Chapter V
The Role of non-Governmental Organization in Peace-Building in Kashmir: An Overview
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THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION IN PEACE-BUILDING IN KASHMIR: AN OVERVIEW

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been witnessing Armed Conflict from the last more than two decades, and Kashmir region in particular has been the most affected. Keeping the previous chapters in view it becomes evident that the conflict has led to the loss of human resource and caused infrastructural damage to some of the important institutions. As in other conflict zones of the world, Non-Governmental Organizations also started operating their programs for the rehabilitation of the conflict-affected population. The present chapter is an attempt to understand the role of NGOs in peace building in Kashmir. Firstly it tries to present the brief picture of historical evolution of the then present NGOs and their aims and objectives. Moreover it attempts to focus on those NGOs which got their existence with the aim of building peace in the state.

Kashmiri by nature are very social and hospitable1. Decades of foreign rule and oppressions have brought people together and united them to fight the forces of servitude and oppression. It is after the end of the foreign rule in the sub-continent; the people of Jammu and Kashmir started a new life of freedom and progress. It is after this great event in the history of Kashmir that people began to translate into practice all their ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. Prior to 1947, particularly after the political awakening since 1931 when people raised revolt against the hereditary rule of Maharajahs, the social awakening was taking roots in the society. The Naya Kashmir Programme formulated by National Conference, the state's popular political organization and by the then most popular leader of the state Sheikh Abdullah, was a mirror of the people's aspirations. It envisaged a program based on equality, fraternity and social justice. This program was implemented after 1947 and is even now the guiding instrument of the State.

1 Alvi, Zahore Ahmad, “Voluntary Social Work Organizations: A Study of Kashmir Valley”, Department of Sociology, Aligarh, 1997p. 71
NGOS in Kashmir: Historical Frame Work

Non-Governmental organizations in Kashmir are of recent origin. The oldest organization is the Dharmarth trust founded as early as 1846. The trust was established under royal patronage of the then ruler of Kashmir, Maharaja Gulab Singh who had contributed a handsome amount of Rs.5 lakhs for its establishment. The organization however had some religious color and was thus confined to particular religious community. As special mentioned may here be made of the earlier non-governmental organizations who served the cause of social awakening and social upliftment of Kashmir and paved the way for the organized effort in these directions. Kashubandu was the first such son of the soil who was great social reformer and raised a vehement voice against all the evils and superstitions that has spoiled the society in the valley. As early as 1932 has started a movement to awaken the people from the centuries old slumber had a great impact on the society. Unlike in the rest of the county, the social reforms movements in Kashmir would not address to a single religious community. On the hand the movements were secular and would regard all religious communities as a single social community.2

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the then Chief Minister of the state appeared on the scene as early as in 1931. Besides engaging himself in political awakening, he simultaneously called for social awakening and social reform.

After 1947 this trend has weaned away and many organizations cover all the communities in the valley though many of them by their nomenclature appear even now to be religious organizations this is because the hold of religion is even now very strong in the valley.

Moreover, the non-governmental organizations now are organized and managed in new ways. The organizations are registered and many get financial assistance from the Government and other agencies. The programs are such that emphasis is laid on the modern practices and the activities are directed towards present day problems. Education and social awakening for peaceful life are dealt with on priority basis.

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In addition to the organizations included in this study, there have many other organizations which exist in name only. These organizations have no doubt been established with sincere motives but they lack organizational and programing activity. The illiteracy has also crippled these organizations. Moreover, the bigger organizations have lowered their utility.

One common aspect of the Non-Governmental Organization in Kashmir is the wider programs they chart out for their functioning. The programs include education, social upliftment, peace building and social crusade. The vastness of the programs hampers the smooth functioning of these organizations and they fail to deal justly with all the programs. The financial worries also are disgusting and create many troubles in their functioning. By and large, the organizations are doing much work in the society. They have done a good service in the fields of education, freeing the people from the trammels of ignorance and backwardness, and in eradicating many evils that used to create havoc in the society.

In order to trace the historical roots and foundations of non-governmental organizations working in Kashmir we have designed a directory of the voluntary organizations operating in Kashmir Valley. Information regarding their establishment, whether registered, addresses aims and objectives and activities have been shown against these organizations. The list is strictly in chronological order arranged according to the date of establishment of the organizations.\footnote{Report from Office of the State Social Welfare Board and Directorate of Social Welfare, Srinagar, J&amp;K, June, 2013}

1. Unjamani-Nusratul Islam: This organization was established in 1899 and is located at Razakedal, Srinagar Kashmir. It has more than 15 executive members with the aims to impart religious, social and moral education to Muslim children, to bring about cultural, social and moral reformation in Muslim society, to impart worldly and religious knowledge for peaceful cooperation and coexistence as a means for the betterment of human life, to promote social welfare of the community and mitigate hardships of its less privileged sections, financial aid to needy students, the establishment of schools and libraries, and of orphanage, etc.

At present it is running several schools and colleges like, Darul-Aloorn Noor-Islam Oriental College Srinagar, Islamia Science and Commerce College, Srinagar,
Islamia High School. Besides the above mentioned educational activities, it also looks after the Jamia-Mosque of Srinagar. Hence education is the first tool for peace building thus is worth mentioning in our study.

2. *Sanatan Dharam Yovak Sabha;* It aims at spiritual and religious progress of society, promote measures for eradication of social evils, like dowry, ignorance and conservatism from society. It provides financial assistance to weaker sections of society, particularly, restitutes, widows and orphans, it also provides financial assistance to various educational institutions; looks after Sheetal-Nath Temple.

3. *Shri Alakh Sahiba Trust:* To impart Dharmic and social education to the weaker and backward sections of society. It provides meager financial assistance to destitute and weaker sections of the society. It often provides education loans to the needy students.

4. *Unjamani-Tableequl Islam:* Estd. 1935, Srinagar, Kashmir to serve the cause of Islam by preaching the universal brotherhood of Islam for universal and eternal peace. It also aims at establishing Qurani-Darasgahs, Islamic schools and libraries and side by side such institutions which can serve the cause of present times, to organize seminars and meetings in order to show the relevance of Islam with the modern economic, political and social institutions, to solve the day-to-day problems with the help of Islamic principles, to eradicate communal disharmony by creating universal brotherhood and establishment of such society that will be free from the shackles of caste, creed, colour or lingual prejudice; to eradicate social evils and fight for the right cause of the poor within Quran and ‘Hadith’; and finally it aims at helping poor and orphans students, widows and destitute.

To fulfill its aims and objectives the Unjamani had organized weekly and monthly seminars at various places to educate people in every walk of life.

5. *Unjamani-Hussaini;* Estd. 1937. Nawpora, Srinagar, Kashmir this organization aims to help needy people especially poor students; to promote the social well-being of the community. It runs a Qurani Darsgah; maintains one library.
6. **Brahman Maha Mandal**: Estd. 1941. Sopore, Kashmir. It aims to promote religious and spiritual progress of society. Its activities are very limited: However, it often provides financial assistance to widows and orphans.

7. **Muslim-Auqaf Trust**: (J&K); Estd. 1943; Regd. Mujahid-Manzil, Srinagar, Kashmir. The trust was founded by the most popular leader, great harbinger of social work in Kashmir and the then Chief Minister of J&K State, Janab Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. The main aim of the trust is the upliftment of the people of Jammu and Kashmir in each and every walk of life; to construct a society in which justice, political social and economic shall prevail; to protect the weaker sections from the cruelty of the users; to lend ‘Qarzi-Hasna’ (interest free loans) to needy and helpless people, to provide financial assistance and scholarships to poor and orphan students; spread education in distant areas of the state; provide regular financial assistance to weaker sections, widows, orphans and destitute; to work for a society based on the principles of social justice, personal integrity and equal rights and opportunities for all.

The trust has done a lot of work in the above mentioned fields; It looks after and manages tens of mosques and Muslim shrines, in Jammu and Kashmir State; For its administrative convenience the trust has different wings, such as, accounts branch, educational wing, 52-sub-auqafs, Baitul-Mal, Revenue and Estates, Agriculture, Horticulture and Forest. The trust runs following schools:

a) **Jamia-Madinatul-Uloom, Hazratbal.**  
b) **Causia Girls High School, Khanyar, Srinagar.**  
c) **Darasgah-I-Alamdar, Chrar Sharif, Srinagar.**  
d) **Mantaquee Middle School, Awantipura, Srinagar.**  
e) **Darasgah, Rajpura, Pulwama, Kashmir.**

The Baitul-Mal has been established for the purpose of providing financial assistance to widows, orphans and destitute. From 1971 to 1976, the trust has provided to such people, a sum of Rs. 21,376/- as financial assistance; Rs. 19,566/- as scholarships to students; Rs. 74,452/- as ‘Taleeful-Qaloob’, Rs. 20,975/- as loan to the needy people; the trust is also running a press of its own, known as “New Kashmir Printing Press”. Throughout J&K State. The trust has 52 branches in different areas of the State.

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8. Hindu Educational Society: Estd. 1943; Regd. Srinagar, Kashmir. The main aim of the society is to impart higher education and training to the Kashmiri youth, irrespective of caste, creed, sex or religion; spiritual and moral development of people and inculcating human principles; it also aims at providing scholarships to 'the needy students and financial assistance to the weaker sections of the Hindu society. The society runs following recognized educational institutions:

1. Gandhi Memorial College, Srinagar.
2. Hindu High school for boys, Srinagar
3. Hindu Girls' High School, Srinagar
4. Lala-Ded Memorial High school, Srinagar
5. Roop Bawani Girls' High School, Srinagar
6. S.D. Girls' High school, Srinagar
7. Tiny Torts (English Medium Balwadi School).

9. Jammati-Islami (J&K): Est. 1944; Regd., Maisuma, Srinagar, Kashmir: Though basically a religious organization established in J & K in 1944, right from the beginning this organization has addressed itself to a crusade against social evils, injustice and illiteracy. Its social programme presently focuses attention & on the Removal/illiteracy through establishment of schools with modern facilities for education and all round development of children and libraries and reading rooms for general public. Through its "Fallah-i-Am Trust" the organization provides financial assistance to destitute, handicapped and other needy persons, children, widows, and poor students. Currently, it runs 30 schools.

10. Nari Kalyan Kendra: This organization basically aimed at widows rehabilitation as is evident from its earlier name - Vidhwe Rikshini Sabha. But now it has taken up a program which is extended to the womenfolk in general. It gives old age pensions to widows and trains them and other women in various handicrafts to enable them to earn their livelihood: It has its own workshop, the manufacturers of which are sold out to government and other handicraft agencies.

11. Samaj Sudhar Samiti: Estd.1947; Regd. Schwala Mandir, Srinagar, Kashmir. It is a socio-religious organization which besides propagating the Hinduism has a socio-economic programme for the betterment of people. It provides financial assistance to widows, orphans, destitutes and has a society for training widows and
young girls in different arts and crafts, such as tailoring, knitting, etc.; it also provides scholarships to needy students of the community; it also arranges widow marriages in the valley.

