

STATE AND DEVELOPMENTAL NGOs A STUDY OF INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGES

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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1996



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21st July, 1996

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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **State and Developmental NGOs: A Study of Institutional Linkages** submitted by **Padmaja Enjeti** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University is her original work and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or any other University to the best of my knowledge.

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Acknowledgements

I thank Prof. C.P. Bhambhri, my supervisor, whose valuable suggestions and patient guidance have contributed substantially to this dissertation.

I am indebted to Prof. Kuldeep Mathur who introduced me to this field of study. I am thankful to Prof. Balveer Arora for his perceptive comments.

I thank the Naya Prayas collective, particularly Rajeev, for making this dissertation more than just an academic exercise.

I would like to express my special appreciation to the library staff at Teen Murti, C.W.D.S. and I.C.S.S.R. for their co-operation.

Anil, Unni and others at A.P. Computers have deciphered my writing and put it in print, My special thanks are due to them.

• Haju and Vinu, thanks for the timely help. I thank my family members for putting up with prolonged periods of uncommunicativeness and encouraging me. Madhavi, thanks for everything.

New Delhi

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INTRODUCTION

The recent years have witnessed the emergence of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) as a major collective actor in developmental activities and on the public agenda in general. This is a significant political, social and economic trend. Within the traditional areas of encounter between the state and citizen this actor has begun to assert itself increasingly.

NGOs are not a new social formation. They have been active for a very long time. But the recent NGO growth has three distinct characteristics according to Michael Cernea:

- 1) The scale and pace at which these organizations have been multiplying and expanding have no match in the past.
- 2) Old NGOs have taken up functions that are new for them adding development oriented and production support activities to their traditional areas of concern such as relief and welfare. They have moved into areas which had come to be regarded as the concern of the government in the era of the welfare state.

- 3) NGOs, in particular the development organizations, have become more organized and aware of their power of being able to mobilize for fulfilment of their goals. Webs and networks of NGOs are being created and national councils and federations have come into existence. This has given them greater share in bringing about policy changes.¹

II

NGOs have come to be known by several names 'voluntary organizations' is the term used for them in India, the U.N. terminology for them is 'NGOs', and the USAID calls them 'private voluntary organizations'. This study uses the term voluntary organizations and NGOs interchangeably.

Brown and Korten define voluntary organizations as a "a distinct class of organizations that depend on energy and resources given freely by their members and supporters because they believe in the organizational

¹ Michael Cernea, Non-Governmental Organizations and Local Development, (Washington D.C., 1988), p.2.

mission and not because of political imperative or economic incentive".² Pitschas is of a similar opinion: "NGOs can be characterized as formalized organizations beyond the state and the market receiving their resources from voluntary contributions of the society on the basis of voluntariness to transform them into collective goods to solve social problems".³ These definitions serve a broad purpose of understanding the character of these organizations. But the arena of their activities is extremely vast and hence it is important to classify them according to the roles they play before analyzing their position vis-a-vis the state and civil society.

III

The activities NGOs undertake have been classified into a number of broad areas by Harsh Sethi: relief and charity, development, mobilization and organization, politics and political education.⁴ They can

² Cited in Gulati and Gulati, Strengthening Voluntary Action in India, (Delhi, 1995), p.1.

³ Rainer Pitschas, "The Role of the NGOs in the Modern State: A Challenge to Institutional Policy and Institutional Development in the South" in R.B. Jain (ed.), NGOs in Development Perspective, (Delhi, 1995), p.10.

⁴ Harsh Sethi, "Action Groups in New Politics" in P. Wignaraja (ed.), New Social Movements in the South, (Delhi, 1993), pp.231,232.

also be classified according to the kind of organization: development and charity organizations; action groups involved primarily in the process of conscientization, mobilization and organization without an explicitly stated political perspective; action groups with political goals and support groups, research and documentation centres. Most NGOs play more than one role at a time and sometimes undertake different activities at different times. NGOs have also been classified according to the location and reach of their activities into international, national, intermediary, local and grass root groups. Development NGOs are defined according to the area of interest such as: community development, women's development, tribal development, health and environment etc. In India a further classification is made on basis of ideologies viz - religious groups, Gandhian constructive workers, radical self help groups and NGOs with no affiliation to any ideology.

Indian NGOs vary in their relationship with the government. The Gandhian voluntary groups had enjoyed a relatively smooth relationship with the government in the 1950's and 1960's. The radical self help groups have been seen as a threat to the government at the lower echelons of the bureaucracy and hence have been harassed constantly. From the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985) there has been a gradual effort to involve

developmental NGOs in plan formulation and implementation at various levels.

IV

Academic debates have centered around the feasibility and wisdom of NGOs associating themselves with government programs. Rajni Kothari believes that the voluntary organizations are an autonomous sector of associations with their roots in the pluralistic traditions of civil society; he criticizes development NGOs working with the government agencies as append ages to the state which suffer from similar problems of corruption and bureaucratization. He argues that the most viable solution to the problem of underdevelopment is to institutionalize notions of alternative development, being articulated by grassroot groups, through the creation of networks of these groups. He has developed a case for a rejection of the current model of development and also for curtailment of the interference of the state in the lives of the people in the name of the development.⁵

⁵ Rajni Kothari, "Voluntary Organisations in a Plural Society" Indian Journal of Public Administration, vol. 23(3), (July-Sept. 1987), pp. 439,440.

Given the problems of widespread poverty and underdevelopment in India, this study disagrees with a view that the state should play a minimal role in development. The problems of centralization, non-performance and inappropriate plans are a result of a centralized planning system with the bureaucracy as its implementing agency. The bureaucracy, originally conceived of as a regulatory agency has not adapted adequately to the needs of developmental administration. Bureaucratic unresponsiveness can be overcome by firstly streamlining its powers and functions through civil service reforms and secondly through the introduction of institutional pluralism in the performance of the tasks of development. Institutional pluralism would mean introduction of new and more appropriate actors in the arena of development. New institutional arrangements with greater roles for NGOs at the stages of plan formulation, implementation and evaluation, collaboration with NGOs at various levels - national, state and local ought to be encouraged. A framework for the interaction of these two actors ought to be worked out.

This study believes that developmental NGOs can be seen as autonomous organizations emerging from the needs of the society and trying to fulfill these needs by building partnerships with other co-actors such as government agencies and other organizations.

The involvement of NGOs in development programs with a degree of autonomy in the planning and implementation process results in a more people oriented perception of the problems at hand and the solutions being developed. The reason is that NGOs normally follow practices that are participatory in nature. Instead of providing readymade solutions the requirements of the beneficiaries are studied and then programs are planned. When such practices are brought into the state's development apparatus it would bring decentralization and local perspectives. The motivating force of these organizations being voluntarism rather than economic or political benefits, there is relatively more commitment on the part of the staff. The solutions are not only people oriented but also rational and cost-effective since the commitment of the staff normally results in full utilization of resources. By acting as alternative of problem solving mechanisms they reduce the dependence on the state. Even while acting in association with the state they strive to preserve their autonomy by ensuring that the state doesnot 'encroach'/try to curtail, their self defined identity. They at once serve the purpose of restricting the state, providing the citizenry with a voice in matters that affect their lives intimately and constructing a more democratic civil society. They thus embody the DeTocquevillian conceptions of an active associational sphere performing the task of an 'independent eye; of the society.

V

However current literature on the NGO sector treats NGOs as agencies or 'contractors' of development programs of the state and international donors and hence judge their potential to replace the state as alternative delivery systems in the social sector. A second perspective looks at action groups working with alternative visions and visualizes them as a challenge to the existing paradigms of development and the new mode of bringing about social/political transformation. A third view point is critical of NGOs both as vehicles of development and their potential for bringing about social transformation. A review of select writings is attempted below:

A. The UN was probably the first institution to officially recognize the role of NGOs in development. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) initiated a move to organize NGOs around the world in the "Freedom From Hunger" campaign. In India this was institutionalized as "People's Action for Development India" (PADI) through which the government channelized funds to NGOs. The other UN agencies such as the UN Research Institute for Social Development and the ILO have studied voluntary efforts in development. Edited volumes by Bhaduri and

Rahman, and Rahman have been published by ILO.⁶ They contain case studies of local voluntary organizations in the Third World especially in Asia. The UN has tried to involve NGOs in all its conferences in recent years viz the Earth Summit, the social summit, the women's conference etc. Dr. Ghali states "with flexible structures, the ability to mobilize private funds and highly motivated staffs NGOs possess a vast potential for the cause of development."⁷ The World Bank under its former president McNamara has been the first organisation to initiate moves to favour voluntary organizations promoting development, since many of the Bank projects faced unnecessary delays because of the Third world bureaucracies. Michael Cernea points out that the main contribution of NGOs is not financial but their ability to organize people for group action.⁸ It is this capacity for 'outreach to the poor' that needs to be strengthened through creation of favourable policy/administrative environments and organizational build up. The paper also provides insights into the World Bank's policy towards NGOs.

