

# Understanding Civil Society and NGO: A Critical Analysis in Indian Context

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**Abstract:** We are living in 21<sup>st</sup> century and thinking beyond liberalization, privatization and globalization. The idea of de-reservation and de-centralization of public sectors also became old. The debate of development and underdevelopment has become an important aspect of Civil Society and NGOS all over the world. I would say three important features like Jimmedaari (Responsibility), Bhagidaari (Participation) and Imaandaari (Honesty) can make the Civil Society or NGO. This argument signifies without the involvement of other stake holders beyond public sectors, there can't be holistic development. It is indeed accepted as an alternative model of development. As we know that Civil Society Organizations are by the people, for the people and of the people, hence these are inevitable part of our modern society. Though transparency and accountability is the real acid test, which are really major concern, which needs to be critically looked into.

**Keywords:** Civil Society, NGO, Development, Voluntarism, Participation

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## Emergence of Civil Society

The idea of civil society has made a dramatic return recently. Fugitive in its senses, the idea of civil society infiltrates all efforts to assess the possibilities and threats revealed by the glacial political shifts at the turn of the century. In a period of rising political animosities and mistrust, it has come to express a political desire for greater civility in social relations. In the west, disillusion with the given 'boundaries' of politics and with the restrictions of what are seen as the increasing decrypting processes of party politics, has provoked interest in civil society as a means of rejuvenating public life. In the south, the collapse of the theoretical models that dominated post IIInd world war understanding of politics has given new currency to the idea of civil society. Intellectuals in India, the Middle East, China, Africa and South East Asia, are all infusing new and complex life into the category. (Kothari, 1988). International

agencies and lenders too have turned their attention to this idea. In an effort to accelerate and increase the efficiency of development tasks, they now seek ways to by-pass the central state and assist directly what they identified as the constituents of civil society. Private enterprises and organizations, Church and denominational associations, self-employed worker's co-operatives and unions and the vast field of NGOs all have attracted external interest. They have come to be seen as essential to the construction of what are assumed to be the social pre-conditions for more accountable, public and representative forms of political power. To all that invoke it, civil society incarnates a desire to recover for society powers-economic, social, and expressive-believed to have been illegitimately usurped by states.

Although central to classical western political theory, the concept of civil society was largely moribund during the days when models of stateless modernization dominated both liberal and Marxist conceptions of social change and development. It was recovered during the late 1970's and 1980's as these models disintegrated. Civil society seemed to promise something better and available: it was democracy and prosperity, autonomy and the means to exercise it. Yet, in those regions that have emerged from authoritarian rule or from close political regulation of the economy that is, in regions that seemed to have created what were assumed to be the preconditions for the emergence of civil society. The common pattern has been the appearance of multiplicity of non-negotiable identities and colliding self-righteous beliefs, not a plural representation of malleable interests. Civil society remains as distinct and precarious an ambition as ever.

Can the category of civil society serve as Ralf Dahrendorf claimed as the conceptual and practical 'key' to such transitions. In contemporary discussions, there is no agreement about the proper location of the sources of civil society, which ought to and actually can restrain and moderate the state. One response, which for convenience might be called a liberal position, sees the effective powers of civil society as basically residing in the economy in property rights and markets where such rights may be freely exchanged. Another view, a radical position locates civil society in a society independent of the economic domain and the state, where ideas are publicly exchanged associations freely formed and interests discovered. Finally a conservative position prefers to see it as residing in a set of cultural acquisitions, in historically inherited manners of civility which moderate relations between groups and individuals. Each of these domains-economy, society, culture-is portrayed by its respective advocates as a domain of special authenticity and efficacy which ought to limit the state and can accomplish more effectively what states have tried, often with pathetic success to do for themselves. Civil society understood by Marxists as

‘bourgeois society’, a realm of contradiction and mystification sustained by relations of power. It was also seen as the sphere of needs, inextricably linked to the productive base of capitalist society and in need of constant police and regulation by the state. Most analysts agree that modern civil society emerges with the rise of relatively independent socio-economic relations as against the family, the feudal lord and the absolutist state. Some add the mixed blessing of capitalism in terms of antisocial effects.

