Chapter-III

Voluntarism: Concept and Approaches

The term voluntarism is derived from Latin word ‘Voluntas’ which means ‘will’. The will assumes various forms of impulses, passions or desires. It is prior to or superior to the intellect or reason. All the theories of voluntarism, whether psychological, ethical, theological or metaphysical which interpret various aspects of experience and nature in the light of the concept of the will, subscribe to the thesis. All voluntary associations which are the expression of human impulse (will), have been the subject of study of, by and large, three disciplines: sociology, social psychology and public administration. Sociologists study voluntary associations as part of the social system; social psychologists are concerned with voluntary associations in an environment of their (voluntary associations) individual members while the scholars of public administration study voluntarism as part of organizational processes.¹

Inequality among individuals is an important source of motivation for voluntary action in any society, whatever be the stage of its development. There are five sources of voluntarism: religion, government, business, philanthropy and mutual aid if the delivery system for human services is analysed. The missionary zeal of religious organizations, the commitment of government organizations to the public interest, the profit making urge in business, the altruism of the social superiors and the motive of self-help among fellow men - all reflect in voluntarism. At the operational level, the above mentioned components may not differ much from one another but each of them is moved by an impulse with service as the common motivation. Bourdillon and Beveridge viewed mutual aid and philanthropy as the two main sources from which voluntary social organizations would have developed. They spring from individual and social conscience,
respectively. Bourdillon observed that the schemes based on these two motivating factors, are converging on each other and it is this mixture of the two elements which is the peculiar characteristic of the voluntary organizations today.2

The voluntary sector has many names. It is also called the non-profit sector, the independent sector, the quasi-private sector, and, the quasi-public sector. It is also called the third sector along with public and private sector. Each of these names attempts to describe the nature of the set of agencies, organizations and institutions that fall between the profit-making private sector and the service-oriented public sector. But each name connotes only one aspect of the system. It is deemed to be independent of the public sector and has a rationale other than profit motive. The term voluntary sector indicates that the effort comes from ‘volunteers’ – time, money and materials. Voluntary sector is a complex creature for three reasons. First, there are relationships between the public and private sectors that include vastly varied roles, purposes, and efficiency. Secondly, the voluntary sector includes multi-billion dollar umbrella agencies. Third, the voluntary sector is multi-functional, including fund raising, education and service delivery. Varied in size, function and degrees of interdependence and relationship between aspects of the system, the voluntary sector is in many ways undefined or misdefined and little understood in terms of its role in the delivery of human services. Despite definition and identity problems, a huge non-governmental network, or set of networks does indeed function in the delivery of human services. Some are part of national network, some are international networks, some are single organizations in a specific city, some co-operate with local, state or federal government, receiving financial support. Some have no ties to government at all.3
Voluntary Organization has been defined by different writers. According to Lord Beveridge “A voluntary organization, properly speaking, is an organization which, weather its workers are paid or unpaid, is initiated and governed by its own members without external control.” Smith and Freedom defined voluntary organization as “Structured, formally organized, relatively permanent, secondary groupings as opposed to less structured, informal, ephemeral or primary groupings, identified by the presence of offices filled through some established procedures; periodic, scheduled meetings; qualifying criteria for membership; and some formalized division and specialization of labour”. David sills, a sociologist, writes that definitions of the term “Voluntary association” differ widely but they generally contain three elements: A voluntary association is an organized group of persons: a) that is formed in order to further some common interest of its members; b) in which membership is voluntary in the sense that it is neither mandatory nor acquired through birth; and c) that exists independently of the state. David Sills defines voluntary organization as “a group of persons organized on the basis of voluntary membership without state control, for the furtherance of some common interests of its members.” Michael Banton, an anthropologist, characterized it as a group organized for the pursuit of one interest or of several interests in common. Usually, it is contrasted with voluntary groups serving a greater variety of ends, such as kin groups, castes, social classes and communities. Attempting a comprehensive definition of voluntary organization, N.R. Inamdar observes: “A voluntary organization in development to be of durable use to the community has to nurse a strong desire and impulse for community development among its members, to be economically viable to possess dedicated and hard working leadership and command resources of expertise in the functions undertaken.”
The choice of strategy to be adopted by a voluntary organization differs from organization to organization and depends on the ideology, motivation, capability of the organization. Generally, voluntary organizations follow four clear cut strategies, as pointed out by J. B. Singh. These are:

1. Simple charity, supplementing welfarism of the state;
2. Encouraging people’s participation and in implementing programmes launched by the government for larger benefit of the community or village;
3. Involving people in programme planning, raising resources, implementing activities and sharing fruits of development;
4. Conscience instilling and organizing people for enabling them to demand and undertake planning and implementation of development programmes beneficial to them.

The voluntary organizations at present adopt a target group approach but aim at self-reliance of the people they are serving. Voluntary organizations generally adopt a holistic approach to rural development and plan and organize their programmes in such a way as to cover all aspects of rural life. Based on the approaches they adopt and the priorities they give, voluntary agencies have been classified into seven categories by J.B. Singh. It means that generally voluntary agencies operate in seven distinct areas. These are:

1. Charity: - Giving food, clothing, medicine, alms, in cash and in kind, land, building etc.
2. Welfare: - Providing facilities for education, health, drinking water, roads, communication, etc.
3. Relief: - Responding to call of duties during natural calamities like flood, draught, earthquake, and manmade calamities like refugee influx, ravages of war, etc.

4. Rehabilitation: - Continuing and follow up of the work in areas struck by calamities and starting activities that are durable in nature.

5. Services: - Building up infrastructure in depressed backward areas.


7. Development of Human Beings: - awakening, raising conscience, organizing, recording of priorities to suit social justice, redeeming the past and opening door for opportunities to the oppressed and the exploited.

Voluntary associations have been classified on a variety of bases. The size of the organization, the structure, the social functions, the sources of their support, the location, the characteristics of the members, the independence or dependence on outside control, and the beneficiary activities are the prime considerations for the classification of the voluntary organization.

