Role and Contribution of Voluntary Organizations working on Women, Children & Livelihood Issues
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Preface

In a democratic society the state has the absolute responsibility and accountability to usher the development facilities to its citizens. The definition of development has broadened with a progressive elucidation of the state’s policies and laws. Development is not only oriented towards economic progress but has also imbibed factors like social justice, gender equity, improved quality of life, inclusive developmental approach and citizen’s awareness. In order to coalesce both economic and social approaches in the development context, the state is required to have a consequential and constructive engagement with the civil society in its various developmental activities and vision. Voluntary organizations are major actors in the development paradigm. Their significant contribution cannot be ignored and there is a need of the hour for both the state and the market to collaborate with the civil society. VOs are well versed with the ground realities and they are playing the role of change makers in their inclusive approach through participatory research, community empowerment and development alternatives.

Civil society organizations can gain recognition and acceptance only when they are part of the broader social processes. VOs have created their distinct identity by working with various social groups and geographical priorities and thematic issues, such as poverty alleviation, community health, human rights, livelihood issues, natural resource management, water and sanitation, etc. To unravel such complexities VOs have adopted various strategies and approaches. Some of these approaches are not only innovative in nature but question the status quo, which in turn has a deep impact on the lives of people.

When we reflect on the work done by civil society organizations in the past few decades, it can be observed that it has contributed incalculably towards nation building. VOs are playing active role in influencing the policies and laws on important social developmental issues. They are actively involved in key decision making processes, lobbying with the government and acting as a pressure group within the higher authority for the benefit of marginalised.

To set the tone right to showcase the magnitude of civil society’s work - it was felt to highlight the contribution of voluntary sector promoting plurality, diversity and tolerance among the society towards various socio-developmental concerns. They are playing the role of catalyst, mediator, service provider and human rights defenders at both regional and international platforms. The VOs are creating waves towards decisive societal complexities in the rural settings bringing both activism and theory close to each other.

It is in this context that VANI has undertaken this study highlighting the contribution of VOs working in three thematic issues – children, women and livelihood. It was felt that there needs to be an explicit framework under which there is a way of tracking the impact of the voluntary sector in the socio-development archetype. The study has attempted to cover colossal scope of VOs working across India in the given thematic issues.
The study gives a trivia of the VOs inputs on various policy level changes at national level focusing on right based approach. They have played active role in women’s self help groups, violence against women, eradication of child labour, right to education of children, land, water and forest rights etc. Such issues have been incorporated in the study. VOs over the years have always believed in defending human rights and they continue to make efforts in achieving just and equitable rights for all. VOs believe in activism and have always supported the voice of the unheard. They have been part of various multifaceted movements which promoted inclusion, equality and justice.

The study gains relevance in today’s scenario where new development actors are sprouting and it is essential to work in close alignment with each other. I would like to acknowledge Action Aid for supporting this research study. I would like to thank the research team of VANI –

Ms Pavneet Manchanda, Ms Divita Shandilya and Ms Tarushikha Yadav for writing this report, Mr. Arjun Phillips for writing the brief and Dr Jyotsna Mohan Singh for coordinating the study.

This study strives to build knowledge of this sector in an exhaustive manner. It is important to look at this sector as an agent of change which is constantly striving to mainstream the vulnerable identities in the society. Unvarying support is needed from the VOs along with other development players to break through the conformist mindsets and bring transformation and justice in the bigot power structures existing in the society.

Harsh Jaitli
Chief Executive Officer
### List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AFARM</td>
<td>Action for Agricultural Renewal in Maharashtra</td>
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<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>AIDIS</td>
<td>The All-India Debt and Investment Survey</td>
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<td>ART</td>
<td>Assisted Reproductive Technology</td>
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<td>ASHA</td>
<td>Accredited Social Health Activist</td>
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<td>CARE</td>
<td>Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere</td>
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<td>CBD</td>
<td>Community Based Depot</td>
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<td>CRH</td>
<td>Committee to Right to Housing</td>
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<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations</td>
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<td>CRSD</td>
<td>Centre for Rural Studies and Development</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department of International Development</td>
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<td>FRC</td>
<td>Forest Rights Committee</td>
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<td>GER</td>
<td>Gross Enrolment Ratio</td>
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<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
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<td>GOI</td>
<td>Government of India</td>
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<td>GII</td>
<td>Gender Inequality Index</td>
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<td>IWMP</td>
<td>Integrated Water Management Programme</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<td>IWHM</td>
<td>International Women and Health Meet</td>
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<td>JSA</td>
<td>Jan Swasthya Abhiyan</td>
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<td>LCWHRI</td>
<td>Lawyers Collective Women’s Rights Initiative</td>
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<td>LFPR</td>
<td>Labour Force Participation Rate</td>
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<td>MCD</td>
<td>Municipal Corporation of Delhi</td>
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<td>MMR</td>
<td>Maternal Mortality Rate</td>
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<td>MNREGA</td>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act</td>
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<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
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<td>NAWO</td>
<td>National Alliance of Women</td>
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<td>NCF</td>
<td>National Curriculum Framework</td>
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<td>NCW</td>
<td>National Commission for Women</td>
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<td>NFE</td>
<td>Non Formal Education</td>
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<td>NFHS</td>
<td>National Family Health Survey</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NHRC</td>
<td>National Human Rights Commission</td>
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<td>NMEW</td>
<td>National Mission for Empowerment of Women</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>NNAWG</td>
<td>National Network of Autonomous Women’s Groups</td>
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<td>NEN</td>
<td>North East Network</td>
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<td>OBR</td>
<td>One Billion Rising</td>
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<td>PACS</td>
<td>The Poorest Areas Civil Society</td>
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<td>PHM</td>
<td>People’s Health Movement</td>
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<td>PIL</td>
<td>Public Interest Litigation</td>
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<td>PRI</td>
<td>Panchayati Raj Institutions</td>
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<td>PWDVA</td>
<td>Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act</td>
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<td>RCH</td>
<td>Reproductive and Child Health</td>
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<td>SHG</td>
<td>Self Help Group</td>
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<td>SHWW</td>
<td>Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace</td>
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<td>SPARC</td>
<td>Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centre</td>
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<td>UGC</td>
<td>University Grants Commission</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>VAW</td>
<td>Violence Against Women</td>
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<td>VO</td>
<td>Voluntary Organisations</td>
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Role and Contribution of Voluntary Organizations working on Women, Children & Livelihood Issues

Introduction

Voluntary action in India has been proactively advocating and supporting the cause of the marginalized and vulnerable for decades. The magnitude of social work delivered by voluntary organizations specifically on rights based issues is indicated by vulnerable sections of society coming forward and demanding their legitimate constitutional rights. There is no doubt that diverse campaigns launched by voluntary organizations have resulted in empowerment of these sections and enabled the voluntary sector to set precedents for judicial and legislative emulation. By virtue of their extensive reach, voluntary organizations have occupied the space where the state has been unable to penetrate.

Post-independence, massive efforts were undertaken to tackle issues which were seen to be laggards to India’s growth story. However these welfare endeavors did not find their fruitful culmination as was expected by them. A status-quo is in existence while addressing these issues. Lackadaisical implementation of policies coupled by bureaucratic delays has effectively circumscribed the desired effect, expected out of these policies. Such is the tragedy of the Indian state which constitutionally carves provisions for the welfare of the vulnerable, yet the outcomes have been negligible.

But with a strong presence of voluntary organizations working especially in the grassroots, a good many initiatives launched by them have brought about a positive change and mitigated vulnerabilities. The immense contribution of voluntary organizations in the domain of rights of children, livelihood and women’s empowerment is highlighted in these present studies. Being supplementary actors i.e. by partnering with the government, voluntary organizations have been pivotal in mobilizing the energy and resources at the grassroots for targeted welfare. The study attempts to recognize the commitment of voluntary organizations in their work towards the welfare of the vulnerable.

Placing voluntary organizations in the context of being the ‘means to an end’, the studies on these three thematic areas analyze the approach and responses followed by voluntary organizations in judiciously utilizing government policies to the maximum such as National Rural Livelihood Mission, MGNREGA, Integrated Child Development Services, Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Swarnajyanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana, ASHA etc. A relative assessment has been made to analyze how voluntary organizations have employed different modus operandi for pursuing their activities, as demonstrated by developing unique and innovative mechanisms which further act as inputs to government policies. A selective documentation of the different research and advocacy efforts of voluntary organizations be it through organizing campaigns, movements, research literature etc. are noted in these studies. In compiling data on these three areas, the prime objective is to underline the voluntary sector’s multifarious initiatives which have yielded positive outcomes and have brought about desired changes.
Scope of the study

Voluntary organisations often underplay their contributions or do not receive due recognition for their intrinsic role in addressing development priorities. As a result, they have to constantly struggle to carve out a place for themselves in the development arena. The present study, therefore, has been conducted to highlight some positive contributions made by voluntary organisations in solving some critical issues of society such as livelihoods, child and women rights.

Many voluntary organisations are associated with various social movements which inform and fuel a right based approach to their work. However, it is often observed that such work is considered problematic and organisations working with a rights-based approach are routinely harassed as there are misconceptions about their functioning. The study is intended at demystifying these voluntary organisations in order to deconstruct the antagonistic mindset around this approach.

Limitations of the study

The voluntary sector is made up of myriad organizations that have brought about invaluable improvements to the lives of the marginalized, especially children and women by delivering quality services in education and health. They have also effected important policy changes through sharing of expertise and consistent efforts. On the other hand, as in any other sector, the voluntary sector has its own share of malpractices and unscrupulous organisations.

The study is highly focused in its scope of documenting the positive work done by some of the many organisations working on livelihood issues, child rights and women rights. Therefore, the report has only been able to capture a snapshot of this wider picture.

Objective

The main objectives of this study are;

• To increase awareness about the contributions of voluntary organisations working for the advancement of policies and services under the three thematic issues namely, livelihood, child rights and women rights.

• To illustrate the impact made by voluntary organisations who are working on these issues through case studies.

• To use the report as a point of advocacy with the government to create greater space and opportunity for civil society at the national level.
Methodology

For the purpose of this study, research was carried out under three strategic heads: –
1. Research and advocacy,
2. Service delivery
3. Rights and entitlements issues.

This strategic distinction has been made to bring more clarity in the way voluntary organisations function as it helps in illuminating sectoral contributions. It also helps in assessing the impact of voluntary organisations more precisely.

Firstly, in order to enable a more comprehensive understanding, few important issues were identified under each thematic sub head i.e. livelihood, child rights and women rights. Thereafter, an analysis of the work done by organisations on these issues was done under the strategic rubric given above.

In all the thematic sub-heads, the focus was on organisations which work for rights and entitlements of the marginalized and vulnerable sections of the society.

Data was collected through primary and secondary research.

A random sampling method was adopted cutting across voluntary organisations working in different geographical regions in India.

To provide a balanced view, various government schemes and programmes, constitutional guarantees, judicial responses and other affirmative policies have been mentioned in the report. The data was culled out from various government reports and websites of various ministries and agencies such as the National Commission for Women (NCW) and National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

Further, case studies were collected on how voluntary organisations have sought to fill policy gaps and empower communities. For this purpose, past studies, projects and publications of organisations were referred to in the study.

The annual reports of various organisations were studied in detail and some of their programmes have also been incorporated in the study.

Data was also collected from various newspaper articles and journals to stress on the far reaching impact of voluntary organisations.

Expected Outcome:

By adding to the knowledge base of the work done by organisations on the assertion of women, child and livelihood rights as basic human rights and other issues such as gender mainstreaming and livelihood rehabilitation, the report would not only clear doubts regarding these organisations amongst other developmental stakeholders such as Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Governments (local, state and national), media, corporates and the general public, it would also bring recognition to their work and create greater opportunities for these organisations to engage with other development actors.
Issues of livelihood

Livelihood is a broad concept that is commonly used by academicians and civil society. It is a familiar term, used mostly to develop and implement strategies to ensure that the vulnerable groups are secured. There are lots of complexities attached to this term especially when government, civil society and external organizations attempts to assist people whose means of living are threatened, damaged or destroyed. Livelihood can be discussed within the social, economic and political context. Institutions, processes and issues such as the market, social norms and land ownership policies affect the ability to access and use assets for a favorable outcome. As the context changes, new livelihood obstacles and opportunities arises. Livelihood is also affected by the changing natural environment. The quality of the soil, air and water, the geographical conditions, the availability of fauna and flora and the frequency of natural disasters, all influences livelihood decisions. The way people use these resources within the socio-political and economic context, form the livelihood strategy. The diversity and range of the livelihood strategy is enormous. One or many individuals may engage in activities that can contribute to a collective strategy on livelihood.

When we look at regions like the European Union and the United States of America, it is contingent on public support for its sustainability. In these regions, agriculture is barely 9% and there is fluidity in demand and supply. But in a country like India, that continues to be dependent on farming and where agriculture is the main economic activity, the issues are more amalgamated and needs some reflection. Within India there are lots of regional variations and at times the various programmes of livelihood issues are not accessible to everyone. Social transformation is expected to take place by improvement in water, sanitation, health, education, income, housing, transportation and communication. Livelihood might or might not be sustained over time. It needs to have sustainable policies and institutions that can safeguard people’s assets and capabilities.

VOs are making a mark towards the contribution of livelihood issues. They are supplementing government initiatives by acting as a conduit between the development programmes and beneficiaries and also creating awareness about the rights of the poor. They have the ability to mobilize and be sensitive to people’s concerns. Many VOs, CBOs, often face hostility by the government while working on livelihood issues. VOs have a non-profit role to play in the development space. Sometimes the government is unable to provide goods and services, so VOs have an important role in their delivery.

Introduction and Background

There was a gaining popularity of the term sustainable livelihood and its conceptual development in the 1980s and 1990s in the fields of sustainable development and sustainable livelihood. Several efforts were made to translate the concept into operational terms. Efforts were made by multilateral institutions like

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UNDP, CARE, DFID, etc. to develop a policy oriented sustainable livelihood framework. These different sustainable livelihood approaches came to be known as ‘asset vulnerability frameworks’, which conceptualized poverty as a condition where a secured life is lacking. The policies of sustained livelihood have influenced the poverty reduction initiatives of both government and VO s across the globe since the 1980s².

It becomes important to keep the livelihood framework in focus to review some of the important discourses on livelihood in the context of India. There are lots of macro-economic conditions which India is facing, like unemployment, inflation, changing socio-political and environmental conflicts. There is also concern about the gap between the economic capability of the households between and within the rural and urban sectors according to the National Sample Survey³.

There have been debates on livelihood issues among various scholars in specific geographies, to emphasize on policy and programmes on the larger agenda of livelihood issues, like interrogating the links between poverty, employment, income, hunger, food nutrition and health. Many scholars are of the opinion that sustainable livelihood has to be broadly defined in the context of tribal people as well. Their multiple vulnerabilities and unfavorable environmental conditions cannot be ignored and also the risks arising from malnutrition, ill health, high mortality should all be taken into consideration. This terminology can only be understood and addressed if we understand it from a holistic perspective.

Understanding livelihood in an Indian context

Reflecting in the context of India, even after 60 years of its independence, a large majority of its population is still living in abject poverty. For them to earn for their very existence has been a constant struggle and a challenge in itself. Even after channelizing and investing hugely in infrastructure development like housing, roads, communication and various other benefits for the rural population, not much has been done to provide benefit to the poor. Over the years it has been observed, that the gap between rich and poor is increasing day by day, and so are the problems. This widening disparity has further increased the gap in rural and urban provisions, resulting in a lack of access to infrastructure facilities. The struggle of civil society and the government is to embark upon the various challenges and provide sustainable livelihood.

In the current decade, according to the planning commission for the 4th 10th five year plan, more than 10 million people are expected to seek work every year. Keeping the veracity of this in mind, where the resources are limited, livelihood for the poor becomes all the more taxing and urgent. There is a need for the organizations to use their resources to the fullest to achieve this target. There is an urgency to respond

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Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
to and promote livelihood, so that every human being gets equal opportunity, ensuring that a poor household has a stable livelihood which will help in increasing income, self esteem and social participation.

**Problems of livelihood**

In India, although the contribution of agriculture to the GNP is around 35%, in the absence of employment opportunities in the industrial and service sectors, over 85% of the overall rural economy is generated from agriculture, of which about 75%-80% is spent on food. Though agriculture is the major source of livelihood, mostly the farmers are illiterate and they are not very successful in cultivating their land economically. Mostly the farmers consider farming as part of their family tradition, following age old practices and adopting new techniques only after observing the success of their neighbours. Nearly 12-15% of the rural families are landless and 69% are land holders with less than 1% land. Out of the 147 million agricultural lands, about 60 million are located in arid zones, which are mostly owned by poor families. Since there are chances of crop failure, the families do not invest in external inputs like plant protection measures, improved seeds and thus end up with poor crop yields during normal years.

Some of the critical issues are -

- **Land** – The pasture lands and common land by the government are also used in many ways for fuel and fodder collection. About 10% of the total land in each village has been reserved by the government for livestock grazing. The land is owned by the village panchayat (local government) and all its members have free access to it. This has led to an over-exploitation of the pastures. So in spite of the land scarcity, over 50% of the total land is either idle or under-utilized. These wastelands are unsuccessful in retaining the water, which leads to soil erosion, flooding of rivers, etc. There is also a high risk of diseases.

- **Water** – It can be said that since independence, India has made progress in water resources and development. Post independence there has been large-scale investment in establishing water storage

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6. IBID
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systems. Due to the various developments taking place, like increasing population, unequal distribution of water, etc. the demand outweighs its supply. Though India has a sizeable water resource base and vast land resources, India struggles to meet its water sector infrastructure requirement. India has about 16% of the world’s population as compared to only 4% of its water resources. About 28% of the total cropping area in the country comes under irrigation and farmers have a tendency to use excessive water. Due to over-use of water for irrigation, over 9.00 million fertile lands have become saline wastelands, which has not only led to a serious threat to food security and employment generation, but also to community health and the environment.

• **Forest** – Forests provide many direct and indirect benefits to rural communities. Around 33% of the total geographical area is to be placed under forest cover, but in reality only 22% land is under the Forest Department of India. It can be estimated that 50% of land is devoid of vegetation due to over-exploitation. The most adversely affected are the tribes, who are completely dependent on forest resources for their livelihood, which has been endangered. They are dependent on the forest for edible fruits, medicines, fire wood for cooking, house construction, fodder for livestock and grazing, timber/non timber products. Therefore, with a majority of the population having an extensive dependence pattern, there are chances of degradation of the forest. There is widespread poverty and a lack of other income generating opportunities, which makes tribals and people living in a rural background, succumb often to the exploitation of forest products.

• **Financial resources** – Financial exclusion among the vulnerable groups still remains a major problem, in spite of the banking system in India. According to AIDIS, 2002, there was a remarkable lack of non-institutional sources of credit to a cultivator’s household between 1951-1991. This was mainly due to low dependency on money lenders. But in the post-liberalization period, the non-institutional credit has increased by 30% from 1991 onwards. This shows that the financial sector has not given much importance to the rural sector in its policy and structural changes. In the last few years, the financial exclusions have increased.

