

Chapter-6

Non-Governmental Organizations and Community Based Natural Resource Management: Select Case Studies With Special Reference to North Bengal.

"...non-governmental organizations are increasingly regarded as the development panacea for the 1990s and beyond" (Mercer, 1999, p. 247).

"Building institutions of the poor and marginalised which are appropriate to the resource to be managed and objective to be achieved"(MYRADA The Mission Statement)

6.1 Introduction

The new strategy of participatory development envisages community participation not in a passive form but in empowered way. This requires that there is an agency that would act as a facilitator and a coordinatory node between the people and the government. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have therefore, come to occupy that space. Their experience at the grass roots makes them excellent facilitators and a go between the community and the governmental line agencies. NGOs may be defined 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'.(World Bank 1995:7) Efforts to distinguish NGOs from Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and what has been called Grass roots Organizations (GROs) have been undertaken by Sen (1999) who points out that NGOs are non membership based organization whereas CBOs and GROs are membership based organizations. Sen draws on the works of (Farrington et al 1993,

Korten 1990) to arrive at a more flexible definition to accommodate the Indian reality. In India NGOs can be defined as organizations that are generally formed by professionals or quasi professionals from the middle or lower middle class, either to serve or work with the poor, or to channel financial support to community based or grassroots based organizations. (Sen 1999, p332) Community based organizations on the other hand, are composed of 'the poor' or the 'low income community'. Then what are the middle class neighbourhood associations to be called? Therefore, can we position the CBOs and GROs outside the universe of NGOs? In the opinion of Jenkins (2010) public interest groups that are not people's movements are regarded as NGOs.

The chapter is divided into five sections. Section 2 deals with NGOs and developmental management in India. Section 3 is divided into seven subsections. Subsection 1 deals with an introduction to NGOs and NRM practices in India. The following five subsections are devoted to a discussion on selected five NGOs in India who are engaged in NRM practices. The NGOs selected are---Chintan, Pradan, Astha, Unnayan and Myrada. Section 4 focuses on the NGOs operating in West Bengal. This section is divided into five subsections, the first subsection devoted to a discussion on the NGOs operating in West Bengal and engaged in CBNRM practices. The four subsections deal with four NGOs, Bikash, Lok Kalyan Parishad, Vasundhara and Janaseva. Section 5 concludes the chapter.

6.2 NGO and Developmental Management in India

In poor countries, particularly, NGOs frequently have a very definite role to play in addressing various local and governmental constraints and in overcoming the current, so-called, 'development impasse' (Binns and Nel, 1999; Mercer, 1999). It seems that NGOs have the potential, by virtue of their intermediary position, to facilitate the development process through linking both "top" and "bottom".

However, it is important to appreciate that if NGOs are to have a meaningful impact, they should ideally operate in a sensitive and participatory manner (Chambers, 1993)

The involvement of the NGO/voluntary organization sector in community based developmental programmes as either financial intermediaries/facilitators/ implementers has been visible from the decades of the sixties in India and with the advent of the new strategies towards participatory development NGOs have come to occupy a premier position. It was during the Janata government that a range of rural development programmes and participatory techniques pioneered by NGOs were incorporated within the state policy (Franda 1983). Although as the eighties progressed voices of dissent about the role of NGOs in the developmental sector emerged that got force with the publication of Prakash Karat's article titled 'Action Groups/Voluntary Organizations: A Factor in Imperialist Strategy' was published in the CPI(M) journal, 'The Marxist' and subsequently appeared in a book form in 1988. Karat claimed of the existence of an imperialist design within the imperialist block to penetrate Indian society and influence its course of development and the instrument for effecting the design was to use these action groups or voluntary agencies. However, this voice of dissent was far outnumbered by the support for NGOs as development partners. As Kamath(2002 : p 21) argues that, 'the supporters of voluntary organizations far outstrip their detractors and critics.' The role of the NGOs as it has emerged and figured out by scholars like Chandhoke(2003: p76) as "rescued and perhaps legitimized the non performing state.....[and] neutralized political dissent..... ." On the other hand although the World Bank since the late nineties of the earlier century was considering to funnel less aid through NGOs and focus more on building viable state institutions rather than bypassing those who do not work (Booth 2003). In India the NGOs have emerged as effective developmental partners especially

in the field where community participation needs to be facilitated. They have emerged in most of the cases as efficient facilitators within the triad of Government, People and the NGOs.

6.3.1 NGO and CBNRM in India

The NGOs operate at the grassroots level within the communities as promoters/initiators/facilitators to a community based alternative indigenous development. Generally, the approach they adopt is based on the projects the NGOs get to implement from the government/donor agencies. But they also undertake bottom-up strategies depending on the level of empowerment and awareness existing within the community. NGOs operate either independently on their own in project implementation or the bigger NGOs contract out projects to, or collaborate with, local/smaller NGOs who operate as the agents/in collaboration with the bigger NGOs.

According to Shah(2003) NGO initiatives in NRM vary greatly in their size, objectives, approaches and orientation.

Perspective: Some – like the Aga Khan Rural Support Program in Gujarat, Sewa Mandir in Udaipur, and PRADAN in Eastern India – work in NRM primarily from the livelihoods and entitlement perspectives. Others like VIKSAT in Gujarat, PRADAN in Madurai, Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS) in Rajasthan work on participatory NRM but from a sustainable NRM perspective.

Focus of Work: A majority of NRM NGOs began with grass-roots projects of their own. However, over time, a new layer of support NGOs has come up at the national and regional level which services the requirements of grassroots NGOs in a number of different ways. The Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development (SPWD) was an early such support NGO which retailed funds to grass-roots NGO without registration under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act; more recently, Development Support Center in Ahmedabad has been

playing such a more broad-based support role at the regional level in watershed development and participatory NRM. A number of regional support organisations catalysed by PRIA – such as UNNATI in Gujarat, CYSD in Bhubaneswar, PARIVARTAN in Bhopal – play a powerful training support role for grass-roots NGOs.

