

Development of the NGOS in Bangladesh – A Critical Review

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Abstract: This article presents a critical review of the development of NGOS in Bangladesh, focusing on their roles, missions, and contributions to socio-economic progress. The study investigates NGOS' participation in development, education, and disaster response projects using secondary sources. It draws attention to the objectives and missions of NGOS in tackling social development, poverty, and inequality. The contributions of NGOS to both formal and informal education are given special consideration. The study also examines the opportunities and difficulties NGOS in Bangladesh face. Finally, the article finishes by examining the overall influence of NGOS on national development.

Keywords :

Non-governmental organizations (NGOS),
Development

Introduction

Non-governmental organizations (NGO) can play an important role in the development effort of any country. The recent world has witnessed the emergence of the NGOS as an increasingly visible and forceful presence on the international development scenario. The changing global environment realized the important role of the NGOS and eagerly recognized the NGOS as development partner (Begum, 2003). NGOS involved in economic and social development have prospered with the associational evolution sweeping the globe in the late twentieth century (Hulmc and Michael, 1996). The rise of the NGOS in the global contest is identified as an important phenomenon, which has implication far the development prospects of the poor. The non-governmental, not for profit organizations are believed to have fewer overheads, to rely less on bureaucratic procedures, and to be less

subject to political constraints. Further more it is believed that the NGOS led projects are innovative, participatory, flexible better directed and more reflective of the needs of the poor in the third world societies (Hossain, 2001). Besides, the role of the NGOS is well accepted because it is believed that the difficulties faced by the government in providing its services can be relieved by, closer collaborations with the NGOS. Thus the NGOS have proliferated as an effective complement to government agencies in providing social services (Begum,2003)

Methodology of the Study

This paper depends on secondary sources such as publishing books, research works, articles, journals, and the report. The objectives of the study are to development of the NGOS in Bangladesh. It is also descriptive in its literature reviewing strategies.

NGO: Emergency

It is seen that in the development of to-day the term “NGOS is much used and abused and, perhaps, little understood. But nonetheless, the presence of NGOS in the development scenario in the rural areas has provoked much interest among the development planners, development administrators and development workers who are keen to see the improvement in the quality of life of poor men, women and children of the rural poor communities. It is a fact that NGOS are working at the back and front, and sometimes at the breast, of government agencies. But in the operational sense in some cases the NGOS are supplementing the work of government agencies and in some case they are working in isolation with obscure target groups in the rural areas. Over the past several decades, NGOS have become major players in the field

of social development. The recent trend that characterizes many NGOs is not only to carry out humanitarian and emergency relief help, but also to organize local initiatives like self help projects, awareness raising, consentization, group formation, leadership, training in management skills (Hulmc and Michael, 1992). This strategy seeks the “empowerment” of people which means “the process of assisting disadvantage individuals and groups to gain grater control than they presently have over local and national decision –making and resources, and of their ability and right to define to define collective goals, make and learn from experience” (Hulmc and Michael, 1992). The NGO sector has grown rapidly in both developed and developing nations since the middle of the 1970. In 1992 International NGOs channeled over\$7.6 billion of aid to developing countries. (World Bank,2004). Like many other developing countries, Bangladesh has witnessed a substantial increase in the range and intensity of activities undertaken by NGOs.

Missions and Goals of NGOS

Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are launched with various purposes. Based on the region or local demand and problems, divergence in each NGO targets and objectives can be observed. But everywhere the main purpose of NGOS is the much-desired development of poverty stricken deprived people. The missions and goals with which the NGOS are established and conducting their operations in Bangladesh are:

- Helping the underprivileged and suffering but also practicing self-control by using one's own resources;
- recognizing local leadership and assets and making sure they are used effectively for welfare and development.
- Organizing the underprivileged and impoverished through the establishment of cooperatives, which enables socioeconomic advancement.
- Development of nutrition and health.
- Behaving as a government partner rather than a rival.
- In addition to performing the required actions to raise public awareness, developing alternatives to address unique social issues and challenges.