**Government initiatives on livelihood promotion**

The government has introduced plethora of schemes that highlight the rural poor and other marginalized sectors over the last five decades. There has been a lot of investment in terms of financial resources, in the various programmes. The government is making efforts in various schemes related to **direct wage employment generation** and is working towards creating **social and economic infrastructure** for poor households through, various income generation programmes. Most of them are implemented directly by the government and there is also active participation of voluntary organizations. Despite the efforts made by the government, there are several loopholes in their implementation, delivery systems and processes,
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Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana

SGSY is a self-employment programme aimed basically at the below poverty line (BPL) families. The objective of the programme is to bring the assisted poor families (swarozgaris) above the poverty line, by ensuring appreciable sustained level of income over a period of time. For this purpose, the rural poor are organized into self-help groups through a process of social mobilization, training and capacity building and provision of income-generating assets.

National Rural Livelihood Mission

This scheme has been undertaken by the Government of India through its Ministry of rural development. The main aim of this programme is to provide judicious payment through institutions, where the vulnerable groups can earn a living, which would help them move above the poverty line. This will help them become economically strong and change their quality of life drastically. The government ensures that one member from every household comes under this scheme in every village. Women are encouraged to participate in this scheme. It also gives special attention to people belonging to schedule castes, schedule tribes, backward classes and isolated communities. Since farming is a major occupation in villages, this scheme focuses on the development of agriculture, sustainable animal husbandry, livestock maintenance, timber production, etc.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

This act was started in 2005. It aims at enhancing livelihood security by providing 100 days of wage employment to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled work. This act covered 2000 districts in its first phase in 2006 and was extended to all the rural districts in the country in the 2nd phase. MGNREGA is the first ever law, internationally, that guarantees wage employment at an unprecedented scale. The primary objective of the Act is meeting the demand for wage employment in rural areas. The works permitted under the Act address causes of chronic poverty like drought, deforestation and soil erosion, so that the employment generation is sustainable.

Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana

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Rural Housing
Is the core programme for providing free housing to families in rural areas. It targets SC/ST households and free bonded labourers. The rural housing programme has certainly enabled many BPL families to acquire pacca houses.

Employment Assurance Scheme
It was launched in October 1993, covering 1,778 drought-prone, desert, tribal and hill area blocks. It was later extended to all the blocks in 1997-98. The EAS was designed to provide employment in the form of manual work in the lean agricultural season. The works taken up under the programme were expected to lead to the creation of a durable economic and social infrastructure and also address the felt-needs of the people.

which cannot be denied. The Planning Commission set up a sub-committee in April 2011 to monitor the various centre sponsored schemes, so that they can perform effectively and also meet the expectations of the state and other stakeholders. The government programmes focus on three categories of people – Below poverty line, Schedule caste and Schedule tribe. Some other groups which have also been added, include – Women, landless, disabled, displaced, development refugee. During the 11th five year plan, the agenda focused on education, health, social security, food security and rural employment. During the 11th five year plan, some major programmes were launched like NAREGA, NHRM, etc.

The Government has introduced various schemes related to rural development and basic livelihood

The introduction of programmes like Bharat Nirman, a project by the government in collaboration with the state government and panchayati raj institution, is an initiative towards the betterment of vulnerable groups. It focuses on injecting new technologies and strengthening voluntary efforts in rural areas.

1Women farmers’ bill 2012 - This Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha as a private member’s Bill in May 2012. The women will have equal right to all properties, including land, which belongs to her husband no matter how the land is acquired and consensus of both husband and wife would be required for a land transaction.

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**Role and Contribution of Voluntary Organizations working on Women, Children & Livelihood Issues**

**Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojna** – It was launched by the government in 2010-2011 to improve the condition of women in agriculture to increase and enhance their capacity for empowerment towards them. This scheme helps them to have systematic and organized investment to augment their participation and productivity in agriculture based livelihoods. It aims to provide direct and indirect support to achieve sustainable agriculture production. Women are enabling to learn and adopt various technologies and farming system.11

**National food for programme** – It was launched on November, 2004, in almost 150 districts in the most backward places of the country to intensify the generation of supplementary wage employment. It helps the rural poor who need wage employment and want to do manual unskilled work. However, the transportation cost, handling charges and taxes on food grains are the responsibility of the States. The collector is the nodal officer at the district level and has the overall responsibility of planning, implementation, coordination, monitoring and supervision. For 2004-05, Rs.2020 crore has been allocated for the programme in addition to 20 lakh tons of food grains.12

**Rural Employment Generation Programme** – was launched in 1995 to create self-employment opportunities in the rural areas and small towns implemented by Khadi and Village industries. Under this scheme there are various programmes establishing various village industries by availing of margin money assistance from the KVIC and bank loans, for projects with a maximum cost of Rs.25 lakh. A target of creating 25 lakh new jobs has been set for the REGP during the Tenth Plan. 8.32 lakh employment opportunities have already been created during 2003-04.13

**Prime Minister’s Rozgar Yojana** – It started in 1993 with the objective of making available self-employment opportunities to the unemployed youth by making them economically independent. There has been about 20 lakhs units set up under this scheme creating 30.4 lakhs additional employment opportunities under the tenth plan. It is not only implemented in rural areas for setting up village industries but also empowering and educating unemployed youth in both rural and urban areas to engage in economic activities.14

**Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)** – It was launched in 2000 as 100% centrally sponsored scheme at providing rural connectivity to unconnected habitation with population of 500 persons or more in the rural areas. The National Rural Roads Development Agency (NRRDA) provided operational and technical support for the programme.15

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13. IBID
14. IBID
15. IBID
**Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana** – is a dual objective programme to tackle the issue of unemployment and food security by providing wage employment during the lean agriculture season. This programme was open to all the rural poor to supplement their primary income by engaging in unskilled manual work near their villages but laid special emphasis on women, SC, ST and parents of children withdrawn from hazardous occupation.

**State-run Housing Schemes** – The rural housing programme was taken up in some States much before the Government of India introduced a scheme for rural housing for poor households. Around 15 States/UTs currently have their own schemes which come under rural housing schemes. These 15 States have together constructed 27 lakh houses in rural areas in this manner from 2001 to 2005.\(^{16}\)

In most states, the state run schemes for rural housing broadly follow the IAY pattern of providing full subsidy for construction of houses and are financed through budgetary allocations at the state level. In Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, where the number of houses taken up is very large, these houses are funded through credit-cum-subsidy schemes where the credit is taken by the State Government from HUDCO and commercial banks and passed on to the beneficiaries. It can be said that the recovery of such loans from beneficiaries are quite poor.\(^{17}\)

Poverty alleviation programs by the government are an important planning process by the Indian government. Through government programs special attention has been given to particular sectors which provide greater opportunities to the people to participate in the growth process. The poverty alleviation programs emphasizes on various aspects relating to health, education and other basic services which have been internalized in the planning process. Central and state government have allocated to issues like education, sanitation, health etc. which promotes capacity building of the poor. They are providing avenues for welfare and schemes. There have been efforts done by the government to work towards SC/ST/, disable and vulnerable groups.\(^{18}\)

The 11th 5 year plan adopted an inclusive growth as the key policy objective for the next five years. Programmes like NREGA not only promote social inclusion, but also transparency and accountability. It adopted various multi–layered approaches which lay emphasis on improving human assets through vocational training and special focus on rural and urban livelihood.

Various ministries at the central government level are also working with Gram Sabhas, VOs, and Self-help groups to make participation meaningful and as a democratic process.

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17. IBID

So government’s efforts in initiating plans including price support, food subsidy, land reforms, improving agriculture techniques for farmers etc. help in not only reducing poverty but empower people in finding solutions to their economic problems. For instance wage employment has led to mainstreaming and integration of poor. The focus on the sustainability of the income generation of the poor still remains elusive in nature. In a critical analysis of these government plans it can be said that there is erosion of plans in terms of resources allocation, implementation and bureaucratic control and non-involvement of communities.19

There have been efforts made by the government, but much more needs to be done for the basic rights of the poor. Voluntary organizations come into the picture to fill in this gap and help reduce the disparity which exists within the society.

**Various movements of livelihood**

Livelihood issues are deeply engraved in India since 1920, and many of the people of India are still fighting for their basic livelihood rights. There are many social reforms and activists who have addressed the issue of inequality prevailing in the society. Many social activists have raised their voices against unjust distribution of assets, access to opportunity and market or the exploitive use of natural resources. The movement started with a prime focus on livelihood and was further translated into many more multi-dimensional movements. There were other such movements, multi-faceted in nature, that were formed to address inequality, and on their way, have made a valuable impact on livelihood issues.

If we go back to Mahatma Gandhi’s time, he focused on a self-reliant economy. He encouraged hand-woven cloth made from hand-spun yarn, which became the symbol of his attempt to strengthen India’s rural livelihood and resulted in the introduction of small-scale village industries. This, after the Independence, was institutionalized into the Khadi and village Industrial commission.

**Bhoodan movement** - In 1951, there was unrest due to unequal land ownership, which led to a movement started by Vinoba Bhave called Bhoodan (land gift). This was initiated to settle the land disputed through voluntary distribution of land.

**Chipko movement** - started during the 1970s in Uttrakhand. The movement was against the contractors of the state, who had the right to fell trees for commercial purposes. Locals were denied their rights to use trees to make farm tools. This was majorly a village-based and also a women-led movement, which fought to protect the forest and also to protect forest-use rights of locals. This movement gradually spread to various other parts of India.

**The Narmada Bachao Andolan** – This movement was started in the 1980s by Medha Patkar. It is a people’s movement which was started against a large dam construction on the Narmada river, in Madhya
Pradesh and Gujarat. Due to the construction of the dam, it was estimated that around 30,000 people would be displaced, largely poor peasants and tribals who do not have proper rehabilitation, along with an inundated forest and prime habitats of rare species. This movement gained a lot of momentum among various social activists, civil society and the debate took place across the globe, discussing the two conflicting viewpoints of development. One emphasized more on large scale industrial and economic growth at the cost of people and the environment and the other emphasized on encouraging small-scale industries integrating with the local communities. This debate continues even today.

**Self-employed Women’s Association** – It was established in Gujarat under the leadership of Ela Bhatt and promoted employment, finance, social security. SEWA has over 700,000 members who promote livelihood in 3 ways, a trade union is formed which promotes financial services and 100 occupation-based cooperatives such as tailors, embroiderers, etc.

**Contribution of voluntary organizations in improving livelihood issues**

**Background**

Voluntary organizations have played a critical role in poverty alleviation, social mobilization, increasing empowerment and improving livelihoods of vulnerable groups over the past many decades. They have involved themselves actively in the development setting and have also gained prominence in national and international scenarios as legitimate actors in the development setting. We can see the changing face of the development paradigms in the fields of growth, poverty reduction and social inclusion, which have gained bearing over the past few decades since independence. CSOs have entered a space where there is constant structuring and restructuring of the systems and it has constantly evolved with the changing scenario and times.

The whole concept of social development and social welfare is not new to the Indian society. Social service, social reform and voluntary organizations are playing an imperative role in the socio-development scenario from the time of Jyothy Rao Phule in pre-independence India. India is a land of villages with sundry culture, traditions, religions and large societal divisions. The basic livelihood issues are concerned with economic growth, social justice and improvements in the basic standards of living, providing adequate and quality social services and basic minimum essentials. So it would be unfair to expect the government alone to grapple with such complexities. Various social movements and voluntary organizations are also contributing towards achieving social development of the poor. Presently, efforts are made toward better livelihood opportunities, provision of basic amenities and infrastructure facilities through various innovative programmes of minimum wages and self employment which is a constitutional right of every citizen under the directive principles of the state policy.
The VOs are helping the poor with access to the system, information on market opportunities, training facilities, information on credit mechanisms so that the poor can meet their aspirations. VOs are working with marginal farmers and the landless and also promoting land based economic development like dairying and other agricultural micro-enterprises. This is working towards promoting education, community health and housing. Various VOs are also opening non bank finance companies and working with SHGs.

They are making sustainable efforts for poor communities, specially adivasis living in forest areas, tribal and other vulnerable groups who are struggling for basic necessities like housing, water, better agriculture facilities, etc. They are taking initiatives to improve agriculture by the cultivation of food and cash crops, integrating natural resource management through development of land and water resources and micro-enterprises.

They have participated and intervened to help various landless families who received lands through the Bhoodan movement and have helped to make their land more cultivable. VOs are associated with many marginal and landless farmers through various programmes like land-based economic development-dairying, agriculture and micro-enterprises. They have worked for community health and housing issues as well.

It was realized after liberalization in 1991, when banks became skeptical of lending money to the poor. That led to many livelihood promotions and it also focused on micro – credit. VOs are reaching out at the household level. They are making efforts towards agriculture being more effective by medium and long term investments, which otherwise is an intricate task to get for small and medium size farmers to access the banks. So it can be said that VOs are active and in the forefront to expand their outreach, reach out to more vulnerable groups in widespread areas and provide effective human and financial resources. The task which lies in front of the VOs is to intensify their services and increase their outreach to more remote places which need attention.

CSOs were always associated with the welfare paradigm, working for the social wellbeing of those who needed special attention. Social welfare programmes covered those who were denied basic livelihood issues and needed support. Over time, this approach faced severe criticism. There was emphasis given to self-reliance, giving rise to self-sustainability, development of human assets and inputs that would generate incomes (credit, market linkages, etc.). Enterprise promotion tapered down to minimalistic microfinance by the early 1990s. A subset of the poor and extremely poor with several disabilities and the aged need more attention, as they will always be dependent. Such groups need long term social protection. These social protection measures have always been considered outside the livelihood domain, despite being considered a right and they are always less resourced. There are very few VOs which are catering to the needs of such groups. There have been VOs which have graduated from a mere welfare to a right-based approach.
approach and others have evolved into micro-finance organizations with the intention of supporting livelihood promotion\(^2\).

In India there will always be a struggle with the right-based approach. They have immensely contributed to the basic rights of the vulnerable groups. The VOs can be divided into 3 categories, namely –
1. Research and advocacy
2. Service delivery
3. Right and entitlements

This chapter focuses on the various contributions of VOs under all the three categories. VOs are the most imperative players in the developmental arena. They have evolved over the years and have been involved with government agencies to bring changes in the lives of the vulnerable.

**Research and Advocacy**

VOs are making great efforts and bringing attention to the government and the civil society on various issues like non-timber forest produce, land and housing issues. A lot of research and advocacy work is surfacing around such issues. There is a lot of mobilization with different stakeholders that is taking place to fight for various policy changes.

**Training**

VOs are initiating centers like livelihood resource centre, which provides support in designing various training modules and organizing trainers at the district and community levels. They are organizing training and imparting training to various communities and organizing exposure visits towards enhancing the capabilities of the vulnerable communities to empower them with their rights.

**Communication and resource material**

VOs are developing resource materials such as booklets and posters on various livelihood issues like diversified farming systems, farming systems support and other rural livelihood initiatives. These booklets

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\(^2\) file://D:/livelihood%20issues/JARS%20730.pdf
are further disseminated for effective implementation at a national level and used for advocacy purposes. VOs are also concentrating on collecting case studies and research work, policy papers on the various policies of livelihood and they are then used for lobbying with the government, to bring about changes in the schemes and policies which benefit the rural population.

_Some of the advocacy methods used by VOs are_ –

- **Grass-root network** – VOs are keen to collaborate with other VOs to ensure the livelihood of the tribals.

- **Communication and outreach** – VOs are involved in public advocacy and awareness to make the society aware of the basic livelihood facilities like land titles for tribal villagers.

- **Legal and administrative support** – VOs provide knowledge about land, forest rights to make the vulnerable groups aware of their own rights.

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**Ensuring a forest-friendly approach – Regional Centre for Development Cooperation (RCDC)**

24After the Non-timber forest produce policy (NTFP) was passed in 2000 (Orissa state), the main work of Regional centre for development cooperation was:

- To support and facilitate initiatives on forest produce through cooperatives.
- Creating alternative arrangements for marketing of NTFP.
- Product development.
- Sustainable NTFP harvesting, processing and management protocols.
- Promoting community managed NTFP enterprises.
- Working with other stakeholders to come up with a uniform NTFP policy for all central Indian states.

Through this, they have been helping many communities to have a more sustainable and forest friendly livelihood base. Over the years, it has helped NTFP cooperatives to enable forest – dependent communities to control and manage the NTFP and agriculture produce.
Influencing policy

RCDC also puts pressure on the government to further make favorable policies in relation to NTFP as an enterprise and thus, has empowered many communities, cooperatives and various other stakeholders to take part in policy advocacy and analysis. They have been involved with policy advocacy in the past, with the Ministry of panchayati raj, Ministry of environment and forest and Ministry of rural development on issues of enterprise development, promoting NTFP policy issues in forest and environmental governance and livelihood development strategies.

The advocacy work involves –

• General public pressure and advocate for proper implementation of panchayats to forest right, etc.
• Monitoring and analyzing government and non-government programmes, schemes and development and making appropriate interventions to facilitate livelihood security.

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<tr>
<th>Policy advocacy - Integrated Watershed Management Programme</th>
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<tr>
<td>APMAS - It has been involved in influencing state level policies and guidelines for effective implementation of the Integrated Watershed Programme (IWMP). Some of its interventions are -</td>
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<td>• Potential contribution in evolving state specific guidelines for IWMP.</td>
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<td>• Enhancing the role of NGOs in watershed projects.</td>
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<td>• Inclusion of cost-effective NRM structures viz., sunken pits, modified gabion structures, brushwood dams in the computer software.</td>
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<td>• Adhering to the ridge to valley concept and to take up SMC works.</td>
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<td>• Collection of WDF and promoting thrift and credit model of savings by the user groups.</td>
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<td>• Convergence with Forest department for treating ridge areas and timely supply of plants.</td>
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<td>• Diversity in farm forestry, horticulture and farming systems.</td>
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<td>• Compilation of various resource materials, avoiding duplication of efforts.</td>
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<td>• Evolving district and state level monitoring teams.</td>
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<td>• Evolving mega watershed level Post Watershed Management structure.</td>
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<td>• Formation of an exclusive team for social audit at state level with GO and NGO representatives.</td>
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<td>• Evolving concurrent monitoring system along with social audit process.</td>
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25 http://rcdcindia.org/our-work/thematic-areas/livelihood/#
• Providing resource support to government and VOs on NTFP value addition, marketing and forest-based livelihoods through research, analysis, dissemination and other modes of communication.

**Impact and achievement**

It was successful in creating awareness and understanding of the watershed projects in local communities. Some of its achievements were –

• Nallamada watershed of Anantpur district, stood first in labour payment and second term of financial achievement during the year. Through this programme, every day more than 1000 men and women were provided employment.

• Farmers who re-migrated to urban areas returned to their villages after their waste-land turned productive and efficient to use for cultivation by using the watershed approach. They had an opportunity to work on their own farm to build water management structures. The land became productive for them to take up agriculture and horticulture.

• The project provided clean drinking water facilities for communities and livestock.

• Dry land horticulture was promoted along with inter-cropping systems. This led to optimum use of water resources as well as conserving the soil.

• Community ownership increased through alteration in social norms and regulation which was setup.

**Mobilizing Self Help Groups – PRADAN**

SHGs are a powerful unit of social mobilization which encourage women from marginalized communities to come together towards better social and economic improvement. PRADAN is involved various income generation activities like small saving and credit.