Specialised Versus Broad-based: Few NGOs in India come up with a clearly articulated goal and strategy in a playing field like, for instance, the International Development Enterprises (IDE) which has steadfastly pursued for over a decade a single-product focus and achieved great scale. Most, even among the elite 150 NGOs, operate on multiple fronts; they may operate NRM programmes in some villages and also organise self-help groups of women in the same area, with or without any overlap between the two. In its extreme form, the broad based approach gets reduced to complete lack of focus and this has great implications for the performance and impact of the NGO.

Scale: Some NGOs tend to develop a strong institutional capacity base in certain programmes and begin to focus energies on scaling-up such programmes while operating others at low-energy levels.

Implementation Approach: Common to all NGOs operating NRM programmes is a local people's organisation which is used as the primary structure for implementing their programmes. However, the form of this organisation, its design and other aspects vary a great deal. The NTGCF organises tree growers' co-operatives to manage and protect plantations. Trivandrum-based SIFFS organises fishermen's co-operatives. The Sadguru Water and Development Foundation and the Aga Khan Rural Support Program form user co-operatives to own and manage lift irrigation co-operatives.

In India and in West Bengal there are two ways that the NGOs seem to operate and this model has also emerged through our field

survey conducted in the three selected districts of North Bengal. Another important dimension is the involvement of the SHGs as partners in the development process. The SHGs formed as a part of the initiatives taken by the different banks as part of the various schemes launched by the banks as part of their community outreach programme as well as by the individual government departments for the development of the poor people in rural as well as urban India has established itself as

At the outset it would be worthwhile to undertake a whirlwind tour of the activities of the different NGOs as an illustrative exercise. Although the NGOS who are engaged in the PPP model projects are many, working in diverse fields related to the issues of microfinance, social justice, rights of individuals who are marginalized but for the sake of the thesis we would be concentrating on those NGOs whose activities are related to environmental protection and community based natural resources management. The first NGO that we have focused on is CHINTAN that is not directly connected with CBNRM but the model that it sets out is an innovative model for understanding the nature of partnerships that the NGOs engage in with the communities to generate inclusive, empowering sustainable and an equitable development.

6.3.2 CHINTAN

“We believe that our planet needs an urgent paradigm shift, one where everyone must share limited resources, while addressing the issues of acute poverty and unequal growth. In India, this translates into policies that are not only inclusive of poor and marginal communities, but are actively shaped by their opinions and concerns. Chintan, therefore, creates partnerships with such communities to help them understand governance and advocate for change that will usher in greater equity.

Chintan also acknowledges the importance of its robust partnerships with other actors—citizens' groups, the media, educational institutions, government agencies, international agencies and concerned individuals—all of whom are key agents of change.

Among the urban poor, Chintan has decided to focus on partnerships with informal-sector waste recyclers. This is because they are marginalized and discriminated against, despite the fact that their work is highly efficient and includes essential green services such as waste collection and recycling; and they are poorly organized. It was clear to us that working with them would have the greatest impact on our mission.”(CHINTAN: Our approach)

CHINTAN is a NGO that works in the field of recycling of solid waste management. Although the Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2000 declare that recycling is a means of handling inorganic, recyclable wastes. However, simply identifying technical pathways is not enough. Recycling in India is undertaken by the labour of millions of people—men, women, as well as children, segregating, bailing, trading and reprocessing recyclable waste, who together comprise the informal sector. A social pathway is therefore also essential.(CHINTAN 2007, Wasting Our Local Resources: The Need for Inclusive Waste Management Policy in India) Since the informal sector is not organized under any organization, the people who work as recyclers, especially the waste pickers, are outside the ambit of access to social security, medical benefits or housing. Their work is also considered illegal by the police, as the sector has not been officially appointed for this task or is not employed by anyone. Based on this broad canvas, CHINTAN has framed policy as having 3 strands: Access to Livelihoods, Extended Producer Responsibility and Health and Social Security.

The New Delhi Municipal Council has formed a partnership with wastepickers organized by Chintan for the last 6 years. Under this partnership, wastepickers are given identity cards and access to medical facilities. A contract for door to door waste collection has also been signed for both commercial areas and residential areas, enhancing the livelihoods of people who earlier worked by picking waste in trash dumps. Additionally, itinerant waste buyers have been facilitated in their work and their cycles are no longer confiscated as illegal vendors. The police in such areas has been partnered and trained to minimize disruptions to work and harassment to wastepickers, resulting in a drastic decline in the number of cases of harassment, beating and asking for gratification amounts. Chintan's association with the DWM has shown that waste pickers are worse off because of less income, less flexibility and that the payments are not in consonance with minimum wages. Since the contractors sell the waste to the biggest dealers or mills directly, smaller players, such as small junk dealers, are being under or unemployed. (CHINTAN 2007, pp17)

CHINTAN has not only ensured the access to livelihood but has established the rights of the recyclers especially the waste pickers and the small time junk vendors as workers. Moreover, they were also ensured proper health care benefits. This approach facilitated not just the people with a sustainable and equitable livelihood but the government as well in ensuring environmental protection and better management of solid waste.

6.3.3 PRADAN

PRADAN was set up in 1983, to support the livelihoods of poor farmers in the rain-fed hilly areas of the poorer regions of India, which had been largely bypassed by the Green Revolution technology. PRADAN recognizes that the poorest households in rural India are caught in a 'poverty trap' and require livelihood support to enable them

grow out of it. It focused on women from the outset because women were seen to be more responsible than men about family welfare and also because they were perceived to be the most marginalized members of already marginalized groups.

PRADAN is one of the pioneers of the Self- Help Group (SHG) approach (widely prevalent now in India), in which women come together in groups of around 20–30, meet regularly, save a certain amount in a common fund until they have enough capital to make small interest-bearing loans to each other or to others in the village. Groups are then linked to bank loans under the Government of India's SHG-Bank Linkage programme. In addition, group members, who are interested in further strengthening their livelihoods and have the necessary assets, participate in specific programmes that provide them with training and marketing support.

