



INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

Initiative in Education & Lifelong Learning

Certificate Programme

NGO Management: Foundation Course

UNIT - 1

Introduction to NGO Management

Units of NGO Management : Foundation Course

Unit 1: Introduction to NGO Management

- NGOs: Relevance And Rationale
- Definitions And Nomenclature
- Characteristics
- Classification Of NGOs
- Evolution Of NGOs Along Different Developmental Frameworks And Approaches
- NGOs In Developing Countries

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Introduction

A 'global associational revolution' is underway around the world, a massive upsurge of organised private, voluntary activity in virtually every corner of the globe (Salamon L. M., 1994). As a result of significant popular demands for greater opportunity, new communication technologies, dissatisfaction with the operations of both the market and the state in coping with social and economic challenges of the present, this 'associational revolution' has focused new attention and energy amidst the broad range of social institutions that occupy the social space between the market and the state.

Often referred to variously as the 'non-profit', 'voluntary', 'third' sector, 'charitable sector' or the 'independent sector', this set of institutions includes within its purview an exhaustive array of entities. Such entities include hospitals, universities, social clubs, professional organisations, day care centres, grassroots development organisations, health clinics, environmental groups, self-help groups, religious congregations, sports clubs, jobs training centres, human rights organisations, community associations, homeless shelters and many more (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2004).

This Unit introduces the concept and idea of non-governmental organisations, its relevance, rationale and characteristics. It also provides an overview of the evolution NGOs with respect to the roles played by them amidst changing development frameworks.

Learning Objectives

After completing this unit, you will be familiar with:

- The relevance of an NGO and the rationale behind its formation;
- Definitions, characteristics and classification of NGOs;
- Evolution of NGOs along various development frameworks, and the different approaches towards it; and
- The growing role of NGOs in developing countries

1.1 NGOs: Relevance And Rationale

Have you ever seen young people in a village/town organising a football club? Or a choir group in a church? Or a Resident Welfare Association (RWA) in the neighbourhood? What do they symbolise? Such groups are examples of organisations, formal or informal, set up by the people to fulfill the needs of their community/society. Such institutions have been variously called 'Non-Governmental Organisations' (NGOs). Since such organisations offer a unique combination of private structure and public purpose, operate flexibly at all scales, are connected to citizens and have the capacity to tap private initiative in support of public purposes, they are nowadays being looked upon to perform an increasing number of critical functions (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2004). Such functions include:

- Helping deliver vital human services, such as health and education;
- Empowering the disadvantaged, in an attempt to bring their unaddressed problems to public attention;
- Giving expression to artistic, religious, cultural, ethnic, cultural and recreational impulses;
- Building community ties and reinforcing the bonds of trust and reciprocity, necessary for political stability and economic prosperity; and
- Mobilising individual initiative in the pursuit of common good

Therefore, NGOs are primarily aimed at serving the community at large, specially the disempowered, and working for their welfare. Millions of illiterate, poor, impoverished and disadvantaged citizens are marginalised and unable to lead a life of dignity. Some among us feel the need to do something meaningful, to engage in working towards realisation of various public goods for other citizens, more particularly the excluded, poor and marginalised. These people are committed to and value the spirit of 'service' to society. When like-minded people who want to 'serve' their community and society at large decide to work together in a structured way, they form what is today commonly called an NGO.

1.1.1 Forming An NGO

NGOs are often used as being synonymous to ‘*collectives*’ and ‘*organisations*’. However, it is important to note that there is a significant difference between these concepts.

People simply getting together for a cause are referred to as ‘*collectives*’. Collectives are based on a common shared interest and exist together for the pursuit of an aim. They can be formed for a short span of time or for longer periods, depending on the nature and purpose of the association. Collectives have been the earliest form of human organisation, even before the formation of governments as we know them today (Korten, 1991).

Contrary to this, an ‘*organisation*’ ensures that a group’s intentions are actually translated into positive change on the ground over time, and gives the goals a definite structure and form. This structure provides a mechanism to practically implement the group’s ideas and helps to systematise activities and processes. Most importantly, it creates a way for these activities to become self-sustaining and autonomous. It may be intended to accrue profits or may have a not-for-profit orientation.

