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Genesis and growth of the NGOs: Issues in Bangladesh perspective

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NGOs (Non-governmental organizations) activities have virtually grown into a movement in Bangladesh and eventually playing a very significant role in the nation's development process scene. NGOs have not been evolved over time. The NGOs throughout the world have evolved in the specific context of the society. The context of the developed countries and developing countries are certainly different. The last three decades, enormous growth of NGOs in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has been regarded as the land of NGOs. This paper highlights common assumptions about the growth and genesis of the NGOs in Bangladesh. This study is mostly based on secondary information. The paper is based on the content analysis of different secondary sources of data and information. Observations are also drawn from several interview sessions.

Key words: NGO, genesis, growth, poverty, voluntarism and Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh, like every other society, has had its tradition of voluntary work, rooted in its social, religious and economic conditions (Batkin, 1992). Individualized and ad hoc voluntary activities in the tradition of giving money and food are quite common. Since the independence of Bangladesh, the state has largely failed to assist the poor or reduce poverty, and NGOs have grown dramatically, ostensibly to fill this gap. In most of the developing countries NGOs are being treated as the alternative to the public sector. Public sector has been seen as the root of all ills in development efforts. When a government program fail or attain results far from exception, all say that this program must rest on NGOs, what McMichael (1996, 1996) has phased 'NGOization'. NGOs sprang in Bangladesh as important action groups in the development scenario immediately after its emergence. Bangladesh as in the last decades has witnessed a phenomenal increase in the number of NGOs.

The history of NGOs in Bangladesh could be traced way back to the British colonial period. Since the British era, NGOs in its traditional form have been working in Bangladesh as different religious trust-based schools, hospitals and orphanages. However, NGOs in Bangladesh got a radical transformation and turned into agents of development in the post –independence era. Since 1970s NGOs therefore become a part of the

institutional framework of poverty alleviation in Bangladesh. The NGOs, especially the large ones in effect, have infiltrated into an operational arena which has traditionally been the 'exclusive domain' of the government. Donors have played a significant role in advocating for the NGOs as an active partner in poverty alleviation projects in Bangladesh (Sobhan and Bhattacharya, 1990). The NGO sector in Bangladesh is an inseparable part of our society. Gradually, NGOs started to work in the field of group formation, credit, formal and non-formal education, health and nutrition, family planning and MCH (Mother and child Health) gender development, poultry and livestock, agriculture, sanitation, environment, human rights, advocacy, legal aids and in many other fields. Untiring efforts and intrinsic zeal have led NGOs towards assisting the poor in poverty alleviation and to empower them in every aspect of social life (Mohiuddin, 2002). In the wake of government failures to address the problems of unemployment, poverty, social injustice and environmental degradation, NGOs have gained recognition as effective development agencies by marshaling the creative energies of the poor to solve their own problems. The changing global environment realized the important role of the NGOs and eagerly recognized the NGOs as development partner. The rise of the NGOs in the global context is identified as

an important phenomenon. This has implication for the development prospects of the poor. The popularity of the NGOs with governments and donors is also identified as equally important. Interest in the work of the NGOs has increased remarkably over the last ten years with growing recognition of the inadequacy, constraints, limitations and sometimes inappropriateness of governmental efforts in a variety of field (Peggy, 1987). The NGOs are seen as the preferred channel for providing services effectively. Gradually the NGOs have become an important partner of development paradigm along with the public and private sectors.

NGOs in Bangladesh are now in the third stage of their growth. In the late 1970s, there occurred a gradual shift from the first generation strategies that is, relief and welfare services to the second-generation strategies characterized by small-scale, self-reliant local development initiatives for building people's capacity. Throughout the 1980s, this thrust continued. Pursing the third generation strategies that focus on the policy changes at different levels is recent phenomenon visible since the early 1990s. The study will focus on the growth of NGO movement in Bangladesh and the extent of the resources that have been mobilized by this sector. In this context, it will show the genesis, growth, function, strengths, and weakness of the NGOs. It will specifically focus on the operational approaches of the NGOs in Bangladesh. At the same time, different views and debate on the role of the NGOs in socio-economic development of the country will be discussed.

