

CHAPTER II

The World of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

In the last chapter we focused on poverty in West Bengal and the district of Coochbehar. We looked at the nature of poverty in the state and tried to answer the question why is the rate of poverty particularly rural poverty so high in the district. In this chapter we look at what NGOs are in academic literature, what are the reasons behind their proliferation, how can these NGOs be classified and finally we focus on the types of NGOs in the district. We also look at how did the NGOs flourish in the district and became an important part in the process of development? The activities of the NGOs will be the subject of the next chapter in our thesis. The points to be discussed are done in three main subsections.

I

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Academic Literature: What are they?

The 'Handbook of Political Science' (1975), which runs into eight volumes is almost silent on the definition of Non-Governmental Organizations (hereafter NGOs). Even after two decades of its publication, the term NGO perhaps had only marginal significance to the Political Scientists. But, now the scenario has changed considerably. And according to Salamon (1994, 109), we are at the center of "associational revolution". In the introduction the author writes that he used the term Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and nonprofit organizations roughly to denote the NGOs. From this, one may make it out that the term NGOs actually covers a large section of organizations. Which type of organization should we consider as a Non-Governmental Organization? To him the answer is, "as an organization an NGO has at least

several full-time staff, some sort of hierarchy, a budget and an office. although with local NGOs this can sometimes mean little more than someone's house or flat" (Potter; 1996; 1-2).

In the literature on NGOS, it is said that common people have formed voluntary associations since long, but NGOs in its present form developed only two hundred years back. And as a term, the 'Non-Governmental Organisations' acquired pace only after the United Nations Organizations (UNO) came into existence. Article 71 of the UN charter (chapter 10) makes a provision for UNO-NGO collaboration. In this article it is described that, "The Economic and Social Council may take suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence..." The definition on international Non-Governmental Organisations is first seen in resolution no. 288 (X) of Economic and Social Council adopted on Feb 27, 1950. In this resolution the international NGOs are defined as "any international organization that is not founded by an international treaty" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/non-governmental organization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/non-governmental_organization)).

In the year 1973, Smith found that, in general people looked the Voluntary Organizations/ Non-Governmental Organizations (VOs/ NGOs) 'either as an unclassifiable and amorphous hodge-podge of groups' or as in that way by which one classify them through 'common sense' categories for e.g. scientific, political, welfare (Smith, 1973). In her writing Weisgrau (1997) argued that the "NGOs is a term used very lightly to mark any organisation which is not a direct division of a national government." What is interesting in her article is that to her the NGOs and their development are lesser a movement and more a "rapidly expanding industry" (Mencher; 1999; 2081-2086).

These organizations are treated from different angles in different countries. In this connection it must be noted that in China, these

organizations are assumed as 'anti-government' (Brett; 1995; 96-110). To Clarke (1998; 36-52): "NGOs are private, non-profit, professional organizations, with public welfare goals. In the developing world, NGOs include philanthropic foundations, church development agencies, academic think-tanks and other organizations focusing on issues such as human rights, gender, health, agricultural development, social welfare, the environment and indigenous people." He excludes "other non-profit organizations such as private hospitals and schools, religious groups, sports clubs, and QUANGO's (quasi-autonomous non-governmental organization)" as non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, he adds that "In the contemporary literature, NGOs are distinguished from people's organizations (POs), local, non-profit membership-based associations that organize and mobilize their constituents in support of collective welfare goals. POs include local community associations and cooperatives as well as peasant associations and trade unions but exclude other professional or business associations. POs are usually regarded as a sub-category of NGOs" (Clarke; 1998; 36-52).

Mathur felt that the term NGO is a vogue one but in India within a short time it had gained currency (Mathur, 1998; 877-879). Mishra felt that because of the poor performance of the government the role of the NGOs have become very important. In the field of agriculture, energy, environment, water resources, the government departments failed to bring integrated development. So, to achieve the above mentioned goal, the hope is rested on the voluntary organisations. Why the hope is centered on the VOs? Because these organisations are working at the grassroots level and give priority to the local needs and requirements. What is more is that they are functioning on the principles of equity and social justice. According to the author of the book, the most important role played by the NGOs is to grow political awareness among the grassroots people. At the time of awareness building, the NGOs are trying to follow three principles, namely, i) charitable principles; ii) the developmental principles; and iii) the participative principles. But, to maintain the above principles, the NGOs have to act in accordance with some basic prerequisites. These are a) "they themselves should be

people's organizations; b) they should help in the development of the grassroots organisations to become self-reliant through local leadership; c) they should not attempt to operate projects directly; d) they should be able to create motivation and opportunities for self-employment among the people; e) the NGOs should thoroughly study the national development policies and try to promote them among the people; f) they should be recognized by the government as an essential force for socio-economic development, and g) there should be complete co-ordination among the NGOs to avoid duplication and wastage." According to Mishra, the above observations are a key to review the book (Mishra; 2002; 238-240).

Ovasdi (2006) gives a single line definition of NGOs in this way, "these are the organisations that work with the people to improve their social and economic situation" (Ovasdi; 2006; 31-34). In an article, Peterson and Peterson (1973) argued on voluntary association that, "no current definition is entirely satisfactory." Referring to Bode, they note that, "a completely satisfactory definition of voluntary associations seems less possible than a set of considerations for developing a definition or several definitions." Quoting Warner, they add in their writing that, ten characteristics are generally attributed to voluntary associations in many past studies. Some of the characteristics from that list are given here:

- 1) Voluntary involvement;
- 2) Secondary importance;
- 3) Normative inducement;
- 4) Specialization of interests;
- 5) Low degree of organization;
- 6) Private organization etc. (Peterson & Peterson; 1973; 2-15).

In one of his articles, Kirby opined that "voluntarism can and does play a role at all levels of development". In this piece of writing he expressed that "private and voluntary organisations are encouraged to collaborate with

AID³⁹ in efforts to carry out the new social objectives. In fact, a new and expanded role for voluntarism is an important innovation and aspiration in AID's current approach to fostering development in LDCs⁴⁰ (Kirby; 1973; 148-155).

We also find a definition on voluntary organisation in the 'National Conference on the Role of Voluntary Organisation in Health Care in India'. It says "a voluntary organisation is a social service and developmental institution motivated to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged in society either through direct services to the people or through facilitative/ indirect services to other voluntary organisations or Government, non-profit making and not undertaken to be fully funded for its maintenance, directly or indirectly by the Government" (Bhose; 2003; 38).

Nanavatty looks at the reasons why the voluntary sector is to be taken to assume responsibilities of rendering services in aid of the government. It is assumed that the VOs derive their strengths because of their attachment with the grassroots people. Their non-bureaucratic character helps them to introduce and experiment in organization of services as well as securing participation of people in the organization of service. Although the author admits that assumption is always not reflected in reality. He did not forget to add that VOs are found in different tone and colour. He further notes that there is a vital and distinct point between the VOs formed during the time of Independence (or soon after that) and the present age. As the contemporary VOs are attaching them with the 'Central Social Welfare Board', 'Ministry of Social Welfare', 'Ministry of Human Resources and Development' (and other government organisations), they are letting loose their independence to experiment and innovate new things (Nanavatty; 1996; 46-52).

³⁹ Agency for International Development.