Some writers like Sherwood Fix made the classification on the basis of distinction between majoral, minoral and medial organizations. Majoral associations are those which serve the interest of the majority institutions of society, such as business, professional, scientific, educational, labour and agricultural associations. Minoral associations serve the interest of significant minority in the population, such as women’s club, church organizations, hobby clubs and above all, ethnic organizations. Medical associations mediate between major segments or institutions in the society. Like a parent-teacher association mediates between the family and the school system.
David Sills developed a structural distinction between corporate type and federal type organizational structure and control in national organizations, while others have used other structural variables like accessibility or eligibility for membership as a basis for classification. Voluntary organizations have certain distinguishing features and characteristics:

1. It is registered under an appropriate Act to give a corporate status to a group of individuals, so that they get a legal personality, and an individual liability may give place to group liability;

2. It has an administrative structure, and a duly constituted managing/executive committee;

3. It has definite aims and objects, and programmes in fulfillment of these;

4. It is an organization initiated and governed by its own members on democratic principles without any external control.

Norman Johnson points out the following main characteristics of voluntary organization:

1. Method of formation, which is voluntary on the part of a group of people;

2. Method of governance, with self governing organization to decide on its constitution, its servicing, its policy and its clients;

3. Method of financing, with at least some of its revenues drawn from voluntary sources;

4. Motives with the pursuit of profit included.

D. Paul Chowdhary has given the following characteristics of a voluntary organization.

1. It is the result of the voluntary effort, which though motivated by different factors, is spontaneous in nature.
2. It is an organization initiated and governed by its own members on democratic principles without any external control.

3. It is registered under an appropriate Act to give a corporate status to a group of individuals so that they get a legal personality and individual liability may give place to group liability.

4. It has a general body and a regularly constituted managing committee, representing all interests, men, women, professional, public men etc.

5. It is known and accepted by the community in which it is formed.

6. It has considerable autonomy and flexible planning and management of its programmes and services.

7. It has a sense of commitment to human development/welfare.

8. It undertakes people’s needs and helps to solve their socio-economic problems.

9. It plans and implements its own programmes through its own voluntary and paid workers.

10. It raises its funds from the community.

11. It maintains its accounts and is accountable to people and the government since it receives grant.\(^ {16}\)

In spite of these above mentioned features of voluntary organization the roots of these organizations lay in virtues like human touch, dedication, flexibility, innovation, nearness to the community. Therefore, the voluntary agencies strive for certain virtues.
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): Its Rise in the World Scen

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) movement is people-centered and it has a long tradition. It is not a new concept but an idea developed from time immemorial. Recently various efforts have been made to define the concept. Voluntary Organizations are known by several other names: NGOs, private voluntary organizations (PVOs), grassroots organizations (GROs), non-profit organizations (NPOs) and so on, depending on the geographical and time of reference. In general, all these organizations regardless of terminology used, have certain characteristics: that they are non-government (although many of them might work in partnership with the Government on projects, or receive funding from government agencies) and non-profit; that they are voluntary (they might have paid staff, but in general are working in the area because they volunteer to, not because they have to – hence voluntary). The term NGO has become especially popular in the 1980s and is used widely in the field of development; whereas the term ‘voluntary organization’ had been in use for several decades earlier, and it was widely used for social welfare and charity organizations. The term ‘NGO’ also embraces a huge diversity of institutions, international NGOs like ‘Save the Children and Christian Aid’ (commonly referred to as Northern NGO or NNGOs); intermediary NGOs in the South (SNGOs) who support grassroots work through funding, technical advice and advocacy; grassroots movements of various kinds (Grassroots organizations or GROs and community based organizations or CBOs) which are controlled by their own members and networks and federations composed of any or all of the above. Clearly, each of those NGOs plays a distinctive role in development and faces a different range of choices and strategies when considering the question of impact.

The term non-governmental organization (NGO) came into vogue in the early 1950s. The term NGO was coined by the U.N.O. mainly to
indicate the difference between the sovereign nation-states and the organizations that collaborate with or receive grants from its agencies to implement the developmental programmes. However, the term is so well spread now that all institutions other than the direct government departments are loosely referred to as NGOs. The various governmental agencies (including NCERT, NIPCCD etc) which are registered as societies, the universities and colleges etc. are also often referred to as NGOs. Of course, all other registered societies are brought under the broad umbrella called NGO. The term ‘NGO’ is used to denote those organizations which undertake voluntary action, social action and social movements. The term is negative in the sense that it logically excludes governmental or quasi-governmental agencies. NGOs possess the characteristics/features not possessed by the Government, and undertake activities otherwise normally not undertaken by the Government.

A NGO is defined in many ways, for example, it is defined as a non-profit making, voluntary, service-oriented/development-oriented organization, either for the benefit of members (a grassroots organization) or of other members of the population (an agency). It is termed, as an organization of private individuals who believe in certain basic social principles and who structure their activities to bring about development to communities that they are servicing; as a social development organization assisting in empowerment of people; as an organization or group of people working independent of any external control with specific objectives and aims to fulfill tasks that are oriented to bring about desirable changes in a given community or area or situation. Again it is defined, as an organization not affiliated to political parties, generally engaged in working for aid, development and welfare of the community; as an independent, democratic, people’s organization working for the empowerment of economic and/or
socially marginalized groups; as an organization committed to the root causes of the problems trying to better the quality of life especially for the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized in urban and rural areas. A NGO is an Organization established by and for the community without or with little intervention from the government; It is not only a charity organization, but works on socio-economic and cultural activities. A NGO is an organization that is flexible and democratic in its organization and attempts to serve the people without profit for itself.21

David Korten argues that any organization that is both non-governmental and non-profit earning is generally considered to be a NGO.22 NGOs are voluntarily formed in the sense that there is no compulsion from government or others which leads to their formation. They are development-oriented in the sense that they are concerned with improving the condition and position of oppressed sections of society, as opposed to other goals like entertainment, promotion of religion etc. They are relatively independent from the government in the sense that their policies are determined by their Board of Directors or Trustees. However, the NGOs have to work within the parameters of government legislations and policies formulated for NGOs.23

NGO sector is bestowed with noble features like 1) Less bureaucratic, 2) spirit of voluntarism, 3) non-profit making, 4) effective in reaching out the masses, 5) possessing ability to operate in remote and inaccessible areas, 6) being in the forefront during natural calamities and 7) above all effecting in delivering goods at grassroots level.