**Support, training and planning –**

PRADAN is involved with various independent livelihood activities. It has involved various SHGs groups in livelihood planning and social empowerment. It gives importance to women’s empowerment as they are the most disadvantaged sector among the people. Women have the capacity to bring changes in their families and communities. It empowers many SHGs to take decisions involving their lives and livelihood.

There were various meetings of SHGs where they discussed ways to enhance and strengthen their livelihood option, which was mostly agriculture based. In 2012, 68,059 women from 5,764 SHGs participated in their respective Gram Sabhas which makes it 27% of the total SHG membership of their organization. The SHG enables its members to gain identity as individuals hence realizing the power of mutual aid. It helps them to access banks and other public services.

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28. IBID
**Campaign to combat vulnerability of the farmers**

AFARM in association with the Shetkari Sangathan and kisan Mitra formed a campaign to combat farmer’s committing suicide in Maharashtra in the Vidharbha region. This region was initiated to sensitize the government about the declining status of farmers and put pressure on the government to fulfill the demands of farmers. This led to the government implementing the various recommendation of the National Farmers Commission.

This campaign was initiated in 3 phases- 1. Farmers’ convention, 2. Manthan Shibir - Cadre building of farmers, 3. Farmers rally from Amravati to meet with the chief minister. AFARM organized various meetings and workshops in consultation with other VOs, CBOs to build a pressure group. It resulted in effective action and representations with the government agencies and policy makers. This campaign is also initiated at national level. The government thus includes addressing issues like reducing the disparity amongst the beneficiaries of rain-fed zones and inclusion of activities from ploughing to harvesting in MGNREGA.

**Minimum wage implementation campaign by Navsarjan**

Navsarjan is a grass-root dalit organization trying to ensure human rights for all. It organized labour union, Gujarat Kamdar Ekta Sangathan and through that, the minimum wage right has been asserted.

**Impact**

- It was organized in one village and later it spread to other neighboring villages. The laborers now see how organizing themselves and working together can benefit them.
- Dalit and tribal women laborers became more vocal as Navsarjan’s worked and supported them throughout.
- In Diver village, Gujarat where the fight for minimum wages started in 2006, due to constant campaigning and supporting the rights of these marginalized groups, the laborers now get minimum wages. Since the village comprises agriculture laborers, the voters who are mostly union members, voted in their own local government.

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30. IBID
Service delivery

VOs are involved both in the supply and the demand side approaches. The demand side approach can be seen as articulating people’s voices. VOs mobilized and clarified the demand for services from both the government and the market, in order for people to achieve their developmental goals. In the context of service delivery, VOs seek help in improving the access of the people to the services provided by the state.

VOs are focusing on capacity building programmes at the grass-root level.

Some of the programmes carried out by VOs are -

- **Awareness Generation Programme** – Here VOs are involved in discussion and debate, sharing information about livelihood issues. They engage with educational institutions, police, judiciary, community groups and the general public. They lobby for socio-legal changes with different state agencies.

- **Skill enhancement training** - They conduct and organize training programmes for non-government organizations working on the basic rights of the poor. This facilitates their participation in trainings and seminars conducted by other organizations. Some of the issues covered in such trainings are employment generation activities, skill development of women, training on various government schemes on livelihood

- **Building the local network and working in alliance with other organization** – VOs come together with other organizations to discuss key concern areas to build various strategies and action for greater and effective participation and outcome.

- **Community participation** – VOs work closely with the community, attend various meetings and undertake exposure visits. This collective reflection leads to a better understanding of issues.

**WADI Programme – BAIF**

This programme spreads over the tribal clusters of 9 states, which has enabled over 1.84 lakhs deprived families to come out of poverty. Many tribals joined the WADI programme which helped them to have land under this programme. Apart from cultivation of drought resistant fruit crops, many new initiatives were promoted for the diversification of farm income and supply chain development for NTPC, such as lac, tassar, wild fruits and vegetables.

**Infrastructure**

VOs are working with a lot of groups and providing them housing facilities. Some of the their work includes providing a women’s housing society, obtaining grant in aid from different funding agencies and extending support for the implementation of the programmes. VOs are involving state/district activists in
the planning, formulation and implementation of the projects. VOs are making efforts to constitute units in various districts.

Organizations like Helpless Women, based in West Bengal, are working with helpless women housing society. This organization provides short stay homes for women and girls; extends temporarily shelter and rehabilitation for those who do not have any social support system, family circumstances, social obstruction, etc. All these reasons socially exclude these women and girls and leave them in a vulnerable position. These shelter homes include medical care, physical treatment, case work service, educational, vocational training and recreational facilities.

Livelihood intervention by Gram Vikas

Skills Training programme - organized in 5 main areas of the construction industry, where skilled labour is in high demand. Gram Vikas trains local people in areas of masonary, plumbing, stone-dressing, etc. The main purpose of the training programme is to improve the livelihood opportunities for the people below the poverty line and with no formal skill or qualification, by enabling them to develop their skills for industries/markets within and outside of rural areas. It builds a strong relationship and rapport with the communities they work with, to enter into deep and frequent dialogues. The issues preventing people from participating are therefore fully understood and the skill building programme can be tailored to ensure needs of the vulnerable are met.

The skills training programme is organized into five main areas, all of which can be used in the construction industry where skilled labour is in short supply. It trains local people in skills that are in short supply. These five areas are Masonary, Plumbing, Bar-bending, Stone dressing, and Painting. Recently, a survey was carried out to assess the effectiveness of the masonry training. The overall aim of the training is to improve livelihood opportunities for the BOP population, specifically younger men and women with no formal skills or qualifications through enabling them to develop skills that can be utilized for industries/markets within and outside of rural area33.

Improving Development effectiveness by convergence of the programmes of DFID

There are various rural development programmes which are working in convergence with other programmes to be more efficient and cost effective. DFID’s rural livelihood programmes are integrated

into government systems and are active in playing the role of catalysts in integrating rural livelihood with other initiatives. There are many successful models of integration which have been adopted, such as the Andhra Pradesh Rural livelihood programme (APRL) model and these are working through village organizations. In the recent years there have been changes seen, where the Rural Development Department is looking at convergence.

In Andhra Pradesh, a pilot in Chittoor district is underway to integrate all budgets and rural development programmes. In Madhya Pradesh, the state government has introduced a programme to integrate all the rural development programmes across the state, through an inter-ministerial forum at the state and the new district levels. So it can be said that DFID’s rural development programmes are well positioned to improve the effective delivery of rural development programmes through an integrated structure, budgets and approaches.

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**Odisha Tribal Empowerment And Livelihood programme (OTELP)**

This programme provides an example of convergence in employment, agriculture and health.

- The village development and livelihood plan includes a range of activities, some of which can be funded under OTELP but others may draw on some other rural development schemes. Village Development Committees will put forth their demand for daily wage employment under NREGS to the respective Gram Panchayat, on the basis of their village development livelihood programme and accordingly the gram panchayat will have to prepare the consolidated NREGS plan.

- Farmers with more than one acre of land are eligible for the National Horticultural Mission. Additionally, nurseries raised by SHGs can be officially declared and sell seedlings to beneficiaries of the NHM.

- OTELP is collaborating with the Forest Development Agencies that are implementing the National Afforestation Programme to ensure that developments under the National Afforestation Programme, both improve the health of forests and positively impact the livelihoods of communities.

- OTELP Village Development Committees, which include a volunteer health worker to work with the Accredited Social Health Activist under the National Rural Health Mission to implement the village health plan.\(^{34}\)

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\(^{34}\) [http://www.rd.ap.gov.in/aprl/Publications/v2_TransformingRural_Low.pdf](http://www.rd.ap.gov.in/aprl/Publications/v2_TransformingRural_Low.pdf)
Rights and Entitlements

In the development paradigm, rights-based approaches have always been the centerpiece towards achieving social justice and social change. VOs focusing on the rights emphasize on economic, social and cultural rights. It has, on several occasions, reflected on the role of the state as the guarantor of rights. This approach has reframed the discussion about the impact, evaluation and development practices. Over the years, the debate within the development community has rarely questioned the core precepts of the welfare mode. Instead, mostly it has focused on the delivery mode. Slowly, a shift can be seen to the right-based approach which has intensified in recent years. As development actors have expanded their reach to the government institutions, they are also strengthening their policy work and embracing the human rights system to add legitimacy to their work. Many VOs are approaching community development participation and engaging people to claim their rights. It is in this context between the rights and the participation approach, that we can see the potential for a right-based approach.

The programmes based on the right-based approach are concerned with empowering the poor, who are mostly socially barred, and to encourage their participation in the development process. This approach focuses on the right-based approach between various institutions, citizens and also brings effective check systems and accountability within the public institutions. In India the right-based approach is not very welcomed or valued in the eyes of the government. There have been many movements, strikes and demonstrations to fight for the livelihood issues of the marginalized. Sometimes such steps have been seen as anti-national, which has created tension between the government and civil society. Such a sense of skepticism still exists towards the right-based VOs. Their struggle to fight the unjust systems and practices within the society and claim the rights and entitlements of the marginalized communities continues.

Source - http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/x9371e/x9371e11.htm
Indian Forest rights Act

Indian Forest Act was enacted in 1927 and placed all the forest land under the control of the government (British). There was a need to take the government’s permission to cut down or plant trees. The government was not interested in protecting the forest, but exploited the forest for massive plantation, and other industrial projects. With such unjust practices, the parliament passed the schedule tribe and other traditional forest dwellers (Recognition of forest rights act), 2006. Commonly referred to as Forest Rights Act, it was designed to reclalm the rights of the land to those who had historically lived here. They were schedule tribes who were dependent on the forest for their livelihood. It was given to these communities to protect, manage, restore and sustainably use the forest resources of the land allocated to them. This act prevented deforestation and other exploitation of their land, free from dominance of forest settlement officers.

Land Rights for Forest Dependent Families: A case study of Doliambo Village

Pragati – Along with other VOs that are working in Odisha in Koraput district, is facilitating the village community and local people in fighting for forest rights at the district level. It has facilitated the forest dependent people to secure their land tenures and resource rights under the schedule tribe and other traditional forest dwellers (Recognition of forest rights) Act 2006.

Doliambo village in Mahadeiuput Gram panchayat consists of 125 households, of which 105 families are scheduled tribes, 18 families are scheduled castes and only 2 households belong to other castes. The villagers are primarily dependent on agriculture and forests for their livelihood. 50 % of the families were dependent on forest lands for their livelihood. Pragati has formed a Village Forest Protection Committee with equal representation of men and women. It has sensitized the village community and initiated the formation of a Forest Rights Committee (FRC). This FRC collected the necessary documents and was involved in a joint verification and demarcation of the land. It took 2 years to get the land titles back for the village community. All the 59 villages have got their land entitlements. Out of these, 5 families have received land entitlement of 3.5 acres each, two families have received 4 acres of land titles, 2 families 2 acres each and the rest 50 families have received 1.2 acres of land titles. After regaining their land titles, 6 families have started their regular agriculture activities. 47 title holders have raised cashew orchards in their forest lands. 56 title holders have received support for the construction of houses under Indira Awaz Yojana and 49 families have received their homestead land titles.

http://www.forestrightsact.com/
Right to access forest resources

Getting access to forest resources like water, land and infrastructure for the poor is an institutional process which requires adaptation to changing circumstances of power, economics and culture. The forest is an important source of livelihood for the poor and indigenous people. These indigenous people make a significant contribution to the conservation and sustainable management of the forest ecosystem. The tribes have the rights over natural resources but the indigenous territory under the state forestland, has led to several conflicts between the state and the tribals.

Land rights initiatives – ARCH Vahini

This grass-root VO based in Gujarat, has pioneered an initiative to enable the people to take ownership of their own land in their local communities, in the forest areas of Gujarat. The villages are using hand held GPS devices to document their land claims and getting it endorsed in their village meeting (Gram Sabhas).

They started this initiative from 25-30 villages in 2010-11, and since then there has been a sharp increase in the demand from villagers in 5 other districts of Gujarat. There are currently 100 villages which are covered under this programme.

In order to meet the growing demand, satellite images from other places were also procured. Therefore, this use of technology is becoming popular and various grass-root level VOs are showing a keen interest to use such technologies for a better output.

The VOs involved in land right act are taking into consideration women-specific circumstances regarding the housing and land issue. VOs are making efforts to provide women with adequate protection and ensuring the enforcement of the due process of the law. VOs are influencing laws and policies which take into consideration an understanding that land is a livelihood resource and social security measure that needs to be protected.

Dalit samakhya, people’s institution - formed by a network of voluntary organizations of Kurnool, has been fighting for land rights of Dalits and marginalized communities. They are of the view that the best way to bring Dalits out of either forced or bonded labor is to make them avail the schemes and facilities through the government agencies and make them procure land for themselves.

Dalit Samakhya did a land survey of government owned land which was under private ownership and was barren and uncultivated. During the survey, information was also gathered about the lands, which were originally meant for Dalits and land certificates distributed under Dalit names but were grabbed by upper castes as it was good cultivable land. As a result of the struggle and efforts by Dalit Samakhya, 750 families were distributed 1060 acres of land.

Facilitating the Realization of Legal Entitlements to Homestead Land for Dalit Communities and Landless Labourers through using the tool of the RTI Act in the villages of Gaya District of Bihar

In the course of work on the issue of homestead land rights, Deshkal Society realized that the provisions of the RTI Act could be an effective tool for realizing the rights of the landless poor, especially from marginalized communities, for legal entitlement to their homestead land. For claiming their legal rights and filing applications for legal entitlement to their homestead land, the landless poor are required to procure several documents and information related to land records. This proves to be a generally uphill task for landless labourers and persons belonging to marginalized communities such as SCs and STs. Most often, due to the ignorance, they are prone to get exploited by local touts and middlemen too. The Society found that the key actors, namely the community, civil society organizations and representatives of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, who play a significant role in facilitating the processes for realizing the right to homestead land, are not generally aware of how the RTI Act can be used as a tool for obtaining these vital documents. In this context, the Society undertook a project to generate awareness among the key stakeholders about the provisions of the RTI Act and how it could be used by the stakeholders for obtaining legal entitlements to homestead land. The project was implemented in the Wazirganj block of Gaya district during 2009-10, with financial support from the World Bank, India under its scheme of Social Development Civil Society Fund Grant. The objectives of the project were to facilitate the process of realizing legal entitlement to homestead land for the landless labourers and Dalit communities, especially Musahars. Achieving this, by using the tools of the RTI Act to build the capacity of PRI members and communities on the RTI Act and legal entitlements to homestead land for making local governance institutions and administration accountable, responsive and transparent.

The outcome of the project was that 74 people belonging to dalit community received legal entitlement to homestead land; large numbers of applications were also facilitated through various stages and 250 community leaders received training on how to use RTI act to obtain information.

Access to resources

39 PACS is making efforts towards more accessibility of the resources and skill to pursue alternative livelihood options through finance, marketable skills and market linkages among the socially excluded groups. They are developing various sustainable livelihood models including public-private partnership, especially in disaster prone areas, through increasing the accessibility of resources.

• It works towards building civil society organizations’ capacity towards alternative livelihood plans for households and analyzing their vulnerability to market forces and climate change.

• Mobilizes the demand for nondiscriminatory access to inputs, services, resources and knowledge necessary to pursue alternative livelihood options.

• Links entrepreneurs from socially excluded groups to the markets.

Today, women of these families, work in their own lands along with their husbands. They are not treated as bonded labor and their children are free to go to school and get proper education. After land acquisition, nearly 40 children have been re-enrolled into school. This is out of 94 school dropouts from 164 families earlier forced into bonded child labor. At the societal level also, ownership of land by Dalits is not only a permanent source of livelihood, but is a visible symbol of social status and their empowerment, giving them equal status in society. After the success of the initiative taken by Dalit Samakhya, the community has become aware and they are empowered to fight for their right and acquire the land allotted to them. They are convinced that owning land was their right and they are entitled to it.

Women’s right to land

There are many land-right movements and women’s group, that have showcased various successful interventions when women come together to manage common resources for the sustenance of the community. Due to their collective approach, women have proven themselves to be better skilled and more efficient at managing common resources than the men of the community. In areas where forests have been ruined, women, due to their traditional roles and skills, have been able to manage and rehabilitate the forest. Women have formed SHGs which can collectivize the community through micro-credit banks and investing their assets into land ownership and rehabilitation. In Shankergard, Allahabad the Mahila Samakya Federation of women’s group has acquired fish ponds and mining areas on group lease. As a group, women are managing these resources and retaining ownership.

39 http://www.pacsindia.org/key-themes/sustainable-livelihoods/access-to-resources
40 http://www.dalitsamakhya.org/ini.htm
Swadhina started working at grass-root level awareness programmes in 10 villages in West Bengal, from mid November 2010 onwards. Various villages met to spread awareness on the issue of women’s land and property rights. Women were taught to sign their names as strong tools of empowerment and for obtaining land rights. There were various socio-legal leadership trainings to develop village level women’s socio-legal advocacy groups to guide women on socio-legal awareness.

Such activities have been in full swing and this has led to small steps towards bringing the gap between policies and reality. They are aimed at improving the land and property rights of 600 and more women belonging to the backward section of the tribal society.


Case study of SEWA

The SEWA Bank was established in 1974 as a separate bank of the poor, self-employed women workers at the initiative of 4,000 self-employed women workers. These self-employed women workers included hawkers, vendors and home-based workers -- like weavers, potters, beedi-, agarbatti-, pappad-rollers --, manual laborers and service providers. One of the main demands of these workers was for credit at reasonable rates which they were unable to obtain from normal banks. The SEWA bank started with a specific objective of providing credit to the self employed women, with a view to empower them and also to minimize the credit uncertainty through money sharks at exorbitant rates.

Through the initiative of the SEWA Bank, the poor women have been given control of natural and financial resources. This has, for example, helped them build their own water structures (like wells, ponds, hand pumps, etc.)

By establishing a relationship of trust and getting involved with the whole life of the borrowers, high recovery rates have been established. This has not only enabled the members to come out of the clutches of private moneylenders, but has enabled them to develop the skills of dealing with formal organizations. In the process, their self-confidence has been enhanced. The vicious circle of indebtedness and dependence on middlemen and traders has been broken. This has changed the bargaining position of these women. They have now started organizing themselves, bargain for higher wages and in case of a need, form their own economic units. Bank provides its members with monetary security and gives them a control over their incomes. It has also provided the banking infrastructure that serves self-employed and small businesses.

Source - http://www.unesco.org/most/asia1.htm
Right to relief and rehabilitation

Disasters, both natural and man-made, have ruined lives of the most marginalized and vulnerable people. The vulnerable sections that have been worst hit with these disasters are the Dalits. The agony of dalits is further perpetuated by caste-based exclusionary practices in Disaster Risk Reduction interventions, by keeping them away from the just system of relief, rehabilitation and recovery. Existing laws, policies and guidelines are not comprehensive enough to capture the sensitive issue of caste-based disparity in emergencies. Their implementation is biased. Therefore, a transformation is called for at the policy and legislation levels, which in principle bear the notion of equity in a broader sense, but do not really work to ensure the same in practice.

Relief and Rehabilitation should be viewed from the human rights perspective to make it a rightful claim of the people of the state/nation.