### **The Civil Society and NGOs**

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The strength of civil society is roughly related to the sheer number of functioning intermediary organizations between the citizen and the state. Within the independent sector, these include everything from strictly civic associations such as athletic teams, to NGOs that are trying to develop their communities or promote social change (Bebbington, Farrington, 1993). Considering this to be the most important role of the NGOs rather than democratizing development NGOs may better be seen as steps towards organizational pluralism.

Yet NGO proliferation over last thirty years has played a second, more specific role in nurturing sustainable development and viable civil societies in the Third World. The large numbers of grass root support organizations (GRSOs) that focus on micro-enterprise development are building a vested interest in their work among the members of grass root organizations (GROs). Since vested interests usually help to sustain inequitable institutions, creating vested interests among the poor, may be an equally powerful way to promote the institutional sustainability not only of micro-enterprises and co-operatives but also of the village councils or women’s group that support such income strategies on a local level. A third, more targeted role for NGOs is to promote political rights and civil liberties. There are now thousands of indigenous human rights organizations at the most political end of the NGO spectrum in the Third World.

To be sure there is nothing foreordained about the strengthening of civil society through the activity of the NGOs. Islamic extremists have destroyed the civil society that was emerging in the Sudan from 1985 to 1989 and the National Islamic Front regime has made it hard to restore a wide range of socio-religious, political and economic institutions. Yet as the vanguards of civil society in the Third World, NGOs not only enlarge the political commons where state and civil society broadly defined, interact. Because civil society is not a dynamic concept, however it is helpful to view this enlarged political commons as the arena for political

development. Over the past several decades, NGOs have grown in number, size and have been instrumental in shaping the resolution of many issues facing business and Governments. Estimates on the numbers of NGOs currently operating in the World very widely, although almost all analysts are agree that the number is growing dramatically. NGOs are increasingly influential actors on the political economic landscape. Their emergence has disrupted traditional relationships between Government and Business and also Government and Public. As the broad NGO movements takes more permanent shape and as individual NGOs gain a more enduring status on the social and political scene. The role of Non-Governmental actors will continue to transition from a simple stake holder pressing Government agents for a hearing to a more complex set of interactions and network relations in which NGOs play more integral role in a complex web of interactions and connections.

Civil society is a term used to distinguish the whole set of organizations, institutions or entities, which are neither Government nor statutory bodies. In an era of retreating government, privatization, free market structural adjustment decentralization, deregulation, empowerment, formulation and implementation of public policy appears to be gradually taken over by NGOs. Civil society has a wide coverage but here it is restricted to voluntary agencies or those institutions or bodies that are free associations of people having the objective of bringing about social and economic change particularly for those belonging to the marginalised sections. They are neither profit making nor political in character. The role of this society has grown in volume and depth in the past decade as agents of change to cure the range of social and economic ills left by failure government or market place. The discovery of civil society has promised a solution to the enduring problems of development and democracy. With the declining of the state in social welfare and social services, NGOs are increasingly gaining attention and prominence and are looked upon as alternative agencies in promoting awareness, change and development in society. Under the broad umbrella term 'voluntary action' we find synonymous terms like NGOs, voluntary organizations (VOs), grass root organizations (GROs) and action groups, etc. however one can not deny the role of the state completely. One can't exist without the other.