12. Indian Red Cross Society (J&K branch): Estd. 1947. The three main ideals for which the Red Cross means to base its activities are:

a) Fostering of friendliness.
b) Education and promotion of health
c) Mitigation of suffering specially during natural calamities and wars. This also includes creation of spirit of service and mutual help specially in young. Besides, it aims at; giving aid to the sick and wounded members of the Armed Forces of the Union; to aid the demobilized sick and wounded members of the armed forces of the Union; to organize maternity and child welfare, Junior and Senior Red Cross and nursing and ambulance works; to provide comforts and necessary garments, etc., for hospital and health institutions; to work for improvement of health, prevention of disease and mitigation of sufferings faced by the society; to provide relief for the mitigation of suffering caused by epidemics, earthquakes, famines, floods and other disasters whether in J&K state, India, or outside; to maintain peace among different sections of society.

It renders war-time Red cross services; supplies medicines, equipments, garments, milk powder and cash grants to welfare extension centres, institutions, hospitals, dispensaries, family planning centres, orphanage and schools; runs two welfare units for women welfare where it provides free medical aid etc. for them; it has started voluntary blood donation service by establishing two blood banks, one at Jammu and one at Srinagar. It provides grants in cash and kind for welfare services to Indian council for Child Welfare and other voluntary social work agencies; at present it has a project in hand to rehabilitate the children of lapiers; it sends helpless patients outside state or country for free treatment; has two destitutes homes; it provides financial assistance in cash as well as in kind to the victims of natural calamities; the Junior and Youth or Senior Red Cress are its powerful wings and they work under the spirit of “I Serve” and promote the cause of health, service to the needy and international friendliness; cooperates with the state government and other agencies in the observance of events like World Health Day, Cleanliness Weak, Propaganda for the promotion of family planning, etc., distributes literature, films, slides on health education and activities of the Society, etc.
13. **Ganesh Mandir Prabhandak Committee:** Estd. 1948; Regd. Habbakedal, Srinagar, Kashmir. Though basically a religious organization, it also aims at providing financial assistance to widows, destitutes, and orphans. It runs a school in which priority is given to the poor children; it also arranges on its own expenses the cremation of persons, if approached; provides financial assistance to widows and orphans.

14. **Unjaman-i-Sharee Shia (J&K):** Estd. 1949; Regd. Badgam, Srinagar, Kashmir: To propagate the Shia theology and promoting the social well-being of the Shia community, it has also an educational programme and has established a number of schools in the valley; it also aims at providing financial assistance to various individuals and for organizations concerned with the welfare of Shia community. It has established institutions such as, Darul-Aloom, Jamia Babul-Aloora, Criotential languages, honours in Arabic and general educational institutions; it provides financial aid to poor and orphan students in the community; it has a handicraft centre, to train girls in various handicrafts and has a reading room attached to its headquarters at Badgam.

15. **A.G. Parmanand Trust:** Estd. 1953; Regd. Srinagar, Kashmir: The main aim of the trust is educating the girls of the society and inculcating in them a true sense of good citizenship and service to the motherland, irrespective of caste and community; it also aims at fostering a spirit of mutual understanding and tolerance coupled with a broad and human outlook to develop a deep and abiding sense of universal brotherhood, untainted by parochial sectarianism. The trust runs a complex of the following three institutions:

a) A high School for poor girls.

b) Industrial institution or center for widows, destitute, women and girls.

c) Research wing.

16. **Rama Krishna Ashram:** Estd. 1957; Regd. Shewala, Karan Nagar, Srinagar, Kashmir: To impart and promote the study of Vedanta and its principles as propounded by Sri Rama Krishna; to impart and promote the study of arts, sciences and industries; to train teachers in all branches of knowledge mentioned above; to carry on educational work among the masses; to establish, maintain, carry on and assist schools, colleges, orphanages, hospitals, dispensaries, homes for the infirm, famine relief work, and other educational and charitable work of such nature; to print, publish, sell or distribute journals, periodicals, books or leaflets for the promotion of its objects.
Ashram runs an institution where it imparts knowledge in the above mentioned fields; it has a library and organizes lectures, seminars and conferences for eradication of social evils prevailing in the society; it also organizes camps in remote places of the valley; publishes books, periodicals and leaflets for the propagation of its mission\(^5\).

   To promote measures for communal harmony and universal peace and brotherhood. It provides financial assistance to widows, and needy people; scholarships to students at different levels with emphasis on medical and technical education.

18. **Students' Welfare Happy Home**: Regd. Estd. 1960; Anantnag, Kashmir: Purely educational with an emphasis on all-round development of children in the vicinity. The organization has established an institution, ‘Experimental Institute, to advance the cause of education and improve the standard of education by making experiments, especially in infant education; it provides education upto 8th standard.

19. **Social Reform Committee**: Estd. 1960; Watal Dub, Shahabad, Sopore, Kashmir:
   Social reformation, educational and moral upliftment of people; to eradicate illiteracy and ignorance, prevailing in the vicinity.

   The Committee runs a co-educational middle school at Sopore; one middle school at Shahabad, one Qurani Darsgah at Shahabad and a school for teaching Arabic language.

20. **Taleemi-Committee**: Estd, 1961; Sopore, Kashmir: Social, moral and spiritual reformation of the people of the vicinity. The committee runs one primary school and one Qurani Darsgah; both these institutions are meant for providing free education to the children of weaker sections of society.

21. **Islamic Youth Federation**: Estd. 1962; Baramullah, Kashmir: To educate youth especially students about Islamic Way of Life; to popularize the ideals of social service. It lends books free to poor students; it has a library; organizes meetings and seminars for eradication of social evils and to prevent people from social misery.

\(^5\) Alvi, Zahoor Ahmad, Op. Cit., p. 64.
22. **Lion’s Club**: Regd. Estd. 1963; Residency Road, Srinagar, Kashmir: The club exerts tremendous influence for national welfare/ international amity and peace, and human progress socially, culturally and economically; to create and foster a spirit of “generous consideration” among the peoples of the world through a study of problems or international relationships; to promote the theory and practice of the principles of good government and good citizenship; to take an active interest in the civic, commercial, social and moral welfare of the community; to encourage efficiency and promote high ethical standards in every walk of life; to help and sympathy people in distress, aid to the weak and substance to the needy; the motto of the club is ‘We Serve; it also aims at supplying drinking water to the villages, helping the blind girls to lead an independent and full life, to save poor heart patients by arranging expensive treatment for them, donating blood for the patients or smaller projects like helping some widows, encouraging the socially handicapped, building a rapport with the lepers.

It undertakes certain projects and provides financial assistance for various welfare activities: Some of the projects undertaken and completed in earlier years: 1) a cash donation of Rs. 2,000 was given by the Club to T.B. Association; 2) a children’s park was built and donated to S.M.H.S. Hospital, Srinagar, for their child welfare programme; 3) in Indo-Pak war of 1965, the members of the Club donated 54,000 ml of blood to Jawans needing transfusion; 4) more than Rs. 5,000/- were donated to various flood relief funds; 5) In July 1975, a sum of Rs. 400/- was donated to Blind Boys Association of Delhi; 6) Distinguished donations of blood were made during the All India Blood Donation Week in 1975; 7) On 26th January, 1976, the Club collected and donated 40C garments, 290 packets of team, fruits and sweets amongst the 245 inmates of leper Home; 8) about 215 inmates of Leper Assylum were taken out for the first time in 100 years, for one day in July 1976, to enjoy a picnic; 9) the Club took up in the month of September, 1976, the project of setting up a school for blind girls in collaboration with the Blind Welfare Association and was completed by the end of 1976; 10) on 14th November, 1976, Children’s Day was celebrated at Bal-Ashram having 34 boys on roll, when new pairs of shoes and fruits were distributed to each child there; 11) in November, 1976, the water supply pipes were laid down in the village Zainakoot, the village adopted by the Club, for the village
uplift programme, and further uplift projects are in hand for implementation in this village; 12) on 15th September, 1976, the Lion’s Club took an oath in support of anti-dowry movement and it was affirmed by the members that they will not give or take the dowry at the marriage ceremony of their children; 13) on 26th November, 1975, one sewing machine was presented to the widow of a police constable who died while on duty, and 14) again on 26th January 1977, Lion members along with their Lionesses donated their blood to the blood-bank.

23. Jamait-i-Hamdani: Regd. Estd. 1964; Zainakadal, Srinagar, Kashmir: Though basically a religious organization, it also addresses itself to social welfare and educational upliftment of the society; To reform and organize the Muslim community; to work for the removal of social evils and cultivate brotherly feelings among all; to strengthen the Muslim community through spiritual, moral, intellectual and social training; to carry on educational work; to help the sick, needy and distressed.

It provides financial assistance to widows arranges marriages of orphans and poor girls; It runs a middle school and ‘Taleemi-Darsgah’s’ at Sopore and Bandipur, it also runs one high school in Srinagar.

24. Anand Niketan: Regd. Estd. 1967, Anantnag, Kashmir: To uplift backward classes and weaker sections of society in all walks of life, it also aims at development of children in all respects and promotion of measures for preserving culture and unity of country. It runs one middle school and one Balwadi centre; the inmates of Balwadi are provided free education and mid-day meals.

25. Bhaqwan Shree Gopi Nath-Jee Trust: Estd. 1968. Regd., Kharyar, Habbakedal, Srinagar, Kashmir: The organization basically aims at spiritual and religious development of Hindu community; it also aims at the upliftment of destitutes, orphans and widows; to raise the social and moral standards of the society. It has been aiding destitutes with a monthly allowance, each from its resources; in 1977 a lump sum aid of Rs. 375.00 was given to a destitute lady on the occasion of the marriage of her daughter and ‘yagneopavit’ of her sons from the trust funds, besides aid in kind collected from the trustees all this shows that the trust is a charitable institution, all money is spent for the uplift of destitutes and for spiritual progress of its aspirants.
26. Kashmir Women's Handicraft Centre: Estd. 1968; Regd. Exchange Road, Srinagar, Kashmir: It aims at providing employment to lower sections of women/girls folk to supplement their family income. It runs a training-cum-production centre, to train poor women/girls folk in various arts and handicrafts; a non-formal educational programme is also provided for the trainees.

27. Zanana Behtari Society: Estd. 1968; Regd; Bararaullah, Kashmir: The society mainly aims at women welfare and child welfare by educating the poor and destitute children and giving training to destitute women for their complete rehabilitation,

The society runs the following institutions:

1. Craft Centre for Women: This centre is meant for providing free training to educated and illiterate women in various crafts. Priority is given to widows, destitutes and orphan girls.

2. Primary class; for educating girls from 1st to 5th class.

3. Ealwadi; where poor children of age group 0 to 6 years is given elementary education for around development of child. They are also provided free milk and mid-day meals.

4. Condensed Course Programme: It is basically an adult educational programme for women who have neglected their studies. Preference is given to widows and orphans.

5. Block Printing press: It is a training-cum-production centre for the rehabilitation of destitute girls. A monthly stipend of Rs. 30/- is given to the trainees.