In terms of the critical moments framework outlined earlier, we find that women were central in the conceptualization of the programme but in terms that stressed their instrumentality (responsible mothers) and victimhood (most marginal of the marginal). However, the SHG model with its stress on promoting women's capacity to save and manage their own financial affairs combined with participatory forms of training appeared to have achieved cognitive and behavioural changes that went beyond livelihood issues. Despite the lack of a formal monitoring system, the flat structure of the organization enabled lessons from the field to be communicated across the organization. This explains why questions about the limits of a livelihood focus were already being raised before the external evaluation helped to crystallize their limits.

At Kesla, SHG Federation model is looking beyond the mere provision of services (financial and group dynamics related) to SHGs to include issues of gender and governance. The objective for the

federation called Narmada Mahila Sangh was articulated by members during Mahadhiveshan 2006 which included economic, social and political empowerment. They have been systematically helping women articulate these issues and developing their capabilities. They have helped the women articulate a vision for the federation, identified and groomed a pool of women leaders, nurtured a cadre of local community workers to assist the leaders and instituted a system of periodic review. They have developed a new process tool that entails working from the Cluster upwards by organising Cluster Adhiveshans (as a prelude to the Mahadhiveshan) to enhance ownership of the Cluster and Federation by the SHGs, thereby increasing accountability and inducing them to take charge. This was put into practice prior to the Mahadhiveshan held on the 24th of February 2007. The exercise done through 35 cluster meetings was the central theme for the Mahaadhiveshan. It helped revitalise the federation structure and set agenda for the coming year. (ANNUAL REPORT 2006-07)

PRADAN is currently engaged in a strategic review of its strategies, to adapt these to the new challenges and opportunities. Steps have been taken to integrate gender analysis into its staff training programme. It has also embarked on a radical new approach to its SHG programme, with a view to transforming groups into a force for transformative change within the community.

In matters of natural resource management it has adopted a new strategy called the INRM approach which means integrated natural resource management approach. In common parlance it means a careful management of the natural resources through an integrated strategy on an assumption that the natural resources share a common linkage.

“Integrated natural resource management (INRM) is a way to ensure that the uses of natural resources are ecologically sustainable.

It is 'integrated' because it attempts to manage all the activities that could affect natural resources, taking natural processes into account as well. It combines managing uses of natural resources with conservation. To do this it cuts across artificial distinctions such as government agency responsibilities, government or property boundaries, industry sectors and scientific disciplines. In defining management areas it gives priority to natural over human boundaries, for example using river catchments or bioregions as the primary basis for planning and management." Department of Environment and Heritage, Government of Australia.

"INRM is an approach to research that aims at improving livelihoods, agro-ecosystem resilience, agricultural productivity and environmental services. In other words, it aims to augment social, physical, human, natural and financial capital. It does this by helping solve complex real-world problems affecting natural resources in agro-ecosystems. Its efficiency in dealing with these problems comes from its ability to:

- Empower relevant stakeholders
 - Resolve conflicting interests of stakeholders
 - Foster adaptive management capacity
 - Focus on key causal elements (and thereby deal with complexity)
 - Integrate levels of analysis
 - Merge disciplinary perspectives
 - Make use of a wide range of available technologies
 - Guide research on component technologies
 - Generate policy, technological and institutional alternatives."
- (www.inrm.cgiar.org)

The Ministry of Rural Development had shortlisted 65 districts for the implementation of NREGA, out of which 56 districts belonged to the

agro climatic zone VII that has a complex ecology where the problem is not lack of livelihood or landlessness but lack of quality resources, not of rainlessness but lack of availability of rainwater for irrigation. PRADAN has been working in this region and providing technologies to facilitate integrated resource management, an approach that was felt appropriate for the implementation of NREGA in this region. Therefore, the Ministry of Rural Development entered into a partnership with PRADAN to assist in the implementation of NREGA.

INRM technologies are of two types-- Structural measures: These involve the construction of different earthen or rocky structures to hold back the runoff and thereby conserve soil and water; and Vegetative measures: These involve appropriate land-use practices to conserve different types of land and maximize agricultural production in the interest of the community. PRADAN is participating in NREGP (National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme) implementation in several locations across states. A pilot project sponsored by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India to demonstrate PRADAN's INRM (Integrated Natural Resource Management) models suitable for selection of NREGP works was implemented in two districts each in Orissa and Jharkhand and one district in Chhattisgarh. The pilot helped open up opportunities to work with Panchayats and gave us insights into the functioning of NREGP on the ground. We are working with the Madhya Pradesh Government in its new initiative to involve NGOs in implementing NREGP. This is an encouraging development since partnership has been identified as an important strategy for growth in the "Vision 2015" exercise. PRADAN now works with 142,620 households in 3,408 villages in 97 Community Development Blocks of 38 districts across the States of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal. A majority of these districts are among the 150 poorest in the country. Nearly all outreach is through women's Self Help Groups (SHGs). More than half

of the families we work with belong to Scheduled Tribes and all are from socio-economically disadvantaged sections of the society.(ANNUAL REPORT 2007-08)

