



- The policy system is incomplete without consideration of the need & contribution of civil society groups that work for the welfare of marginalised strata of society.
- The role of civil society in welfare and development can be traced from the pre-independence era to the present day.
- During the national movement itself, India's civil society began to emerge.
- This process was aided by the mobilising efforts associated with the pre-independence elections to legislative councils.
- The Constitution contained the usual liberal protections that make civil society possible, that is, freedom of speech, assembly, and so forth.
- The civil society also shaped by other legal provisions, like the 'reservation' of about one-fifth of parliamentary constituencies for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- In the last few decades, the role of civil society has increased substantially in the field of policy-making.
- The Tenth Five-Year Plan emphasises the role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as integral partners in development.
- These organisations include voluntary organisations, corporate bodies, cooperatives & trusts, which are actively involved in economic and social development.
- The basic strengths of this sector is being utilised in the policy process, namely their advocacy skills, organisational skills & above all, closeness to the people.
- CSOs are considered the sine qua non of efficiency, effectiveness & 'legitimacy' of the government in a democracy.
- As the Tenth Five-Year Plan stresses on the role of these organisations as effective partners in development, it is imperative to discuss the constraints, which affect the development of government - civil society relationship.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN INDIA

- The voluntary movements grew with the emergence of various religious groups & social reform movements like the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, etc.
- It is to be noted that Mahatma Gandhi's movement for national independence was rooted in the ideal of social reconstruction, self-help and development of poor and untouchables through voluntary effort.
- He gave a new dimension to 'voluntary effort' in India. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), such as, the All India Spinners Association (1925),

CLASS NOTES ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN POLICY-MAKING

- and All India Village Industries Association (1934) were active during the freedom struggle
- Socio-economic movements like movements of Dr. Ambedkar & E.V.Ramasamy, for the equality rights
- Even Christian missionaries extended relief & rehabilitation services; and for this they adopted education aid health care activities, besides provision of relief & rehabilitation.
- The occurrence of frequent floods, droughts, famines or other natural calamities during the 1950s & 1960s prompted massive voluntary action.
- Under the influence of the Sarvodaya Movement, youth movements, etc. a fillip was given to voluntary efforts.
- The changing socio-economic milieu has persuaded the Indian NGOs to extend their arenas of action.
- The realisation of development goals, such as, alleviation of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, inequality, ignorance, environmental degradation and strengthening of national integration, depend upon the active participation of people through public-private partnerships.
- The CSOs have also emerged as an important instrument of 'decentralisation' and 'de-bureaucratisation' in India
- Other popular terms used to describe civil society organisations in India are, 'civic institutions', 'social movements', 'non-profit organisations', 'voluntary organisations', 'independent advocacy groups', and 'Non-Governmental Organisations' (NGOs).
- The NGOs constitute a major part of CSOs, and hence it is important to discuss the role of these organisations.
- The NGOs are described as the third sector involved in development, in India (vis-a-vis the 1st is the Public Sector & second is the Private Sector)
- According to the World Bank, "NGOs include charitable and religious associations that mobilise private funds for development, distribute food and family planning services and promote community organisation
- They also include independent cooperatives, community associations, water user societies, women's groups and pastoral associations.
- Citizen groups that raise awareness & influence policy are also NGOs".
- Due to the changing needs and policies they have diversified their activities and became more professional in policy-making.
- As a result, the process of networking with other organisations in the same or similar area is also seen among the NGOs

- NGOs have a legal status in India, since they register themselves under the Societies Registration Act of 1860.
- The large number of NGOs are registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 1976.
- The govt has been planning to enhance the participation of the voluntary sector in development. Therefore, to provide a single window on policy matters regarding the voluntary sector, the Union Government declared the planning commission as the nodal agency to promote the Government-Voluntary Organisations Interface.
- The civil society groups are active participants in planning, & implementation of government policies and programmes.
- A highly articulate civil society with crosscutting, overlapping memberships of groups, of/and social mobility is the presupposition of/for stable democratic polity, and a guarantee for equality and justice.
- They serve as watchdogs of government programmes, and also as 'policy advocates', applying their grass-roots knowledge of development to government priorities and programmes.
- In the globalisation scenario, civil society organisations operate at the local, regional, national and international levels.