The NGO sector differentiates itself from government and corporate enterprises in terms of its purpose, which is said to be driven by values like altruism, philanthropy and voluntarism whereas the primary objectives of government and private sectors remains to govern and make profits respectively.24 Thus, it is placed in an advantageous position in comparison
to other formal bureaucratic organizations as far as achieving its objectives
are concerned. Non-Governmental organizations, in recent years, have been
considered by scholars, donors, and many outside governments as a positive
alternative to government led approaches to development. They are no
longer viewed as implementors of development programmes, but as a
vehicle that may usher in a new overall approach to the problems of
development. Jessica Vivian\textsuperscript{25} writes that many Western Governments and
funding agencies view NGOs (as a whole) as “magic bullet” that can be fired
in any direction and still find its target and deliver positive results, despite
the fact that NGOs generally leave little evidence to support the results of
their activities. They are often expected to be able to come up with quick,
simple answers to complex, long standing problems that have long eluded
attempts by institutions with greater resources and power, many of which
have themselves sought easy, quick highly visible answers.

Of the qualities most often attributed to NGOs, perhaps the most
commonly held is related to their autonomy. It is widely held that freedom
from government constraints gives NGOs greater latitude to attempt untried
approaches to development, to adapt new techniques to unique situations,
and to combine known, successful practices with untested ones. This is
attributed to the belief that the organizational structures of most NGOs are
informal rather than bureaucratic or hierarchical, and that NGOs pay greater
attention to results than to regulations and the protection of their own
political power.\textsuperscript{26}

A number of other positive attributes has been enumerated by the
supporters of NGOs regarding their ability to out-perform government
agencies. Judith Tendlers (1982) notes several truisms of NGO activities:
NGOs succeed in reaching the poor; the poor participate in NGO projects;
there is greater emphasis placed by NGOs on teaching people how to gain
better control over their lives than the attainment of specific tasks and goals; NGO programmes/projects can be (and are) more flexible and experimental than official ones because they are smaller in scale; their costs tend to be lower than government led ones; and, as private organizations, NGOs have “a special ability to work with and strengthen local institutions.”

NGO interventions are also perceived as more effective and sustainable over long term than the government programmes. NGO workers are characterized as inherently highly motivated, committed to their work, and providing a more continuous, long-term presence in a community than frequently transferred government employees.

Though voluntary organizations in different guises existed well before the 20th century in Northern and Southern World. NGOs as they are properly known today have a more recent history. The early Southern NGOs typically arose out of the independence struggles. The first Northern NGOs to enter the stage after the First World War were the Catholic Church and Save the Children Fund. They were increased in number towards the end of and immediately after the Second World War. When Oxfam started in 1942, Catholic Relief Services in 1943 and American Co-operative Agency for Relief Everywhere (CARE) in 1945. Initially these NGOs were engaged in relief work, primarily in war-torn Europe. They gradually shifted their attention to the third world and also broadened their scope of action and included welfare activities. During 1950s and 1960s the number of Northern NGOs multiplied and their focus moved progressively to development activities. At the start of this period their development work fitted into a conventional modernizing school of thought – helping poor communities to become more like Northern societies by importing Northern ideas, technology and expertise. Initially they were oblivious of their Southern counterparts, of village committees and other indigenous structures. And
gradually many of them came to criticise the effects of the traditional
development model and to seriously question their contribution to it. They
started to shift to new role, that of providing a services to the popular
grassroots organizations and self-help movements. By 1961, for example,
Oxfam had made a policy decision to move away from financing missionary
organizations to switch funding to support indigenous efforts. Many of the
earliest organizations it funded have gone on to become significant NGOs in
their own right. The increased funding opportunities from Northern
voluntary sources led to a mushrooming of Southern NGOs. Many of these
grew rapidly to become national level institutions which served as
intermediate organizations, channelling the assistance from the Northern
NGO to the grassroots level. New political concept, emerging from Third
World intellectuals, Development Theory, once dominated by Northern
practitioners, was becoming an indigenous process, led by the people
themselves. In the early days there was homogeneity among NGOs. They
more or less pursued a common agenda. Some remained with their
traditional activities. Others progressed to new activities and analysis at
different rates. And many Southern NGOs became more assertive. Up till the
1960s the NGO community was almost exclusively a Northern preserve,
thereafter it has become increasingly a shared ground, albeit initially shared
with Southern NGOs created by their Northern partners. In the 1970s the
spectrum broadened many NGOs engaged in self-help activities came to
realize that there was a limit to how far self-help activities could go,
governed by the vested interests of the political and economic elite.
Development was increasingly viewed as a process of liberating the poor,
both from their physical oppressors and from their poverty. New approaches
were called for Brazilian NGOs (particularly inspired by the ideas of Paolo
Freire) pioneered the approach of conscientization – a combination of
political education, social organization and grassroots development –
designed not just to improve living standards, but to help the poor to perceive their exploitation and to realize the opportunities they have for overcoming such exploitation through mass organizations. Throughout much of the third world, NGOs concentrated on fostering structures to help the poor in their struggle against injustice. The gradual realization throughout the 1970s that poverty is political in nature also gave birth to advocacy as a new activity. The 1980s has been an important leap forward in advocacy work.

Another trend in influencing change is in Southern official structures. David Korten calls this “micro-policy reform.” Official aid agencies have, through structural adjustment, positioned themselves as primary actors in the promotion of macro-policy reform in the conviction that more effective and sustainable development is only possible given a conducive policy environment. Equally, if not more important, are the reforms in local government structure and institutions. Some of the more thoughtful NGOs have come to realize that their projects by themselves can never hope to benefit more than a few chosen communities and that these projects are only likely to be sustainable when local public and private organizations are linked into a supportive national development system. The prevailing local or national policy environment may actively discourage the self-reliant local initiative. Some NGOs have therefore attempted to increase substantially their development impact on policy debates as catalysts for appropriate micro-policy reforms.

