

ESSENTIAL AND IMPORTANT ROLE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF NGO'S IN PROTECTING ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

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Abstract:

Today we come across various non-governmental organizations (NGO's) whose concerns are focused on various areas such as social issues, health issues, and environmental issues. Non-Governmental Organization is a broad term, which includes charity organizations, advisory committees and various other professional organizations. NGOs in India are spread across the country and they have close contacts with communities. They are involved in the whole spectrum of developmental activities from creating environmental awareness to undertaking watershed development: from disaster management to sustainable livelihoods; from joint forest management to giving inputs to policies. They range from clubs, which encourage nature camping to agencies, which undertake research and monitoring. The present study focused on the important role of different NGO's in protection of Environmental problems.

Introduction:

There are large number of NGOs in India and other countries that are exclusively working for environmental, protection, conservation, and awareness. There are various non-governmental organizations which are actively involved in environmental protection in our country. NGOs are now playing an important role in framing the environmental policy, mobilizing public support for environmental conservation, and protecting the endangered species of forests and animals. Environmental organizations such as Earth watch and Sea Shepherd Conservation Society have been successful in creating awareness about the environmental dangers in using drift nets in the commercial fishing industry.

In the five decades have witnessed the difficult problems encountered in providing health care services to our poor people, the majority of who live in more than half-a-million villages and in the proliferating slums of our cities. Charitable and voluntary

organizations since time immemorial have been contributing significantly towards the health care of the community. With the passage of time, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have equipped themselves adequately and come up enthusiastically in providing services like relief to the blind, the disabled and disadvantaged and helping the government in mother and child health care, including family planning programmes. The important role played by the various national and regional level NGOs is briefly documented in the 'Encyclopaedia of Social Work in India - 1968, where special mention has been made of such organizations like All India Blind Relief Society, Family Planning Association of India (FPAI), Indian Medical Association, Indian Red Cross Society, National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Sent Parman and Blind Relief Mission, T.B. Association of India, Bombay Mothers and Children Welfare Society; to name a few. Greater roles for the NGOs was seen to ensure Health for All through the primary health care approach. Their role was also considered as most crucial to translate the concept of 'People's Health in People's Hands' into action.

Objectives of NGO's:

General Objectives of NGO's:

- To describe and discuss the common characteristics of health system functioning in the given socio-economic, socio-cultural, political and ecological settings.
- To highlight and delineate crucial factors responsible for the health sector reforms and to undertake, as the most challenging endeavour, effective and efficient health management and quality health care service provisions in the community.
- The fundamental objective is to act as a catalyst in bringing about local

initiative and community participation in overall improvement in quality of life.

Civic and Environmental Objective of NGO's:

This aims at developing civic and environmental consciousness among the public. Organization of civic amenities and sanitary facilities on a self- help basis, enactment of suitable legislation for the betterment of civic standards, environmental protection is some means by which a cleaner and healthier environment can be achieved.

Service Objective:

This was formulated to provide service to all segments of the society like the poor, women, children and youth through various schemes like drug and alcohol addiction programmers, organization of rallies against child labour, medical camps, blood donation camps, etc. This also includes the protection and preservation of nature, wildlife, historical and heritage monuments.

Different Roles Played by NGO's:

Solid waste management:

This includes both municipal solid waste and bio-medical wastes. Civic Exnoras play a major role in assisting the Municipal Corporation in the collection of garbage from individual households and the deposition of the same in secondary collection points by appointing street beautifiers in the concerned areas. With its experience over the years, Exnoras has realised that this was merely a relocation of waste rather than management of solid wastes.

Zero waste management:

NGO's have now started focusing its efforts on the concept of Zero Waste Management, by which practically all wastes can be converted into wealth through recycling. Exnora is also addressing the problem of handling and disposal of bio- medical wastes, and is trying to find a solution beneficial to all concerned.

Citizen's Waterways Monitoring Programme (WAMP):

This programme was started with the sole purpose of developing clean and pollution free waterways in cities and for creating a healthy living environment for all city dwellers.

WAMP was formed in 1991, as a joint programme with several NGOs and individuals dedicated to the cause of developing clean waterways in the city. A series of meetings were conducted with various governmental agencies, which has resulted in the drafting of a detailed action plan. If the Government and the public implement the plan properly this will result in achievement of clean waterways.

Community Sanitation Improvement Projects:

Inadequate sanitation facilities are a major problem to human health, especially so in the neglected low- income areas and slum settlements. NGO's concept of self help is best displayed by the community sanitation improvement projects in these areas. Two of the most successful projects have been at the at Narikkurava (Gypsy) Colony in Indira Nagar, Chennai and at Giriappa Road in T. Nagar, Chennai.

Student Environment Programme (STEP):

This program has a dual role - of creating environmental awareness amongst the student community and to develop each child's mind resources through various personality development programs. A teachers' manual and an activity book that have been brought out as a part of this program are designed in the 'do-and learn' format and provide an easy understanding of the problems faced by us and at the same time kindles the mind to find remedial measures.