⁴⁰ Lesser Developed Countries.

In Bhose's (2003) book we notice that he focused on man's nature as 'gregarious animal'. And to him this nature of human being give birth to the concept of voluntarism from the very start of human civilization. Voluntary Organizations (VOs) or non-governmental organizations work away from the governmental system and their main concern is 'service'. The history of the voluntary organizations is very old. They are even traced in the Paleolithic period too. This is true that in the 20th century the VOs are able to establish itself as a concept but the real evolution took place in this field in the post World War- II epoch. Behind the growing activities of voluntary organizations one may find the important reasons are as missionary zeal, war and calamities, socio-economic discrimination etc. In addition to that, the concept of welfare state, emergence of international organizations, disasters (both man-made and nature), ethnic problems (riots and clashes) helped to spread the voluntary organizations throughout the world.

To Bhose (2003), like human society the voluntary agencies also have a history of evolution. The primitive people were forced to show a voluntary unity because of risk-management, collection of food and biological-physiological needs. And whenever one group was searching food together, obviously one common interest came out. And later kinship organizations accelerated this one. And at length when the tribes settled in one place, automatically society was formed. In this way one may see that it was the voluntary groups on which the early social action was relied. With time, the society became more and more complex and this complexity made voluntary organizations more indispensable in the society (Bhose; 2003; 23).

Bhose (2003) also adds that the activists engage in the voluntary sector are sometime facing a problem on how to look a voluntary organisation. Some of them feel that there is a disagreement between the terms NGOs and Voluntary Organizations. It is because under the umbrella of the NGOs a large number of organisations including business clubs, recreation clubs who have no social activism are placed. Bhose admits that in broader sense the above mentioned organizations are included within the

umbrella of NGOs but the definition of NGOs specifically refers to the voluntary organisations solely (Bhose; 2003; 40).

The 'International Bank for Reconstruction and Development' (IBRD), popularly known as World Bank defines the NGOs as "private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development" (<http://wbi0018.worldbank.org/essd/essd.nsf/NGOs/home>). But one thing should be noted here that in the broader sense, the phrase NGO may be given to any nonprofit organization, which is distinct from the government. The IBRD not only defines NGOs but also provides an idea of strengths and weaknesses of the NGOs. Recognizing the diversity of the NGOs, some general strengths of this sector have been pointed out in this way:

- i) Strong grassroots links;
- ii) Field-based development expertise;
- iii) The ability to innovate and adapt;
- iv) Process-oriented approach to development;
- v) Participating methodologies and tools;
- vi) Long-term commitment and emphasis on sustainability;
- vii) Cost-effectiveness.

In the same manner some common drawbacks are also to be found out in this way:

- a) Limited financial and management expertise;
- b) Limited institutional capacity;
- c) Low levels of self-sustainability;
- d) Isolation/ lack of inter-organizational communication and/or coordination;

- e) Lack of understanding of the broader social or economic context (<http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/essd/essd.nsf/NGOs/home>).

Ross (1976) in his article expressed that VOs in ancient Judaism were basically the guilds, most probably a form of fraternity or burial association and the synagogue (Ross; 1974; 84-90). Rosenbaum (1981) believed that voluntary sector's activities have a great value in the society. To him the main reason behind this is that VOs are playing a homely and humanity based role which are not performed by the government. To the author, the idea of "an extensive voluntary sector" is nothing but an American phenomenon. It is notable that the values which are carried by the VOs such as pluralism, diversity and individualism are the integral part of American heritage (Rosenbaum; 1981; 82-89).

Brown and Kalegaonkar in their article (2002) pointed out that the importance of civil society and development NGOs in various sectors (like social, political, and economic) is growing very rapidly. Actually, the NGOs are increasing because of the fact that the state has some sort of limitation as a medium of development. Brown and Kalegaonkar agreed that during the time of social change and developmental process some organizations are playing a vital role (Brown & Kalegaonkar; 2002; 231-258).

In an article Mercer (2002) states that NGO literature proliferated in the 'last 15 years'. What is more he adds that in the 80s of the last century, NGO literature emphasized on "NGOs' efficiency, impact and scale." In the early 1990s a new set of debate along with the concept of civil society, democracy, good governance were included in the NGO literature. Agreeing with Bratton (1989), Mercer opined that NGOs' contribution in development may be considered more important in political than economic terms. Furthermore, Bratton opined that the role of the NGOs has become important because of their participatory and democratic characteristics. One interesting point which is to be noticed in Mercer's article is that he distinguished 'NGOs'

and 'Grassroots Organizations (GROs)' in terms of their size, number of members, area of operation etc. He strongly believes that NGOs mean those organisations which are officially established, have employed staff and obviously well-resourced. On the other hand GROs refer to the comparatively smaller, very often membership-based organisations and which mainly rely on donors or NGOs for finance. This article actually tries to find out the relationship among NGOs, civil society and democracy. In his article, Mercer shares that a common thought regarding their (NGOs and civil society) relationship is that, NGOs are not only one of the important parts of the civil society but they also try to strengthen it (civil society) by their activities. And finally strengthening civil society actually helps to prop up the democratic process also. Mercer talks about three principles which helped establish NGOs' role in strengthening civil society and democracy. These are:

Firstly, as NGOs are acting as autonomous, they pluralize and strengthen the institutional arena;

Secondly, NGOs help to increase citizens' participation in developmental process. NGOs are related with grassroots organizations which are often formed by poor and marginalized groups. In this way NGOs are trying to increase citizens' participation;

Thirdly, NGOs are said to establish an alternative model of perspective and policies. They sometimes challenge state autonomy in national and local levels and in this way they already play a significant role in case of democratic transitions and democratic consolidation in several Latin America countries, especially in Chile and Brazil (Mercer; 2002; 5-22).

Devine (2006) in his study writes that Non-Governmental Organizations- "a) provide welfare services efficiently to the poor; and b) develop a political process grounded in principles of participation, empowerment and accountability" (Devine; 2006; 77-79). To Sabel Rahman

(2006) development policy based literature in the last twenty years mainly concentrated on two things, namely;

- i) Development does not mean only 'economic change'. It relate with local political context, poverty alleviation etc. and
- ii) Against corrupt departments of the government, the donors and policymakers start to think that NGOs are their alternative at the grassroots level (Rahman; 2006; 451-473).

To write something on the NGOs it is better to briefly talk about social work too. Social work and NGOs or NPOs are very close to each other. In our society particularly, for a long time NGO activists were known as social workers. When we talked with the common people in Coochbehar district almost all of them told that before forming the NGOs, the prominent activists were known as social workers in their locality.

Let us try to know how the concept of international social work gained momentum. 'International social work' is the term which was first used by George Warren. In the year 1943 he coined this term to describe social work practice in agencies which were engaged in organized international efforts. According to experts, it is a distinct field of practice and demand specific skills and knowledge to cope with the social workers to act in international agencies (e.g. the International Committee of the Red Cross). Later, the word 'international social work' was able to include domestic social work practice with immigrants and refugees (Sanders, 1984; Sanders & Pedersen, 1984). Since the last decade of the last century, many scholars have started to define international social work from a broad perspective. To them, it is a professional practice that already crosses national boundaries and swears on contacts and exchanges between countries for e.g. Hokenstad et al. (1992) (Xu; 2006; 679-692).