There are some reasons for the proliferation of NGOs in the recent world. First, the neo-liberal project, as expressed through structural adjustment in the South, and as promoted in the North by its leading political ideologues (most notably Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher), required a curbing of state spending, and a rolling back of social sector investment. In
theory an unfettered market would provide more efficient services and create the jobs that would generate the wealth needed to sustain them. As private voluntary agencies, NGOs could occupy this new niche quite comfortably, participating in the social safety-net project and social investment funds that were supposed to alleviate the immediate effects of SAP. Hence NGOs were encouraged to present themselves as appropriate channels for aid to the poorest, for those at risk of falling through the net. Second, the break down of the Soviet bloc, culminating in the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, was associated with and, by some observers, attributed to the emergence of people’s organizations through which opposition to the prevailing political system was powerfully articulated. These included church-based groups, union’s professional bodies, and also a nascent NGO sector. The idea of autonomous civil society organizations holding government accountable, and at the same time pushing forward a democratization agenda, was appealing to observers from different points in the political spectrum. Third, in Latin America there had been a long tradition of radical social organization as a form of resistance to military dictatorship, particularly once the space for political dialogue was effectively closed off. NGOs had played a vital role in countries such as Brazil, Chile, often maintaining what little space might exist for debate, or holding on to an alternative vision of society.30

The decade of the 1980s and 1990s was the expansion period for NGOs and GROs both North and South of the world. The rise of NGOs and GROs (Grassroots Organizations) on the world scene is an important phenomenon which has implications for the development prospects of poor people, for the future of these organizations themselves, and for the wider political economy of which they form a small but growing part. The rise of NGOs is not an accident, nor is it solely a response to local initiative and voluntary action. Equally important is the increasing popularity of NGOs
with government and official aid agencies, which is itself a response to recent developments in economic and political thinking. Since the end of the Cold War, development policy and aid transfers have come to be dominated by a policy which is called as New Policy Agenda which based on the beliefs organized around the twin poles of neo-liberal economic and liberal democratic theory.31

NGOs have provided welfare services to poor people in countries where governments lacked the resources to ensure universal coverage in health and education. The difference is that now they are seen as the preferred channel for service provision in deliberate substitution for the state. Under the New Policy Agenda, NGOs are seen as vehicles for ‘democratization’ and essential components of a thriving ‘civil society’, which in turn are essential to the success of the agenda’s economic dimension. NGOs are supposed to act as a counter weight to state power – protecting human rights, opening up channels of communication and participation, providing training grounds for activists and promoting pluralism. The rise of citizens’ movements around the world documented by Korten (1990) and crystallized most recently in the establishment of CIVICUS (1994) (the World Alliance for Citizen Participation), is not just a result of developments in official aid, but it cannot be separated entirely from the political ideas of the New Policy Agenda.32

As a result of these developments, government has been prepared to channel increasing amounts of official aid to and through NGOs. Although accurate and comprehensive data are hard to come by, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that the rise and growth of NGOs (and less so of GROs) is directly related to the increasing availability of the official funding under the New Policy Agenda. NGOs are seen as effective vehicles for the delivery of the agenda’s economic and political objectives.
The reduced importance of the development state is the cause of the rise of NGOs is contentious because widely accepted theory is that it is inefficiency, trained incapacity and corruption of the bureaucratic machinery, corrupt and inept political leadership of the state to deliver the goods, lack of accountability, lack of will and lack of commitment to the development goals and lack of people’s participation which are responsible for the rise of NGOs in the Third World.

The government agencies and political parties of developing countries like India failed to bring in people-centered rural development. In this context, Webster notes that: A government rarely does, or will fulfill more than a few of the wide range of demands that effective democratic decentralized government requires. Rarely, if ever, is there an adequate devolution of power, of responsibilities or of resources to decentralized government institutions. Secondly, the government is rarely willing to implement the types of structural reforms and policies that can bring about a transformation in the abilities of marginalized groups and other disadvantaged social actors to contest more successfully in key markets that determine the economic, social and political conditions. Third, institutions of local government are rarely willing to bring about the mobilization of disadvantaged groups in order to place demands upon the state. Fourth, the electoral focus of political parties upon the institutions of government at the local and national levels tends to mitigate against taking up specific local problems or, given the patrimonial nature of local politics, problems that challenge local political elites. Because of the above reasons, NGOs have come to occupy a central position in facilitating development at the local level, and hence, have considerable space to initiate development directed at improving the condition of the more marginalized and disadvantaged social groups. This is one of the important opportunities that the NGOs have.
Rural development is a strategy to promote the social life of common villagers and to extend social and economic benefits to the very groups followed by social and political awareness. People’s dependence on government for organizing them and bringing about their development has proved to be wrong and ineffective. It underscores the importance of NGOs’ role in development as social mobilizers of people for development.

Because of their proximity to grassroots, flexibility of approach, ability for experimentation and people centered and people oriented model of development, the NGO have emerged as one of the most viable alternatives in the search of development planners to bring about sustainable development and effective structural change from centralized to decentralized delivery system. The NGOs optimize the institutionalization of the time-honoured practice all over the world of rendering noble, selfless community services on voluntary and non-profit basis by resourceful, enlightened, public spirited, active citizens and social workers. The NGOs have a crucial role to play in the process of nation building and planned socio-economic development everywhere, particularly in developing nations like India. Development plans, programmes or projects initiated by the government have little or no chance of success without the total involvement and full and active cooperation and participation of the people in the various interfaces of the development process. Herein lies the critical importance of NGOs as the dynamic instruments of the civil society, as citizen groups, as community organizations and as people’s own institutions for mobilizing the participation of local people into the government/voluntary agency sponsored development process in planning, implementing and monitoring development programmes on their own initiative to suit the felt needs of the people at the grassroots levels.
It has become almost a truism in the eyes of many that NGOs are more successful than governmental bodies in attaining the goals of rural development, in terms of implementing projects and programmes. NGOs are increasingly considered important in bringing about other aspects of rural social change serving as agents in the creation of (or strengthening of existing) civil societies and good governance and also fostering democratic and alternative approaches to mainstream development policy and practice.34

Types of NGOs and their Functions

NGOs, reflecting largely their historical evolution, can be divided into six categories.

1. Relief and Welfare Agencies (RWA) like Catholic Relief Services, various missionary societies, and so on.

2. Technical Innovation Organizations (TIO) - NGOs which operate their own projects to pioneer new or improved approaches to problems, and which tend to remain specialized in their chosen field. Like the International Aga Khan Foundation and the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh.

3. Public Services Contractors (PSC) - these NGOs are mostly funded by Northern World Government and work closely with Southern Government and official aid agencies. The NGOs are contracted to implement components of official programmes because it is felt that size and flexibility would help them perform the tasks more effectively than government departments. Like CARE.