⁶ A. Bhaduri and A. Rahman (eds.), Studies in Rural Participation, (New Delhi, 1982). And A. Rahman (ed) Grassroots Participation and Self Reliance, (New Delhi, 1984).

⁷ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, An Agenda for Development-1995, (New York, 1995), p.52.

⁸ Cernea., n.1, p.7.

The USAID study by Judith Tandler summarizes several USAID project reports and indicates pertinent evaluational criteria for studying voluntary agencies in development. The study finds NGOs as suitable structures for institutionalizing an effective delivery system.⁹

David Korten puts forward the "learning process approach" to study the organizational effectiveness of NGOs and suggests techniques to improve managerial efficiency of development projects.¹⁰ E.Garilao attempts to study NGOs as strategic institutions. He argues that networking and formation of alliances are indicators that NGOs have emerged as a third sector and are creating a new industry which he calls the "social development industry" whose competitive edge lies in its ability to organize communities for development better than the state or the private sector. Therefore he pleads for a greater role for NGOs with regard to policy making and advocacy of policy changes.¹¹ Sheldon Annis is of the

⁹ Judith Tandler, *Turning Private Voluntary Organisations into Development Agencies*, (Washington, D.C., 1982).

¹⁰ David Korten, 'Community Organisation and Rural Development: A Learning Process Approach', Public Administration Review, vol. 40, (Sept.-Oct., 1980), pp. 107-132.

¹¹ Ernesto. D. Garilao, "Indigenous NGOs as Strategic Institutions: Managing, the Relationship with Government and Resource Agents", World Development, vol.15, (1987), pp.113,116.

opinion that the NGOs must have a more positive outlook towards the governments at the policy making levels. This is in order to make way for sustainable alternative development institutions where webs of organizations would proliferate and be linked to governments. This would make the idea of a largescale small-scale development possible in reality.¹²

Norman Uphoff undertakes to delineate NGOs and grassroots organizations as a separate, distinct category instead of a residual one. This is done according to the incentive system at work in the three sectors i.e. the public, the private and the NGO sectors. He highlights the role of the third sector in rural development in the context of "diminishing states and expanding markets."¹³

E.A.Brett treats voluntary agencies as value driven organizations and raises some theoretical issues with regard to efficiency and accountability in voluntary agencies. Of central concern is the enforcement

¹² Sheldon Annis., "Can Small-Scale Development be a Large-scale policy? The case of Latin America", World Development, vol.15 (1987), pp.130,131.

¹³ Norman Uphoff, "Grassroots Organisations and NGOs in Rural Development: Opportunities with Diminishing states and Expanding Markets", World Development, vol.21, (1993), p.6097.

of accountability to ensure efficiency in service delivery NGOs and cooperatives. With particular regard to NGOs he focusses on the varied relationships between 'principals and agents' involved in the production and management of services and its effect on volag effectiveness.¹⁴

In R.B. Jain's edited volume on NGOs in development, an essay on the roles of NGOs in India with regard to policy making has been authored by Jain;¹⁵ Gangrade and Sooryamoorthy give a review of the NGO sector in India and the various challenges that it faces.¹⁶ Rainer Pitschas in another essay examine the role of NGOs in the modern state in the context of structural deficits of the state and market. Pitschas argues that the emerging challenges to public administration necessitate the upgradation of the institutions of governance and the improvement of service responsiveness in public services at the local level. Pitschas's thesis is that, "only the development of NGOs and their arrangements of service delivery may be able to stop growing bureaucratic unresponsiveness". He points out

¹⁴ E.A. Brett, "Voluntary Agencies as Development Organisations: Theorizing the Problem of Efficiency and Accountability", Development and Change, vol. 24, (1993), p.269.

¹⁵ R.B. Jain, "Influencing Public Policies: Challenges to NGOs in India", NGOs in Development Perspective, (Deihi 1995), pp. 55-79.

¹⁶ K.D. Gangrade and R. Sooryamoorthy, "NGOs: Retrospect and Prospect" R.B. Jain, *ibid.*, pp. 27-49.

the need for a plurality of organizations to fulfill the various functions required of the modern state.¹⁷

In the Indian context, the Government of India made little effort to define the role of a voluntary agency in development till the Seventh Five Year Plan. In the first few plans the tendency was towards treating them as social service organizations. From the Seventh Five Year Plan onwards the emphasis has been on involving voluntary agencies in planning and development programs. The policy of economic liberalization and debureaucratization has increased official pronouncements on support to voluntary agencies in order to shift power from a centralized state to "peoples own efforts." There have been many empirical studies on voluntary agencies in development in India.

Terry Alliband's study provides some good background material on some selected voluntary agencies and their role in community development in rural areas. His main contention is that rural problems exist on account of the absence of (1) a co-operative spirit (2) problem solving abilities and (3) a disinterested leadership. In such a scenario, voluntary agencies which have a track record of being innovative are seen as capable of bringing

¹⁷ R. Pitschas, n.3, pp.12,13.

about transformation by mobilizing people effectively. Terry Alliband analyses some historical programs and current experiments in rural development. The analysis relies heavily on brochures and discussions with project personnel. His evaluation focusses on addressing the question of the maximum utilization of the potential of the organization in the redressal of the problems of the communities.¹⁸

Poonam Smith-Sreen has studied the functioning management and experiences of women's organizations in effectively developing income generation as a strategy for womens development in India. She has developed the concept of "member accountability" in organizations for analyzing the effectiveness of NGO programs. The study throws insights into the relationship between member accountability and benefits to members.¹⁹

Vanita Viswanath has made a comparative study of two NGOs working in rural Karnataka to assess their effectiveness as "vehicles of

¹⁸ Terry Alliband, Catalysts of Development: Voluntary Agencies in India, (West Hartford, 1983), pp. 13-15.

¹⁹ Poonam Smith - Sreen, Accountability in Development Organisation Experiences of Womens Organizations in India, (New Delhi, 1995), pp.224-231.

change". The priorities in women's development programs are (ought to be) economic benefits, development of leadership capacity and increase of their collective power. These priorities form the main criteria for the evaluation of the functioning of the organizations. The study, based on detailed fieldwork, places the work of these two NGOs as development organizations in the context of the various efforts (both governmental and non-governmental) in women's development.²⁰

Gulati and Gulati have undertaken a comprehensive study in Rajasthan and Gujarat with the stated objective of studying ways to improve the efficiency of voluntary agencies working in the areas of primary health family planning, environment and women's development. This study focusses on four aspects of effectiveness:

- (a) ways to sustain the driving force behind the effectiveness of voluntary agencies - viz commitment and motivation.
- (b) method to improve the relationship between government and voluntary agencies without undermining their autonomy.

²⁰ Vanita Viswanath, NGOs and Women's Development in Rural South India - A Comparative Analysis, (New Delhi, 1993), pp. 1-5.

- (c) relationships of competition and complementarity, in the voluntary agencies world and how these can be exploited to yield better results for the community.
- (d) methods of functioning of voluntary agencies and their implications for the communities in which they work.²¹

Anil Bhatt has carried out a study of Fourty-nine Oxfam sponsored small action groups in two districts of Gujarat. The study takes a good note of the socio-political economic forces that shape the activities of the groups.²² D. Paul Chowdhury's book is an encyclopaedic source book on the voluntary sector in social welfare and development in India.²³

B. A new perspective on development and democracy sees micro-action for development at the grassroots as a possible answer to conventional models of development. Democracy and development are seen as integral components of the process of development. It emphasizes a pluralistic

²¹ Gulati and Gulati, n.2, p.6.

²² Anil Bhatt, 'Development and Social Justice: Micro Action by Weaker Sections' (New Delhi, 1989).

²³ D. Paul Choudhury, "Voluntary Effort in Social Welfare and Development" (Delhi, 1991).

paradigm of development where the stress would be on programs that are rooted in the needs of the local communities and resources. Voluntary organizations are thus seen as part of the grassroots, micro level groups. Development NGOs are not however considered as voluntary organizations.