Both collectives and organisations may pursue the same aims and objectives of helping or serving society. However, when these efforts are provided a structure in the form of an organisation which is not-for-profit, it is known as an NGO. Therefore, ‘*forming an NGO involves conversion of a group or collective into an organisation, for the purpose of social betterment or development, but without a profit motive (i.e., the organisation is not for profit).*’

Usually, an NGO is also ‘registered’ under a specific law of a country. There are a series of legislations under the common law of respective countries which address the field of the voluntary, non-profit sector in different ways.

1.1.2 Benefits Of Forming An Organisation

Although an individual can also contribute to the welfare of society in a number of ways, if these same individuals come together as an organisation, it helps validate its existence, along with accruing other benefits. They are:

- **Socio-political entity:** An organisation gives a group of people a social and legal status. It gives a group the legitimacy to exist, function and grow. Having an identity also helps in finding resources and financial support.
- **Organisational systems and structure:** Forming an organisation means that a complete system of procedures has to be set up. This enables other people to join. Such systems help maintain a democratic set-up and most importantly the credibility of an organisation. The systems adopted are generally global in nature and help set benchmarks of transparency. They help put into practice the principals of accountability and transparency so that the NGO has credibility in wider society and among different stakeholders. An organisation also gains credibility by showing commitment to their cause
- **Direction for future:** A formal organisation evolves a direction for its future which is encapsulated and articulated in its vision and mission, strategy and interventions. Its strategy and interventions are formulated within the theory of social change or theory of development it adopts. Resources are then more easily aligned to this overall direction and purpose.
- **Sustainability mechanisms:** Formal organisations are sustainable and adopt mechanisms that promote sustainability.
- **Autonomy and independence:** A group or collective remains dependent on a few specific people. Hence, although the group exists as a whole, decision making generally does not follow any set procedure. Forming an organisation enables the group to function objectively.
- **Possibilities of institutionalisation:** An organisational form allows more people to join in with the cause and can help the cause become institutionalised. This helps to keep the cause alive even if the group which started it is no longer associated with it.

1.2 Definitions And Nomenclature

In this sub-section, we provide different ways in which NGOs have been defined. The term NGO came into use in the year 1945 with the provision in the United Nations (UN) Charter for organisations that were neither governmental, nor member states. Such organisations were needed for a consultative role with the UN. On February 27, 1950, international NGOs (or INGOs) were first defined in a resolution of the Economic and Social Council (of the United Nations) [ECOSOC] as *'any international organisation that is not bound by an international treaty.'* The term has since been used in many ways and in many forms. The World Bank's operational directive on NGOs defined the term as *'groups and institutions that are entirely or largely independent of governments and characterised primarily by humanitarian or cooperative, rather than commercial objectives.'*

Other definitions of an NGO include:

- An organisation of individuals who believe in certain basic social principles and who structure their activities to bring about development to the communities that they are serving;
- A social development organisation assisting in the empowerment of people;
- An organisation or group of people working independently of any external control with specific objectives and aims to fulfil tasks that are oriented to bring about desirable change in a given community, or area, or situation;
- An independent, democratic, non-sectarian people's organisation working for the empowerment of economic and/or socially marginalised groups.

Despite the growing numbers and importance of NGOs over the decades, the nomenclature used to identify this set of organisations varies considerably. They are variously referred to as 'voluntary organisations', 'voluntary associations', the 'third sector', 'non-profit sector', 'independent sector', 'civil society', etc. (Tandon, 2002) The table below presents the diversity of NGO acronyms that are widely used.