4. Popular Development Agencies (PDA) - Northern NGOs and their Southern World intermediary counterparts which concentrate on self-help, social development and grassroots democracy, Like BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Development Committee)
5. Grassroots Development Organizations (GDO) - Locally based Southern NGOs whose members are the poor and oppressed themselves, and which attempt to shape a popular development process. They often receive support from PDAs, though many receive no external funding at all. Like Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) of Ahmedabad, Credit and Savings Groups in the Indian Sub-continent.

6. Advocacy Groups and Network (AGN) - Organizations which have no field projects but which exist primarily for education and lobbying. For example, the Third World Network based in Penang, Freedom from Debt Coalition in the Philippines.  

There is another classification of NGOs under four broad categories:

a) Operational or grassroots NGOs;

b) Support NGOs;

c) Network NGOs; and

d) Funding NGOs.

The functions of each type of NGO are —

a) Operational or Grassroots NGOs

Grassroots NGOs directly work with the oppressed sections of society. Some NGOs are big, while some are small. The grassroots NGOs could be either local based, working in a single or and small project location, or be working in multiple project area in different district, states and regions covering a larger population. The approach and orientation of grassroots NGOs also differ. Based on this, the following distinction can be made among grassroots NGOs- i) charity and welfare NGOs focus on providing charity and welfare to the poor, ii) ‘development NGOs’ focus on implementation of concrete development activities, iii) ‘social action groups’ focus on
mobilizing marginalized sections around specific issues which challenge the distinction of power and resources in society and iv) empowerment NGOs combine development activities with issue based struggles. Charity and welfare NGOs are involved in charity, welfare, relief and rehabilitation. A large number of church based on NGOs operating in South and North- East India still have charity and welfare component in their programme. Development NGOs may be involved in providing (facilitating the provision) development services such as credit, seeds fertilizers, technical knowhow, etc. Such NGOs concentrate on development of socio-economic environment of human beings. Social action groups focus on mobilizing marginalized sections around specific issues which challenge the distinction of power and resources in a society. These NGOs are involved in raising of consciousness of the people, awakening, organizing, recording of priorities to suit social justice, redeeming the past and opening doors to opportunities to the oppressed and exploited. Empowerment NGOs combine development activities with issue based struggles. They may be involved in making provisions of services such as savings and credit; but, they utilize such activities for social, economic, political and cultural empowerment of the poor. MYRADA utilizes credit management groups and watershed programmes for not only to bring development among the oppressed communities but also for social and political empowerment.

The main difference between social action groups and empowerment NGOs is that former do not normally undertake development activities as they believe in addressing the root causes of poverty. On the other hand, the empowerment NGOs undertakes development activities because the people cannot undertake the struggles with ‘empty stomachs’. They believe that empowerment of the people is an essential prerequisite for development.
Hence, they strive hard to enable the people to become free from all the exploitative structures.

The approaches followed by the charity, welfare and development NGOs are related to delivery system. As the activities undertaken by the first two types of NGOs are non-controversial and do not lead to clash of interests in the countryside, the government too extends full support to NGOs working in these areas. The support from donor agencies to NGOs involved only in charity and welfare is on the decline as it is felt that this strategy is based on giver and receiver relationship and not of building the capacity of the people. It is also believed that it is paternalistic in nature and causes human degradation. However, activities undertaken by the last two types of NGOs, namely, organization of the people belonging to the disadvantaged groups, bringing in social and political consciousness among them, enabling them to realize and assert their right etc, are basically related to the development of the target group communities and the approach to development is political. Hence, their activities are often politicized. With the increased government funding for anti-poverty programmes through NGOs and the growing legitimacy for NGOs, many government officials and political leaders also joined the fray often by floating their own NGOs. Grassroots NGOs now undertake a host of activities including environmental projects, dry land development, savings and credit programmes schemes for income generation, health and education projects, the formation of agricultural labour unions, etc.

b) Support NGOs

Support NGOs provide services that would strengthen the capacities of grassroots NGOs, Panchayati Raj institutions, Co-Operatives and other to function more effectively. Examples of these types of NGOs are SOSVA, SEARCH, etc. Some of the support NGOs render support in specific
thematic areas such as health, education and environment, while others provide support in generic issues such as perspectives, leadership, human resource development, management, etc.

c) Umbrella or Network NGOs

Network NGOs are formal associations or informal groups of grassroots and or support NGOs which meet periodically on particular concerns. An example to this is FEVORD-K (Federation of Voluntary Organizations in Karnataka). They act as a forum to share experiences, carry out joint development endeavors as well as engage in lobbying and advocacy. The participation of network NGOs in lobbying and advocacy is, however, a recent phenomenon.

d) Funding NGOs The primary activity of these NGOs is funding grassroots NGOs, support NGOs or people’s organizations. Most funding NGOs in India generate a major part of their resources from foreign sources; though there is an effort by some to raise funds from within India. The organizations such as CRY, Dorabji Tata Trust, Aga Khan Foundation, in India provide funds to NGOs. Foreign NGOs like Action Aid, Oxfam, etc., with headquarters in the developed Western countries, mobilize resources from both the public and governments in their respective countries to help grassroots NGOs in their efforts to initiate and implement pro-poor rural development activities. Foreign NGOs do have field offices here. Some bilateral agencies like German Development Corporation (GTZ) DANIDA, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) etc, do provide funding support to NGOs, but, these cannot be called as NGOs.
In India there are six types of NGOs which have been classified on the basis of their position and the scope of functions. These are:-

1. Big indigenous NGOs which are working in various regions of India.
2. Big Indian NGOs which are working in various districts of a particular Indian region.
3. Medium size indigenous NGOs engaged in one or more than one village.
4. Small indigenous NGOs functioning in various villages.
5. Big international NGOs giving financial aid to the indigenous NGOs.
6. Small international NGOs which directly work at the provincial level.37

**Changing Strategy of NGO**

Historically the functions of NGOs have been changing according to the changes in the vision of development organizations. As individual NGOs have grown in sophistication regarding the nature of development and the potentials of their own roles, many have undertaken increasingly effective strategies involving longer time perspectives, broadened definitions of the development problem, increased attention to issues of public policy, and a shift from exclusively operational to more catalytic roles. David Korten identified four generations in the evolution of NGOs programme strategy in order of

a) Relief and welfare;
b) Local self-reliance;
c) Sustainable systems development; and
d) Peoples movement.

