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NGOs and rural poverty eradication in Karnataka-India: Tracing the root of the difficulty and solution

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Since Independence India has made a noteworthy development in different sectors of rural development. The thrust of these programmes have been to make a frontal attack on poverty through unique employment generation programmes, productive asset transfer through institutional credit and subsidy programmes and programmes of rural housing, drinking water and sanitation. Strong thrust has been given to social security programmes for providing assistance to the destitute and poor families. Assistance and encouragement to voluntary agencies and training of functionaries of rural development form part of the emphasis on accelerated rural development in India. This paper is based on the field work experiences of the authors and concludes that any strategy for rural development must involve the effective and professional management of the NGOs (non governmental organizations) active participation of the community at all the levels.

Introduction

Rural poverty has long been both an economic and social problem in India. India has one third of the total population of the world living under poverty line. It is a land of agriculture comprising approximately 83,0000 villages and 3500 hamlets with many million populations. Most of the people live in the rural areas under subsistent condition. In comparison to other Asian countries, production per unit area is very low here. Environmental degradation, over-population, illiteracy, malnutrition, unemployment and low per capita income are the main drawbacks for its development. Indian economy is mainly based on farming, which is mixed and subsistent in nature. The farming systems are very poor resource-based and cannot

satisfy the need of the nation with present level of technology. For creating the resource for the scientific farming systems for higher productivity and the integration of existing enterprises like crop, livestock, fisheries, agro-forestry, off-farm and non-farm activities need to be promoted in a holistic way. These activities will be enhanced towards desirable direction for improving quality of the rural community if the human resources are properly developed through functional education, training and exposure to need-based technology. These, in turn, will play a significant role in providing food security, employment generation, nutrition uptake and income earning to reduce poverty and to raise living standard. Therefore, it is essentially important to literate and educate the people to enable them to actively participate in the development activities of farming rural systems in an integrated manner through raising productivity of land and man, protecting environment and eliminating the vicious circle of poverty for constructing better society for decent livelihood systems (Datta, 2001, p. 14).

Rural poverty

Numerous NGOs have been working towards finding a solution to the rural poverty problem in India. According to the latest ILO report, more than 17.5 million rural children are working in different corners of India because of poverty (citation). Many NGOs have grown in size and capabilities conducting research and training's while developing effective and innovative programmes to shift children from work to school. The work of NGOs in the fields of primary education, rural development, micro-financing, and alternative income generation programmes have also made important contribution in the effort to eradicate rural poverty in both urban and rural India. However, unless NGOs make significant improvement in their performance in promoting sustainable livelihood for the poor their best efforts may not prove sufficient for ending rural and rural poverty (Calvin, 2001, p. 24).

With a view to having a holistic approach to the task of

ensuring sustainable development of land, the Agriculture Ministry has recently established a new department known as the “Department of Land Resources”. This will facilitate coordinated policy intervention as well as quality improvement in area development schemes. Non-government organizations, self-help groups and *Panchayati Raj* institutions have been accorded adequate role in the new initiative. In order to improve the quality of life of the rural poor and to ensure equal and effective participation of the people, the restructured programmes will help functionaries at various levels in responding better to the needs at the field level (Kamal, 2003, p. 37).

Study areas: This paper is based on the field survey conducted in four districts viz; Mysore, Kodagu, Bangalore and Chamarajanagar districts of Karnataka, India last for 5 months. A total of 35 NGOs working about rural poverty were chosen for the current study. Qualitative data has been analyzed using NUD* ISD database.

Result and discussion

Role of NGOs

Despite the formation of specific policies and projects for dealing with rural poverty, and the implementation of a large number of programmes by the Government and NGOs in pursuance of these policies, the impact on rural poverty in the country has not been minimal. The basic reason for the failure of many programmes is that they are simply not designed to do so and no community participation. Programmes, which will be implemented by the NGOs is not geographically and culturally specific. The need for revitalizing *Panchayati Raj* (*local self governments*) institutions has, therefore, been recognized as an instrument for participative planning and implementation of various development programmes at grassroots level by collaborating with NGOs.

So long as poverty continues to exist it would be difficult to eliminate other rural and rural problems. Simple legislation/programmes are not enough. Since acute economic crisis is the prime reason in rural India the only method of withdrawing family from poverty by arranging alternative income generation programme. In this corner point, all NGOs must and should think to provide some alternative income generation programme and assisting producer's organizations. If NGOs seriously wants to be in this field and, if so, necessarily specialize and they should think much larger scale programmes and project. Not only this, they should have high quality of human resource to mange themselves as organizations and their operations in a more (Panesh, 2004, p. 25).

Since poverty is an intense socio-economic problem among rural and rural folks NGOs should requires long term multipronged strategy to be carried out on a continuous basis. Although at policy level NGOs have been perceived as developmental agents, yet the scene at the grassroots level is not always in consonance with this subjectivity. It is so because base level Government functionaries some time see NGOs workers as outside encroaching/ occupying their space. And on other side few NGOs thinks different Government agencies are the main hurdles in their way. This may be the major weakness of many NGOs Their mutual interactions and even collaboration makes the effort more effective.

Here both Government and voluntary agencies should change their attitude and should be complimentary to each other and must take confidence in each other. The NGOs should make a lot of homework in making people's participation in educating and training to improve their of professional skills, overcoming behavior and cultural resistance of communities may be preferably involved in tackling the problem of rural poverty and always they should try to became closer to the local people. Many NGOs believe economic compulsion is not only the reason for rural poverty. The recent survey shows that more

than 29.27% of working children is the need to supplement the rural family income while only 37.56% of child workers were required to gain employment to earn a minimum living for their families. Only 3.56% are working part time, to finance their own education besides contributing to the inadequate family income Hence, all NGOs must think in the way of giving more and more low cost job oriented education and their by encouraging more women joining the work force besides empowerment of rural women would go a long way in elimination of rural and rural poverty (Eggan , 2005, p.26).