Table 1: Diversity of NGO Acronyms (Lewis & Kanji, 2009, p. 9)

AGNs: Advocacy groups and networks	MOs: Membership organisations
BINGOs: Big international NGOs	MSOs: Membership support organisations
BONGOs : Business-organised NGOs	NNGOs: Northern NGOs
CBOs: Community-based organisations	NPOs : Non-profit or not-for-profit organisations
GONGOs : Government-organised NGOs	PVDOs: Private voluntary development organisations
GRINGOs: Government-run (or inspired) NGOs	QUANGOs: Quasi NGOs
GROs: Grassroots organisations	RONGOs : Royal NGOs
GSCOs : Global social change organisations	RWAs : Relief and welfare associations
IDCIs : International development cooperation institutions	SHOs : Self-help organisations
IPOs : International/indigenous people's organisations	TNGOs: Trans-national NGOs
LDAs : Local development associations	VDAAs : Village development associations
LINGOs : Little international NGOs	VNPOs: Volunteer non-profit organisations

NOTE BANK

Use of the term 'Non-Governmental Organisation' has gained ascendancy in the past three decades. While the term 'NGO' was first made in the context of the United Nation system, its usage, both internationally and in India, has changed over time. In the Indian and regional context, NGOs includes a spectrum of institutions, which includes faith based welfare organisations, charity based organisations, development organisations, private consultancy and research groups, disability organisations, academic institutions, parts of the media, and even some institutions from the private for-profit business sector.

1.3 Characteristics Of NGOs

The Commonwealth Foundation, in its NGO Guidelines for good policies and practice, defines NGOs on the basis of four key characteristics (Ball & Dunn, 1995):

1. Voluntary nature

The word 'voluntary' distinguishes NGOs operating in democratic societies from the government, i.e., statutory agencies. They are thus formed voluntarily and are non-statutory. It also means that there is an element of unpaid voluntary work contributed to the organisation, most commonly by board members not receiving payment for their work, and also (and possibly on a large scale in some organisations) voluntary, unpaid work performed by members and/or beneficiaries. However, it will be wrong to assume that all NGOs are characterised by being entirely voluntary or largely dependent on voluntary efforts.

2. Independent

NGOs are controlled by those who have formed them, or by a board of management to whom the responsibility for control and management of the NGO has been delegated, within the laws that govern the functioning of the organisation. However, it is important to note that the term 'Board(s) of Management' is generally used as a descriptive one. The constitutions of individual NGOs and/or the laws under which they are registered and function may use other terms, such as 'trustee(s)', 'director(s)', etc.

3. Not-for-profit

NGOs are not formed for personal profit/gain. However, NGOs may have employees who are paid for what they do. NGOs may also engage in revenue generating activities. They do not, however, distribute profits or surpluses to shareholders or members. They use the revenues generated solely for the pursuit of their aims.

4. Not self-serving in aims and related values

An NGO usually aims to improve the circumstances and prospects of disadvantaged people who are unable to realise their potential or achieve their full rights in society, through direct or indirect forms of action; and/or act on concerns and issues which are detrimental to the well-being, circumstances or prospects of people or society as a whole. These aims give NGOs clear values and purposes, which distinguish them from other organisations formed by or among disadvantaged people in order to help themselves and reduce inequalities between them and other sections of society.

The first three defining characteristics suggest the essential conditions which should be present in any legal environment in which NGOs function. Their existence should be enabled, permitted and encouraged, but not required by law. The government should also allow them to function independently, but nonetheless within the laws of the land. The law ensures that NGOs are not used for the personal profit of those who direct their affairs. A broad range and number of organisations, clubs and associations are found in democratic societies which serve a wide variety of social, political, civil, sporting, religious, business, cultural and recreational purposes. Many of them satisfy the first three defining criteria mentioned. The fourth defining characteristic, concerning the aims and values, defines particular types of NGOs, organisations which do not serve the self-interest of members but are concerned in some way or other with the disadvantaged, or with concerns and issues which are detrimental to the well-being, circumstances or prospects of people or society as a whole.

1.4 Classification Of NGOs

NGOs have been variously classified on the basis of different criteria.

I. According to the nature of the institution

According to the nature of institution, NGOs can be categorised into four categories (Korten, 1991):

- (a) **Voluntary Organisations:** They pursue a social initiative driven by a commitment to shared values
- (b) **People's Organisations:** They represent their members' interests, have member accountable leadership and are highly self-reliant,
- (c) **Public Service Contractors:** They function as market-oriented, non-profit organisations for the purpose of serving the public;
- (d) **Hybrid Government/Non-Government Organisations:** They are the creations of the government that serve as instruments of government policy.