6. Destitute Home: It is meant for the rehabilitation of destitutes, both men and women.

28. Knitting Centre: It is also a training-cum-production centre for women. Besides above activities the Society also organises seminars and meetings for the eradication of social evils prevailing in society.

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29. Islamic Study Circle: Estd. 1968; Awkaf Building, Lal-Chowk, Srinagar: Though basically a religious organization, it also aims at the promotion of social welfare activities for the upliftment of weaker sections of society; to raise the moral and social standards of the Muslim community; to inspire people to develop virtues and give up vices by cultivating purity in action within basic principles of Islam.

It has a central library-cum-reading room in the heart of the Srinagar and different branches in various areas of the valley in a very limited sense it helps students and orphans and arranges their admissions within country; it organizes seminars as well.

30. Muslim Educational Trust: Estd. 1968; Read Sopore, Kashmir: The trust was basically established for devising ways and means to identify talented young men and women from the community and encourage them for the pursuit of higher studies. Since its inception the trust has been providing financial assistance to the intellectually promising, but economically handicapped and deserving young men and women for the pursuit of higher education in the country and abroad; it has also got a socio-economic programme for the weaker sections of society. Today to the trust has become a big complex centre the needs of all people in every walk of life.

Activities and the institutions run by the Trust are as follows:

1. Financial assistance for higher studies; from 1959 to 1975 the Trust has provided financial assistance to 321 young men and women for higher education in the country and to 19 persons, interest free loan for higher studies abroad.

2. M.E.T. Teachers' Training College: It is meant to prepare good teachers with missionary spirit for reconstruction and trans-formation of society and to shape the destiny of the nation.

3. To help the talents of the community and help the buds to sprout and bloom to the full, a residential public school has been established in 1974.

4. Women's Polytechnic; This institution is meant for training women for self-employment and self-generating economy through small sale agro-based industries. This institution has three main centres; a) carpet weaving centre; b) paper machine centre and c) embroidery centre.
5. Balsevika Training Institute: It provides training to 50 teachers every year in collaboration with the Indian Council of Child Welfare.

6. For narrowing down the swelling numbers of the educated unemployed, the trust has been training the youth in its “Stenographic Institute” for clerical posts.

7. ‘M.E.T. Departmental Store’ has been established to popularise the principles underlying the ‘cooperative movement’.

8. Under the auspices of the trust and Industrial cooperative Production Centre Ltd. has provided work for ten women workers who are weaving carpet under the guidance of the skilled instructors.

9. The Trust has a hostel for women.

10. The trust has a middle school at Wussan and other at Bengal Tangmarg; it also runs one primary school at Rajori.

31. Majlis-un-Nisa (J&K): Estd. 1970; Regd. Sopore, Kashmir: To promote the general welfare of the women of the State by helping those who are: a) educationally and economically backward; b) physically handicapped; and c) socially unadjusted. The organization extends help to a large number of disabled persons and widows; it also provides help to orphans and deserving students and deputes women for medical, educational and social welfare training; it also provides legal assistance to women to enable them to get and maintain their rights; it helps women to find employment in various departments and institutions in the state; besides, it organizes seminars, public meetings, to promote women awakening and emancipation; it runs the following institutions:


2. Condensed Course of Adult Women, Sopore.


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7. Iqbal Memorial Education Centre, Bandipur.
8. The Light House Education Centre, Sopore.

32. Educational Trust: Estd. 1971. Kapwora, Srinagar, Kashmir: It aims at promoting educational and socio-economic programmes for the weaker sections of society, especially widows, orphans and needy people. It has a library for lending books to needy students and one hostel for students coming from distant areas of the valley; it also runs one handicraft centre for women/widows and orphaned girls; they are provided free training in various crafts such as knitting, and tailoring, embroidery, crewel work, sozni and tilla; it often provides scholarships to students for higher studies.

33. Women Handicrafts Production-cum-Training Centre: Estd. 1971; Shaheed Ganj, Srinagar, Kashmir: It aims at providing opportunities for self-employment to needy and educated unemployed girls of the locality. It runs a Women Welfare Centre where it provides free training to its initiates in various crafts such as leather work, crewel work, etc.

34. Dr. Ghulam Mohyuddin Trust: Estd. 1971; Residency Road, Srinagar, Kashmir, Head Office, London: The trust is established by a Kashmiri doctor himself, who lives in London. The trust aims at promoting and facilitating higher education especially in sciences and technology by providing financial assistance to students and scientists in these fields.

35. Yatoom trust (J&K): Estd. 1972; Regd. Shaheed Ganj, Srinagar, Kashmir: Maintenance and upliftment of downtrodden children, especially, handicapped, destitute and orphan children; also arranges for the marriage of poor girls and finances destitutes families and students in way of aids and loans.

It runs an orphanage and a home for blind at Bimna it also runs a hostel Gulshan Mahal Hostel for orphans and destitutes where free boarding and lodging facilities together with an education programme are available for orphan and destitute
girls it runs a ‘Kashmir Crafts Centre’ at Dalgate, Srinagar, where orphan and destitute girls are taught different handicrafts, it also aids and/or provides loans to poor families after a proper scrutiny, irrespective of caste, creed or religion; it has evolved a concept of Mass Marriage, where under the trust arranges marriages and bears all the expenses; the idea behind the mass marriages is to encourage and facilitate eradication of marriage evils, eating the Kashmir society; for handicapped it has a special programme where under the trust sends children and young adults to different institutions in the country for treatment and surgery, on-its own expenses 8.

36. Samaj Behbood Committee: Estd. 1973; Gawkdal, Srinagar, Kashmir: This committee has adopted a socio-economic programme to: a) fight hoarding, profiteering and black-marketing; and b) help socially backward classes in the area; to raise the social and moral standard of the community. The committee has set up a fair-price shop to provide essential commodities at controlled prices. It has a ‘Bai-tul-Mal’ which provides financial help to widows and other deserving people and educational scholarships to orphans and poor children; it also runs a coaching centre where children of the area are coached in their education.

37. Samaj Behbood Committee: Estd. 1973; Phag, Hajan, Kashmir: To raise the social and moral standards of people; to promote measures for eradication of social evils. To fulfill its aims and objectives it organizes seminars and meetings to educate people in all walks of life.

38. Zanana Dastikari Production Centre: Estd. 1974; Regd. Nawpara, Srinagar, Kashmir: Established by a London returned lady of an immense philanthropic nature, the centre has a socio-economic programme aimed at best exploiting the talents of girls from backward classes. It runs a handicraft centre providing livelihood to hundreds of girls and acquainting them with changing world around them, with a non-formal education programme; through personal efforts and influence of its secretary, it exports all its products to U.K.

39. Youth Welfare Committee: Estd. 1975; Khanyar, Srinagar, Kashmir: The committee has a social education programme, it has launched a crusade against social evils and arousing the socio-civic conscience among the people.

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40. Markaz-i-Behboodi-Khawateen (J&K): Estd. and Regd. 1975; Miskeen Bagh, Srinagar, Kashmir: To impart intensive training in arts, crafts and social work to enable women-folk earn their living and which would make them better housewives, conscientious citizens and social workers; to provide residential accommodation to working girls from rural areas; to run home for destitute women and needy orphan girls; provide nutritive food to preschool children in slum areas; to run guest house for VIP women; to promote setting up of voluntary organizations for welfare of women; to coordinate activities of various public, semi-public, autonomous or private agencies engaged in social and economic welfare of the women-folk, to undertake such social and economic activities which are helpful in the uplift of women in the state.

Presently, the organization trains free of cost hundreds of girls in various handicrafts; the society has launched a programme for informal education of women; it runs a home for destitute women; it also organises seminars, public meetings and social gatherings for the emancipation of women; it has a centre for ‘Gujars and Bajrwalas’ (nomadic and backward tribes) where they are trained and educated and are provided with free boarding and lodging; it has a cooperative store, where it provides different essential commodities to poor families on non-profit basis.

This organization is first of its kind in Jammu and Kashmir State headed by a zealous social worker, Begum Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, wife of the present chief Minister of J & K. State. It has a vast complex and an aggressive programme to emancipate the women of the state.

41. Hindu Youth Forum: Estd. 1975; Anantnag, Kashmir: To promote social welfare activities and inculcate high ethical morals, civic sense and self-service in the youth. It has a library-cum-reading room where it organises seminars and public meetings for the eradication of social evils.

42. Samaj Behbood Committee: Estd. 1975; Khwaja Gilgit, Sopore, Kashmir: Socio-economic programme aimed at adult education, eradication of social evils and training girls of backward classes in various arts and crafts. It runs an adult education centre; arranges seminars and meetings and has established a Handicraft Centre.
43. Gurdawara Prabhandak Committee (J&K): Regd. and Estd. 1975; Badshah Chowk, Srinagar, Kashmir: This is a state level committee of Sikh Community in the State and by an act of the State Assembly in 1973 it has taken over the management of all Gurdwaras in the State. It became effective body in 1975, when it began social upliftment and awakening of the community. The Committee has its branches throughout the State through which it provides financial assistance to widows and orphans; it runs ‘Gurunanak Social Welfare School’, which is open to all communities; it also gives loans to needy people for their adjustment in the society; it runs some high and middle schools throughout the state, which are open to all communities; it has a hostel where it provides free accommodation and free meals to pilgrims and needy people; it also organises mass assemblies to promote religious and spiritual progress of Sikh Community.

44. Kashmir Blind Association: Regd. and Estd. 1976; Zana Kadal, Srinagar, Kashmir: As its name envisages the association is concerned with the blind people in the valley, it aims at around development of blind people. It runs a day school where education by brail is imparted to blind girls; besides, some arts and crafts and music is taught to the girls; it also works to organize blinds in the valley and publicises their problems.

45. Shia Welfare Trust: Estd. 1976; Shaheed Ganj, Srinagar, Kashmir: The trust aims at social welfare of the community. It arranges public meetings to mobilize public opinion against social evils and educating the people for a better social life, it has a programme of providing help to the needy in the community.


47. Samaj Behbood and Amun Committee: Estd. 1977; Khanyar, Srinagar, Kashmir: It aims at a crusade against social evils, dowry, gambling, drinking etc; for this purpose it organizes weekly or monthly seminars and public meetings.

48. Shree Santrocha Singh, Gurmath and Tehsil Ashram: Estd. 1977; Baramullah, Kashmir: To educate orphans, destitutes and downtrodden people for their complete rehabilitation by providing them free education and technical training. To fulfill its aims and objectives it will start functioning in June 1978.
49. **Social Welfare Committee**: Estd. 1977; Sonapat, Kashmir: To organize social welfare activities for all-round development of people in the vicinity, to help destitutes and weaker sections of the society; being recently established it has yet to organize its activities.

50. **Falah and Behbood Committee**: Estd. 1977; New Colony, Rampur, Chattabal, Srinagar, Kashmir: To promote the social well-being of the community, to launch a crusade against social evils and arouse the socio-civic conscience among the people, it organizes seminars and public meetings for the reformation of society.

51. **Samaj-Behbood Committee**: Estd. 1977: Khwaja Bazar, Srinagar, Kashmir: To bring about cultural, social and moral reformation of the society; to promote social welfare of the community and mitigate hardships of destitutes and poor people.