Harsh Sethi has done comprehensive work on community action groups and their role in India. He views them not only as groups engaged in the search for development alternatives but also as candidates for formulating transformative politics in India. He visualizes micro action for development as part of a bottom-up strategy development. Hence he sees the need to link it up to a macro perspective. Micro action could emerge with sectoral issues such as health, education etc. and become a part of a broad movement for alternative visions. Sethi however notes with concern the decline in the spirit of social concern despite the mushrooming of voluntary agencies and availability of resources. This is attributed to the sophisticated techniques of cooptation adopted by the state and the fragmentary divisions within the sector itself.²⁴

Jhunjhunwala visualizes voluntary work as a countervailing structure which has the potential to guide the intrasigent and displace the

²⁴ Sethi, n.4, pp. 248-253.

decadent government". Such a potential can be realised when voluntary workers all over the country are organized not as a party but a diffused countervailing structure and engaged in interaction with government at various levels.²⁵ D.L. Sheth sees the relevance of grassroots initiatives in the context of (a) the failure of the existing models of economic development to tackle the problems of human development on a sustainable basis (b) the state and political process having lost the commanding position vis-a-vis the economy. Intervention on behalf of the poor to control market forces from ravaging the subsistence livelihoods of the poor has come to an end. Sheth opines that the grassroots initiative has the potential to lead to a new relationship between the state and civil society -where the latter would play a pioneering role in transformation.²⁶

Rajni Kothari refers to grassroots activist groups as "Non-party Political Formations" which are to be seen as a part of a democratic struggle at various levels emerging at a time when existing institutions

²⁵ Bharat Jhunjhunwala, "Voluntary Work as Countervailing Power", Economic and Political Weekly, vol. 21(14), (April 5, 1986), p.597.

²⁶ D.L. Sheth. "Grassroots initiatives in India" Economic and Political Weekly, vol. 19(6), (Feb. 11, 1984), pp. 259,260.

and theoretical models on which they are based have run their course.²⁷ This activism by voluntary organizations are seen as a response to the incapacity of the state to measure upto growing demands and also to the increasingly undemocratic political structure. Grassroots action groups are seen as new forms of organizations to communicate with the state. Since macro-organisation such as political parties have lost their legitimacy as instruments of representation. Development activities by such groups and communities are seen as a necessary ingredient of this new model of politics where the keywords are participation and use of local resources.²⁸ Kothari makes out a case against pure economism and developmentalism in the voluntary sector. He believes that the strategy of involving NGOs in the state's development programs is part of a new frontier of World capitalism - government organized NGOs and international NGOs are spearheads of this new strategy. Such an agenda conveniently Camouflages new corporate expansion and allows straightforward colonization of peoples resources.²⁹

²⁷ Rajni Kothari, "Non-Party Political Process", Economic and Political Weekly, vol. 19(5), (Feb.4, 1984), p.216, 217.

²⁸ Rajni Kothari, "Voluntary Organisations in a Plural Society" Indian Journal of Public Administration, vol. 33(3), (1987), p.441.

²⁹ Rajni Kothari, "NGOs State and World Capitalism" Economic and Political Weekly, vol. 21(50), (Dec. 13, 1986), p.2177.

One of the most comprehensive studies on the voluntary sector in India has been undertaken by Shashi Ranjan Pandey. He identifies three types of organizations service, development and action organizations and presents seventeen case studies which illustrate the strength and weakness of each in providing alternative development strategies. He describes the growth, development and linkages of action groups in India and places them partly in the context of the failure of the development policy of the centralized state and partly as a historical growth of indigenous traditions of voluntarism. Pandey's central argument is that voluntary groups of all three varieties are local groups which engage in politics by incorporating indigenous ideas. They are influenced by funding agencies and government policies and their successes are monetary and non monetary. But by rephrasing and opposing mainstream models of economic growth the main ingredients of the counter ideology that emerges are justice, indigenous values and mass policies. Pandey does recognize the lack of macro-level impact in a sustainable manner.³⁰

Voluntary organizations have been criticized for corruption and misuse of funds. A number of scholars have critiqued other issues related

³⁰ Shashi Ranjan Pandey, "Community Action For Social Justice, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 58-62.

to the working of NGOs. Mohit Bhattacharya is of the opinion that voluntary efforts can only be treated as a salutary addition to the stock of organized efforts. They cannot be the instruments of social transformation. Which is possible only through the restructuring of the state power.³¹ C.P. Bhambhri similarly opines that essential tasks of development require more of state intervention and not less of it.³²

Stating the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] party line Prakash Karat in his article opines that, voluntary agencies are regular recipients of funds from imperialist countries and hence sees them as part of the imperialist design to penetrate Indian society and its course of development. By doing so it seeks to use the NGO sector to counter the potential of the Left movement in India.³³

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- ³¹ Mohit Bhattacharya, "Voluntary Associations, Development and the State" Indian Journal of Public Administration, vol. 33(3), p.393.
- ³² C.P. Bhambhri, "The Modern State and Voluntary Societies", Indian Journal of Public Administration, vol. 33(3), p. 298.
- ³³ Prakash Karat, 'Action Groups Voluntary Organisations: A Factor in Imperialist Strategy', The Marxist, vol. 2(2), (April-June 1984), p.19.

VI

Scope of the Present Study

The present study is limited to the study of developmental NGOs. It seeks to study the efficacy of the new institutional arrangement of collaboration between different government agencies and NGOs in the particular context of development of poor women and children in urban slums and overall slum community development. The NGO chosen for the purpose is "Naya Prayas" a member of the larger family of "PRAYAS".

This study seeks to examine the role of the NGO in bringing about changes in the lives of these poor women on the basis of the three priorities laid down by Vanita Vishwanath i.e economic benefits, development of leadership capacity and increase of the collective power. The utter poverty of the families in the three slums of the project area of 'Naya Prayas' has prevented parents from sending their children to school and instead, compelled them to send them to work at a young age. This study also seeks to undertake a study of 'Naya Prayas' attempt to provide a solution to the grave problem of child development through an alternative schooling format. These attempts are to be seen in the context

of bringing about overall changes in the provision of basic infrastructure and upgradation of living conditions in the project areas. Hence the efforts of Nayaprayas to bring in many actors such as other NGOs, the Ministry of Welfare and the Delhi Police are to be understood as partnerships with a cause. Such attempts can be mistaken as an attempt to implement government programs if the innovative approaches to involve community opinion are not noted. The effort throughout this study will be to examine the viability of such institutional arrangements as a long term solution with wider applicability.

The institutional arrangement will be seen from the perspective of state-civil society relations and how these institutions are moving from a conceptualization of state-NGO relations as polar opposites to issue-based partnerships. Hence a redefinition of the nature of development NGOs is attempted.

Chapter I

STATE, NGOS AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Role of the State in Development

Early development economists¹ recognized the role of government in providing infrastructure to facilitate development. Another role that the government was allocated was that it was to undertake activities to compensate for 'market failures'. In the developing countries market failure were supported to have resulted due to a lack of adequate supply and demand, information failures, improper investment allocation and lack of infrastructure. It was supposed that the state would have to play a major role to raise an economy out of its backwardness. The success of Keynesian activism in fighting the great depression in the western countries, the success of the Marshall plan in achieving the quick reconstruction of Western Europe and the achievement of Soviet Union in 1930's on the industrial front, virtually created a consensus on the viability

¹ Nurkse, Kugnets, Rosenstein-Rodan etc. are considered to be early development economists.

of state-led development. The state emerged in the role of an investment planner and almost every developing country set up a planning agency to formulate plans for development.

Achievements of State Led Development in India

India inherited a stagnant economy, a primitive agriculture, low level of industry and technology and a high proportion of poverty stricken population. Trade was skewed towards imports. Infrastructural facilities were grossly inadequate. Indian leaders like Nehru opted for a planned economy with a pre-eminent role for the state in order to overcome these problems of under-development. Planning has resulted in remarkable results in all facets of the economy: the economy has been pulled out of stagnation, industrial growth has occurred and self sufficiency in food grains has been achieved.

Limitations: On the one hand there are problems which are the results of "too little" being done to tackle problems of elephantive proportions such as poverty, unemployment etc, on the other there are problems pertaining to the negative effects of development and the model of development itself like marginalization of certain sections of population like tribals, forest dwellers, environmental degradation, overcrowding of

urban areas resulting in slums, congestion etc. The centralized model of planning has resulted in neglecting local needs of diverse communities, and has failed to harness local energies & resources. The bureaucratic channel through which policy is formulated and implemented has resulted in considerable wastage of plan funds through inappropriate spending and corruption.

