



## Initiatives taken by volunteers for sustainable development

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### Abstract

The Voluntary Organizations (VOs) action programs address issues of education, skill development, income generating, community organizing, and health. Funding, one-man decision-making, unappealing paid staff service conditions, and bureaucratic indifference are the issues facing VOs. Strengthening and promoting volunteer activity is critically important. The extension-oriented promotive style of the bureaucracy's operation, the simplification of the grants-in-aid process, the establishment of a networking mechanism among VOs, the training of staff, the improvement of the organizational structure and administrative proficiency of the voluntary organizations, and the demonstration of the leadership's sincere commitment to treating VOs as partners are some of the recommendations for improving VOs. Because VOs have firsthand knowledge and experience of people's needs and available resources at the grassroots level, their involvement in the nation's sustainable development is seen as crucial. VOs interact with humans more closely. VOs are more adaptable than strict bureaucratic systems. A complex governmental setup is significantly more expensive than voluntary activity.

**Keywords:** Voluntary Organizations (VOs), Social Activism, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), sustainable development, socioeconomic development

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### Introduction

In India, voluntary work has long been a fundamental component of the sociocultural heritage. Because they are based on the people, voluntary organizations (VOs) are able to effectively address the needs and goals of the public.

An endeavor of one's own free will is called voluntary action. It encourages people to get involved in efforts to improve their social and economic well-being. Voluntary action helps people help themselves by utilizing their own resources, discovering their potential, and finding and putting into practice solutions to their problems in order to reach their objectives. However, voluntary action may not always align with the state's current policies and programs. Many of these initiatives fall under the category of social activism, in which underrepresented people, organizations, or even others band together to protest and demand reforms to the current social and economic systems.

### Features of Voluntary Organizations (VOs) That are silent

The initiative of people who are deeply interested in social welfare and development, especially for the underprivileged segments of society, leads to the formation of voluntary organizations (VOs). These individuals are motivated by their concern for social causes and exhibit a strong sense of passion and commitment. VO membership is entirely optional. While some VOs focus on certain topics, others have more general purposes and objectives. VOs do not operate under government administrative authority and do not have their own set of rules and regulations. However, some do search for government grants-in-aid, for which they must often meet specific requirements. The majority of VOs are registered in accordance with the Societies Registration Act of 1860 or comparable state government acts. They become qualified to receive government grants-in-aid as a result of their registration.

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Because both kinds of organizations engage in activities outside the government sector, academicians and development planners consistently use the words Voluntary Organization (VO) and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) interchangeably. But not all non-governmental organizations are voluntary. There are differences between NGOs and VOs in terms of their finance, autonomy, manner of operation, sponsorship, and place of origin.

### India's Non-Profit sector growth

When it comes to state-VO cooperation, the Indian situation is distinct. Anaemic and feeble local self-governing institutions are indicated by centralizing growth tendencies. Public policy, on the other hand, has concentrated on