Since all sections of the society may not have simultaneously completing all stages of evolution, all generations of NGOs are available in the same society.38 All the four strategic orientations appropriately co-exist within the larger NGO community – and sometimes even within a single NGO. At the
same time there is an underlying direction of movement that makes it appropriate to label these orientations as first, second, third and fourth generation.

Generation-I: Relief and Welfare

Many of the larger international NGOs like Catholic Relief Services, CARE, Save the Children, and the World Vision began as charitable relief organizations, to deliver welfare services to the poor and unfortunate throughout the world. The same pattern is observed in some national NGOs such as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). Many of them were focused originally on natural disaster and refugee situations relating to floods, famine, and war. The objective was meeting immediate needs through direct action. The focus of attention was on individuals or families and the benefits they received depended entirely on amount of resources at the disposal of the NGO. But as a development strategy, relief and welfare approaches offer little more than temporary alleviation of the symptoms of underdevelopment.39

Generation-II: Small Self-reliant Local Development

Recognizing the limitations of relief and welfare approaches as a development strategy, in the late 1970s many NGOs undertake community development style. Projects in area such as preventive health, improved farming practices, local infrastructure development and other community development activities. What distinguishes these efforts from relief and welfare approaches is the stress on local-self reliance, with the intent that benefits would be sustained beyond the period of NGO assistance. Often second generation NGO activities parallel those of government, but are defended on the grounds that the government services are inadequate in the villages in which the NGO works. Second generation strategies by definition
do not attempt to address the causes of the inadequacy of other services
providers or the larger institutional and policy context of the NGO’s own
activities. The scope of attention is limited to individual village or
neighborhoods and to the specific local groups the NGO is assisting.40

Generation-III: Sustainable System Development

Currently segments of the NGO community are again engaged in a re-
examination of basic strategic issues relating to sustainability, breadth of
impact, and recurrent cost recovery. At the heart of the re-examination is a
realization that: 1) Acting on their own they can never hope to benefit more
than a few favoured localities; and 2) Self-reliant village development
initiatives are likely to be sustained only to the extent that local public and
private organizations are linked into a supportive national development
system.41

A growing number of NGOs are coming to realize that they need to
exert greater leadership in addressing dysfunctional aspects of the policy and
institutional setting of the villages and sectors within which they work. This
means moving to a third generation strategy in which the focus is on
facilitating sustainable changes in these settings in a regional or even
national basis. It will likely mean less direct involvement at village level for
these particular NGOs and more involvement with a variety of public and
private organizations that control resources and policies that bear on local
development. These may include local and national governments, private
enterprises, other independent sector institutions etc. The more fully the NGO
embraces third generation programmes strategies, the more it will find itself
working in a catalytic, foundation-like role rather than an operational
service-delivery role - directing its attention to facilitating development by
other organizations, both public and private, of the capacities, linkages, and
commitments required to address designated needs on a sustained basis.
Generation-IV: Peoples Movement

This generation of NGO strategy is characterized by a shift in the emphasis from reform to transformational activity through people’s movements.42

Voluntarism in India

While associations called NGOs may appear to be a new phenomenon in India, in the past several of their roles, activities and functions were performed by a variety of local organizations. History bears constant testimony to non-state efforts and initiatives towards building structures of socio-economic security by the people for themselves. The state did not constitute a frame of reference for these activities; the traditional mode of organizing self-help and philanthropy was essentially societal in nature. It is only with a growing centrality of the modern state that terms such as ‘voluntary’ and ‘non-governmental’ sectors came into prominence to describe those few welfare and developmental activities which originate outside the state structure and within society. On the other hand, as part of anti-colonial resistance, the 19th and the early 20th century saw the emergence of numerous indigenous organizations devoted to social and religious reform.

The second major shift in the 19th century paradigm of organizing voluntary work occurred at the turn of the century when Gandhiji entered the Indian political scene. Gandhiji sought to recapture the constructive spirit within society which drew upon the innate resources of the people. Gandhian movement focused on reorganizing people’s own resources for goals of material and spiritual wellbeing. Over a period of time, several organizations were formed in different fields-education, health, women, animal husbandry etc. In the process it drew the hitherto excluded sections of society into the national movement, but more particularly into the growing voluntary sector which was now described in terms of social service and constructive work. It
was during this phase that social action acquired a pronounced political content. This fusion of social action and politics resulted in viewing the colonial states as a road-block rather than facilitator to the process of social transformation. Instead of making demands on the state for extending its protection and patronage to voluntary or social reform action, it emphasized people’s own empowerment through constructive work. The third trend emerged from the new realities created by the growing hegemony of the congress party during the independence movement. Its root lies not in the world of social action but in politics, which then spilled over into the world of social action. Beginning with the ideological splits in the independence movement, this trend got consolidated in the early decades after independence. It owes its origin to the mobilization and organization activities of the communist and socialist parties. Several groups of activists working either in their front organizations, or later independently, began to take up, issues ignored by the groups belonging to social reform or the Gandhian genre.\(^{43}\)

After independence, a change in the perception of development and the role of NGOs in rural development took place. In 1950s and 1960s, it was assumed that the economic growth through state investment was the answer to poverty. This was to be accompanied by welfare programmes for the disadvantageous which were thought to be incapable of participating in programmes aimed at economic growth. The Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development initiated community development effort in rural areas to enable the people to participate in economic growth programmes. On the other hand, the responsibility of the welfare programmes was vested with Social Welfare Ministries of the state government. Non-governmental Organizations were approached by national Government and aid agencies to assist in the implementation of these Community Development and Welfare
Programmes, especially in rural areas. Many of the NGOs which were active during independence movement were involved in the implementation of Community Development Programme. Christianity based aid agencies supported the work of Missionaries involved in welfare activities with a focus on health and education especially in South India and tribal areas of central and eastern India. During the 1960s, it was found that economic growth, combined with welfare activities at the micro-level, were not adequate to alleviate poverty. Hence, the Indian government initiated Small and Marginal Farmers Development Programmes with a view to alleviate poverty. Indian NGOs were called upon by the government to enlist support of the local population for these programmes and help out in their implementation. This was in addition to their involvement in welfare vocational training programmes. During this period, alternative perspectives or development and role of NGOs were also emerging. A large number of people with liberal and radical ideologies were attracted to the Marxist analysis to understand the fundamental causes behind poverty and exploitation. The causes of poverty were understood to be the class nature of the society with rich exploiting the poor. They, therefore, rejected the development models followed by the government on the grounds that they mainly addressed the symptoms rather than the root cause of poverty. Therefore, a large number of young people and section of intelligentsia with Marxist perspective sought to organize the poor and the exploited in rural areas.