NGO SECTOR IN BANGLADESH

Any agency that is not controlled by government can be regarded as NGOs. The public's perception of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is that, they are working for the common good of individuals or groups. Since the mid 1970s, the main focus of NGOs has been on social welfare activities, with interventions in the fields of social mobilization and rural development. In recent years, rapid mushroom growth of the NGOs in Bangladesh can be easily observed. The NGOs sector's main interest of recent years, social welfare activities, is increasingly being incorporated into mainstream national development endeavors and NGOs are now acknowledged as partners in development. The majors areas in which NGOs are presently involved include relief and rehabilitation; rural development; education; health and family planning; micro-credit; infrastructure development; and research and communication (Begum, 2003).

The last two decades of the past century experiences enormous growth of NGOs all over the world. Bangladesh has been regarded as a land of NGOs. Nobody knows how many NGOs are working in Bangladesh. Because of different NGO affiliation bodies,

and absence of coordination among the agencies concerned the estimate about the number of NGOs vary greatly (Hallway, 1998). The growth in number of NGOs hardly ensures more benefit to the poor clients. NGOs usually are registered with different government agencies such as the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Women's Affairs and most of them from the Department of Social Welfare. Among the NGOs, all are not affiliated with the ADAB. So, it is not possible for ADAB to provide the actual number of NGOs. There are duplication in memberships, who are a member of ADAB are also a member of other NGO networks such as, Voluntary Health Service Society (VHSS), NGO Forum for Water and Sanitation.

It is estimated that there are 19000 NGOs working in Bangladesh (Huq, 1997). In October 2008, NGOs registered with the NGO Bureau (NGOAB) is 2340 (NGOAB registration unit). Under the 1961 Ordinance of social welfare agency (registration and control) the NGOs was 2101 in 2001 to 2002, 1962 in 2002 to 2003, 2433 in 2003 to 2004 and 1575 in 2004 to 2005 fiscal year (Social welfare Department 2005). Not until September 2004, the number of registration of voluntary organization was given by Social Service Department (SSD) in 45026. In every typical Bangladesh village, we find signboards depicting the identity of some clubs or samities.¹ The number of NGOs in Bangladesh indicates that Bangladesh is a hunting ground and a land of opportunities and opportunities too. This increasing number of NGOs is perhaps the really active. In critical consideration all these are NGOs. But here we are concentrating more on the development NGOs those are engaged in poverty alleviation. Based on their origin, role and geographical zoning, the NGOs in Bangladesh are grouped into three major categories (1) Local, (2) National, (3) International. Both the local nation NGOs are indigenous and mainly engaged in organizing, mobilizing and empowering the poor and simultaneously providing various services at the grassroots level.

GENESIS: AN EVOLUTION OF NGOS IN BANGLADESH

At the very outset the NGOs were not claimed themselves as development agencies. The NGOs in Bangladesh followed some stages of growth. Though NGOs are engaged in diversified types of activities, the stages could be summarized on the basis of distinctive orientations in programming strategies. The specific stages are:

In colonial period

Voluntarism was almost synonymous with charity work

¹ Samities = Association

during the colonial period. Groups of volunteers, mostly members of Zaminder² families and other land-based elites, had emerged spontaneously in emergency situation to help the victims of flood, famine and epidemics, but ceased to exist when the situation improved. Youthful altruism coupled with the contemporary ethical value of looking after Proja (tenants) when in distress was the main inspiration behind such activities (BFF, 2002). The first efforts to institutionalize charity work and social welfare activities in Bangladesh were made by the Christian missionaries. They often selected remote and poverty-stricken areas, where they set up hospitals, schools, orphanages and so forth (Rahman, 1993). Many such centers have been operating for well over 100 years and mark the origin of modern day NGOs in Bangladesh. In the public's perception, NGO generally stands for all NPOs working for the common good of the people or a segment thereof. Among the NGOs still functioning in Bangladesh, the Baptist Missionary Society is reportedly the oldest of British origin and has been working since 1794. Of the local NGOs still functioning, the Christian Mission Hospital founded in Rajshahi in 1880 is the oldest. Among local NGOs operating with foreign funds and possessing a secular character, the Kumudini Welfare Trust is perhaps the oldest in the country, founded in 1944 (Sanyal, 1980).