people's engagement and participation in development. Geographical and socioeconomic differences have been brought about by development, but it has also occasionally resulted in great resentment and violent agrarian protests. While caste structure has not diminished in rural regions, clan homogeneity has emerged on certain economic problems, gaining political legitimacy. Examples include land reforms, Bhoodan and Gramdan, the restitution of tribal lands that were alienated, the negative effects of gigantic dams on water supplies, and fair wages for rural laborers. Through their shared cause with civil society associations, NGOs have positively impacted the battles of economically oppressed groups and acted as catalysts in the fight for development empowerment. Three mutually reinforcing pillars of gradual and seamless growth transition underpin India's democracy. First, individuals are brought into the mainstream of development and independent organizations are encouraged to function under the constitutional mandate. Second, areas designated for voluntary work to promote rural development are part of the planned development strategy. Lastly, political parties back nonprofits that carry out development initiatives. Three separate but related streams of VOs and NGOs have contributed to this progress in various ways. The goal of the first stream is the increasing integration of the weakest link in the socioeconomic development chain through intellectual or ideological participation in democratic debate. The second stream consists of tangible or utilitarian investments that support community cohesiveness in stepping up development initiatives. The third stream is spiritual or philanthropic, which is required to awaken social consciousness in order to share resources and provide for the weaker members of society. All of this is reflected in Indian development. The Preamble of the Constitution embodies the spirit of the constitutional mandate, while the Directive Principles of State Policy demonstrate the state's obligation to provide gradual empowerment. They have been strengthened by the Supreme Court in many public interest lawsuits (PILs) filed by VOs. It has confirmed that the right to live with dignity and all of its ramifications is part of the right to life (Article 21). The Supreme Court (1984) explained that "where legislation is already enacted, the state can surely be obliged to ensure observance of such legislation." However, it may not be possible to compel the state through the judicial process to make provisions by statutory enactment or executive fiat for ensuring... basic essentials which go to make up a life of human dignity. In particular, the Directive Principles (Article & 38) mandate that the state encourage business groups "to minimize the disparities in wealth and work to eradicate disparities in status, resources, and opportunities, not just between individuals but also between groups of people living in various places or pursuing different careers. (Article 43). NGOs are required to apply for legal status in legislation created in accordance with the powers divided between the state and the "economic organization" that promotes employment with a "living wage." Union and the State in the Constitution's Seventh Schedule. The First Five Year Plan said that "the field of public cooperation becomes coterminous with that of national development" in light of this assumption. It stated that since "the responsibilities of the administration tend to increase to an extent with which it may be difficult to cope," "voluntary organizations" should try to create fields for constructive work and that as they grow and are able to take on more responsibility, it should be possible to entrust to them "an increasing number of functions which have at present to be undertaken by Government agencies." For this reason, Bharat Sewak Samaj (BSS) was established as a networking organization and platform. The Second Five Year Plan went one step further and emphasized that "by harnessing voluntary effort and local manpower resources, physical targets in the Plan can be supplemented in many fields and even greatly exceeded." It also stated that "cooperative form of organization has advantages which neither the system of private enterprise nor that of state ownership can match." In order to foster a culture of voluntary labor, it welcomed new Gram Vikas Mandals and Gramdan villages in addition to established Gandhian organizations like the Sarva Sewa Sangh and Gandhi Smarak Nidhi. Further listing of all Indian volunteer organizations "with links in different parts of the Country (that) can help to create a sense of oneness and common outlook" was the next step in the Third Plan. The goal and aim of VOs were extremely apparent at a time when the current generation of NGOs had not yet emerged, hence the forms of VOs were not important.

### **Nonprofit initiatives for sustainable growth**

**Pre-Independence era:** Prior to the 19th century, the needs of the impoverished and destitute in the Voluntary Action for Sustainable Development society were met by traditional social institutions such as family, kinship, caste, and village community. Large numbers of people received charity and aid after natural calamities including floods, famines, fires, earthquakes, and wars. Individual generosity resulting from religious acts and piety constituted the majority of these endeavors.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, voluntary work became increasingly structured, and a number of religious groups established organizations to carry out social welfare initiatives. Even though their overt goal was frequently to spread their beliefs, Christian missionaries also made significant contributions to the organization of social services for the underprivileged.

Because of the efforts of several national leaders and social reformers, voluntary activity of a secular nature began to gain traction during the freedom movement. A new age of mass mobilization for the socioeconomic advancement of the masses was ushered in by Gandhi's social reconstruction concept. The participation of national leaders and social reform groups sparked a fresh interest in India's pressing social and economic issues. As a result, the nation saw the establishment of several volunteer groups. Despite their very modest size, these VOs were ignited by the fervor and devotion of the voluntary workers. They compensated for the government's insufficient services by working in the fields of health and education for the general public across the nation.

Voluntary effort led to the establishment of several welfare institutions, schools, universities, and benevolent clinics in the early decades of the 20th century.

