

## NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations which are independent of government involvement are known as **non-governmental organizations** or **non-government organizations**, with **NGO** as an acronym. NGOs are a subgroup of organizations founded by citizens, which include clubs and associations that provide services to their members and others. NGOs are usually nonprofit organizations, and many of them are active in humanitarianism or the social sciences. Surveys indicate that NGOs have a high degree of public trust, which can make them a useful proxy for the concerns of society and stakeholders. However, NGOs can also be lobby groups for corporations, such as the World Economic Forum. According to NGO.org (the non-governmental organizations web associated with the United Nations), "[an NGO is] any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level ... Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of service and humanitarian functions, bring citizen concerns to Governments, advocate and monitor policies and encourage political participation through provision of information." The term "NGO" is used inconsistently; it is sometimes a synonym for a civil society organization, any association founded by citizens. NGOs are known in some countries as non-profit organizations, and political parties and trade unions are sometimes considered NGOs. NGOs are classified by orientation and level of operation; orientation refers to the type of activities an NGO undertakes. Activities may include human rights, consumer protection, environmentalism like in our case, health, or development. An NGO's level of operation indicates the scale at which an organization works: local, regional, national, or international.

### Types

NGOs may be classified by their orientation and level of operation.

### Orientation

- Charities: Often a top-down effort, with little participation or input from beneficiaries, they include NGOs directed at meeting the needs of disadvantaged people and groups.
- Service: Includes NGOs which provide healthcare (including family planning) and education.
- Participation: Self-help projects with local involvement in the form of money, tools, land, materials, or labour
- Empowerment: Aim to help poor people to understand the social, political and economic factors affecting their lives, and to increase awareness of their power to control their lives. With maximum involvement by the beneficiaries, the NGOs are facilitators.

### Level of operation

- Community-based organizations (CBOs) are popular initiatives which can raise the consciousness of the urban poor, helping them understand their right to services, and providing such services.
- City-wide organizations include chambers of commerce and industry, coalitions of business, ethnic or educational groups, and community organizations.
- State or county NGOs include state-level or county-level organizations, associations, and groups. Some of these NGOs are guided by national and international NGOs.
- National NGOs include national organizations such as YMCAs and YWCAs, professional associations, and similar groups. Some have state or city branches, and assist local NGOs.
- International NGOs range from secular agencies, such as Save the Children, to religious groups. They may fund local NGOs, institutions and projects, and implement projects.

### **Activities**

The World Bank classifies NGO activity as operational and advocacy. NGOs act as implementers, catalysts, and partners. They mobilize resources to provide goods and services to people who have been affected by a natural disaster; they drive change, and partner with other organizations to tackle problems and address human needs. NGOs vary by method; some are primarily advocacy groups, and others conduct programs and activities.

### **Operational**

Operational NGOs seek to "achieve small-scale change directly through projects", mobilizing financial resources, materials, and volunteers to create local programs. They hold large-scale fundraising events and may apply to governments and organizations for grants or contracts to raise money for projects. Operational NGOs often have a hierarchical structure; their headquarters are staffed by professionals who plan projects, create budgets, keep accounts, and report to and communicate with operational fieldworkers on projects. They are most often associated with the delivery of services or environmental issues, emergency relief, and public welfare. Operational NGOs may be subdivided into relief or development organizations, service-delivery or participatory, religious or secular, and public or private. Although operational NGOs may be community-based, many are national or international. The defining activity of an operational NGO is the implementation of projects.

### **Campaigning**

Campaigning NGOs seek to "achieve large-scale change promoted indirectly through the influence of the political system." They require an active, efficient group of professional members who can keep supporters informed and motivated. Campaigning NGOs must plan and host demonstrations and events which will attract media, their defining activity.

### **Combined**

NGOs may conduct both activities. Operational NGOs will use campaigning techniques if they face issues in the field which could be remedied by policy change, and campaigning

NGOs (such as human-rights organizations) often have programs which assist individual victims for whom they are trying to advocate.

### **Public relations**

Non-governmental organisations need healthy public relations to meet their goals, and use sophisticated public-relations campaigns to raise funds and deal with governments. Interest groups may be politically important, influencing social and political outcomes. A code of ethics was established in 2002 by the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations.

