorsement in international fora. Increasingly, NGOs are able to push around even the largest governments. NGOs are now essentially important actors before, during, and increasingly after, governmental decision-making sessions.

### **The UN Secretary-General in 1995 said:**

"Non-governmental organizations are a basic element in the representation of the modern world. And their participation in international organizations is in a way a guarantee of the latter political legitimacy. On all continents non-governmental organizations are today continually increasing in number. And this development is inseparable from the aspiration to freedom and democracy which today animates international society. From the standpoint of global democratization, we need the participation of international public opinion and the mobilizing powers of non-governmental organizations".

NGOs are facing a challenge to organize themselves to work in more global and strategic ways in the future. They must build outwards from concrete innovations at grassroots level to connect with the forces that influence patterns of poverty, prejudice and violence: exclusionary economics, discriminatory politics, selfish and violent personal behavior, and the capture of the world of knowledge and ideas by elites. In a sense this is what NGOs are already doing, by integrating micro and macro-level action in their project and advocacy activities. "Moving from development as delivery to development as leverage is the fundamental change that characterizes this shift, and it has major implications for the ways in which NGOs organize themselves, raise and spend their resources, and relate to others." In the dynamic environment, NGOs need to find methods of working together through strategic partnerships that link local and global processes together. By sinking roots into their own societies and making connections with others inside and outside civil society, NGOs can generate more potential to influence things where it really matters because of the multiple effects that come from activating a concerned society to work for change in a wider range of settings.

### **The Following Six Factors Identified As Important, In Ngos Role Development and Operation of Infrastructure**

Community-based organizations and cooperatives can acquire, subdivide and develop land, construct housing, provide infrastructure and operate and maintain infrastructure such as wells or public toilets and solid waste collection services. They can also develop building material supply centers and other community-based economic enterprises. In many cases, they will need technical assistance or advice from governmental agencies or higher-level NGOs.

### **Supporting Innovation, Demonstration and Pilot Projects**

NGO have the advantage of selecting particular places for innovative projects and specify in advance the length of time which they will be supporting the project - overcoming some of the shortcomings that governments face in this respect. NGOs can also be pilots for larger government projects by virtue of their ability to act more quickly than the government bureaucracy.

### **Facilitating Communication**

NGOs use interpersonal methods of communication, and study the right entry points whereby they gain the trust of the community they seek to benefit. They would also have a good idea of the feasibility of the projects they take up. The significance of this role to the government is that NGOs can communicate to the policy-making



levels of government, information about the lives, capabilities, attitudes and cultural characteristics of people at the local level.

NGOs can facilitate communication upward from people to the government and downward from the government to the people. Communication upward involves informing government about what local people are thinking, doing and feeling while communication downward involves informing local people about what the government is planning and doing. NGOs are also in a unique position to share information horizontally, networking between other organizations doing similar work.

**Technical Assistance and Training:** Training institutions and NGOs can develop a technical assistance and training capacity and use this to assist both CBOs and governments.

**Research, Monitoring and Evaluation:** Innovative activities need to be carefully documented and shared - effective participatory monitoring would permit the sharing of results with the people themselves as well as with the project staff.

**Advocacy for and with the Poor:** In some cases, NGOs become spokespersons or ombudsmen for the poor and attempt to influence government policies and programmes on their behalf. This may be done through a variety of means ranging from demonstration and pilot projects to participation in public forums and the formulation of government policy and plans, to publicizing research results and case studies of the poor. Thus NGOs play roles from advocates for the poor to implementers of government programmes; from agitators and critics to partners and advisors; from sponsors of pilot projects to mediators.

### **NGOs in Development Cooperation**

The essence of non-governmental 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. Mirroring the support given to northern NGOs, official funding of southern NGOs has taken two forms: the funding of initiatives put forward by southern NGOs, and the utilization of the services of southern NGOs to help donors achieve their own aid objectives. The common ground between donors and NGOs can be expected to grow, especially as donors seek to make more explicit their stated objectives of enhancing democratic processes and strengthening marginal groups in civil society. However, and in spite of a likely expansion and deepening of the reverse agenda, NGOs are likely to maintain their wariness of too close and extensive an alignment with donors.