### **Development and Essence of Civil Society**

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Rajesh Tondon and Ranjita Mohanty (2003) observe that the recent upsurge of interest in the idea of civil society can be attributed to the aspirations of ordinary

men and women to carve out for them an autonomous space for collective action and act as a counter to state power. These aspirations drove home two messages – they affirmed the desire and competency of ordinary people to define both political and social good and their terms of engagement with the state in pursuing them. Secondly, they affirmed the strength of collective action in achieving their desired political and social goals. Thus the struggle, which began with craving out a space away from the snooping eyes of the state, where people could discuss the essence of liberty, autonomy and dignity of human existence, in due course of time became a politically volatile to bring down the most reliable regimes. (Tondon, R and Ranjita Mohanty, 2003). The rise of NGOs and civil society in the third world can be attributed to:

- Demise (rolling back) of the development state.
- State's incapacity to extract sufficient resources in order to maintain its system of political control, which consists of clientelistic relations of patronage to all competing social classes.
- Inefficiency, corruption, lack of accountability in bureaucratic machinery (Bava: 1997: 13)

And the rise of NGOs and civil society has resulted:

- Rise of protest and discontent movements against the lacunas of the state.
- More democratization and decentralization
- Accelerate people's participation
- Increasing debureaucratization
- Emphasis upon accountability of the state machinery to the citizens or peoples.

### **NGOs and Civil Society in India**

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NGOs are civil society organization are being projected as a substitute to consolidate state system in India. Their growing fame in the field of development is strongly related to the declining authenticity of the state. Increasingly, the state looked upon with disbelief, if not contempt. It is considered to be corrupt, oppressive, anti-poor and state structures are criticized as being rigidly bureaucratic and thus unsuited for performing either welfare or resource management functions. Whereas NGOs are seen as 'civil society' actors that are more responsible and committed to bringing about social change.

- Nayar (2001) argues that India has a well-developed civil society and some of its CSOs have made commendable contribution both to the cause of democracy and to national development. There are certain pre-requisites for the civil society in India and the performance of civil society in India is conditioned by the extent to which these pre-requisites are met. They are:
- A political system with neutral state and a liberal democratic set-up: Toleration of opposing ideologies and groups, respect for the rule of law and protection of the fundamental freedom of the citizens are basic to the system.
- An economic system guaranteeing economic justice to all citizens: Welfare provisions and meeting the minimum needs of citizens are sine-qua-non of this system.
- A socio-cultural system based on universalistic values: Affective neutrality must have precedence over affectivity orientation of the citizens.

Kothari (1989) advocates the positive role of civil society stating that the relationship between state and the democratic process has broken down in India and the dominant castes have been successful in making the state increasingly insensitive to democratic politics. State has now become an agent of the ruling class. A weak state can become hostage to the powerful groups in the society creating a social obstacle to development. Beteille (2001) opines that there is need for the strengthening of civil society in India, which he calls the 'intermediate institutions' for safe guarding the autonomy and plurality of institution. Voluntary organizations have the responsibility to wards restoring the space of civil society encroached upon by the state. Chandokhe (1995) opines that the actual struggle in the way of NGO sector lies in maintaining their political nature, as only through this, the disadvantaged can be empowered to challenge the existing power structures in the society and thus, modify the contours of development according to there own needs. The idea that NGOs should act as an agency to increase the efficiency and responsiveness of the state has also received much currency. The political role of society has attained significance, especially in the last decade characterized by economic liberalization.

### **NGO as an Alternative Option**

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Non-government organizations have come to occupy an important place in development discourses. They have assumed a very important role in facilitating

change at the grass root level. Since 1980s, there has been sharp increase both in number and in importance of NGOs. Both the inadequacies of the state and dominant ideologies of development led to the emergence and growth of this sector. With the criticism of top-down development efforts, widespread evidence that development strategies of past few decades have failed to adequately assist the people in rural areas and growing support for development efforts that are sustainable and which include the participation of intended beneficiaries have stimulated existing development agencies to search for alternative means that is to laud the role of NGOs and to involve local population in development process. NGOs have undertaken an enormously varied range of activities and their participation has been impressive in implementing grassroots sustainable development, promoting human rights and social justice, empowering women, weaker and marginalised section, protecting against environmental degradation, safeguarding poor from debt crisis, literacy, and education and pursuing many other objectives formerly ignored by government bodies. These are the areas in which the official agencies have limited experiences or discover tremendous operational difficulties and as a result, they are actively seeking the collaboration with NGOs. NGOs helped those most in need, who have been missed by official aid programmes.