NGOs have a deep connection with the concept of social work. At the biennial general meeting of the 'International Federation of Social Workers' (IFSW) held in Montreal in July 2000, the organisation decided to establish a new international definition of social work. Almost at the same time, the 'International Association of Schools of Social Work' (IASSW) also granted this definition in its General Assembly. Later in June 2001, when these two organisations met in Copenhagen both of them agreed to adopt it as the joint international definition. Originally composed in English, this definition had now been translated into 15 other languages. This actually starts with a short definition followed by some remarks. The first paragraph tells us the definition and the rest three highlight on the values, theory and practice of social work. The definition is as follows: "The social work profession promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships, and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work" (Hare; 2004; 407-424).

The meaning of the word NGO depends mainly on its perspective. In his article, Neal used the term NGO "to refer to legally constituted nonprofit organizations whose operations promote diverse economic, political, or cultural interests for the benefit of a broad social group." He later explained that some of the NGOs are oriented towards the professionals. And some other organisations try to serve peasants or engaged in promoting certain religious ideologies. What is more, Neal's article divulges some of the typical characteristics of the NGOs. He discusses the features of the NGOs taking help from different other authors in this field (<http://nvs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/37/3/492>). For example, Batliwala & Butcher (2002) in their books expressed that by informing and mobilizing marginalized populations, NGOs are trying to support the democratic rule in spite of the fact that it is a sector outside the government's domain. Sometimes it is noticed that NGOs are organizing protests and

petitions (Gilberth & Otero; 2001). In several cases NGOs have performed the role of human rights and election observers (Blum, 2001; Risse, 2000; Sikkink, 1993). We, in this particular context want to mention that in the year 2001, the much controversial⁴¹ parliament election of Bangladesh was monitored by several NGOs. Beside the above political function, some other political activities are also seen within the NGOs job (Fisher, 2003; Foweraker & Craig, 1990; Nelson, 1995, 2002). So in several regions it is traced that NGOs have become important political advocates and social service providers (Boris & Mosher-Williams, 1998; Clarke, 1991; Habib & Taylor, 1999). Some scholars believe that nonprofit organisations have the ability to contribute in the process of democratization (Escobar & Alvarez; 1992). But on the other hand some other group of scholars believes that NGOs are boosted by the power of the elites (Ferguson, 1990; Fisher, 1997; Pasha & Blaney; 1998) (Neal; 2008; 492-511).

There are several types of studies in which GO-NGO interaction are traced (Young, 2000). For this purpose one can put the opinion of Anheier-Salamon⁴² (1998) and Salamon-Sokolowski-Anheier⁴³ (2000). According to them, social origins theory believes that a combination of various factors (not a single factor) should be credited for the existence of nonprofit sectors (Seibel⁴⁴, 1990). Scholars of the social origin theory also believe that nonprofit organisations shape and are shaped by their social and political surroundings. It is seen that in a number of countries, the size and

⁴¹ The two major parties in Bangladesh are 'Awami League' and 'Bangladesh Nationalist Party'. Before the election both the parties raised voice against the male practices from the part of the opposition party as well as the government. So a numbers of election observers including some international NGO activists came to watch the election.

⁴² Anheier, H., & Salamon, L. (1998). *The nonprofit sector in the developing world: A comparative analysis*. New York: St. Martin's.

⁴³ Salamon, L., Sokolowski, S. W., & Anheier, H. (2000). *Social origins of civil society: An overview*.

Baltimore: Johns-Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies.

⁴⁴ Seibel, W. (1990). Government/third sector relationships in a comparative perspective: The cases of France and West Germany. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 1, 42-61.

composition of the nonprofit organisations are not shaped only by the power of the state and religious institutes. The power of the working class, landed and social elites and peasants in addition to the above powers are also responsible for that. (Neal; 2007; 492-511).

In case of India, the NGOs are now counted as the third sector only after the government and the corporate sectors. This is also a reflection of the global scenario too. In India, it is seen that in late 1970s some Christian organizations including the Left, the Gandhian and the followers of Lohia focused on the development in the grassroots level (Bhose, 2003; 14). Ovasdi (2006) divided the evolution of Indian NGOs into four phases. A short discussion of these four phases is given below:

Period between 1960 and 70: According to Ovasdi, the NGOs in its contemporary form started to flourish in India between the mid-sixties and the early seventies of the last century. During this period, the government was criticized for their earlier adopted development model. In this period, India witnessed the vast gap between the rich and the poor. In addition to that an increasing division was noticed between the rural part and the urban part of the Indian society. What is more in the late 1960s two social factors i.e. economic stagnation and political instability made India's economic and political condition shoddy. And it was at this point of time (1968-69), the concept of alternative and integrative rural development got pace. New generations of people were responsible for that. People were noticed to join in this movement during the time of droughts and floods. During the time of 1971 Bangladesh liberation movement this movement found stride. The young people in India joined this movement to rehabilitate the huge number of Bangladeshi refugees. In West Bengal, it is noted that student movement and Naxalite movement helped to bring new thoughts in the voluntary sector.

1970-1980: It was the mid of 1970s when Indian NGOs were able to attract the attention of the foreign donors. The international donors found that the

Indian NGOs are transparent, locally effective and have flexible approach. These actually attract them on Indian NGOs. A new generation also entered into this field that is found different from the Gandhian NGOs. Indian NGO activists in this phase were also influenced by Jay Prakash Narain's 'Total Revolution' concept. Some of the notable institutions were also formed in this period like, 'Tata Institute of Social Sciences' (TISS), 'Institute of Rural Management' (IRMA). Several State sponsored NGOs were set up in this phase, e.g. we can mention the names of 'Council for Advancement of People's Action for rural technology (CAPART), 'National Wastelands Development Board' (NWDP). Some of the ministries even started to fund the NGOs in different schemes. The ministries like welfare, health and family welfare, urban development etc. represent this category. Specialized bodies of the UNO like, 'World Health organization' (WHO), 'United Nations Children's Emergency Fund' (UNICEF), World Bank also increased their support toward Indian NGOs in this part of the last century.

To Ovasdi, the declaration of emergency in 1975 started a new phase in the history of Indian NGOs. He expressed that in this period, the concept of people's participation started to come forth. The focal point of the voluntary organisations is seen with the target groups like, tribal, landless labourers, small farmers and women and so on.

1980-1990: According to Ovasdi, the 80s of the last century witnessed a growth in the Indian voluntary sector with a different form. The growth was seen in case of the support organisations which are specialized in training, research, legal aid, advocacy, documentation and so on. The issues like women's development, environment and forestry gained pace. And above all, a further professional approach was noticed in the voluntary sector. This is the period when NGOs started to think themselves as an important part of the civil society. Moreover, the community groups, unions too are also taken into consideration as the agents for development and integrated part of the civil society.

1990 Onwards: The things that received importance in the 1990s in the NGO circuit are, i) efficiency and competence of the NGOs; ii) availability of the resources; iii) performance; iv) achievement of results.

An alarming situation was also witnessed by the NGO sector in the early 1990s. Some 'paper organizations' were traced in this period whose main intention was to siphon funds. Growth in funding by the foreign donors and by the government was the main reason behind this.

