

NGOs in Practice: An Analysis of Some Important Aspects

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Abstract

Non government organizations (NGOs) are the non-profit organizations spread out all over the world which are generally involved in socio-economic development of communities. Till the end of 1970s, the role of non government organizations (NGOs) were little recognized, though the concept of voluntary action is not a new phenomena. The NGOs also perform the role of service Contractors for different government schemes and Projects. The present study was aimed at understanding the different practical aspects of the working patterns of NGOs. The study was desk based. The researcher used data from various secondary sources. The Article emphasizes on the urgent necessity to build the capacity of NGOs and the need to develop leadership capability. The researcher has tried to present possible solutions to the contemporary challenges the NGOs are facing as some recommendations for future policy making.

Keywords: NGO, Policy, Government, Leader, Service , Development.

Introduction

Non government organizations (NGOs) are the nonprofit organizations spread out all over the world which are generally involved in socio-economic development of communities. Non government organizations are voluntary organizations in nature. Till the end of 1970s the role of non governmental organizations (NGOs) were little recognized, though the concept of voluntary action is not a new phenomena. In the 1970s and 1980s when the state-led development Approaches failed, the NGOs emerged as alternatives. They provided innovative approaches for community centered developments in the areas of service delivery, advocacy, human resource development, women empowerment etc.

According to Imandar , during ancient and medieval times voluntarism operated freely and exclusively in the field of education, medicine, cultural promotion and even acted as succor in crisis situations like droughts, floods, epidemics and foreign invasions etc. The NGOs are not viewed as competitors by many governments which are ready to provide the NGOs scopes of working and involvement in programs and schemes as such governments see the NGOs as partners and allow them to render input to the policy making process. The NGOs also perform the role of service contractors for different government schemes and projects.

Objective of the Study

The present study was aimed at understanding the different practical aspects of the NGOs which are performing in different fields and thereby suggest a few recommendations for future.

Methodology

The study was carried on based on extensive review of Literature via Google and the analysis was mainly qualitative. The study was desk based. The researchers also used data from various secondary sources and took the help of government databases, magazines, books, seminary reports, research articles etc. Published documents possessed by different NGOs and different library sources were also used.

Literature Review

In the present study, a few studies have been reviewed which have been done previously by different scholars, with a view to understand the different aspects of the working patterns of NGOs. A few among them are given below:

Niumai (2006) states that the NGOs should not be romanticized as being one of the most effective entities for the eradication of poverty and social change. In many cases the NGOs have been proven to be declining in its voluntarism whenever an endeavor was done to expand and emphasize on the employees rights. An increasing doubt and disillusionment regarding the way the NGOs use their funds is also a matter of concern. The market-driver NGOs usually do not hesitate to sacrifice their ideology for sake of prudence.

Wood (1997) has stated that in the Indian NGOs headed by charismatic popular leaders , the individual Freedom and Liberty are in some occasions hampered. This may lead to a decreasing participation of the wider staff in the process of decision making. Moreover, the NGOs must not be seen differently from the environment and culture in which they perform their activities.

Erfan and Othman (2013) have found out that there are some prominent obstacles that prevent the civil society organizations from achieving their aims. Some of these obstacles are administrative and organizational structure, the aims and objectives of the organization, the funding and the financial resources, rules and regulations of the work system , training, coordination and the networking system of the organization etc. The research was meant for addressing the constraints that the Gulf country named Oman was facing. In the research one can see the detailed specification of the features and functions of Oman's civil society.

Mosa (2012) has briefly presented a summarized role of the NGOs in the following ways:

- Provision of service : Providing services of different types is a traditional role played by the NGOs for decades. Working in the area of charity is an example of it.
- Promoting the development process: Empowering the human resources for a developed future is a major task of the NGOs. Starting from capacity building to skill development, planning, formulating and the practical implementation of different schemes and programs are parts of the roles of the NGOs.
- Rendering services in the policy formulation and general plans : Among the prominent roles of the NGOs some are proposing alternative plans, negotiating or influencing the policy formulation mechanism etc .

Omonmwan and Odia (2019) have elaborately analyzed the strategies for community development with special focus on the roles of NGOs. The donor agencies of the NGOs like NGO functionaries, educators, students, heads of families etc were interviewed along with the

beneficiaries of the NGOs. This research work shows different worth mentioning aspects of donor agencies and the influential roles they play in the development process.

Analysis of Different Aspects of Ngos

Classification of NGOs:

NGOs can be classified mainly into two categories and they are given below:

Operational NGOs: The operational NGOs mainly focus on decision making and implementation of development related schemes and projects . In order to sustain their schemes and projects, the operational NGOs mobilize resources. It may be in the form of financial assistance, volunteer laborers etc. Running the operational NGOs is a complex task as it requires time and the expertise for a smooth and efficient planning, budgeting, accounting and reporting process of the finance from different donors. On many occasions, the operational NGOs turn to Advocacy in situations like facing problems in the completion of projects.

Advocacy NGOs: The advocacy NGOs basically defend and promote particular causes of their domains. The functions of advocacy NGOs are more or less the same as those of the operational NGOs except the difference of financial balance . In it fundraising is required comparatively in a smaller scale.. The advocacy NGOs campaign to achieve the ideals of human rights and social justice etc. They are mostly political or principle based NGOs. Different advocacy NGOs like human rights NGOs and women's NGOs work in their policy domains to eradicate the injustices and discriminations the human race is facing in different forms.

