

CHAPTER VI

NGO and Government Relations

This chapter focuses on the relationship of NGOs with different Governmental bodies. We in fact had tried to answer the question, what kind of relationship exists between the Governmental organisations and NGOs that are implementing poverty alleviation programmes in the district? This is important because both the organisations are supposed to devote them in the service of the common people. So, if these two organisations do not have good relationship among themselves, common people will be the ultimate victim. What is more the total money which was fixed for development would go in vain. That's why priority was given to find out whether the relationship between these two is cooperative or not and if cooperative, to what extent it is cooperative. In addition to that, we put emphasis on suggesting possible solutions to strengthen the relationship between these two bodies.

For the purpose of writing this chapter we took the help of the available NGO literature as well as from the survey about which we have already mentioned in the fifth chapter. Additionally, we talked to Bank officials and its staffs for their opinions. These helped us to understand the problems they face during the time of disbursing and recovery of loans. And what kind of role is being played by the NGO activists as a mediator between the common people (SHG members) and Banks. What is more, this survey (with the Bank officials and staff) helped us to know about the role played by the NGOs during the time of negotiations between Banks and SHGs. Finally, last but not the least, before writing this chapter, a large number of NGO activists was interviewed to know the grassroots level reality on GO-NGO relationship.

During the time of interviewing the above mentioned targeted population, we always kept the existing literature in our mind. The literature on NGOs informs us that, NGOs are considered both good and bad by the scholars as well as by the GO staff. For example we can say that if some scholars in this field looked them as a tool for development¹⁵² some government officials are fearful about NGO activity. Even some politicians consider NGOs as anti-government (Fisher; 2003; 40). Even in India, the Orissa police recently demanded the stoppage of NGOs' developmental activities in Maoist dominated areas of the state. Tribal based Malkangiri district's police superintendent Mr. Gojviye expressed that the money which is being spent for development purpose in this area is siphoned off by the Maoists. That's why Mr. Gojviye urged the state government that the NGOs should be banned in this district. What is more he added that by using force the Maoists are taking money from the NGOs. The NGO officials of that area obviously were saddened by this kind of statement of the police officials (ABP, NOV 5, 2007). If the NGOs are looked in this manner by a high ranking official of the Government, it is not very difficult to understand what kind of relationship exist between the two organisations in that particular area.

A similar kind of relationship may be traced in other parts of the world too. Most of the NGOs functioning in the Middle East are facing insalubrious scanning from the government. In Singapore, there is a history of putting the leaders of grassroots support organisations (GRSOs) in prison. In 1995, the Kenyan government forced to shut down the GRSOs and created government-organised NGOs (GONGOs) who were close to the official ruling party (Fisher; 2003; 40). Potter (1996) adds that it's always not an easy task to distinguish between the government and the NGO. In support of his comment he said that sometimes it is seen that the NGOs are exclusively financed by governments. He in this regard raised one vital question, "does this make them an arm of the state" (Potter; 1996; 1-2)?

¹⁵² A detail discussion of this is there in the second chapter.

In Coochbehar district, we found from our survey that cooperation and non-cooperation both exists between the GO staff and NGO activists. The Secretary¹⁵³ of a 'Gram Panchayat' (GP) once told us with a slight grievance that the NGO activists only come to them whenever they face any trouble or need something from this office. We may quote him this way, that, 'NGOs come to us only during the time when they require signatures'. When we tried to learn, how much truth exists in this statement, we found that this understanding was actually a result of misunderstanding. In this case the Secretary was annoyed regarding why the people related to the NGO does not visit GP regularly and why do they come only during the time of taking signatures. Now our question is, why should NGO activists visit GP offices regularly? Is that a part of their job? We think this type of thinking emerge from the 'mentality' that looks the NGO activists as 'inferior' to them. He is not the sole person who is thinking like this. During the time of our survey it was revealed several times that the GO consider themselves as superiors than that of NGO staff. But, if anybody deeply thinks into the matter he will find out that in no case these NGO activists can be called as 'inferior' to the GO staffs. As they are not working at your office, how can you claim undue obedience from them? So, before calling the NGOs it is the duty of the government to change the mentality of its staff.

