

Impact of Non- Governmental Organisation in The Socio-Economic Development of Rural Lives; A Case Study of Vosard



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ABSTRACT: Non-Governmental Organizations play an important role in the development sector through participatory people cooperation. NGOs are widely recognized for filling the gaps created by governments' failure to satisfy the needs of the poorest residents in developing countries. The number of activities undertaken by NGOs has widened in the near future. It may range from awareness creation to much broader range of activities which includes humanitarian issues, developmental aid and sustainable development. Many organizations also participate in the actual administration of conservation areas, assisting in the promotion of community or individual action, as well as campaigning for more government and corporate sector accountability. Present Article focuses on effectiveness of nongovernmental organizations in rural growth through a case study directed on VOSARD (Voluntary Organization for Social Action and Rural Development), a NGO situated in Idukki district, Kerala. Major rural development programmes undertaken by the NGOs in their areas included community development programmes, agricultural programmes, human resource management and development activities, micro financing, industrial and trade programmes.

KEY WORDS: Non-Governmental Organisations, Rural Development, VOSARD, NGO Case Study, Idukki.

I. INTRODUCTION

The existence of NGOs is proven to be a need rather than a luxury in civilizations in a world of global association revolution. Apart from traditional collaboration with state and non-state actors NGOs more recently take up activities which includes multinational corporations [2]. In the national level as a civic sector NGOs are playing a critical role in providing solid assistance to the development issues. Other than government interventions, an amount of non-government organisations have played a prominent part in rural community development.

II. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Non-Governmental Organisations with a social mission comprise the "third sector" of modern society. While there is no universally agreed-upon definition of an NGO Baride (2013) [11], defined it as "legally constituted organization created by natural or legal persons that operates independently from any form of government". Sometimes the term Non-Governmental Organization is used exchangeable with 'Voluntary Action'. As a response, the term "non-governmental organisation" (NGOs) has come to be applied to a large number of organizations [6]. It includes Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGs), Voluntary Development Organizations (VDOs), Voluntary Associations, Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs), Non-Political Formations or Non-Party Political Processes, Social Action Groups, Grass root Organizations, Community Development Organization and Social Work Agencies are often used to describe similar Non-Governmental Organisations [15].

Iriye (2004) opined that Non-Government Organizations has the comparable mode of operation with voluntary, nonreligious, and non-military associations. It is a self-organized volunteer group of persons who organized on a fixed schedule for a shared purpose except attaining government office, making money, or engaging in unlawful activities. The word was coined by the United Nations (UN) in 1945 and is now commonly used to refer to non-profit organisations that are not part of a government or run for profit. When NGOs are supported entirely or partially by governments, they keep their non-governmental status by removing government representatives from its board of directors [11]. As a requirement for getting a non-profit status NGOs in India have to register under any of the four statutes like the society Registration Act 1860, Indian Trust Act 1882, the Co-Operative Societies Act 1904, the Joint Stock Companies Act 1956. In addition to avail foreign contributions, they need to get another registration which is Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 1976 (FCRA). In India majority NGOs are under Society Registration Act [15].

III. GOVERNMENT AND NGO RELATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural development is based over the use of available resources and ecosystem services. The policies and programmes for rural development, of governments are multifaceted activities like employment generating opportunities, alleviating poverty by coupling the accessible resources, and provision of better income opportunities. Now a days the governments are focusing on different programmes aimed at establishment of basic facilities and substructure facilities through advanced programmes of wage and self-employment [3].

The government of India has executed many plans for the improvement of the rural communities [14]. NGOs have responded appropriately to the government's socioeconomic development plan whenever the government's emphasis for rural development programmes has altered throughout time. As a result, when the government shifted its focus from capital-oriented growth to anti-poverty initiatives, NGOs switched their operations from welfare and service delivery to a frontal fight on poverty. When the government moved on to macroeconomic and structural reforms in the 1990s, NGOs began to focus on scaling up their activities. As a result, they collaborated with the government to develop novel techniques and guarantee that policy changes aligned. They also intensified their advocacy and lobbying efforts, grew their network, broadened their scope of activities, and targeted minority populations [9]. The National Policy on the Voluntary Sector was endorsed by the Government of India's cabinet of ministers in May 2007, as the first step in a process to develop a new working relationship between the government and volunteer organisations (National Policy on the Voluntary Sector 2007) [10].