VOs role in development and disaster relief

VOs are playing a significant role in disaster response and mitigation in different regions. There are various national and international VOs providing humanitarian assistance to disaster victims. They play a central role in providing emergency response and rehabilitation.

National Dalit Watch (NDW) of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) has collected hardcore evidences of discrimination through the studies, in the event of these disasters. National and international organizations are making collaborative efforts to institute a policy environment that recognizes such discrimination and defines entitlements of survivors in a manner that makes the state accountable at local levels. Efforts are also being made to conceive effective solutions and mechanisms for the inclusion of dalits in all interventions pertaining to disaster management and risk reduction.

The scenario, at present, is such that those empathizing with the Dalit cause are accused of Naxalism. The Dalit issue is coming to the fore because Naxalism and Maoism are a real threat and the government is now interested to ensure that Dalits don't enter these guerrilla factions. In Bihar powerful landlords usurped the land that originally belonged to tribals, which led to tension between the landless tribals and the authorities. Naxalism spreads in situations like these because of the desperation and helplessness of tribals and dalits.  


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**Short term rehabilitation** – Some of the short term rehabilitation activities include food security, creation of community assets, reviving schools, social mobilization and group formulations. There are INGOS and local VOs which initiated food for work programmes in affected villages to provide people with interim food security and mobilize resources, construction of community assets such as water sources, irrigation facilities such as canals, earthen check dams, roads and other civic infrastructure. They also carry out various participatory impact and need assessment studies to structure the rehabilitation plan.

Various VOs in the development arena, emphasise on community based initiatives. VOs form village development committees to coordinate restoration and rehabilitation initiatives at the community level. Functional groups comprise women, farmers, water users and youth to carry out specific task. Such efforts strengthen a right-based approach to rehabilitation and divert attention from relief aid, which helps in restructuring rehabilitation activities.

**Long term rehabilitation** – There are various VOs which were successful in mobilizing resources and have adopted a more long-term strategic approach. Restoration of farm and non-farm livelihoods, construction of schools cum cyclone shelters, and initiatives to strengthen community based disaster attentiveness are the main highlights of rehabilitation efforts made by VOs.

Prominent VOs have undertaken construction of 60 schools cum cyclone shelters. These efforts were supplemented with government initiatives to construct 150 multi-purpose cyclone shelters with resources received from various sources. They also strengthen the community disaster preparedness through activities such as awareness raising, training, local volunteers’ mobilization, contingency planning and institution building at the grass-root level for which VOs play the lead role in initializing.

**VOs response to the 1999 cyclone** – They played an active role during the Odisha cyclone. They responded to food relief, temporary shelter, medical aid, trauma counseling, etc. 40 local and international VOs set up an emergency response network called Odisha Disaster Mitigation Mission (ODMM). ODMM set up a control room at the state capital and shared information with the government regarding problems faced in affected areas.

**Displacement issue**

After independence, the Indian state assumed the responsibility for economic growth and national progress. This development gave impetus to large models of urbanization involving transfer of high level technology and heavy capital investment, which only strengthened the existing power structures and feudal patterns.

This development policy leads to systematic displacement and dispossession of the resources, labour, and the very means of human existence of the dalits, tribals and the poor. People were forced to abandon their
socio-economic fabric and ecosystem which was their very place of survival and were reduced to nomads and misfits. The development of industries, mines, dams and plantation has led to natural disaster and calamities, drought, floods, etc.

**VOs’ contribution to basic amenities and displacement**

VOs surveyed many resettled villages and identified various issues like unemployment, irrigation and the drinking water issue. Though this was the mandate under the policy of the government to provide these provisions, it was not implemented. VOs engaged themselves to develop infrastructure facilities. The VOs took the responsibility to improve the status of the displaced people. Some of the organizations like Divya Sewa Trust committed to improving the livelihood of the displaced women and youth. The people displaced in the Narmada Project were given assistance. It adopted 65 rehabilitation sites in Vadodara district for their development. It trained 300 youths and helped them attain jobs. It promoted a participatory approach in various community development activities. It provided them educational training. The VOs forced the government to integrate infrastructure development projects in the country. The constant efforts made by the VOs led to indigenous people becoming more vocal in voicing and claiming their rights.

**Civil society’s attempt towards Rehabilitation policy**

In 1987, a draft policy was prepared by National Working Group supported by Narmada Bachao Andolan. The civil society launched an extensive process of discussion across the nation to identify the principles on which the policy should be based. This was then presented to the secretary, Ministry of Rural Development and Government of India. The draft was approved and many principles enunciated by the civil society were approved. It was finally introduced in the Lok Sabha in 2011, but it’s currently, still under revision. So the civil society is actively involved in the influencing the policies at the national level.

**South Asian Voluntary Action**

Koraput is Odisha biggest district. A majority of its population (56%) are tribals forming 24% percent of the state’s tribal population. Today Dalits and Tribals form 70 per cent of the district’s population. The District has 18 large projects with about 5,00,000 acres (2,000 sq.km) of its total area of 26,961 sq.km (or 7.42 per cent) occupied by these schemes. More than one lakh tribals have been deprived of their land, including 4,00,000 acres of forest on which they are dependent for their livelihood. More than 6 percent of the district population, mainly tribals, have been displaced. The quality of life indicators like literacy, life expectancy, employment, health are low among the displaced people - the tribals and dalits.

SOVA is working towards achieving sustainable issue and the approach towards achieving sustainable issue is twofold – Farm activities, Non-farm activities

**Farm Activities**

Koraput is rich in natural resources like coal, aluminum, etc. but the so called developmental projects in the area have left thousands of tribes landless and without a livelihood, resulting in migration to other areas.

They have built community organizations in 72 villages so the tribals can work together to maximize the potential of their natural resources and reduce the dependency on their landlords. All activities are planned and implemented with complete participation of the villagers to ensure their success and sustainability.

**Land Development:** They work with the rural poor, build their capabilities, and introduce and develop new livelihood opportunities. It has an integrated approach to resource management and has demonstrated ways to promote the development of natural resources. This approach leads to an equitable and sustainable economic growth that ensures household food security, and helps minimize mass poverty. The technologies that SOVA has developed are simple and labour intensive and best suited to the people they are designed to serve. In the land development projects, they have trained farmers on land-leveling and bonding, water conservation and planning sustainable agriculture strategies.

**Vegetable Cultivation:** They are working to encourage farmers to take up vegetable cultivation on their small-scale homesteads and near dug wells. These activities provide the poor family with a dependable source of income. They have taken up fruit tree plantation programmes on private lands. Over 6,000 families are currently involved in SOVA’s horticulture programme.

**Non Farm activities**

**Low Cost Housing:** They supply home building materials, like tin roofs and doors to the poorest of poor villagers, identified by their village development committees. The villagers then work together to construct the homes using local materials and the materials provided. So far, they have helped in the construction of 90 homes, changing the lives of families that previously had no shelter and few opportunities.

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Right to economic livelihood

_Dalit women’s livelihoods accountability initiative_

Unemployment is a major upheaval in India. There is a lack of capital and infrastructure in the rural sector which has led to a large pool of surplus labour, willing to work at very low wages. Traditionally there were agriculture and cottage industries, but due to the ever mounting population it became insufficient to absorb them. Therefore, people migrate to cities in search of work and a better quality of life. Women and children suffer the most as they stay back in the village and fall prey to exploitative practices of land owners or contractors. The rural areas have remained exploitative in nature with gender and caste based hierarchy existing.

To address such complexities of poverty and unemployment the Mazdoor Kissan Shakti Sanghantana (MKSS) and the National Campaign for people (NCPRI) /Right to Information and many other people’s movements and organizations, campaigned for an employment guarantee scheme that was introduced by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in 2005. The NREGA was the largest initiative towards creating a social security mechanism for the marginalized.

The NREGA has benefited many vulnerable groups. Still, there were some places like Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, where dalit women were not claiming these rights. They were unaware of such schemes. To create more awareness among them and the ability to claim these legal entitlements, there was an initiative called ‘Dalit Women’s Livelihood Accountability Initiative (DWLAI)’ which has been in operation in Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh since January 2010. This initiative has been partnered with DSS.

_DWLAI is working towards their access to NREGA related entitlement. Some of its achievements are –_

- It underlined the inter–relations between political and economic rights. It enhanced the rights by building capacity of both the target groups to claim their economic rights and also enhanced the target group’s participation in decision making.
- It emphasized the relationship between dalit women’s right to decent work and their right to improve their own knowledge, skill and abilities to negotiate their rights.
- It assisted dalit women in acquiring job cards, bank accounts in their name and access to community resources for employment. The key was claiming the economic rights.

_Right to work and national security bill_

There are various marginalized populations and poor in urban India who despite contributing to India’s economic growth, continue to be undervalued and exploited. There have been many interventions with hawkers, domestic workers, construction workers. Still there needs to be lot of work done so that they are able to live with dignity.
Effectiveness of DWLAI

There was a remarkable change in the participation of Dalit women in MGNREGA employment as labourers as well as supervisors; involvement of Panchayatraj leaders to expand access of the MGNREGA to Dalit women. Other important advances were obtaining job cards and bank accounts for Dalit women and the payment of wages through the women’s bank account. There were also more Dalit women as union members and improved worksite facilities.

Their success was largely due to the efficacy in building capacities of partner organizations to educate, empower and work in the interests of right holders while holding duty bearers and officials responsible and accountable for administering MGNREGA. Their piloting of innovative models enabled them to demonstrate results and learn from each other and continuous lobbying and advocacy.

Policy and practice work on right to social security by YUVA

There has been efforts by YUVA to bring changes at the policy level in the national security bill and also build the capacities of the informal sector workers at the grass-root level. YUVA is making an effort to put pressure on the central government to make the social security act more inclusive and comprehensive. This act doesn’t cover livelihood rights as part of social security, there is no nodal ministry to implement and no social security fund. Many talks were conducted with the Labour Ministry. It submitted various petitions demanding amendments in the social security act to MLA’s, MP’s. There were many national level workshops and campaigns launched to raise awareness on this act.

Impact

- Advocacy of Social Security Now has led to an increase in budgetary allocations for informal workers, Rs 1000 crores has been allocated for social security schemes and Rs 1000 crore for skill up-gradation of informal workers.
- There is inclusion of the issue related to the lacunae in Social Security Now.
- YUVA is a core working group of the Social Security Act and has played a key role in developing and strengthening the campaign of Social Security Now.

48 http://www.unwomen.org/~/media/Headquarters/Media/Publications/en/FGEP/ProgrammeEvaluationGenderatWorkDSSIndia.pdf
49 Social Security Now, is a network of over 500 organizations including people’s movement, trade union, Civil society organizations all over India campaigning towards the realization of comprehensive social security and protection for about 423 million unorganized workers through a central legislation.
**VOs helping to strengthen NREGA**

VOs are strengthening the village development committee and self-governing body and making them aware about various employment rights. They have succeeded in helping and strengthening various rural villages to access employment under NREGA and fight against vested interest groups to ensure that they can work on their own local projects, without any unjust means.

VOs are increasing their reach through awareness programmes and capacity building of socially excluded minorities of the various schemes and policies. Some of its efforts are –

- Job cards of individuals belonging to socially excluded groups.
- Person – days of work received on average by members of socially excluded group.
- Timely payment of prescribed wages to workers from socially excluded group.
- Provision of prescribed worksite facilities with a particular focus on women and people with disabilities.
- Participation of CBOs in MGNREGA committees for inclusive implementation of the scheme
- Productive assets, resources and control of ownership by socially excluded groups.

VOs are making efforts in strengthening SHGs - This group can collectively accrue saving to fund income–generating activities such as agriculture, livestock rearing, fish farming and horticulture. VOs are helping women to be economically independent and encouraging groups to undertake various income generating activities such as agriculture, livestock rearing, fish farming and horticulture. They link them to various local banks so that they are able to access external funds and government loans.

**Access to water and sanitation among dalits**

Almost 73% of the population lives in villages. There has been investment in the water and sanitation sectors but there have been the same challenges faced, like low coverage and poor water and sanitation services especially in rural areas. The Dalit community faces discrimination when it comes to access to water and sanitation. In India more than 20% of dalits do not have access to drinking water, 48.8% of dalit villages are denied access to the water source and only 10% of dalit households have access to sanitation as compared to 27% for non-dalit households. Dalit women often are socially excluded and stand in a separate queue to fetch water.

Communities in Andhra Pradesh were unaware of their rights and entitlements. The service delivery departments were not very responsive and drinking water systems were defunct for long periods of time. This led to a lot of hardships among rural communities specially dalit communities, women and children who had to travel long distance to collect water. An organization CRSD, in Anantpur has been working in the area of water. CRSD combined its advocacy and works with MGNREGA, to streamline the rights to water and sanitation and increased access to services among the poor. It is working with dalit communities.

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50. [http://www.pacsindia.org/key-themes/sustainable-livelihoods/mgnregs](http://www.pacsindia.org/key-themes/sustainable-livelihoods/mgnregs)

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which are deprived of safe drinking water. It is helping the communities to raise awareness about the issues by forming water and sanitation committees including government officials. At every review meeting with the officials, the committee consistently demanded that a pipeline to be laid from the overhead tank to the community. There were nearly 135 water and sanitation committee members, consisting of Self help group members and Srama Shakthi from 15 Grama Panchayats, who were also involved in this process.

Major achievements of CRSD

- The government approved an allocation of two rupees per person per day for drinking water, benefiting nearly 800,000 community members.
- For the first time, the Education Department allowed schools to use their maintenance funds for maintaining toilets.
- Marginalized Dalit communities and school children in 165 villages accessed improved water and sanitation facilities.
- Substantial investments have been made using labourers employed by the employment guarantee scheme to renovate water recharging structures, which has led to increased water tables in most of the areas covered.
- In May 2012, the government agreed to include latrine-building within the employment scheme. In this approach, the government pays rural labourers to build the latrines as part of the existing employment scheme. CRSD provides the training and covers the material costs.
- As a result of the collaborative approach, the government institutionalized the dialogue, by forming a government organisation – the Andhra Pradesh Alliance of NGOs (APNA), which is monitoring the implementation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and the Scheme in Andhra Pradesh. Both the Department of Rural Development (responsible for WASH) and the Department of Primary Education, are involved in the committee.
- The Department for Rural Development has passed government orders giving space for NGO network members to participate in the monthly state-level interface workshop with the Principal Secretary of Rural Development, that reviews the employment guarantee scheme and at district-level with the Project Director of the District Water Management Department. Furthermore, the government has now taken on the role of facilitator and funder of the meetings.
- Facilitated by civil society organizations, the work has strengthened interactions at the village, sub-district and district level and between government officials and rural labourers.

http://www.freshwateraction.net/sites/freshwateraction.net/files/CRSD%20GTF%20case%20study.pdf
Food security and livelihood—Action for food production

It works in the area of agriculture and food security by adopting innovative models of sustainable agriculture practices, which includes soil and water conservation and promoting alternate livelihood options. It focuses on a community-based environment, low-cost water saving technologies, tree-based farming, rural livelihood securities through integrated farming systems. There are various development models to improve livelihood through a combination of crop rotation, mixed cropping, organic farming and dry land agriculture practices.

It has focused on providing technical solutions to small and marginalized farmers to improve their production. Integrated agriculture practices with livestock rearing and fisheries model solutions have been developed for specific geographical location to meet the requirements and also generate additional income.

It has also contributed to better management practices in traditional cropping patterns that has also evolved as a strategy to improve livelihood, like cotton cultivation across project villages in Maharashtra and Gujarat. To enhance livelihood by reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing adaptive communities to climate change, was also one of the strategies. The roles of livestock in rural households and their contribution to livelihood, led to creation of barefoot technicians. Livestock specialists designed and developed modules of capacity building of livestock technicians, for the promotion of livestock and animal husbandry in rural areas.

Right to adequate housing

The right to housing is recognized as a basic human right by the United Nations as well as India. Despite this recognition, the right to housing is blatantly violated in India. India is part of various international treaties and covenants that endorse the right to housing. These include Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the rights of the child, etc. Housing is a critical issue for the urban poor. Housing is one of the top priorities for every citizen. It is regarded as a basic facility which cannot be denied in a fair and equitable society. “According to the National Family Health Survey, concluded in 2000 by the Indian government, only 19% of the rural population lives in pucca (strong) houses, while the remaining live in kaccha (weak) and semi-pucca houses with mud walls and thatched roofs.”

Adequate housing is integral to poverty reduction and social justice. It cannot be viewed in isolation, but is very much a part to develop harmonious and healthy communities.

Rural housing poverty

Most of the Indian population is rural and 70% of the poor lives in villages. According to National family health survey conducted in 2000 by the Indian government, only 19% of the rural population lives in pacca houses, while the remaining live in kaccha (weak) and semi-pacca houses with mud walls and thatched roofs. 87% of homes in villages do not have toilet facilities. Cooking is done inside the house without

proper ventilation, with biomass such as dried cow-dung, firewood, dry weed or crop residue which can be harmful for health.

55 **Community housing through VOs**

There are various promising models of housing facilities which involve VOs and communities. There are various VOs which are involved in taking up the task of facilitating housing construction and providing loans to the poor, like Habitat for humanity. They provide interest free loans to the poor. The funds come from individual or corporate donors. These funds are channelized to the deserving recipient through various VOs. Habitat for humanity provides technical assistance and work along with the housing partners. The housing partner ensures that such facilities are going to the most vulnerable person.

VOs perform a variety of roles, like identifying the right beneficiaries, disbursement of funds, and also monthly collection of repayment, cultivating SHGs in each locality to ensure payment is done.

VOs are focusing on housing poverty in India. VOs are looking at housing poverty, both in rural and urban areas. They developed successful housing projects that influenced government housing policies. VOs have developed solutions that have been adopted by the government in its local and national

55 http://tejas.iimb.ac.in/articles/Tejas_September%20Edition_Article%203.pdf

programmes. Organizations like SAATH, have integrated slum development projects, which became the basis for the slum networking programme, implemented by Ahmedabad municipal corporation. There are certain slum relocation models which have become the standard in Mumbai and are now being replicated in other cities.

VOs are now looking at more market-based solutions and new social business models. VOs like Mahila Sewa Housing Trust or SPARC, also provide housing solutions, while being financially sustainable.

SAATH did a detailed survey in the slum of Pravinagar (Ahmedabad) to see the impact of ISD. The survey demonstrated that the project has allowed housing upgradation (increasing the number of rooms or making a concrete roof and brick walls or making a lasting flooring. About 40% have made changes in their houses. About Rs 50,250 have been spent on the house up-gradation.57

Human Rights Law Network – work towards illegal forced eviction and network with other organizations to evolve a joint action campaign ensuring the right to housing for everyone. In 2000, National Forum of Housing was set up in various parts of the country. There were various awareness programmes, talks with the government to solve the housing issues. The team provided legal and administrative provision for the urban poor. It studied the master plan provisions, suggested and advocated pro-poor changes. It developed various strategies of intervention and built public support for the campaign. This initiative involved policy makers, bureaucrats and progressive town planners, to implement pro-poor policies and adequate housing and land supply. Forced eviction was monitored and extensive documentation was carried out which stirred a lot of public reaction, both in the national and international circuits.58

SPARC – It is an organization based in Mumbai which works with the most vulnerable and invisible Mumbai urban poor, pavement dwellers. It finds a solution for the poorest and most marginalized population in the city.