52. **Falahi-ATO Committee**: Estd. 1977; Khansahib, Badgam, Kashmir: To raise the social and moral standard. Of the community, promote measures for eradication of social evils, like dowry, ignorance and conservatism from society. It organizes weekly and monthly seminars to educate people for social reforms and social welfare activities; It often helps needy people and orphans.

The purpose of above mentioned NGOs working in Kashmir with different aims and objectives, is to encourage the civil society of Kashmir and India in general and international civil society members in particular to come forward and join hands with the people of conflict prone valley of Kashmir so that the peace building activities may come in force and the issue of Kashmir may get solved peacefully.

53 **Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons**: Association of parents of disappeared persons (APDP) was found in 1994 in Srinagar, Kashmir, APDP is a collective of the victims of enforced disappearances in Kashmir, campaigning to seek justice and to get information on the whereabouts of the missing members of their families.

For more than two decades now APDP is the support base of the families of the victims of this human crime in Kashmir. APDP raises funds through contributions and donations from individuals and organizations to provide assistance to the affected families in numerous ways.

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The Association organizes regular inter-district meetings to enable members to extend solidarity to each other, share information and review the status of their legal cases. On the 10th of every month APDP organizes a sit in demonstration at Partap Prak Srinagar which brings together the family members. These meetings have played a vital role in keeping alive the issues of enforced disappearances in the public memory in Kashmir. Besides, advocacy for their cause these meetings also bring emotional and psycho-social support to the affected families.

Presently, APDP is able to reach out only to those small numbers of affected families who are members of the association and join its monthly demonstration 10th day of every month. Many of the families need timely and legally appropriate, although, minor advice, while many other families and assistance in filling cases and following them up. In the absence of any financial resources even assisting these members becomes difficult. It is therefore imperative to strengthen its capacities to reinforce and extend its potential as a frontline organization campaigning against enforced disappearances in Kashmir as well as providing assistance and support to the affected families.


The specific and substantive objectives of the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society are:

1. To strengthen the independent civil society movement in Kashmir.
2. To reactivate the paralysed (due to armed conflict) civil society of Kashmir by involving the secular democratic forces for alternate political activity.
3. The CCS is intending to create a forum where the important public issues could be deliberated, discussed and rationalized, particularly by the youth.
4. The CCS is trying to plan an important role in the process of conflict prevention and peace building, to combat the jingoist hysteria created by the governments of India and Pakistan.
5. To stimulate and to involve national and international political actions and to facilitate the formulation of concrete political proposal in the promotion of peace and democracy and to deal with the political questions that rise in conflict situations.
6. To build alliances with the Indian civil society and the European civil society for resolving the Kashmir imbroglio in a democratic and peaceful manner, for ensuring positive peace in the Southeast Asian region. Unless the structural causes and conditions that have given rise to the violent conflict are not eliminated, there can’t be positive peace. The negative peace process alone is not enough to do the job, because without positive peace negative peace may collapse.

7. To build institutions in the state of Jammu and Kashmir to protect and promote the civil and political rights of the people. Only institutions can be guardians of the rights of the people. Institution buildings are necessary for ensuring peace and the civic rights of the person.

Role of NGOs in Peace Building in Kashmir: Since 1990

Kashmir did not have the presence of vibrant Non-Governmental sector prior to 1989 although some organizations were present however they had confined their role to the spread of the religious education and helping the poor families. After the 1989, the conflict situation in Kashmir leads to loss of the human lives and other socio economic implications\(^{10}\).

Kashmir traditionally has been a plural society and very close-knit religious society. So there was very less scope for the NGOs to work in social sphere. If a child was without parent he/she would be supported his/her relatives. However, it was only after 1989, which lead to the entry of many NGOs in Kashmir. The reasons for the entry of NGOs has been the increasing victims of violence, curfews, close down of business and tourism, at the same time increased number of children who lost parents, psychiatric disorders etc.\(^{11}\). It has been also noticed that the earthquake of 2005 in Kashmir also led to the entry of some voluntary organizations to the valley.

Suri in his work on NGOs in Kashmir Agents of peace and development points that holding of elections in 1996 also helped in the establishment of NGO culture as government allowed media and NGOs to monitor the elections as being free and fair. The government also felt that these organizations could help in projecting a


\(^{11}\) Dabla, B. and /Save the Children – UK North Wst India Zone 1999. Report on the Research Project o Impact of Conflict Situation on Women and Children
democratic image at the international and domestic level. This led to the dramatic increase in number of NGOs in Kashmir during 1996-1997, the author points\textsuperscript{12}.

There are around 100,000 children without parental support in Kashmir (UNICEF) Margoob (2006) mentions that the number of institutions in Kashmir were very less or almost does not exist before 1990. As before 1986 there was only one institution in Srinagar. The requirements of institutions were increased after 1990s and most of the cases are chronic conflict. Conflict also had significant impact on the mental health of the people of valley. This is also revealed by the number of patients who are attending psychiatric hospital in Kashmir which has increased immensely since nineties.

Thus Non-Governmental Organizations found space and started working in different areas in Kashmir. These responses came at three levels, Local Organizations, National and International Non-Governmental Organizations.

To trace the evolution of NGO culture in Kashmir over the past few decades, we need to briefly look at the kind of society that has existed and exists in Kashmir today. The concept of an 'NGO' is a relatively new one, even in the international arena. The infusion of this concept of NGO into Kashmir is even more recent. Kashmir has traditionally been a plural society, which manifests itself in the concept of Kashmiriyat\textsuperscript{13} Kashmir has traditionally been a very close-knit religious society. As a result, the need for NGOs in the social sphere had never been felt. For example, an orphan in the pre-1989 period would immediately be adopted by one of his relatives or neighbours in accordance with their religious and social practices; hence the need for orphanages was never felt\textsuperscript{14}. This phenomenon was so wide-spread that every family in Kashmir could be called an NGO, since it had always played this role. Thus, very few social welfare or voluntary organizations had existed in Kashmir before the period of militancy.

The period after 1989 marked a watershed for NGOs in Kashmir and their need was deeply felt for the first time, with violence increasing, the number of casualties and victims of violence continued to rise. Over the next few years, with the

\textsuperscript{12} Suri Anirudh, Op. Cit., p. 29.

\textsuperscript{13} Kashmiriyat is used broadly to represent the idea of a separate identity for all Kashmiris, whether they are Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs, based on their distinct language, culture and history. It is said to be on the decline in recent years, which is believed to be the cause of communal tension in Kashmir.

\textsuperscript{14} Interview with NGO activists, and Historians in Kashmir University, July 2013
Indian army attacking militants and their supporters, Kashmiri society began to feel the brunt of militancy on their lives. Normal life in Kashmir being disrupted with curfews for many days at a stretch became a common occurrence. Life came to a virtual standstill at the height of the militancy as food and other supplies were disrupted, curfews were imposed, offices began to be closed down and the tourist and other businesses that Kashmir had thrived upon began to be adversely affected. With this came the need for someone to help ease the lives of the common people. Problems, like an increasing number of orphans, psychiatric disorders, lack of freedom of speech and expression as well as movement, unemployment and many others associated with the wide-spread violence affected the hitherto peaceful and thriving Kashmiri society.

As more NGOs and local initiatives started coming up to meet the needs of the society, there were other factors at work impeding their growth. Increased violence was a major hindrance in the effective functioning and development of NGOs, as they cannot function in an environment where the lives of its activists are constantly at risk. A second reason relates to the Government strategy to counter the increased militancy and its support among the masses. As the government moved from a defensive policy in the early 1990's to a more aggressive strategy to root out militancy, it let the people feel the harsh realities of militancy for themselves and refused to provide succour to the victims. The aim was to strike at the roots of militancy and erode the popular local support to militancy. The Government refrained from playing a positive role in the establishment of NGOs as it felt that active and effective NGOs could have cushioned the effects of militancy which would have led the local population to believe that militancy could be sustained without disrupting their lives. Without NGOs working to ease their suffering, the people began to feel the male effects of militancy and the Government strategy to eliminate support for militancy began to work.

The next big step in the evolution of NGOs started as the political situation came under some semblance of control in the mid-90s after extensive military action and dwindling support for militancy. The Government decided to hold elections in 1995 that would be free and fair, or at least appear to be so. Per that, it needed to have other democratic institutions in place, including the media and NGOs, which have increasingly become the forum for projecting a democratic image to international and
domestic communities. A study of the evolution of NGOs in Kashmir reveals a
dramatic increase in their number functioning in the State starting from the 1996-1997
period\(^\text{15}\). Most of these NGOs were sponsored by the Government or one of the many
governmental agencies working in J&K to restore some semblance of peace and
normalcy. These NGOs, which have come to be called GONGOs or Governmental
NGOs, sprang up in large numbers over a short span of time and exist till date, at least
on paper. The general trend in the realm of civil society in recent years in Kashmir
has been encouraging\(^\text{16}\). The number of NGOs have increased manifold, the reasons
for which are many. With the concept of Civil Society gaining a foothold in India and
to a certain extent in Kashmir, starting an NGO has \textit{“become the fashion\(^{17}\).”}
However, many of the people running these organizations are \textit{“not very sincere about
it and are just interested in making fast money”}. Also, such organizations are often
accused of being used by corrupt politicians and bureaucrats to \textit{“siphon funds to their
favorites\(^{18}\).”}. This is not to say that there are no people or organizations that
are making a genuine effort to establish civil society in this violence-ravaged State.

The spurt in the growth of NGOs has been spread over different domains: The
intervention of NGOs has been crucial, since the Government was found to be lacking
in many areas. An overview of the current state of NGOs shows that the main fields in
which they are active in Kashmir are the following; orphanages, self-help groups,
dialogue groups, medical care, rural development and employment generation-
oriented groups, widow care, disappearances, coalitions of NGOs, ecological and
environmental groups, and awareness groups.\(^{15}\) In terms of geographical distribution
of NGOs, there is a clear imbalance between Srinagar and other far-flung areas of the
State. Most of the NGOs are based in or around Srinagar, even though the areas
worst-affected by militancy are the border areas of Kupwara, Poonch, Rajouri,

\(^{15}\) Interview with officials of the state Social Welfare Board and Directorate of Social welfare,
Srinagar, J&K, July 2013

\(^{16}\) Dr. Navnita Chadha Behera, Personal Interview, 03 July 2011. Dr. Behera-is the author of \textit{State,
Identity, and Violence: Jammu and Kashmir} (New Delhi: Manohar, 2000) as well as many research
papers and articles on Kashmir.

\(^{17}\) Ms. Ashima Kaul Bhatia, Personal Interview, 07 July 2013. Ms. Bhatia works with WISCOMP and
co-ordinates its \textit{Athaads} project. She is also the author of a report, \textit{Transcending Faultlines: the
Quest for a Culture of Peace} (New Delhi: WISCOMP, 2001).