The government had nominated different policies aiming for the sustainable enhancement in the quality of life of rural people especially of the marginalized. Widely held rural developmental programmes are explicitly aiming at reducing poverty and unemployment such as MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), RSVY (Rastriya Sama Vikas Yojana), IAY (Indira Awas Yojana) and SGRY (Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana). Some others are meant for improving health conditions and educational status like ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) and DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas). All of these plans aim to bridge the gap between rural and urban populations, thereby reducing inequalities and speeding up the development process [12]. The government has been supporting and funding NGOs through Khadi and Village Industries Cooperatives, Central Social Welfare Board, National Wasteland Development Board and CAPART has been supporting and funding NGOs [16].

Even while NGOs are not officially affiliated with the government, they retain close ties with local residents. As a result bringing changes is not a hard mission for them. As a result, in India's eighth five-year plan, NGOs were given a higher priority for rural development. A nationwide NGO network was established as part of this strategy. NGOs are expected to play a critical part in the development of the public-private partnership model, according to the ninth five-year plan. The government has given NGOs more leeway for rural development through agricultural development policies and associated implementation methods [8].

The government, with its increased control over and access to resources, and operating within a bigger institutional framework, can create and administer programmes that cover a considerably broader range of the poor. Non-governmental organisations, on the other hand, can intervene in society in a far more beneficial way than the government [13] and design and implement suitable programmes for the welfare of the weaker sessions of the society. NGOs have a number of benefits over government groups when it comes to providing aid to the rural poor. Even if non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have a stronger ability to reach the poor, governments must still make the necessary changes to ensure the economy's long-term growth [3].

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Aims And Objectives of The Study

The focal intention of the paper is to know NGO's intervention to bring change in the society. Keeping this broad perspective in mind the study explores the intervention activities of VOSAR and its interventions impact on the society. A Case study method was used.

B. Institution Profile

VOSARD (Voluntary Organisation for Social Action and Rural Development), having the registration number I-750/98, is a voluntary organization registered under Travancore Kochi Cultural, Scientific, Charitable and religious Trust Act XII of 1955. VOSARD was founded in 1998 with the goal of improving the lives of the impoverished, disadvantaged, and underprivileged people living in the most backward and isolated hills areas of Idukki district and other parts of Kerala. The organization's aim is to work toward a value-based society in which the poor, children, women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised people are empowered to make positive changes in their lives. Main objectives of the organisation are empowering the weaker section of the society, promotion of Self-Help Groups, introducing micro credit system to the poor and needy people, linkage services between people and government, youth enrichment programmes, special programmes for physically challenged and old age people and care and protection of children.

V. INTERVENTION ACTIVITIES

The activities undertaken by VOSARD, since its inception has been pioneering different humanitarian activities like community-based programmes, empowerment activities, rehabilitation works, specialised care and protection programmes and environment protection activities in the most recessive and inaccessible hilly regions of Idukki District and parts of Kerala. The glimpse of the activities is as follows.

A. Community Mobilization and Capacity Building

VOSARD's primary activity is community mobilisation, which aims to empower individuals to make their own decisions and take accountability for improving their lives and publics. VOSARD began to organize the poor and PWDs into self-help groups at habitation level and federate them into higher level people's organization to ascertain their rights and development means and other basic entitlements. The key activities dealt with by SHGs and federations include creating awareness, leadership training, skill enhancement programmes, livelihood upgradation activities, microfinance, and taking up issues with the government.