**Post-Independence era:** India began systematic attempts to promote the socioeconomic growth of its citizens as soon as it gained independence. New difficulties arose with the introduction of the national community development program in rural India. The community development strategy was assisted self-help since it was meant to be mostly planned and carried out by the village community, with some financial backing and technical assistance from the government through the extension service. Therefore, the goal of community development was to use the community's own resources to activate them. This strategy was intended to make people realize that rural development would be self-sustaining and proceed more quickly if community involvement and self-help could become its cornerstones. In order to encourage voluntary activity in rural regions, steps were made as part of community development. Punctional groups of women and youth were established as Yuvak Mandals and Mahila Mandals, respectively. Through initiatives, people's participation and contribution to development were also sought during the First and Second Five Year Plans. Additionally, volunteer organizations participated in development projects and received Shram Dan, or voluntary labor contributions. The importance of community effort, cooperative self-help, and voluntary activity was heavily stressed throughout the third and succeeding Five Year Plans, and the State adopted a policy of supporting and promoting volunteer groups. However, the Ministeries/Departments were allowed to determine the specifics of the volunteer sector's function in the 1960s and 1970s. Without taking into account the comprehensive character of development work, the Ministries established their own standards and patterns of aid to the Vo since the majority of them were carrying out their programs in rural regions. Even in related or closely related developmental operations, the resources of many ministries were not combined for development activity in a specific area. The Seventh Plan gave considerable attention to volunteer groups because it recognized their significance in quickening the pace of social and economic development. On the voluntary efforts and involvement of individuals in rural development. According to one definition, the goal of volunteer organizations is to secure the participation of local communities, especially those living below the poverty line, to ensure feedback regarding the impact of various programs, and to provide a foundation for creativity with new methods towards integrated development. With the assistance of well-known nonprofit organizations, a comprehensive training program for the selected individuals was created in response to the acknowledged need for a cadre of skilled animators and social organizers. The Government of India established CAPART, an NGO, in 1986 with the goals of encouraging voluntary work and public involvement as well as assisting in the advancement and dissemination of technologies pertinent to rural India. The function of VOs in rural development was given more attention in the Eighth Plan. An NGOs nationwide network was established. The Planning Commission developed three plans pertaining to creation, replication, multiplication, development, and consulting in order to support this network. A mechanism to offer VOs and NGOs operating in the field of integrated development a single window of services was developed.

Similar to this, volunteer organizations were expected to play a bigger role in the 9th Plan and beyond, particularly as social animators and facilitators to raise awareness via campaigning. In order to better their economic situation by coordinated action, they were also expected to assist the impoverished in establishing Self Help Groups (SHGs). In this manner, the community, PRIs, and nonprofit groups would collaborate to promote local development and, in turn, lower poverty rate levels.

Based on the development programs that are offered for participation and the roles that the VOs are expected to execute as outlined in the different Five-Year Plans:

- a. **Advocacy:** Supporting socially important causes including enhancing the lot of the impoverished in rural areas, ending and rehabilitating child labor and bonded labor, establishing the small family norm, stopping environmental damage, elevating the position of women, encouraging literacy, etc.
- b. **Social Activism:** Promoting radical action, raising awareness, creating groups, and, where required, opposing established institutions and processes in order to transform structures and organizations.
- c. **Relief:** Offering assistance to those affected by man-made and natural disasters.
- d. **Development:** Putting a variety of development programs into action.
- e. **Research, Assessment, and Documentation:** Determining and analyzing developmental challenges and assessing development programs in order to increase the body of information regarding development strategies, delivery methods, and program impact—all of which are critical for bettering program planning.
- f. **Training:** Increasing competence in various areas of duties and giving officials professional skills at various levels.

## Conclusion

As VOs' involvement in the nation's planned development continues to grow, suitable steps have occasionally been made to encourage and support voluntary activity. However, more work has to be done to enhance VOs' operational quality so they may effectively contribute to the nation's efforts toward sustainable development.

The following are some recommendations and remedial actions that should be implemented in this regard:

- Voluntary activity should be encouraged by political leaders. Professionals, academics, and industrialists should all show their dedication to this cause. They will have a far better understanding of the issues facing the poor's growth as a result.

- The way the bureaucracy handles nonprofit groups has to undergo a significant overhaul. To achieve the goals, an extension-oriented promotive style of functioning is crucial.

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