NGOs and Accountability

Though in theory NGOs are supposed to function and serve their constituency with a sense of accountability both financially and strategically , but in practice less focus on strategic accountability and more focus on financial accountability of resource is seen. The conflict of strategy accountability and financial accountability is related with the push done by the Donors for professionalism in the working pattern of NGOs. The Donors design programs and policies and even guide the preferences, whereas the NGOs lag behind in an endeavor to figure out the way they would like to react to it. In such a situation, the NGOs react to the revised preferences and funding of the donors in four major ways and they are given below:

Exit and Voice strategy: Exit is the process of ending the relationship by the NGOs from the donors. Voice is a mechanism of feedback to influence and sustain the relationship by ensuring a balanced interest of both. With a purpose to gain control over symbolic non- material resources, the NGOs usually exchange economic resources by using exit and vote strategy. By using the exit and voice strategy, the NGOs exercise control over information, status, fame, prestige etc. In Fact exit and voice require social power which the NGOs possess . As the NGOs have the potential to set rules, norms and procedures, they are considered as having sufficient store of Social power.

Loyalty and Adjustments: They provide more financial security. Loyalty is a process of showing compliance with the donor by the NGOs. Adjustment is the process of deliberately and voluntarily managing the activities by the NGOs keeping in mind the objectives set by the donor with a purpose to ensure the funding.

Therefore, the relationship of accountability of the NGOs with the donors are directly linked with the four strategies. Again, organizational behavior is differentiated by perceptions,

and the behavior may increase or decrease the dependency level of the NGOs on their donors and thus shape the accountability process.

NGOs and the Leadership Roles

Issues like the changing nature of society, the breakdown of traditional social structures and norms, the influence of technological advancements and globalization process would be the concerns of the future leadership of the NGOs. It is a need of the time that the leaders are capable of defending their roles and status to justify their right to lead. Leadership needs to be based on openness, clarity, courage, integrity and empathy. A wider knowledge based competency to work in multi-cultural environment, communicating and negotiating skills etc some of the essential requirements of a successful leader. As unpredictable situation are normal for them, the leaders have to be ready to cope with new challenges and be adaptable to the changing circumstances. Incorporating ethics and integrity in the work with an increasingly participative way is a challenging task. To listen and accept "feedback" and a sense of "leading by example" or "work to talk" are important characteristics for a future leader. The NGOs should device systems and processes to ensure that the most competent and reliable individuals emerge in the leadership positions, because leadership cannot be measured merely on short term performances. On one hand, the NGOs need to focus on development of leadership capabilities and on the other hand, the leaders themselves need to focus on enhancing their credibility and competency.

Role of NGOs in Conflict Transformation

The NGOs possess the potential to contribute in the field of reconciliation and transformation of conflicts and tensions. The NGOs properly understand the history and local culture of different ethnic groups as they work at the grassroots level. Traditional instruments like the culture of Tea-House can be chosen as an opportunity for a constructive way to resolve conflicts because in conflict transformation and resolution, communication is the first and the foremost important step. Communication of the warring factions in a trustable and friendly environment would lead to an atmosphere for peaceful reconciliation and transformation of conflicts. The NGOs are the entities which have the real capacity to organize meetings and thereby play the mediating roles. As of the modern nation state, the NGOs can change the notion of territorial borders as meeting points of the nations and the people, rather than considering only as a tool of protecting its sovereignty and integrity. Therefore, in the future the NGOs have to come forward for conflict transformation and resolution in different parts of the world.

Way Forward

The NGOs need to focus on how to sustain and maintain development projects and programs by monitoring in a logical way with the vision of addressing the real needs of the people. Failure should never dishearten. Rather in those situations concentration for equality of work, keeping aside the statistical achievements is necessary. For the motivation of more mass participation, awareness campaigns and workshops have to be reinforced at the grassroots level. It is worth mentioning here that to continue and maintain their moral authority, some important attributes have to be maintained by the NGOs and to mention a few of them are - transparency, impartiality, representativeness, independence, reliability of purpose etc. The top leaders of the NGOs ought to create an environment of freely expressing the opinions and chance for criticism of all kinds without any fear in their institutions. The leaders themselves should go through empowerment training from time to time to update their skills. The governments, individuals, citizens and other agencies should extend support to the NGOs

for a better future for all . Also, there is a need to conduct periodical research to fix the preferences of the NGOs by the leaders for an effective utilization of material and human resources.

Conclusion

A great deal of the NGO literature is concerned with empowerment of the NGOs and smooth functioning of the same with a sense of accountability. It is a fact that the NGOs have immensely contributed to the community development. Mere focus on service provision by the NGOs does not necessarily mean involvement of the community to get the access to rights, services and government recognition. More than the contemporary need-based approach used by the NGOs , there is a need for adopting a more integrated approach. The effectiveness, legitimacy and performance of the activities of the NGOs need to be monitored and evaluated from time to time.

For an all round development of the community, rather than emphasizing only on government activities, other Development agencies like the NGOs should come forward.

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