Emerging trends in managing natural disasters have highlighted the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as one of the most effective *alternative* means of achieving an efficient communication link between the Disaster Management agencies and the affected community. Many different types of NGOs are already working at advocacy level as well as grassroots level; in typical disaster situations they can be of help in preparedness, relief and rescue, rehabilitation and reconstruction and also in monitoring and feedback. The role of NGOs is a potential key element in disaster management. The Non-Governmental sector that operates at grassroots level can provide a suitable alternative as they have an edge over governmental agencies for invoking community involvement.

### **Characteristics of NGOs with regards to environmental management and risk mitigation**

- Environmental monitoring and reporting.
- Protecting the environment.
- Management of resources and environment through community-based projects.
- Providing basic social services (if any is stated by the NGOs mission statement)
- Awareness-raising, campaigning and advocacy.
- Education, training and capacity building.
- Government and NGOs partnership.
- Regional and international cooperation and networking.
- Engaging in suffering relief activities.
- Promoting interest of the marginalized groups such as the poor.
- Advocating community development.
- Environmental management planning.
- Biodiversity and wildlife conservation. Etc.

An example of an international NGOs for the environmental care and management is the Greenpeace. Greenpeace is an environment-friendly international organization, which aims at promoting environmental awareness. It is an independent, campaigning organization, addressing the environmental abuse through direct, non-violent confrontations with governments and companies. It exposes the global environmental problems and provides

solutions for a healthy environment. Greenpeace focuses on the most crucial worldwide threats to our planet's biodiversity and environment. Its campaigns to:

*1. Stop Climate Change:*

The extensive use of oil, gas, fuel, and other energy resources leads to climatic changes, which results in global warming. In order to stop climate change, Greenpeace is campaigning on various fronts. It has been researching to stop climate change and to promote clean energy solutions.

*2. Protect Ancient Forests:*

Many forests of the world are in crisis. The plants and animals are facing the threat of extinction. People living in forests and depending on them for their livelihood are also under threat. Greenpeace takes up the responsibility to save the forests and provides solutions for the same.

*3. Save the Oceans:*

Greenpeace's save the oceans campaign currently focuses on four major threats to the world's oceans: overfishing, pirate fishing, whaling, and intensive shrimp aquaculture.

*4. Stop Whaling:*

Commercial Whaling has resulted in the decline of the world's whale population. In order to stop commercial whaling, Greenpeace is working on many fronts. Through political work, public outreach, and by adopting nonviolent direct action against the whalers at sea. Greenpeace is fighting against commercial whaling.

*5. Say No to Genetic Engineering:*

Genetic engineering enables creation of plants, animals, and micro-organisms through the manipulation of genes. The organisms, which are produced through genetic engineering when interbred with the natural organisms, lead to new environments, which are uncontrolled. Their release into the environment leads to "genetic pollution", as once released they cannot be recalled back. Greenpeace believes that "organisms," which are genetically engineered, should not be released into the environment without adequate knowledge of their impact on the health and environment. It advocates taking immediate measures such as labelling of genetically engineered ingredients, and the segregation of genetically engineered crops from conventional ones.

*6. Stop the Nuclear Threat:*

Greenpeace campaigns against the use of nuclear power as its use has never been peaceful. It leads to accidents, deaths, and disasters. Radiation released into the environment through the

nuclear tests has led to the contamination of soil, air, rivers, and oceans, causing cancer and other diseases in people.

#### *7. Eliminate Toxic Chemicals:*

Greenpeace also campaigns against toxic chemicals, as they prove to be a global threat to the health and environment.

#### *8. Encourage Sustainable Trade:*

Greenpeace opposes the current form of globalization that is increasing corporate power. It demands that the World Trade Organization (WTO) adopt a policy of trade, which works for all and that preserves and restores the environment. Governments must work toward achieving sustainable development, which means integrating three things: environmental, social, and economic priorities.

Greenpeace is a non-profit organization, and in order to maintain its independence it does not accept funds from governments or from the corporate sector. It depends mainly on the voluntary contributions of individuals and grants from foundations. Greenpeace was founded in 1971 to oppose US nuclear testing in Alaska. The organization has fought to protect the endangered species, stop the dumping of hazardous waste, and strengthen national and international laws that regulate environmental affairs.