- Bringing the underprivileged into the mainstream of progress, eliminating superstition and beliefs that oppose it, and fostering a constructive attitude in society.
- Giving women priority in financing programs by allowing them to participate directly in the production process, which opens up the possibility of extra family income and eventually leads to self-sufficiency.
 - Behaving as a government partner rather than a rival.
 - Maintaining support for the impoverished so they can save money at an increasing rate from rising incomes and make their own investments.
 - Raising awareness and fostering leadership among those who lack land and others who have comparatively fewer resources.
 - Assisting individuals in adapting to the evolving social landscape. government and not as a rival.

The prosperity of NGOs in Bangladesh:

There are some autonomous and non-formal groups, communities, societies, agencies organizations engaged in reducing the sufferings of the masses and they are known as NGOs. Thus we see, NGOs are not only non-governmental but voluntary also. Now Bangladesh is also known as a country of NGOs. Some of the organizations have been successful in organizing the rural poor and my to eradicating poverty.

Bangladesh is one of the poorer countries in the world. Because of the multitude of problems, both natural and man-made that Bangladesh has had to face ever sight of the positive aspects of the fact that by putting our heads together we have also achieve ‘miracles’. The 75 million people at independence that turned into 120 million in 1997 have managed to survive on a land mass and with resources that would have been depleted overnight almost by any other people. Despite its growth in population, the country has in 30-years, become nearly self-sufficient in food grains and the other side development. Seventy percent of the newborn children are now immunized, and fertility rates have greatly fallen. Infrastructure has been set in place, and the country has reaffirmed its commitment to democracy. Bangladesh was determined to confound the doomsayers and these who had carelessly and unkindly called it

a “basket case”. The need for development and the willingness of outsiders to help Bangladesh is to generate a community of development organizations that is the NGOs (Ahmed and Rafi, 1999).

The NGOs in Bangladesh followed some stages of growth. However, massive destruction of the economy wrought by the war of liberation in 1971 called for immediate relief and rehabilitation interventions. In this crucial time immediate responses were received from satisfactory number of foreign organizations which came forward to rescue the war ravaged people. At this critical juncture some positive responses were made by a good number of committed people who established a few national organizations. There are now established as leading and pioneering NGOs in Bangladesh. They are BRAC, GK, CARITAS, CCDB, Proshika etc. (Shailo, 1994).

NGOS rudiments in education (formal and non- formal)

Bangladesh ranks among the bottom 20 countries in the literacy league table. Between 1980 and 1998, the adult literacy rate rose marginally from 32 to 38 percent with the rate for females at only half of males. Recent statistics provided by the government indicate that the literacy rate reached 65 percent in 2001 (Daily Star, 2001). Since the mid-1980s, particularly since the *Jomtien* conference, a number of new initiatives have been undertaken by the public, private, and non-governmental organization (NGO) sectors to promote primary education in the country.

According to government statistics, over 37,000 primary schools owned and managed by the government form the mainstream of primary education in the country. In addition,

approximately 23,000 other primary schools, established privately, are managed with limited government subvention. Over 7,000 Islamic schools, the *Ebtedayee madrassas*, provide education with Islamic focus. Several NGOs have initiated primary education for those who are left out of the formal systems; in total, the number of students served by them in non-formal system is estimated to be 1.4 million, which includes 1.2 million of BRAC-2 alone (Alam and Hussain, 1999). In terms of public spending on education, Bangladesh (in 1993-94) spent 2.3 percent of its gross national product (GNP) on education, which is considerably lower than the average 3.5 percent investment in education for the South Asian region (Haq & Haq, 1998). More importantly, 96 percent of the revenue expenditure on primary education in the country is allocated to teachers' salaries leaving very little for monitoring, supervision, training and other quality enhancing activities (Ahmad, 1996).

In Bangladesh, primary education has never been equally accessible for all groups in the population. Studies carried out earlier on had indicated that girls, children living in rural areas and urban slums, children from socio-economically disadvantaged families and ethnic minorities were particularly disadvantaged in access to education (Broke and Cammish, 1991; Chowdhury et al., 1992; Nath et al., 1993; UNICEF, 1992; Alam et al., 1997). This, however, is not peculiar in Bangladesh; in developed societies like the United States, social stratification is also found to be increasingly linked to the system of education (Hurn, 1993).