NGOs are performing those functions, which the state has not been able to do effectively, and thus they are means for accelerating the pace of social change rather than alternative to the state. NGOs have been embraced and promoted in the past few decades by international development agencies as well as by critics of development. By 1980s, the acceptance of NGOs grew because of their international support and their capacity to deliver services. Aid to these organizations was regarded as highly efficacious option for realizing the development objectives of the third World. They became intermediary organizations between civil society and state. Thus, NGOs have ventured into territories that were left out or sidelined in the development programmes of the state especially for tribal development. Since independence, government has actively thought and planned for the upliftment of tribal people. However, much remains to be done. Large numbers of NGOs are in tribal areas, and are closure to the circumstances, needs, aspirations and feelings of the people as compared to government structures. NGOs working in the tribal areas that come in direct contact with people are definitely in a better position. NGOs have gained recognition as the third force of development. They have greater diversity, credibility, transparency and accountability. Their dynamic presence locally has been the focus of discussion in the country over last few decades. It is a social phenomenon, which has attracted the attention of many scholars and constitutes special area of inquiry

in social science research. Although many NGOs are working at the grassroots level in different parts of the country, however, there is specificity to the origin, ideology, direction and growth that requires a regionally and historically specific analysis. Despite all the critics and hurdles NGOs has become an indispensable part of our society.

### **Emergence of NGOs in India**

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India has a greater tradition in philanthropic activities, social service and voluntary work. Before independence, people volunteered their service in various fields ranging from help extended to the needy as a part or charity work (during outbreak of famines, flood, in health, in education etc.) To self help programs involving the needy in the process of their own development. In nineteenth century, voluntary activity took the form of social and religious reforms. Christian missionaries also played an important role in charity and voluntary work. Gandhi's belief that India lives in village and his call for rural construction inspired his followers to do work in these lines. During post independence period, there was a sudden increase in both volume of activity and number of NGOs. The most significant of these trends was the growth of size and spread of VOs as an organized and systematic form of voluntary action throughout the country. This increase in number and diversity in the activities of NGOs was in response to the dominant ideologies of development and failure of government programmes to deliver benefits to the poor. Before independence, as in the ancient and medieval India, voluntarism was manifest in diverse forms. In the fields of education, medical service, natural calamities, and cultural promotion and at crisis like epidemics, people volunteered their service and expertise. As Gangrade and Sooryamoorthy (1995) in their paper 'NGOs: retrospect and prospect' have discussed in detail about the factors that have promoted the rise of voluntary action in India. This can be summed up as Hindu tradition, Missionaries role, Gandhi's role and perception.

Voluntarism gained new stimulus in 19<sup>th</sup> century and voluntary activities were evident in three direction mainly religious reforms, social reforms and voluntary work. Social reforms fought against the evil customs and practices to usher in radical reforms. The highly rigid social structure built on the foundation of cast system offered them with extensive opportunities to protest and reform movements. Many associations originated in different parts of the country attracting many people to voluntary work. Their voluntary and selfless service were instrumental in organizing public opinion against anti-social, cast oriented practices such as Sati, child



marriage and several other disabilities. Christian Missionaries also participated in charity work and reform activities. Voluntarism of Missionaries took concrete shape in the field of education. They were pioneers in setting of orphanages. In remote and inaccessible areas, they set up schools and hospitals for Tribals. They organized Tribals and took initiative to protect them from exploitation and land alienation.