Housing Projects
They started work with pavement slums and formed a network of women’s collective called Mahila Milan (Women together). They entered into partnership with the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF). The aim of this alliance is to promote and produce urban development practices that are inclusive of the poor. They are also engaging with the government to undertake housing and sanitation projects, which are led by the community. They also work in partnership with various local and regional authorities, financial

“SAATH was the first NGO in the 90’s, to say that poor people were able and willing to pay for basic infrastructures and services”
— Rajendra Joshi, SAATH founder and managing trustee

institutions and poor communities to explore the various possibilities. They are working to explore the various possibilities under the existing policies and are in talks with regulatory bodies to advocate better housing policies at the city, state and national levels.

**Conclusion**

VOs have assumed a significant position in the wider engagement of the civic and development initiatives. Factors such as disillusionment with a centralized structure, importance of pluralism, expanding civic engagement and collaboration amongst multiple actors, justifies such changes in its approach and perception. There is growing relevance of VOs which can be attributed to the realization that neither the state nor the market can fully address the problems faced today. VOs have become global actors in the development process across the globe on various livelihood issues, starting with community development to training policy research and advocacy. The organizational facility, informal work style and close engagement with grassroots communities, enable them to deliver services to people at lower costs.

The VOs are making efforts to make poor communities self-sustainable. When these groups have access to sustained livelihood, they become less susceptible to natural and man-made forces. They are making efforts to create spaces around, where rural people can be organized and equipped to deal with outside systems and claim their basic rights. VOs’ approach towards livelihood has always been people-centric. They are constantly working towards enabling the communities by making technologies and ideas available to them, so that they can control their own resources. These resources help in organizing the poor into institutions, at various levels, making them integrate in the mainstream systems and providing sustainability to their lives. The problems of livelihood are age-old and complex, so it won’t be justified for any single actor to make a significant mark. There is a huge gap which exists between the haves and have-nots and VOs are constantly trying to fill that gap. The efforts will be impactful only when multiple players come together, that is, the government and civil society, to provide concrete steps to improve the bottom of the pyramid.

Some of the steps which VOs could take in strengthening the livelihood rights of the vulnerable groups are –

- VOs programme can be more people-centric and can build further capacities to empower people to help them develop their own assets and skills, so that they can access new opportunities for income generation and employment.

- VOs should expand their outreach and play an active role in sensitizing the masses in rural areas, across India to have a more qualitative approach towards changing the employment scenario and be able to mobilize more resources for such groups.

• VOs should also focus on old age and disabilities groups which are also denied basic livelihood rights. They should have concrete and exclusive policies and programmes on their agenda.

• There should be action-oriented participatory research with individuals, households, communities and villages to identify, characterize and prioritize constraints and interventions, for improved productions and increased livestock productivity.

• VOs should strengthen the alliance among farmer organizations, communities and CBOs for raising awareness and develop capacities to ensure farmers’ rights to preserve genetic resources of biodiversity.

• Land right activists need to demand for positive processes towards implementing women’s rights to land and resources.

Issues of Women

Introduction and Background

Women have been consistently discriminated against and structurally marginalized in patriarchal societies such as India. Gender based inequalities have denied women basic socio-economic, political, cultural and civil rights and fundamental rights such as the right to equality before law, right to education, right to freedom of association and, in some cases, the right to life and liberty.

In India, gender discrimination starts right at birth with greater value being placed on the health and survival of males than of females. Health and population indicators such as sex ratio at birth and infant and child mortality by sex, clearly show a preference for male children. This systematic discrimination is further intensified through lower access to resources such as education, employment, income and limited power of decision-making and freedom of movement. Women face acute economic constraints which disallow them from breaking through the cycle of vulnerability, exploitation and the lack of agency that they are trapped in.

Violence against women has been institutionalized in Indian society, over decades of subjugation and routine emotional and physical abuse in Indian households. Regressive systems such as the purdah system, dowry and normative practices such as child marriage, sati and enforced widowhood have proved conducive to gender based violence and continue to reinforce the secondary status of women.

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60. The National Family Health Survey 2005-06 (NFHS-3) includes sex ratios at birth, infant and child mortality by sex and low ages at marriage for women as indicators that are driven by gender differences in the perceived worth of males and females.

61. Although the last known case of Sati was reported from Deorala village in Rajasthan in 1987, which prompted the enactment of the Sati Prevention Act, the practice of “becoming” sati is still glorified and Sati temples still exist. Please see: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/stoi/Why-sati-is-still-a-burning-issue/articleshow/4897797.cms?
Women from disadvantaged groups such as lower castes and classes and rural populations are particularly vulnerable to violence and deprivation, in the form of lack access to health and educational services. Women’s empowerment has become an integral part of the development discourse in this context. The government has adopted affirmative policies for the up-liftment of women, while the judiciary has passed certain progressive judgments which have set important precedents. Other actors such as the civil society, have also played a significant role in reforming and widening the space occupied by women in public and personal spheres, in linking critical issues on the national, regional and global agenda to the needs and concerns of women and in initiating a debate on gender and the socialization of gender itself.

This has also led to a shift towards a right-based approach to the status of women in India in recent years, whereby women are asserting themselves and demanding equal rights from the state, instead of entitlements which prove hollow in the absence of sustained social change, which may take years to bring about.

**Government Initiatives**

*– Domestic Interventions*

The government has acknowledged the wide gap that exists between goals enunciated in the Constitution and the situational reality of the status of women in India. Although women are constitutionally guaranteed rights such as the right to vote and the right to work, they are largely absent from the economic and political space in India and their participation in political decision making and the formal workforce is abysmal.

The government’s focus, initially, was on the provision of basic services and redressal mechanisms to women through its welfare schemes such as Sabla (Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls) and legislations such as the anti-dowry law. However, in recent years, there has been a gradual realization that women need to be integrated as equal partners into the development process, which requires the government to adopt a more holistic approach. Therefore, the government has shifted its approach to enabling women to participate more effectively in economic and political institutions. It has adopted far more nuanced policies such as the promotion of self-help groups and micro finance programmes to ensure economic security for women and laws such as the 73rd amendment, passed in 1993, which allows for 50 per cent reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

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63 National Policy for Empowerment of Women. Available at: http://www.wcd.nic.in/empwomen.htm
Central Government Welfare Schemes for Women:

1) **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**

The government introduced the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme in 2014 with the aim of arresting the decline of Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and improving the ratio through a mass campaign accompanied by multi-sectoral action in 100 gender critical districts. The targets under the scheme are to improve the sex ratio at birth by 10 points in a year in the 100 gender critical districts and reduce the gender differential in child mortality rate for children under five years from 8 points to 4 points. It also places emphasis on increasing girls’ enrolment in secondary education from 76% in 2013-14 to 79% by 2017 and providing girls with toilets in every school in the 100 gender critical districts. Other targets include improving the nutrition status of girls under five years of age and ensure universalisation of ICDS.

2) **Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) – Conditional Maternity Benefit (CMB)**

This scheme targets pregnant and lactating women and aims to improve their health and nutrition along with the health of their infants.

The focus is on promoting appropriate practices and care during the pregnancy, delivery and lactation stages and encouraging women to follow optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices including early and exclusive breast feeding for the first six months. For this purpose, the government provides cash incentives to pregnant and lactating mothers through the platforms of ICDS such as Anganwadi centres.

3) **Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (Sabra)**

The government adopted the Sabla scheme to enable adolescent girls to achieve self-development and empowerment. It provides an integrated package of services to adolescent girls through ICDS. These services include nutrition provision, iron and folic acid supplementation, regular health check-ups, nutrition and health education, counselling and guidance on family practices, child care and home management as well as vocational training for girls over the age of 16.

Under the scheme, adolescent girls are also provided information about existing public services such as Primary Health clinics, post offices, banks etc.

4) **Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP)**

The government has adopted the STEP programme to provide support to poor or asset-less marginalised women with special focus on SC/ST households, women headed households and families below the poverty line. The target group includes women daily
wage labourers, unpaid daily workers, migrant labours, tribals and dispossessed groups.

5) **Ujjawala- Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-Integration of Victims of Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation**

The Ujjawala scheme has been adopted with the objective of prevention of trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation and to facilitate rescue of victims and their subsequent placement in safe custody. It focuses on five components namely, prevention, rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration and repatriation.

The government provides funds to implementing agencies such as Women and Child Welfare Department of State governments, Women’s Development Corporations, Urban Local Bodies or voluntary organisations. These agencies can use the funds for the purpose of generating awareness, for conducting programmes for social mobilisation, provision of rehabilitation services including counselling, legal aid and vocational training or to facilitate repatriation of cross-border victims to their country of origin.

Source: [http://wcd.nic.in/](http://wcd.nic.in/)

The Government also set up the National Commission for Women (NCW) in 1990, which is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Both the Ministry and the Commission have the mandate to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. In addition, State Commissions have been set up to work on policies to advance gender equality at the state level.

The government adopted the **National Policy for the Empowerment of Women** in 2001 with the goal of bringing about advancement, development and empowerment of women. The policy lists the continuously declining female ratio in the population, social stereotyping and violence at the domestic and societal levels and widespread discrimination against the girl child as manifestations of gender disparity and recognizes the need for a change in societal attitude which acts as a barrier to the attainment of equality for women.

Its objectives include creation of an enabling environment for women to realize their full potential through the adoption of positive economic and social policies, elimination of all forms of violence against women, while strengthening the legal systems aimed at ending discrimination against women. It also seeks equal access for women to health care, quality education, vocational training, and remuneration for work, social security and political representation.

The policy also states the intention of the government to build partnerships with the civil society and in particular with women’s organisations, as they work closely with women at the grassroots level and have the capacity to reach groups and areas where the scope of government is limited.
The government also launched the **National Mission for Empowerment of Women** (NMEW) in 2010 with the intention of strengthening its efforts for women’s development. The NMEW facilitates the convergence of all the women’s welfare and socio-economic development programmes run by various ministries and departments of the central government.

The NMEW routinely engages voluntary organisations who work for women’s rights in order to carry out research, increase community outreach, generate awareness and implement government programmes such as capacity building of women.

Over the years, the government has enacted various legislations meant to protect the rights of women. These include:

1) **The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961**, which seeks to prohibit the practice of giving or asking for dowry by holding any person who gives or takes or abets the giving or taking of dowry, or demands dowry directly or indirectly, liable for prosecution.

2) **The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987**, which deems that anyone who attempts sati or does any act towards such commission shall be liable for punitive action. In case of a person committing sati, the person who abets the commission either directly or indirectly is considered an offender.\(^{64}\)

3) **The Hindu Succession Amendment Act, 2005**, which provides equal rights of inheritance of ancestral land and property to married and unmarried daughters as that of the sons. (It does not apply to Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Jews.)

4) **The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005**, which is a civil law which recognizes the right of a woman to live in violence free home and provides legal remedies if she is subjected to physical, sexual, verbal and emotional or economic abuse. The court provides relief by way of protection order, custody order, compensation order, residence order, monetary relief or through an interim or ex parte order.\(^{65}\)

5) **The Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (SHWW), 2013**, which defines what constitutes sexual harassment at the workplace and provides redressal mechanisms. It stipulates the setting up of Internal Complaints Committees and Local Complaints Committees to investigate and settle matters through conciliation.\(^{66}\)

6) **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013**, which recognises acts such as acid attacks, sexual harassment, voyeurism, stalking and trafficking as punishable offences and also broadens the definition of rape, while at the same time increasing the quantum of punishment up to death for sexual assault and rape.

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\(^{64}\) **Copy of the Act available at** [http://wcd.nic.in/commissionofsatiprevention.htm](http://wcd.nic.in/commissionofsatiprevention.htm)


\(^{66}\) **Copy of the Act available at** [http://wcd.nic.in/wcdact/womenactsex.pdf](http://wcd.nic.in/wcdact/womenactsex.pdf)
Role and Contribution of Voluntary Organizations working on Women, Children & Livelihood Issues

– International Commitments

The government is also a signatory to international conventions such as the Convention to End all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Declaration.

CEDAW was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and subsequently ratified by 187 of the 194 member nations.

It is widely considered as an international bill of rights for women and aims at removing discrimination against women, where discrimination is defined as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.67

States that are party to the Convention are required to adopt certain measures such as reforming their legal system to abolish discriminatory laws and adopting laws which prohibit discrimination against women; establishing tribunals and other such public institutions to ensure protection of women against discrimination, and ensuring that all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organisations or enterprises are eliminated.

They are also bound to submit national reports to the Committee every four years, detailing the measures taken by them to comply with treaty obligations.

The MDGs have been the definitive development goals since they were adopted at the turn of the century. Out of the eight goals listed in the declaration, three of them are committed specifically to reducing gender disparity and empowering women.

India signed the CEDAW in 1980 and ratified it on 9 July, 1993. Recently, India submitted its 4th and 5th periodic reports on 2 July, 2014 at the 58th session of the committee. The report acknowledged the heightened international attention brought to incidences of violence against women in India after the gruesome rape incident of December, 2012 and highlighted the key initiatives and strategies of the Government of India for the period 2006 to 2011 including infrastructure development, economic and social inclusion of the marginalised and gender-sensitive policies.

The shadow/alternative country report for the period under consideration was submitted by the National Alliance of Women (NAWO) which drew attention to the enormous problems still faced by women in India and stated that the Government has failed to ensure the protection and promotion of women’s human rights through the full implementation of national laws and policies and international conventions and treaties that it is party to.

For a summary of the report, refer to: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/Ind/INT_CEDAW_NGO_Ind_17400_E.pdf

Goal no. 2 of the Declaration aims to achieve universal primary education. India is on track with the targets under this goal. It achieved an impressive net enrollment ratio of almost 98 per cent for both boys and girls.

But these enrolment figures do not seem to reflect the reality of how many people actually attend school or complete the primary education cycle. According to a recent UNICEF report, 80 million children out of the 200 million children (almost 40 per cent) enrolled in schools drop out without completing their primary education. This may be due to a number of factors such as inaccessibility, child labour, poor quality of education and child marriages. Notably, almost 62 per cent of the out of school children were girls which indicates that they are far more susceptible to being taken out of school to work at home or to be married off early due to factors such as low importance attached to women’s education, concern about women’s safety at school and regressive attitudes restricting their mobility outside the household.68

Goal no. 3 of the Declaration is the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. Under this goal, countries are required to ensure an increase in the ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education, an increase in the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and higher representation of women in the national parliament.

India has made remarkable progress in achieving equality in gross enrolment ratios (GER) for primary and secondary education after having missed the 2005 deadline for elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education. However, the country still remains far behind in attaining this goal when it comes to tertiary education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary school participation, Net enrolment ratio, 2008-2012</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>98.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school participation, Net attendance ratio, 2008-2012</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>81.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school participation, Net attendance ratio, 2008-2012</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate (15-24 years), 2008-2012</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>74.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


With respect to women’s employment and political participation, the GoI’s MDG Report 2009 states that “participation of women in employment and decision making remains far less than that of men, and the disparity is not likely to be eliminated by 2015.” 69

**Goal no. 5** aims to improve maternal health by reducing the Maternal Maternity Ratio (MMR) by three fourths between 1990 and 2015, increasing the number of institutionalized births, where deliveries are made by skilled health professionals and ensuring universal access to reproductive health.

India has succeeded in reducing MMR from 280 per 100,000 live births in 2005 to 190 per 100,000 live births in 2013. However, India will fall short of the target set by the MDGs as it is required to bring down the MMR to 109 per 100,000 live births by 2015.

Institutional deliveries in India have risen from a mere 26 per cent in 1992-1993 to 47 per cent in 2007-2008.70 But universal coverage still remains a distant target as it is expected that India will be able to ensure only 62 per cent of births in institutional facilities by trained personnel by 2015.71

Therefore, India has performed poorly or less than satisfactorily on all the gender goals listed in the MDG declaration.

**Overview of Present Situation**

The status of women in India has shown little, if any improvement in the past few decades despite the various government initiatives. The number of cases of crimes committed against women which include rapes, female infanticide, domestic abuse, kidnapping, trafficking and forced prostitution, dowry deaths, sexual harassment and molestation, are on the rise with the National Crime Record Bureau’s statistics showing a 7.1 per cent increase nationwide since 2010.

India continues to perform poorly on international indexes which measure gender inequality and gender gaps.

It ranked 132 out of 187 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (GII) in 2013 according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report. The GII measures the loss in a country’s progress and human development because of gender inequality in reproductive health, women empowerment and labour market participation.

The report also paints a dismal picture when it comes to women’s access to education, employment and health services and political participation. According to the report, only 29 per cent of women above the age of 15 were a part of the workforce compared to 80.7 per cent men in 2011. Only 10.9 per cent of Members of Parliament (MPs) in India are women.

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69. UNDP in India overview of MDGs at http://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/mdgoverview/overview/mdg3/
71. UNDP in India overview of MDGs at http://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/mdgoverview/overview/mdg3/
The child sex ratio in India is extremely skewed with only 914 females per 1000 men and the maternal mortality ratio is extremely high with 200 deaths per 100,000 child births. Only 26.6 per cent of women above the age of 25 years received a secondary education in 2010, according to the report.

The Global Gender Gap Index, which is measured by the World Economic Forum in order to assess the progress made by a country in bridging the gender gap, has ranked India 101 out of 136 countries in 2013. The index measures the relative gap between men and women in the areas of health, education, economics and politics based on a country’s performance in four sub-indices that measure economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. The rankings are based on four of sub-indices that measure economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. While India performed strongly in the political empowerment sub index and was ranked 9th (this was only because India was ranked high in the Female Head of State indicator when Pratibha Patil was in office and didn’t reflect actual levels of political participation), it was ranked only 124 in economic participation, 120 in educational attainment level and a dismal 135 in health and survival.

India is the lowest ranked BRICS country in the Global Gender Gap Index. It also emerged as the worst G20 country to be a woman in, in a recent poll conducted by the Thomas Reuters Foundation. The poll, which was based on parameters such as quality of health services, threat of physical and sexual violence, level of political voice, and access to property and land rights, found that women in India are discriminated against and face abuse and threats to survival at an unparalleled scale amongst the G20 countries.

Despite widespread efforts by the civil society such as women’s rights organisations, student organisations and other NGOs and State institutions to increase awareness, eliminate gender discrimination and ensure equal rights for women, the current situation in India continues to be extremely disheartening for women’s empowerment.

These efforts need to be complemented by adequate legal systems and policies.

Unfortunately, despite existing schemes and policies, their effect remains largely limited due to either systemic gaps in the implementation or lack of awareness about the programmes at the grassroots level. This ignorance is caused by widespread illiteracy and further spawns corruption and inefficiency. Women are also denied access to these schemes because of high levels of domestic subjugation due to which they have restricted mobility and their decision making capacity and agency is highly curtailed. There also exist glaring lacunae in the Indian legal system such as the non-recognition of marital rape as a crime against women and a punishable offence. These archaic laws need to be reformed at the earliest to ensure that women occupy an equal space in society.

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72 UNDP in India overview of MDGs at http://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/mdgoverview/overview/mdg3/
73 “India advances, but many Women still trapped in Dark Ages”, Thomas Reuters Foundation, June 13, 2012 at http://www.trust.org/item/20120613010100-b7scy/?source=spotlight
Areas of VOs’ Contribution in women’s rights through research and advocacy, service delivery and rights-based actions

Voluntary Organisations have contributed significantly to the advancement of women’s social, economic and political rights in India. By adopting feminist policies and innovative programmes, women’s rights organisations seek to challenge oppressive gender power relations and alter the marginalised position which women have been relegated to in society.