To Ovasdi (2006) some of the characteristics of the Indian NGOs are the following:

- a) "Non-profit.
- b) Voluntary.
- c) Legally constituted.
- d) Directly or indirectly reliant on the system of national/ international aid or other assistance, like donations and endowments.
- e) Working for the people, by the people, through the people.
- f) Beneficiaries are the targeted segments of society.
- g) Self-governance.
- h) Do not distribute profits, if any, to the members of the organisation except as wages and salaries.
- i) Registered under Companies Act 1956.
- j) They have definite aims and objectives.

Ovasdi (2006) classifies some of the types of the NGOs in the country:

- a) Relief and Welfare Agencies (for e.g. Red Cross).
- b) Technical Innovation Organizations: To introduce new or and improved access to problems are the focal theme of these types of organizations. British Intermediate Technology Development Group,

Grameen Bank of Bangladesh are the best examples of this type of organization.

- c) **Public Service Contractors:** These organisations think that their size and flexibility are fit for doing the task better than the government. So they try to implement the works of the GO bodies. CARE is a good example of this type of organization.
- d) **Popular Development Agencies:** Non-profit sector of the developed nations fund their counterparts in the third world countries to focus on self-help, social development etc. The finest examples of this type of organization are; Seven OXFAMS, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee and so on.
- e) **Grassroots Development Organizations:** Self-help groups, Aruna Roy's Mazdoor Kissan Shakti Sangathan are the examples of this type of organization.
- f) **Advocacy Groups and Networks:** Education and lobbying are the main objective of these groups. In this regard one may take the name of the 'Transparency International' which engages to check corruption at the highest levels of the government, 'Narmada Bachao Andolan' etc. (Ovasdi; 2006; 31-34).

To Rajan (2004), the ruling elites of India in post independence era were able to design and control the development process bypassing the Gandhian ideologies. To help the poor or we can say in this way that to uplift the condition of the poor, the 'trickle down' policy was adopted from the part of the GO. But, unfortunately after 50 years of independence 40 per cent population were found poor in India. The current trend of people's participation was promoted by Robert Chambers. He introduced a method called 'Participatory Rural Appraisal' (PRA). A citizen of United Kingdom, Mr. Chambers was engaged in Her Majesty's colonial service in Africa. Rajan (2004) points out that NGO leadership in most cases are in the hands of charismatic persons (Rajan; 2004; 253-270).

In India, proliferation of NGOs has taken place in the past few decades. According to 'Johns Hopkins Comparative Study of the Third Sector' in India there are more than 1 million NGOs engaged in various fields.⁴⁵ In India, the five year plan of 1985-90 for the first time 'included' and 'integrated' the NGOs in the 'development processes'.

Basu (2005; 61-76) in his writing expressed the ideas of Mr. Prakash Karat⁴⁶. To Karat, the NGOs act as a weapon of the imperialist power to establish multi-party democracy in the Third World countries. And this starts from the 1970s of the last century. One vital point Karat adds that NGOs are concentrated more on different 'section' of the society, like, poor, women, tribal etc. They are not concerned over 'classes' of the society. And in consequence of that it is very difficult to know the main factors behind the poor condition of the exploited class (Basu; 2005; 61-76).

⁴⁵ Salamon, L and Aheier, H; "The Nonprofit Sector in the Developing World", Manchester University Press, 1997.

⁴⁶ Prakash Karat is at present the General Secretary of the 'Communist Party of India (Marxist)' [CPI (M)], the largest Communist Party in India.

II

Proliferation and Categories of NGOs

In the last 20-30 years, a boom was noticed in the arena of transnational society. And the term 'explosion' was used by the 'United Nations Development Programme' (UNDP) to describe this expansion. In 1839, world's first NGO 'Anti-Slavery Society' was formed. But, till 1874 only 32 NGOs were traced in this circuit. The scenario started to change gradually in the next century. From 1914 to 2000 the total number of NGOs increased from 1083 to 37, 000. In terms of percentage this rate is 3416.44. The all important part of this growth is that 1/5th of these international NGOs came into existence after 1990 (UNDP Human Development Report, 2002).

The above paragraph emphasize on the time of the NGOs' proliferation, Clarke (1998) on the other hand stressed on the region where this proliferation took place. Recognizing the fact that proliferation of the NGOs is a worldwide phenomenon, he specially mentioned the zone of Asia, Africa, and Latin America where to him significant expansion took place. To him between 1984 and 1993, when private sector organisations grew by 65 per cent in Philippines, a growth of 148 per cent was noticed in registered NGO category. During then 58,000 NGOs existed in the Philippines. In Kenya, 184 per cent growth is noticed in the NGO sector in just nine years (from 1978 to 1987). It is revealed that in 1993, Brazil had the highest number of NGOs (with 110, 000) among all the nations in the developing world. India was ranked second with 1000, 000 NGOs.

To Clarke (1998), the main reasons behind the growth of the NGOs are the following:

i) Non-governmental agencies in the industrialised world channel a lot of aid through non-governmental partners of the developing world. In this

connection one good example was given by him. He writes that in the year 1990, US \$ 7.2 billion was provided by the rich nations' NGOs. The figure was equivalent to 13 per cent of net disbursements of official aid or 2.5 per cent of total money outgoing to non-developmental and developing NGOs and People's Organisations (POs).

ii) The next reason to him is that in this neoliberal age from the 1980s, multilateral donors and their bilateral partners are able to channel funding through non-developmental and developing NGOs.

iii) Because of the economic recession in the 1980s of the past century, the nation which earlier had a negative mind towards NGOs tried to change their policies and involved NGOs in nation building process.

iv) It is seen that large-scale social movements (in some developing nations) which perhaps earlier were ideologically and organizationally unified, shifted in their themes of social mobilization.

In his work Clarke (1998) tries to look at some important questions on NGOs e.g. why are the NGOs proliferating? Ideologically, what are the bases of NGO action? And obviously, how far NGOs can intervene in politics? Looking at these questions, Clarke at first sought the help of Sethi's (1991) work. Sethi (1991) in his book revealed that in Philippines and India, NGOs are able to fill an institutional gap formed because of the weakness of political parties and trade unions. But, the situation in Indonesia and Vietnam are different from India and Philippines. In these two nations, the proliferation of the NGOs comes about because of the hegemony and not for the weakness of formal industries (Clarke; 1998; 36-52).

To categorise the NGOs, Wiesgrau⁴⁷ (1997) opted the following criteria; composition, size, mission or purpose, sources of funding, histories, whether they focus on a particular area (e.g. agriculture) or not, whether they provide innovative models in 'technology' research methods or institutional arrangements' and their manner of day to day functioning and decision-making.

Mencher however uses other criteria to categorise the NGOs. These are a) NGOs' relationship with other social movements including women's movement; movements against oppression (e.g. race); diverse left movements within or outside of political parties; diverse rightist groups including religious fundamentalist environmental movements and b) current Western and international policies' effect on poor villages and NGO responses to these policies (Mencher; 1999; 2081-2086).

