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**The Role of NGO's in Community Development  
A Study with Special Reference to Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper highlights the role of NGO's in community development programme in Dindigul District. It is a case study of two NGO's. The needs for further understanding of the functional properties of NGOs and for their effective functioning are necessary in this region. The NGO sector effectively works towards uplifting the socio-economic status of the poor. India is a land of villages and the Government of India has been implementing numerous rural development programmes for the upliftment of rural Communities. NGO's with their advantage of non- rigid, locality specific, felt need based, beneficiary oriented and committed nature of service have established multitude of roles which can effect rural development. However, despite their good intentions, a large number of NGO's find it difficult to sustain in the long run i.e. sustainability of organizations as well as sustainability of projects. An attempt has been made to analyze the working of NGO's for the rural poor in this paper. On this backdrop, the present study explores the role and their performance of NGO's in poverty eradication and upliftment of women empowerment in Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu.*

**Keywords:** Government, NGO, Community Development, Poverty alleviation/eradication, upliftment, empowerment and Sustainability Development.

# **The Role of NGO's in Community Development**

## **A Study with Special Reference to Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu**

### **Introduction**

The present strategy of community development mainly focuses on poverty alleviation, better livelihood opportunities, provision of basic amenities and infrastructure facilities through innovative programmes of wage and self-employment. The above goals will be achieved by various programme support being implemented creating partnership with communities, non-governmental organizations, community based organizations, institutions and industrial establishments, while the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) provides logistic support both on technical and administrative side for programme implementation. Other aspects that will ultimately lead to transformation of rural life are also being emphasized simultaneously. This paper is aimed to study the role of NGO's in community development with reference to Dindigul District of Tamil Nadu.

### **Review of Literature**

**U. Ramaswamy (1991)** Suggest the term NGO is very broad and can be applied to any organization which is operationally distinct from government. In the field of development, NGOs the word range from large scale funding organizations to local self-help organizations; and may include research institutes, coordinating bodies as well as lobby groups as mentioned earlier.

**D. Paul Chowdhary (1985)** stated, the goals of NGO, unlike those of government or business, are altruistic. They seek to benefit others rather than themselves. A voluntary Organization may be defined as an organizational entity, set up by a group of persons on their own initiative or partly by an outside motivation to help the people of a locality, to undertake activities in a self-reliant manner, to satisfy needs and to ensure a more equitable and effective development of the rural poor. **David C. Korten (1990)** Thus, NGO's agencies are non-profit organizations, primarily established to represent the needs and aspirations of the people intended to serve. Therefore, at times they are referred to as

'third-party' organizations, i.e., those basing their social legitimacy on the premise that they exist to serve the needs of third parties persons who are not themselves members of the organizations. **A. Bhattacharjee (1985)** Opines, there is no definition of non-governmental organizations, which is authentic and universal. NGO means many things to many people. To the leftists, it is a design, or at best a pawn in the neo-colonist strategy; to the rightists it is a bulwark against any radicalism; to the Government it is sometimes as righteous as the Government itself.

**P.J. James (1995)** The UN Department of Public Information defines Non-government organizations as "any of those organizations which are not part of a government and which have not been established as a result of an agreement between governments. NGOs can be research institutions, professional associations, trade unions, chambers of commerce, youth organizations, religious institutions, senior citizens' associations, tourist bodies, private foundations, political parties, Zionist organizations, funding or development, international and indigenous agencies, and any other organization of a non-governmental nature."

## **Methodology of the study**

### **1. Statement of the problem**

It is clear that the research has emerged as an important and potent field of research agenda for social scientists in recent times. Despite the ambiguities and vagueness prevailing in conceptualizing and operationalising the NGO sector, scholars have undertaken the studies to explore and examine in this sector. Though the research on the role of NGOs in community development is still in its nascent phase, it has been widely acclaimed that this area deserves further research.

There was a substantial growth of NGOs in India after independence. Such a growth and development helped a lot in increasing the quality of services with some qualitative improvement in rural areas. Besides, international policies on social welfare and rural development encouraged NGO sector to expand their services labeling

themselves as the national and international organizations with an intention to outreach the foreign funding. Considering the multifarious activities, extent of their operations and commonalities in their welfare programmes. The present attempt is to find out the performance and the role of the NGO in Dindigul district. The two NGOs are selected for the study as given below-

- ✓ Gandhigram Trust and Dindigul Multipurpose Social Service Society (DMSSS)

## 2. Objectives of the study

The objective of the study is to understand the role of NGO's in Community Development with special reference in Dindigul District.

- To study the impact of Educational Development under the NGO's in community development.
- To examine the role of NGO's to uplift Women Empowerment in Dindigul District.
- To find out the Employment and Income Generating Activities implemented by the NGO's.

## 3. Research Design

The present study has adopted the **descriptive research design**. The descriptive study concerned with describing the characteristics of the subject with specific prediction and narration of fact. The **purposive sampling** was adopted while identifying the NGOs. The following criteria were kept in mind to avoid causality errors while selecting the NGO's.

- The NGO which has completed ten years in existence.
- The NGO extensively involved in Community Development.

Based on the above conditions, the researcher selected the two NGOs in Dindigul district. The researcher finds it essential, as understanding the effectiveness of the

programme of NGOs are not easy and they do not have uniform guidelines for measuring the techniques of their programmes. Thus, the researcher wants to explore out the role of NGO's in community development.

