



Role of NGOS In Economic And Social Development Of Assam With Special Reference To Barpeta District

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Abstract:

Voluntary activities have been an integral part and parcel of India from its historical legacy and NGOs are nothing but organizations working voluntarily for the common goals. Post-independence, NGOs existed but their roles and activities were very limited and more of voluntary nature. After India's independence from British rule, NGOs emerged in limited extent till 1980. Thereafter, most of the NGOs were founded and started emerging as important players in socio economic development of rural economy. During this period several new professional young social workers from different areas started joining NGOs.

NGOs are relatively small, innovative, flexible and participatory in the nature of activities undertaken and successfully reaching to the grassroots level of the economy for socio economic development. The realization of the NGOs' role in rural development gained importance in the Seventh Five Year Plan and then inclusion of NGOs becomes a part of every successive Five-Year Plan in India. Today NGOs are some of the most successful players in shaping and enhancing the socio-economic growth and development. The role of NGOs in poverty alleviation, employment generation, rural healthcare, vocational training and skills development, women and child development are remarkable and gained momentum.

In India, there are no accurate statistics on number of NGOs present. However, in India there are approximately 3 million NGOs registered with the Government of India in 2023. We have more than 2770 NGOs actively working in Assam and these numbers are registered with NGO DARPAN. Barpeta district has more than 154 registered NGOs currently working for economic growth and development in the district. There may be more numbers of NGOs which are not registered with any government authority and working for the common goals.

Keywords: Non-government Organization, Voluntary, DARPAN, Vocational etc.

Introduction:

Voluntary activities have been an integral part and parcel of India from its historical legacy and NGOs are nothing but organizations working voluntarily for the common goals. Post-independence, NGOs existed but their roles and activities were very limited and more of voluntary nature. After India's independence from British rule, NGOs emerged in limited extent till 1980.

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the grassroots level of the economy for socio economic development. The realization of the NGOs' role in rural development gained importance in the Seventh Five Year Plan and then inclusion of NGOs becomes a part of every successive Five-Year Plan in India. Today NGOs are some of the most successful players in shaping and enhancing the socio-economic growth and development. The role of NGOs in poverty alleviation, employment generation, rural healthcare, vocational training and skills development, women and child development are remarkable and gained momentum.

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Statement of The Problem:

At present, robust emphasis is given to develop rural sector. Though multiple efforts are made in India by the Local, State and Central Governments to develop rural India, the current achievements are not remarkable. One of the most imperative contributing factors to the failure of rural development programme is due to absence of contribution from the people. Involvement and contribution from micro level is required in planning, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring for sustainable economic development. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a significant role in this regard. Therefore, this study basically tries to analyze the contribution and role played by the NGOs in

economic development of Barpeta district of Assam. The study will answer the following research questions:

- What role NGOs play in socio-economic development of Barpeta district of Assam?
- How is the performance of NGOs in Barpeta district? What are their achievements in poverty alleviation and providing employment opportunities?
- What are the problems of NGOs and their beneficiaries in the district?
- How to improve the performance of NGOs in socio economic development of Barpeta district?
- What are the government policies for NGOs?

Objectives Of The Study:

As India is a land of opportunities and around 69 percent of its population resides in villages and rural areas, prosperity of India depends on the development of rural sector. In this regard, NGOs play a significant role in economic development of rural areas. Researcher has set the following objectives for this study:

- To find the nature, emergence and development of NGOs in Barpeta district of Assam.
- To study the structure and functions of the NGOs with regard to economic and social development of Assam, particularly in the Barpeta district.
- To study the impact of rural development projects, initiate by the NGOs in socio economic development of the district.
- To evaluate the performance of NGOs in Barpeta district in changing the socio-economic conditions of rural youth.
- To examine the problems of NGOs in Barpeta district.
- To make recommendations based on our study which will have policy implications.