PRADAN has been actively engaged in empowering the people through the supply of appropriate technologies so that people could gain sustainable and equitable development. PRADAN organises women from poor households into self-help groups around savings and credit. Mature groups are enabled to get access to bank credit and may also be linked to suitable poverty alleviation programmes of the government for financial assistance. The SHG is the base for promoting sectoral livelihood activities, beginning with exposure to such programmes nearby and livelihood planning exercises conducted with groups. PRADAN begins its engagement with rural communities by organizing women into SHGs. About five years ago, as we began rationalizing and expanding our work on livelihoods, the notion of livelihood planning with SHG members was introduced using a structured methodology. Since a large number of SHGs had already been formed and livelihood activities were already underway, we decided that project teams would conduct livelihood planning with SHG members gradually without disrupting the current programmes. The need for convergence of various sectoral activities at the household level for maximum sustainable impact highlighted by on-going reviews and critique of our work has further reinforced the importance of livelihood planning. Most teams now carry out livelihood planning exercises with SHG members before initiating sectoral livelihood interventions. PRADAN leveraged Rs 45.91 crore in the reporting year from various sources as against Rs 35.29 crore in the previous year. The World Bank supported District Poverty Initiative Projects in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh, Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana in Jharkhand, DFID supported Madhya Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project in Madhya Pradesh were major sources of subsidies

and loans. The State Tribal Welfare Commissioner in Jharkhand, NABARD and the IFAD aided Tribal Development Programme supported our programme to develop land and water resources. Funds were also accessed from programmes like NREGS, SGSY, etc.(ANNUAL REPORT 2006-07)

6.3.4 ASTHA

Astha was formed in 1986 and was registered as a Society, under Society Registration Act. The founder members have 10 to 15 years working experience in the field of adult education, rural development, organizing women's group, drought management and agriculture development. Astha has been primarily engaged in Rajasthan. Astha always has made an attempt to ensure the Right to Justice, Peace, Development, and that no caste, class, gender based discrimination takes place. They have worked for a society in which 'the poor have control on their natural as well as livelihood resources, people co-exist with nature, equality prevails in the society, and the citizens of India have strong moral values.'

The following five dimensions have guided the activities of AASTHA.

- Independent People's Organizations
- The Necessity of Women's Participation and Leadership
- Knowledge is Power
- Advocacy for Policy Change
- The "Macro" and "Micro" are Linked

Aastha began its work with commitment towards people and having faith in them. According to them they have been guided by the following approaches -

1. An Organizational Approach – we help those living under economic marginalization, feudal traditions, gender stereotypes and

inequalities, environmental degradation, etc. to get organized into community and issue-oriented groups and networks, and to support those already formed.

2. A Rights Based Approach – we work with the people to claim, and re-claim, their human rights i.e. right to life, to work, to a life with dignity, to food, to land and livelihood.
3. An Educational Approach – in which “praxis” (action-reflection-action), learning from experience, learning from analysis, learning from each other, training events, awareness raising camps/exposure visits and tours, learning from “people’s knowledge”, all play major roles.
4. A Developmental Approach – in which we attempt to initiate processes, make linkages, set in motion problem solving actions...and yet an approach which questions the dominant paradigm of “Development”. We, with The People, are in search of a new definition of “Development” which would respect and take seriously sustainable lifestyles for sustainable development, indigenous people’s social and survival patterns, people’s knowledge, and so on.

Issues of Emphasis

- Organizing the Unorganised, Community Organisation
- Training, Analysis, Strategy Planning
- Women’s Empowerment and Organisation
- Livelihood – Resources for Livelihood, Unemployment, Migration
- Minor Forest Produce and Non-Timber Forest Produce Collection and Sale
- Tribal Self Rule
- Panchayati Raj Institutions

- Credit Including Problems with Banks, Cooperatives, Money-Lenders
- Tribal Policy, Tribal Issues
- Displacement from Land and Livelihood
- Widows and Separated Women fight for their rights
- Forest Issues, of Game Sanctuaries, Forest Land Occupation
- Urban Environmental Sanitation, Vermiculture
- Drought Relief and Migration Strategies
- Communal Harmony
- Violence Against Women, Cases, Anti-Liquor Campaigns
- Rajasthan State Budget Analysis

6.3.5 UNNAYAN

SHGs are the primary institutions with whom Unnayan works. The SHGs which were pioneered by Unnayan in its operational area in Rasgobindpur and Balikuda Blocks in Mayurbhanj and Jagatsinghpur districts respectively have opened up avenues for women to step out of their homes into the public domain. Indeed, partly learning from indigenous savings and credit systems, the SHG system is becoming increasingly mainstreamed, with agencies like the Mission Shakti, ITDA and DRDA now involving selected SHGs and linking them to banks.

SHGs have helped women to gain increased access to and control over the economic resources of their families. Some groups who are mature have started involving themselves in wider social issues in the villages. This is a powerful process that enables growth and progress in the community. Members learn from each other in a group and groups learn from other groups, which then lead to collective progress. have received recognition from their community.

The aim of this programme is to impact the lives of the beneficiaries by bringing about social and economic change through small livestock and capacity building. The following are the objectives of the programme--- i) To create livelihood opportunities in the village in order to check migration by 50 % among partner families; ii) To organize people into self-sustaining informal institutions; iii) To facilitate partner families develop values of mutual help and self-help; iv) To empower women through these processes.

Unnayan has been engaged in activities like----

"Plantations---Wastelands in the vicinity of tribal villages are the unutilized resources having the capacity of getting transformed into an income generating asset for the community. These resources if tapped properly could become a strong contributing factor to food security of the community on sustainable basis. Unnayan could recognize the potentiality of wasteland in turning into food basket for the tribal communities and resilience and perseverance of the tribal which can lead to regeneration of the barren stony upland into green fields. The district of Mayurbhanj has vast uplands that are unsuitable for agriculture. Unnayan, worked intensively over a period of six months with the communities to develop a plan for utilizing these uplands. Commercial plantation on these lands was the solution. The community has planted Mango, Cashew, Bamboo, Sabai Grass etc.

"Non - timber forest-produce----Agriculture is the primary occupation of tribal families in the district of Mayurbhanj. Since the area is rain-fed and mono cropped, the families also depend on the forests around them to supplement their incomes. For this, they collect Sal (*Shorea robusta*) leaves from the forest and sell them to entrepreneurs and traders who use this for making bio-degradable and organic plates and bowls.