#### **4. Methods, Sources and Tool of data collection**

The tools of inquiry required for the study were constructed at different stages. At the first state, the researcher reviewed available **Secondary Data** likes Annual report of the NGO's, Magazines, Books, Journals, Articles, bulletin, Internet, etc, and with the related official documents in the IRDP, which were helpful in identification of relevant attributes for the purpose of the present study.

At the second stage, **Various Discussions** were held with the Directors, Project Officers, Assistant Project Officers, Block Development Officials and others who are connected with the implementation of rural development and also **Observation Technique** in the field which helped the researcher to focus on the significance of the study and preparing suitable tools for the present study.

#### **5. Limitation of the study**

The present researches of the study are confined only two NGO's which focus in the role of community development, with special reference to Dindigul District. Hence it is necessary to work in this area. This would be of great help to the implementing agencies to bring necessary improvements in the community development. The researcher also felt that the study could have taken more information from other NGO's.

#### **6. Analysis and Findings**

##### **6.1 Impact of Educational Development under the NGO's in community development**

The NGO's in Dindigul District like their counterparts elsewhere in India have been rendering educational services to young and old through different streams as also

imparting technical and vocational training to the needy and targeted groups. Two such NGO's have been identified and their services in the education sector have been quantified.

### **(I) Gandhigram Trust**

The founders of Gandhigram were of the firm conviction that education is the foremost through which the living standards of the illiterate and ignorant in the villages could be improved. Eventually, Gandhigram Trust established different institutions such as: Gandhigram University, Teacher Training Institutes and College of Education, Post Graduate Diploma Programme, Certificate Courses and various Vocational programmes. *"One of our major challenges in the coming years is the restructuring of our educational system, The experience of Gandhigram will be useful in this"* stated the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, while inaugurating the Gandhigram University on March 8, 1977. In all the educational institutions of Gandhigram Trust the students hailing from the rural areas are given priority in admission. These educational institutions contributed marvelously to the development of Education in Dindigul District.

### **(II) Dindigul Multipurpose Social Service Society (DMSSS)**

The DMSSS has been rendering services to develop the educational standards of rural and urban poor since 1986. It is also imparting technical training to the youth to equip them to find employment opportunities. It has been conducting many programmes to develop education.

- **Kolping Computer Training Centre**

Computer education will make the youth of rural and urban areas to gain confidence in getting employment. With this objective, DMSSS started Computer Training Centre at the premises of DMSSS in Dindigul on January 22, 2003 with the donation of Kolping India, Chennai. The computer centre is fully equipped with all infrastructural facilities required with less fee structure to train the rural boys and girls.

- **Skill Training Centre**

Since 1991, the rural boys and girls below the poverty line in the villages of Dindigul District are being provided with skill trainings in typewriting and tailoring activities in DMSSS Skill Training Centre at Dindigul. Tamil Nadu Government has recognized DMSSS as Training Institute and issued a permanent recognition certificate on December 11, 1998 for Typewriting course.

## **6.2 The role of NGO's to uplift Women Empowerment in Dindigul District.**

Dindigul District is one of the backward districts of Tamil Nadu. It is due to superstitions and cultural stigmas the women had no access to health care and education. Gandhigram Trust and Christian Missionaries were the foremost NGOs to start women development activities in the fields of health care and education since from 1940. The society which has access to health care and education will step into next stage of development. Later on NGOs concentrated on the economical, social and political empowerment of women. Taking up two such of those NGO's that have prioritized interest for the development of women in the district.

## **6.3 Employment and Income Generating Activities implemented by the NGO's.**

The NGOs play a major role in extending the technologies of the agricultural and rural industrial sectors to the people. In Dindigul District, people in rural areas are mostly employed in agricultural sector which is highly seasonal in nature. The people are found unemployed in most of the period in a year. It leads to the migration of rural people to urban areas in search of employment. The NGOs motivate these people to find alternate employment in producing leather products, coir ropes, brooms, juices and syrups, masala powders and other kitchen products, baskets and bags and rearing dairy animals, poultry and goats. The NGOs give the people relevant training on the enterprise and provide

them market intelligence. NGO's have been involved in activities that help generate employment avenues for the unemployed rural youth in Dindigul district.

## **SUGGESTION**

- A similar study can be conducted with more NGO's covering more districts to compare the geographical differences on the impact of community development.
- Various methods used by NGOs can be replicated elsewhere to the possible extent for making successful implementation of all development programmes in the future.
- Donor agencies should also take active initiation in selecting the funding projects and even selecting of NGOs too.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study revealed that NGOs are functioning for the betterment of the destitute and the helpless, the untended population of the society. It was proven that the active presences of NGOs are a boon for the overall and social development of the country. The NGOs have proven themselves as the true partner of the government in poverty eradication and socio-cultural development. The literature established the important roles played by of NGOs in the fight against poverty through sustainable community development, micro-finance, capacity building, self-reliance, peace building and empowerment especially women's empowerment all aiming at poverty alleviation.

By examining the present study conducted in Dindigul District among the two selected NGOs, it is pertinent to draw a conclusion that the NGO's have taken enormous efforts and used various methods in community development to implement various development schemes. Based on the results of the present study, no doubts, the process of community development has helped a lot in promoting, strengthening, and stabilizing the various development programmes.

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