### **M. K. Gandhi and Voluntarism**

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Gandhiji's strong adherence to high social ideals and practical approach inspired sincere and conscientious workers to follow him with a genuine sense of dedication. His movement for national independence was rooted in the ideal of social reconstruction, self-help and upliftment of the poorest of the poor through voluntary action. His belief in the potential of rural India, and the wisdom that India lives in her villages guided him to concentrate his effects on villages. Rural reconstruction was his mission. He initiated a large number of construction social welfare programmes designed to remove the evils that had crept into society. His constructive programme, which entailed among others Charkha, Khadi, Gramodyog, basic education, removal of untouchability and prohibition found ready acceptance among people. His followers who could not or did not wish to join the government or ruling party established number of voluntary organization to work closely with governmental programmes meant for diverse social strata from harijan (the untouchables) and Tribals to slum dwellers. Such agencies organized handicrafts and village industries, rural development programmes, credit co-operative, educational institution and retained a degree of autonomy in their functioning.

Gandhi founded Harijan Sevak Sangh, Gramodyog Sangh, Hindustan Talim Sangh, Adivasi Seva Mandals, and Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust was all his creations. Inspired by his ideology, a number of voluntary associations like the All India Spinner's Association, the All India Village Industries Association and many others later emerged on the scene (Gangrade and Sooryamoorthy, 1995). Many leaders were to follow him like Acharya Vinoba Bhave came forward with the novel idea of Bhoodan and Gramdan movement (land and village gift) and Jayaprakash Narayan along other inculcated the Gandhian spirit of voluntarism. A.V. Thakkar, popularly known as Thakkar Bapa, who made a mark in history of voluntary service. He too based his work on Gandhian principle. His attention was drawn to the field of education, health and tribal development. Sudden growth of NGOs in India was witnessed soon after independence especially around 1960s. The iniquitous nature of the state and inability of government programmes to

benefit the deprived sections, led to the realization that mere implementation of govt. schemes by the govt. sponsored agencies was not enough, and could in fact be counter productive (Jain, 1995). Both the official planning system and the market economy had failed to make a significant dent in India's problems of poverty and inequality. This gave rise to skepticism about the ability by the institutional structures of democracy legislatures, parties, unions, and panchayats- to address problems of needs of the poor. Formulated policies were not suitable enough to reduce poverty and inequality, and when they were, they were not implemented effectively. The govt. sponsored model of development was seen as having failed to deliver benefits to the poor, and the formal political establishment had lost its legitimacy (Rohini Patel, 1991).

To fill the vacuum, a new class of social mediators arose which led local protest and civil rights movements. Many struggle-oriented groups emerged due to this. Today, there are a large number of such organizations struggling on behalf of the poor, the landless, the tribals, the bonded labourer, and many other social strata, that were being discriminated against both by the policies of the state and the dominant element in the social strata. The NGOs constitute a whole spectrum of different kinds of voluntary group (Jain, 1995). India witnessed an increase in the number of NGOs since independence. Socio-economic backdrop of the country provided fertile land for the emergence and growth of NGO sector. Also the democratic system was congenial to offering space for such activities both independently and in association with govt. agencies. There was a corresponding increase in volume of activity during the post-independence period along with increase in number. However, the causes of proliferation of NGOs in different periods, beginning in the 1950s were not analogous. According to Mukherjee (cited in Sooryamoorthy and Gangrade, 2001) if national sentiments, derived from the involvement in the freedom struggle, reigned supreme in the minds of the people and motivated them to voluntary organization in the 1950s, the reason were obviously different for the period since then. One can notice the expansion of NGOs more in developmental activities, such as income generation programmes in the 1960s, in latter part of the 1960s and early 1970s the concern of NGOs was changing. The shift turned in favour of issues associated with ecology, environment, technology and development. While matters concerning human rights dominated the 1980s, attempts to sustain the degrading environment due to ruthless exploitation or the antipoor policies of the state gave the impetus for the formation of NGOs in the 1990s (ibid).