The Solutions

There have been differing diagnoses of the problems of the Indian economy and hence different solutions have been offered. The neo-liberal economists have talked of the need to streamline bureaucracy and cut down the role of the state² Advocates of decentralized development have talked of the need for revitalization of local institutions and community organizations to bring about development.³ Grassroots activists demand

² Pranab Bardhan "Symposium on the State and Economic Development", Journal of Economic Perspectives, vol.4 (3), (Summer 1990).

³ See L.C. Jain et. al. Grass without Roots: Rural Development Under Government Auspices, (Delhi, 1985).

the withdrawal of the state from civil society.⁴ Citing support from experiences of many grassroots action groups they argue that state interference cripples local initiative and compromises on the autonomy of civil society. A brief review of the three perspective points out the emphasis all the three perspectives place on voluntary organizations, through each defines them differently.

- a) The neoliberal economic theory has built up a strong case for 'rolling back the state' by focusing on state failures in development and 'rent seeking behaviour' of the interventionist state. The critique of planned economies is accomplished by the prescription that state intervention be reduced to a bare minimum and that the market forces should be allowed to play freely. This would lead to efficient allocation of resources. The neoliberal theory opines that government ought to perform only those roles where it has a 'comparative advantage' over other institutions such as the market and the non-profit sector. The World Bank/IMF policy has been

⁴ a. For Instance Telmo Rudi Frantz: "The Role of NGOs in Strengthening civil Society", talks of the experience of UNIJUI a Brazilian in promoting self-help, World Development, vol.15, 1987.
b. Rajesh Tandon "Changing Context and Challenges for Voluntary Action" Social Action, vol.46 (1), 1996, p.8,9.

shaped by this perspective and has resulted in large quantum of aid being channelised through NGOs instead of government. At the core of this argument is the classical political economists position that intervention of the state in matters of the civil society and its affairs was unnecessary and unfeasible. Classical political economy permitted the state only the functions of protecting citizens, provision of justice and public amenities. This was due to the conception of civil society (which included both the market and the political sphere) as a sphere constituted by self-seeking but rational individuals. Rational decisions communicated through market regulated the social behaviour of individuals. The rise of a civilized society can be attributed to this rationality of the individuals and the market and not to the direction of the state. Thus the role of the state should be minimal compared to the market and organisation created by individuals by their own volition. However the aims of this conception of a social order were maximum prosperity and happiness for all. Hence most adherents of the school made provision for the state to intervene to help the displaced and provide for the poor.

The neoliberal economic theory calls for 'alternative delivery systems' to fulfill the task of providing for the poor. The state is to act as a resource agent for NGOs which would undertake the task more efficiently. NGOs are attributed with qualities of flexibility, commitment and professionalism which give them the edge over the state in the performance of certain functions. This policy of 'contracting' NGOs for implementation and monitoring of development programs has been pursued by the Government of India since the Seventh Five Year Plan. Such a perspective towards development indicates the continuation of the policy of centralised planning with only the agency of implementation being substituted. Rajni Kothari criticizes this approach for failing to recognize the character of the voluntary sector and thus causing it "unimaginable harm." By creating mechanisms which ensure a steady flow of funds the government is trying to co-opt the voluntary sector and hence gain legitimacy.⁵

The problem that this study sees with the neo-liberal perspective is the vast sweep and uniform applicability that it claims for itself.

⁵ Rajni Kothari, "Voluntary Organizations in a Plural Society" Indian Journal of Public Administration, vol. 33(3) 1987, pp.443,444.

Developing countries like India face enormous economic problems. The state is a central actor today in the social sector and is the main agent of efforts to bring about development. Reduction of the state to the role of a disburser of resources when institutional mechanisms of the other sectors are not well developed could spell doom for these economies.

- b) The systems of economic planning and those of mobilizing resources have tended to reinforce the centralizing tendencies of the Indian administrative structures. Advocates of decentralised development argue that what is required today is not a reduction of the functioning of the state. Planning for development should be from below and not vice versa. Local institutions ought to be strengthened to get access to the needs of local communities, community organizations and NGOs working in various location would then play a major role in assisting local institutions in program formulation, implementation and monitoring. This perspectives has influenced formulation of development programs like the Urban Basic Services Program (details in the third chapter). With the passage of the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution giving greater powers and autonomy to local

governments, this perspective seems to be one possible course of action for the development policy.

This argument recognizes the reality that the state cannot be dispensed with as a strategic institution in the development scenario. What needs to be done is to democratize it. NGOs are therefore seen as supplementary actors.

- c) Rajni Kothari, Rajesh Tandon, Harsh Sethi etc criticize state and led development and the model it is based on on these grounds (1) that the trickle down that was anticipated has not occurred (2) that development has resulted in a large scale displacement of tribals and forest dwellers due to environmental degradation; rural poor have been displaced due to farm mechanization, and unavailability of opportunities in the countryside; Urban poor, who are mostly migrants in search of greener pastures, have been relegated to the slums. (3) this is the result of the pursuit of a model of development which has no roots or relevance in the Indian context. Moreover its primary focus is infrastructure and not the individual.⁶

⁶ ibid., Tandon, n.4(b), p.8.

Kothari's solution to the problem of underdevelopment is genuine voluntary work whose focus is human development.⁷ The agenda for voluntary organisation is to restore the space of civil society encroached upon by the state. He talks of the need for the civil society to organize around self-help grassroots organization and create wide webs of these organizations that would form a well connected whole.

This civil society argument has the support of contemporary political theory which views civil society and state as mutually opposing categories: For example, Patrick Chabal in "Domination in Africa: Reflections on the limits of power" conceptualizes civil society as a "vast ensemble of constantly changing groups and individuals..[who have]..acquired some consciousness of their externality and opposition to the state."⁸ This notion of a self regulating civil society as a source of opposition to the state is not found either in Hegel or Gramsci. Hegel, considered to be the originator of the concept of civil society sees it as one of the three moments of ethical life the other two being state and family. It is seen as the domain of particularity where the self seeking individuals fulfil his needs. The

⁷ Kothari, n.5, pp.443.

⁸ Cited in M. Bratton "Beyond the State: Civil Society and Associational Life in Africa" World Politics, vol. 41, pp.407, 408.

intermediary associations that are formed in the process of need fulfillment such as 'Estates', 'Corporations' etc institutionalize a communitarian moment. (as against the institution of family which embodies the characteristic of particularity). But the ultimate expression of universality is the state. For Hegel therefore civil society is not a sphere that can be a source of opposition to the state. Gramsci views civil society as an array of cultural, educational and other institutions through which the state operates and enforces intangible and subtle forms of power. It is the arena for creation of consent for the projects of the state.

De Tocqueville is the theorist to whom the contemporary civil society argument traces its lineage to. He portrays civil society as an autonomous sphere of intermediary institutions that would ultimately guarantee that the state unable to arrogate itself to more power than an active litigency is willing to grant. Thus the state is seen as being directed by the needs of the civil society.

However as Michael Bratton points out all these conceptions prejudice the nature of state society relations.⁹ In India and other

⁹ M. Bratton "Beyond the State: Civil Society and Associational Life in Africa" World Politics, vol. 41, p.407.

developing countries these are areas of conflict in state society relations but equally there are areas where corroboration and co-operation between society and state. The state is an institution that arises from the society and can be understood properly when placed in the social context. A perspective that sees state society relations as of opposing categories or as one of them as being submissive cannot explain a range of institutions such as development NGOs. Alfred Stepan defines "civil society as an arena where manifold social movements and civic organizations from all classes attempt to constitute themselves on an ensemble of arrangements so that they can express themselves and advance their interests"¹⁰ a Development NGOs can be defined as these 'civic organisations' which draw upon the resources of the society and on the basis of voluntariness transform them into collective goods to solve social problems in the life of individuals and communities inhabiting this sphere, Their closer association with community life makes them better problem solving mechanisms than government agencies.

Efforts to make the state more responsive and efficient should take steps to bring in institutional pluralism. Institutional pluralism is a necessity in the contemporary society because of the vast diversity of

¹⁰ ibid.

problems facing us. A number of institutions acting in tandem could solve these problems better than a single institution. It would along strengthen the democratic impulses of the society by providing a wider social base for the institutions.