TYOLOGY OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS ON THE BASIS OF WORK

- Among the civil society organisations, NGOs constitute a major part, hence their types & organisation needs to be studied.
- The CSOs are identified and classified on the basis of their work, according to the level at which they operate, and according to the approach which they undertake to fulfil their goals.
- Service-oriented organisations :- Provide services in the areas of health, education, family planning etc. The programme details are designed by the CSOs, and local citizens are expected to participate actively in implementation.
- Charity-oriented organisations:-- are directed towards meeting the basic needs of the poor or vulnerable sections of society by providing clothes, food, medicine, temporary shelter, housing etc.
- These types of CSOs are very useful and undertake relief activities during disasters, such as, flood, earthquake, tsunami and cyclone
- Empowerment-oriented organisations:-- aim to develop an understanding among the underprivileged sections of society about the socio-economic or political factors, which affect their development; and help to strengthen their own potential power. In this regard, they act as

facilitators & encourage maximum involvement of the local citizens in collective concerns

- Participation-oriented organisations :- often have a participatory orientation, for example cooperatives.
- In the community development project, participation begins with the need of identification and continues during the planning and implementation stages.
- Civil society organisations concentrate mostly in the metropolis, and some of them are working in tribal areas.
- Techno-Managerial Voluntary Agencies accelerate the groups of rural development through modern management techniques and technology.
- Reformist Voluntary Agencies advocate changes in the social and economic relationships in the society with in the existing political framework.
- Radical Voluntary Agencies organise and try to empower the exploited, and mobilize them against the exploiters.
- Community based civil society organisations include women's organisations, youth organisations, religious or educational organisations.
- State/City level organisations like Chambers of Commerce and Industry, ethnic or educational groups, which are involved in specific activities to help the poor.
- National level organisations, such as, the Red Cross assist local branches in disaster management, epidemics, etc.
- International level organisations like OXFAM and CARE are involved in funding the local NGOs to implement the development project themselves

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

- Civil Society Organisations are expected to play an important role in all conceivable aspects of development as a planner and implementer of development programmes; mobiliser of local resources and initiatives; catalyst, enabler and innovator; builder of self-reliant sustainable society; mediator of people & government; facilitator; supporter and partner of government programmes; agent of demystifying technology and disseminating information; factor of transformation, conscientisation, and improvement of the poor; and facilitator of development education, training and technical assistance.

SUPPORTING GOVT PROJECTS

- CSOs help in selecting the suitable locations for innovative government projects, and specify the strengths and weaknesses.
- In this regard, they suggest ways to overcome the shortcomings that government may face at the time of implementation.
- Thus, CSOs contribute at the time of planning itself. They act more quickly than a government bureaucracy due to the flexible and democratic nature of their organisations.

- They support & demonstrate the results of pilot projects very effectively and facilitate clear communication between citizens and the govt.

FACILITATING COMMUNICATION IN PLANNING PROCESS

- In policy-making, they have a good feel of the community response and basic needs of the citizens.
- To win the confidence of the people (community) they use interpersonal methods of communication. They provide information to the public agencies about the lives, attitudes, culture and capabilities of people in their area.
- They facilitate communication at both levels, upward from citizens to the govt and downwards from government to citizens.
- In upward communication, they inform the government about the requirements, orientations and abilities of local people; and provide feedback for modifying or changing the existing programmes in consonance with the basic needs of the area.
- Downward communication entails creating awareness among people about the government plans, functions, and available resources.
- They work in strategic ways, share information, and develop networking between the other organisations involved in their field.

MOBILISING LOCAL RESOURCES

- Their efforts can be seen during the post-disaster phase, especially in planning for rehabilitation and reconstruction
- In certain cases, NGOs become spokespersons for the poor & underprivileged sections of society

ADVOCACY FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED SECTIONS

- Civil society actors prepare and empower the disadvantaged sections of people to overcome psychological inhibitions and to raise their voice against atrocities and injustice
- They act as 'Ombudsman' for the affected people, and attempt to influence government policies and programmes on behalf of the underprivileged sections of society

MONITORING & EVALUATION OF GOVT POLICIES

- The CSOs conduct innovative research and activities in the field of planning for policy-making and implementation of development programmes, which is documented and shared with the government and public.
- These efforts in monitoring & sharing of results contribute to the effective functioning of the bureaucracy & political leadership, and encourage people's participation in the policymaking process; thus, they keep a check on policy process.
- Some NGOs provide technical assistance, and training for monitoring and evaluation.

FACILITATING DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- The civil society actors develop programmes, with the help of experts, to provide technical assistance and training capabilities.
- They also provide training for volunteers and personnel of other NGOs.