Voluntary organisations have also been actively involved in the planning and execution processes of various national and state policies related to women, whereby they provide critical inputs to the government and its concerned agencies and supplement the government’s implementation efforts to ensure that core issues are identified and addressed and that these policies adequately benefit the target population.

Development organisations working for women’s empowerment conduct research on various issues such as domestic violence, sexual harassment at workplaces and lack of access to basic amenities. They develop training methodologies and systems for capacity building of women and organize awareness campaigns and gender sensitization workshops; they interact with state and non-state actors and advocate the creation of an enabling environment for women with the objective of empowering women by restructuring patriarchal institutions and achieving tangible gains such as greater access and control over resources by women.

These organisations also run programmes to bridge service delivery gaps in education, health, employment, legal aid and post abuse rehabilitation.

Research and Advocacy

Awareness Campaigns: - Women’s issues and concerns are largely sidelined not only at the local, community level but even by Governments and the media. To bring these issues into mainstream discussions is one of the main objectives of voluntary organisations working on women's rights.

VOs carry out widespread research and on the basis of their studies and findings they do advocacy with policy making bodies. They also carry out awareness campaigns and initiate discussions on women’s concerns such as domestic violence, sexual harassment and economic discrimination and deprivation. VOs also identify a wide range of stakeholders such as college students, panchayats, law enforcement agencies and young men in the age group of 18 to 25 years and try to sensitize them to the status of women in India and the urgent reform of patriarchal institutions.

Women’s organisations and activists also help in developing and incorporating a gender perspective through trainings and events. In order to maximize their impact, VOs design and implement ingenious programmes and widely use technology and multimedia. They use social media such as Twitter and Facebook to reach a mass audience and encourage them to understand the urgent and deep-rooted nature of women’s issues.

Safetipin App

Safetipin is a free mobile app which allows users to rate the level of safety in their neighbourhoods on various parameters such as availability of public transportation and open spaces. It also allows them to

share other information such as instances of harassment at a particular spot and timings of shops in a locality. The information shows up on a map which serves as a safety indicator and location information repository to women and other stakeholders such as the government, NGOs and other citizens.75

In a recent analysis done by Safetipin for about 10,000 spots in New Delhi, respondents have given below average ratings for parameters such as availability of light, openness, walk path and public transportation.76

### The One Billion Rising (OBR) Campaign

The One Billion Rising Campaign came to India in 2013 where various events such as flash mobs, street plays, marches and cultural events were planned across cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Vadodara, Srinagar, Siliguri, Kolkata, Lucknow and Madurai.

The OBR campaign in Delhi was organised on 14 February, 2014 with almost 65 organisations and numerous individuals coming together to participate. The Global OBR campaign aims at generating awareness about violence against women and is an international call to pledge to root out violence against women. Jagori and Sangat are the Indian coordinators of the campaign.

To learn more about OBR, please see: http://www.onebillionrising.org/about/campaign/

### Ring the Bell!

Breakthrough, a global Human Rights organisation has started the “Ring the Bell” Campaign. The campaign calls on men around the globe to make a promise to take concrete action, however small or big, to end violence against women. The campaign is based on the premise that an effective legal system and able law enforcement agencies need to be supplemented by individual and community actions which break the norms and habits that perpetuate violence. The campaign aims to mobilize almost one million men through Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr.

For further information, see: http://breakthrough.tv/ringthebell/what-you-can-do/

### Legal Aid and Policy Advocacy: -

Women are often unable to access a legal aid and redressal mechanism, which proves to be a major impediment for women in claiming their rights and entitlements. This may be due to a variety of reasons such as lack of awareness of their rights or economic constraints which make it difficult to benefit from legal services.

Voluntary organisations are involved in creating legal awareness among women. They ensure that women know about the various laws that pertain to the specific issues they face along with promoting over all

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76. IBID
knowledge of legalese. VOs also provide legal services such as assistance in filing and fighting court cases and legal advice. They also generate publications which collate and simplify decisions and laws and can be useful for other organisations and persons working on women’s rights.

VOs also view law as an instrument of change and strive to improve the legal system by pushing for reforms in laws which fall short of expectations of the lived realities of women and for introduction of laws where there are gaps in the legal system. Organisations routinely file Public Interest Litigations (PILs) where required in this regard.

The Lawyers Collective Women’s Rights Initiatives (LCWHRI) carries out promotion of legal knowledge through various literacy workshops and training programmes in schools and colleges. It also engages with law enforcement agencies and policy makers to sensitise them to particular problems that women face while approaching the legal system.

**Vishakha Judgement: A case of NGO Intervention**

Following a gross injustice where the accused in a rape case of a social worker were acquitted because they were from a “higher caste”, Vishakha, a Jaipur based NGO which works for women’s education and research filed a petition along with the Women’s Rehabilitation Group, Jagori and Kali for women. This led to the landmark Supreme Court judgement in 1997, which is popularly known as the Vishakha judgement where the Supreme Court laid down guidelines for combating Sexual Harassment at the workplace. It became mandatory for employers to set up internal committees to look into such complaints.

The full text of the judgement can be found here: http://www.curaj.ac.in/PDF/anti%20sexual%20harrassment%20cell/VishakaGuidelines%20CCSH%20GOI%20Instructions.pdf

**Amendments to Criminal Law dealing with sexual offence cases:**

The December 2012 gang rape case led to widespread protests through the capital and many other Indian cities such as Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad and Mumbai, where women’s organisations, activists, students and many others collectively demanded reforms to the laws pertaining to sexual offences. As a result of these protests the Central Government set up a three member commission known as the Justice Verma Committee. The committee was assigned with formulating recommendations for amendments to Criminal Law.

Thereafter, the committee held widespread discussions with activists and civil society organisations along with setting up feedback mechanisms for the general public.

After the submission of the report, The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 was passed in the Parliament in March, 2013, prior to which an ordinance was promulgated by Pranab Mukherjee, the President of India, in February 2013.
The ordinance came under strong criticism by women’s groups for ignoring some key recommendations listed in the Justice Verma Commission’s report, which was written after far reaching consultations with students, women’s groups and rights activists. An official statement issued by nearly 1350 women and rights activists criticised the ordinance for not recognizing marital rape as an offence, not trying rapes by armed forces personnel in ordinary courts and not barring politicians facing sexual offence charges from contesting elections.

The ordinance also left out other crucial recommendations. While the Justice Verma Commission was against death penalty in rape cases and recommended a maximum punishment of life in jail, the ordinance introduced the death penalty for aggravated rape. The ordinance also proposed gender neutrality of the perpetrator of rape but following protests from women’s rights organisations, this clause was removed to state that only a man can commit the offences under the Act, when the Ordinance was adopted as an Act of the Parliament.

Service delivery

Access to Health Facilities and addressing Reproductive Issues: - Most health and nutrition indicators in India are emblematic of the systematic discrimination against girls and women. The infant mortality rate for females is higher as compared to males. Although there is a marginal improvement in the overall sex ratio, child sex ratio (0-6 years) has been steadily declining and is currently at a low of only 918 girls to per 1,000 boys. This indicates that there is an increase in the prevalence of practices such as sex-selective abortion, systematic undercounting of female children and negligence of prenatal and ante natal care in the case of girls.

In case of full immunization, data suggests that the gender gap is growing as the proportion of male children who are fully immunized is 9 per cent higher than the corresponding proportion of female children (according to NFHS-3 estimates), whereas this differential was 8 per cent in NFHS-1 and 6 per cent in NFHS-2.
Girls are also likely to be undernourished or severely malnourished for the indicators of weight and height according to their age. This may be attributed to the fact that the girl child and her nutritional needs are often ignored and in case of the presence of other male children in the house, especially in poor households, are willfully discriminated against in favour of the son.

Women’s access to healthcare is also extremely limited due to ignorance and discrimination. Women’s health organisations play a very important role in plugging this gap.

They run programmes on addressing basic needs such as immunization, access to better sanitation, distribution of milk and supplements to undernourished girls and women and occasionally organising camps such as eye relief camps or tuberculosis detection camps. They also run relief camps for medical aid during emergencies such as natural calamities.

Voluntary organisations also engage in capacity building through training of activists, health care providers and doctors to address the special needs of girls and women who can’t afford good medical care, especially in rural and urban poor areas. For the purpose of community level awareness, sensitisation and capacity building, organisations run training programmes in schools and colleges and in various localities.

Voluntary organisations have a gender based perspective to health, where issues and concerns of women’s health are located in the realm of women’s rights. Women’s well-being and health concerns are often understood in relation to their role as mothers and care-givers. But women’s rights organisations believe that health is a fundamental human right and every woman is entitled to the provision of quality and affordable health care, regardless of the role she plays in a household.

With this perspective, these organisations undertake advocacy initiatives such as disseminating information through reports, meetings and publications to create mass awareness on issues such as maternal health,
occupational health hazards, AIDS and Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs). They also run campaigns against mal practices such as sex selection, forced sterilisation and violence against women.

They seek to influence government policies which have an impact on women’s health and address the gaps that persist in existing policies by liaising with the government and demanding for a gender dimension in all state policies and schemes. They also work in tandem with other networks and organisations working on similar issues to build consensus and devise strategies to improve the status of women’s health.

Access to Education: - According to data collected by NFHS-3, only 55 per cent of women and 78 per cent of men are literate in India. Other indicators such as the enrolment ratio and net attendance ratio also show a wide disparity between men and women, suggesting skewed access to education for women.

Only 59 per cent of women and 82 per cent of men aged between 15-49 years have ever been to school. Although the differential in attendance is minimal among children aged 6-10, it consistently increases with age. The sex ratio of girls attending school per 1,000 boys was 957 in the age group 6-10 after

**Advocacy by Sama**

Sama (Resource Group for Women and Health) is an NGO which was established in 1999 to develop a deeper understanding of health and initiate interventions to bring about structural and institutional changes for the betterment of people’s lives, especially women.

In order to build momentum for these interventions, Sama has been a member of various national and international health and women movements and networks such as the People’s Health Movement (PHM), Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA), National Network of Autonomous Women’s Groups (NNAWG), International Women and Health Meet (IWHM), Ethics Movement and National Bioethics Conference.

Sama has also consistently worked with national organisations such as the National Commission of Women (NCW) and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), using its own understanding of health in the context of socio-economic, historical and political realities to bring in a more comprehensive perspective on health in the collaborative projects.

As part of a project conceptualised by NCW, Sama initiated Health and Nutrition training of college students in Delhi.

Sama was also responsible for preparing chapters on health for the Class 7th Social Science text book as per the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) in 2005.

As part of the NHRC’s initiative to spread awareness on human rights education through “Dossiers on Human Rights Education for University Students”, Sama prepared a dossier on Women’s Right to Health. Sama was also responsible for developing a curriculum Handbook on Human Rights Education for Beginners for school children, titled “Reproductive and Sexual Rights”, with an emphasis on the ongoing reproductive rights movements in India for the University Grants Commission (UGC).
which it dropped to 884 in the age group 11-14 and then to a low of 717 girls per 1,000 boys in the age group 15-17.  

To bridge this gap, several voluntary organisations work on ensuring that women gain greater access to education and the goal of universal education is realised.

VOs are involved in providing education services to girls to make up for institutional, social and policy failures.

They provide academic support to girls through their supplementary education programmes where classes might be conducted for a few hours before or after school. The curriculum is taught in a simplified manner and the idea is to enable children to attain grade-specific competency levels. They also run other programmes such as Non formal education (NFE) for out-of-school girls who have never been to school or who drop out after a few years of schooling. Evening schools are also run in many districts for women who work in farms and as labourers during the day.

Some organisations also run day care centres for the children of manual labourers so that they can be given pre-primary education and prepared for absorption into the formal school system and more importantly, so that their older siblings do not have to drop out of school to look after them.

Voluntary organisations also provide children from deprived backgrounds with material support in the form of uniforms, textbooks, school bags etc. They also facilitate schooling by providing funding for needy students, especially girls, since their education is not a priority in some households. They also develop manuals for training teachers and curriculums and books to be used in non-formal education programmes.

It has been seen that one of the major factors that girls drop out of government schools is a lack of toilets. Sakshi, a Delhi based organisation working to empower slum children and communities by providing them access to health, education and community development services, has undertaken a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene project to address this issue. It builds toilets in MCD schools and provides hygiene education to slum children and their families and communities. By ensuring that the toilets are clean, functional and gender-specific, they strive to ensure a reduction in girls' dropout rates from schools.

**Figure 3.1 Percentage of boys and girls attending school in the 2005-06 school year, NFHS-3, India**

(Source: NFHS 3 Report on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India)

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Voluntary organisations work with the rights-based approach that women have been systematically denied access to education for decades, especially women from the poor, rural and marginalised communities.

Education provides access to information and knowledge and enables skill building and critical thinking. It is an empowering tool which accords women agency outside the confines of their household and allows decision-making within the household. As such, it has a direct impact on women’s freedom, well-being and demographics such as health and employment.

Although education became a fundamental right for all children when the Right to Education Act was adopted by the Parliament in 2010, the conditions for achieving quality education for all girls are far from favourable. Therefore, voluntary organisations have tried to counter the discrimination that girls face in receiving an education by confronting inhospitable conditions, archaic attitudes and administrative deficiencies.

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**Sahjani Shiksha Kendra, Nirantar**

The Delhi based NGO, Nirantar, initiated an education programme “Sahjani Shiksha Kendra” in Lalitpur District of Uttar Pradesh in 2002. The programme reaches out to women and girls belonging to the most marginalised communities in the area, including Adivasis and Dalits. Through village level literacy centres, basic literacy is imparted along with a multi-grade teaching approach. Facilitators at the centres also hold open meetings regularly where issues such as health, violence, food security and caste are discussed to increase awareness.

Adopted from: http://www.nirantar.net/index.php/page/view/53

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**Rights and Entitlements**

**Inclusion in Workforce:** - Female participation in the labour force in India has been continuously declining. Female LFPR (Labour Force Participation Rate) declined from 33.3 per cent in 2004-05 to 26.5 per cent in 2009-10 in rural areas and from 17.8 per cent in 2004-05 to 14.6 per cent in 2009-20 in urban areas. From 2004 to 2009, employment of female workers has fallen by 7 per cent in the urban areas and by 3 per cent in rural areas.

The Global Employment Trends 2013 Report, prepared by ILO, places India 11th from the bottom out of 131 countries in female labour force participation.

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In the new landscape of the Indian economy, job opportunities for both men and women are shrinking but women have borne the brunt of it as they are usually concentrated in sectors of the economy where growth has become stagnated.

According to ILO economist Steven Kapsos, in India’s 10 fastest growing occupations between 1994 and 2010, women accounted for less than 40 per cent of the employment growth. The fastest growing sectors are mining, construction, manufacturing and transport, agriculture and fisheries.

In India, almost 94 per cent of the population is employed in the informal sector. Women are disproportionately represented in this sector. They have little access to the formal labour market due to problems of lack of education, limited skill building opportunities, familial restrictions and poor working conditions. Also, a large number of women are engaged as invisible workers whereby they undertake household work and care for children or other dependents which is not considered as formal work. Therefore, women’s contribution to the Indian economy remains largely unrecognised and unquantified.

Women who are employed in the informal economy are constantly exposed to threats such as economic shocks and exploitation by middlemen. They are usually excluded from the social security framework which caters to workers in the formal economy. They are also more vulnerable to crimes related to economic displacement such as human trafficking.

Women are also unable to gain control over financial resources and convert their income into savings due to inadequate access to financial services. This financial dependence is detrimental to the emancipation of women.

Organisations working on women’s rights have sought to redress this by creating awareness among women and ensuring their inclusion into the formal sector through capacity building and promotion of education. In the informal sector, VOs seek to increase the bargaining power of women by organising them into cooperatives or collectives which demand equal wages, decent working conditions and social security for women.

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In India, the Self Help Group (SHG) model of Micro-finance has been particularly effective under which a group of 10-20 men or women regularly contribute small savings contribution to a common pool until the group generates enough capital for lending. Many NGOs have adopted this model to ensure financial independence and sustainable livelihoods for women who are unable to participate in the formal workforce.

The Delhi government recently announced its scheme for handing over the operation of a large number of its ration shops (where ration is provided at subsidized rates to the poor) to women SHGs. The decision was taken by the Food and Civil Supplies Department under its “Mission Convergence” Scheme.


VOs are also involved in skill building of women through trainings and workshops at the community, panchayat and district levels. This allows women to partake and benefit from economic activities.

The DDS Community Media Trust won the UGC-CEC (University Grants Commission – Consortium of Educational Communication) National Award for the Best Educational Video Film for a programme on Environment and Development. The Community Media Trust is a media programme run by a group of Dalit women who are members of the Deccan Development Society, DDS, which works in the Medak district of Andhra Pradesh. The programme was set up in 2001 as a medium for women from poor and marginalised communities to express their concerns and needs and make their voices heard. The winners of the award are women farmers who are mostly illiterate.


The SEWA Grass Roots Organising Approach

SEWA Bharat, recognised worldwide as a trade union of women workers in the informal economy works through its network of SEWA saathis or grass root workers to make women aware of their right to livelihood. The saathis reach out to poor women through community meetings called Mohalla Meetings. They then identify Aagewans or community leaders to work within the community and organising women into member based collectives for the purpose of livelihood support and advocacy. These collectives include producer groups, micro finance cooperatives and trade committees.

To learn more, please see: http://sewabharat.org/program-themes/advocacy-organizing/
Political Participation: Women are largely absent from all levels of governance in India. This absence is most pronounced at the national level, where currently, only 58 legislators out of 543 are women in the Lok Sabha (10.7 per cent) and 23 out of 243 legislators are women in the Rajya Sabha (9.5 per cent).82

Political participation at the local level is also extremely limited despite a 33 per cent reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and urban local bodies. In a true, vibrant democracy, it is imperative that all citizens have the freedom to participate in all processes of governance, which includes standing for elections and getting elected to legislative bodies. However, the persistent under representation of women in political life has led to a democratic deficit in India.83

Women are also inadequately represented in the judiciary in India which is a hurdle to the realization of non-discrimination in public life.84

Women are excluded from political processes in the country due to the various social, economic and cultural biases they face. Discrimination in terms of their access to education, control over resources such as income and freedom to occupy public spaces impairs their political participation, thereby excluding them as equal beneficiaries of the development process.

To encourage the entry of women into politics, voluntary organisations organize awareness campaigns and familiarise women with their right to equitable political participation. They also attempt to incorporate gender into the narrative of political process and organisation by making gender the focal point of political debates and discussions. Women’s political participation is also restricted due to a hostile environment and inadequate support facilities. They are often discouraged from politics as it is considered to be unsuitable for women. Voluntary organisations address these problems by acting as a support mechanism for women representatives and by establishing networks for women leaders where they are mobilized on issues of common concerns and interests. VOs also develop training materials for women leaders on topics such as basic introduction to governance processes.