The crucial point, however, is that the key actors i.e., the state and the NGOs must be able to work out a broad framework for collaboration. The next chapter exposes possibilities for such a collaboration in the context of the various aspects of NGO-Government relationship.

Chapter II

ISSUES IN THE GOVERNMENT-NGO RELATIONSHIP

The relationship between NGOs and Government at different levels is a multifaceted one with number of areas where co-operation is feasible and an equal/more number of problematic areas. Kuhnle-Selle describe the relationship between government and third sector by means of a four section diagram.¹ The distinctive features are on the one hand the possibilities of communication and contact of the third sector with the State and on the other its level of dependence on the State with regard to finance and control.

**Relationship Between
Government and Third Sector**

	State Nearness (with regard to communication and contact)	
	(1)	(2)
Dependency upon the State [with regard to finance and control]	Integrated dependency	Separated dependency
	(3)	(4)
Independence vis-a-vis the State	Integrated autonomy	Separated autonomy

Source: R. Pitschas in R.B. Jain (ed.) *NGOs in Development Perspective* (1995)

¹ Cited in Rainer Pitschas, "The Role of NGOs in the Modern State: A Challenge to Institutional Policy", in R.B. Jain (ed.), NGOs in Development Perspective, (Delhi, 1995), p.16.

The first rubric shows a high degree of integration. The integrated dependency is determined by state-nearness with regard to communication and contact and dependence with regard to finance and control. In the second, the state has preponderance. The freedom of action of organisations in the NGO sector is greatly restricted by state control. The third typifies the pluralist ideal where the NGOs can have an influence on the state without being integrated in the decision making or implementation process of the state. The fourth rubric signifies a separated autonomy of the third sector by means of independence from the state and state distance.

Such a model, however, does not throw much light on the specific realities of the Indian context. The complex nature of NGO-government relationship in India can be understood only by taking a look at the evolution of the relationship in the post independence period.

Mahatma Gandhi suggested that the Congress party be dissolved after Independence was secured and that partyworkers join a new organisation 'Lok Seva Dal' devoted to social work. This did not happen but a number of Gandhians established voluntary organisations and began working at the village level. There was considerable collaboration between

the government and these groups. In the First Five Year Plan Rupees forty million was set apart for voluntary organisations "for dealing with social problems for which the state cannot provide in sufficient measure." The tendency was to treat them as social work and charity groups. In the 1960's the voluntary organisations shifted from implementing government programs to work based on their own creativity. In the 1970's a critique of the development model developed because the expected "trickle down" had shown no signs of occurring. This along with the changes in the political system resulted in the voluntary agencies resorting to organizing the poor and the marginalised to assert themselves. This brought about a confrontation with the state. But there were many NGOs who still continued with development work without involving themselves in mobilizational activities. The Gandhian NGOs supported Jayaprakash Narayan's call for "total revolution" and thus aligned themselves with the anti-government forces. This led to some harassment in the 1980's through the appointment of Kudal commission. The Kudal Commission was appointed to inquire into finances of these Gandhian voluntary agencies. Foreign contribution and Government funding were stopped under allegations of mismanagement. This led to a gradual dissolution of these voluntary agencies.

The Sixth Five Year Plan made an effort to define the role of a voluntary agency. The focus, however, still remained their role in social welfare and charity work. The work of voluntary agencies in disaster relief, rehabilitation etc was lauded. With regard to long term development work their role was defined as that of a 'contractor' who would implement schemes designed by the government.

The Seventh Five Year Plan marks a policy shift from bureaucratic planning to a greater emphasis on peoples participation. The plan proposed to do this by taking steps for decentralisation of planning and increasing the involvement of voluntary agencies in the implementation of the plans at the grassroot level. This policy has been continued in the Eighth Five Year Plan too.

The voluntary sector has been divided on whether or not to accept this proposal of the government. Rajni Kothari and others have described it as a move to co-opt voluntary agencies working independently by the lure of steady funds. But others have gone ahead and joined hands with the government agencies in various programs.

This strategy to involve voluntary agencies presumes a presence of good will and mutual trust between the two. But the situation is not all that smooth. Tongkawate and Tips have evaluated the co-operation between government and NGOs in Thailand. They feel that the main causes for a lack of co-operation are

- the government's complicated system and regulation.
- different concepts, goals and methods.
- lack of provincial policy.
- NGOs lack of policy and plan.

In contrast to this NGOs criticise that

- governments are not sincere with NGOs
- governments want to control NGOs
- governments have inefficient information system.²

The government is not a monolithic identity and different ministries and government agencies have varying perspectives and expectations. The

² See Maniemai Tongkawate and Walter Tips, "Co-ordination between Government and Voluntary Organisations (NGOs) in Thailand's Rural Development", Public Administration and Development, vol. 8(4) (1988), pp.418-420.

voluntary agencies are also a diverse lot with differing rationales and may not see the costs and benefits of interacting with the government in the same light.

Gulati and Gulati point out that 'In theory relations between voluntary agencies and government can be at different levels: (i) simple exchange of information (ii) pilot testing by voluntary agencies of government innovations (iii) replication by government on a much broader scale of innovations made by voluntary agencies in their own area of operation (iv) joint delivery of services to the people, with each partner playing roles according to their comparative advantage (v) governments attempt to change the behaviour of voluntary agencies through persuasion regulation or repression and (vi) efforts of voluntary agencies to change government policies through persuasion, advocacy, demonstration in the street or court action.³ The perception of governments at various levels differ. These perceptions of the government about voluntary agencies and of voluntary agencies about the government are summarised by them as follows:⁴

³ Gulati and Gulati, Strengthening Voluntary Action in India, (New Delhi, 1995), p.66.

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 67,68.

1) Views of the Government and Government Officials

- a) "The plan documents of government are based on the assumption that development is the only consideration in the government's relations with voluntary agencies and that government officials have the same mind sets regarding how development is to be pursued. Neither assumption is necessarily valid.
- b) The plan documents of the Seventh Five Year Plan and Eighth Five Year Plan demand innovative breakthroughs from voluntary agencies while most ministry programmes handed over to voluntary agencies for implementation are tightly specified. The implicit message is that the design of these programmes is fine and what is required of the voluntary agencies is to secure the co-operation of the people to implement these programmes.
- c) The ground reality is that what really counts is the personal inclination of the concerned government officials. Some are aware of the defects of past government approaches and genuinely believe that participative approaches of voluntary agencies can make a difference. There are others who still believe in the top-down model and find it difficult and

distasteful to communicate to voluntary agencies. Something akin to class stratification stands in the way of good relations between government and many voluntary agencies."

- d) Officers in the Home Ministry and in departments of state government's concerned with security tend to see voluntary agencies as a security hazard. There is a marked degree of apprehensiveness that voluntary agencies can be a conduit for foreign powers trying to subject the country or that voluntary agencies might try forced religious conversions.

2. Views of Voluntary Organizations.

- a) Voluntary Agencies resent the heavy burden of government regulations and feel that it stifles their independence.
- b) The voluntary agencies share the general public opinion that the government sector is a massive phenomenon which is inefficient, highly bureaucratic and corrupt. Yet it is central to public life and hence they carry on their business with it as best as they can.
- c) Many voluntary agencies passively accept government programs and are heavily dependent on government funds. There are other committed voluntary agencies who try to

there is an impasse, conflict develops-the voluntary agencies resort to protests ; government resorts to withdrawal of financial support and harassment.

From these comments it can be deduced that the four types of issues affecting voluntary agencies-government relationship are: (1) the regulatory framework (2) government funding (3) foreign funding and (4) the question of the development model.

1. The Regulatory Framework

The number of acts and legislations governing relations between government and NGOs are: Societies Registration Act, 1960, The Indian Trust Act, The Trade Union Act, Co- operative Act, the NGOs are registered under Societies Registration Act or Co-operatives Act. Other acts which affect the way NGOs function are Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act FCRA, 1976 regulating foreign funding of NGOs and the Income Tax Act 1965 governing the income tax obligations if any.

- a) Registration of voluntary agencies under the Societies Act or Trust Act have become increasingly cumbersome. To register, NGOs need to register with income tax authorities for income tax exemptions

and Home Ministry to obtain foreign funds. These are very burdensome for new, small and non profession groups. Moreover none of the present acts cater specifically to the voluntary sector. Hence what results, is a multiplicity of interpretations of these acts, as also conflicts between the government officials and voluntary organisations.

