

## **Non Governmental Organizations**

NGOs (Non-governmental organizations) are increasingly becoming an important force and there are claims that they are efficient and effective, they are innovative, flexible, independent, and responsive to the problems of poor people at the grass-roots level. The growth of such NGOs over the past two decades has given them an increasingly important role and has led them forming a distinctive sector within civil society. They have been engaged in all sectors of social life, such as relief, rehabilitation, health, education, development programs, peace, human rights, and environmental issues, using finance raised from voluntary, private sources, and donor agencies, and managing themselves autonomously at local, national and international levels.

### **How to Define an NGO**

It is difficult to talk about the structure and place of NGOs in society, because there are wide variations among the countries they operate in and in the structure of NGOs. Each country has NGOs within its own legal structures and NGOs are shaped by agreements with international organizations also such as the ILO, EU etc. These organizations sometimes form the structure of NGOs. Therefore NGOs can be defined in terms of their functions in the social system. According to Siegel and Yancey (cited in Judge,1994,p.3), these functions and services could be ‘expressing and addressing the complex needs of society’, ‘motivating the individuals to act as citizens’ and ‘promoting pluralism and diversity’. These variations can affect their organizational structure. Some describe NGOs as ‘community based voluntary organizations that help themselves and serve others at local level, national and international levels’. Some people consider that these are vehicles for ‘democratization’ and are essential components of a flourishing ‘civil society’ or as ‘formal organizations’. Mostly these organizations emerged when a group of people organize themselves into a social unit that was formed with the clear objective of achieving some objectives and formulating rules to govern the relations among the members of the organization and the duties of each other’ (Frantz,1987:122). According to Korten (1991) they were the earliest form of human organizations ‘long before there were governments’. People organized themselves into groups for mutual protection and self help.

It is difficult to provide exact and commonly accepted definition. An organization to be an NGO in the true sense, should fulfill the following criteria; firstly, it should be autonomous, neither depending largely on the state for its funds (though it may be-and often does receive a proportion of its funds from public sources nor being beholden to Government in the pursuit of its objective; secondly, it should be non-profit making, thirdly, the major part of its funds should come from voluntary contribution.

### **Definitions**

1. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are generally considered to be “non-state, non-profit orientated groups who pursue purposes of public interest”, excluding the private sector (Schmidt and Take 1997).
2. Private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development (World Bank 2001)
3. NGOs are “value-based organizations which depend, in whole or in part, on charitable donations and voluntary service,” and in which “principles of Altruism (fact of caring needs of others) and voluntarism remain key defining characteristics”. (World Bank)
4. It is an organization of private individuals who believe in certain basic social principles and who structure their activities to bring about development to the communities that they are servicing.
5. Social development organization assisting in the empowerment of people.
6. An organization not affiliated to political parties, generally engaged in working for aid, development and welfare of the community.
7. Organizations established by and for the community without or with little intervention from the government; they are not only a charity organization, but work on socioeconomic- cultural activities.
8. An organization that is flexible and democratic in its organization and attempts to serve the people without profit for itself.

## **Types of NGOs**

There are many possibilities to classify NGOs. The following is the typology the World Bank uses:

### **Operational NGOs**

Their primary purpose is the design and implementation of development-related projects. One categorization that is frequently used is the division into relief-oriented or development-oriented organizations; they can also be classified according to whether they stress service delivery or participation; or whether they are religious and secular; and whether they are more public or private-oriented. Operational NGOs can be community-based, national or international.

### **Advocacy NGOs**

Their primary purpose is to defend or promote a specific cause. As opposed to operational project management, these organizations typically try to raise awareness, acceptance and knowledge by lobbying, press work and activist events.

### **Acronyms**

Nongovernmental organizations are a heterogeneous group. A long list of acronyms has developed around the term 'NGO'.

These include:

**INGO** stands for international NGO, such as CARE;

**BINGO** is short for business-oriented international NGO;

**RINGO** is an abbreviation of religious international NGO such as Catholic Relief Services;

**ENGO** means environmental NGO, such as Global 2000;

**TANGO** means technical assistance NGO;

**GONGOs** are government-operated NGOs, which may have been set up by governments to look like NGOs in order to qualify for outside aid;

**CSO** means civil society organization;

**DONGO** means Donor Organized NGO.

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