II. According to the level of operations

- (a) **Community Based Organisations:** They arise out of people's own initiatives. These include sports clubs, women's organisations, neighbourhood organisations, religious or educational organisations. There are a large variety of these, some supported by NGOs, national or international NGOs, or bilateral or international

agencies, and others independent of outside help. Some are devoted to raising the consciousness of the urban as well as rural poor, or helping them to understand their rights in gaining access to needed services while others are involved in providing such services.

- (b) **Citywide Organisations:** These include organisations like commerce and industry, coalitions of business, ethnic or educational groups and associations of community organisations. They become involved in helping the poor as one of their many activities, while others are created for the specific purpose of helping the poor.
- (c) **National NGOs:** These include organisations that are based nationally.
- (d) **International NGOs:** These include agencies which havev international operations. Their activities vary from funding local NGOs, institutions and projects, to implementing the projects themselves.

III. As per their geographical location

- (a) **International NGOs:** Those which function internationally, in several countries.
- (b) **Single Country NGOs:** These are based and functional in a single country.

IV. As per their orientation

- (a) **Charitable orientation:** This often involves a top-down paternalistic effort with little participation by the 'beneficiaries'. It includes NGOs with activities directed toward meeting the needs of the poor, such as distribution of food, clothing or medicine; provision of housing, transport, schools, etc. Such NGOs may also undertake relief activities during a natural or man-made disaster.
- (b) **Service orientation:** This includes NGOs with activities such as provision of health, family planning or education services in which the programme is designed by the NGO and people are expected to participate in its implementation and in receiving the service.

- (c) **Participatory orientation:** It is characterised by self-help projects where local people are involved, particularly in the implementation of a project by contributing cash, tools, land, materials, labour, etc. In the classical community development project, participation begins with needs definition and continues into the planning and implementation stages. Cooperatives often have a participatory orientation.
- (d) **Empowering orientation:** Here, the aim is to help poor people develop a clearer understanding of the social, political and economic factors affecting their lives, and to strengthen their awareness of their own potential power to control their lives. Sometimes, these groups develop spontaneously around a problem or an issue. However, at other times, workers from NGOs play a facilitating role in their development.

V. As per their strategy of intervention

- (a) **Single sectoral approach:** Such NGOs work in a single sector, such as health, education, social forestry, drinking water, shelter, sanitation, income-generation.
- (b) **Multi-sectoral approach:** Some NGOs may take a multiple-sectoral approach towards their interventions, interlinking across different sectors.
- (c) **Homogenous clientele approach:** These often focus their area of work on homogenous groups like tribal populations, women, Dalits, landless labourers, slum dwellers, pavement dwellers, homeless, etc.
- (d) **Heterogeneous clientele approach:** These often address multiple heterogeneous clients, with different groups being covered by different programmes or the same programme.

This classification is important to distinguish from the mission and nature of work because many times organisations translate their broad mission with a specific strategy, which varies from location to location. It is therefore common to see organisations engaged in the provision of health services to tribal populations only in one area and to mixed populations in another. It is also common to see organisations providing multiple-sectoral interventions with heterogeneous groups of clients even though they are broadly classified as poor. Increasingly, there has been a trend towards movement from homogeneous clientele and unitary sectoral work to heterogeneous client groups (under a broad definition of the poor) and multi-sectoral interventions.

VI. As per their nature of functions

- (a) **Programme implementation:** These are field based groups/organisations who work directly with the communities. They take up issues and implementing programmes directly. These organisations represent their members for purposes of claims and/or negotiations with the government and other bodies and fight in defence of the interest of their members. It includes groups like workers' unions. Landless farmers may organise themselves to demand agrarian reform measures. These kinds of organisations act as pressure groups representing the interests of the communities falling in the same social economic strata.
- (b) **Support to field based organisations:** These include organisations who promote community groups to take up issues and implement programmes. They have broader functions, which include representation, along with managing assets held in common by the whole community. For example, a dispensary constructed with self-help initiatives, valley dams/wells, and community centres. These organisations perform a support function for field based organisations. Their operations vary from the district to the national level. They also provide a variety of other kinds of

support, ranging from information dissemination and research to technical support in the field, from water management to organisational development, etc.