B. Community Based Rehabilitation Works

Since 2002, one of the agency's key interventions has been the rehabilitation of people with impairments. Organizing PWDs into DPOs (Disabled People's Organizations) at the village, Taluk, and State levels, the agency has been working with roughly 5800 PWDs in the district to build their capacity to address their fundamental rehabilitation and development requirements. Some of the best practices in Community Based Rehabilitation works are Formation of Four tier Disabled People's Organizations, Accessing PRI schemes and benefits, Promotion of sustainable livelihood to overcome the poverty, Home based rehabilitation interventions, Rehabilitation of children with disabilities, Promotion of CBR through Partnership, WHO New CBR Guidelines, and Community Mental Health promotion program

C. Women Empowerment

In today's society, the influence of family is critical for women, particularly poor women in rural areas. Women's status in the social structure has an impact on how they are perceived in their economic roles. Women are frequently expected to carry the weight of their families' survival in the poorer sectors of the rural community. Women are disproportionately affected by poverty and unemployment, leading to the phenomena of feminization of poverty. VOSARD begin to work with the women from early days and organized them into self-help groups and built their abilities to overcome family and social burdens. There are 5650 women have been enrolled in to 315 self-help groups. VOSARD build the capability of the group adherents in leadership development and building their earning capacity to overcome their poverty and gain social recognition. Besides, it also facilitate them to access livelihood finance and legal support services.

D. Family Counselling Centre

Since 2004, a Family Counselling Centre has been operating with the help and guidance of the Central Social Welfare Board and the Kerala State Social Welfare Board. The centre is assisting people in overcoming family problems and strengthening the family institution by instilling the necessary values and capacities. Apart from resolving family disputes, the therapy centre helps with teenage issues, parent-child maladjustment, behavioural issues in school children, cases of substance addiction, and suicide attempts, among other things.

E. Children and Youth Development

Under this mega project VOSARD has two focused areas and activities. Primary intervention area is Childline 1098. It is a project of Women and Child development, Govt. of India under Integrated Child Protection Scheme. VOSARD, from 2011, is the implementing agency for Childline in Idukki district. The main mode of operation is done through a 24-hr toll free tele-outreach help line number (1098) at Kattappana and sub center Kumily, set up to provide assistance to distressed children. The main activities include provision of shelter, medical assistance, rescuing distressed children and deportation, sponsorship programs, emotional sustenance and child care and protection at the large context. Skill training for unemployed youth is another major initiative of the organisation under Youth development activity. In partnership with Functional Vocational Training and Research Society Bangalore, VOSARD is imparting professional knowledge to the unemployed youth in our district. The selected poor youths are given various skill development training which includes tailoring and art works, driving, livestock management, welding and fabrication and other trades. The agency has been selected and trained 150 poor youth (men and women) from the project area.

F. Care and Protection for Senior Citizen

Though ageing is the natural stage of human life, it brings innumerable problems for the senior citizens like financial, physiological, housing, abuse, isolation and lack of care and support services. Among 4793 senior citizens identified from the age group of 55+, 500 persons were selected as primary project beneficiaries on their socio-economic, physical and family conditions in Chakkupallam and Erattayar Panchayats of Idukki District. This Misereor-funded project aims to improve the quality of life for senior adults by

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encouraging self-help and promoting community-based care and support services by actively engaging families and other stakeholders. In addition, this project safeguards senior citizens' rights, improves livelihood among active and semi-dependent seniors by guiding them to health and welfare services and encouraging them to fully participate in family and social life.

G. Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security

It is a project aimed to promote mixed farming of farmers in the hilly regions of Idukki District hoping to achieve food security and nutritional security. Small farmers will be able to overcome low productivity and low agricultural income by using the mixed farming strategy. As a beginning it has started forming farmers clubs and clusters. VOSARD ensure that technology, design and the institutional arrangements envisaged in the projects are simple and within the reach of the rural poor. The organization introduced some natural conservation technologies like watershed management, rainwater harvesting practices, soil conservation activities, and organic farming and management to the small farmers. Also, farmers' association, community micro-finance, CBR work are replicable models and many were learnt the art of it and replicating in neighboring districts.