The NGOs are supposed to perform some assigned functions/tasks of the government or some mother NGOs or the work which they have devised. As they are doing these tasks at the village level, it is quite obvious that they should keep contact with Gram Panchayat or Panchayat Samity level. But it does not mean that they are subordinate to the GO bodies or they have to visit these offices daily. This type of thinking should be treated as obsolete thinking in the 21st century. Rather we can say that as the government does not have wholesome infrastructure to reach the grassroots people¹⁵⁴ and they

¹⁵³ Secretary of Baneshwar GP. We interviewed him on Apr. 24, 2008 at Baneshwar GP office.

¹⁵⁴ Perhaps it is unknown to the GO staffs that during the time of 7th Five Year Plan (1985-89) it was decided by the Government of India to call the NGOs to act as a link between the government machinery and the common people (<http://mohfw.nic.in/Annual%20Report%202001-02%20.pdf/Part%20-II-8.pdf>).

are seeking help from the NGOs, if the performances of the NGOs are good; the government should remain grateful to them (NGOs). So, to us, NGO staff should go to the GP office or Panchayat Samity office only for official work and not for oiling them regularly. Moreover, if the practice of regular visits to the GP office starts then corruption will creep in. One thing should be remembered always that the NGOs are helping the government in the implementation of the projects and not the other way round. People or the staff of the GO bodies should understand this soon at the grassroots level bodies and this will only help benefit the targeted people.

One high ranking government official¹⁵⁵ in a financial institution told us that a number of NGOs in Coochbehar district suffer from the problem of lack of sincerity in their works. For example, at present 33 NGOs are registered under their financial institution but unfortunately only 15 NGOs are working, 18 NGOs out of the total are not in touch with them. To this respondent, if they showed sincerity in their work it will ultimately help the poor people of this district. At the same time he praised the dedication and innovativeness¹⁵⁶ of some other NGOs. He believes that this is high time to change the persisting concept that 'social work means to do something for the society without any kind of expectation'. To him in the 21st century, this kind of thinking is outdated. In our country, nobody can think that he will run his family by involving himself solely in social work. This kind of belief to this respondent ultimately does not benefit the society. To overcome this problem, 'Professionalism' needs to be incorporated in the field of 'Social Work'. In this connection one needs to point out that what the President of an NGO¹⁵⁷ in Coochbehar district once lamented when he lost some good

There was certainly any lack traced by the government in their machinery that forced them to call the NGO sector in the developmental process after 45 years of independence.

¹⁵⁵ District Development Manager of NABARD. We interviewed him on Nov. 01, 2007 at his Coochbehar office.

¹⁵⁶ In an interview with us on Apr. 03, 2008; he told that inspiring by his words one NGO named 'Z-Academic Society', Sunil Sarani, Coochbehar started to make shoes and chappals from 'Pati'. To him it's a great piece of examples of innovativeness.

¹⁵⁷ President of 'Nishiganj Club'. He was interviewed us on Dec. 07, 2008 at their NGO office.

workers when they (workers) joined governmental jobs. We think that those who have already devoted themselves to social work, it is the responsibility of the government to think for them. New concept should be built-in in this field, so that through social work one can run his or her family very well. After all, the government cannot ignore that social workers are actually doing welfare activities on behalf of the government. Later we talked to some of the social workers who joined governmental jobs quitting different NGOs. Almost all of them told us that they are not mentally satisfied with their present job. But, the salary which is drawn by them is much higher than what they received as an NGO activist and what is more, now they have job security. We think this actually is the loss of the society that some good proven social workers are 'mentally exploited' in other fields (here in different governmental offices) and if they are offered handsome salary and provided with job security they might become pioneers in the development sector.