No. 1, 2003, p. 71. Gowhar Fazili teaches Political Science at the Government Women’s College,
Srinagar. He is a political activist and is deeply interested in ecological issues. He is also the co-
author of an important report on the impact of protracted violence on Kashmiri youth.
Baramulla etc. While there are some NGOs working in these areas, they are very few in number and are facing great difficulties. Poverty and extreme backwardness left far flung areas including the tribal areas of Poonch and Rajouri neglected even by NGOs and deprived of access to basic facilities like drinking water, education, health care, sanitation and means of livelihood\(^\text{19}\).

Among the active NGOs working in Kashmir, orphanages are the most prominent in terms of their work, reputation and goodwill. One of the worst affected groups during this militancy-rife period has been children, who have been rendered homeless, often as orphans\(^\text{20}\). The number of orphans created over the past 14 years of militancy is estimated to be anywhere from 15 to 25 thousand. However, most of the orphanages house only 100-120 children, and the number of orphanages actually working would not number more than ten. It is easy to see that an unacceptably large number of children are still not being taken care of. While the Government too has established a few orphanages, most of them are in a pitiable condition, and many opine that it might even be better for a child to be kept out of such homes.

Some orphanages like the J&K Yateem\(^\text{21}\) Foundation, Yateem Khanah, and J&K Yateem trust have managed to establish a good reputation for themselves based on their selfless work, though they might have their own shortcomings. Yateem Foundation has, within a period of 3-4 years, managed to establish itself as a reputed organization which lays great stress on transparency; this is one quality found lacking in most other NGOs. It was the first orphanage to have established a proper system of handling donations, stressing on transparency to gain the trust of more people and attract more donations. Its public audit system has been adopted by other NGOs. Yateem Foundation famously, and to the amazement of many, collected around Rs. 23 lakhs in the month of Ramazan for its activities. In the process, they set an example for other NGOs who often complain about the paucity of funds and limited ways of raising funds. However, people generally give generously for religious activities, but not much

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\(^{19}\) Mr. Shabir Kohli, Personal Interview, 27 July 2013. Mr. Kohli is the President of INSAAR, an NGO working in Poonch district for the welfare of tribals, mainly Gujjars.

\(^{20}\) Under its Violence Mitigation and Amelioration Project, Oxfam (India) Trust recently produced a rather unusual report, The Impact of Violence on the Student Community in Kashmir (2003), that documents the opinions of nearly 200 young Kashmiris on how the violence has affected their lives in terms of their education, its psychological impact etc. The primary research was conducted by a group of young Kashmiris familiar with the situation in the State.

\(^{21}\) 'Yateem' in Urdu for 'orphan'
for social causes. Moreover, there is a general consensus that orphans are the children of God and should be helped and taken care of in the best way possible.\(^{22}\)

Dr. Rouf, who works with Yaleem Foundation, represents a generation of Kashmir who left the Valley when militancy was on the upsurge in the early '90s and pursued their studies in different parts of India. They are exposed to different ideas and concepts prevailing in different parts of the country. On returning to their homeland, as many of them did in the past 2-3 years, they brought back these ideas and apply them here, in the words of Dr. Rouf, "the lessons learnt from the outside world" have guided him and helped him gain new perspectives. A graduate from Patna College, Dr. Rouf acknowledges that he got the idea of establishing an orphanage from the concept of 'Anathalaya' that was prevalent in the Gupta Dynasty. Similarly, Gowhar Fazili\(^{23}\) who spent his schooling and college years in Bangalore and Delhi returned with many ideas. He formed a unique group called SPACE (Students' Platform for Acquiring and Consolidating Experience), which is literally meant to be a space for student activity and self-therapy. Different group activities organized by NGG groups in Bangalore inspired Fazili to start a student group in Kashmir to give them a space where they could voice their opinions and listen to others without worrying about their implications. College life has to mean more than just classes, according to Fazili, and since colleges in Kashmir are currently not strong on extra-curricular activities, SPACE is a timely initiative to help the Kashmiri students form their own views and express them.

Environmental groups have been active in Kashmir in recent years, especially with the serious ecological problems that the world famous Dal Lake in Srinagar is facing. Therefore, Kashmir needed the immediate attention of environmental NGOs. The Save Dal Campaign was started by an Englishman named Charles Goschen, who was appalled at the condition of the lake during one of his visits to Kashmir. The Green Kashmir movement, started by Charles, managed to build an environment-conscious lobby in the militancy-ravaged State. However, his untimely death crippled the movement. Though it lives on, the Green Kashmir Movement has split and many more environmental groups, claiming to be working towards the environmental protection of the State, have been formed. One of them, HOPE, came into existence in April 1099, and has been working in the field of Solid Waste Management. HOPE

\(^{22}\) Dr. Rouf. Personal Interview, 17 July 2013. Dr. Rouf is Manager of the Yaleem Foundation.

also undertook a Solid Waste Management Project for the Dai Lake, handed over to
them by the J&K Lakes and Waterways Development Authority. Workers of HOPE
go to every individual houseboat daily to collect their waste. HOPE mainly
undertakes projects given to them by the relevant official authorities, besides
organizing public awareness campaigns. However, the state of environmental NGOs
is best summed up in the words of Saqib Qadri, Vice Chairman of Hope, "This is the
beginning, much more needs to be done, which is only possible when the people at the
helm of affairs, both in governmental and non-governmental organizations, show
concern, commitment and competence towards the job assigned to them."

The need for medical care NGOs has also come to the fore in the violence-
ridden State, but NGO efforts are found lacking in this field. *Medecins Sans Frontiers*
(MSF) is the only international NGO to have started, a psychosocial program in
Kashmir, after assessing the mental health situation among the Kashmiri population. MSF is also one of the very few NGOs that have actually ventured beyond Srinagar
into the neighbouring districts of Pulwama and Ganderbal block. MSF offers
psychosocial services, education and support in these districts, besides undertaking
activities to improve psychiatric care facilities in the Government Psychiatric
Hospital, Srinagar. Doctors at the Psychiatric Hospital appreciate the work done by
MSF in these areas, "MSF rebuilt the hospital building that had burnt down," and
without their help, medical services would have completely halted. MSF, however,
needs to exercise more caution and try harder to blend into the unique social context
existing in Kashmir, according to people who have observed it at work. The scope for
improvement thus definitely exists not only in terms of the work going on, but also in
the number of organizations working in this field.

While human rights have been a very delicate issue, with possibly the gravest
consequences, nationally and internationally, not many NGOs are working to act as
pressure groups to make the Government and armed forces accountable for their
actions. While local groups like the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons

Qadri is the Vice-Chairman of HOPE.
25 Arshad Amin. Personal Interview, 17 July 2013. Mr. Amin works with the MSF in Srinagar,
Kashmir. Additional input gathered from a report on MSF: Naqshab Afro, Naheed Hamdani and Sue
Prosser, "Medecins Sang Frontieres: Doctors without Borders in Kashmir", *New Hope*, vol. 3 no. 6,
26 Dr. Arshad Hussain. Personal Interview, 18 July 2013, Dr. Hussain is a psychiatric doctor at the
Government Psychiatric Hospital, Srinagar.
Chapter V: The Role of Non-Government Organization in Peace-Building in Kashmir: An overview

(APDP) are working to provide justice to the families of EID (Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances) victims, restrictions are often imposed on their functioning citing national interests and security reasons. Human rights have been a sensitive issue, and the Government has adopted a high handed approach towards it. NGOs fighting against human rights violations by highlighting such issues are deemed to be working against the State.

International NGOs (INGOs) seem to be having an even harder time in Kashmir. MSF, incidentally, is the only INGO that has not signed a Memorandum of Understanding (Moll) with the Government, which stipulates that any international NGO will have to seek the permission of the Government before venturing into sensitive areas, and will have to be accompanied by Government officials. Other INGOs like the International Committee of the Red Cross, which have a token presence in Kashmir, are required to sign the Moji. This translates into limited access to sensitive areas, and limited ability to publish their findings. Human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have produced damning reports of human rights violations in Kashmir by various Government agencies and the armed forces. These reports, many of which were published in the early and mid-90s when militancy was at its peak, caused the Government of India much embarrassment in the international arena. Consequently, the Government of India curtailed the INGO activities. They are allowed to conduct research work in the State, but are not given permission to publish any reports based on their findings. They also have to face restrictions in their field work, such as being taken on guided tours, which are likely to be manipulated to represent something entirely untrue. Thus, several limitations have been imposed on the working of International NGOs in Kashmir on the grounds of “national Interest” and “security reasons”. MSF, as mentioned above, has not signed a Moll, and thus enjoys more freedom and flexibility in their functioning. However, MSF does not venture into the political domain, and limits itself to the psychosocial and medical domains.

An interesting phenomenon that has been developing in different parts of the Valley is the concept of self-help groups. As in many other conflict-ridden areas, many humanitarian organizations provide unconditional aid in times of crisis in the form of money as well as essential goods. This backfires as people tend to become
dependent, expecting others to come and help them in every moment of crisis. To overcome this problem, which has manifested itself in Kashmir, the idea of building self-help groups has been developed whereby individuals and small organizations go to different villages, especially in traditionally-neglected districts, and help the village people take advantage of the different schemes brought out by the Government and social welfare agencies like the Women’s Development Corporation or the State Social Welfare Board. These people are encouraged, guided and provided basic resources to set up their own small businesses, be it poultry or weaving or starting computer literacy centres, or dealing collectively with the psychosocial problems of individuals in the villages. WISCOMP27, under its Athwaas28 project, is helping the formation of such self-help groups in villages. Athwaas is unique in its purpose as it seeks to empower people who are in a position to empower others in a similar predicament, thus creating a “ripple effect”, or a chain reaction. Villages in Kashmir can especially benefit from such projects as many far-flung villages are neglected by most organizations, and self-help groups seem to be the best way to empower the villagers, rather than simply make them more dependent.

Going by numbers, the largest NGOs in Kashmir is probably the Indian Army. The Indian Army is considered to be an NGO, broadly speaking, since it undertakes development projects and implements education and health care programs in areas where both the Government and other voluntary organizations have failed to make inroads. One of the recent programs of the Army was the Sadbhavana program in the border areas of Jammu and Kashmir. In Kargil, the locals’ implicit support to the intruders was proof enough to the Army in 1999 that it had lost its support base. The army then realized that “security and human development had to be intrinsic parts of border management”\textsuperscript{29}, Lt, Gen Arjun Ray, believed to be one of the officials behind the project, believes that the role of the Army has changed, and it is no longer possible to win the battle with the might of the gun or money. “\textit{It is necessary to win the hearts of the people to overcome the circumstances. The armed forces should not only aim to win the war but to avoid it all together.}” The Sadbhavana Project focuses on bringing

\textsuperscript{27} WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace) is a project of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility, based in New Delhi, WISCOMP strives to support women to form networks and increase their participation to strengthen their role in multi-track diplomacy processes in the South Asian region.

\textsuperscript{28} Kashmiri for “handshake”

development and dignity to the 109,500 people in the 190 villages close to the 265 km Ladakh-PoK border. All round development of the border areas to sensitize the people, it is felt, would greatly reduce support for the Pakistan-backed militancy.