The period of the later 1960s and early 1970s also witnessed the rise of the Naxalite movement in various parts of India especially in Telengana area of Andhra Pradesh. The movement criticized the way in which the land reform programmes was being implemented by the government. The Lohiaites and Gandhians came together under Jayaprakash Narayan and
launched total revolution movement. Emergency was imposed all over the country. These developments paved the way for the emergence of NGOs working around issue based struggles (often referred as social action groups) in different parts of the country.\textsuperscript{45}

These social action groups focused upon issues such as price rise, emergency rule, corruptions, deficiencies in the implementation of land reforms, and inability to enforce minimum wages. By the mid 1970s, the impact of Marxism was felt on the Church. With the advent of liberation theology, there was a split in the church based institutions. Further, the Janata Party’s rise to power in 1977 raised hopes among the poor as well as in social action groups. This hope was soon dispelled. As a result the social action groups lost faith in the ability of the formal political processes to bring about transformation in the society. The early 1980s also witnessed the emergence of idea on the need for people’s participation, conscientisation and empowerment in poverty alleviation, as well as the need to take the diversity among the poor on the basis of class, caste, gender, ethnicity, etc, into account.\textsuperscript{46} Thus, the post emergency period witnessed the people coming out of the church, and the left, Gandhian and Lohiaite movements getting converged as far as the development at the grassroots level was concerned. They focused on raising awareness and conscientisation with the objective of mobilizing the poor to influence the social and political structure.

The need to improve the quality of life of the poor made the activists from different bagrounds to talk of development by the mid 1980s. The fragmented and compartmentalized development models which still had charity and welfare components were replaced by integrated development models. The gender justice, environmental concerns and human rights were understood as part and parcel of structural aspects of the society which together with class, caste and ethnicity were responsible for the exploitation
of the marginalized sections within the society. The priorities and agenda of donor agencies also influenced the development perspective and programmes at the grassroots level.\textsuperscript{47}

The trends contributed to the emergence of two distinct types of grassroots NGOs. Development NGOs sought to work around concrete sectoral activities relevant to different poverty groups in the countryside (agriculture, watershed, environment, off-farm and non-farm income generation activities, health, literacy, etc.) Although the charity and welfare NGOs were also undertaking these activities, the crucial difference was the development NGOs sought to adopt participatory and innovative approaches. The other type of NGOs that came into existence was empowerment NGOs which formed organizations for different poverty groups in the countryside and strengthened their effort to address the root causes of poverty such as class, caste system, lack of access to the market, etc. The main difference between social action groups and empowerment NGOs was that the latter were not transient, did not focus on a single issue, and were not averse to accepting foreign funding. Thus by the late 1980s there were four different grassroots NGOs which often coexisted in the same locality - welfare NGOs, development NGOs, empowerment NGOs and social action groups. While the first two types of the groups often entered into collaboration with the government, the last two often confronted with state policies, legislations and practices. Support and network NGOs also emerged during the late 1980s, to lend capacity enhancement support to grassroots NGOs and create a platform for NGOs to meet, share experience and carry out coordinated action.\textsuperscript{48}

The development NGOs were called upon by international aid agencies and Indian government to supplement the government micro level poverty alleviation and basic needs programme in share where development
NGOs were perceived to have comparative advantages. These comparative advantages are of reaching the poor, eliciting and enabling people’s participation, promoting innovative and cost-effective approaches to poverty alleviation, identifying and disseminating appropriate technology, making the government’s delivery system accountable, etc. Thus, a broader role was perceived by the Indian Government for NGOs. For the first time, the planning commission included a separate sub-section on ‘Involvement of Voluntary Agencies’ in the Seventh Five Year Plan document (1985-1990) under the chapter Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Programmes. Plan expenditure of Rs.100-150 crore was earmarked towards the collaboration between the government and NGOs. In order to channelize these resources for NGOs involved in poverty alleviation and rural development programmes, the Council for Advancement of People’s Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) was established in 1986. This agency was also entrusted with the responsibility of providing support to the NGOs.

By 1990s, significant development started taking place in India and across the world. NGOs have become popular with government and aid agencies in response to certain development in economic and political thinking. The development policies of the World Bank, bilateral and multi-lateral agencies, and aid transfers from them, have come to be dominated by what is referred to as a New Policy Agenda, which gives a prominent role to the NGOs in poverty alleviation and the development of civil society. The agenda has two elements: economic and political.

The economic agenda, followed in India since 1991, see the markets and private sector as efficient in producing the goods, services and in achieving rapid economic growth. Liberalization, globalization and privatization of the economy are the key elements of this agenda. The economic growth is considered as a key strategy for poverty alleviation. However, the strategy
proposed to achieve economic growth is different to the one promoted in the 1970s. It is market-led rather than state-led, export-oriented rather than capital intensive and women inclusive rather the women exclusive. The aid agencies prescribed that Indian government should gradually reduce its role in service provision and development, and leave this task to the NGOs as these are seen as cost-effective and efficient service providers.

