SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Non Governmental Organisations are involved, in a variety of programmes, to improve the overall status of women in India, including the Karnataka state. The participation of NGOs in poverty reduction and alleviation is also noteworthy. The consentization and organisation of people are considered to be basic, to promote welfare and development. NGOs work in collaboration with government agencies and other organisations. The common programmes that are initiated by NGOs are Women empowerment, community development and income generating activities. For which they initiate activities like, awareness, education, non-formal education, skill training, watershed management for economically low income group. Most of these programmes are initiated focusing on women. Some of the studies conducted earlier, pointed out that NGOs at grassroot intervention failed to make any significant dent in the status of women.

The present study evaluated the role of NGOs in promoting women and child welfare, and analyze the impact of the programme on the target group and the community. The study was undertaken in Mysore district of Karnataka state in south India, where around 43 NGOs are involved in developmental activities. Among them, 20 organisations were found to be having target group as women and children. The first phase of the study assessed the role of NGOs in promotion of women and child welfare. The study covered all the 20 NGOs located in different parts of Mysore district, that were involved in women and child welfare.
An indepth study was carried out on two of NGOs - MYRADA and ODP- 200 women from each group, spread over in 42 villages of Mysore district were selected on a random basis. A total of (1-6 years) 25 children from each group coming under the services of NGOs were selected. All the selected women and children were beneficiaries belonging to either NGO group being covered by their programme services and activities.

The results of the study indicated that all the 20 NGOs are registered under the society's act of 1960 of Karnataka. The NGOs were functioning with the staff strength of 276 members, 50 percent of them being field level workers. Majority of NGOs (13Nos) were housed in their own buildings. By and large, though all the NGOs were having multiple objectives, major importance is being given to women and child welfare programmes.

The strategies adopted by these NGOs to implement the programme include both developmental and participatory activities along with the social and welfare aspects. It is significant that 50 percent of NGOs are involving the target group in taking decisions with regard to programme planning. The functional area of NGO ranged from covering the entire state to selected urban slums in Mysore district. It was observed that the NGOs were having problems in implementing the programmes due to lack of cooperation from the target groups, limitation of funds and personal resources. However, more number of NGOs (8) were being funded by the foreign agencies followed by Indian agencies and local donors. Hence, financial resource was not a major constraint for sustaining NGO programmes and activities. NGOs Perception, analyzing the situation of target group indicated poor health status of women
and children to be of major concern followed by maternal and infant mortality, low literacy, unemployment and child labour. Hence, based on the need assessment of the target group and the availability of funds, NGOs activities included awareness, education and child welfare programmes and skill training to promote family income. The NGOs were also conducting self assessment to find out progress and felt that programmes have been successful to a “great extent” as perceived by the NGOs. The specific areas of improvements were in health condition followed by reduction in child labour and poverty with improved social awareness. The evaluation of NGO programmes also indicated, that there has been an increase in the participation of women in politics and in the decision making process concerning the personal/family issues. However, the decision making regarding the number of children and finance were highly significant compared to other issues such as marriage, education of children, jobs and voting. Moreover, NGOs programmes promoted a better credit system through banks or cooperative societies through awareness programmes.

The assessment of the background information of the target groups of both MYRADA and ODP indicated almost a similar pattern in terms of socio-economic and dietary characteristics. Demographic characteristics of the families showed that 35 to 44 percent of members belonged to group of 30 to 40 years. About 65-69 percent of the selected by both the NGO groups belonged to SC, ST and backward communities. While assessing the socio economic status of the group, it has been found that while the literacy level of women was higher in case of MYRADA, the number of wage earners was almost the same in both NGO groups. Though living conditions were similar,
the groups under ODP enjoyed better facilities in terms of sanitation and drinking water.

The results show that families under both depend on a wide range of sources for their livelihood. However, ODP groups generate more income from business than the MYRADA groups. The monthly expenditure pattern on different items was also similar between the two NGO groups.

The data on the dietary pattern revealed a similar pattern to that prevalent in rural areas of southern Karnataka. The cereals were the predominant item in the daily meals. "Ragi dumpling" is the staple food served with vegetable curry and pulses. Dairy products are included in the form of coffee or tea in the daily menu. Food habits of the families under both NGO groups were simple and conform to a uniform pattern. By and large, women the "food provider" were the last to partake food, and they were eating the left over and usually they did not get sufficient quantity or quality food. It was also observed that the food habits of women were being influenced by both tradition and socio economic status of the families.

