

Book Review

NGO and Social Development. A.S. Sujatha, 2013, New Delhi, ALP Books, ISBN: 978-93-82215-78-3

In the present scenario voluntary organisations play a crucial role in every sector especially in rural development. Of the various voluntary organisations besides the government, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are those who supplement governments' effort as they are committed to social justice, sustainable development, social mobilization, and issues like women empowerment and human rights.

The book *NGO and Social Development* written by A.S. Sujatha describes the various activities done by NGOs at different fields like democratic development, civil society, education, capacity development, and human security. The book has nine chapters. The study focus is on the role of NGOs in social mobilization in the context of Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY). The main objective of the study is to understand the various processes and methods applied by the NGOs for the purpose of social mobilization in context of SGSY, impacts on SHGs, growth of SGSY, and NGOs' role in social mobilization. The information was collected from four NGOs in Sivaganga and Pudukottai districts of Tamil Nadu. The author selected two NGOs each from the district and explorative study was used for exploring various methods and tools used by NGOs for social mobilization. Purposive sampling was adopted. Pilot study was conducted using a structured interview schedule. The data was collected from NGOs directly with the help of constructed tools. The author presents various factors like the methods of social mobilization, individual's involvement and various impacts of social mobilization.

In another chapter the author presents a detailed study on what NGOs are, why and how NGOs are engaging at local, regional and international level and its impacts. The author is trying to give a clear understanding on what exactly the NGOs are doing in the society from grassroots to the highest level. The author explains the gap filled by the NGOs where the government has failed to do its bit to the society and how the NGOs deal with the government by keeping a professional relationship. It also points out how NGOs are linked with international NGOs which are acting within the UN context as well as other various roles of the NGOs with different levels of socio-political undertakings nationally and internationally. The author presents different opinions about the term for NGOs with regard to those given by others. Most of the NGOs work for the social wellbeing especially in the area where the government is unwilling or failing to provide services. While in western countries most of the NGOs also work closely with the governments as partners or contractors.

NGOs are giving priority to environmental awareness and their public effort can be seen in the sustainable development through participation, advocacy and research. They pay attention to environment in order to play a better role in protecting the environment. Although in most cases they face financial setbacks still they continue to render their part of the work and hence these NGOs have won the credibility and appreciation in this region at all levels. According to the nature of work the NGOs play various roles and undertake activities in the front line, seeking different rights through lobbying and protests. The author compares the study with that of the NGOs in other countries and shows how the regional NGOs can adopt various activities and implement it within the region and link with the outside forums well.

The author describes good governance and how good governance can lead to sustainable development. It is also a common saying that good governance is a key factor in the success of economic and social development focused on poverty alleviation. The author also presents the example of good governance and the strength of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) with a brief overview and its results and some factors which are contributing to its success. The book also provides knowledge about NGOs in other countries like Madagascar, Lithuania, Ghana, and South Africa.

The critical role NGOs play in civil societies is detailed in the book, discussing the differences between NGOs and government organisations. Examples of other voluntary groups are illustrated. The author thinks that the Peace Corps is a unique governmental development agency working with the community partners. In most cases NGOs are an expression of people's belief that they take their own initiative in order to fulfill the potential by working with the people and often reduce the gap that exists between the advantaged and disadvantaged. In this way the NGOs have their own characteristics which make them distinguishable from other organisations. The author has pointed out in three main points that in the field of education the NGOs have laid the foundation and they are related directly to capacity building, as in 1) The funds that the NGOs received from the government should reach the public especially those for educational purposes. 2) NGOs should not create hindrance against the various donors especially with the government in their involvement in education. 3) If the NGOs are to be engaged in capacity development they must adapt a long term approach and elaborate a specific strategy. The author also points out that capacity development approach is too wide in theory and too narrow in practice. Through capacity development NGOs can bring radical changes in the field of education.

One of the drawbacks in most of the states is that the government does not play its development role fully especially in the field of health, education and development. In these areas the NGOs have filled this gap in rural areas where the government has failed totally. Keeping in mind all this the NGOs have taken various interventions from bottom level to the upward and from the upward level to downward approaches by linking up and assuring sustainability in all fields. NGOs have touched from the grassroots to the international level in bringing development for all by linking with various sectors. The great impact the NGOs are making today is that they are able to reach out to different countries through various means of communications and coordinate network in applying or searching for financial support for the development areas. Citing the example of Estonia which is a young democracy the third sector is still in its very early stages of development. NGOs are to provide and support the young people and create opportunities for them for active participation in the social life.

The NGOs are always available to tackle human security issues. All individual needs are made known as well as the potential threats to human security. The main hurdle that NGOs face is that in spite of the smooth sailing of the NGOs there are sometimes clashes between the NGOs and government due to the pressure faced by the governments. NGOs have come to be experienced, renowned and resourced actors both locally and internationally. This book is helpful for policy makers especially for various voluntary organisations who are striving for the protection of human rights, planning and implementation. Good practical examples are also cited in the book linking it with many other countries in the world. This book is both theoretical and practical for anyone who likes to make use of an NGO for social development.

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