"BaripadaMudhi----The Mayurbhanj Mahila Association (MMA)- an all woman collective of puffed- rice or Mudhi producers in the district of Mayurbhanj in Orissa in India. The cooperative was formed in 2002 when a small group of 10 women came together on an experimental basis to sell their mudhi collectively. Being a part of the staple diet in the area, mudhi is consumed in every home and hence, also prepared in each home. Everyone was skeptical when the cooperative first began, including the women who were a part of it. Today, there are 150 women who are members of the cooperative and rely on the income they earn from producing mudhi and selling it to people all across the state of Orissa through MMA. In July 2007, Mayurbhanj Mahila Association acquired the trademark for their product 'Baripada Mudhi.

"Leaf plates and cups----Tribal families in Mayurbhanj collect leaves from the Sal trees. Traders buy these leaves from the community at very low prices, convert them to organic plates and bowls and sell them in the local markets and urban centres at very high prices. In order to ensure that maximum profit reaches the poor tribal families, Unnayan selected some marginalized members from the community and provided them with machines that mould these leaves into plates and cups. As a result of this, these families are now earning an additional average income of Rs.500/-per month for six months from Sal leaf stitching and bowl-making vocation. Earlier machines were being supplied by the sal leaf plate traders on loan, as a result of which they were dictating terms for these tribals. This was a kind of exploitation by the traders. The people were being bonded with the traders to supply the product at the rate fixed by them. But with the ownership of machines, now the beneficiaries' bargaining power has increased, as they are no more indebted to the traders.

"Sabai Rope- making-----Effort has been made through our project in Mayurbhanj to orient people to bring the wasteland under cultivation of Sabai grass (*Eulaliopsis binata*). Sabai is mainly sold in form of dry grass and rope. Unnayan has supplied twisters to some marginalized tribal families. Since sabai is a seasonal crop and rope making is usually done at the leisure time of the people, therefore the villagers use the twisters on rotational basis. Sabai grass and rope has a readymade market and people are already adapted to this crop. There are large patches of waste land where sabai grass can be cultivated. A large local market where supply is well below the demand ensures that the family will always benefit from this.

"Livestock Farms----Unnayan has set up a goat-rearing unit and a poultry unit in its office premises at Kakbandh village with 30 goats and 100 poultry birds at the beginning. It has been planned to further increase this number to 100 goats and 500 poultry in due time. These units are being treated as demonstration units of scientific and commercial rearing of livestock. Necessary technical guidance and training is being taken from experts of the genetics department in veterinary college of Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology. The main purpose of these units is to provide technical inputs to the community on income generation through livestock promotion by experiments at our own level along with generating some income for the organization itself. The process involves the entire cycle of this farming starting from construction of the sheds according to the need based on the research study, selecting appropriate breed, vaccination and medication, feeding till the marketing of the products. A relatively small unit of the goatery farm in a group and 3 individual units of poultry have also been set up at community level following the same technical process. Unnayan, at present, is conducting a study on the viability of further expanding this at community and individual household level.

Unnayan has now developed a name for itself in the area as the producers of livestock. Our poultry farm is now known for its supply of banaraja chicken in the area. This breed grows at a good rate but is not as susceptible to diseases as broiler chicken. Looking at the response of the birds, the district has appointed Unnayan to supply chicks to all small producers in Mayurbahnj. The chicks are procured from Bhubaneswar and are reared in the farm for a period of three weeks. This is a sensitive period for all small livestock. After the first three weeks, they are less prone to diseases and mortality and can be reared with minimal care.

"Herbal Garden---Herbal medicines are the best remedies for a number of illnesses. They offer the best treatment at low costs with little or no side effects. In most rural homes, we see that people still use herbal medicines, moreso in tribal homes. Looking at this, we started our own herbal garden this year where we prepare herbal medicines. This process began with a week- long training for three of our staff members at 'Anthra' an organisation working in the field of Ethno- veterinary medicine. This training oriented the participants to identification of herbal medicines, preparation of medicines, packing and preservation of medicines. The training also involved disease identification and the application of herbal medicines. With trainings in traditional knowledge, we are now preparing medicines for human beings too. Since the project area in Mayurbhanj is located close to the forests, the herbal plants are available. We are also growing some of the plants. These medicines (neem oil and paste) are being used extensively for skin ailments. The herbal garden was started to support the work of Ethno- Medicine and Ethno- Veterinary Medicine in the field. Herbs from here are used to prepare a variety of herbal medicines that are sold at the office. These ethno- medicines are also applied to the farm animals on an experimental basis.

6.3.6 MYRADA

Myrada was started in 1968. Myrada at present is directly managing 18 projects in 20 backward and drought prone Districts of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. There are other States where it has collaborated with Government, Bilateral and Multilateral Programs, by contributing to program design and supporting implementation through regular training, exposure and deputation of staff. Examples of such long-term support are in the States of Haryana, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Jharkhand, Orissa and Chattisgarh. This approach arises from Myrada's decision not to fly its flag all over, but to promote, in collaboration with other institutions, a proven development strategy in which the rights of the poor, women and marginalised to build and manage their own institutions, to develop their own livelihood strategies, to associate in order to lobby effectively to change oppressive relations, to access resources and build linkages are recognised. Myrada realised from its experience in the early 80s, that it is not enough to teach poor people to fish, when they cannot reach the river due to oppressive power relations which prevent them. These relations which are generated by caste, class, tradition and gender resulted in increasing dependency for livelihoods and loss of land, decreasing access to resources, an inability to accumulate capital and inequity in gender relations at home and in society. The experience between 1985 and 1987 especially with the Self Help Affinity groups indicated that appropriate institutions of the poor and marginalized where they could set their own agenda regarding functions, livelihood strategy and the pace to achieve it were the most appropriate instruments to decrease/ neutralise the impact of oppressive power relations in society and in the home and to open access to resources in an effective and non-violent manner.

MYRADA in matters related to natural resource management believes in the recreation of " a self-sustaining and environmentally clean habitat and the institutions to sustain it, based on a balanced perspective of the relationship between natural resources and the legitimate needs of people". With a view to an effective realization of their goals Myrada has undertaken such activities that would not only generate environmental regeneration through afforestation, low external input sustainable agriculture, conservation of water, etc., but also promote people's institutions like Gram Panchayats (GPs), Watershed Area Groups (WAGs), Soukhya Groups (SAGs) and (CMRCs) to manage natural resources and to promote ecological restoration.