- b) Income Tax: Firstly, registering with the Income Tax Department is a difficult task because, the provisions are obscure and current modalities are not clear. Hence applications are rejected for insufficient reasons and demands for bribes are common. Secondly, Income Tax Act as it applies to voluntary agencies under the Trust Act is extremely complicated.⁵ Thirdly, if more than 25% of a grant received by a NGO in a particular tax year remains unspent the excess is considered as taxable income. Moreover, income generated by a volag is considered as taxable even if it has plans of using it for further developmental work.⁶ Lastly tax provisions with regard to donations have varied too often.

⁵ For example, Gulati and Gulati point out that Section 10(21) subjects voluntary agencies running literacy classes in rural areas with an annual outlay above Rs. 50,000 to taxation even though it exempts an elite public school like Doon School under section 10(22).

⁶ This was pointed out to me by Rajeev at Naya Prayas.

But it must be noted that the government has its share of grouses. Voluntary organisations have very often been used as shields for tax evasion. The corporate houses have often created their own 'Voluntary agencies' to make use of these exemption provisions.⁷

- c) The FCRA-is another area of conflict. The Home Ministry regulations require that an agency has to be registered and operational for 3 years to receive foreign funds. Since there is a three year requirement period for government funds too, most grassroots organisations struggle to survive in the first few years when they actually need to be supported. Two to three months are taken to decide on an application. Routine visits to ministries and filing reports are activities that small groups can not afford. These hurdless cause disillusionment among the members and many die a premature death even before getting a chance to prove themselves.

The regulatory framework has no problem solving fora in order to help the NGOs. In order to build a sustainable co- operative relationship the regulations must be fewer in number and less

⁷ There have been instances of corporate philanthropy which have made tremendous difference like Mafatlal Industry Limited's Rural Development Program in the some districts of Gujarat.

problematic. A joint mechanism with a few representatives of the NGO sector and some government officials must be evolved in all the ministries dealing with NGOs.

2. Funding from Government:

Government financing of NGOs is provided departmentally and through specialised institutions such as Council for Advancement of Peoples Action and Rural Technology (CAPART).

Funding from CAPART: CAPART is supposed to function as an autonomous body. It has some NGO representatives on its board. But all its senior officials are IAS officers and it functions like a government body.

CAPART requires that an NGO should have an operational record of at least three years as a basis for applying for funds. There is no core support for voluntary agencies for institutional development. New organisations get very little technical support. Voluntary agencies are very critical of CAPART's functioning and the amount of paper work. But CAPART believes that voluntary agencies tend to approach it prematurely even before there is a constituency for their service. It believes that once there is demand from a community it is easier to grant funds.

It is also true that many NGO's misappropriate government funds. When CAPART black lists these organisations a hue and cry is raised about government interference.⁸

It is essential that NGOs recognize the importance of effective accountability mechanisms in order to gain public legitimacy. Most NGOs neglect effective management procedures [and infact many sneer at any mention of professionalism]. Both CAPART, established NGOs and also large networks of NGOs should take measures for institutional development of the third sector.

3. Voluntary Organizations and Development Policy:

NGOs can have an impact on government policy in three ways:

- 1) Through programmatic innovations,
- 2) By being vigilant observers of formulation and implementation of government policies,
- 3) By trying to promote development co-operation across sectors.

⁸ See Rashtriya Sahara [Supplement (Hindi)]. (Feb.15, 1995) for the reactions of important NGOs leaders on the recent blacklisting of some 50 NGOs by CAPART in Jan. 1996.

Innovations by NGOs such as the Jamkhed healthcare experiment of Dr. Arole have influenced policies of government departments by indicating new and alternative ways of problem solving. To influence government policy NGOs try to adopt strategies of (1) collaborating with the government in policy formulation. (2) using public forum to communicate their demands (3) contest government policy through protest and challenging the government in court.

In the 1950's there was considerable consensus on the development model & policy. Government was regarded as the main agency to promote development. Voluntary agencies played a secondary role. In the 70's and 80's this consensus broke down and voluntary agencies took up issues of alternative development strategies. They did make contributions but they were piecemeal and do not amount to a comprehensive model. The government alone has a comprehensive development approach which covers all macro, micro dimensions and sectors, however flawed it may be. The government policy has evolved over time. The work done by voluntary agencies has been only one factor making for change.

The issue of voluntary agencies working for policy change has been rejected as irrelevant by most environmental action groups. They regard

government as the instrument of the existing establishment and hence believe that fundamental systemic change alone can result in any real change in government policy. Such a viewpoint results in confrontation between them.

Tandon identifies three broad categories in the way NGOs relate to governments.

- a) Dependency-Where NGOs implement programs of the state, or receive funds from the state or both, there is a dependency on the ideas money and resources of the state. This category is a broad generalisation. Findings of Gulati and Gulati point out that the degree of assertiveness of a NGO is not always reduced because of its dependence on government funds.⁹ For example Shree Vivekanand Research and Training Institute of Kutch, Gujarat, working in the field of water harvesting, is an interesting case of high dependence on government funds combined with a high degree of assertiveness.¹⁰ This can be attributed to its excellent results in

⁹ Gulati and Gulati, n.3, p.81.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

its projects.¹¹ An NGO with a well developed institutional structure can co-operate with the government as an equal because of the resources that the latter possesses.

- b) **Adversarial:** This category refers to a situation where NGOs and the government are locked in an adversary relationship. This is the type which was visible in relation to all those NGOs which challenged the policies of the state, its development frameworks and paradigms on the one hand, or directly or indirectly supported the social movements on the other. In some situations where government officials at the local and state level were identified as part of the vested interests exploiting and marginalising the poor, the work of the NGOs towards the purposes of empowerment and building community organisations was seen as questioning of these vested interests, the government officers, the government structure and apparatus. In such a structure the very nature of NGOs work has an objective conflict of interest vis-a-vis the government.

¹¹ Rajesh Tandon, NGO-Government Relations: a Source of Life or a Kiss of Death, (Delhi, Not dated).

- c) **Collaborationist:** The nature of NGO-government relationship need not be perpetually adversarial. It means a relationship of authentic collaboration, acceptance of autonomy, independence and pluralism of NGO opinions and entails a genuine partnership between the two to work on a problem facing a region or the country. Cooperation does not mean either filling the gap where the state is unable to provide effective and responsive services or fulfilling the targets of the government. Co-operation does not also absolve the state of its responsibilities.

It is these kind of relationships that need to be fostered by both the government & NGOs. The next chapter deals with an experiment of successful collaboration-Naya Prayas.

Chapter III

NAYA PRAYAS-BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROGRESS

India has been witnessing rapid urbanization in the recent decades. The urban population which was estimated to be around 217 million in 1991, is growing at the rate of 3.6% per annum. A variety of factors like industrialization, development of trade and commerce, concentration of educational facilities, administrative offices, hope of employment opportunities etc. attract various sections of semi-urban, and rural populace to urban areas. A considerable number of migrants become urban poor. Notwithstanding the fact that employment opportunities in the organised sector are difficult to come by, a job in the organised sector necessitates the acquisition of certain minimal skills. Immigrant labour therefore, tends to be increasingly engaged in informal sector activities such as hawking, self-employment as mechanics, employment as household helpers etc. The Human Development Report 1994 states, that nearly 33 percent of the urban population live in abject poverty. The twin factors of poverty and population growth, are responsible for aggravating the existing

problems of the urban areas such as unemployment, housing shortage, creation of slums, environmental decay, poor health and hygiene, and problems of social disorganization and crime.

Given their abject poverty and the non-availability of low cost housing, urban poor normally find shelter in slums or create new squatter settlements in unoccupied lands. In the slums so formed, one half of the population lives in semi- pucca dwellings, only 15 per cent have private toilets and 21% have access to public conveniences. Basic services such as water supply, electricity, health and sanitation are non existent in most slums because they have not been regularised by the government. The supply of water and electricity is subject to pilferage and hence doesnot always reach the hutments (even when there are facilities).

Though the basic problems remain the same for urban and rural poor, the urban poor face added complications since having been uprooted from their native environment, they experience a feeling of alienation and neglect. Such physical and psychological problems with the added pressures of poverty lead to social tensions.