GOVERNMENT - CIVIL SOCIETY INTERFACE

- Partnerships between CSOs and government agencies have contributed to greater effectiveness in the implementation of welfare and development programmes.
- The Union Government recognised the crucial role of NGOs in development during the Sixth Five-Year Plan.
- Since then more emphasis has been laid on the promotion of the NGOs in order to secure people's participation in various development programmes.
- The creation of the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), in 1986, is an example of this strategy
- The NGOs & movements, which started for the purpose of protection of environment, such as, the 'Chipko Andolan' led by Sunder Lal Bahuguna and Narmada Valley Protection Movement, led by Medha Patkar have been quite successful in bringing to the attention of the government the problems of infringement of the rights of the affected people
- The upsurge in civil society movements has resulted in bringing about alterations in policy decisions
- The incorporation of the public demands in policy was reflected in the National Forest Policy, 1988 & the circular on Joint Forest Management, 1990 that moved away from focusing on the commercial value of forests towards recognising the need for conservation of forest.
- The India office of international NGOs like WWF-India are involved in research relating to environmental protection and sustainable development.
- In addition, Indian groups, namely, the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), The Energy Resources Institute (TERI) and The Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) have been contributing to national level policy-making
- After the Bhopal Gas Disaster (1984), many NGOs have been instrumental in persuading the government to accept some of the proposals for minimum compensation and relief
- The NGOs petitioned the Government of India & the World Bank to work out alternative designs, and to reassess the impact of the Narmada Valley Project.
- Due to their efforts & pressure, the World Bank was persuaded to send its team for reassessment of the Narmada Valley Project.
- The local level NGOs have been involved in organising women to form associations, taking up self-help programmes, devising strategies for

changing the existing social structures, and raising the status of women as equal partners in development with men.

- For example, the All India Women's Conference, Bhartiya Gramin National Memorial Trust, Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), etc. have been working incessantly for the upliftment of women.

PAVEMENT DWELLERS IN MUMBAI

- The important issue for the pavement dwellers is shelter. As their habitations are not located in the govt maps, they are, therefore, deprived of entitlement benefits, and are not legally recognised.
- They do not find a place in the entitlement network for basic facilities, such as, electricity, drinking water, ration card and banking.
- The pavement dwellers could draw the attention of the government at the time of elections, and next time when their houses are demolished

GOVT. POLICY

- The Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) has addressed the case of pavement dwellers in Mumbai.
- It was set up in 1984 to support women pavement dwellers in their own empowerment.
- In this case, Mahila Milan is an outcome of the interventions of SPARC, which is an association of women pavement dwellers.
- It is a membership association of self-help variety, primarily engaged in savings and credit for its access to housing and livelihood on the pavements of Mumbai.
- During the short span, the SPARC started working with National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF).
- The SPARC played the role of initial empowerment of Mahila Milan both in building their awareness as well as in enabling them to engage with the Municipal Cooperation and other government agencies in Mumbai.
- The SPARC used their research strategy to prove that public agencies are not meeting the basic needs.
- They pressurised the govt and the municipal authorities through demonstrations and 'dharnas', and sustained meetings and dialogues structured to articulate the interests and needs of pavement dwellers in the city of Mumbai.
- Supreme Court judgement recognised the problems faced by the pavement dwellers, but did not declare the demolition unreasonable, unfair and or unjust (up to 1995).
- Therefore, the recognition of pavement dwellers in the policy process was the outcome of a continuous interaction & negotiation with the State Government.
- The civil society interventions also highlight the need for involving all the stakeholders-including the

affected people in public policy process, especially on welfare and socio-economic development. (Tandon and Ranjita, 2000)

DECENTRALISATION OF POWER IN BANGALORE

- The state bureaucracy in Karnataka resisted to pass the state legislation pertaining to devolution in urban governance.
- In addition, efforts were made to dilute the 74th Constitutional Amendment mandatory provisions into options that the state legislator would decide upon. (Tandon and Ranjita)
- In this situation CIVIC, which is an intermediary association engaged in research & advocacy took up the case of enactment of state legislation pertaining to the 74th amendment
- The CIVIC has followed its usual procedure of organising meetings and holding seminars, both in Bangalore as well as in mofussil towns of Karnataka to make the citizens aware of the provisions of 74th Amendment.
- The Karnataka Nagarpalika Act was passed in 1996 - and since then, CIVIC has been working towards making the ward committees operational.
- The fact that CIVIC is there to monitor the operationalisation of the Nagar Palika Act and that monitoring the formation of ward committees and its operation is also an agenda of CIVIC....." (Tandon and Ranjita)