The World Bank concept on NGOs covers a huge number of organisations and at the same time various types of organisations. For example if anybody looks in the area where NGOs are engaged in development related functions, he finds out that there are some international charities that exists like CARE, WORLD VISION, OXFAM etc. And with that he also finds that local community based self-help groups are also working in developing and underdeveloped world. The wide range of the term 'NGO' is discussed in this article. It is said that a vast area of our life is touched by the NGOs (<http://wbi0018.worldbank.org/essd/essd.nsf/NGOs/home>).

World Bank mostly have a touch with two kinds of NGOs, namely i) operational NGOs and ii) advocacy NGOs. The main function of the first kind of NGOs is to relate themselves with development oriented programmes. On the other hand advocacy NGOs are those who are engaged with a particular

⁴⁷ Wiesgrau, Maxine, "Interpreting Development: Local Histories, Local Strategies", University Press of America Inc. Lanham, New York, 1997.

cause and they even influence on World Bank's programmes (<http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/essd/essd.nsf/NGOs/home>).

Kirby (1973) in his article suggests that, "Development may be broadly defined as a process of change in general well-being leading to a higher quality of life for all." Within this framework the author attempted to classify voluntary organisations by taking into consideration the following:

1. Public issue/ instrumental voluntarism;
2. Expressive voluntarism; and
3. Service voluntarism.

A brief discussion on the above classification is given below:

1. Public issue/ instrumental voluntarism: These types of organisations mainly emphasise on affecting government policy decisions and its implementation. Viewing different types of activities, these organizations may again be classified into various categories, like, Public information voluntary groups, Low pressure issue-oriented voluntary groups, High pressure issue-oriented voluntary groups.
 - a) Public information voluntary groups: One may label this voluntary group as an issue-oriented organisation because their main aim is to awaken public interest in a particular context. They normally take a neutral position and these organisations' behavior is almost like an educational instrument or institution. They also function as a mediator to inform common people about their rights as a citizen. Some of these kinds of organizations are functioning in less developed countries (LDCs) to Kirby (1973) as examples. These are- 'Ethiopian Council on Social Welfare', 'The Organization de Ciudadanas Costarrinses', 'The Central Institute of Research and Training in Public Cooperation' (India) etc.

- b) **Low pressure issue-oriented voluntary groups:** On various public oriented issues, this type of associations play a dedicated participation with a low-key action to reach their targets. One of the important characteristics of this organization is their reliance on established political institutions, processes and instruments. To Kirby (1973) in less developed countries (LDCs) groups like 'Mass Education Association in pre-communist China', the 'COLAC of Latin America', the 'Hind Mazdoor Sabha' in India etc. are examples of this kind.
- c) **High pressure issue-oriented voluntary groups:** These association' functions are just opposite of what is done by the low pressure issue-oriented groups. They favour strong action like strikes, publicity campaigns, mass demonstrations, violence and so on. 'All India Trade Union Congress' (AITUC) of India, the 'Tupamaros in Uruguay', and the 'National Awami Party of Bangladesh' are the best examples belonging to this category (Kirby; 1973; 2; 148-155).

Bhose (2003) in his study depicted the characteristics and specialties of the NGOs in the following manner:

- i) **Voluntary:** NGOs are formed voluntarily by the commitment of some people.
- ii) **Legal Status:** Under different types of acts, the NGOs are registered with the government. Some of these are like, Societies Act, Trust Act and Trade Union Act etc. Furthermore if any NGO is willing to get foreign funds, they have to register themselves under Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of India.

- iii) **Independent:** In case of setting up and execution, the NGOs are found more independent than the Government institutions.
- iv) **Flexible:** NGOs are found free from red tapism and bureaucratic hurdles.
- v) **Quicker in decision-making:** The author believes that because of the above mentioned characteristic, the NGOs can take decisions quickly. And that's why people benefit more than the action taken by the GO bodies.
- vi) **Non-Profit Oriented:** 'Profit' is not an objective of the NGOs. If any monetary profit takes place from any economic project, it is re-used for further development purposes and not distributed among the members or stake holders of the organisation.
- vii) **Not Self-serving:** The basic objective of the NGOs is to serve the poor and try to uplift their condition. Uplifting the economic condition of the NGOs and its activists are not the objective of the NGOs. The NGO activists receive mental satisfaction by the co-operation of the people. This inspires them to do better in future.
- viii) **High Motivation:** The NGO activists are highly motivated to work for the betterment of the poor. In the time of work they have to forget about the clock.
- ix) **Freedom in work:** During the time of field work, the NGO workers enjoy much freedom. This freedom ultimately becomes a source of great motivation. They even, because of this freedom and motivation forget their ill-salaried condition.

- x) Value driven: Normally NGOs are run on the basis of humanitarian principles and social values, which ultimately has an aim to form a value based society.
- xi) Catalytic: Without any kind of involvement in the process of intervention, the NGOs facilitate the communities towards social actions.
- xii) People-centered: Slightly changing Lincoln's famous quote we can write that--- NGOs are of the people, by the people and for the people. They actually sort out plans for the development of the common people and then they try to implement those plans through common people (Bhose; 2003; 39-40):

In his article entitled "NGOs: Are They a Force for Change?" Joan Mencher (1999) devoted space for discussing "What is an NGO?" In this section he tells us about the range and complexities attached with the name NGO. To present a realistic representation of NGO sector he provides us a multi-dimensional model which is mentioned below:

A) Size: -

- i) Organizational size: To Mencher, NGOs may be as small as one village oriented and may be as large as CARE or OXFAM which are functioning throughout the world.
- ii) Area of operation: In this category it is seen that in how many nation-states the NGO is operating. Most of the NGOs are found to base and operate in one nation. But, in some case it is noticed that an NGO is

based with one 'developed country' and spread their operation in many developing countries.

- iii) Geographical location basis: We can give the example of this category in this way that, in rural areas, in how many parts is covered by an NGO. And in urban areas, the number and nature are the main concerning matter to differentiate the NGOs from one another.

B) Organizational Pattern: Under this category one can look at so many sub-divisions again. These are:

- i) In the first category, one should try to find out whether the organization is hierarchical or not? And if it is revealed that the organization is hierarchical, the next thing is to try to know what kind of autonomy is given to its people and wings of the organization?
- ii) Secondly, it is to be watched whether and to what extent the NGO includes non-local people? The education of the members, power, all these are to be counted in this.
- iii) In third point he wants to mention that, if the organization is found not too much hierarchical, then focus should be shifted on how decision-making takes place?
- iv) The centralize nature of the organization and its branches are to be considered.
- v) Role of the women from minority community in the decision-making power.

C) Focus: - Mencher used the word 'Focus' to denote various processes.

- i) **Administrative processes:** In this phase, it is detected whether the people of the NGO are paid or unpaid or a mixture of both? And in last case whether there is any tension that exists between paid and unpaid groups?
- ii) **Functional processes:** The decision-maker in a particular circumstance is to be pointed out. And it is also to be noticed that during the time of need who decides and obtain the fund.
- iii) **Goals:** It includes health, employment and or income generation, agriculture programmes, loan programmes, child care etc.

D) History

- i) In this category one important question is how do the NGOs evolve? It means whether the NGO started as a co-operative or not and if it started as a co-operative how does it involve itself with other activities?
- ii) Did the NGO start as a local movement or was it started by the people coming from outside.
- iii) In what stage an NGO becomes a 'parastatal organization' or quasi-governmental organization?