Table 1: Stages of change in the Activities of NGOS

Period	Political system	Activities
1971-1990	Military, quasi-military rule	Relief, social mobilizations, anti-autocracy movement
1991	Democracy	Relief only after natural hazards, business, micro-credit, limited social movements by same (against fundamentals, for sex workers, women).

Source: [Ahmed, Donar NGOs the states and their clients in Bangladesh, 2001]

In Bangladesh, during the 1970s, there had been mushroom growth in the number of

NGOs and as upsurge of interest in offering realistic as sewers to several issues of human wellbeing that have so long remained neglected. Among the most neglected session, the traditional development planners always

by passed the poor and vulnerable. They had no access to resources of the state and nobody cared about them. Different issues like education, health and nutrition, mother and child-care, right of people over common community resources, gender disparity in the society etc. are also out of the rice of the common people (Saifullah, 2001). So the NGOs that are firstly know as church based voluntary organization devoted those selves to developing the living standard of the rural poor in Bangladesh.

The charity and welfare activities of the NGOs Continued till 1973. The national NGOs then felt that in stead of making people dependent on aid they have to decide certain strategies for taking up program for sustainable development, they went to involving themselves in sector programs such as agriculture. Fisheries, livestock health and family planning etc. The NGOs realized that development process can be kept ongoing through supplying productive inputs and by providing technical assistance. They identified target groups can consisting of disadvantaged poor people. They arranged to train-up people to enhance their social consciousness and to form their own institutions. The people were helped to undertake collaborative social actions such as bargaining for higher wages, better terms in share cropping, land lease, protection against abuse of rape, dowry, divorce without compensations, etc. Thus the NGOs initiated a proven process of development at the grassroots (Shailo, 1994).

Actually, NGOs in Bangladesh have shifted their focus from social mobilization in the 1970s and 1980s to economic changes for their clients in the 1990s. This change in focus has happened for several main reasons, *Firstly*; NGOs struggles on issue like access to Khan (State) land put them in conflict with both the state and the local elite. NGOs role in the anti autocracy movement was fostered by major political parties (1990). In 1996, NGOs took part in a successful full movement for elections which antagonized the government in power at the same time. *Secondly*, NGOs are trying to become self-reliant through involvement in business and micro credit operation. Now a day, very few NGOs engaged in social movement which marks a division in the NGOs community (Ahmed, 2000).

About the emergence of NGOs in Bangladesh, Aminuzzaman Said, although the NGOs had been working in traditional form since the British colonial period, they got a radical transformation only after the liberation in 1971 and turned into agents of development. Government of Bangladesh (GOB) had to face a Herculean task of renewal and reconstruction of the war torn economy after the war of independence. But the GOB neither had the capacity nor had the appropriate institutional mechanisms to address the volume and diversity of such enormous problems single-handedly. At that time a large number of international NGO and voluntary organizations extended their helping hands to assist Bangladesh (Aminuzzaman, 1993). Besides, a few national organizations developed at that period as spontaneous responses from a number of committed people, which are at present well known leading NGOs in Bangladesh.

Conclusion

By the above discussion, it is found that Bangladesh was always a strong platform for the growth and development of the NGOs in the country. Though the NGOs started their activities as voluntary, nonprofit organization but they make themselves essential in the necessary for the poor, backward and in rural women of Bangladesh. In conclusion, Bangladesh's socioeconomic transition has been greatly aided by the growth of NGOs, especially in fields like health, disaster response, poverty reduction, and formal and informal education. By accessing disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, particularly during natural catastrophes and humanitarian crises, NGOs have successfully supplemented state activities. Their aims and objectives have mostly centered on social justice, human development, and empowerment, which have led to quantifiable gains in social consciousness and living conditions. Therefore, while NGOs remain key actors in Bangladesh's development process, their future effectiveness depends on improved collaboration with government institutions, increased openness, and a more community-centered approach. A balanced cooperation between the state and NGOs is vital to guarantee sustainable and equitable development in Bangladesh.

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