The 'Pradhan'¹⁵⁸ of a Gram Panchayat told us that as the NGOs are attached with development related works, their failure or their limitations sometimes hamper the entire development of the society. It is not possible for the GO bodies to remain aloof from the activities of the NGOs as they also have responsibility towards their people. In this connection he specially praised the dedication and mentality of the activists of an NGO named 'Satmile Satish Club O Pathagar' working in his Gram Panchayat. He said that till now their GP is not declared as a 'Nirmal GP'.¹⁵⁹ But they are giving a lot of effort to make it. For this purpose they have sought the assistance of this NGO. And he is really happy about the role played by the above mentioned NGO in this project ('Total Sanitation Campaign'). But, at the same time he is very much frustrated over the functioning of another NGO. They have been assigned with the same task under the TSC programme. But, this NGO have failed to complete their target. And in this particular case, incomplete work means, the whole GP will be the victim. The Gram

¹⁵⁸ GP Pradhan of 'Falimari GP', Coochbehar- I block. We interviewed him on Apr. 14, 2008 at Maghpala market.

¹⁵⁹ 'Nirmal Gram Panchayat' means every family within that Gram Panchayat have sanitary latrine and take safe drinking water.

Panchayat receives a handsome amount of money after it is declared 'Nirmal Gram Panchayat'. The Pradhan of a Gram Panchayat felt that it is because of the negligence of this NGO people of this region has been duped. He used the term 'negligence' intentionally because within this GP, two NGOs have been provided with the same facilities. Even their places of work are in a same zone. So, when one NGO (i.e. 'Satmile Satish Club O Pathagar') is able to complete the target before the due date, it is just because of the 'negligence' that the other NGO becomes late. In this particular point we think that NGOs should prepare their plans with more concentration before starting their project. Otherwise common people will be the sufferer because of their non-performance.

To the 'Pradhan' of the above Gram Panchayat they have another objective to fulfil through the NGOs. They want to make the rural people aware of maintaining basic health. He informed us that the NGO which achieved success in the TSC project in their Block were often found organising seminars on the rights of the labours and health awareness camps for the bidi workers and other labours that belong to the unorganized sector. These types of programmes helped the targeted people in two ways. First it helped them to make the people aware of their rights. Secondly it helped them also because in these camps the targeted people were able to check their health. It is not only necessary to ensure rights for the poor but they must also be made aware of these programmes.

The 'Pradhan'¹⁶⁰ of a Gram Panchayat also informed us that some rules and regulations of the government were not understandable to the common man because of lack of clarity. In this connection one good example was given by him. The 'prerak' and 'nodal'¹⁶¹ persons of the 'Sarba Shiksha Abhijan' (SSA) are eligible to form and nurse SHGs in rural areas under

¹⁶⁰ Pradhan of Falimari GP, Coochbehar-I block. He was interviewed by us on Apr. 14, 2008.

¹⁶¹ 'Prerak' and 'Nodal' persons are related with the 'Sarba Shiksha Abhijan' (SSA). The main objective of this programme is to return those people into the schools who due to various reasons left the school.

'Swarnajayanti Gram Swarogay Yojana' (SGSY). In his GP, 3 persons from this category (i.e. 'prerak' and 'nodal') formed groups. But, the DRDC declared financial assistance only for 1 'prerak'. The interesting thing is that the cheque was issued in favour of the 'pradhan' of this GP (it means the cheque is actually issued in his favour) and he was instructed to give it to only 1 'prerak'. He was confused since he did not know whom to give the money. If 3 persons have worked as facilitators, financial assistance should be given to all the three men individually. But, this was not recognized by the government agency and hence the money could not be disbursed.

We can illustrate a good example of GO-NGO relations in Chowdhurihat GP of Dinhat-II block. The 'District Development Manager'¹⁶² of 'NABARD' told us to visit Chowdhurihat GP. To him, in this GP, one Bank manager¹⁶³ had brought 'revolution' in the field of development. And the relationship of GO and NGO in this GP is also a significant thing. On 9th December 2007 we went to Chowdhurihat to meet that 'revolutionary' Bank manager. The Bank Manager during the time of interview we noticed that he talked in details on the causes, effects and probable steps to eradicate poverty in this GP as well as from Coochbehar district. And he took the help of different NGOs of Chowdhurihat GP to attain this goal i.e. alleviate poverty from this GP. The causes of poverty in Coochbehar district according to him are as follows:

- i) Lack of basic infrastructure in Coochbehar district is one of the main reasons behind poverty. Here, by using the term basic infrastructure, he meant road, electricity, communication, skilled human resource, etc. He said that the condition of roads in this district throughout the year does not remain the same. In support of this statement he gives the example of the road from Dinhat to Chowdhurihat. This road for several years had remained poor. Only this year (2007) the road has

¹⁶² On Nov. 01, 2007 at his Coochbehar office.