E) Funding source: The classification under this heading was made by Mencher in the following manner:

- i) The first category includes NGOs which are getting foreign funds from the first world.
- ii) In this category those NGOs are targeted which are receiving funds from their national governments.
- iii) The NGOs of South Asia which get fund from state governments or local district governments.
- iv) NGOs, which are raising funds through members' donations and so on.
- v) Various combination of above mentioned four sub-categories.

F) The Impact of Funding Parties' Goals on Preferences:

It's very important to know the back groups of intentions and means in which funding parties' goals can influence on Third World NGOs.

- i) Some NGOs may make problems to small NGOs and make it tough for them to survive.
- ii) Sometimes NGOs face problems to mix their preferences and funding agencies' priorities (Mencher; 1999; 2081-2086).

To Parvey (1972) the word 'development' is a Post World War II phenomenon in Western Europe to formulate programmes for economic recovery and growth. Writing in the early 70s of the last century, he expressed that the trend which was noticed in the 'development' sector related with "national and regional aspirations, the total culture needs of the people and the overall development of the political and social environment independent of current political situations." Recognizing the likelihood of flourishing NGO sector in the Third World Countries Parvey (1972) focuses on three major problems and a number of queries associated with it.

To him the first problem is "what are the structures and functions of voluntary associations within developing countries?" The first related question that he asked or raised was how can voluntary associations in developing countries be classified? Answering this he at first broadly divided his answers into five categories. A brief discussion of his answer to this question is given below:

- a. Different branches of international organizations vs. those organizations which are operating solely within one nation or one region.
- b. Traditional vs. Modern.
- c. Limited membership vs. broad base of representation.
- d. Direction of function.

Two things are to be searched under this sub-category; the first one is whether the VOs are inward (mainly self-serving, for example, The Indian caste associations) and the second one is outward (basically the VOs which are serving for other people, for example, The Ramakrishna medical care associations).

- e. On the type of influence, the VOs may also be divided into three sub-categories. These are:
 - i) The VOs which are able to influence power elite of the nation or able to affect governmental policy are to be placed under the first sub-category;
 - ii) The VOs which operate as government propaganda agencies;
 - iii) The VOs which are keen to re-focus local special interests;

In problem number two, Parvey (1972) discussed "how are international voluntary associations structured and how do they function in the international community". Under the above problem, the first sub-question asked by Parvey was "How can international voluntary associations

(especially those with recognized UN affiliation) be classified?" Broadly he classifies the VOs in four different categories in this section.

In the first category he discussed about the types of associations, such as:

i) Business and Commercial; ii) Religious; iii) Welfare and Social Service; iv) Professional and Occupational; v) Student and Youth movements; vi) Women's organizations; vii) Policy change organizations and viii) Agricultural.

In the second category he discusses VOs on the basis of financial support and leadership. Under this category, the two main sub-categories are: i) Area of the World and ii) "Environment" of interests.

In the third category he analyses VOs in terms of certain parameters. These are:

- i) Geographic— Like Eastern and Western Europe, North American Third World and so on;
- ii) Ethnic;
- iii) Religious;
- iv) Self-Serving or other people serving;
- v) Types of influence. In this area Parvey again makes two divisions such as "a) pressure to affect international and U.N. policies and b) Act mainly as a channel for propaganda on already established U.N. decisions.

Parvey in the fourth and last category of this section classified VOs in terms of the 'purpose'. He again notices two sub-categories namely narrow (which emphasise on specific issues) and broad (which emphasise on multi-purpose issues) under this category.

The second sub-question that he raises under problem number II is "what is the identity of international voluntary associations?" Answering this Parvey speaks that structures, leadership, relationship to other international

voluntary associations are to be noticed to find out the answer. A brief discussion of this part is stated here:

- i) Structures: The noticeable thing in this section is that whether the VOs are representing their member nation states with a view of totality or not? And it is also to be looked that, are the VOs entitled with their own objectives and plans.
- ii) Leadership: In this point it is noticed that who, is actually setting the goals and exerts influence on behalf of the voluntary association.
- iii) The focus of this part is centered in searching relationship to other international voluntary associations.
- iv) In this sub-division it is probed whether and to what extent the policies of the international organizations affect the style of functioning in member nations and organisations within their mother nations and/ or vice versa. Parvey argued that "downward transmission of information, attitude, and policies" and "upward transmission of needs, pressures for policy change etc..." affect the process of functions of member states and organisations within their home countries and/ or vice versa.

The last problem (problem number three) in his article was asked by Parvey in this way: "how can international voluntary associations become more effective in Third world development both at the national and international levels.

The above problem is discussed under the light of a number of questions and their answers. The first questions asked by Parvey was—

- i) "Where might there be a more receptive climate for the development of more voluntary association activity—short and long-run?" He mentions the names of two areas to give the answer to the question, namely a) different regions and sub-regions of the Third World and b) different socio-political structures within the Third World.

- ii) "What insights might be gained from a study of specific voluntary associations?"

While answering this question he mentions two sub-categories, namely-- a) international and b) national (but with international implications).

- a) International: The examples given by him in this part are—The International Red Cross; SODAPOX (The combined development programme of the World Council of Churches and the Vatican); The International Chamber of Commerce and so on.
- b) National (but with international implications): Black organizations, instant movements (the example is Citizen's League Against the Sonic Boom) are placed in this category.

Third question or problem number three is, "What are some examples of possible influential roles?"

Answering this question, Parvey says in the first place that the VOs in case of moderating social change are playing a formal as well as an informal role. In the second place, he mentioned that the function of the VOs in the development of new intermediate groups—a) create new organizations tackle the new situation of liberation and increasing equality of women b) VOs try to increase the development of associations of the middle classes, mainly associations of professional groups, students and so on c) VOs help in organized labour and peasant movements and in the mobilization of "human resources" d) it creates urban immigrant associations.

In the third place, Parvey says that, VOs provide primary education, community health services and adequate shelter and so on.

In the fourth place, Parvey revealed that the act of VOs in international arena in the following way—

- a) VOs arrange "international institutions and interest groups as counter allying forces to the interest groups of private multinational corporations."

- b) VOs also "provide national grassroots associations parallel to the 'from the bottom up' strategy of the Chinese involvement in development in Latin America, Asia, and Africa."

The fifth and final question that was asked by Parvey under problem number three, "How might international voluntary associations provide national development?" The answer that he gives in different parts is the following—

International VOs try to find out mutuality of interests. Sometimes these are found with Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) members and sometimes with native voluntary associations:

In the second part, Parvey says international VOs perform leadership training among the educated people. Parvey adds that the international VOs provide leadership development to the newly educated (women's group, labour unions etc) and professional groups belonging to science and technology.

In the last two paragraphs of the second part, it is seen that sometimes international VOs "provide voluntary association training—

- a) through secondary and primary schools providing education about what voluntary associations are; how they are formed, organized, financed; how they function socially, politically; their style of leadership and cooperative behavior; etc."
- b) Regarding group voluntary action, the international VOs give training via voluntary associations themselves at both national and international level (Parvey; 1972; 2-7).