Tree Planting:

The Civic Exnoras in the city have been instrumental in planting trees for the purpose of beautification of roads, parks, playgrounds, burial grounds, etc., with the larger perspective of environmental protection.

Vegetable Roof Gardening:

With agricultural land shrinking rapidly and deforestation rates rocketing, urban agriculture is the need of the hour. Exnora has been propagating and training youth in setting up and maintaining vegetable roof gardens in households of Tamil Nadu. The organization is closely working with the Tamil Nadu Horticulture and Agriculture Departments on this project.

Rain Harvesting:

NGO's have propagated the system of rain harvesting in several residential areas in the city with the aim of exploiting one or another important water source, viz., and rainwater. Many cities suffer from perennial water problems every summer and therefore it is important that all avenues of water source be tapped. By using simple and inexpensive techniques the NGO (Exnora) has arrived at a method to conserve a large part of the 110 cms of rain that we receive annually. A Water Conservation Committee constituted in Chennai by Metro Water Supply and Sewerage Board Exnora is a core member.

AIDS Awareness:

NGOs are working diligently to educate the public about the prevention of AIDS and provide support and counseling for HIV-infected persons. The additional dangers of placing value judgments on how individuals became HIV-positive is one of the toughest issues facing NGOs that work with people who are HIV positive. One key in the prevention of AIDS is to eliminate negative images of HIV-infected persons as projected by the media. NGOs should work toward educating the public to respect the dignity of all persons living with HIV, regardless of how they became infected.

Pollution Control:

The task of pollution control in India is complex due to the large number of heavy, large and small-scale industries involved. Further, the rise in the number of vehicles coupled with poverty and the large population puts tremendous pollution pressure on air, water and land. A comprehensive approach to pollution control is being undertaken based on the following principles:

- Prevent pollution at source.
- Encourage, develop and apply the best available practicable technical solution.
- Ensure that polluter pays for pollution and control arrangements.
- Focus on protection of heavily polluted areas and river stretches.
- Involve the NGO's in educating the public about pollution control measures to be taken.

Noise Pollution:

Noise pollution has become a major problem in the metropolitan cities and in other urban areas. With a view to regulate and control noise producing and generating sources, the Ministry of Environment and Forests has notified the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000 under the Environment (Protection) Act 1986, for prevention and control of noise pollution in the country.

Air Pollution:

The sources of Air Pollution are industries like thermal power plants, sugar mills, distilleries, paper mills etc. Vehicular emissions are another source of air pollution. The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 has classified the industries as red, orange and green depending on the degree of pollution caused by them. It further specifies the various pollution control measures to be adopted by these industries.

Water Pollution:

The rivers of India are part of its cultural heritage. Over the years, the quality of the water has deteriorated due to the uncontrolled release of effluents by industries into the rivers. A National River Conservation Plan (NRCP), which includes second phase of GAP also, has been formulated which aims to control the pollution of grossly polluted rivers of the country. A National River Conservation Authority has been setup to review the implementation of the programmes related to cleaning of rivers. The NRCP covers 141 towns located along 22 interstate rivers in 14 states. The total cost of the scheme is Rs.2013 crores. A National Lake Conservation Plan envisaging the conservation of lakes by prevention of pollution by catchments area treatment, desalting, weed control, based on the integrated water shed development approach is under implementation.

NGO's Role in Pollution Control:

The success of India's environmental programmes depends greatly on the awareness and consciousness of the people. A National Environmental Awareness Campaign has been launched to sensitise people to the environmental problems through audio -visual

programmes, seminars, symposia, training programmes etc. Paryavaran Vahinis have been constituted in 184 districts involving the local people to play an active role in preventing poaching, deforestation and environmental pollution. 4000 NGOs have been given financial assistance for creating environmental awareness. An Environmental Information System (ENVIS) network has been setup to disseminate information on environmental issues. India has a large network of NGO's, which are involved in spreading the message of sustainable development to the public.

Conclusion:

The total number of NGOs in the country is about 70,000; (Nagraj) while the actual number might be in lakh, the number of the registered NGOs may not be more than 10,000. Commercialisation of NGOs has no doubt led to their rapid growth but it does not mean that every one joining the field is coming because of money only. A high official with CAPART says that there are more number of good NGO's than the bad NGOs but "unfortunately it is only the bad ones who get projected." A code of conduct should be evolved to evaluate and rate the NGOs and the initiative should come from within the NGO sector. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) is working on evolving a regulatory frame work to allow NGOs to sell micro insurance products particularly to tap insurance potential in the rural areas. Since NGOs are performing well the insurance sector also will be soon open to NGOs. These NGOs can capture the rural market easily.

What we can do for the protection of Environment:

1. Educate the students about the pollution problem and the harmful effects of pollution.
2. We should minimize the use plastic cover for different purposes.
3. Buy only environment friendly products i.e. the products which are not reducing the natural resources.
4. Not to waste water for various purposes.
5. To plant and grow trees in the house garden.
6. To Support the NGO's financially which are rendering service to the Health and Environment sector.
7. To motivate research on different measures to be taken to solve environmental problems.
8. To support the initiatives taken by the central and state government in protecting our environment.

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