H. Promotion of Non-Conventional Energy Source

This project aims to raise awareness about and promote alternative energy sources such as biogas and solar powered energy among rural populaces. People have been encouraged to undertake environmental protection measures through sensitization and training programmes. People accept biogas construction employing Ferro cement technology since it is commercial and enduring.

I. Drinking Water Supply and Management

The Kerala Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (KRWSA) has propelled a demand-driven scheme called JALANIDHI. The primary goal of this project is to supply rural residents with clean, safe drinking water on a long-term basis. VOSARD serves as a support organisation for recipient groups, providing technical and social assistance. Beneficiary Groups are formed to carry out the project in a participative manner (BGs).

J. Income Generation Programme for Backward Community

With the support of Kerala State Backward Community Development Corporation (KSBCDC), VOSARD could distribute Rupees 33.75 lakh to 234 beneficiaries belong to backward communities. Each beneficiary gets Rs. 25,000 at low interest to start an income generation activity.

K. KAVAL PROJECT

The initiative began in the year 2016 for "Psychosocial Care and Support to Children in Conflict with the Law," which was instigated by the Kerala Department of Women and Child Development with technical assistance from the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bangalore.

VOSARD as the implementing agency provides individual care plan to children in conflict with law in three Taluks (Peerumedu, Udumbanchola and Idukki) of Idukki district. After appearing before the Juvenile Justice Board, the children would be assigned to NGOs that would carry out the 'Kaval' programme. The skilled experts provide a 17-day intensive training to the children.

VI. IMPACT ON SOCIETY

Various developmental interventions had been conducted in the community for the needy and vulnerable which obviously had brought tremendous change in the approach and able build rapport with the community people. Through Community mobilization programmes VOSARD could approach 10,000 families and mainstream those via creating awareness, leadership training, skill enhancement programmes, livelihood upgradation activities, microfinance, and taking up issues with the government. As a result, nearly 80% of the beneficiaries are aware of and had access to government support programme or schemes and receive financial support from at least one programme. Some of the major augmentations happened in the life of beneficiaries are given below.

Major improvement happened through VOSARD in the life of women and girls in the project area is the increase of household income and improved living conditions. And the best outcome is the level of increased confidence to the target groups since the awareness generation about women's and children's rights. As a result, in the last LSGI election (LSGI election 2020), 30% of the elected women are from the SHG groups managed by VOSARD. Those elected women representatives use their position to put women-specific issues on the agenda, thereby achieving concrete improvements for girls and women.

Through training programs and income generation activities, VOSARD could help the target population to find Income and employment opportunities as a result sustainably increase the household income. 48 women / young adults have undergone vocational training in catering, tourism, office / data management or prep courses for public service. Of these, 35 professionally qualified women / young adults (70%) have found a job to secure their livelihood and thus sustainably increase their household income. VOSARD provided livestock for income generation activities. Around 365 families have been able to diversify their sources of income and have thus sustainably increased their household income.

A huge number of programmes like skill training, education support, vocational training, children's club, insurance, counselling services, career guidance and child line are implemented for the betterment of the children and youth beneficiaries. Children's clubs

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with a total of 300 members are set up and active in the eight villages. Children / youth have been given knowledge about their subjects, know where to get support and are in regular contact with each other. Proper guidance in the form of professional counselling is provided to children in distress.

The agency has also been providing services to enhance livelihood among active and semi-dependent elderly citizens, including guiding them to health and welfare services and encouraging them to fully participate in family and social life. Each and every project aims at the development and improvements of the downtrodden and marginalized people. It is done through dedicated staff and volunteers via regular home visits, surveys, network & linkages, advocacy, and bridge building programmes.

CONCLUSIONS

VOSARD from its inception onwards as an NGO supported the given community members to identify and take collective action on issues which are important to the poor people. As an NGO it could touch the lives of the people with the help of timely implemented programmes and projects. The important qualities for community development like hard work, strong commitment, self-determination and focused mind can be seen in its activities. It is very clear that VOSARD has done a spectacular works in the field of rural development such as community mobilization and rehabilitation, women empowerment, environmental protection activities, skill training, senior citizen programmes and various other income generation activities.

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