¹⁶³ Mr. Jitendra Behari Mahapatra, Manager of 'Central Bank of India', Chowdhurihat branch.

been repaired. He adds that from New Jalpaiguri to New Coochbehar and from New Coochbehar towards Assam a large portion of the railway track has single line and due to this train services are affected adversely. Electrification is not complete in the district¹⁶⁴.

- ii) The geographical location of this district is also against development. Bangladesh and Assam are the neighbours of this district. Bhutan is also very near to this district. Unrest in Assam often spreads out heat waves in Coochbehar. And the trouble of Chowdhurihat which borders Bangladesh was told by him in this way, "*ekhane meye harale Delhi jai, ar Garu harale Bangladesh jai*". Translated in English it means 'here at Chowdhurihat if girls are lost, they are found in Delhi; and if Cows are lost, they are found in Bangladesh.'

After explaining the causes of poverty, he discussed with us the possible remedies. To him, the probable remedies for alleviating poverty are:

- i) People of Coochbehar district will have to reduce their dependence on agriculture. They are too much depended on agriculture.
- ii) A number of skilled labours (weavers, ply makers, mason, labours engaged in construction companies etc.) every year go to Delhi, Gujarat and Rajasthan in search of jobs. If proper job is provided to them in their own locality, there will be no shortage of skilled labours for the newly set up industries. The cost of living is very high in north and south India where these labourers go. They will prefer to stay in their native places even if they are provided low wages. So, the main task for the government is to create jobs in the above sectors for these skilled labourers. If factories open up, others along with skilled labourers will be benefitted. Even the newcomers can also

¹⁶⁴ We compared this statement by him with news item published in the 'Anandabazar Patrika' that 36 percent people are taking the facility of the electricity in Coochbehar district (ABP, Nov. 03, 2007).

learn everything from the experienced persons about their work.

- iii) Khadi Board, NABARD should come forward to set up small scale industries in the rural areas of Coochbehar district. Khadi Board has certain schemes where people can get 30 per cent subsidy for up to 10 lakh loan and 10 per cent subsidy for loans up to 10-25 lakh loans. People those who are related with the development of Coochbehar should take immediate initiative to introduce these schemes in the district.

Like Khadi Board, NABARD has also some schemes to set up new industries. In this point one interesting thing was raised by him. He told us that sometimes NABARD officials send proposals to the Bank for loans (for setting up new industries) but these applications were not sent as per norms. Hence in a number of cases it is found that in spite of fulfilling all the above criteria, the interested youth were deprived of loans which they could have got.

- iv) He said that it's not true that lack of raw materials is one of the main reasons behind not setting up big industries. On the basis of jute and tobacco production, there is every possibility of establishing new industries. Unfortunately no industry is running in this district on the basis of these two crops. These crops are taken from these areas and readymade goods (e.g. cigarettes) are marketed by the big companies from other states. So profit is being made by others on the basis of Coochbehar's raw materials. This is high time that the government should look up this matter so that industrialisation in these remote areas does take place.
- v) To achieve success in the area mentioned above, the politicians need to perform their duties setting aside narrow politics. They should take initiative and steps to set up industries, raise their voices against lack of infrastructure in the legislatures and guard industrialists against 'red-tapism'.

The politicians know better than anybody else about the demands of the local people, their mentality and how to transform the economy of this region. So their role is very crucial.