As they live in congested and unhygienic surroundings, the slum

communities, especially the women and children, are exposed to many health problems. The action research program for employment and income generation for women in a squatter resettlement colony in Delhi presented by Coe highlights the role of women as earners.¹ Although employment opportunities for women are limited in this setup, poor urban women with little or no skills, are forced into performing what are called, "women specific tasks" like domestic help, piecerate work for garment industry etc., where there is no guarantee of steady employment and wages are low. Her income is crucial in meeting the needs of her family, sometimes they even manage to contribute to savings or send the children to school.

Children suffer due to the oppressive physical and social environment in slums. Lata Narayan points out the need to provide satisfying compensatory experience to these children, within the framework of the children's total cultural ethos.² The salient features in this process are use of recreation, concept of participation, discipline and punishment.

¹ See Jane Meleny Coe, "Employment and Income Generation for Women in a Resettlement Colony in Delhi: The Linkage between Social Action and Research", Social Action, vol. 30,(3), (July-Sept. 1983), pp.285-300.

² Lata Narayan, "Work with Children in Slums", Indian Journal of Social Work, vol. 46 (4), (Jan. 1986), p.485.

Urban poverty and state policy

The Indian government did not take serious note of the problems of urban poor till almost the Sixth Plan. The state and central governments however did undertake certain measures for the Urban poor on an adhoc basis. Some important programs are Urban Community Development Program, Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums, Self Employment Program for the Urban Poor, Minimum Needs program, Nehru Rozgar Yojana. The coverage of these programs are limited and most of them are administrated bureaucratically without any community participation. These programs were seen as welfare programs and hence did not address the questions of sustainability and empowerment of participants.

In the seventh plan the Urban Basic Services (UBS) program was initiated. U.B.S. advocated the provision of basic services to the slum communities through community participation and women's empowerment. After a pilot project the program was universalized in 1990. Unlike other programs this is implemented through community based organizations constituted at the slum level and have women members exclusively. The slums are also constituted into 'Neighbourhood groups' with one female member as a 'Resident community volunteer'. Plans are formulated by the neighbourhood groups with the help of the staff affiliated to urban local

bodies. Once plans are approved, municipalities channelize funds to these groups for their respective activities. But this program has limited scope because, it caters only to recognized slums and leaves most of those living in squatter settlements out of its pale.

Hence the task of undertaking any community development scheme in these squatter settlements has come to rest on voluntary efforts of individuals and NGO's. However these efforts are hamstrung by the lack of resources and need to be reinforced by support from other institutions like the government and its agencies.

The Prayas JAC Society is an NGO which originally began as an attempt to help the uplift of street children. It now has a new project-the Naya Prayas which has begun an endeavour at comprehensive slum community development programs at three centres in South West Delhi. Naya Prayas is the focus of this chapter.

Prayas Juvenile Aid Centre

This "Attempt" to provide support to street and working children of Jahangirpuri slums (North Delhi) began in 1988 with twenty five children, a few part-time social workers and a few policemen. Today 'Prayas'

represents a successful joint endeavour of Delhi police, Delhi school of social work, Shramik vidyapeeth (Ministry of Human Resources Development) and a dedicated NGO, catering to around 2000 children's needs. The basic components of this much lauded program are

- 1) provision of non-formal education to these children and enabling them to get admission in government schools once they make the grade.
- 2) provision of midday meals & snacks in order to provide incentives for the parents who have to forego the income of a child to send them to school.
- 3) older children [above 14 years] are taught vocational trades like candle-making, detergent-making, Auto-repair, book-binding, embroidery, tailoring, tie and dye, block printing, making of cards etc.
- 4) Prayas Health Service consists of two well equipped mobile vans with a team of dedicated doctors from various hospitals in Delhi who organize health camps in various slums of Delhi to cater to the needs of these neglected children.

"NAYA PRAYAS"- 'A NEW ENDEAVOUR'

Prayas inaugurated this project in 1992 for the socio- economic upliftment of the slums of Lalkhet, Kusumpur-pahari and Bhanwar Singh camp in South West Delhi. These slums are inhabited by extremely poor, lower caste migrants from Rajasthan and Haryana. This slum project caters to around 50,000 people through various aspects of the program.

The socio-economic conditions when the project was initiated: A baseline survey conducted before the project was initiated with the help of some students of Delhi School of Social Work showed that (a) nearly 60% of the population lived below the poverty line. (b) There were no medical facilities or educational facilities for children. (c) Nearly 95% of the women were illiterate or had little education. (d) Coming from very traditional rural set ups these women were not allowed to and were themselves not open to the idea of working outside the house. Some did start working as domestic help and sweepers etc when forced by circumstances. (e) The slums lacked electricity, roads, water or even postal communications. Lalkhet was especially untouched by any governmental or nongovernmental agency.

The project was started on a piece of land donated by the residents of the Lalkhet Basti and a two roomed accommodation provided by the slum wing of the Muncipal Corporation of Delhi in the Kusumpur Basti Vikas Kendra.

Programme Objectives

1. To undertake welfare programs for identification, protection, care, development and rehabilitation of neglected and disadvantaged children, youth and women.
2. To help in creation of basic humanitarian services such as roads, drainages, electricity, public conveniences.
3. To organise educational programs for these groups.
4. To organise vocational training for these groups and help provide a source of income in order to enable them to lead a life of dignity.
5. To provide basic health, nutritional and medical services and to organize various other related activities.
6. To render psychological support and counselling.
7. Create shelter homes for the disadvantaged group especially the children in need of urgent protection.
8. Most importantly, to organize these disadvantaged groups to enable them to bring changes in their lives.

Program Components.

- 1) The original Prayas model components such as Non formal education, vocational training cum income generation, health care and nutrition are main parts of the program.
- 2) A new addition has been the recognition of the need for Women's education and employment in order to uplift neglected children and for community development in general.
- 3) Efforts to develop basic infrastructure like street lighting and electricity for the households, more water pumps and roads through collaboration with other NGO'S.
- 4) A counselling centre has been set up with the aid of 'Sanjeevani' another NGO.

Program implementation

- 1) Non formal education: The Naya Prayas project has three Nonformal education centres at Bhanwar Singh Camp, Lalkhet and Kusumpur-pahari. The centres have two trained educators each along with a supervisor. These educators who belong to the slums or nearby areas belong to the low income group and have completed their schooling.

There are about 200 children on the rolls of each centre. These children have been sent by their parents after much coaxing and pressurising by the project officials. Most of the children belong to the age group of 7 to 12. Almost 79% of the children were engaged in various occupations before being sent to the centre. The main attraction for the children is the playroom set up with various kinds of creative games. Children at Kusumpur Pahari are fortunate since a large vacant area has been cleared up by the MCO [on the request of the Delhi police and Naya prayas] and made into a playground. For Bhanwar singh camp the efforts are underway to develop one outside the slum on an area used earlier for garbage dumping. This is dream come true for the children. Psychologically it has many good effects as the children find a release of their energies in a positive manner on the playground.

The teaching material has been designed and provided by NCERT'. The Shramik Vidyapeeth trains the educators and supervisors. Children are taught to read and write first. The children are then educated through stories; essential science and mathematics are also taught. Then the children are put into schools in order to be educated formally and secure school certificates.

The children in the older age group of 12-16 are taught caning, bookbinding and other trades. There is a vocational training course in electrical repairs for boys above 14.

Young girls are taught courses in hair styling, tailoring, embroidery, candle making, detergent making and how to be a beautician. All the vocational trades are taught by either the trainer or a polytechnic diploma holder in that trade.

As a part of the non-formal education program the children are taken out on a short excursion for a day or two. This exposure provides a break from the crowded slum area and is also of educative value. Movie shows are organised. Cultural shows by these children have been organised for fund raising.

The original attraction for the children and parents was the mid day meal program and the snacks offered in the day. The children are given healthy food with milk everyday. This is the most well implemented part of the program.

Community Participation and Response

Though the project supervisors met with apathy and indifference in the initial days the communities in all three centres seem to have developed a feeling of ownership vis-a-vis the program. Nearly 60% of the children said that their mothers enquired of what was taught in the 'school' that day. It is the women participants of the income generation program who make food for the mid day meal for the children.

The project officials conduct a home visit to the children's homes as a routine and in special cases when a child appears to have any physical or psychological problem that needs to be tackled.

The efforts of Naya Prayas towards helping the children of these areas have resulted in it being accepted by the communities. Thus it has gained legitimacy to undertake other programs for the slum.

Women's Programs

Income generation program: The women in these slums are mostly illiterate and unskilled. Due to the lack of any economic power the woman have very little control over the household. Moreover the poverty and low incomes force these woman to place themselves, their health and their

needs as the last priority. Their ignorance affects the upbringing of the children.