During British rule³, NGOs were regulated as 'literary, scientific and charitable societies' through the Societies Registration Act (SRA) of 1861. This Act was promulgated for 'improving the legal condition of societies established for the promotion of literature, science, or the fine arts, or for the diffusion of useful knowledge, the diffusion of political education or charitable purposes. Seven or more persons associated to any literary, scientific or charitable purpose may be by subscribing their names to a Memorandum of Association and filling it with the Register of Joint Stock Companies under the Ministry of Commerce, from themselves into a society under this Act (Haider, 2009).

The traditional NGO movement of Bangladesh did not have any history of grassroots development, such as the Gandhian ideals which have influenced the goals of NGOs in other parts of colonial India. Accordingly, the dominant sections of contemporary NGOs in Bangladesh do not trace their origin to pre-existing NGOs.

East Pakistan period

The community development strategy entered Bangladesh as early as 1956 in the Pakistan Academy for Rural Development (PARAD), at present in the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BRAD), as

the Commila Approach to integrated rural development with its cooperatives and a two-tier organizational structure. The main drawback of the government approach, impediments created by bureaucratic structure and red tapism, and the major problem of expecting from government agencies with their limited and often underpaid field-staff, working with the vested interest groups in the villages, to isolate the cooperatives from the unequal rural power structure is unrealistic. Thus, the board institutionalized structure established by well-intentioned government planners lacks detailed planning at a micro-level or in their direct dealings with the grassroots beneficiaries. It is these sectors that the non-government organizations step into the shoes of government.

In spite of wealth and natural resources, East Pakistan also faced the share of suffering. Floods and natural calamity were common in that period. McInley (1979) reports ten tidal waves in the coastal area of Noakhali between 1960 and 1970. The non-government organization Co-operative for American Relief in Everywhere (CARE) and CARITAS, Christian Organization for Relief and Rehabilitation) Pakistan branch had become heavily involved in sheltering vulnerable displaced peoples. They are also indicative of the way NGOs adapted to the changing environment in which they found themselves (Davis, 2006). The Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Regulation and Control) Ordinance was promulgated in 1961 'to expedite the registration and control of voluntary social welfare agencies and for matters ancillary thereto'. A voluntary social welfare agency is defined in this law as follows:

'... Organization, association or undertaking established by persons of their own free will for the purpose of rendering welfare service in any one or more of the fields mentioned in the schedule and depending for its resources on public subscriptions donations or government aid'.

The Ordinance required that every organization that sought to render voluntary welfare service under 15 specified areas must be registered with the Pakistan Social Welfare Department. Although the constitution of Pakistan was abrogated afterwards, this Ordinance remains valid in its entirety in present-day Bangladesh. It is applicable to all NGOs, including those which receive foreign funds. A large number of NGOs are registered under this Ordinance. The registration procedures are simple. However, the power given to the Government raises concern for arbitrary exercise of excessive control. The 1961 ordinance allows the government to interfere with the governance structure of the NGO in the following two ways: The Department of Social Welfare (DSW) as the registering body is authorized to suspend the governing body of an NGO cannot dissolve the NGO without the approval of the DSW. Organizations involved in the following activities were identified as voluntary

² A land-based aristocracy created under the Act of permanent Settlement of 1793. The Act was abolished in 1950.

³ Present Bangladesh, as part of India, was under British rule until mid-August 1947.

social welfare agencies: 1) Child welfare; 2) Youth welfare; 3) Women's welfare; 4) Welfare of the physically and mentally disabled; 5) Family planning; 6) Recreational programs intended to encourage people away from anti-social activities; 7) Social education that is, education aimed at developing a sense of civic responsibility; 8) Welfare and rehabilitation of released destitute; 9) Welfare of the handicapped; 10) Patient welfare and rehabilitation; 12) Welfare of the aged and infirm; 13) Social work training; 14) Co-ordination of social welfare agencies.