To Brown and Kalegaonkar (2002), civil society include a variety of organisations. To them it is very difficult to make a list of them. In their study, they tried to focus on the development NGOs. And in this sub-section of the VOs they observed that there are many types of NGOs that exist. Taking from Vakil⁴⁸ (1997) they write that by means of functional orientation, NGOs may be divided into these sub-groups—welfare, development organizing, advocacy, development education, networking or research. And by means of level of operation, development NGOs may be divided into community, national, regional or international (Brown & Kalegaonkar; 2002; 231-258).

Fisher (2003) on the other hand divided the NGOs into the following three categories:

- i) Northern Non-governmental Organizations (NNGOs): These organizations are mostly based in one developed country but its operation area is spread out internationally.
- ii) International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs): These organizations have branches in three or more than three nations.
- iii) Southern Non-Governmental Organisations: The NGOs from the Third World or developing or undeveloped countries belong to this group.

In addition to that, Fisher felt that the term NGO denotes different meanings in different countries. In Western Europe, the term NGO means the NPOs which are operating internationally. But, in the transitional nations of Europe and former Soviet Union, the term NGO covers all charitable and nonprofit organizations. Eventually in the Third World, the term NGO denotes those organisations which are engaged in the process of development (e.g. hospitals, charitable organisations, universities etc.).

⁴⁸ Vakil, A C (1997), 'Confronting the Classification Problem: Toward a Taxonomy of NGOs, World Development, 25 (12), 2057-2070.

Discussing Third World NGOs, Fisher specially deals with the idea of two types of NGOs namely grassroots organisations (GROs) and grassroots support organisations (GRSOs). The GROs are mainly based on local communities and GRSOs are nationally or regionally based development organisations. Having professional staffs, the GRSO play the role of a mediator to channel international funds to the GROs. Moreover, Fisher talks about two other types of NGOs that is GRO networks and GRSO networks. The functions of the GRO networks are to link local communities to one another (Fisher; 2003; 7).

In a legal sense, the development and voluntary organisations in India are recognised as 'society' or 'trust'. They are not legally named as an 'NGO'. In India, it is assumed that an NGO should have the following characteristics:

- i) They do social work with professional attitude;
- ii) They have paid staffs;
- iii) They are receiving funds from the foreign donors (Ghatak; 2005; 93-106).

According to an estimate in the year 2002, there were approximately 1.2 million NGOs in the Indian soil. The figure included large scale NGOs, local clubs and societies as well. It is stated that in that year, 53 per cent of the total NGOs in India belong to village and 47 per cent represented the urban sector. What is more, approximately 0.6 million NGOs (i.e., 49.6 per cent of them) were not registered (Kundu; 2005; 115-138).

Kundu (2005) in his study tried to categorize the Indian NGOs. To him by and large Indian NGOs can be divided into three categories. These are:

- i) Relief/ Donation/ Service oriented: These NGOs usually run schools, hospitals, old age home. What is more during the time of emergency or during the time of natural calamities they may also come out with relief measures.

- ii) Development oriented: Long term development, social justice, and people's empowerment are the main objective of these types of NGOs. They are again divided into four sub-categories:
 - a) Community development organization: The primary concern of these organizations is to run programme on economic development, create public opinion on different social issues and so on.
 - b) Network: These are formed by a number of NGOs in regional or at the national level. Their primary aim is to work together to get success on issues like, food security, child labour etc.
 - c) Service oriented organisation: To develop the potential power of the human beings; these NGOs run programmes for their targeted people.
 - d) Advocacy: These NGOs are basically trying to change policies. Their advocacy is seen in the fields of Human Rights, Food, Work, Right to Education and other domain.
- iii) People's organization: These organisations are mainly formed by the NGOs. It is told that theoretically they are autonomous but in reality they function under the mother NGO. What is more in most of the cases it is found that they do not have any legal validity (Kundu; 2005; 107-114).

Bhose (2003) classified NGOs on the basis of the activities they perform. The categories of NGOs, to Bhose (2003) are as follows:

- i) Charity NGOs: Charity is the primary function of these NGOs. Giving something to others is their main objective.
- ii) Relief and Rehabilitation NGOs: From the heading it is clear that these NGOs engage in providing relief and rehabilitation schemes which fall under this category.

- iii) Service Providing NGOs: These NGOs are basically welfare oriented. They run mobile Clinics, hospitals, schools for the poor section of the society. Low expense and high quality services are provided by these NGOs.
- iv) Economic development NGOs: These NGO activists believe that "Economic gain is the social gain". So they try to adopt those policies by which the poor can generate their income. Increase in income will result in their development.
- v) Social Development NGOs: Various social aspects are the main focal theme of this type of NGOs. They consider that social awareness and people's involvement will give rise to development.
- vi) Empowerment NGOs: The aim of these types of NGOs is to strengthen people in a way so that they can have control over their resources. Education is considered to be one of the medium through which it can take place.
- vii) Network NGOs: In the decade of the 80s these types of NGOs were established. These NGOs are like umbrella or federation type. They are working on a common issue like drug abuse, women's rights, etc.
- viii) Support NGOs: It denote those newly emerged NGOs which give supportive functions to different grassroots NGOs. (Bhose, 2003; 45-49).

Taking location and area (based on functionalities of the NGOs) as the criteria, Robinson (1995) divided the Indian NGOs into six categories. These are:

- i) The large size indigenous NGOs which are functioning in different states in India;
- ii) Big Indian NGOs which are working in the different districts of a single state;
- iii) Mediocre indigenous NGOs those are functioning in one or more than one village or villages;

- iv) Small indigenous NGOs which are engaged in several villages;
- v) Large scale international NGOs which are financially assisting the indigenous NGOs;
- vi) Small scale international organisations which are directly working at the regional level (Mukhopadhyay; 2005; 77-92).

We think that any organisation which has emerged outside the government's sector should not be simply called as an NGO. If anyone starts to do so, one day will come when organisation formed by the thieves will be called as NGOs. But this obviously hurt the social development movement. So, we think that 'development' should be the motto of an organisation before we start to call that organisation as an NGO. The objective of that organisation may be to develop rural area or urban area. Or they may engage in improving women's condition or the education sector- whatever it may be but some kind of development must be tagged with their objective. In this point we want to mention the opinion of Ovasdi (2006). To him in India, the term NGO is considered as a negative term, like non-vegetarian. In reality it is not that a 'non-vegetarian' does not take vegetables. By using the term 'non-vegetarian' we actually mean those who eat meat besides vegetables. Similarly, to Ovasdi (2006) any organisation if not run by a government agency cannot be called an NGO. It is seen that most profit seeking organisations are run by the NGOs. And in India, it is also seen that some NGOs are promoted, financed and managed by the government (Ovasdi; 2006; 34.).

III

NGO Types in Coochbehar

Let us come to the NGOs in the district with which this study is concerned. According to the 'Department of Social Welfare, Office of the District Magistrate, Coochbehar' at present 50 registered NGOs⁴⁹ are carrying out their activities throughout the district. But, here we want to bring up one fact that a large number of NGOs outside these 50 NGOs are also working in the district. If that is the case, why these NGOs do not get a place in the above list? The staff of the 'Department of Social Welfare, Office of the District Magistrate, Coochbehar' told us that every year some NGOs fail to renew their names due to various problems. One of the major and common problems in this regard is that they fail to submit proper papers including the annual audit report. Due to this reason the department itself rejects NGOs' plea to renew their organization. Another problem in this connection according to a staff of the 'Department of Social Welfare, Office of the District Magistrate, Coochbehar' is that, sometimes internal fractions within the NGOs are also responsible for registration or renewal. Whatever may be the reason, the fact is that, there are a number of NGOs whose existence are prominent in this district but are not able to enlist their names under the 'Department of Social Welfare, Office of the District Magistrate, Coochbehar'.