MYRADA had adopted the strategy of self help group as the appropriate people's institution which had the capacity to provide the poor with the space and support necessary to take effective steps towards greater control of their lives in private and in society. The SHGs could provide the benefits of economies of scale reducing costs in certain areas of the production process where the members may decide to undertake it as a common action as well as benefit the members in providing them with an effective credit delivery system. The groups provide a firm base for dialogue and cooperation in programmes with other institutions like Government departments, cooperatives, financial and Panchayat Raj institutions; if the groups are functioning well , they have the credibility and the power to ensure their participation in identifying, planning, budgeting, and implementation of Panchayat Raj programmes for the empowerment of the poor. It also helps to assess the individual member's management capacity which may fall short of what a "viable"investment package requires for optimum returns, as prescribed under regular IRDP norms. MYRADA has engaged in activities to promote sustainable livelihood options as well as

management of natural resources through the strategy of self help groups.

6.4.1 NGOs in West Bengal

As in other parts of India West Bengal too has attracted the attention of the NGO sector. Poorer regions of the state have become the activity area of the voluntary and nongovernmental organizations who have engaged in diverse activities to forge in participatory development on the one hand and providing help to the poor to get access to the various developmental schemes run by the government and donor agencies.

6.4.2 BIKASH

Set up in 1996 BIKASH's aim is simple, to develop the most vulnerable sections of society to achieve their full potential. It basically has as its field area the rural women in Bankura district of West Bengal and challenged children in Kolkata. It essentially works in the arena of rehabilitation of mentally challenged children and empower women through the formation of self-help groups and ensure food security. It also works towards creating awareness among community members about environment protection and sustainable development. For the year 2006-07 Bikash being selected as Lead NGO of CAPART to implement its Skill Training for Rural Young Professionals Scheme (RYP) and Nodal NGO Scheme, in a focused manner on a need based and location specific approach, in the vulnerable pockets of Bankura district. The current priority intervention areas of Bikash as a Nodal NGO are as follows:

i) Creation and maintenance of database of NGOs in Bankura - I, Sonamukhi and Chatna blocks and provide support to grassroot level NGOs for project proposal formulation, etc and enhance skill for income generation in Bankura - I block

ii) It has started networking with grassroot level NGOs of three blocks namely Bankura -I, Sonamukhi and Chatna blocks for creation of their databases (NGO profiles), need identification of their stakeholders and collecting project proposals from their working area as per their felt need.

It has also trained a group of professionals with required income generating and life skills from within the agrarian village community of Bankura, who can be a friend, facilitator and guide to the same community and act as an intermediary with the government and as representatives of NGOs in the grassroots.

iii) Food security project is designed to ensure the food security of poor, rural women through the strengthening and empowering of women's self help groups. As well as education on setting up grain banks and managing through the lean season, women are trained to understand the nutrition of the food they are consuming. Some women have developed kitchen gardens at home for their own use, selling any surplus at the market. More advanced groups have started storing and exchanging seeds and developing plant nurseries. Information is also provided on non-farm activities and alternative income-generating activities. This programme is supported by CASA (Church's Auxiliary for Social Action)

iv) Using the self-help group approach as CASHE, the difference with the SGSY scheme is that it works with even more impoverished groups of women and aims to bring every assisted family above the poverty line within 3 years. The type of economic activity this enables includes livestock rearing and making moori (puffed rice). By 2005 over 50 self help groups had been formed. This programme is supported by the District Rural Development Cell of Bankura and Bankura Zilla Parishad

v) One of the newest programmes, is the Credit and Savings for Household Enterprises Programme (CASHE) that aims to significantly increase the income and economic security of poor women and their households by providing them with a range of financial services.

Poor rural women across 250 villages are currently formed into around 650 self help groups, each averaging 12-15 members, so over 8,000 women have been reached within just 2 years of operation. This programme is supported by CARE, West Bengal.

Bikash has entered into partnerships with DRDC, Bankura Zilla Parishad, Dept of Panchayat & Rural Development, Govt West Bengal, National Trust, Govt of India, CARE West Bengal, CAPART etc.

6.4.3 Lok Kalyan Parishad

Loka Kalyan Parishad was established in 1977 as a voluntary organization with the objective to take up direct action initiatives for poverty alleviation and started to work in the poorer regions of West Bengal and Bihar. LKP in its second generation has shifted its focus to include PRIs as partners in their initiatives. The focus has changed to include Panchayati Raj Institutions (local self government) as the principal actors in this work. Loka Kalyan Parishad has been working on Food Security issues for long years. Its critical realization has been to meaningfully involve the Panchayats to address the food security issues through various forms of decentralized natural resource management. LKP has successfully demonstrated this in its project areas Kalchini Block in Jalpaiguri, Ilaambazar & Labhpur Block in Birbhum, Itahaar Block in Uttar Dinajpur, Harirampur Block in Dakshin Dinajpur, and Jhalda-II block in Purulia. Shortage of food grains in lean seasons is still prevalent in the above districts. The practice is to take food grain on loan as a forward contract which the poor repay at high rate of interest or by working in the Boro season