There is a high degree of diversity and heterogeneity in the activities of NGOs. The spread of NGO activities in the country is manifested in different spheres. Their

work in domain of social welfare, development oriented initiatives, empowering women and weaker sections, conscientization, protecting the rights of marginalized, and spreading literacy and education are notable and impressive. NGOs perform numerous roles. They are activists, mobilizer, educations, advocates, protector of rights; conscientizer facilitators, animators and they face many problems while playing these roles specially while criticizing govt. policies.

### **Participatory Approach and NGOs**

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Emergence of the consensus that participation of people in development process is necessary and the question how participation strategies are to be implemented has become most paramount. NGOs have been found to fulfill a major aspect of such strategies. Since independence until the sixth five-year plan, government did not recognize the role that NGOs can play in development process. The tendency was to equate the work of NGOs with welfare activities and charity work. But after realizing the importance of participatory development, the sixth five-year plan document (1980-85) emphasized the role of NGOs, as new actors in mobilization of people in specific or general development tasks. The seventh five-year plan (1985-90) envisaged a more active role of voluntary organization so as to make communities as self-reliant as possible. The plan envisaged a number of areas for the VOs to supplement governmental efforts. Various efforts were made to involve them in development programmes, especially in the planning and implementation of rural programmes. Because of the belief that voluntary groups can take better care of the deprived and weaker section of the society in comparison to the state because of their proximity with the local people. This does not mean that state can be relegated to a role of passivity rather voluntarism can supplement and work as support system in govt. efforts. This reality that participation of people in development process is important, is acknowledged by the UNDP's Human Development Report (1993) in its very first sentence; 'People's participation is becoming the central issues of our time'. A widely shared view in the development community is that without the commitment, creativity, energy and involvement of the people, the pace of development will not accelerate. The participatory approach is, in fact being viewed as the most effective way of achieving equitable and sustainable development (H.M.Mathur, 1997:53). Participatory development is a reorientation of development in favour of the poor people by their involvement in the programmes formulated for them taking into account their problem, needs and aspiration where they play major role in decision making.

## NGDOs as Subcontractors

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In theory these developments offer many opportunities for the not-for-profit private initiative. However, if the enormous expansion and recognition lead to a situation in which the agenda of NGDOs in the North and the South is increasingly being influenced or determined by other actors, then it is a high price to pay. As stated by Smillie (1995) and other commentators, NGDOs in the North and the South have increasingly become contractor's, or even subcontractors, of big multilateral or national donor agencies. The organizations' own policies, often combined with pressure from their main financial source, are the most significant force bearing down on organizations to join the mainstream. Many non-governmental development organizations depend (or have become dependent) on private financing. As a result, the accountability mechanisms change and their autonomy is increasingly compromised. In the literature this is often referred to as upward accountability: being accountable to, and satisfying the financier sometimes takes precedence over downward accountability (being accountable to the board, members and beneficiaries of the organization itself). Increasingly the adage 'he who pays the piper calls the tune' holds true. It goes without saying that this development greatly affects the policy, instruments and workings of NGDOs. Moreover, it will reduce the diversity of the NGDO sector. Similar tendencies can be observed in the Dutch development cooperation community. In recent years, for instance, the government has tightened the rules for the cooperating private organizations (including the four co-financing organizations) under the so-called Programme Financing agreement. The increase in funds has gone hand in hand with stricter auditing. Another example is the India Committee in the Netherlands, originally an independent solidarity committee. Partly through the financier it directed its policy towards enhancing conditionality between bilateral and multilateral donor agencies. Belgian researchers further report that the policy of the Belgian chapter of Medicines sans frontières is partly influenced by main financiers in the non-profit sector (The European Univon and Nestle, one the main enterprises in the food industry).