The 1961 Ordinance gives the government power to intervene in a NGOs management structure. The DOSS (Department of Social Services), as the registration authority is empowered to suspend the governing body of an NGO without giving any right to appeal, but the governing body of an NGO cannot dissolve the NGO without the approval of the DOSS. The relevance of the Ordinance is questionable on three grounds; firstly, the political circumstances behind its introduction no longer appertain. Bangladesh is not under a military rule and has its own Constitution; secondly, the scope of NGO activities has expanded far beyond the fifteen areas specified in 1961. A glaring example is the absence of the important micro-credit activities in the 1961 list; thirdly, the pertinence of the Ordinance is not clear since it does not provide any legal identity to the NGOs, although widely believed to do so.

Tradition of voluntary activities

Voluntary works and undertakings of social works in respect of extending benefit to the less fortunate people had been here in Bangladesh. These beneficial tasks were mainly undertaken having been inspired by the religious spirits and also by the on-going, social and cultural values. Even the landlords and well-to-do persons though usurping poor people's rights, undertook several works inspired by the concepts and spirit of voluntarism. These activities include establishment of schools, hospitals, mosques, markets. All the works were done for the benefit of the community. These traditional philanthropic activities have changed a lot in view of the gradual changes in the political and socio-economic spheres. With the changing social structures and consequent changes in beliefs, practices and social relations, the concept of voluntarism has marked a radical swing along a direction that involves professionalism, invites specialization and invokes formal management structures, which can be seen in contemporary NGOs operating in Bangladesh (Huda, 1990).

War of independence

Both national and international NGOs started their

operation in Bangladesh as relief organizations after the 1970 cyclone. The war of liberation of 1971 followed immediately after the cyclone and a section of those who participated in relief activities joined the war. Following independence many of these individuals or groups go back to their previous professions, but formed NGOs. A large number of international voluntary organization as the reconstruction of the war devastated economy attracted major inflow of resources from overseas. During this period, they were primarily in providing food and essential commodities to the war afflicted people. Initially, they were involved in the distribution of clothing, medical and food items, and even extended their work to construction of house for war victims. They also took part in developing physical infrastructure such as roads and bridges. These are now established as the leading and pioneering NGOs in Bangladesh (Lovell 1992). They are BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, GK, CARITAS (Christian Organization for Relief and Rehabilitation), CCDB (The Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh), Proshik, but a few years after liberation the purposes that they were serving (rehabilitation of war affected people) had more or less lost their rationale. The major challenge that the NGOs faced at this phase was how to survive by transforming themselves. By 1973, through performing relief work, NGOs could mobilize large groups of workers who had experienced interaction with national and international agencies. They had already been able to create an effective organizational mechanism for performing work at the grass-roots level. Leaders of NGOs state that it was during this period they realized that relief efforts do not solve the problem of the poor. They felt that if relief works, the resources they commanded could be channeled in a productive way by involving the recipients themselves then the NGOs role would more positive.

Unsuccessful of poverty alleviation efforts

Poverty alleviation efforts in Bangladesh started under the purview of rural development. The Village Agriculture and Industrial Development (V-Aid) program, the first large scale rural development program launched in 1953, organized large number of 'Chand Tara' Clubs and 'Touth club' and encourage the villagers to work on cooperative basis (Hussain, 1996). The V-AID program abruptly abandoned in 1960 without any significant success except creation of awareness among the rural people about their problems and among the policy makers about the need for rural development as the pre-condition of national development. The V-AID program was followed by the infamous 'Comilla Model developed through a series of pilot research by the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BRAD) during the 1960s. 'Comilla Model' was also largely based on group approach and credit (Hye, 1996). It was expanded throughout the

country in 1972 as Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP). Farmers were organized into two tier Cooperative groups Credit and other development inputs' were mobilized through these Cooperative groups. Many of the macro-reforms, made by the GOB with a view to benefiting the poor, have failed to achieve desired success from time to time, due to the non-existence of appropriate institutions to execute such reform at the grassroots level. But the NGOs succeeded here due to their small size and their concentration on a limited number of activities they were capable to deal creatively with situational demands.