Hypotheses

Our study has the following hypotheses:

- The functions of NGOs are effective in socio economic development of Barpeta district of Assam.
- Performance of NGOs has tremendous impact on employment generation for the rural youth in Barpeta district.
- The NGOs play an important role in poverty alleviation and economic upliftment of rural people in Barpeta district.

Research Methodology:

The information is collected by the researcher for the study from the following sources:

- **Primary sources of data**
- **Secondary sources of data.**

Primary sources of data were gathered from the heads of the NGOs i.e. President or Secretary or senior staff with the help of a well-structured questionnaire prepared considering the main objectives of the research study. Also, data were collected from the beneficiaries of the NGOs. Direct interaction and expertise in the functioning of NGOs and benefits received by the respondent beneficiaries help to collect innovative opinions from the NGOs involved in developmental activities and their beneficiaries. Moreover, primary data are collected through administered questionnaire by the researcher from the sample NGOs and their beneficiaries. The motive of data collection from the beneficiaries is to understand the impact of rural developmental projects undertaken by the NGOs. In order to make the study more convenient, the sample NGOs' authorities were communicated through email, telephone calls and fixed appointment in advance for conducting the interviews and filling the survey questionnaire. However, beneficiary's data are directly collected from them without any prior appointment but as per their availability.

Testing of Hypotheses:

Collected statistics are analyzed and arranged according to the hypotheses of the study with the help of different statistical applications and techniques. Pearson Correlation Coefficient analyses are used to test the hypotheses framed for the study. Apart from Pearson Correlation Coefficient, Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel were extensively used for the analysis of data. Besides logical and analytical analysis of statistical data, concurrent interpretation of data has been provided to get the insights of the study. We have used statistical tools like mean, r-values and p-values, coefficient of variation and percentages to find the results of the study.

A) Functions of NGOs are effective in socio economic development of Barpeta district of Assam

This hypothesis has been proved and tested through Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis. Relationship between the number of functions as x-variables and number of beneficiaries as y-variables for each of the 18NGOs have been analysed and found Pearson correlation coefficient (r) = 0.8674

Results of the Pearson correlation indicate that there is a significant large positive relationship between X and Y, (r) = .867, $p < .001$).

Hence, we observe that the functions of the NGOs are effective in socio economic development of the district. We have accepted the alternate hypothesis (H_a) that functions of NGOs are effective in socio economic development of Barpeta district of Assam and rejected null hypothesis (H_0).

B) Performance of NGOs has impact on employment generation for the rural youth and women in Barpeta district.

The impact of the rural development projects is that it is directly generating

employment opportunities for the rural youth and women in particular. This means that performance of NGOs is positive to generate the employment opportunities to shape the growth and development of Barpeta district. We have combined all the projects completed in the period of 6 years with approximate number of employment opportunities generated by each of the NGOs from 2015-16 to 2021-22 for all 18 NGOs to calculate the relationship between the number of projects and its impact in generating employment opportunities and found Pearson correlation coefficient (r) = 0.9533 Results of the Pearson correlation indicate that there is a significant large positive relationship between X and Y, (r) = .953, $p < .001$). Hence, we have accepted the alternate hypothesis (H_a) that the performance of NGOs has tremendous impact on employment generation for the rural youth and women in Barpeta district and rejected null hypothesis (H_0).

C) NGOs play important role in poverty alleviation and economic upliftment of rural people in Barpeta district.

To assess the relation between rural development projects executed by the NGOs and its impact on poverty alleviation and upliftment of rural people in Barpeta district through Pearson Correlation Coefficient to test the validity of the hypotheses formed at the outset and derived Pearson correlation coefficient (r) value 0.9315

Results of the Pearson correlation indicate that there is a significant large positive relationship between X and Y, (r) = .932, $p < .001$).

Therefore, the impact of the rural development projects directly helps alleviating poverty and upliftment of the rural people. Hence, we have accepted the alternate hypothesis (H_a) that NGOs play important role in poverty alleviation and economic upliftment of rural

people in Barpeta district and rejected null hypothesis (H_0).