## Role of NGOs in Strengthening Civil Society

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A central premise of the NGO literature is that NGO proliferation strengthens civil society by advocating and supporting the reform of the state, by organizing and mobilizing disempowered social strata, and by supplementing the traditional institutions of democracy such as political parties, trade unions and the media. Since 1990, the concept of civil society has been 'grabbed' by NGOs as one relating

closely to their own strengths. (Liberals see NGOs as the 'third sector', remedying the institutional weaknesses of both the state and private sector promoting socio-economic development and the neo-liberals see NGOs as a part of the private sector, of socio-economic significance mainly, delivering services to the poor cheaply, equitably and efficiently. (Clark & Gerard, 1998) According to Mark Robinson (1996: 211) NGOs contribute to the strengthening of civil society and democracy in the following way.

- To strengthen the pluralistic foundations of democratic society,
- To defend collective interests against encroachment by the state or market actors.
- To create representative institutions for the poor and disadvantaged,
- To uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms,
- To criticize or redress unjust or inefficient state policies,
- To mitigate or redress the cause of societal conflict,

In India, Sethi (1998) argues, a withering of formal representative institutions has fuelled the explosion in NGOs numbers (Clarke & Gerard, 1998). The development NGOs have emerged as a reckoning force owing to their involvement in contemporary socio-economic development process and also for filling in the void created by the apathy and recalcitrance of two prime sectors i.e., public and private. The non-governmental institutions are part of civil society, but obviously not the whole of it. They constitute, however, a key component of civil society institutions. It's reformulation-State relationship puts primacy on strengthening civil society. NGOs are one set of institutions within civil society. They are, therefore, part of the public domain of governance by civil society. NGOs have become the active agents of the civil society. They have acquired both grassroots level reach through community participation and expertise in their activities. They have been fairly successful providing a flexible, efficient, local delivery system and effective programme implementation mechanisms in addition to mobilizing citizens for developmental efforts. NGOs contributed to the strengthening of the civil society by bringing about a diversity of structures and a deepening of political participation. (Srivastava, Jayati 2002)

Strengthening civil society in contemporary context implies strengthening its material, institutional and ideological bases. It further implies new approaches to governance and politics. It implies strengthening "citizenship." The development NGOs can play strategic roles in this context through their programmes and

activities. They can (as many do already) address the issue of recovering the material base of civil society through greater access to and control over the resources by the local communities and people's organizations. They can facilitate the process of generating informed public judgment and of becoming active citizenry. Interventions aimed at strengthening the capacity of its own, and other, institutions of civil society, to critique the existing development paradigm and to evolve an alternative people-centered, community-based, citizen-governed development paradigm can be useful in this regard. Facilitating increased citizen access to and engagement with public policy issues can help to alter the practice of governance.

The role of NGOs in strengthening civil society to regain and retain hegemony over the State and private enterprise is another critical strategic function. Challenging the continuous attempts to control the minds of people, expanding and systematizing popular knowledge, expanding social control over education and science, strengthening mechanisms for democratization of knowledge, promoting philosophical and normative debate around issues of public concern, encouraging civic articulation of parameters of governance, facilitating promotion of ideas related to social distribution of power and accountability of the State to civil society, etc. are some of the strategic roles that development NGOs can (and sometimes do) play in support of strengthening the ideological base of civil society. Civil society needs to be enabled to articulate its framework and values of unity within diversity - a task that NGOs can facilitate. NGOs can strengthen the practice of citizenship by encouraging the people to view themselves as producers of culture, ideas and values. The institutions of civil society, development NGOs themselves need a stronger institutional base. Instead of getting bogged down with the "supposedly" temporary and transitory nature of their existence, development NGOs need to strengthen their institutional capacities to perform the strategic roles described before. This raises the question about the need for elaborating mechanisms for ensuring accountability of NGOs to civil society. Development NGOs can help strengthen (or rebuild) institutional mechanisms within civil society to provide for services to families and communities. As the State shifts its role from "provider" of services to "enabler," there is a risk towards "privatization" of services (like education, healthcare, etc.). While resisting the current pressures for and temptations of becoming service-providers themselves, development NGOs can help contribute to the strengthening of institutional arrangements within civil society for "public" provision of such services.

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