

Role of NGO in Ensuring Wellbeing of Rural People in West Bengal: An Archetype

Avra Sen

Research Scholar
Department of Adult, Continuing Education & Extension
Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India.

Abstract: The paper discusses the non-uniformity of development in India, and then highlights the challenges that thwart the holistic development of the population. Then the role of developmental organizations is discussed through highlighting the functioning of a specific NGO that supplies drinking water in a region of West Bengal in India that is affected by arsenic toxicity. The way in which the NGO functions has been explored in the writing. The success of the NGO has been mentioned as an archetype, while acknowledging the role of such organizations in ensuring faster development in the Indian society.

IndexTerms—developmental organization, rural development, arsenic toxicity, drinking water distribution, rural Bengal.

I. INTRODUCTION

India is known for its topographical and environmental diversity. The population of the country is spread across various regions that differ in their sustainability. Moreover, the developmental process has not been uniform in all the parts of the country, in spite of efforts. Now, one needs to reckon that however paradoxical the term might be, the country of India is reckoned among the 'developing' nations of the world. One of the foremost markers of development is the way in which the governance can deal with environmental barriers to holistic development. However, a number of environmental challenges thwart the path of holistic development in the Indian context. It needs to be reckoned that by holistic development, one should not think of capitalist infringement of rural milieu or exploitation of the environment in the name of 'development.'

The disparity of economic classes among the people of the Indian society adds to the problems of holistic development. Nature too poses hindrance in certain areas of the country, and challenges the scope of proper sustenance. In science, the debate of nature versus nurture has intrigued scholars for long. Now, if one views the challenges of nature that are posed to human community of a milieu, the need of nurture or human intervention can be comprehended. Obviously, one aims to endeavor here to delve deep into how humans can overcome the challenges to sustenance that are posed by the nature (or environment).

II. NON-UNIFORMITY OF DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

Not digressing from the Indian context anymore, one can talk about the non-uniform nature of development that has added to the subsequent disparity among the communities or rungs of the Indian society. In a country that is yet to do away with its colonial hangover, development of the rural (or economically backward) masses has been one of the primary challenges. Now, this sluggishness in the overall development of rural India has only added to the disparities and woes of rural population.

One has to reckon the fact that arsenic-containing drinking water has been one of the major environmental issues that has thwarted the well-being of considerable number of people across India. In the wake of the severe threat posed by arsenic poisoning in parts of India, the government is yet bring the entire population within the secure domain. Now, this issue has become a major concern for the government. But thankfully, in the present era, nexus between the government and non-government developmental organizations provide the much needed hope and respite from the issue.

III. THE ROLE OF NGO: A CASE STUDY

TollygungeSundarban People's World is a non-government organization which deals in community drinking water. Now, it needs to be reckoned that arsenic poisoning occurs through water consumption. In the areas that are affected by arsenic, people get exposed to the threat of arsenic toxicity. With a vision to neutralize this enormous threat to human health, the contextual developmental organization started its functioning. The NGO in context has been functional for a number of years now, and has utilized all its resources to combat with the challenge of arsenic toxicity in the southern region of the state of West Bengal, India.

Jeevanamritt, the brand name, distributes pure water to a considerable number of people in West Bengal. The water is treated with reverse osmosis and seven levels of filtration, including UV ray treatment and ozonization. The water that is processed under the supervision of the organization in context is distributed in the arsenic affected areas of South 24 Parganas at a very nominal price of 0.75 paisa per liter. Thus, it is understandable how the organization in context is committed to the cause of uplifting the lifestyle of the common people of the state. Jeevanamritt started working in October 2014, and since then the organization has

served more than 10,000 houses. Currently, Jeevanamritt has around 20 community distributors and more than 6,000 registered households. Their process of functioning is similar to LPG cooking gas delivery system in India.

Area covered directly by the developmental organization:

- Dhapdhapi 1 gram panchayat

Population: 16500 approx.

- Dhapdhapi 2 gram panchayat

Population: 17000 approx.

Both areas are enormously affected by arsenic and the drinking water supply of the developmental organization aids to the needs of the people. Thus, one can understand the extensive functioning of this non-governmental organization in the rural region of the state of West Bengal, India.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE FUNCTIONING OF THE NGO

The management and work force of the developmental organization went on to start their work through conducting a survey of the area that was supposed to be covered. The organization focused on spreading awareness about fresh and pure drinking water and its benefits among the people so that they could readily agree to subscribe to the services provided by the organization. This was followed by registration of the households who would get the services. The organization started receiving requirements through Facebook community page, phone, SMS as well as door to door knocking. To increase the area of operation the developmental organization has recruited community distributors who follow the same steps. It needs to be noted that the customer gives them empty jar and they provide the customers filled up water jars.

In this era of digital technology and Internet, the population of West Bengal is greatly inclined toward using social media for communication. The developmental organization has banked on the ease of communication via social media for the purpose of raising awareness. Social media exposure let the organization reach out to mainly the younger generations of the area of functioning via community groups. The younger generations having been convinced of the issue, face-to-face awareness programs in the area via public meetings, posters and leaflet distribution became much easier. The developmental organization makes sure that the representatives are in constant touch with the customers via the social media platforms, thereby catapulting the relationship with the people. Representatives address queries, meet requirements or take complaints via social media. This has helped building the trust between the developmental organization and the local people. Thus, one can very well comprehend how communication has come to be the key to success in such ventures. The proper functioning of the organization can be credited to its apt utilization of the mediums of mass communication.

V. CONCLUSION

Such developmental works across the society as the one discussed are potentially based on public awareness and engagement. With rapid globalization and spread of technology across the world, social media would have an important role in awareness programs and mobilization of people. The success story of TollygungeSundarban People's World can be seen as an inspiring microcosm indeed. Many other non-governmental organizations are functioning at present for the purpose of development of the masses. The government should explore the scope of engaging and supporting more such developmental organizations for potential work so as to speed up the process of uplifting the conditions of sustenance of the people. Proper planning and execution in this regard can work as catalysts to fight issues that threaten public well-being as in the case of arsenic toxicity in South 24 Parganas in the state of West Bengal, India. The same model of functioning can be used by other organizations in other areas to produce effective results when it comes to developmental work.