They also carry out training programmes and capacity building exercises for women to strengthen their leadership skills and broaden their worldview. Women who want to enter politics often lack confidence and skills such as public speaking. They also lack knowledge and information about key issues such as political processes and strategies. Voluntary organisations help women overcome these challenges and assist them in taking on the role of effective and decisive leaders through workshops on communication, campaigning, planning and networking.

Although providing one-third reservation for women in local bodies was a significant step towards their political empowerment, it hasn’t shown the desired results due to the existence of several structural inequalities. It is a common practice for male members of political parties to get their wives or daughters

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83 Ibid
84 Executive Summary of the 4th and 5th NGO Alternative Report on CEDAW-2014
nominated from the reserved seats in order to exercise control on their behalf. Voluntary organisations working for women’s rights challenge the status quo by generating awareness and building up the agency of women leaders for their full participation in the political process. They also engage with male elected representatives and sensitise them about women’s issues and ensure that women’s demands are included as key priorities in their policies.

**Protection from Violence:** Data from the National Crime Records Bureau indicates that the incidences of violence against women have been constantly rising. While a total of 2,44,270 cases were booked as crimes against women (under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and SLL (gender specific laws) in 2012, a total of 3,09,546 crimes against women were reported in 2013, showing an increase of 26.7 per cent. While government authorities attribute this rise to an increase in reporting of such crimes, it is evident from recent cases that have come to light in the media that women are not only being subjected to
more and more violence, but they are also increasingly becoming victims of more brutal forms of violence such as sexual assault, dowry related violence and atrocities committed during communal riots.

Women’s organisations run several awareness programmes on violence committed against women that make women aware of their rights and available measures for recourse. They seek to bring cases of violence and domestic abuse into the public domain as too often such cases remain confined within households, prolonging the suffering of women.

Voluntary organisations conduct gender sensitisation and gender perspective building workshops in schools, colleges etc. and organise campaigns to bring attention to particular problems that women face in leading a life free of violence and fear. These campaigns are also used as a means for advocacy with the government and law enforcing agencies to formulate policies to eliminate these problems.

**Safe City Delhi Programme**

The Safe City Free of Violence against Women and Girl programme was launched as a collaborative effort of Jagori, UN Women and Department of Women and Child Development in 2009. The campaign focused on the right of participation of women by ensuring access to “Cities where women and girls are able to move around freely without the fear of harassment and violence at all times and enjoy what the city has to offer.” A Strategic Framework for Safer and Violence Free City was designed which talked of proper urban designing, a better public transport system and increased civic awareness along with a responsive police and judiciary.


Since the police are the first respondents in most cases of violence against women, trainings are also conducted to ensure that they are sensitive to victims of violence and they conduct their investigations in a manner which is not detrimental to the emotional or physical state of the complainant.

With the perspective that gender sensitisation among enforcement authorities is critical for a responsible approach to women complainants, the North East Network (NEN), Shillong brought out a Training and Resource Manual for Police Personnel on Gender Sensitisation and VAW. The manual was prepared in collaboration with the police and is now used by the North East Police Academy to train police recruits all over the region.

A copy of the manual can be found at:

Voluntary organisations also perform the vital function of providing rehabilitation and counselling to survivors of violence such as sexual abuse and assault through women helplines and support groups. Some organisations also run shelters for women who can’t live at home due to dire circumstances such as routine abuse by the husband or in-laws. VOs also organise self-defence trainings for women in order to teach them basic survival techniques and instil confidence in them.  

Women’s rights organisations have worked tirelessly for the assertion and recognition of basic human rights for women. They continue to struggle for bringing about changes to government policies and laws for the empowerment of women. They also continue to struggle to broaden the understanding of women’s rights where women are not seen only as reproductive agents but as productive, individual members of society.

Access to Property: Property ownership is considered extremely important for the reduction of poverty.

Landesa India works with governments in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh to help them design, pilot and establish programmes which enable poor and landless families to gain access to land.

In collaboration with the Odisha government, Landesa established a Women’s Support Centre in Ganjam District. The project was subsequently upscaled to 76 centers in four districts across the state. More than 5,00,000 single, rural women are landless in Odisha. The aim of the programme is to ensure that widows or abandoned women and other single women gain access to government services, especially opportunities which allow ownership of land.

It leads to various immediate benefits such as income gains and food security for poor families. It also has long term effects such as safety net and investment effects where access to land allows poor households to weather economic shocks and send their children to school ensuring their better future. An egalitarian land distribution also leads to broad based income growth in the future by allowing dynamic income distribution.86

Various studies have established linkages between women’s ownership of land and social and economic benefits such as improvement of family health and nutrition, less vulnerability of women to contracting HIV/AIDS, better capacity of dealing with the consequences of illnesses such as AIDS, improvement in education level in their children and reduced likelihood of becoming victims of domestic abuse.87

Therefore, women’s right to land improves their access to key economic markets which has a direct impact on women’s and their families’ well-being. It also indirectly leads to the empowerment of women as it strengthens women’s ability to participate in decision making processes at the household, community and broader levels of society.88

In India, women’s access to land remains extremely limited. A report of the Sub Group on Economic Empowerment of Women for the Twelfth five year plan, 2007-2012, pointed out that women own only 9.3 per cent of the land in India.89

VOs have fought for the right of women to inherit property and own land by increasing awareness at the grass roots and pursuing advocacy with governments at the local, state and national level.

Navsarjan, a Rajasthan based organisation has formed a members based community group called the Jamin Adhikar Sena or Land Rights Army. Navsarjan trains the male and female members of the group to gain access to land for its landless members and educate others about their land rights. As a result of Navsarjan’s efforts, thousands of acres of land have been awarded to landless labourers and housing plots have been awarded in women’s names.

To read about Navsarjan’s Land Rights Campaign, please see: http://navsarjan.org/programmes/land-rights-campaign/

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87. Landesa Centre for Women’s Lands Rights at http://www.landesa.org/women-and-land/
Conclusion

The system of patriarchy is deeply embedded into the Indian social structure along with a culture of misogyny which has made it an arduous task to bring about meaningful change. As advocates of social change, the VOs working on women’s rights, therefore, have to address the behavioural and discursive gender barriers that are responsible for disenfranchising women along with the structural causes for disempowerment. In fact, there needs to be a concerted effort on the part of both the government and NGOs to bring about an attitudinal change.

The State’s institutions have fallen short of sufficiently addressing women’s concerns. The report of the High Level Committee of Status of Women in India (2014) drew attention to certain institutional limitations such as the reactionary and perfunctory approach of the National Commission for Women and the direction of a large amount of resources towards child development within the Ministry for Women and Child Development, making resources available for women’s empowerment inadequate. It is essential that the government ensures that its ministries and agencies are upgraded to reflect the situational reality of women.

In India, girls are often subject to a double discrimination as they experience a lower status than that of boys and are further disadvantaged by the sub-group of class, religion or caste that they belong to. Therefore, policies which consider girls and boys to be equal beneficiaries are not genuinely effective and the government and the civil society need to adopt a nuanced approach where specially tailored development interventions ensure women empowerment.

The first steps towards women empowerment are improving women’s access to education and ensuring better political representation.

Although girls’ education is associated with direct benefits such as reduction of child and maternal mortality, improvement of child nutrition and health, lower fertility rates and improvement in economic production according to the World Bank, the percentage of women in India with access to education is still very low.

In addition, currently, women have very limited decision making capacity not only at home but also in the public space which is reflected in the under representation of females in politics and even judiciary. As long as these hurdles exist, it will be impossible for women to participate efficiently and fully in the development process.
Issues of Children

Introduction and Background

The ‘Millennium Development Goals Report 2014’ (launched by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in July 2014) stated that with respect to global MDGs, India continues to battle child mortality. According to the report, India had the highest number of under-five deaths in the world in 2012, with 1.4 million children dying before reaching their fifth birthday. The Government of India had endorsed the ‘UN Convention on the Rights of the Child’ in 1992, but still there are millions of children in India who grow up condemned to miserable conditions like abject poverty- deprived of education, medical treatment, food or adequate protection that is required for their development. Even though policies and laws exist to protect children and their rights, the provisions are either, implemented inadequately or implemented in a completely apathetic manner. Hence, there is a critical need to respond to the ever-increasing violation of the rights of children. In light of this, voluntary organizations come to the forefront to play an effective role in the issue.

VOs are widely recognized for the scope of their activities, commitment and essential role in building the worldwide movement for the rights and protection of children. An unprecedented number of VOs have been involved in the child rights issue since its inception. It is recognized that VOs have played a significant role in the global movement and the development of children worldwide. The report highlights the role that NGOs have played in pioneering the development of children’s services and their potential capacity to facilitate partnerships between the groups of stakeholders. Challenges faced by VOs are also examined with a view to improve their capacity to form partnerships that would maximize the effectiveness of their programmes with respect to children’s issues.

Demographic situation:

With more than one-third of its population below 18 years, India has the largest ‘young population’ in the world. Over 19% of the world’s children live in India. This means that every sixth child in the world today, refers to India as home. As children constitute the principal asset of the country, the Constitution of India accords a special status to children as deserving of special provisions and protection to secure and safeguard their entitlements. Children’s Development is as important as the development of material resources and the best way to develop national human resources, is to take care of the children. All-out efforts are being made by India for the development and welfare of children. However, much remains still to be done. A lot more has to be done for the health, nutrition and education of children who are most vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. It is unfortunate that girls, in particular, face debilitating discrimination at all stages. Therefore, specific concentration is being given to the efforts to improve the life and opportunities of the Girl Child.

30 http://www.wcd.nic.in/cwnew.htm
Domestic Initiatives

Laws for children in the Constitution of India/Indian legal situation

There are several constitutional provisions for children. These include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article 14</td>
<td>State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Article 15(3)</td>
<td>Nothing in this article shall prevent the State for making any special provision for women and children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Article 21</td>
<td>No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Article 21A</td>
<td>State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Article 23</td>
<td>Prohibits trafficking of human beings and forced labour.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Article 24</td>
<td>Prohibits employment of children below the age of fourteen years in factories, mines or any other hazardous occupation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 25-28</td>
<td>Provides freedom of conscience, and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 39(e) and (f)</td>
<td>State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing to ensure that the health and strength of workers, men and women and the tender age of children are not abused and that the citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength and that the children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that the childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 45</td>
<td>State shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 243G read with Schedule 11</td>
<td>Provide for institutionalization of child care by seeking to entrust programmes of Women and Child Development to Panchayat (Item 25 of Schedule 11), apart from education (item 17), family welfare (item 25), health and sanitation (item 23) and other items with a bearing on the welfare of children.</td>
</tr>
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Five year plans

Prior to the *Fifth Five-Year Plan*, the government’s focus was on child welfare through the promotion of basic minimum services for children. This culminated in the adoption of the National Policy for Children, in 1974.

The *Fifth Five-Year Plan (1974-79)* saw a shift of focus from welfare to development as well as the integration and co-ordination of services after the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) 1975.

The *Sixth Five-Year Plan* strengthened child welfare and development. It led to the spatial expansion and enrichment of child development services through a variety of programmes.

The focus of the *Eighth Five-Year Plan (1992-97)* shifted to human development through advocacy, mobilization and community empowerment.

In the *Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002)* the Government of India declared its commitment to every child. *The Tenth Five-Year Plan* advocated a convergent/integrated rights-based approach to ensure the survival, development, protection and participation of children. It set specific targets: all children to complete five years of schooling by 2007; reduction in gender gaps in literacy and wage rates by at least 50%, by 2007; reduction in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) to 45 per 1,000 live births by 2007, and 28 per 1,000 by 2012; reduction of Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) to 2 per 1,000 live births by 2007 and to 1 per 1,000 live births by 2012; arresting the decline in the child sex ratio; and universalization of the ICDS scheme.

*The Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-2012)* prepared by the Planning Commission emphatically stated that ‘Development of the child is at the centre of the Eleventh Plan’. While continuing with the rights-based approach to child development, the plan recognizes the importance of a holistic approach, focusing both on outcomes and indicators for child development as well as macro-perspective trends and governance issues. It focused on revising and strengthening various existing policies and programmes to bridge the identified gaps and to introduce new schemes to address the needs of pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls; also to tackle problems related to child trafficking, the declining child sex ratio and child protection.

In the twelfth five year plan (2012-17), a working group on child rights was constituted to recommend priorities and strategies for children. Five sub-groups of the working group were constituted subsequently which deliberated on the key themes of child survival and development, ICDS, early childhood care and education, child rights and protection, the girl child and adolescents. The working group recommended a transformative vision of the twelfth plan that suggests “More inclusive growth begins with children.”

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92. [http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/committee/wrkgrp12/wcd/wgrp_child.pdf](http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/committee/wrkgrp12/wcd/wgrp_child.pdf)
Legislations

There are several legislations pertaining to children. These include the following.

1. The Guardian and Wards Act, 1890
2. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929
3. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
4. The Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act, 1956
5. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986
7. The Pre-Conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Technique (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994
8. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995
9. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000
10. The Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005
11. The right of children to free and compulsory education act 2009
12. The protection of children from sexual offences act, 2012

Policies

The various national policies that have provisions for the interests and benefits of the children are discussed below:

a) National Policy for Children: - According to the policy adopted on 22nd August, 1974 the state shall provide adequate services to children (before and after birth) and during the growing stages for their full physical, mental and social development. The measures suggested in the policy include a comprehensive health programme, supplementary nutrition for mothers and children, free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years, promotion of physical education and recreational activities, special consideration for children of weaker sections like SCs and STs, prevention of exploitation of children, etc. To affirm the Government’s commitment to the rights-based approach to address the continuing and emerging challenges in the situation of children, the Government of India thereby adopted these resolutions on the National Policy for Children, 2013.
b) The National Charter for Children: - The Government of India adopted the National Charter for Children which had been prepared after obtaining the views/comments and suggestions of the State Governments/UT Administrations, concerned Ministries and Departments and experts in the field. The National Charter is a statement of intent embodying the Government’s agenda for Children. The document emphasizes Government of India’s commitment to children’s rights to survival, health and nutrition, standard of living, play and leisure, early childhood care, education, protection of the girl child, empowering adolescents, equality, life and liberty, name and nationality, freedom of expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly, the right to a family and the right to be protected from economic exploitation and all forms of abuse. The document also provides for protection of children in difficult circumstances, children with disabilities, children from marginalized and disadvantaged communities, and child victims. The document while stipulating the duties of the State and the Community towards children also emphasizes the duties of children towards family, society and the Nation. The National Charter for Children was notified in the Gazette of India on 9th Feb., 2004.

c) The National Nutrition Policy adopted by the Government in 1993 identified a series of actions for different Departments in the area of food production and distribution, health and family welfare, education, rural and urban development, women and child development, etc.

d) National Plan of Action for Children 2005: Ministry of Women and Child Development has prepared a National Plan of Action for Children 2005, after harmonizing the goals for children set in the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children held in 2002 and the monitor-able targets set in the Tenth Five Year Plan, and goals for children in related Ministries/Departments. The Action Plan has been prepared in consultation with concerned Ministries and Departments, States/Union territory Governments, Non-Governmental Organizations and experts. The National Plan of Action includes goals, objectives, strategies and activities for improving the nutritional status of children, reducing IMR and MMR, increasing the enrolment ratio and reducing the dropout rates, universalization of primary education, increasing coverage for immunization, etc. The Prime Minister’s Office is monitoring the National Plan of Action for Children, quarterly, on the basis of these eight parameters.

International initiatives

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

India acceded to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on 11th Dec., 1992 to reiterate its commitment to the cause of children. The objective of the Convention is to give every child the right to survival and development in a healthy and congenial environment.
World Summit for Children
India was party to the Declaration adopted in the World Summit for Children held in 1990, which adopted
goals for the Member Countries to be achieved by 2000.

UN Special Session on Children
The UN Special Session on Children held in May, 2002 set, by consensus, after negotiations lasting about
a year and a half, fresh quantitative and qualitative goals for children for the present decade, relating to
survival, health and nutrition, early childhood care and education, and child protection.

Millennium Development Goals and the SAARC Conventions
India is also a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals and the SAARC Conventions on Child
Welfare and Combating Trafficking of Women and Children in the SAARC Region.

Schemes/Projects for the benefit of children
Several Ministries and Departments of the Government of India are implementing various schemes and
programmes for the benefit of children. Some of the Schemes and Programmes are as under:

1. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)
2. Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG) (Sabla
   Scheme) Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme for the Girl Child with Insurance cover
   (Dhanlakshmi)
3. Scheme of Integrated Education for The Disabled Children
4. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA)
5. Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS)
6. National Scheme for Incentive to the Girl Child for Secondary Education
7. ICDS Systems Strengthening and Nutrition Improvement Project (ISSNIP)
8. Scheme for Welfare of Working Children
9. Mukhya Mantri Kanya Vivah Yojana
10. Parvarish – A foster care scheme
11. Mukhya Mantri Kanya Suraksha Yojana
12. Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for the children of working mothers
13. Nutrition Component of Prime Minister Gramodya Yojana and Nutrition Programme for
    Adolescent Girls
14. An Integrated Programme for Street Children
15. Integrated Programme for Juvenile Justice
16. Shishu Greh Scheme

http://socialwelfare.icdsbih.gov.in/Schemes_Programmes/Schemes_Programmes.php?grpID=2&SubGroupID=1
The Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS): In view of the gaps identified and recommendations and suggestions received from various quarters, it has been decided to combine the existing child protection schemes under one integrated scheme titled “Integrated Child Protection Scheme”. The Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), a centrally sponsored scheme was launched to build a protective environment for children in difficult circumstances, as well as other vulnerable children, through Government-Civil Society Partnership. ICPS brings together multiple existing child protection schemes of the Ministry under one comprehensive umbrella and integrates additional interventions for protecting children and preventing harm. The scheme aims to provide for care and protection of all the children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection.

The Commissions for Protection of the Child Rights Act 2005

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), a statutory body, was set up in March 2007 under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, an Act of Parliament (December 2005). The Commission's Mandate is to ensure that all Laws, Policies, Programmes, and Administrative Mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Child is defined as a person in the 0 to 18 years age group.

The Commission visualises a rights-based perspective flowing into National Policies and Programmes, along with nuanced responses at the State, District and Block levels, taking care of specificities and strengths of each region. In order to touch every child, it seeks a deeper penetration to communities and households and expects that the ground experiences gathered at the field are taken into consideration by all the authorities at the higher level. Thus the Commission sees an indispensable role for the State, sound institution-building processes, respect for decentralization at the local bodies and community level and larger societal concern for children and their well-being. Similarly, the state government constitutes State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights in their State.

Childline India Foundation (CIF) has been set up as a nodal organization, supported by Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, to monitor and ensure the qualitative development of the Childline service across the country. Childline is a toll free telephone service (1098) which anyone can call for assistance in the interest of children. It has prescribed minimum quality standards for the services to be provided by its partner organizations that are implementing the Childline programmes in various cities of the country. It initiates the preparatory activity that precedes the initiation of the Childline service in any city. CIF is also involved in awareness and advocacy in order to strengthen the efforts related to child welfare.
National Awards

*National Child Award for Exceptional Achievement*

The National Child Award for Exceptional Achievement was instituted in 1996 to give recognition to the children with exceptional abilities and who have achieved outstanding status in various fields including academics, arts, culture and sports, etc. Children between the ages of 4 to 15 years who have shown an exceptional achievement are considered for this award annually.