Findings of The Study:

As per the research study, following are the findings:

Growth of NGOs:

NGOs are playing a major role in economic growth and development through mobilizing communities and catalyzing people's interventions for specific issues. In India, there are approximately 3 million NGOs registered with the government authority in 2023. Amongst the states, Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of NGOs with more than 0.54 million NGOs, followed by Maharashtra with 0.52 million NGOs. Kerala stands third in the list with 0.37 million NGOs and West Bengal with 0.23 million NGOs. Union Territories have around 82,250 NGOs and capital Delhi alone has around 76,000 NGOs. We have more than 2770 NGOs actively working in Assam and these numbers are registered with NGODARPAN. Barpeta district alone has more than 154 registered NGOs currently working for economic growth and development in the district.

Function of NGOs:

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) function as basic providers of necessities. They are increasingly entering into wider range of socio-economic development activities to benefit the vulnerable people of the society. Today, NGOs are covering broader arenas of development activities and their functions are increasing day by day. Poverty alleviation through self-employment, empowering women and overall rural development are the most important functions or goals for all the NGOs.

Sources of funds:

NGOs have to concentrate on raising the funds from different sources and also spend good amount in raising the funds from the members'

subscriptions, government agencies, donations, foreign agencies and other sources. It is found that 11 NGOs out of 18 selected NGOs are getting donations from the global organizations. Almost all the NGOs have member subscriptions to get the membership funds monthly or annually. These organizations are receiving donations from the people and charity organizations (private and corporate). Majority of the NGOs are also raising their own funds through selling their products in the local markets. All selected NGOs, except 2 NGOs such as Paka Development Association and Paka Gram Unnayan Parishad, Fingua are receiving central and state government grants monthly or annually under various schemes to execute multiple development programmes in the Barpeta district.

While studying annual budget and fund position of the selected NGOs, around 11 percent of the NGOs have up to 20 lakhs of annual funds availability for spending. Another 2 each of NGOs are having 80 Lakhs to 1 Core or above 1 Core annual funds for spending in a financial year to undertake various development activities. We have 22 percent of the NGOs which are having 21 to 40 lakhs of funds and 28 percent of the NGOs are having funds of 41 to 60 lakhs per annum. So, majority of the NGOs are having 40 to 60 lakhs of amount for annual spending. There are 5 NGOs in the district in this regard. Also, there are 3 NGOs having average yearly funds 61 to 80 lakhs for spending on development projects and programmes. We have around 11 NGOs in the district which are getting funds from the international organizations or working with global NGOs to undertake multiple development projects. Availability of funds is the main factor for the NGOs to work for the poor and marginal sections of the society in Barpeta district.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

As per the finding of the study, following suggestions are made to streamline the role of NGOs in socio economic development of the Barpeta district:

Assist ground level organization's Growth:

The NGOs are working as agents of socio-economic growth and development in the district. They must decentralize their efforts for further improvement in the growth of NGOs and act as people's organizations to help in achieving all-round socio-economic development. NGOs should assist the development and growth of ground level organizations through SHGs, other local bodies and people's participation to become self-reliant and efficient organizations in the locality. Functions and activities must change with the pace of time.

NGOs come across various barriers and constraints to reach the status as most successful organizations to work for the rural development today. The functions and activities of NGOs must change with the pace of time as per the requirements of the society.

Conclusion:

NGOs are the bigger players in socio economic development of the rural economy working for the poor and weaker section of the society at grass root level. NGOs need to work in collaboration with the local bodies and government authorities to achieve holistic development of the rural economy. Stimulation of NGOs will further boost the performance in shaping and enhancing the rural economy with all round growth and development. The problems faced by the NGOs and their beneficiaries need collaborative efforts to stimulate and address the issues permanently in the Barpeta district. The various suggestions and recommendations from the NGOs officials and beneficiaries require immediate attention. In this regard, government

authorities should take the proactive measures that benefit NGOs and their beneficiaries. Today, NGOs are feasible and flexible to take much broader role in socio economic development of the economy.

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