### **Interactions with the State**

As it is mentioned already, one of the fundamental reasons that NGOs have received so much attention of late is that they are perceived to be able to do something that national governments cannot or will not do. However, it is important to recognize that relations between NGOs and governments vary drastically from region to region and country to country. For example, NGOs in India derive much support and encouragement from their government and tend to work in close collaboration with it. NGOs from Africa also acknowledged the frequent need to work closely with their government or at least avoid antagonizing the authorities. Most NGOs from Latin America offered a much different perspective: NGOs and other grassroots organizations as an opposition to government. In the Third World, the difficult economic situation may force governments to yield to pressure from multilateral agencies to give money to NGOs. In these cases, the governments act as conduits of funds but in some cases try to maintain control over these NGOs precisely because of their access to funds. However, it was also recognized that through the multilateral donors, NGO cooperation and solidarity can influence policy at the national levels.



Multilateral donors may serve as a kind of "buffer" between government and NGOs in order to avoid unnecessary current tensions and to promote coherent national development strategies.

### **Alternative Approach and Development**

The rapid growth and expansion of NGOs worldwide attest to their growing critical role in the development process. At the international level, NGOs are perceived as vehicles for providing democratization and economic growth in Third World countries. Within Third World countries, NGOs are increasingly considered good substitutes for weak states and markets in the promotion of economic development and the provision of basic services to most people.

NGOs are seen by their proponents as a catalyst for societal change because they are responsive to the needs and problems of their clients, usually the poor, women and children. Because of targeting and being responsive to marginalized groups in society, NGOs are being heralded as "important vehicles for empowerment, democratization and economic development." Perhaps the greatest potential NGOs have is to generate self-help solutions to problems of poverty and powerlessness in society. This is based on the view of NGOs as independent, "efficient, less bureaucratic, grassroots oriented, participatory and contributing to sustainable development in grassroots communities." But for NGOs to remain independent of donor or elite control and achieve their social and economic goals, they have to work diligently toward capacity building and financial sustainability. NGOs are increasingly playing an important role in the development process of most Third World countries as discussed in section three of this paper. The growing importance of NGOs in the development process is attributed to the fact that they are considered suitable for promoting participatory grassroots development and self-reliance, especially among marginalized segments of society—namely, the poor, women and children. In fact, some NGOs seek to organize and involve the marginalized groups in their own development. And sometimes, they try to link their clients to the powerful segments of society by providing access to resources that are normally out of reach to the poor. For example, within development-oriented NGOs, microfinance institutions (MFIs) try to contribute to the economic improvement of the poor by: "bringing in new income from outside the community, preventing income from leaving the community, providing new employment opportunities and stimulating backward and forward linkages to other community enterprises."

As stated earlier, most development-oriented NGOs in the Third World use new and innovative development strategies such as the "minimalist cost effective approach (favored by microfinance institutions/poverty lending programs), "assisted self-reliance" or "participatory development." Overall, NGOs appear well suited to adapt the use of such innovative strategies because of their small-scale of operations, flexibility and great capacity to mobilize resources and to organize people to solve their own problems. The new development strategies perceive people as active participants of their own development. These "bottom-up" development strategies stand in sharp contrast to the "top down" capitalist and state socialist models of development. Both the capitalist model based on "trickle-down" and the state socialist model of "egalitarian development" based on central/state planning of economic activity have failed to meet basic needs of the poor, women and children and have not helped these marginalized groups to solve their own problems. Both models offer no real choice to the poor about immediate local problems faced or needs. Both forms of institutionalized "top-down" directed development discourage popular citizen participation and de-emphasize people-centered development activity. And finally, both models stress large-scale, capital intensive projects that are susceptible to elite control, corruption, and inefficiency.

### **Conclusions**

Non-governmental organizations play an increasingly important role in the development cooperation. They can bridge the gap between government and the community. Community-based organizations are essential in organizing poor people, taking collective action, fighting for their rights, and representing the interests of their members in dialogue with NGOs and government. NGOs, on the other hand, are better at facilitating the supply of inputs into the management process, mediating between people and the wider political party, networking, information dissemination and policy reform. NGOs often are successful intermediaries between actors in the development arena, building bridges between people and communities on one side, and governments,



development institutions, and donors and development agencies on the other. In an advocacy role, NGOs frequently represent issues and views important in the dynamics of the development process. As we start the 21st century, NGOs hold a great promise to provide self-help solutions to problems of poverty and powerlessness in many Third World societies. They are increasingly making up for the shortcomings of the state and market in reducing poverty in Third World countries. Furthermore, their future role in development is expected to increase precisely because of favorable international donor support.

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