India is a home to a large number of NGOs. Estimates of the total number vary, from the thousands to the tens and hundreds of thousands, depending on the definition of the term. The number and concentration of NGOs varies by states and regions, with the greatest aggregation of Indian NGOs existing in the Southern states, stemming in part, from a long history of Christian social welfare and humanitarian efforts in the region. As elsewhere, Indian NGOs involved in rural development exhibit a wide range of attributes. In general, though, the typical Indian NGO is a small agency, concentration on the delivery of specific services and projects to a few villages within a limited geographical area, with a handful of operatives, and limited funds and other sources. Despite their diversity, one widely perceived similarity among Indian NGOs (and of government as well) is their focus on poverty alleviation and the empowerment of the poor. How that is to be achieved, though, is a point of departure.51

According to Riddle and Robinson (1995), there are two approaches towards rural development taken by Indian NGOs. The first has as its basis a concentration on the mainstream practice of addressing the systems of poverty and underdevelopment by delivering a range of integrated programmes and projects with the involvement of NGOs and grassroots organizations as implementers. According to Farrington and Lewis (1993), there is a consensus among these NGOs and government which operate
under this approach, that the existing social and economic structures, although inherently important, (are) not directly challenged.\textsuperscript{52}

The second, contrasting approach based on the idea of social action – that effective rural development requires a fundamental transformation of the existing economic and social structure established and maintained by the state. Under this the role of NGOs consists of mobilizing the poor to make direct challenges and demands on government for equitable service delivery, improved wages and working conditions, and other entitlements.\textsuperscript{53}

This focus, which takes a closer look at the underlying cause of poverty and underdevelopments can be seen in the proliferation of issue based groups representing such concerns as women’s issues, child labour, occupational health hazards, and displacement projects as well as those advocacy groups that work directly on behalf of the political rights of the rural poor. The growing focus on popular participation and social action is, according to Robinson et.al. (1993), a major point of difference between NGOs and the Indian government.\textsuperscript{54} Although the approaches have fundamental differences, some NGOs believe “that the two are not inimical and that equatorial improvements and empowerments and complementary and can reinforce one another.”\textsuperscript{55} While a NGO which adopts the social action approach to improving rural people’s conditions may find it difficult to enter into cooperative or collaborative relationships with certain government organizations, this does not automatically preclude such possibilities.

**Development, Participation and the Role of NGOs**

Nation-building signifies the citizen’s socio-psychological and political sense of unity, oneness and belongingness to the nation – the supreme feeling and emotion of national unity and his duty of allegiance to and protection and safeguarding of the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty
of the nation-state in the midst of cultural diversity. A unity of the people is the hallmark of a nation. It has to be fostered, nurtured and maintained by the care and concern of its state and its agencies for the citizens’ welfare and all round development through recognizing and safeguarding citizen’s rights and freedoms, by effectively enforcing the rule of law and removing the constraints that inhibit their participation in administrative and political life of the nation and enjoyment of the fruits of development.

Milton Esman observes, “One of the tasks of nation-building and development is to bring members of the national community into a network of relationships and institutions which enables them to participate actively in decisions affecting their individual and group welfare.”

According to democratic theory, participation is the process by which goals are set and means are chosen in relation to all sorts of social issues in such a way as to increase the allocation of benefits in a society to match the needs and aspirations of the people. In other words, it denotes development participation.

The modern notion of participation is one of citizen involvement in the various interfaces of the developmental decision-making process: planning, implementation and evaluation of plans and policies. Unless there are real opportunities for people to have a say in planning and implementation of the development programmes the adult franchise alone may mean nothing at all. As Hari Mohan Mathur opines, the real purpose of participation is to develop human capabilities for development, decision-making and action. Participation means a kind of local autonomy in which people discover the potentialities of exercising choice and managing their own development. Participation of citizens in the development process is most important aspect of development administration. It is the sine qua non of success, viability, efficiency, economy, effectiveness and equity of
development administration and legitimacy of the government. People’s participation also renders speedy but less costly implementation of development policies possible by providing useful information to administration in programme planning and implementation.

Development to be successful has to be people oriented i.e. people should become both the subject and object of development. During the era of economic growth and top-down planning people were viewed merely as the object of development. For administrators and development bureaucrats, people usually did not count for much and local knowledge and capacity were undermined even for simple changes in rural life. Most administrators wanted the public to be passive recipients (object) of the services provided by government agencies. What development administration failed to see was that the immense capacity of people to contribute to their own development. People are greatest assets and resources waiting to be tapped. The development of human resources should one of the top priority goals of socio-economic development in all developing nations like India.

The responsibility for the task of creating awareness among the people about their rights and motivating, inspiring and guiding them to participate in the development programmes has to be shared both by the government and voluntary agencies. The latter can cope with the problem more efficiently as catalysts, motivators, conscientisers, innovators and educators. The government by itself cannot achieve the development goals and objectives without people’s support and cooperation. Being citizen action groups and community based social service units the NGOs should rise to the occasion and become joint partners in the challenging task of people-centered participatory development and nation-building.

In fact NGOs’ participation in development planning, implementation and evaluation and monitoring of programmes and projects, irrespective of
whether these are self-initiated or sponsored and funded by the government is the manifestation of citizen’ participation and involvement in the development process. For, it is important to realize the fact that the NGOs are peoples’ own, non-profit, service-oriented grassroots (local) agencies, for bringing about collective welfare of the people and the country as a whole.\textsuperscript{58}

In developing countries like India the realization of development goals, such as strengthening of national integration and alleviation of poverty, unemployment, inequality, illiteracy, ignorance and environmental degradation hinges upon active participation and full involvement of the citizens of the state in public life (affairs) and development tasks. While citizen participation is the means of attainment of national and individual development, decentralization - political and administrative, territorial and functional, economic and financial is the means of promoting people’s cooperation and support for democratic decentralized development. There exists a triangular relationship between decentralization, democracy and development.\textsuperscript{59} Institutions of local self-government (PRIIs and municipalities) signifying political decentralization are essential for development; for they alone make popular participation in decision-making effective and informed. Further, achievement of social change and economic development requires spreading of efforts so that local communities and individuals can participate and bring under ideal conditions the local energy, enthusiasm and initiative for local development activities. Experience suggests that it is only when people have control over decisions and their execution that administration can become responsible and responsive to the people’s needs and aspirations.\textsuperscript{60}

As the UN document specifies:

“An important reason for decentralization is to develop more effective popular participation in local affairs including activities of central
government carried out locally, such participation not only enhances the dignity of the individual and the sense of community at all levels, but also adds and provides a means for local control over them. It makes the programme more responsible and better adapted to local needs. Moreover, through participation, members of the community may be induced to do more on their own initiative and make a further contribution to government programmes.”

Here lies the importance of NGOs as organizations of the “members of the community” prepared to take initiative and undertake developmental tasks on their own and contribute to the implementation of government programmes. The NGOs are the outcome of the process of decentralization and debureaucratization.
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