- (c) **Networking:** This category gains significance because of the increasing need for advocacy and public education on different issues. The number of networking organisations in the field of women and environmental issues has made a substantial impact on thinking in the voluntary sector in particular and the public in general during the recent past.
- (d) **Association:** Here members are registered and are normally screened on the basis of certain criteria developed by the members themselves. The organisation represents the interests of its members actively, and is involved in pursuing a specific common goal. Its members are registered. Cooperative societies come under this category, but increasingly, many groups are being registered as community based organisations.
- (e) **Policy advocacy:** NGOs play an extremely important role in identifying unaddressed problems and bringing them to public attention. They also play a role in protecting basic human rights, and in giving voice to a wide assortment of social, political, environmental, ethnic, and community interests and concerns. The civil society sector is the natural home of social movements, and it functions as a critical social safety valve, permitting aggrieved groups to bring their concerns to broader public attention and to rally support to improve their circumstances (Salamon & Sokolowoski, 2004).

VII. As per size

- (a) **Small sized:** Those with two to three staff members as full timers and many

volunteers as part timers. Funds are based on local resources and local informal receipts from outsiders. The focus is outreach to a handful to villages or hamlets.

- (b) **Medium sized:** This includes 10-12 full time staff members and a budget of 1724 USD or less per annum based on project grants, and coverage in one or two blocks in rural areas and two or three slums in urban areas.
- (c) **Large sized:** These include more than a hundred full time staff members and a budget ranging 1700 to 8600 USD per year based on project grants from several national and international sources and coverage spreading over several states, if not complete coverage of a large state itself. Many such organisations have fairly autonomous state level projects or branches or sub-organisations.

Apart from the above general basis of classification of NGOs, the classification NGOs has also been attempted by some authors. Some of them are:

Indian voluntary organisations pursuing developmental goals and agendas have been classified based on their roles or functions (Mahajan, 1999):

- (a) The first is defined as a public service contractor, who is engaged in service provision.
- (b) The second is defined as a collaborator, who works with the government to generate desired development outcomes.
- (c) The third is that of a social innovator who incubates new ideas, models and practices which address a particular developmental problem.
- (d) The fourth role is that of policy advocates and social critics who focus on providing an analysis of emerging social, political, economic and environmental issues as well as the policies and practices of the government and international agencies.

- (e) The fifth role is that of building civil society institutions which could be the basis for providing access, voice and representation to hitherto excluded and marginalised citizens.

NGOs can be classified into two broad categories (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2004):

- (a) *Service functions*: It involves the delivery of direct services such as education, health, housing, economic development promotion and the like.
- (b) *Expressive functions*: It involves those activities that provide avenues for the expression of cultural, spiritual, professional, or policy values, interests and beliefs. Included here are cultural institutions, recreation groups, professional associations, advocacy groups, community organisations, environmental organisations, human rights groups, social movements and the like.

Another way of classifying NGOs would be (Tandon, 2002):

- (a) Field programme based (welfare, empowerment and innovation) organisations,
- (b) Support (capacity building and information) organisations,
- (c) Umbrella or network federations and associations,
- (d) Research and advocacy organisations,
- (e) Philanthropic (grant-making) organisations, and
- (f) Foreign organisations.

THINK TANK

Using your country as an example, list at least 3 NGOs in each of these categories:

- (a) Funding NGOs
- (b) Support or Intermediary Organisations
- (c) Field/Action Level Organisation

1.5 Evolution Of NGOs Along Different Developmental Frameworks And Approaches

Although NGOs have usually been associated more with development practice than development theory, however, they can also be understood with reference to the broader trends in the evolution of thinking about development. By linking the study of NGOs more closely to theoretical ideas about development, it becomes possible to gain more critical insight into the world of development NGOs. Therefore, this section will provide an account of how NGOs have been viewed in different developmental approaches. It takes a selective approach in placing NGOs within a range of broader ideas about what is development and how it is practised (Lewis & Kanji, 2009).