*National Award for Child Welfare*

The Award was instituted in 1979 to honour five institutions and three individuals for their outstanding performance in the field of child welfare. The National Award for Child Welfare includes a cash prize of Rs. 3 lakhs and a certificate for each institution and Rs. 1 lakh and a certificate for each individual.

*Rajiv Gandhi Manav Seva Award*

This Award was instituted in 1994 to honour an individual who makes an outstanding contribution towards service for children. The Award carries a cash prize of Rs. 1 lakh, a silver plaque and a citation. The awards were increased to three from the year 2006.

According to the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 a ‘child’, “means a person who has not completed his fourteenth year of age.”

Children not only have rights to health, nutrition and education, they have rights to protection, freedom from violence and exploitation, and to “a safe and supportive environment”. The seventh major goal of the World Summit for Children called for the protection of children in especially difficult circumstances, particularly in situations of armed conflict, but this goal was not well defined at the time. 94

Following is a list of various protection issues concerning children.95

Abuse and Violence
Child Sexual Abuse
Street Children
Children Living with AIDS
Child in Armed Conflict
Girl Child
Child Marriage
Children with Disabilities
Children affected by Substance Abuse

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Role and Contribution of Voluntary Organizations working on Women, Children & Livelihood Issues

Birth Registration
Missing Children
Children in Conflict with Law
Children without Parental care
Child Health and Nutrition
Children of Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Families
Children in Poverty
Child education/Lack of access to education
Child neglect
Child prostitution
Internet Child Pornography
Trafficking and Slavery
Military Use of Children

Despite these laws, policies and commitments, the actual situation for India’s children vis-à-vis health, education, early childhood care and protection is not reasonable.

Vulnerable groups such as children have always needed support from the voluntary sector to articulate issues.

Role of VOs in children issues

Voluntary organizations have grown in numbers over the past years and also widened their scope of work in all aspects of human need. They play a central role in key child rights development throughout the world and enhance the effective engagement of civil society groups to mainstream child rights. VOs are committed to ensuring that all children fully enjoy their rights as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Voluntary organizations are fighting against the various atrocities meted out to children. The main role of VOs is to build a world fit for children where the voices of young people are heard and their demands for concrete actions is taken seriously. Civil society support for children over the recent past and current decades has been evolving progressively across sectors and fields of child welfare, development and protection.

Child-focused VOs are found throughout the country and in almost all sectors. They are carrying out programmes and activities ranging from direct service to children, such as withdrawal from the streets and rescue and rehabilitation exercises; direct educational support for children in schools to dissemination of child rights through communication materials, media write-ups; research and training; monitoring and reporting on International conventions; advocacy and public education and awareness programmes.

This section points to the contribution of VOs in offering children a better life as their basic human right. The contribution is discussed in three broader roles of VOs i.e. research and advocacy, service delivery and rights-based entitlements.
**Bigger role to NGOs by Delhi government in child protection framework**

Due to the rise in the cases of missing children, trafficking and child labor, the department of women and child development has directed the child welfare committees and superintendents of child care institutions to allow NGOs to be part of investigation proceedings. Also, authority has been given to them to submit reports on cases assigned to them, as and when required. This order is an attempt to reinforce the existing child protection mechanism in order to bring in transparency and accountability.96

**Research and Advocacy**

VOs pursue research and support advocacy on priority child rights issues through coordinated action with members and partners. They intensify and sustain advocacy on child rights; strengthen research and capacity building among their staff, community leaders, and children to take responsibility for rights-based programmes and services; and promote strengthening of family to continue advocacy and partnership with government, civil society and the children themselves.

It has been observed that VOs cooperating with governments advocate, at all levels, on behalf of children for better policies, stronger laws, higher budgets, defense of rights and improved services for children. They ensure concerns of children are translated into priority policies with adequate resource allocation and Ombudsman of children. To ensure children’s best interest, VOs have been instrumental in providing assistance in formulation of new laws, rules and policies for children. They also review existing teaching, programmes/policies and conduct fact-findings, campaigns, publish books/poster to overcome past actions that might have fostered discrimination and abuse against children.

**National Policy Advocacy For Children, Reviewed**

CRY participated and provided its inputs based on its grassroot-level experience in regional and national consultations for reviewing the (NPC) National Policy for Children 1974 and in the re-drafting of the revised policy. With support from regional National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPPCCD) centres, they participated in the regional consultations in Guwahati, Lucknow and Bangalore that were organized by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. They were also invited to sit on High Court Committees pertaining to the Juvenile Justice system.

*CRY Annual Report 2010-11*

With respect to community, VOs encourage and educate them to work with local governments on behalf of all children. They also uphold the rights of the child and urge national governments to ratify and implement the Rights of the Child.

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Role and Contribution of Voluntary Organizations working on Women, Children & Livelihood Issues

Child budgeting: voluntary organizations endeavor to analyze budgetary provisions on the social sector, to identify the magnitude of budgetary allocations made by the Centre/State Governments on schemes meant for addressing specific needs of children, to examine the trend in child specific expenditure, etc. The main agenda for the exercise of child budgeting is to review resource allocations related to children; explore ways to increase budgetary allocations for children; assess budget utilization rates for the social sector and child specific programmes; identify blockages and constraints to effective utilization; identify methods for tracking expenditure and monitoring performance to ensure that outlays translate into outcomes for children.

Service delivery

As service providers, Voluntary organizations have played the crucial role of a development factor. In the development sector, many VOs have moved ahead and taken the gap filling initiative of capacity building activities by organizing consultations, increasing awareness about child rights among communities, duty bearers and right holders.

- **Generating awareness:** VOs encourage children to express themselves and raise awareness among youth and children in the country about the Convention of the Rights of the Child and what is available to them as a right under the existing national laws and policies. Also, encourage children to explore their needs, rights and responsibilities to help them identify the violations that they face, as well as the obstacles encountered by them in the realization of their rights.

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97. [http://www.childlineindia.org.in/Child-Budgeting.htm](http://www.childlineindia.org.in/Child-Budgeting.htm)
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• **Youth participation:** Also, they encourage participation of children & youth by integrating them into the life of the community; training youth as facilitators in training institutes, and expanding opportunities for them. VOs strengthen youth participation in developing National Plans of Action on their own behalf and pursue the ongoing process of reforming legal instruments regarding children.

• **Increase consciousness:** voluntary organizations organize training programmes to raise consciousness about the importance of child rights with all social workers and others who work with children. VOs equip children with comprehensive and correct knowledge about their rights.

• **Counseling:** voluntary organizations provide counseling to both - victims of abuse and those in conflict with the law.

• **Capacity building:** VOs build the capacity of service providers and various stakeholders such as the law enforcement officials, the judiciary, functionaries in the juvenile justice system, media and society.

• **Sustainability:** VOs help sustain programmes that empower children, mothers and their families at the community level to prevent further abuse violence and exclusion.

• **Active mobilization:** VOs campaign and mobilize civil society groups to pursue effective action through their agenda for children and actively promote international initiatives for children in all countries.

### Partnership in implementation of a scheme

Mid-day meal scheme is implemented by the Government in partnership with voluntary organisations to help mobilize community support, as also promote public-private partnership (PPP) in the scheme. Akshayapatra, a not-for-profit trust of ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness), Bangalore, has partnered with the Government of India to implement the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, the world's largest school lunch programme. Akshaya Patra started in the year 2000, and today reaches more than 8600 schools in 8 states across India. It serves cooked lunches from 19 kitchens for 1.3 million children daily, forming the largest NGO-run mid-day meal programme in the world. Wherever located, Akshaya Patra kitchens have enhanced the effectiveness of the Mid-day Meal Scheme in the local schools, and have brought benefits in bettering enrolments and the school attendance of children. The summary impact of a daily assured meal under the Akshaya Patra mid-day meal programme is seen in the attitudes of children, who look forward to school, and their parents, who no longer want their children to drop out.98

Role and Contribution of Voluntary Organizations working on Women, Children & Livelihood Issues

• **Skill enhancement:** voluntary organizations focus on leadership skill enhancement and training on child protection and legal provisions related to child rights.

  Uday Foundation, a Delhi based voluntary organization, provides free computer education to hundreds of unprivileged children every month. The computer learning centre achieves exceptional academic performance, similar to private computer training institutes but with no costs to the students.99

• **Sensitization:** development organizations sensitize and involve the immediate stakeholders and make government departments and other government agencies, which are legally bound to perform their duties and ensure children their rights, accountable for their work. The process of sensitization of a child supportive environment, which includes parents, community members, media, health officers, police and other administrative officials, is aimed at building an environment capable of nurturing and cultivating a child’s infinite potential for growth and development.

  **Awareness and Sensitization**

  A Health Awareness camp was organized under the project nanhi kali100 at Nalwa Village of Phalasia Cluster of Jhadol Block. A total of 95 NKs including 15 NK Club members, 5 change agents and 10 Bal Panchayat members attended the camp along with 22 members of the community. The Nanhi Kalis were sensitized through a presentation about healthy diet and proper intake of vitamins and minerals during periods and pregnancy. The ANM also educated the gathering about communicable diseases and how to prevent them. Importance of cleanliness and its role to prevent diseases like Jaundice and TB was also explained to the participants. A talk on the ill-effects of Child Marriage was also conducted during the camp to sensitize the villagers.101

• **Voluntary organizations educate,** sensitize and update all the stakeholders through newsletters, reports, information brochures, education materials, etc. They also conduct conferences and seminars to raise issues pertaining to deprived children. These platforms are also used to share learning among fellow organizations.

100. Project Nanhi Kali was initiated in 1996 by the K. C. Mahindra Education Trust (KCMET) with the aim of providing primary education to underprivileged girl children in India. Since 2005, Project Nanhi Kali is jointly managed by the K. C. Mahindra Education Trust and Naandi Foundation.
Campaign against Child Labour (CACL): The campaign against child labour is a joint initiative of Youth for Voluntary Action (YUVA), Pune and Tere des Hommes (Germany) India Programme. The Campaign is currently supported by ILO and is actively working for progressive eradication of child labour through provision of education, organisation of awareness programmes, promotion of legislative changes and rescuing children in bondage or victims of abuse.

Murshidabad is one of the most backward districts of India. The long and porous border with Bangladesh, extreme rural poverty, low female literacy rate and natural disasters make the children in the district highly vulnerable to trafficking and child marriage. Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) has started rolling out in the district and CINI as the member of the District Child Protection Society (DCPS), is designated for capacity building of multiple stakeholders involved in ICPS implementation. As part of this responsibility the CINI team has facilitated a series of awareness and training programmes for the members of Child Protection Committee (BLCPC) at the block and village levels across all 26 blocks of the district. The efforts of CINI have actively mobilized panchayats, schools, self-help groups and other service providers in the formation of 1020 Village Level Child Protection Committees (VLCPCs) in the district. These VLCPCs are now fully functional to ensure a community based ‘Safety Net’ of protection and elementary education of all children in their respective areas through regular tracking and sharing meet.102

Rights and entitlements

Children are being looked upon as change agents, who are active contributors to the well-being and development of the family as well as the community. Voluntary organizations are making efforts for child protection and for reducing risks of violation of child rights, making children's rights a reality, and creating an enabling environment that supports children's positive development.

a) **Right to Survival** - Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states that children have the right to live and governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthy. Voluntary organizations respond to the immediate needs of any children in crisis and help them to realize their rights.

b) **Right to Development** - voluntary organizations work towards

facilitating all-round growth, development and empowerment of the children and catalyze an overall improvement in the quality of their lives.

c) Right to Protection from exploitation, abuse, neglect: around the world, children are being abused, beaten, violated and exploited. Voluntary organizations are working to protect children from such violence and aim to promote action that will prompt violence prevention strategies and protect vulnerable children.

d) Right to Participation – voluntary organizations ensure that children in India are motivated to participate and express their thoughts freely.

e) Right to education: P.R.I.D.E. India is making a sustained effort to ensure quality education for children through several initiatives like Balwadi, Study centres, Reading Improvement program, Children Club, etc. However, its scope is often hindered because children do not have access to a light at home for their studies. Thus the initiative of Project ‘I’-Illuminate was born to ensure that every child has access to a personal study light and a Kerosene free environment. P.R.I.D.E. India is trying to ensure that every child’s Right to Education is realized by providing the children of Mahad and Sastur access to a personalized, lightweight, non-polluting, dependable and safe solar energy study light.

1500 children benefited through Project ‘I’-Illuminate in the year 2012-13, and it hopes to eliminate the darkness that comes with a lack of education.104

f) Right to be free from child labour: Child labour is any work done by children in order to economically benefit their

The right to participation helped Tarnum continue her studies, instead of being a child bride. Based in the Giridih district, Jharkhand, Jago Foundation was set up in 2004 in response to mass displacement of local communities due to mining and land acquisition programmes. The depletion of forest cover led to a further loss of income and added to their hardship, leading to issues such as child labour, child trafficking and illiteracy.

As a member of the children’s collective group within her village, Tarnum Khatun was aware of child rights and the problems associated with child marriages. When she learnt of her parents’ marriage plans for her, she decided to become an agent of change. Today, this brave and determined 15-year-old girl is continuing her studies.103

families or themselves directly, at the cost of their physical, mental or social development. It has been observed in India and other countries, that the practice of “child labour” is a socio-economic problem. From the last many years, the government of India has been making amendments to laws and acts related to child labour eliminations, but it is not possible to completely eradicate the issue.

It has been observed that these interventions from civil society actors for child development and protection adequately supplement Governmental efforts at creating a country fit for children.

Child Rights for Change is a long term initiative to save the children. It aims to make child labour socially and culturally unacceptable amongst parents, farmers, communities and other duty bearers in the major cotton producing states of India. The project is underway in 1,882 villages across 4 districts of Gujarat (Ahmedabad, Bharuch, Surendranagar and Sabarkantha) and 4 districts of Maharashtra (Akola, Amaravati, Buldana and Washim). Recently, efforts have been expanded to Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

The project has reached out to over 4 lakh children. Under the project, more than 350 villages have been made child labour free; 1868 children’s groups have been trained on their rights, enabling them to raise the same at the community level; 38,200 children aged 6-14 years, have been removed from labour and re-enrolled in schools; 12,437 children aged 15-18 years, have been equipped with vocational skills.

The quality of education has been improved in Anganwadi (pre-school) centres and schools through the provision of learning materials, painting educative pictures on the walls and building the capacity of Anganwadi Workers and teachers on child-friendly teaching methods. As a result 88,847 children have been equipped with school readiness skills and 78,577 children have completed primary education.

92,892 children, men and women have been made aware of the health risks associated with working in cotton fields and 8,211 farmers have pledged to not employ children in their fields.

It has been observed that these interventions from civil society actors for child development and protection adequately supplement Governmental efforts at creating a country fit for children.

Conclusion

The voluntary organizations have enthused lot momentum and are constantly striving towards people centric approach. Their inclination have always been directive towards the human rights issues. One of the most vulnerable and susceptible groups in our society are children. In the context of India, the current status of children is appalling and there is a need to ensure that each and every child have the right to enjoy their childhood. In order to achieve this utopian view, the VOs in India are making efforts to uphold the rights of children in education, nutrition, health, development and protection. VOs and development thinkers are committed to changing the way children are perceived and treated in society and also looking at various strategic approaches and utilization of resources to maximize the impact of children.
One of the main thrust area of intervention is education which has always been a priority in the development discourse. VO's are also indefatigably making efforts in tackling malnutrition by bringing down child mortality rate. They are also creating a secure and protective milieu that is free from any discrimination, violence, abuse and making efforts to make space for their voices to be heard and recognized. They are amplifying their concerns and issues to the society at large. The civil society is endorsing for more child centric sustainable policies and child sensitive legislations to bring transformation in the status of children. For a country to progress and develop the status of children plays a very imperative role as they are the current and future assets of the nation.

Some of the steps which VO’s would take in strengthening child rights issues are:-

• VO’s should facilitate children’s engagement, including the most vulnerable, in all aspects of the development of child rights. This engagement will give children the opportunity to share their own views, experiences and perspectives on the Rights of the Child and furthermore, to engage in their own children’s rights advocacy.
• Mechanisms for systematic monitoring and evaluation should be developed and appropriate disaggregated indicators for monitoring should also be developed with urgency.
• Child budgeting and child budgeting analysis should be incorporated into the overall budgeting arrangements from national to decentralized levels.
• The state should forge closer collaboration with child rights NGOs to encourage them in their work and to provide support for critical work by NGOs working in child protection, that need expansion, replication or scaling up.
• Continue the process of supporting children to learn about their human rights through training and outreach activity, producing materials about children’s rights, advocacy and campaigning.
• Facilitate meetings and consultations for children at local and national levels.
• Produce a children’s report for various audiences, from local authorities to the national and international level.
• Engage with the media to promote and debate children’s rights; use of theatre and video productions to explore children’s rights issues.
• Build the capacity of partner/member NGOs to support children’s self-advocacy.
• Have a child protection framework in place, with well-defined procedures, roles and responsibilities.
• Raise awareness of children’s rights with government officials, practitioners and other adults working with children.
• Deliver children’s rights outreach sessions in schools, youth clubs, children’s homes and other institutions to raise awareness.
• Produce a report on the status of child’s rights and advocate for the outcome document, organize professional training with children, parliamentarians, policy makers, media, and civil society organizations.
• Improve monitoring, reporting and follow-up action to protect the security and rights of children in specific armed conflicts.
• Promote awareness of child rights among children and adults, and foster changes in attitudes and values that undermine respect for the rights of children, especially those that result in violence against children.
• Strengthen strategies and mechanisms to ensure children’s participation in decisions affecting their lives within the family, the school or the community and ensure they are heard in legal and administrative proceedings concerning them.
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About ActionAid India

ActionAid India is part of a global federation which is present in over forty countries across the world. ActionAid has been working in India since 1972 with the poor and the socially excluded communities to achieve greater human rights for all and defeat the indignity of poverty.

ActionAid works with those who are most in need of help, such as the dalits, tribals, religious minorities and women. We directly reach out to 50,25,915 people from 9,56,448 households in 25 states and 1 union territory of India through the help of 12 regional offices and 278 grassroots NGOs.

As part of larger collectives, we engage with the government at all levels to advocate for pro-poor policy-level changes and interventions based on our evidence-based and participatory research, for example, in our campaigns on saving the girl child and ensuring land rights for dalit women farmers.

About VANI

Voluntary Action Network India (VANI) is an apex body of Voluntary Organisations.

• Founded in 1988 to act as a promoter/protector and collective voice of the voluntary sector.
• Base of 8000 non-governmental organisations spread in 25 states of India.
• Resource Centre for publications, research work, articles, important documents and information about and related to the voluntary sector.

Objectives:
• As a platform, to promote voluntarism and create space for voluntary action.
• As a network, attempt to bring about a convergence of common sectoral issues and concerns for building a truly national agenda of voluntary action in India. In addition, facilitate linkages of various efforts and initiatives of the Indian voluntary sector, which succeed in strengthening a united and sustainable movement of change.
• An an association, work towards fostering value based voluntary action and long term sustainability especially amongst our members.

Areas of work
• Promoting practices of good governance in the voluntary sector.
• Strengthening networks
• Articulating independent voices of the sector.
• Research and advocacy of policies and law effecting the voluntary sector.