The experience at Jahangirpuri pointed out the need to involve the community more wholly in the process of development and not just as the parents of the children.

Therefore an adult education program was started for the women of the community. But the attendance was very low since most women were too busy trying to make ends meet to have time to educate themselves. The project supervisors then met the adults in the community and sought their advice on how the women's program could be organized. Most of them stressed the need to have something that will benefit them economically. So a program to impart tailoring and embroidery skills was evolved. The Ministry of Human Resource Development advanced a grant-in-aid to offer stipends to the women for the period of their training of six months. The stipend amounting to one hundred and fifty rupees only [Rs.150/-only] seems a very negligible amount at first glance. But when considered in relation to the Rs 800/- to 1000/- income that most of these women manage with this is a major addition to the family income. Rs 20/-of this stipend is deposited in a saving account that the NGO has

opened for each of them, with an interest of 2%. Every month, one or two account holders are eligible to take away a portion of the money pooled in incase of any urgent need or emergency or to buy some durable asset that would economically benefit the household.

This arrangement, based on the "Gramavikas" model of Karnataka, has brought in about 50 participants in two batches, not much in terms of numbers, but yet a beginning. The women who have undergone training earlier also come to the centre in order to pick up some take-home work. The women are supplied with the rawmaterial. They are paid on a piece rate basis at the end of the month.

The products produced are marketed through various outlets of other NGO's and also through the Delhi police foundation [for women]. There are no restrictions on freelancing, for these women.

The social aspects of the income generation programs are also interesting. The women [trainees and others] are divided into groups for distribution of the work. The groups are then encouraged to discuss anything of interest- ranging from family problems to movies. This exchange of experiences generates a feeling of camaraderie amongst the

women. The supervisor intervenes in a discussion and veers it around to discussion of solutions. Many problems facing the slum are discussed. This gives the project personnel an insight into their mindsets and their concerns.

Health Care: The Prayas Mobile Health service visits the centres once a fortnight. The children's problems get priority. Vaccinations and immunisation programs form an important part. The community at Kusumpur has access to a dispensary. Lalkhet & Bhanwar Singh camps are presently in the process of being allotted one. The fact that Ministry of HRD is one of the patrons and many of the bureaucrats are extremely sympathetic to the requests of the communities has speedened up procedures in other ministries and the Delhi government.

Community Assets: The small office-cum-project centre was unapproachable due to garbage and slush. The project personnel approached the recognized "elders" of the community and put forward the suggestion that the community should share the costs of laying a pathway by rendering voluntary service. The community agreed to perform 'Shramdaan'. The pattern has been followed in laying other pathways in the slum. The material costs are borne by the grant-in-aid for the purpose.

Another NGO' has taken up the task of providing adequate lighting through solar powered lights currently in Kusumpur. Later this is to be extended to other slums as well.

Counselling Service: The counselling service offered by an NGO (Sanjeevani) provides help for distressed women with emotional and domestic problems. Project personnel of Naya Prayas also send children with psychological problems and their parents to the counselling centre.

Partnerships in Progress

1. Delhi Police and Naya Prayas: Naya Prayas, being a member of the Prayas JAC society, is a partner to Delhi police in the attempt to protect neglected children. The Delhi police form an important component of the juvenile aid centre at Jahangirpuri. It also contributes financially in a big way by paying the lease on the six L.T.G. flats that the Prayas JAC is housed, the electrical and telephone bills, maintenance of the vehicles used by the project, furniture etc a part from regular donations. The Delhi Police has also gifted Prayas with land for a 'Home for street children'.

The importance of this partnership, as far as Naya Prayas is concerned, lies in the fact that the Kusumpur and Lalkhet areas were a area for drug peddling and crime (as was Jahangirpuri). The children of these areas were dragged into the racket at early ages hence juvenile delinquency was a problem. The Prayas solution represents an effort to work towards longterm answers for social problems that seem to have roots in poverty and underdevelopment.

The Delhi Police has also had its share of gains. Prayas in association with National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development (NIPCCD) is conducting a series of workshops on ways to tackle juvenile delinquents without the use of coercion. Ofcourse, it gives the much maligned Delhi Police a 'human face'. But this is a program in its embryonic form. Whether the actual object of sensitizing the police and making then conscious of the rights and problems of various sections of the society can be achieved through such a model is yet to be seen. The immediate result is visible from the fact that the police 'chowki's' outside Kusumpur and Bhanwar Singh Camp (which were swamped with complaints earlier) are virtually dysfunctional now.

2. Shramik Vidyapeeth, Delhi: is an extension wing of the Directorate of Adult Education, part of the Department of Education in the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The Shramik Vidyapeeth has organised vocational training programs for youth in electrical wiring, repair of electrical appliances and the embroidery program for women. The adult education programs for women are also conducted by educators trained by the Shramik Vidyapeeth. This collaboration provides Prayas with valuable technical source material and funds of the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

3. International Partners: The major international donor is the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). CIDA has presently offered to fund the costs of expanding the capacity of the Naya Prayas project to include more women and children. OXFAM-USA, the British High Commission and save the children fund are the other donors. The multiple sources of funds have ensured constant field visits by the donors and kept the project functioning smoothly. Moreover the financial support of the international donors gives Naya Prayas the potential to go in for more innovation and expansion.

4. The Ministry of Welfare: The Ministry of Welfare has been a source of grants-in-aid for development of infrastructure like roads, street lighting, childrens park etc.

5. Others NGOs: The Prayas family has access to the advise and resources of other NGOs since it is a member of the Delhi NGO forum. It is through this forum that it has been able to mobilize support for the Prayas Health Service Scheme.

6. Delhi School of Social Work: Every year some students of this school work with Naya Prayas and Prayas JAC as a part of their field placement. Infact the project managers at both the projects are from this school. This ensures that valuable professional expertise becomes available for a worthy cause.

The Prayas model represents an attempt at channelising resources through widespread networking. Radical anti-state stances foreclose any possibility of collaboration such as this one. It results in isolated experiments devoid of sustainability. Collaborations attempted within a mutually agreeable framework not only achieves the goal of reaching out to the under privileged; they also cater adequately to concerns of autonomy of the smaller partner i.e. the NGO.

CONCLUSION

The strengths of the voluntary sector are the micro-nature of its activities, innovativeness and the commitment of personnel. But as Sheldon Annis points out, "In the face of pervasive poverty small scale can merely mean insignificant, low cost can mean underfinanced innovative can mean temporary".¹ Hence what is now required of this sector in the ability to consolidate its strengths and work towards producing a greater/wider impact. Some current trends which are likely to influence the growth of this sector are discussed below:

1. **Voluntarism Vs Privatisation**

One of the growing trends in many countries of the South is the promotion NGOs under the guise of promoting privatisation in the social sector services. It is within this context, that the question haunts: whether increasing support from multilateral agencies is not likely to push them i.e. NGOs, into supporting trends towards privatisation of social sector services? It is important to note that

¹ Sheldon Annis "Can Small Scale Development Become a large Scale Policy? The case of Latin America." World Development. Vol.15 Supplement, (1987) p.129.

NGOs play a distinctive role and not one of merely substituting the state. They do provide services, but do not displace the delivery mechanisms of the state or absolve it from performing its moral and constitutional role.

2. Co-operation Vs Sub-Contracting

Increasingly, the governments are calling upon NGOs to get involved in development programs mostly designed by the state. It is only when programs are formulated along with NGOs that co-operation becomes meaningful. Otherwise the nature of the relationship becomes one of contractor and sub-contractor, where the NGOs receive payment for fulfilling certain targets.

3. Collaboration Vs Autonomy

One of the most important issues effectively the NGO- government relationship is the issue of co-existence with mutual respect, dignity and autonomy. The state and its agencies are relatively much more powerful than individual NGOs. Yet the challenge of development requires a relationship based on cooperation and co-existence. The question is whether this cooperation can be achieved without compromising the autonomy of the NGO. The NGOs require the

resources and capacities that the state possesses. It is also true that the state requires the efficiency and commitment shown by these organisations. It is important that the government find ways to support NGOs without encroaching on their flexibility and autonomy.

NGOs need to pay more attention to building their institutional capacities to function as independent, effective and competent entities for long term sustained work. The Prayas model is one among the numerous attempts at promoting co-operation across sectors. Such joint endeavours can be replicated in other fields and need to be promoted by national policy makers and international donors.

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