Thus, where the GOB failed to achieve the desired success, the NGOs played an important role in complementing the government efforts (Huda, 1987). Hence, it is argued that the emergence of NGOs in Bangladesh is directly related to the failure of the governments to meet the hopes and aspirations of the people (Hasan, 1992).

An increase in foreign aid

The mushrooming growth of NGOs in Bangladesh is partly due to the increase in foreign aid and humanitarian help to cope with many natural disasters that Bangladesh often experience. Foreign funding is sometimes considered as a lucrative opportunity to collect resources for the NGOs (Shailo, 1994). There are many sources of funding for NGOs; The NGO Affairs Bureau of GOB (Government of Bangladesh) keeps records of all foreign funds directly channeled to NGOs. The amount received from multilateral sources, government sources and self – generating funds etc. are not available. The available data indicate that NGO funding from 1995 to 2006 has increased steadily. In 1995, NGOAB approved Tk.6342. This figure rose to TK. 17628 in 2001 to 2002 through November 2004 (World Bank, 2005). If one compares the grant component of ODA with NGO finance received through NGOAB, one finds that in 2001 to 2002 NGO fund as percentage of ODA grant was 6.2 By the year 2003 to 2004 it had increased to 11% and by 2007 to 2008 it had risen to 16.7% .

Bottom-up social transformation movement

Since 1973, NGOs emphasized on integrated community development programs. They dealt with sectoral activities such as agriculture, fisheries, livestock, cooperatives, health and family planning, adult education, vocational training, etc. NGOs made efforts to remove the structural barriers through initiating institutional changes and building organizations of the poor. The NGOs realized that development process can be kept ongoing through technical assistance. They identified target groups consisting of disadvantaged poor people. They arranged to train –up people to enhance their social consciousness

and to form their own institutions. The people were helped to undertake collaborative social actions such as bargaining for higher wages, better terms in share-cropping, land lease, protection against abuse of rape, dowry, and divorce without compensations. Thus, the NGOs initiated a proven process of development at the grassroots. Meanwhile, many new NGOs came into existence and expanded their programs basing on the needs of the target people. During the initial years of work as development NGOs, they mainly replicated the mainstream development programs following a community based approach. However, they very quickly understood the shortcomings of the community based approach the target group approach. It was during this period, that one witnessed form a radicalism in the perception of a section of NGOs about their role. They started highlighting the fact that the root causes of poverty were structural and they themselves were catalyst organizations working towards transforming the power structure. Therefore, organization building of the rural poor, reducing dependence on traditional power elites, development of the independent resource base of the rural elite, participation in social actions for confronting the power structure all became part of their wider development objectives. BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, Nijera Kori, ASA (Association for Social Advancement), Proshika Manobik Unnoyon Kendra (PMUK), Proshika Comilla are some organization who were in the forefront of such 'bottom-up' social transformation movement. By mid- 1980s, therefore, one witnesses another shift in NGO objectives from social transformation through bringing in changes in power structures towards providing specific services to their target groups and also to the wider community services which were hitherto not available from the state, private sector, and other civil society organizations. At present, services available from NGOs include health care, family planning, legal aid, non-formal primary education and micro-finance. The most important service that has earned Bangladesh NGOs international recognition is the delivery of micro-credit.

MICRO-CREDIT IN BANGLADESH: INTEGRAL PART OF NGOS EFFORTS

Credit program or revolving loan fund, were common among NGOs from the beginning of their involvement in Bangladesh. The Grameen Bank of Bangladesh is considered as the pioneer in this model. Grameen Bank's innovative collateral free credit model was developed in 1975, the benefit of these credit services hardly reached the poor. The massive acceptance of Grameen Bank among the rural poor and its rapid expansion in Bangladesh as well as replication worldwide represent its excellent success. By now, it is the largest micro-credit program in the world and is considered as the model in

the field of poverty alleviation. It was not just the Grameen Bank alone, but others like BRAC, Proshika, ASA, RDRS (Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service), TMSS(Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sanngaha) and few NGOs were involved in collateral-free credit program on substantial scale. An increasing thrust towards a credit program by mainstream NGOs have been observed since the mid- nineties. It now the biggest activity of the big NGOs and is a core activity of many medium and small NGOs.