Another key aim of this project is to check the spill-over of militancy into Ladakh. Hence, the Army has undertaken a major human development drive in Ladakh. With cooperation from the Bangalore IT industry, it has installed computers in schools. Volunteers from an NGO, Prakruti, are teaching students in Ladakh. The main thrust areas of the project are primary education, secondary and tertiary health care, community development and empowerment of women. While the project has been a success and has managed to make Ladakh a militancy free zone, the Army does realize that charity cannot be the engine of sustainable growth in these areas. Without sustainable and equitable growth over long periods of time, the Army faces the danger of losing the goodwill that it has generated over the years. Thus, plans are now underway to ensure the empowerment of the people to ensure growth by themselves through efforts facilitated by the initial help and guidance provided by the Army. Hopefully, the "astounding success" of Sadbhavana will hopefully be emulated in other parts of the Valley.

Also worth mentioning are some other groups which might not fall within any of the above categories but are doing commendable work. Among these is Helpline, an NGO in Bil Behar Tehsil which provides education to children from poor families. It trains a group of volunteers, both boys and girls, to teach children in the evenings. The aim is to create a similar ripple effect that local self-help groups aim to create. Helpline, run by Mr. Javed Ahmed Tak, himself suffering from disability, is planning to co-ordinate with other NGOs like WISCOMP, under its Athwaas project, to broaden the scope of their activities. Other groups like the Jammu & Kashmir Markaz- Behboodi Khawateen (Center for Women's Welfare) provide training in arts and crafts for women as well as a home for destitute women. Groups like the Zanana Dastkari Production Ltd and the Markaz Industrial Cooperative Society impart training and provide jobs to poor women in the Valley along with providing financial assistance to women and orphans for marriages, medical care and legal awareness.

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30 Ibid.
31 Gen. V.G. Pathankar, former Commanding Officer, 15 Corps, Srinagar in a talk on "The Current Situation in Kashmir" at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi, 6 August 2003.
Hussaini Relief Committee, which has been working actively to establish blood banks, has now embarked on awareness programs and is planning to branch out further with the help of funding from national NGOs like the AMAN trust and Oxfam (India).

International NGOs and national NGOs do have a minimal presence in the Valley. Similarly, cases where individuals from other parts of the country have come to Kashmir and settled here to work with the needy are rare, but do exist nonetheless. A couple from Pune, Bharti and Adik, are a good example of this rare phenomenon. A trip with an NGO from Pune to help victims of violence in the Valley had exposed them to the plight of orphans in the Valley. Seeing that their number was on the rise, they decided to stay back to run an orphan home and help widows as well. Despite facing resistance initially from the locals, the Army and the local clergy, they stuck on. Gradually, people accepted them and acknowledged the humanitarian character of their work. Their story, published in the local media, serves as an example for others. Such initiatives are very encouraging for the emergence of a NGO culture and community as a whole; hopefully it will spark off a movement to bring a semblance of normalcy into the lives of the people.

The situation is definitely improving now; with many NGOs initiating work in the Valley by working with and funding local NGOs that they have taken pains to choose. Thus, organizations like the AMAN trust and Oxfam (India), both based in Delhi, have allied with local NGOs to do the kind of work they are interested in doing. The importance of National NGOs is two-fold; not only do they bring with them the benefit of experience in this field, but also, equally importantly, they become a much-needed source of funding for the local Kashmiri NGOs: The experience and guidance provided by the national NGOs will be crucial since a major problem faced, by them in Kashmir is the lack of direction, and lack of knowledge in running an NGO effectively. That this problem can be solved in this way is corroborated by the fact that many NGOs in Kashmir that are working effectively and have established an enviable reputation for themselves are being run by people who have worked with NGOs elsewhere, and are familiar with managing an NGO.

Obstacles for Peace Building
Chapter V: The Role of Non-Government Organization in Peace-Building in Kashmir: An overview

It is important to identify some of the key problems that NGOs face in Kashmir. Firstly, and more importantly, NGO culture has not permeated Kashmiri society yet. As mentioned earlier, Kashmir has not had a history of the presence of NGOs, let alone voluntary organizations, working for the larger societal good in areas where the Government has failed. "Each family was an NGO by itself\textsuperscript{32}." This meant that Kashmiri society had never felt the need to organize such help groups on a larger scale. The culture of helping people was limited however to one's near and dear ones. One exception in the context of Kashmir is the payment of zakat\textsuperscript{33} that is generally used for the greater social good. But zakat\textsuperscript{33} is usually in the form of monetary assistance to the needy. It does not really help the needy become self-dependent nor does it mean that the donors are actually directing their time and efforts into helping the needy. So the culture of organizing a mass movement to provide organizational assistance to the needy is absent. "People are not ready to make sacrifices anymore," says an NGO activist\textsuperscript{34}. They feel they have suffered enough and lost enough in the resistance movement, which itself has never been able to become mass-based or even indigenous. "As a result, people are indifferent." Unfortunately, the movement to revive civil society\textsuperscript{3} has never been mass-based. It has simply involved and attracted individuals.

Secondly, the work of the few functional NGOs falls much below expectations, though there are exceptions to the rule. By any account, there are hundreds of NGOs registered in Srinagar under the Societies Registration Act, ranging from religious and media organizations to human rights and community-based organizations, all serving a specific purpose. A key point to take note of in the context of Kashmir is that there are several voluntary and charity organizations that are not registered as NGOs, but are doing the same kind of work and addressing the needs of the same kind of people as NGOs in other areas. Thus, any comprehensive list of NGOs working in Kashmir will have to include such organizations as representative of the actual situation in Kashmir. Often, the little work that has been

\textsuperscript{33} Zakat is the contribution/donation that is expected from every Muslim and is usually put at 2.5% of one's unspent income.
\textsuperscript{34} Khurram Pervez, an NGO activist, is a student at the Media Education and Research Centre (MERC), Kashmir University, besides working for the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations and Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons in Srinagar. Interview in June, 2012

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done on NGOs in Kashmir has ignored this important fact, thus making the situation seem gloomier than it actually is.

NGOs in a conflict zone like Kashmir do face unique problems, which obstruct their functioning in various ways. Problems for NGOs start from the time of registration itself. Trust has been the single biggest casualty in the past 14 years. Any new organization or group is looked upon with suspicion and often accused of being a hawala front for militants. Hence, it becomes essential for any voluntary organization to work under legal auspices to prevent being unendingly harassed. Over the past few years, a number of dedicated social workers or retired government servants have formed organizations to work for the welfare of the people. However, they soon realize that it is very difficult to get a society registered in Kashmir. Thus, discouraged from the start, many of them often drop out completely.35

Accreditation or registration of NGOs is done under the Societies Registration Act (SRA), 1860, The Public Trust Act, 1882, and the Charitable and Religious Trust Act, 1920 or the Co-operative Societies Act36. The SRA stipulates that any association with more than seven members should register. The arbitrary and political nature of accreditation manifests itself in the friction between NGOs and the government and efforts on the part of the latter to scuttle the activities of the NGOs37. In Kashmir, the problem is worse than in the rest of the country. Though registration under the SRA usually takes one or two months, in Kashmir it takes much longer. Before submitting their application for registration to the Registrar, applicants have to obtain a "non-involvement certificate" from their respective District Magistrates. Undoubtedly, it is necessary to ascertain the identity of each and every member of a new organization. The problem arises when this process takes a few years. Though the process is being expedited in recent years, it is still a very cumbersome process. This long delay occurs when officials of different agencies like the Police and the CID (sometimes, other

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35 In an interview with a Professor of History in Kashmir University, I was told that though he and his SOU were both interested in doing social work and forming an NGO to preserve the cultural heritage of Kashmir, they had decided against it after realizing the cumbersome process that registration entails. Coming from an erudite scholar, one can imagine how lay people would be deterred from such cumbersome paperwork and the verification process.

36 Hiroshi Sato, "India-NGOs: Intermediary Agents or Institutional Reformers?" in Shinichi Shigetomi (ed.), The State and NGOs: Perspectives from Asia, (Singapore: Institute of South East Asian Studies, 2002), p. 64.

37 A detailed examination and listing of problems being faced by HQOs regarding registration can be found in Voluntary Action Network India (VANI), Report of the Task forces to Review and Simplify Acts, Rules, Procedures Affecting Voluntary Organizations (New Delhi, 1994) and VANI, Laws, Rules find Regulations for the Voluntary- Sector, Report of the South Asian Conference 6-10 March 1996, (New Delhi, 1996),

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agencies also get involved) take an extraordinarily long time to verify the credentials of the members. This, in turn, is used as a tool by these government agencies to harass NGOs trying to work in sensitive areas and delay their registration processes to prevent them from starting work.

Kashmiri NGOs also face major funding problems. The sensitivity and gravity of the conflict in Kashmir is a double-edged sword as far as NGO funding is concerned. Ironically, a lot of money flows into these NGOs because of the fact that Kashmir is in conflict. The widespread Kashmiri Diaspora and members of the Muslim worldwide community channel their money to NGOs; whether they suspect it might be used for illegal purposes is another matter. Several foreign donors, including donors from European countries, especially the Scandinavian countries, give money to Kashmiri NGOs because of the conflict in Kashmir.

The gravity of the conflict and the suffering and trauma associated with it is the reason why NGOs need to exist and do exist in Kashmir. While the conflict attracts all sorts of funding sources, the fact that Kashmir is such a sensitive issue in the international arena requires India to tread with caution and take necessary preventive steps in the interests of national security. Thus, strict control and monitoring has to be undertaken for every organization since there is a high incidence of such organizations serving as hawala fronts for militant organizations. The government wants to prevent this, which makes the lives of NGOs difficult in different ways. These include frequent visits of security personnel, refusal to let members travel, or interact with people and organizations abroad, frequent questioning about financial accounts, etc. Foreign funding by legal means is also limited and closely monitored by the government. Any NGO that wants to acquire foreign funding has to obtain an FCRA\textsuperscript{38} number. NGOs in Kashmir find it practically impossible to obtain permission to receive foreign funding because the Government wants to keep foreign involvement to the minimum in Kashmir, the idea being that the presence of international NGOs or funding from foreign sources would permit foreigners to get involved in Kashmiri society, and would drag them into the politics of the Kashmir conflict. Since the Indian Government's political stance is against foreign intervention in the Kashmir conflict, only two NGOs in Kashmir to date have

\textsuperscript{38} Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA), 1976, regulates the flow of foreign funds to organizations and people in India.
been allotted an FCRA number. Both these NGOs are Ladakh-based ecological groups. The government does not mind foreign donors chipping in to help the ecological cause in Ladakh, which is a militancy-free zone. Thus, with foreign sources of funding being virtually closed, and it being very difficult to raise funds locally, except for religious purposes, NGOs in Kashmir face a huge problem in terms of funding.\(^{39}\) It is highly likely that this leads some NGOs to turn into hawala fronts for militant organizations. On the one hand, the gravity of the conflict attracts sources of funding, but on the other hand, the sensitivity and seriousness of the issue forces the Indian Government to keep strong controls over on the sources of funding for NGOs and their functioning.