- vi) He also talked about the psychological reason. According to him, a section of the people of this area thinks that their poor condition is hereditary and it is inevitable and no one can change it. Then we asked him how he came to this conclusion? He started his answer in this way--- one day he found in his locality that one van puller is taking his 9-10 year old son to assist him. When he asked him why he is not sending his son to the school, the van puller promptly replied that as he was a van puller, there is no necessity to send his son to the school. After all, his son has to pull the van for the rest of his life. He also talked with many other belonging to this category. And he found that not everybody, but a section of the people still possess this sort of mentality. This type of mentality may create hindrances in the path of development, he commented.
- vii) The second psychological reason mentioned by him is that, a large section of the people of this area is willing to enlist their names in the BPL categories (the APL people also want to enlist their names in the BPL list). The reason behind this is that, if anyone is able to enlist his name in the BPL list, he will receive some benefits from the government. Now it has become a matter of pride to hold a BPL card. But, they do not understand that by getting a BPL card they are actually placed among the marginal section of the society. And in this way how will the economic scenario of this district change? So, to him the fake BPL card holders should withdraw their names from the BPL list. And the people those who actually belong to the BPL category must try to uplift their economic

condition. There should be a realisation that holding a BPL card is not at all a matter of pride for a human being.

- viii) To him, everywhere (not only in this area) a section of the elite class always want that the poor should remain poor so that they are able to maintain their dominant position. He told from his own experience that one graduate from a poor family never raises his voice against any wrong action done by the illiterate or less literate member of the traditional 'jotedar' (landlord) family. He told us that if that graduate sees that a member of the 'jotedar' family is engaged in illegal activities still then he remains silent. In this way the evil cannot wither away from the society. The poor people should raise their voice against any kind of ills in the society..

He also stressed on keeping right kind of 'mentality' by the NGO activists for the attainment of their goal. After discussing with a large number of people, we also think that the most important part behind any development programme is 'mentality' and 'involvement'. To us, all other things including 'money' is secondary and these two are primary. If anyone is facing financial problem or any other problem, he may overcome it through his 'mentality' or 'involvement'. But if he does not have the 'mentality' or 'involvement' to do a particular work, no one can expect a good outcome from that work. So, to us, for the GO-NGO both activists, all other things are secondary in front of 'mentality' or 'involvement'.

This view was also expressed by two Block office staff. During the time of interview, these two Block staff¹⁶⁵ (one among them was high ranking official) exposed that they are witnessing 'lack of will' and 'lack of involvement' as the main factor that hinders the process of development. Both of them told us that in their Block, 6 NGOs have enlisted their names

¹⁶⁵ These two block staffs belong to Tufanganj- I Block Office. One was Joint BDO and another one was clerk of that office. We interviewed them on Oct. 03, 2008 at their office premises.

under the 'Total Sanitation Campaign' (TSC) project. But, only 4 NGOs are now engaged in this project. The other two left the project. This was because of their lack of interest in the work. We believe that NGOs should not only think that they are doing social services. They should start thinking that through their participation in this type of project, some of their field staff can earn something and run their families. Professionalism should be tagged with social service. This type of thinking should be welcome from both the sides, i.e. GO and NGO. The GO bodies should also announce sufficient subsidies to the NGOs so that it generates interest among the field staffs towards their work.

The 'mentality' factor can be established through another experience¹⁶⁶ which is visible in this block. The NGOs in this block take keen interest to do well in the 'Total Sanitation Campaign' (TSC) project. There are 4 NGOs that are active in these projects. But when it comes to performance of the NGOs in the 'Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana' (SGSY) programme it is very poor. The reason behind this is that the NGOs found fewer hazards in implementing the TSC project than SGSY programme. The reason for not taking interest in the later is because of internal problems of the organisation. This is what was told by the NGO activists. But we think this cannot be a satisfactory answer because the same NGO which is doing well in TSC programme is found failing in the SGSY programme. If internal problem was really the reason, then successful implementation of the TSC programme could also become difficult. So we tried to find out what are the actual problems, which the NGOs confronted in implementing the SGSY programme.

