

By;

Dr. Suchitra Devi

Associate Prof.

Education Deptt.

N.A.S College

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Role of NGOs in development of Education in India

Education is both the means as well as the end to a better life. It is a movement from darkness to light. Without education, people get caught in the inter-generational cycles of poverty and backwardness. Seven decades have passed after independence but still, India struggles to achieve a literacy rate of over 90 per cent. Providing quality education to all children of India should be the top priority of both the State and Central governments. And thus, the different departments of the Government of India often support charities to bring more and more children under the ambit of their education initiatives.

Contextualising Non- Governmental Organisations in India

NGOs today are widely acknowledged as the new, as well as important, political actors in the developing world. NGOs in India have played a variety of complex roles and have collaborated with the state, its agencies and officials to plan and implement particular development programmes.

However, they have as well, questioned the role of the state in perpetuating the existing inequality and injustice, which tends to further, marginalize the poor and the oppressed.

What is an NGO?

The term NGO was officially brought into being by the United Nations Economic and Social Council on the 27th February, 1950 and referred to those officially recognized organisations with no governmental affiliation that had consultative status with the United Nations (UN). This term was coined by the UN mainly to indicate the difference between the sovereign nation states, which happen to be its direct members, and the organizations that collaborate with or receive grants from its agencies to implement developmental programmes.

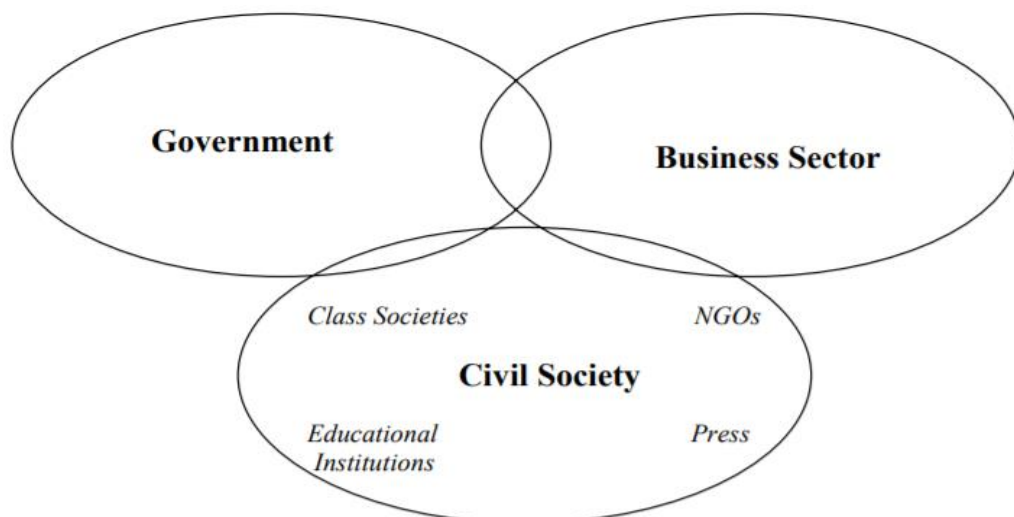
However, today its meaning incorporates an enormous variety of structures, pursuing diverse strategies of widely differing sizes, aims or missions, and therefore, defies a precise definition.

Why NGOs are needed to boost the spread of education in India

Since India is a vast country, both geographically and demographically, government alone cannot bring all children into the fold of education. Even today, 17.7 million children in India

are out of school. The retention rate in schools is still abysmally low and a large number of children drop out even before completing class 8. The status of girl child education is even worse as the mindset that girls may not be educated as they are to be eventually married off still prevails in the Indian society. In such a scenario, the role of the civil society becomes all the more important in order to ensure that the benefits of education reach the lowest strata of the society. Several Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been working at the sheer grass root levels to extend education to underprivileged children in India. Since independence, NGOs have been trying hard to strengthen the existing education system and network in the country so that more and more children get opportunities to go to school and remain there. The best thing about NGOs is that they work at the grass root level, connecting with the masses and spreading awareness on the importance of getting good education to march ahead in life.

Following image illustrate the role of NGOs vis-à-vis Government and other agencies:



Players in the Democratic Society

How NGOs are contributing to the cause of education in India

Many NGOs have been spearheading the movement to provide quality education to the most marginalized and deprived children of India. With programmes in the most remote and marginalized areas of India, the NGO ensures that the benefits of the Right to Education Act reach the most deprived children. The idea is to ensure that all children, irrespective of their origin, are able to go to school, play, interact and learn with other children of their age so that they secure for them a life of dignity and contribute to the betterment of the economy. NGOs

spread education by the following measures:

1. Most important aspect to boost the spread of education is to spread awareness amongst the parents and the communities and every child needs education. The message needs to spread far and wide and getting quality education is the legitimate right of all children, no matter which social or economic background they come from. Save the Children connects with the most backward communities, where there are several instances of children squandering their childhood in fields and factories or dropping out of school, and counsels parents and elders on the importance of sending children to school.

2. Another important aspect to improve the penetration of quality education among the most deprived children is to make learning a fun experience. **Child education NGOs** like Save the Children train teachers to impart learning using child-friendly and interactive teaching-learning methods. The NGO sets libraries and infrastructure right, conducts computer and English classes, promotes and facilitates extra-curricular activities and sports.

3. The NGOs engage heavily with the local communities to form Children Groups (CGs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) and work with them to ensure that they take accountability of the development of the children in their community. Massive enrolment drives are conducted in which out-of-school and vulnerable children are mapped and enrolled into formal schools in age-appropriate classes.