Health care practices are found to be similar in both NGO groups with all the children getting immunized. However, the awareness regarding nutrition and health care was very low. Higher percent of women under MYRADA were found to be tobacco users. On the whole the awareness regarding the community health services could be rated as satisfactory.

The somatic status of women as an indicator of the nutritional status revealed a normal BMI with a WHR higher than normal, indicating lower segment over weight/obesity. The women under both groups of NGOs were
also showing a lower protein status. Thus, most of the women having normal BMI were showing lower protein status with higher WHR which could be attributed to a cumulative effect of long term malnutrition due to inadequate food intake and increased physical activity.

Nutritional assessment of children by the criteria of BMI showed that more number of children in MYRADA come under normal range than the ODP group. However by the criteria, Ht/ Age, Wt/Age and Z score, greater number of children are found to be malnourished. Even the morbidity pattern is found to be similar among children of both groups of NGOs where respiratory problems like cough, cold and fever are the common afflictions.

The data on the perceptions of women beneficiaries on the “programme benefits” indicated higher positive responses in case of MYRADA than ODP.

Time frame of NGO intervention with target group showed a longer duration in case of MYRADA. Moreover, more number of NGOs were also functioning in the target areas of MYRADA. In the case of ODP more than 54 per cent of the beneficiaries were being covered by their programmes and activities.

Responses of women regarding NGO programme/activities revealed that most of the NGO programmes and activities were significantly different between the two NGO groups. Except in the area of education, activities in other areas like social action, conscientization political awareness, material help, financial help, community development were significantly different between the groups. The responses indicated the perception of women
regarding NGO programmes and activities were higher in case of MYRADA as compared to ODP.

A higher percent of women from either group of NGOs opined that the programmes were beneficial to “some extent”. The percentage of women opining that the programmes were beneficial to “great extent” were found to be within 18 percent for all activities except for awareness and literacy (37 to 39 %). There were also few respondents who remained neutral.

It is a fact that NGOs are playing an important role to improve the status of women and children. However, the outcome has not been substantial to bring effective change in the quality of life in the target groups. NGOs through their intervention failed to make any significant changes at the grassroot levels especially with regard to the status of women and children. Perhaps they failed to distinguish between “condition” and position of women (condition is the material state in which the poor women live-low wages, poor nutrition, lack of access to health care, education training etc. Position is the social economic and legal status of women as compared to men).

The study also indicates that the target groups are more attracted to the material help than the activities like awareness education, conscientization etc. Hence, the NGOs should emphasis on changing the attitude and awareness level of the target groups.

The results of the present study indicated that though NGOs are by and large involved in improving the condition of the target groups particularly women and children, their activities in terms of meeting the basic need has been limited. This implies that the activities of NGOs are not reaching the
target group equally. Though there is change in the awareness level, the target population continues to live following the same pattern of life in rural areas. There is no notable change in food habits, work and in attitude of the target group.

It is suggested that for better functioning of NGOs the following maybe considered.

1. A coordinated approach and a positive attitude towards other NGOs functioning in the same target area may be helpful in better implementation of the programme.

2. More emphasis should be given to income generating activities through which women's self-reliance can be achieved.

3. The area of operation of the NGOs should be identified and decided according to the financial sources of each organisation.

4. The adoption of developmental and conscious rising strategies together may create a better impact of the NGOs intervention than following one strategy alone.

5. NGOs should promote women's organisations functioning as liaison between them and strengthen them through training.

6. Promoting better health status largely depend on activities meeting the nutritional needs, hence nutrition related issues have to be emphasized.
This study provides no basis for denying the fact that NGOs have vital role in promoting women and child welfare. However, the impact of their programme does not appear to be substantial. Moreover, NGOs need to focus greater attention to the nutrition factor in all development programmes.

It is also emphasized that since NGOs have a leading responsibility to bring changes in the position and condition of women, they should take up their task with more commitment and finds new ways to bring significant changes in the life of the weaker sections especially women and children. Identifying the appropriate inputs for improving the quality of life, appears to be a practical approach.