Almost all the NGO activists told us that before forming SHGs, a lot of things including the homogeneity of the groups were to be given utmost

¹⁶⁶ This was told by the Joint BDO of the Tufanganj- I block on Oct. 03, 2008 at his office.

importance. A representative of the GO¹⁶⁷ also supported this viewpoint. Heterogeneous character of the groups hampers its unity. But, the NGOs do not sort out plans properly before forming the SHGs. This one is the most vital reason why the NGOs left the SHGs after the formation period. In this point our suggestion is that a workshop on a regular basis (2 or 3 in a year) is necessary for the NGO activists, particularly for those who are engaged as field staffs on behalf of the NGOs. And NGOs should receive more financial assistance for nursing the groups than forming the groups. In this way, the NGOs will take more interest on nursing and will not stop their functions after forming the groups. Nursing groups is much more vital than formation of groups. Training on a regular basis and appropriate rules and regulations can only save the groups from the hands of the bad NGOs.

Two staffs¹⁶⁸ working in one of the Block offices in Coochbehar district who are in touch with the NGOs on a regular basis told us a few things on this point. One of the staffs who is aged around 50 years told us from his vast experience that after the NGOs were given responsibility, the development process in the district have been accelerated. "But, they should show punctuality in completing their assigned task"--- this was his reply at the time of answering one of our questions. We actually asked him in what ways the NGO's can perform better in future? He in this place explained to us some negative things, the most important being the delay in completion of a task. To him, everybody knows that the cost of the raw materials (whether it is construction related or any other) is increasing day by day. If one NGO is six months behind the schedule time to complete a project, it clearly denotes that they have to compromise with the quality of the work. As a result the common people will be duped because of the late running of the project.

¹⁶⁷ Joint BDO of the Dinhat - I Block. We interviewed him on Sep. 12, 2008 at his office.

¹⁶⁸ These two staffs belong to Coochbehar - II Block Office. We interviewed them on Sep. 05, 2008 at their office.

The other staff whom we talked to even told us that sometimes the GO bodies are even blamed by the common people because of not finishing the targeted project in scheduled time. The common people do not understand their (GO bodies) obligations in this matter. On this particular point we discussed a lot with the different NGO staffs. After the discussion it became clear that to us in some cases they (NGO activists) do not have any other option but to stop the work. Everybody knows that the NGOs have limited fund. If they do not receive financial assistance from the GO bodies, how can they pay their field staff? So, sometimes late disbursement of funds from the part of the GO bodies ultimately caused the stoppage of the work. We, in this particular point think that, it is the duty of the government to look out that there is regular disbursement of money in development related projects.

The GO and NGO staffs told us that 'red tapism' is one of the main reasons behind the above problem. So, necessary steps are to be taken to reduce 'red tapism'. Another NGO activist¹⁶⁹ directly complained to us that some office staff intentionally delayed the approval of the project or delay in sanctioning the money for the project. When we asked whether he is trying to indicate some financial corruption or not, he remained silent. It is not possible for us to search out the truth on financial corruption, but if fixed rules and regulations are absent in fund disbursement procedure, there is every possibility that corruption will take place.

In this point we again want to stress on the setting of the right 'mentality' of the GO and NGO staffs in this way so that they can't even think of personal benefit. We know this is very tough, but at the same time we don't think this is impossible. Actually, for the progress of the society, today two 'P' are very necessary. One 'P' is for prize and another 'P' is for punishment. The strict implementation of these two 'P's can save our society from the vicious cycle of corruption.

¹⁶⁹ He is the Secretary of an NGO which have head office in one of the sub-divisions of the Coochbehar district. We interviewed him on Nov. 18, 2007 at his NGO office.

One important issue was raised by one another government official.¹⁷⁰ This lady is also actively engaged with the NGOs on behalf of the GO bodies. She told us that if one NGO is doing poor, all the NGOs in that circuit are blamed for it. To establish her point she gave one good example. According to her, in their block, one NGO is doing really very well out of 3-4 in SGSY and TSC projects. The services and dedication of the activists of the first NGO toward the common people is not questionable. But, because of the other 3-4 NGOs, which are not performing well, the whole NGO activists and staffs in this block are facing questions. In this connection, the block officials have nothing to do because the field staffs of the NGOs are not controlled by them. The GO bodies are also facing different questions from the district level officers because of non completion of the assigned tasks within the scheduled time.