Though national NGOs could be a good source of funding and experience for local NGOs in Kashmir, by and large, NGOs from the other parts of the country do not seem to empathize with the plight of the Kashmiris. According to Yoginder Sikand, “the absence of any major initiatives from Indian NGOs in Kashmir reflects the way many Indians see the Kashmir question as a real estate dispute, coveting the land but conveniently dispensing with its people.”\(^{40}\) NGOs abound in Andhra Pradesh and Haryana, but Kashmir seems to be lagging behind in this regard and national NGOs seem to be conspicuous by their absence. Kashmir has selling value, a brand name in international activism. People and NGQs can and do make money out of Kashmir and the Kashmiris realize this, which breeds discontent and mistrust among them regarding activism as a whole, whether it comes from national or international NGOs

Says an NGO activist, “Are there not enough problems in the areas they come from, that they have come to work with us? Is there not enough misery in places like Bihar? Why do these NGOs like to come to Kashmir then?” Obviously, according to him, they will be suspect in the eyes of the people. We can understand Europeans

\(^{39}\) For a detailed analysis of the problems faced by NGOs/VOs in terms of funding in general and foreign funding in particular, see “Voluntary Agency trends in India and Financial Aspects of the Voluntary Sector” in Dimensions of Voluntary Sector in India, CAF’s Validated Database 2000, (New Delhi: Charities Aid Foundation India, 2000).

\(^{40}\) Ibid., pp. 8-9 According to documents available that detail the social movements in India through the 19 and 20th century, these movements generally emerged in small areas and remained confined to local issues. The pre-independence era witnessed two types of social movements: socio-religious movements aimed at reform in the intellectual and cultural life of India, and peasant and other upsurges like the sepoy mutiny of 1857 which is believed to be the “culmination of peasant movements all over India.” The post-independence era has also not been devoid of social movements, such as the Chipko movement, the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu, Bandhua Mukti morecha, the Silent Valley Struggle, Narmada Bachao Andolan etc.
coming to help us, but Indians, no." His statement, besides shedding light on the reasons why people would be generally suspicious of any national NGO, can also be seen as part of the larger antagonism and mistrust associated with anything Indian in the Valley. Obviously, the Kashmiris will not look kindly upon people making a fortune out of their plight. To break this pattern of mistrust, a few NGOs have to work sincerely and affect the lives of the people in a way that reflects positively on their sincerity. The Government can have a crucial impact in changing the nature and the perception of the work of NGOs The dynamics of the relationship between NGOs and the Government is examined in the following section.

NOG's and their Relationship with Government

To examine the state of relations between NGOs in Kashmir and the Government, it is essential that we understand the history of voluntary organizations, in India, the nature of social movements, and the contexts in which they have evolved and flourished. Also crucial to examine is the current government policy in India towards NGOs, and its impact on Government-NGO relations in Kashmir.

India has definitely had a long culture of volunteerism, which has been well-documented through the 19th and 20th centuries.38 Even after Independence, there has been a long history of cooperation and good relations between the two, especially with the emergence of a large number of what came to be known as Gandhian organizations. The Central State Welfare Board was set up in 1953 to promote and fund voluntary organizations. The next main spurt in voluntary movements came in 1977, led by Jayaprakash Narayan against the Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi. Later, under Mrs. Gandhi again, the VOIs lost their privileged position and the bureaucracy assumed the responsibility for implementing various developmental programs. However, in recent years, there have again, been efforts by the Government to provide support to these organizations.

In 1994, the Government of India came up with an Action Plan to bring about a Collaborative Relationship between Voluntary Organizations and Government In the recently held All India Conference on the "Role of the Voluntary Sector in National Development" on 20 April 2002, K. C. Pant, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, said:
With increasing popular demand for better quality and delivery of public services, governments everywhere are responding by taking steps to involve the civil society. They recognize that the voluntary sector enjoys certain functional advantages, being community based, more accountable and capable of providing services at a lesser cost. More significantly, voluntary organizations have the flexibility to develop innovative projects based on local needs and resources in contrast to the standardization that normally characterizes governmental actions. That is why I feel that there is space for voluntary action even where local self-governing institutions like PRIs\textsuperscript{41} are strong as the VOs could work for making the system more participative, transparent and accountable by creating awareness among the people about their rights, their duties and about shortcomings in development. Their roles are, and should be mutually supportive and symbiotic\textsuperscript{42}.

While NGOs, as the concept exists how, are by definition independent and distinct from governmental organizations, it is widely believed that they cannot be very effective without the help and co-operation of their counterparts in India. This is probably due to the fact that after Independence, the fate of VOs and more recently, NGOs, have been dependent on the support they get from the Government. Their fortunes change with Changes in Government. Though, this may not necessarily be a bad thing. But there needs to be recognition of the fact that NGOs need to be wholly independent, though co-operation and co-ordination with the Government is also a must in a developing country like India, since the State lacks the resources to implement its programs effectively. NGO culture has not really permeated society all that well; hence, it is necessary for the two to move hand-in-hand for the betterment of the people.

The official website of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Empowerment articulates its official policy and relationship with NGOs in the sphere of social welfare. The Ministry also realizes that there are some areas that need more attention and funds than the others. There are very few states in India that have witnessed such massive violence, destruction of civil society and disruption of the normal lives of

\textsuperscript{41} Panchayati Raj Institutions

\textsuperscript{42} Mr. K.C. Pant, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission of India at the All India Conference on the “Role of the Voluntary Sector in National Development”, 20 April, 2002, Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.
people than Kashmir. In view of this, it would be safe to expect that the Government would allocate more funds to supplement its work in Jammu and Kashmir with that of the NGOs. That the government recognizes this fact does not really translate into action, at least in Jammu & Kashmir. Statistics on the official Ministry website show a pathetic number of organizations in J&K that are being funded by the Government. The number of organizations and the amount of funding is much greater in other states like Gujarat and even Punjab\(^43\). Whether this is due to a lack of interest in the establishment of a civil society, or because the government feels capable of handling the task by itself in J&K, is known only to the Government officials. However, compared to the rest of the country, Kashmir has been neglected and ignored, despite probably being the most in need of such NGOs. The Ministry of Social Welfare and Empowerment provides grants to only five NGOs in the entire State of Jammu and Kashmir, which is negligible compared to grants given to NGOs in other states like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat etc.\(^44\).

Government-NGO relations in Kashmir are also adversely affected by the fact that the government does not share an amiable relationship with the people. Almost all the people blame the government for exacerbation of the conflict. Since these are the very people that NGOs are trying to help, a strong NGO-Government relationship places the people in a moral dilemma. They feel constrained to seek help from the same authorities who are the cause of their misery without moral inhibitions\(^45\). Thus, GONGOs, as the Government-backed or sponsored NGOs are popularly known, find it difficult to make inroads into Kashmiri society. GONGOs sprang up in large numbers quite mysteriously in and around the period of the 1096 elections, possibly to publicly accept the legitimacy of the newly elected government. However, it is high time the GONGOs repositioned themselves (and the Government will have to play a role here) as distinct from the Government and work purely on humanitarian issues without pursuing a political agenda. The Government, thus far, has not shown any signs of letting the GONGOs break free. However, hopes in this regard have risen in

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\(^43\) Ministry of Social Welfare and Empowerment official website, retrieved on 10 July 2013

\(^44\) Ibid.

\(^45\) This moral dilemma was articulated by Mr. Pervez Imroz, Patron, Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons, and President, Coalition of Civil Society, Srinagar, J & K. Also, victims of violence articulated the same position, though they did admit that there were circumstances where, despite these moral convictions, they had accepted the help of the Government backed NGOs, or GONGOs since they were in dire need.
the light of the "healing touch" policy of the Mufti government. It remains to be seen whether the Mufti Government's power and political will are able to free the GONGOs of their political baggage.

The Government definitely needs to take upon itself the responsibility of promoting NGOs through various schemes. Interviews with government officials from different ministries however show a lack of interest in promoting NGOs in Kashmir. Officials of the Ministry of Social Welfare, when confronted with the dismal figures for Kashmiri NGOs receiving grants, explained that it was not the prerogative of the Government of India to hunt down NGOs to give them grants. Instead, it was the responsibility of the respective State Governments to forward proposals from registered NGOs in the State. "Sitting here, we cannot know who is doing what and how credible he is." Thus, the Central Government has to. Depend on the State Government, and the J&K Government has, according to him, failed on this account. There is a lack of proposals forwarded to them from Jammu & Kashmir. He put forward the example of Andhra Pradesh as a state which was receiving several grants for NGOs as the Government there was actively forwarding proposals from these NGOs that were credible and it was thus easier for the Ministry to approve.

However, government officials and State Welfare Board official's in Srinagar tell a different story. While the Board forwarded around 40 proposals in 2000-2001, none of them were processed, that is neither accepted nor rejected, and summarily returned in 2003. While not explicitly stated, it was implicit that the officials in J & K feel that the Centre does not trust their recommendations because they feared the funds would be channelled to the militants. Certain proposals forwarded by the State Board under a program known as NORAD, officials claim were lost or misplaced by the concerned authorities in Delhi. Faced with this kind of attitude from officials at the Centre, the State officials refuse to accept responsibility for the lack of governmental support to NGOs in Kashmir.

NGOs complain that the Government does not allow them to work independently, but the Government denies any such interference. While the Directorate of Social Welfare, J&K, cannot, speak for NGOs whose work might

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46 Interview they were in dire need, Government official of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Empowerment, New Delhi, India, June 2013.
interfere with the interests of national security, officials in the Directorate claim that "currently there is a big thrust to involve NGOs in implementing many of our schemes. The Government is willing to give up its responsibility in many areas to genuine NGOs if they have the requisite infrastructure"\(^{47}\). The Government apparently sees many advantages accruing from an improved relationship with NGOs. As another official says, "we need NGOs to reduce establishment costs to implement schemes that we bring out. We would need to establish infrastructure for every new scheme that we plan to implement, which would eventually become a liability for the Government later on as we wouldn't have any use for it afterwards. However, if there are NGOs out there with established infrastructure, it would make things much easier for us, and be much better for NGOs also"\(^{48}\).

However, there seem to be two things stopping the J&K Government from acting on this policy. Firstly, there are an insufficient number of genuine NGOs in Kashmir, and secondly, most of the genuine ones lack proper infrastructure. "We are ready to give help to NGOs, but they have to be there. An NGO is one that has a commitment, a culture; those kinds of NGOs are very few in Kashmir, claim officials. He admits, "Some religiously-inclined NGOs are sincere but they do not take help from us. If the social ones also become as committed, then relations between the government and NGOs could go a long way."

Unfortunately, the Government is merely indulging in wishful thinking, hoping that in a violence-ravaged society, genuine NGOs with the requisite infrastructure would spring up suddenly out of nowhere. Not only have bureaucratic hurdles like delays in the second or third instalments of long term projects led to stoppage of projects, such delays also inevitably cause liabilities in terms of personnel as well as infrastructure. Another problem with government funding of projects is that such funding is usually project-based, which presumes that the NGO would be well-equipped to cover overhead costs, such as building, maintenance, auditing etc\(^{49}\), as is reflected by the desire of government officials to use NGOs to cut establishment costs.