Apart from the poverty, the second main reason is the present rural education system. Many rural children are working because their parents want them to work for the reasons other than economic crises. For example child might have lost his interest in the education, failed in the same class for many times, corporal punishment by the teachers, parents might wanted to continue their family occupations in the early age, hanging with bad friends, threat of probable unemployment in the future, earn additional income to the family-etc. In short time any NGO's /Government cannot eradicate poverty. Hence, NGO's should think about present education scenario and better concentrate on these topics.

Since many parents do not understand the significance of the education, NGO's have to work to create awareness about the value of the education among the rural folk. As soon as possible NGO's should open *Home work centers* where any school going child can come and get help to complete his/her school home work under the guidance of a trained teacher, and *Community play centers* where all children come and can play any games like Carom, chess and volleyball-etc. if so few educational aspects of rural and rural poverty can be solved. All children would have certain inherent skills. It is necessary to equip them with certain skills suiting their aptitude, NGOs should conduct most advanced type vocational training courses and must be more suitable to the rural youths. These new courses should be suited for the youths who combine their work

with normal studies. Moreover in order to provide opportunity to working girls for supplementing the family income NGOs should take some step to develop more rural co-operative societies. Through this, young working girls having responsibility for organizing training, making raw material, available and selling the products goods to the market.

Learning from others

Reputed NGOs like Rural organization for Appropriate Development(ROAD), Professional Assistant For Developmental Action (PRADAN) Trust for Rural Development (TRD) etc are some of the important NGOs working on rural poverty Issues and have valuable lesson from the field to others. Especially Rural Organization for Appropriate Development (ROAD) a Mysore- (Karnataka) based NGOs has successfully implemented all above mentioned programmes in its working area. But before learning any thing from others they have to concede that the work being done by agencies is addressing the same rural poverty issues as the NGOs are trying to grapple with. But it is important to note that, each NGOs will have different ideas regarding poverty focus, community acceptance, beneficiary owner ship, funds, human resource, planning strategies-etc.

Resources from the mainstream

Finance

Since almost all NGO's totally depend on either foreign or Indian grants for their activities, it is necessary to raise capital from mainstream sources, such as the development financial institutions and the bank. If so it will have two benefits; first it will make NGO's more accountable in terms of effective use of money ad also it opens much larger sources of funds that foreign and Indian grants. Almost all-financial institutions and banks like SIDBI, ICICI, NABARD, IDIBI have by accumulated years of experience in funding NGOs through

grants for experimental projects NGOs can approach these institutes to get fund as loans with longer than normal repayment and moratorium periods and lower interest rate or they can rise money from the corporal sectors. A good example for these NGOs are STD (Society for Tribal Development Delhi), SRD (Society for Rural Development-Bombay) and TRI (Trust for Rural Issues-Madras).

Human Resources

NGO's are known to have highly experienced and committed individuals. Many NGO's have good grassroots worker but not at middle levels. If so, the grassroots worker may not get any guidance and support. Thus NGOs should hire more experienced persons in rural poverty, Anthropologists and other experts. If NGOs would like to move from direct implementing agencies to supporting producers organization, they need to have higher caliber of people at all levels is accentuate. Those in support roles have to be more versatile, having broad-based knowledge of various fields that impinge on rural poverty eradication programme.

Technology

As another step towards effectiveness in rural and rural poverty eradication programmes, NGOs need to have link with various technology generation institutions blessed with a very large scientific and technological research infrastructure in India. Since rural poverty issue is related to more than one field NGOs should get a lot of technical support from these institutions. The presence of professionally trained staff in NGO's greatly facilitates this process of acquiring technology and adaptation to the local situation and to the poor rural poverty families.

Training should be relative to the ground situation and executed by the professionals only. Training techniques have to be related to the experience of the participants and must

simultaneously appeal to their thinking and emotions. Behavioral games, stimulation's and case study bases discussions are some useful techniques and visit to other organizations will be also be useful.

Expertise

NGOs should have a vast pool of technical experts and professionals specialized in project finance, socio-economic analysis, micro finance, training and capacity building, technical aspects, computing, rural infrastructure, rural financial institutions, planning, monitoring, evaluation-etc

Knowledge

As rural poverty is a complex phenomenon all NGOs should have certain useful concepts which have a bearing on successful rural poverty eradication programmes like,

1 NGO's should understand social structure, caste and class problem, dynamic of social changes, political economy of resources and police analysis-social science;

2 communication theory; diffusion of innovation; group dynamics and collective action; training and organization development; and any appropriate technology;

3 competitive behavior of firms; resource and ecological economics; social cost benefit analysis-economics;

4 Accounting and finance; marketing; management information systems.

Conclusion

In this paper a strong argument has been made that rural and rural poverty related NGOs should re-examine their approaches in this field due to it's inherent complexity and difference rather than relief and welfare programmes. They should exclusively focus on supplementary and complementary issues of poverty. If these kinds of NGOs could succeed in promoting sustainable livelihood for the poor, so that they can develop requisite level of expertise in rural poverty related sub sectors. And NGOs must think of much larger scale projects and draw financial and human resource from the mainstream. Policies and projects should adopt a holistic approach, taking in to the consideration socio economic set-up of working area. They should also enter into collaborative relation ships with Government agencies and other NGOs. NGOs try hard to solve grass-root level of problem and they should think in upgradation of living standards and education status more particularly of the women and child. More than this, NGOs should learn in employment generation in non-agricultural sectors which may play a crucial role in the rural development

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