From the list given by the 'Department of Social Welfare, Office of the District Magistrate, Coochbehar', it is clear that the growth of NGOs in Coochbehar district does not show an equal distribution among the 5 sub-divisions. If we divide these 50 NGOs in 5 sub-divisions, we will see that most of the NGOs function around Coochbehar Sadar sub-division. A total of 30 NGOs out of 50 registered NGOs are centered on the Coochbehar Sadar sub-division. It means 60 per cent registered NGOs are being controlled from the district hub.

⁴⁹ In the month of October, 2008, a list of 50 NGOs handed over to us by the 'Department of Social Welfare, Office of the District Magistrate, Coochbehar'.

NAME OF THE SUB-DIVISIONS	NO. OF REGISTERED NGOs
Coochbehar Sadar	30
Dinhata	8
Mathabhanga	7
Tufanganj	3
Mekhliganj	2
TOTAL SUB-DIVISIONS- 5	TOTAL REGISTERED NGOs- 50

Table No 2.1: Number of registered NGOs in different sub-divisions of Coochbehar district.

Total 32 NGOs are found whose head office is situated in rural areas and offices of 18 NGOs are situated in urban part of the district. Here we want to mention one thing that some of the NGOs have more than one office in this district (including both rural and urban offices). Here we have counted their head offices only. What is more, among the above mentioned 50 NGOs, 13 NGOs (26 per cent) have a club background.

Now let us look at the characteristics of the NGOs functioning in Coochbehar district in the light of the literature on NGOs that we have discussed earlier in this chapter. As per the characteristics referred by Fisher (2003) most of the NGOs in Coochbehar district belong to 'Grass Root Organizations' (GROs) and 'Grass Root Support Organizations (GRSOs)'. The six NGOs which we have surveyed⁵⁰ fall into the first group. But some NGOs which are operating in this district fall in the GRSO category also e.g. 'Society for Participatory Action and Reflection' (SPAR) or 'Sundarban Rural Development and Training Centre' (SRDTC).

⁵⁰ A detailed discussion of this survey is in the third chapter.

If we follow Kundu's (2005) classification we will note that all the three categories of NGOs are present in Coochbehar district. The first category i.e. relief/ donation/ service oriented characteristics are found within almost all the NGOs. Here we specially want to mention the name of 'Ramkrishna Math' which is well known throughout the country for their relief functions. We were informed by the common people that during the time of natural calamities (e.g. flood, cyclone) almost all the NGOs try to give their best to save the lives of the people in Coochbehar district. The NGOs who are engaged with DRDC and NABARD may be called the NGOs engaged in long term development goal (i.e. second category mentioned by Kundu). Now, the third category i.e. "people's organization" of Kundu (2005) we found in the activities of 'Khatamari Deshbandhu Club'. We have discussed about this organisation in the third chapter of our work. To uplift the socio-economic condition of the Choudhurihat Gram Panchayat they formed 'Youth Development Centre' in association with 39 other clubs. We think this a good example of the "people's organisation" in the district.

If anybody looks through the eyes of Robinson (1995), he will find out that almost all the NGOs in Coochbehar district fall under two categories out of the six categories cited by him. These two categories are: a) mediocre indigenous NGOs which are functioning in one or more than one village/villages and b) small indigenous NGOs which are engaged in several villages.

According to the World Bank, the strength of the NGOs is rooted in:

- I i) Strong grassroots links;
- ii) Field-based development expertise;
- iii) The ability to innovate and adapt;
- iv) Process-oriented approach to development;
- v) Participating methodologies and tools;
- vi) Long-term commitment and emphasis on sustainability;

- vii) Cost-effectiveness
(<http://wb1n0018.worldbank.org/essd/essd.nsf/NGOs/home>)

We, during our survey have noticed that most of the NGOs operating in Coochbehar district have strong grassroots connection. What is more, there is no shortage of innovativeness in the activities of the NGO staffs. They are found committed and aware of how to become cost-effective. So in our opinion the government should give them more and more chance to prove their ability in the process of development. They have adequate potentiality to become a good NGO. What they need is proper guidance and financial support from the part of the GOs.

Ovasdi (2006) writes that in India the evolution of the NGOs may be divided into four stages namely i) period between 1960-70; ii) 1970-1980; iii) 1980-1990; and iv) 1990 onwards. If we see the NGOs functioning in Coochbehar district in the light of the Ovasdi's viewpoint, the thing that comes is that most of the registered NGOs (out of the above mentioned 50) were in fact born in the 1990s or later. Almost all the non-club based registered NGOs in Coochbehar district emerged in this phase. And in the case of club based NGOs, we can say that some of them were born long before this phase but as an NGO in a true sense their re-birth took place in this phase.

After completion of the two surveys, we would like to divide the NGOs of Coochbehar district into two more types, namely, NGOs having club background and NGOs having no club background. In Coochbehar district, 13 registered NGOs (out of 50 registered NGOs) are found to have club background. The club based NGOs almost all are very old, at least 30-40 years old. But, the non-club based NGOs are hardly 10-15 years old. It is seen that the club based NGOs engaged themselves in social welfare activities long before they registered themselves under 'West Bengal Society Registration Act'. Later on they did register themselves under that act and soon after that their social welfare activities received official recognition. But,

the non club based organisations were set up to perform a particular task (e.g. to take participation in 'Total Sanitation Campaign' or 'Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana' etc.). Members of both the categories told that to serve the common people is their primary motto.

In Coochbehar district, the NGO members have mostly joined this sector due to their commitment towards social service. A good number of people associated with the NGOs were very popular in their locality long before joining the NGOs. They achieved this popularity because of their participation in different social service activities. In this connection we want to mention about a conversation that took place between us and one NGO activist⁵¹. We asked him to tell us why he joined the NGO sector. He laughed and replied that his grandfather expired when he was 18-19 years old. His grandfather was attached with social service and did a lot for his locality. During that time (after his grandfather passed away) this NGO activist went to the SDO office for some official work. When the office staff came to know that this person is the grandson of that personality, a warm reception was extended to him, which was something unusual. Since that day he firmly decided to do something for the society for which he will be remembered by all even after his death.

But most of the NGO activists told us that it is the 'obsession' or 'passion' which had been the driving force behind joining social service. To an NGO activist⁵², this 'obsession' is no lesser than drug addiction. Some of the wives even complained of negligence of their families by their husbands. After a deep study of NGO activists we think that if their sincerity and dedication is adopted by all the staffs of the public departments, the socio-economic condition of our nation would have changed to a great level.

⁵¹ Secretary of a Coochbehar based NGO named 'Godhulibazar Northeast Society for Self Empowerment of the People' (G-NESEP).

⁵² President of the 'Nishiganj Club', an NGO based at Nishiganj, Coochbehar.