Successful in sector development

NGOs activities have virtually grown into a movement in Bangladesh and eventually playing a very significant role in the nation's development process. They assumed a vital role in certain sectors, such as, poverty reduction, family planning, gender issues, primary health care, education, rural development, improvement of infrastructure and environment protection. In public sector these areas have received scanty attention and small resources allocation at the implementation level (Shelly, 1992).

However, different type data are found about the number of NGOs working in Bangladesh from the publications of different agencies. NGOs usually are registered with different government agencies such as the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Forest and Environment. In every typical Bangladesh village, we find signboards depicting the identity of some clubs or samities (associations). The number of NGOs in Bangladesh indicates that Bangladesh is a hunting ground and a land of opportunities and opportunists too. This increasing number of NGOs is perhaps the symbol of the traditional Bangladeshi heritage of 'every one for each other'.

REGULATORY INSTITUTION: THE NGO AFFAIRS BUREAU (NGOAB)

Gradually the NGOs expand their activities in Bangladesh. They play an important role in the context of national development. GOB also views the activity of the NGO as a useful contribution to the national development. GOB welcomes NGOs' activities in various fields, where government activities are not adequate. With a view to attaining optimal impacts, the NGOs require collective coordination (Holloway, R. 1998). Because only well-coordinated NGO activities could supplement and complement government's development programs quite meaningfully, on behalf of GOB, the responsibility of coordination of NGO activities is assigned to the NGOAB.

Previously foreign NGOs and NGOs receiving foreign

funds, working in Bangladesh had to apply to different government agencies for registration and various approval and permissions. Clearance from committees at various stages and inter-ministerial bureaucratic procedures not only increased paper work for the NGOs, but also resulted in the loss of substantial funds due to delays in the process. The 1980s witnessed a huge backlog of projects pending government approval (World Bank, 1996). Due to inadequate manpower and lack of a central body in the past, GOB could not also monitor the NGO activities properly. As a result, activities of some NGOs resulted in wastage of resources and brought the NGO activity under criticism in general.

In 1990, the government created the NGOAB within the Ministry of Establishment to co-ordinate and regulates the activities of NGOs operating with foreign funding. NGOs of foreign origin also come under the preview of the NGOAB. The necessary approval for working with foreign donations, known as the FD Registration, is obtained from the NGOAB by the NGOs concerned. Separate approval for all projects is required from the NGOAB. Until 1990, NGOs had to follow a complex set of rules and procedures. They had to apply to different government ministries and departments for registration, project approval and permission to obtain foreign funds. This involved a great deal of paper work, long delays and contact with many ministries. Delay at any point caused disruption of the whole process. The NGOAB was therefore created to provide a one-stop service. It is now located within the prime Minister's office and is responsible for all contact with NGOs under the 1982 Foreign Contributions (Regulation) Ordinance. The NGOAB's establishment has positively changed the enabling environment for NGOs. It helps them obtain registration, approval and permission with respect to program implementation and receiving money from abroad, with a short period.

The principle aim of NGOAB is to ensure quality performance of the NGO sector and its accountability to the state. Since the establishment of the NGOAB, bureaucratic requirements have gradually diminished and some unnecessary paper work has been abolished (Task Force.1990). Despite these changes, however, onerous procedures that burden NGOS still remain. The NGOAB have a long list of responsibilities. The situation has definitely improved in terms of the registration and approval process, but the NGOAB is not well equipped for 'co-ordination and monitoring', as it does not possess an adequate number of trained personnel to carry out the entire task. The ordinances, regulations, circulations vested the NGOAB all its responsibilities regarding coordination, regulation and monitoring of foreign and foreign assisted non-government voluntary organizations and individuals working in Bangladesh. The NGOAB is charged with certain responsibilities (NGOAB, 2008). While considering the application for registration; the NGOAB is required to seek approval from the Home