at low wage rate. LKP has shown how the women SHGs could have their neighborhood grain bank in which they save grains. Many Panchayats could provide them with initial matching grains, over and above the amount saved by the members. This has become more successful in Ilambazar, Lavpur, Itahaar and Harirampur areas, where the shortage of grains is acute. More than 1900 families in 175 groups stored 1297 quintal rice in 174 grain banks (Dec'04) Panchayats in these areas have vested land which generally lies fallow. These lands could be made productive through some land development work and by community efforts. LKP has been able to advocate and convince the Panchayats to handover these lands to SHGs for them to labour and produce fruits and many vegetables for home consumption and surplus sale. The SHGs were selected on the basis of consensus jointly in Gram Unnayan Samity meeting. Lease deed has been drawn up. Thus fallow lands were converted to useful cultivation. In many cases Panchayats also provided seed inputs with support from LKP. User groups build up revolving fund at Gram Unnayan Samiti level to meet up future input requirement at many GPs. Seasonal fallows are a common feature in west Bengal. These are kept fallows for lack of irrigation facility or cost of production. LKP tried to convince the owners to lease out such land for one crop season to SHGs. The landowners were reluctant. The Panchayats stepped in and provided written guarantees to ensure that such seasonal lease would discontinue when the owner wants the land back in the next season. And an informal agreement is signed between SHGs, private land owner and Panchayats. Thus the SHGs got hold of the land which they used for cultivation on residual moisture. Small parcels remains unused in most households in West Bengal. Rampant malnutrition is a common feature in rural poor families. Those small parcels of homestead land can be brought under home garden where from major year round need of fresh

healthy vegetables and or fruits can be grown. This also creates small savings against regular family expenses. More than 10,000 rural families in SHGs have grown vegetables in their kitchen gardens. Small seed inputs along with simple production techniques through initial hand holdings are only needed. In large number of Gram Panchayats water bodies and ponds have been vested to the Gram Panchayats. The usual practice is to lease out these ponds to private individuals. LKP tried to advocate for a policy change. It suggested that instead these ponds should be leased out to adjacent SHGs who could fish and make extra earnings for the families. This was gradually accepted. The previous lease agreements were not renewed and fresh lease was given to women SHGs. In all cases, it is the Tribals, Muslims, SCs who have benefited from this arrangement. Further to providing such lease, the Panchayats also provided them with financial support to buy fingerlings, and other consumables. LKP advocates integrated eco-based fish farming based on pond management. Social forestry generally refers to an array of Eucalyptus and Sonajhuri trees that grow fast but are not conducive to environment. Besides it does not help in nutrition, fuel or fodder. LKP has a agro forestry model involving 15-18 types of plants including plants for food, fuel, fodder, and fruits. This model was initially tried out in a Gram Panchayat and later was done on a wide scale in nearly 24 Gram Panchayats. Further, the saplings were all made by the women SHGs in their neighborhood nurseries of 10000 to 18000 pcs per season. The plants were purchased by the Gram Panchayats and Panchayats Samities, the plantation was done by the SHGs themselves and initial maintenance was also done by them, thus ensuring the plant's safe growth. This has now become a wide scale practice. The Panchayats provided financial support to buy the saplings, also supported by paying for plantation and maintenance costs to the SHGs. There is an agreement between Gram

Panchayats, that the property would be jointly owned by the GP-SHG and sale proceeds for timber production will be distributed on an average 75:25 basis. More than 14 lakh saplings planted on 400 acres of fallows and 52 km. road, canal, river banks up to 2006 by 877 SHG families with survival rate of more than 70%.

In all its project areas LKP has successfully introduced new crops of various types with help from Gram Unnayan Samities, Panchayats and SHGs. The philosophy is two fold: a) to introduce low water consuming crops, vegetables, so that the poor could afford it. B) To introduce low cost but high nutrition crops and vegetables to improve nutritional levels of the poor. Examples of such new products are many only a few are mentioned here.

Agroforestry on road side fenced by rows of pigeon pea. Pulse crops harvested within 6 - 7 months, along with huge fuel wood. Plantation of saplings escape grazing Approximately 60 - 70% rainfed Aman rice lands remain fallow after harvest. Pulses & oil seeds crops popularized on residual moisture through POIRA system of cropping. Field bunds remain unused. Pulses like Black gram, Horse gram, Pigeon pea even vegetables grown on field dykes getting popularity.

Growing potato from True Potato Seed (TPS) is one of practice in West Bengal. 25 odd demonstrations in W.B. in 6 blocks in 2007 successfully generated interest within small growers & SHG members. Field dykes are planted with pigeon pea & horsegram (Kulthi), now a popular practice in rain fed areas.

Local cultivators of *Amarphophallus* (OL) was in crop list. But Kavour variety introduced in Birbhum, Purulia, North & South Dinajpur, Kalchini block of Jalpaiguri got popularity. Seed corn is available from local production now in those block areas. There are rural poor families who do not have even a small piece of land for home garden. These families in SHGs take land on lease or on the

basis of share of produce from GPs. or private owners to grow vegetables, fruits for their own family consumptions. More than 2500 families in 306 groups are involved in group gardening. Even surplus produced could be marketed which enriched their group fund. SHG, mother groups, VECs in many rural schools initiated vegetable, fruit garden where from fresh produces are given to the school childrens along with mid day meals. Sometimes landless groups also take some share of produce for their family consumptions. More than 20 nos. school gardens are functioning where 160 families have taken part in 23 groups. LKP has made special efforts to help the poor workers of tea garden areas try supplementary livelihood opportunities and techniques. This mainly involved taking un used land from the tea garden management, and develop it by the women SHGs to make vegetables, crops, etc. Several examples are shown below. In all such cases LKP has involved the Gram Panchayats to write to the management, and pursue the matter with them. The Panchayats have also provided financial inputs for seeds, seedlings, chick lings, bee hives etc.

Black peeper has potential in Jalpaiguri. Mediums of tea garden shed trees can be used for its cultivation without hampering tea environment (ICAR) which can generate employment & resources. Black peeper on millions of areas trees at homestead & T.E. Malibaris have tremendous production opportunity. Demonstration at Kalchini getting popularity. Bee keeping in Tea garden inhabitants is getting popularity as a supplementary livelihood option in Kalchini. DRDC has entered into an agreement with LKP and has encouraged the SHGs to take up such activities.