4. Group learning has proved to be one learning methodology which helps children learn better and fast and also promotes healthy competition. In classrooms, Save the Children encourages and helps children to undertake learning activities in groups.

5. Metros such as Kolkata and Delhi are home to a large number of urban poor who live in slum or slum-like areas. Children in these communities are often involved in child labour and have very little or no access to education. Save the Children runs learning centres for street children and child labourers coming from socially-excluded communities where they are provided learning and/or after-school support. The idea is to groom these children and help them take the leap to formal schooling.

Role of NGOs in Education
Historic roles of NGOs in Education:
Spread of western education, led by religious organizations in late 19th and early 20th centuries
Played a key role in the inclusion of education development in international organization projects after the second world war
- Development of education initiatives, outside state actors (1950s and 70s)
More recent roles of NGOs in Education:
- Provision of educational access to students without access to public/government education
- Advocacy for government to provide access to education for all
- Provision of non-formal education
- Provision of support for small and rural schools

Examples of NGO's working in India

Many NGOs in India are doing a great job in helping out the underprivileged kids with education and to bring about a social change. Following is a list of 5 such Indian NGOs which are doing their best in providing education equality:

1. Teach For India: 'One day all children will attain an excellent education'- a vision that defines Teach For India, a Teach To Lead project that encourages young college graduates and professionals to take up two years of full-time teaching sessions in under resourced schools. In an effort to provide quality education to all, Teach For India currently works in 5 main cities of India- Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, Hyderabad and Chennai and is well equipped with some 700 Fellows who are working towards eradicating the high inequality present in Indian education system.

<http://www.teachforindia.org>

2. Make A Difference (MAD): Along with education partner, Cambridge University Press, Make A Difference or MAD has initiated a unique project 'The English Project' to educate children from poor homes, orphanages and street shelters with English. Currently, some 1200 volunteers are working hard to teach 4000 children in some of the major cities of India including Mangalore, Chennai, Bangalore, Mysore, Delhi, Dehradun, Kolkata, Vellore, etc. A winner of the prestigious Ashoka Staples Youth Social Entrepreneur Competition in the year 2008 and also a Noble Laureate of the Karamveer Purashkar awarded by ICongo, global fellow of YouthActionNet and Cordes Fellow 2010, MAD also runs a Placements project running that aims to place underprivileged children on the same platform with the children from regular homes.

<http://www.makeadiff.in/>

3. Pratham: Established in the year 1994, Pratham is dedicated to provide education to children belonging to the slums of Mumbai. Team Pratham comprises of civil servants, PhDs, social workers, educationists and many other educated personnel who are working for a common dream of developing the future of children of the country. With an aim to offer every child their fundamental right to education, Pratham has slowly grown into a larger organisation covering 19 states of India.

<http://www.pratham.org/>

4. Barefoot College-India: An entire campus that runs on solar power. Yes, that's Barefoot College that was originally started by two friends Meghraj and Sanjit 'Bunker' Roy and who wanted to establish college for the rural population of India and was established in 1972. Today, the organisation trains local community people into teachers, specialized professionals in other fields and has initiated many educational efforts for children. The organisation has also been ranked as the second best educational NGO in the year 2013 by The Global Journal.

<http://www.barefootcollege.org>

5. Cry: 'Child rights and you' or CRY is an NGO in India working for children and their rights. CRY has undertaken a lot of initiatives to improve the condition of underprivileged children and one of them is the 'Chotte Kadam-Pragati ki Aur', a literacy drive that has

reached out to more than 35000 children in 10 states of India. 'Mission Education' is another very popular campaign from CRY to make sure that 'education is every child's right' and that proper education reaches to more children in every new academic year.

<http://www.cry.org>

Present Picture:

As per the last Census held in 2011, there are 444 million children in India under the age of 18 years. This constitutes over one-third of population in India in 2011. This is said to be the world's largest child population in a single country. About 27 million children are born each year in India where only 53% of habitation have a primary school and only 20% of the habitation have a secondary school. The statistics are further grim in nature. Less than half of India's children between the age 6 to 14 go to school. Only about 33% of all children who enroll in grade one reach grade eight. Infrastructure-wise, in nearly 60% of schools, there are less than two teachers to teach Classes I to V. 1 in 40 primary schools in India is conducted in open spaces or tents. As far as drop outs are concerned, 25% children of school-going age are out of school in India. As per District Information System for Education 2014-15, only 32% children finish their school education age appropriately and only 2% of the schools offer complete school education from grade 1 to grade 12.

Under such conditions the role of [NGO in India for children education](#) becomes very crucial. There are numerous NGOs who have taken up the onus of taking care of children education, especially for the under-privileged ones. One of the prominent one is **Lakshyam NGO**. This NGO not only helps to spread education among the under-privileged children in India across various cities but also work towards protecting the basic right to education of children. It provides the attitude, opportunity and exposure to good education to such children and helps them develop to be at par with the more privileged children of the society in terms of literacy. The major objectives of the NGO in India for Children education are:

- a. increasing the enrollment in schools
- b. developing learning skills in local schools & communities
- c. make education reach to such masses who are unable to attend formal schools due to reasons like poverty, proximity distance, health issues, etc.

- d. replicate their education models and scale them up to serve large number of children to achieve a large-scale impact
- e. provide inclusive education to children with special needs
- f. vocational training to children with permanent disabilities
- g. work as a catalyst to bring sustainable change in the lives of the children with a life-cycle approach of development

Conclusion:

The importance of the role NGOs can play in the spread of education to different nook and corners of a vast country like India is undeniable. Together with existing Government machinery, NGOs can ensure that no child is left behind when it comes to getting education.

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