DELHI GOVT :- BHAGIDARI

- With the objective of good governance, based on the active participation of citizens & cutting all the bureaucratic barriers, the Delhi government initiated the concept of Bhagidari, in January 2000, that is, citizen-government partnership.
- 'Bhagidari' is a means for facilitating citywide changes; utilising processes and principles of multi stakeholders, that is, collaboration between citizen groups, NGOs, and government.
- It aims to develop joint ownership by the citizens and government of the change process, through people's participation in governance.
- The Bhagidari scheme basically involves: Discussions on problems and basic issues, thus arriving at solutions on the basis of consensus; Implementation of solutions; and Monitoring of the implementation process.
- Success stories reveal nominations of 500 water wardens and 1,500 assistant water wardens, citizen groups, the launch of old age pensions and smart card schemes for senior citizens, and the appointment of social welfare committees in 600 government aided schools.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS: CHALLENGES

- According to Neera Chandhoke, "Civil Society is not an institution, it is rather a process whereby the inhabitants of the sphere constantly monitor both the state and the monopoly of power in civil society"

- Democratic movements have to constantly widen the spaces from where undemocratic practices can be criticised, and for this purpose they have to exercise both vigilance and criticality In the process civil society constantly reinvents itself, constantly discovers new projects, discusses new enemies, and makes new friends. . . And this is important, for civil society as an essential precondition for democracy (Neera Chandhoke, 2003).
- It is argued, that policy-making and implementation of development plans could get a boost through active civil society organisations performing their role effectively and in collaboration with the govt
- Paternalistic attitude of some government officials, and dependence of CSOs on government aid restrict the degree of the civil society actors' participation in programme/project design.
- Major emphasis and concentration of government only on those selected programmes, just because aid and assistance is available for them, lose their (CSOs) innovative ace and enterprising character.
- Government grants make it incumbent on the NGOs to evolve, and adhere to, organisational rules and procedures.
- The requirement of organisational compliance introduce elements of bureaucratisation and formalisation that are less responsive to the needs of people. Thus, they become top-down, non-participatory and dependent on external and governmental support.
- Bureaucratisation brings hierarchy, thus decision-making tends to be more centralised, which, in turn, destroys the cooperative and collegiate nature of civil society.
- In cases where NGOs combine development concerns with political and religious objectives, politicians develop vested interest in and use them for their political gain instead of allowing them to serve the people.
- In a political environment, NGOs often fail to contribute or influence the policy or programmes in an objective manner.
- Many NGO-sponsored projects may have limited self-sustainability as they are not designed with sufficient concern for sustainability
- Restricted ways of approach to a problem or area and territorial possessiveness of an NGO may also reduce cooperation between various agencies.
- Unwillingness of civil society actors to engage in a genuine dialogue with government officials may generates suspicion among civil servants, thereby

limiting the organisation's access to government resources.

- The government's passive attitude to fulfil its commitment to improve services, eradicate discrimination and poverty, shortage of competent staff at local level, corruption and nepotism may lead to confrontation between the government and civil society organisations.
- Pressure on successful civil society organisations from major donors to receive more funds, and too much dependence of NGOs on foreign donors may adversely affect their performance.
- There may be problems between the government and civil society organisations due to the suspicion that civil society actors are 'guided by a foreign hand'
- The involvement of civil society actors in politics leads to close affiliation with politicians, which may undermine their autonomy. In such cases, they cannot freely criticise the government for wrong policies.

REMEDIAL MEASURES

- Formulation of policies that encourage a healthy civil society, and public accountability of govt institutions will result in joint efforts for effective policy-making. For this purpose, review the working committee of the 'Mother NGO' concept, and based on that, consider alternative modalities of funding NGOs in order to enhance transparency and accountability in their functioning
- Develop core competencies and professionalism in civil society organisations for their effective contribution to policy-making.
- Design regulations to help the civil society organisations in developing sound management practices, and eliminating restrictive laws and procedures.
- NGOs are expected to provide a supplementary or complementary role to govt in the effective implementation of policies.
- The government provides funds, projects, and training opportunities to provide encouragement to the civil society actors; and to develop their skills and contribute to development.
- Civil Society actors should be motivated and encouraged to reduce sectoral gaps and avoid activities of religious or ethnic bias.
- A high degree of professionalism mong NGO personnel can prevent such bias. Training programmes too should make a special focus on this.