Inhabitants of tea gardens suffer from malnutrition diseases. Tea garden workers get some land adjacent to quarters called Malibari. Most of them are not inhabitat of regular vegetable gardening. Both worker & non-worker families in group started year

round vegetable & fruit gardening either in their malibari or taking T.G. fallows from the management. Some groups started marketing surplus produce at local market.

Tea estate have high demand. SHGs in Kalchini area tea garden took vermicompost production & started marketing to tea estate apart from own use in their home gardens. Cultivation of organic mushroom has become a popular activity of the SHGs. There is high demand in the locality and at Jaigaon. There is high demand of Agro forestry saplings in many Govt. programs. SHGs have started producing saplings. Small animal rearing as backyard activity of the tea garden workers and the SHGs have also been taken up.

LKP has been successful in ensuring decentralized Natural Resource Management and has also entered into a partnership with the local Panchayats for successful implementation and management. LKP has taken up the task of providing technical training on Nursery, Fishery, Animal resources along with management Financial support to buy seeds, fish lings, nursery plants, consumables, etc. LKP has also provided financial support to Panchayats on new seeds, special consumables, etc. On the other hand Panchayats have contributed by its advocacy on Panchayats people partnership and capability building. It has ensured and made the necessary arrangements for the lease of vest land in favour of SHGs, lease guarantee in favour of SHGs and private owner, and providing Panchayats matching grant to multiply this to large beneficiaries.

6.4.4 VASUNDHARA

Vasundhara Enviro Welfare Society was established in 1996 with an objective to provide meaningful opportunity for the disadvantaged section of the region so that they are in a position to develop. Focus on women and vulnerable section of the society. The

NGO organizes poor women into small self help groups so that they are economically self reliant. It has promoted SHGs in Alipurduar-I, Alipurduar-II and Kumargram block of Jalpaiguri district. The NGO is also involved as a facilitator in the promotion and development of the leadership potential of the SHG women. They have also organized farmers clubs so that modern sustainable agricultural techniques could be used by the farmers. Supported by NABARD they have also organized Farmer's Leadership Training Programme at Mahakalguri GP, Turturi GP and Tatpara GP under Alipurduar-II Block.

The above mentioned NGOs have been engaged in community based natural resource management in the districts of North Bengal. The NGOs have helped the local community to engage in the NRM programmes by forming SHG groups by the local community, and building their capacities so that they the local people could ensure sustainable livelihood for themselves. In these programmes the NGOs have also been engaged as a partner by the various government department's line agencies to help them implement their programmes through the involvement of local community especially the Self Help Groups. The NGOs act as a coordinator between the government line agencies and also facilitate and build capacities of the local community by providing them with training and knowledge about new techniques. The NGOs with their long years of grassroots experience and knowledge has been made partner by the government.

6.4.5 Raiganj Janaseva Society

Raiganj Janaseva Samity was set up in 1995 in Raiganj with the intention to empower rural people specially women and children belonging to scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, and other backward community living below poverty line in Uttar Dinajpur mainly in the blocks of Karandighi, Raiganj and Kaliaganj. Through participatory

efforts the objective was to ensure ecological balance, to remove the pollution of environment and economically empower people. The main objectives were to work socio economic development of the vulnerable sections of the society and provide services to the community in the form of training people to economically empower themselves in livelihood skills and working in the field of safe drinking water and sanitation. The NGO works in partnership with different other governmental and non governmental agencies like---- CAPART, Lok Kalyan Parishad, PRIA/DFID, Self Help Group Promotional Forum,etc. With Lok Kalyan Parishad it is engaged in the promotion of decentralization at the grass roots as well as in the NRM projects undertaken by Lok Kalyan Parishad in Uttar Dinajpur. Women empowerment awareness camp, Literacy Health & Sanitation, prevention of child labour etc. campaign, organizing training camps on vermicompost through organic fertilizer, Environmental awareness camp, mother child health care camp, legal Aids, Anti trafficking, SHG group formation, are the major activities undertaken by them. Most of the programmes are supported by NABARD, CAPART, PRIA/DFID, LKP, SHG promotional forum.

In Raiganj block, RJSS has trained people to form SHGs and presently in 9 No.Gouri G.P, 11 No. Birghi G.P and 12 No. Birghi G.P they have formed 533 SHGs who are engaged in activities like agriculture, kitchen gardening, goatery, poultry, pisciculture, bee keeping, trading on agricultural crops, paddy husking, grocery shops etc.

In collaboration with CAPART, RJSS has trained the SHGs in Sari (Mohadevpur), 11 no Birghai, Raiganj ,Ital ,9 no, gouri G.P , Raiganj in pisciculture and mushroom cultivation. Similarly with the assistance of NABARD RJSS has trained the SHGS and Farmers clubs in Ital model village,9 no gouri G.P .,11 no. Birghai, Raiganj Block,12 no. Barua G.P, KARandhighi. Block. Awareness Camp about women

empowerment, Training on SHG formation, Skill development activities through Vocational training, Village development planning, total village development through PRA/ PLA, Entrepreneurship development.

This has not only generated an increase in the income of the people but has also brought in change especially with regards to the banks linking up and coming forward to provide loans. Within the village the SHG members especially the women have raised their voices within their families and villages for their rights and social evils like gambling, alcoholism and witch hunting have reduced to a great extent.

6.5 Conclusion

The above discussion puts a cursory glance on the different types of activities that are undertaken by the NGOs not only throughout India but also by the NGOs in West Bengal and North Bengal, the field of our research specifically. The fact that emerges is that the NGOs have emerged as facilitators and the go between the governmental line agencies and the 'community'. The role of the NGOs are not just limited to ensure facilitation only but also playing the role of a catalyst in the developmental process. Their experience at the grassroots and their professional support do not just ensure that CBNRM practices are better managed and participatory but they also play a positive role in transforming the people, especially the marginalized segment of the population, the women. The question of livelihood and management of resources have not only been dealt with but the bigger goal of transformation---the question of empowering the people, especially, the marginalized, the women, have been addressed. The next chapter which is our field survey data analysis would be able to focus on it better.