The broad ideas regarding this have been presented in Table 2 which links the different theories of development with implications for NGOs, so as to illustrate ways in which each particular view of development tends to bring with it a different 'way of seeing' NGOs

Table 2: NGOs in the context of changing development theory (Lewis & Kanji, 2009, p. 60)

Sr. No.	Development theory	Main development idea	Role of NGOs
1.	Modernisation	Transition from pre-capitalist conditions to modern capitalist growth and change.	NGOs are rarely mentioned.
2.	Dependency	Under-development as a continuing condition of subordination after colonial exploitation of 'Third World' peripheries by Western 'core' countries.	NGOs are rarely mentioned but 'social movements' are often seen as positive forces for liberation and revolutionary change.
3.	Institutionalism	Only by improving structural relationships and economic incentives will optimum conditions	NGOs are seen as one of the three main institutional sectors; with the 'right' rules and

		for development be achieved.	incentives in place, and in optimum circumstances and contexts, NGOs can have comparative advantages over the other two sectors in providing services.
4.	Neo-liberalism	Making globalisation work for the poor: market mechanisms are the key to unlocking the potential of developing countries to develop economically.	NGOs are flexible agents of democratisation and private, cost-effective service delivery.
5.	Alternative development	Grassroots perspectives, gender equality, empowerment and bottom-up participation are the keys to sustainable and equitable development processes.	NGOs are critical actors in terms of their closeness to the poor, and their ability to challenge the top-down, mainstream development orthodoxies.
6.	Post-development	Idea of development is itself an undesirable western imposition on the rest of the world; we therefore need to abandon it	NGOs are agents of modernisation, destroying local cultures and economies, only local social movements constitute useful sites of resistance to these processes.

The above are broad development paradigms in which the functions, roles and structures of NGOs took shape and continue to do so. Reflections of these different schools of thought can be seen in local NGOs, international NGOs, governments, donor organisations, teaching institutes, etc. There are times when NGOs in the Third World are blamed for acting as agents of the First World, helping implement the development plans of the latter for the former, thus substituting the fabric of one society with another. However, there have also been instances where NGOs have resisted the state's 'modernising agenda' which often exclude taking into account people's aspirations. It is, however, important to underscore the fact that governments, as well as NGOs, still continue to operate, quite naturally, out of these various development paradigm

NOTE BANK

At the time of the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) during the 1980s and 1990s, it was clear how the western world tried to not only pre-empt but to also chart out the path of development for the Third World. Poorer countries which received international aid, through the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), as part of SAPs, were asked to open their markets as part of the loan conditionality. Therefore, the development views of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund clearly dominated, along with the modernisation and neo-liberal school of thought. It was in the 1990s that many NGOs started to turn to and use rights based programming to bring the rights of the marginalised to the forefront. As a result, the role of NGOs and people's (including governments') perceptions have changed the way NGOs have found themselves performing different roles amongst all these development models.

Along with the evolution of NGOs across various developmental theories, it is also important to note that there have been five different approaches to understanding development NGOs, mentioned in Table 3 below. It helps to explain why interest in the role of NGOs has come from a wide variety of perspectives and viewpoints along different development frameworks, as we saw earlier in the changing perceptions towards NGOs.

Table 3: Five main approaches to understanding development NGOs (Lewis & Kanji, 2009, p. 205)

Sr. No.	Basic Approach	Key ideas
1.	NGOs as 'democratisation'	NGOs are expressions of citizen action in public space, whether as informal, grassroots groups or professionalised development agencies. Their activities contribute to deepening of democracy by strengthening participation and their voice in policy.
2.	NGOs as 'privatisation'	The essential strength of NGOs is their 'private character' and their difference from the government. They can work effectively with business, as private, non-profit actors, and can also be contracted by government to deliver services.

3.	NGOs as 'developmental'	NGOs are seen as part of the development industry, as extensions of the bilateral, multilateral and private donors which predominantly fund them. They carry developmental ideas into the community and serve as agents of modernisation.
4.	NGOs as 'social transformation'	NGOs are vehicles for the development of alternative ideas about progress and change and seek to challenge policy orthodoxies. They are viewed as being a part of the wider community of social movements and citizen networks, challenging the problems of poverty and inequality.
5.	NGOs as 'charity'	NGOs as key actors within an international system of charitable giving, exemplified by notions of religious charity, and activities such as child sponsorships.