What is more she adds that, the NGOs do not have adequate number of field staffs. To her, in most of the cases, not only these field staffs are inadequate in number but sometimes it is also found that they are even untrained. She opined that the organisation of time to time training programmes and refresher courses is very much necessary to make the field staffs cope up with contemporary ideas.

Staff shortage not only affects the NGOs, but it also affects the GO bodies too. For example, we can state here the conversation that took place between us and one of the respondents.¹⁷¹ He tells us that in their office the post of the Industrial Development Officer is vacant for a long time. The officer is supposed to look after the 'Total Sanitation Campaign' (TSC) programme. So, another official of this office has been given the extra responsibility to look after the said programme. It is not very difficult to assume that the officer who is looking after it is not in a position to give 100

¹⁷⁰ She is working in Coochbehar- II Block Office. We met her on Sep. 05, 2008 at her office.

¹⁷¹ He is the Head Clerk of the Coochbehar- II Block Office. We met him on Sep. 05, 2008.

per cent in TSC programme. So, we think that the government should give paramount importance to fill up vacancies wherever required in development related projects. Otherwise the objective of the development programmes will get hindered.

A high ranking official in a BDO office in the Coochbehar district¹⁷² during an interview with us firmly expressed that there is hardly any doubt that there is a requirement for accelerating the development process after NGOs had been included to cooperate with the GO bodies. Before taking charge his present post, he served in another district in North Bengal. He, from his long time experiences in civil service stated us that NGOs are found to do better function than the individual (here by using the term 'individual', he tried to indicate 'contractor'). To him, the NGO activists always fear that if they fail to do their work or if there is any fault in their work that may create a bad image for the entire NGOs. This fear creates a pressure on them to perform well. Here we find out one important thing that collective responsibility is much better than individual responsibility. When we met the members of the 'Self-Help Groups' (SHGs), we had similar kinds of experience. The members of the SHGs told us that their performance is always better when they try to perform jointly under the banner of the groups. He is happy with the NGOs attached with their office particularly in the tasks of TSC and SGSY programme.

Another civil servant¹⁷³ of the district almost aired the same view during the interview. This man told us that at present their office is attached with the NGOs in two projects, namely, the 'Total Sanitation Campaign' (TSC) and 'Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana' (SGSY). The development functions run by the government got pace after the inclusion of the NGOs--- this was the remark passed by him when we asked him whether NGOs are doing well or not in the above mentioned programmes. When we were discussing about the roles played by the NGOs in his block, one important

¹⁷² Joint BDO of Dinhata- I Block. We met him on Sep. 12, 2008 at his office.

¹⁷³ BDO of Mathabhanga- II Block. We met him on Aug. 29, 2008 at his office.

point was raised by him. He told that besides the above mentioned programmes, sometime they request different NGOs to engage in literacy campaign, organise awareness campaign on public health and so on. And the GO bodies received overwhelming support from the part of the NGO sector. We think that it is a good signal for the entire society that the NGOs are coming in front to assist the GO bodies to eradicate literacy or to improving the health of the people. What are the important steps to be taken by the NGOs to improve their functions? When we asked this question to him he replied that communication between GO-NGO is to be increased. A good communication between the two bodies may reduce the gap and improve the quality of their work. After all whatever they do, he tells, if the result is positive, it directly helps the common people.

So, we hope that we have been able to depict a clear picture on the GO-NGO relationship in Coochbehar district. Where cooperation exists, we have nothing to say but where cooperation is required, we have tried to suggest our own views. Finally one thing we would like to mention here and that is whether the GO bodies are 'superior' or the NGOs; this should be forgotten by both of them during the time of work. Only one thing is to be remembered during then that-- everybody comes here to do something for the common people who in most cases are poor. So, GO and NGO activists should concentrate on their own work and not waste time by intervening in each other's work.