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\(^{47}\) Interview with the Section Officer of the State Social Welfare Board, Srinagar, J&K, 22\(^{th}\) July 2013

\(^{48}\) Interview with Officials of the Directorate of Social Welfare, Srinagar, J&K, 25\(^{th}\) July 2013

\(^{49}\) CAF, N/ 36, pp. 20-21.
for themselves. There is very little emphasis on long term planning, in terms of equipping NGOs with the infrastructure that could be utilized by the Government later, as well as by the NGO for other projects.

While officials do not hesitate to admit that red-tapism is causing a lot of problems, they are quick to offer solutions. According to one official, “if NGO funds are given directly to the District Collector, it would result in much more efficient use of funds,” as there would be less layers of red tape that these funds would have to go through. He feels that this would be much better for everyone as all sectors [emphasis added] need NGOs today. Where an NGO needs Rs. 10 to get a piece of work done, the Government spends Rs. 50-60, because of establishment costs as well as layers of bureaucracy. Thus, “even if NGOs are corrupt, more benefits will still reach the people”\(^{50}\).

Unfortunately, an atmosphere of mistrust exists between NGOs and respective Governments. The government, has had bad experiences with NGOs, as people have registered NGOs, received grants and fled with the money with no results to show on the ground. Consequently, the Ministry has evolved stringent criteria for sanctioning grants. Registration as an NGO under the Societies Act, a minimum of 3 year experience in the field of work, a list of people in the managing committee of the organization, a recommendation and verification of credibility by the respective State Governments and absence of organizations in the particular field of work are some of the criteria that Government officials list\(^{51}\). The Ministry of Social Welfare website also provides a list of blacklisted NGOs and the members of their managing Committees\(^{52}\), though a study done by VANI on blacklisted organizations says that both the basis and manner of revocation of the earlier status was improper, organizations were not aware of the reasons for blacklisting and did not even get an opportunity to be heard\(^{53}\).

On the other hand, the NGOs cannot be faulted for not being able to meet these criteria. Local NGOs often started by people with meager resources find it

\(^{50}\) Ibid.
\(^{51}\) Interview, n 45
\(^{52}\) Ministry of Social Welfare and Empowerment n 41
\(^{53}\) CAF, n 36
difficult to meet the criteria set by the Government. To work for three years without funding means they have to find their own money, or raise funds from external sources like foreign NGOs. Since they are not allowed to receive funding from foreign sources, and finding their own money is difficult, NGOs either close down or end up becoming fronts for illegal activities. The government, on its part, is justified in laying down stringent criteria; however, it has to reduce the red tape. This must reduce delays in the verification process, which is often the biggest stumbling block in Government-NGO relations. As regards human rights and other sensitive issues, where NGOs and Government interests often clash, I would argue that only international pressure and a change in the political and security situation on the ground in Kashmir can bring about positive change. The newly elected Mufti Government has to play a role in letting NGOs take an independent stand and become a voice for dissent within Kashmiri society for his 'healing touch' policy to be effective. At the same time, the Central Government needs to take steps to relax the rules governing the work of international human rights organizations like Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch. These groups have in the past produced damning reports, but the time is ripe in Kashmir to allow these groups to resume work and serve as checks on the government and its agencies. Letting these groups resume their work in J&K will add to the credibility of the new government and restore people's trust in it. Stronger and fairer NGO-Government relations can thus be instrumental in the restoration of trust; winning the trust of the people would mean half the battle is won.

NGOs, or for that matter, any organization has to take into consideration local factors to function in any part of the world. Often, not taking cultural factors into account can prove to be detrimental to the success of well-meaning endeavours. Kashmiris have high self-esteem and hence nurture a culture not to take to the begging bowl even in harsh circumstances. A Kashmiri prefers not to seek help from outside his own circle of friends and relatives, which explains why NGOs have difficulties in their efforts to create an impact. There have been very few beggars on the streets of Kashmir in the past, as Kashmiri society has generally been self-sustaining, and reasonably prosperous. However, in recent times, beggars have begun
to appear on the road. Kashmiri society, reeling under the devastating effects of the conflict, has been deprived of its economic sustenance and finds its traditional support systems, like the family, being made ineffective. This implies that NGOs can start moving in to make an impact as their need is being increasingly felt.

It cannot be denied that NGOs, both domestic and international, have established a presence in India, and are active in several fields. According to the latest estimates; there are roughly 25,000 NGO groups which are active in their respective fields in different parts of the country, though the number of registered NGOs would be many times that number. Kashmir, however, has not seen a proportional rise in the number of active NGOs. Kashmir desperately needs injection of funds, people and organizations to infuse new vigour and relevance into the fledgling civil society. National and international NGOs, the international community, the State and Central Government, the people of India and the people of Kashmir themselves have a big role in reviving the civil society in Kashmir via the NGOs.

At a seminar held in Kashmir on the theme 'What is Civil Society and how can we turn it into an effective mechanism to further democracy in Kashmir', it was emphasized that one of the primary functions of civil society, of which NGOs are a crucial part, was to ensure its ability to be a voice of dissent. People in Kashmir have often expressed their lack of trust in the government, and it is widely believed that "when governments come to power, they tend to occupy too much space, illegitimately encroaching upon the individual and community rights. Because of the absence of any controls they tend to become corrupt and inefficient." NGOs and civil society, thus, assume a crucial role to keep checks on the government. Kashmiri civil society activists acknowledge that though civil society in Kashmir is "trying to create space for dialogue and dissent"; it has not yet been able to become "a viable force against the abuse of power." Acknowledging the problem is half the solution, and efforts seem to be underway to form organizations that would be able to stand up to the government and act as pressure groups to prevent any excesses.

Amnesty International can be considered to be one of these organizations. Even though the activities of such international human rights organizations have been

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54 Gowher A. Fazili, Op. Cit., p. 70
55 Ibid., p. 69.
56 Ibid., p. 70.
limited, these organizations have begun to criticize the Government of reneging on its promises. In a newspaper report published in a major national daily, Amnesty International flayed then then “the reported statement of J&K Chief Minister Mufti of ‘reorienting’ the special operations group (SOG) saying this amounted to backtracking on promises to punish police personnel guilty of committing human rights violations\textsuperscript{57}”. The London-based organization also criticized Mufti for allegedly announcing that an amnesty would be available to those who have reportedly perpetrated abuses. Such reports by widely-respected NGO’s are damning to the reputation and image of the Government and force the government to deliver on its promises. Not only have human rights abuses been ignored and gone unreported on various occasions as we have seen, but many organizations and the media have been pressurized into toeing the line of the Government. In another instance, the Human Rights column in the Srinagar-based English daily Greater Kashmir was severely criticized by the Government, and the daily was coerced into stopping the column altogether. Many such instances have occurred, which NGOs would do well to highlight. Thus, NGOs and media have a lot to gain from extensive co-operation as they need each other for their effective functioning.

NGOs can also be a very effective tool to ensure that the voices of the minorities and other communities are heard. Certain communities traditionally neglected by the Government, often find their voice through NGOs or community organizations. Panun Kashmir and J&K Pandits Conference have played this role in the past. However, they often face problems of internal differences and clashes of power, as Pandit organizations based in Jammu have been facing. Panun Kashmir, due to internal differences split, leading to the mushrooming of various Pandit organizations claiming to be working for their welfare. Recently, a report was carried by the Daily Excelsior on how all the Kashmiri Pandit organizations had sunk their differences and “unanimously urged the State Government to extend its healing touch policy to the community as well, which has been the main victim of the 13 year long turmoil\textsuperscript{58}.” Unity among such organizations is the key to their success and they would do well to guard themselves against splits to maintain some sort of leverage and legitimacy with government circles. Extensive interaction with the people of Kashmir

\textsuperscript{57} Mufti Backtracking on Commitments on SOG: Amnesty, “Hindustan Times”, 8\textsuperscript{th} January 2003, p.6
and NGO activists reveals the immediate need for NGOs to enter the psychiatric field in a big way. The conflict in Kashmir has taken its toll of lives, but children especially have been forced to grow up in an environment where there has been no love, no safety, no security, no schools, no colleges, no means of having fun, no mischief, nothing that comes along with a normal life, more so a normal childhood. Thus, to ensure a bright future for the next generation of Kashmiris, it is very important for psychiatric services to be provided on a war footing. While in 1990, there were, on an average, just six patients approaching the Psychiatric Diseases Hospital in Srinagar daily; this number had gone up to 59 in 1994 and at present, on an average, about 200 patients turn up, which predictably enough, is grossly understaffed. While there has been a dramatic increase in psychiatric disorders, mainly the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, there are only 7 psychiatrists and one clinical psychologist for a population of nearly four million. Very few NGOs have entered this field, primarily due to lack of training to deal with such cases, and secondly, due to social stigmas attached to psychiatry. The general sentiment among Kashmiris seems to be that “if anyone wants to help us, let them come, heal us psychologically, and help by establishing psychiatric treatment centres.”

Another area of concern is that of the welfare of widows and orphans. As mentioned earlier, there are a few Orphanages and widow welfare homes that are active in Kashmir. However, the number of orphans and widows that they collectively take care of is abysmally low. Immediate attention of NGOs as well as policy makers is essential to bring back some sense of normalcy in the lives of women and children, both of which are probably the worst affected groups of society in the past 25 years of militancy. While the politics and violence associated with the resistance movement in Kashmir continues it is essential to recognize the importance of maintaining the continuity of programs for the welfare of women, especially widow, and children so as to keep the foundations of Kashmir intact, NGOs have a crucial role to play in this 'damage control' exercise, More orphan homes and widows homes and

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61 Informal chats with various people from all walks of life in Kashmir, including NGO activists, doctors, and common citizens, July 2013.
opportunities for the women and children to live their lives constructively is the need of the hour.

Employment generation-oriented schemes sponsored either by the government or initiated by NGOs through local self-help groups need to be strengthened and taken to the far-flung areas of the State which remain neglected. Lack of education, sanitation, health care, employment opportunities, safety, and other basic problems continue to affect the people living in border areas, which are also the worst affected by militancy NGOs need to develop infrastructure, in terms of manpower and facilities to better implement the schemes introduced by the Government. National and International NGOs need to provide guidance and financial support to local NGOs and enhance their capabilities so as to better fulfil their roles in society.

Similarly, on the environment front, there is an immediate need for environmental groups and environmental activists to raise their voices to save the environmental heritage of the State of Jammu & Kashmir. The livelihood of many Kashmiris is dependent on the health of the ecology and the environmental balance. India has witnessed exemplary environmental movements including the Chipko movement and the Narmada Bachao Andolan. These should serve as an inspiration for environmental activists to initiate movements on a war footing to save the world-famous Dal and Wular lakes along with the rich forest heritage that Kashmir boasts. The work of advocacy groups, such as those advocating freedom of speech and expression, protection of the freedom of the media, and protection against human rights abuses is essential for restoring the trust of the people in the Government.

The collective aim of all the NGOs in Kashmir should, thus, be to develop and strengthen the civil society in Kashmir.