Ministry.⁴

Establishment of the government NGO consultative council

In order to provide a forum for open dialogue between the Government and the NGOs, GOB has established the Government NGO Consultative Council (GNCC) by a Gazette notification, dated 17th October, 1996. The objectives of the establishing the GNCC are:

1. To increase mutual understanding and cooperation between GOB and the NGOs for the overall development of the country.
2. To identify and discuss issues which impede GO-NGO cooperation and develop an improved policy and institutional environment for GO-NGO Cooperation.
3. To suggest modalities for greater involvement of NGOs in national development.
4. To propose measure to simplify and improve the

⁴ The Home Ministry is required to give its decision within 60 days for receipt of the letter from the NGOAB. In considering the application, the Home Ministry is expected to look into the following matters:

(a) Whether the organization or person (s) involved is /are involved in anti-state/anti-social activities and whether the persons concerned had been convicted for these or any other immoral acts.

(b) Identities of the members of the executives committee of the organization, their relationship and social status.

(c) Previous experience of the organization in Social Welfare activities.

(d) Whether the organization has its own office (Circular : section 6.1 (d) 1993).

If the NGOAB does not receive the Home Ministry's decision within the specified time, the NGOAB is required to send a written reminder to Home Ministry after 30 (thirty) days (Circular: Section 6.1(d): 1993). It will then be presumed that the Ministry does not have any objection to the application for registration of the NGO concerned. The NGOAB is required by law to issue the letter of registration within 90 days of receipt of the application. The registration remains valid for 5 years unless canceled by the state (Circular: Section 6.1 (d): 1993. State retains the right to cancel the registration of an NGO. Registration can be renewed for 5 years provided NGOAB is satisfied with the performance of the NGO. Renewal applications should be accompanied by the constitution of the NGO, names and addresses of the members of the executive committee and minutes to the annual general meetings of the NGO and the free for renewal of registration.

White scrutinizing, the NGOAB has to consider whether the project contributes to socio-economic development, without duplicating existing state and non-government programs (Circular: Section 7(1) : 1993). After scrutiny, the NGOAB forwards the proposal to the relevant Ministry, which has to reply within 21 days. If the Ministry does not, the NGOAB can assume that the Ministry has no objection to the project (Circular: Section 7 (d): 1993. However, if the Ministry has an objection to the project or recommends modification unacceptable, the NGOAB may approve the project after obtaining clearance from the Prime Minister's Office (Circular: Section 7 (e) 1993. The NGOAB, if necessary, can approve the project proposal after making changes and modifications. But in such a case, the opinions and limitations of donor agency/agencies and relevant NGOs should be considered (Circular: Section 7 (f) 1993. The NGOAB is required to communicate its decision within 45 days of receiving the project proposal with the requisite details (Circular : Section 7 (g) : 1993.

regulatory system for creating an enabling environment for governing NGO activities.

5. To suggest measure to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation capacity of the NGOAB partner NGOs with a view to ensuring accountability and transparency for development assistance funds.

Membership of the GNCC (Government NGO consultative council)

The council has a maximum of 23 members, which include six representatives nominated by the government from concerned Ministry/Division and eight highest level appropriate NGO representatives nominated by the ADAB. The chairman of the council is appointed by the government. The Director-General of the NGOAB is the ex-officio member-secretary to this council. The remaining seven positions are to be filled in according to the advice of the council. Representatives are appointed for two years and no individual can serve more than two consecutive terms.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to analyze the genesis and growth of NGOs in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh NGOs started their activities as voluntary, nonprofit organization but they make themselves essential in the necessary for the poor, backward and in ware women of Bangladesh. It has argued that these NGOs have transformed themselves by changing or incorporating new goals in order to face the challenges which were thrown upon them from the environment in which they operate. NGOs have been extremely successful in providing access to a credit to a large number of people and participation in development process, to some extent, has made the role of the few NGOs controversial.

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