**Greenpeace has played an important role in preserving the environment, which is proved by its successful achievements:**

1. A ban on toxic waste exports to less developed countries.
2. A moratorium on commercial whaling.
3. A United Nations convention providing for better management of world fisheries.
4. A Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary.
5. A 50-year moratorium on mineral exploitation in Antarctica.
6. Ban on the dumping at sea of radioactive and industrial waste and disused oil installations.
7. An end to high-sea, large-scale driftnet fishing.
8. A ban on all nuclear weapons testing their first ever campaign.

Why did we use such an elaborate and detailed example as the Greenpeace movement? This is to show that an NGO can have a successful impact in fighting off 'vices' otherwise

governments and other management bodies cannot. With proper funding and awareness, their voices through campaigns can make positive impacts on the world.

### **The community**

The community as an institution in itself is emerging as an effective player in the entire mechanism of disaster administration, environmental management and ecological sustainability. In the event of actual disasters, the community, if well aware of the preventive actions it is required to take can substantially reduce the damage caused by the disaster. Awareness and training of the community is particularly useful in areas that are prone to frequent disasters. While the community as an effective institution is yet to take shape in the country, considerable efforts are being made to form and strengthen community-based organizations at grassroots levels

### **Role of the community in environmental management**

#### Communities as Custodians

One of the major reasons there needs to be greater role of community in making environmental decisions, is to protect the rights of indigenous people. There is also need to the right to protect and manage natural resources located on traditional indigenous lands and the right of citizens to live in a healthy environment.

### ***Strategies for a safer future preparedness, mitigation and prevention***

In disaster situations, a quick rescue and relief mission is inevitable; however, damage can be considerable minimized if adequate preparedness levels are achieved. The loss to life and property loss needs to be drastically and considerably reduced. The good practices are a result of the heightened awareness and sensitivity towards communities at risk. The approach of reducing community vulnerability for reducing disasters has paid richly. The first step in this direction has been of identification of vulnerable communities. Those communities periodically exposed to natural hazards, and within them those with low levels of coping powers, such as economically weaker sections, are the first focus of preparedness efforts. Marginal sections of rural communities and dwellers of informal settlements and slums in urban areas fall within this class. Efforts in the direction of integrating disaster prevention into habitat planning processes are one of the most viable disaster prevention means.

### **Role of Local Bodies**

Local governance institutions, with their grass-root level contacts with the common people, can make a substantial contribution to the process of spreading awareness and ensuring an active people's participation in disaster mitigation activities and environmental management and conservancy. They are the ideal channels for NGOs and other agencies that conduct any disaster management programme, right from relief, recovery and rehabilitation to planning for mitigation and prevention. However, in order to tap this potential to its fullest, awareness raising and sensitization programs need to be conducted within these institutions for making them better equipped.

## **Disaster Management**

Below are some of the policies set by the government to mitigate disasters:

- A holistic and pro-active approach for prevention, mitigation and preparedness adopted for disaster management.
- Each Cabinet Ministry and Department of the Government sets apart an appropriate amount of funds under the Plan for specific schemes/projects addressing vulnerability reduction and preparedness.
- Elected entities such as the members of county assemblies, MCAs, Members of national assemblies, MPs, senators and County Governors to also do their role in the sensitization and policy enforcing to ensure proper mitigation procedures are followed
- Where there is a shelf of projects, projects addressing mitigation will be given priority. Mitigation measures shall be built into the on-going schemes/programmes
- Each project in a hazard prone area will have mitigation as an essential term of reference. The project report will include a statement as to how the project addresses vulnerability reduction.
- Community involvement and awareness generation, particularly that of the vulnerable segments of population and women has been emphasized as necessary for sustainable disaster risk reduction. This is a critical component of the policy since communities are the first responders to disasters and, therefore, unless they are empowered and made capable of managing disasters, any amount of external support cannot lead to optimal results.
- There will be close interaction with the corporate sector, nongovernmental organizations and the media in the national efforts for disaster prevention/vulnerability reduction.
- Institutional structures/appropriate chain of command will be built up and appropriate training imparted to disaster managers at various levels to ensure coordinated and quick response at all levels; and development of inter-county arrangements for sharing of resources during emergencies.
- A culture of planning and preparedness is to be inculcated at all levels for capacity building measures.

## References

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