1.6 NGOs In Developing Countries

In the countries of Africa, South Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Central and Eastern Europe, the development of NGOs has been more robust in recent years than in any other region. This has been the result of expanding communications technologies, frustration with state centred approaches to development and engaging in new efforts to empower the rural poor. Despite this, NGOs continue to engage in a smaller proportion of the economically active populations of these countries than in the more developed regions of the world. One reason for this may be the rural character of these societies and the resulting retention of traditional forms of social assistance, which rely more on family relationships as compared to voluntary organisations. Therefore, traditional clientelistic systems of social control and modern authoritarian social regimes have limited the space available for the development of independent organisations. With historically small urban middle class populations and large numbers of marginalised rural poor, these countries have not given adequate opportunities for the growth of such voluntary organisations. Hence, the average size of the NGO sector in these countries is well below the all-country average (Salamon & Sokolowoski, 2004).

Another distinguishing feature of the sector in these countries is the relatively low level of governmental support that is available for it. They, therefore, have to depend heavily on fees and private philanthropy, as compared to their counterparts elsewhere. Even with volunteer efforts included, fees still remains the dominant portion of income of such organisations.

THINK TANK

Reflect on the working conditions and opportunities available for growth of NGOs in your region. Identify the factors that strengthen/constrain the execution of their activities.

The role of NGOs and the people's (including governments') perceptions have changed the way NGOs have performed different roles. The 1970s marked the beginning of a sea change which saw an 'intensification' of NGO strengths and activities. This was evident from the role NGOs played in a succession of UN conferences, such as the Stockholm Environment Conference in 1972 and the World Population Conference in Bucharest in 1974.

NGOs also played a key role in drafting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since 1992, the influence of NGOs at the international level has continued to grow, as shown by the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro (1992), in which NGOs were active not just in the conference but also in its preparation. The Rio conference approved a series of policy statements relating to the role of NGOs. In Agenda 21, the main policy document that emerged from Rio on global environmental action, the need to draw on the expertise and views of NGOs within the UN system in policy and programme design, implementation and evaluation was formally stated. In June 1997, the vital role played by NGOs and other major groups in sustainable development was recognised in Chapter 27 of Agenda 21, leading to intense arrangements for a consultative relationship between the UN and NGOs.

All this constituted a substantial trajectory of change as NGOs shifted from a role at the periphery to a place not too far from the main centres of action within international UN policy processes. From only occasional mentions of the role of NGOs in the documentation produced by the Brandt Commission in 1980, by 1995 the

Commission on Global Governance had recommended that a Forum of Civil Society be convened and consulted by the UN every year. For some the era of NGO 'empowerment' had begun (Charnovitz, 1997). More recently, it has been argued that NGOs now form an integral part of the UN system (Martens, 2006).

Herein, it is important to note the dual role that NGOs have played precisely due to their diversity. On the one hand, they have been agencies of development as per Western notions and on the other hand they are actors who have questioned the same. While trying to develop a formal understanding of NGOs it is useful to see them as groups of people thinking and believing in different schools of thought and at the same time creating their own theory of change, consciously and unconsciously.

Summary

In this Unit, you were introduced to the concept of 'Non-governmental Organisations', as a third sector operating for social welfare and with a not-for-profit motive. Along with this, conceptual clarity on NGOs was provided, by describing its definition, characteristics and classification. The Unit introduced various development paradigms and their differing perspectives on NGOs, where NGOs are viewed differently, positively, negatively or neutrally. The reasons behind the underdevelopment of NGOs in developing countries, along with analysing their growth trajectory, detailing the evolution of their importance and position in society were also examined in the Unit.

Recommended For Further Reading

- Tandon R, and Mohanty R., (2002), Civil Society and Governance. Delhi: Samaskriti
- Tandon R., (2002), Voluntary Actions, Civil Society and State, Delhi: Mosaic Books
- Exploring the Non Profit Sectors in India, PRIA and Society for Socio-Economic Studies and Services and John Hopkinson University, USA, September, 2003
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