**NGO and elementary education**

A Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) is an organisation that is not directly

part of the structure of government. Various definitions for Non-Governmental

Organizations (NGOs) have been pronounced depending on the context in which the term

is used. The World Bank defines NGOs as “private organizations that pursue activities to

relieve suffering and promote the interests of the poor.” Examples of NGOs are BRAC,

Durnibar Foundation, LIVESTRONG, Action Aid. There are three stages or generations

of NGO evolution. First, the typical development NGO focuses on relief and welfare, and

delivers relief services directly to beneficiaries. Examples are the distribution of food,

shelter or health services. The NGO notices immediate needs and responds to them.

NGOs in the second generation are oriented towards small-scale, self-reliant local

development. At this evolutionary stage, NGOs build the capacities of local communities

to meet their needs through “Self reliant local action”

It should be noted that the problems of development in developing

**Definition of NGO:**

Willets (1996) defines NGO as, “an independent voluntary association of people

acting together on a continuous basis for some common purpose other than achieving

government office, making money or illegal activities.”

World Bank (1990) defines NGO as, “an organization or group of people

working independent of any external control with specific objectives and aims to fulfill

tasks that are oriented to bring about desirable change in a given community or area or

situation.”

**Role of NGOs:**

The number of NGOs in India is unclear, but on the Government’s webpage there

are 41,812 NGOs registered that are working in collaboration with the Government

(Government of India NGO Partnership System 2009), thus one can predict that the

number of unregistered NGOs in the country is even larger. In order to meet the goals

that have been set up in the SSA programme and the RTE Act, the civil society and

NGOs play an important role both when it comes to implementation and monitoring of

the SSA programme and the RTE Act. The reason for this is that NGOs in India for a

long time have been playing a role in providing education. But this has also resulted in, at

least in theory, that a great number of NGOs have changed their work in order to live up

to the SSA and RTE requirements. NGOs are important for: awareness raising among the

people, social mapping of educational needs and problems, providing resource help for

the Government and provision of special training to name a few (SSA 2011:84-87).

Since NGOs play a large role in the education sector in India it is necessary to

provide a short introduction concerning advantages and disadvantages of NGOs.

Strengths associated with NGOs are that they are working with people on a grassroots

level and hence, said to take into consideration the views of the people (Craig and Mayo

1995 cited in Potter, Binns, Elliott and Smith 2008:319). NGOs are also regarded to be

more democratic, flexible and participatory than the government (Holmén 2010:20) and it

is common that they put pressure on the government in order to make the work of the

government more transparent and accountable (Edwards 2001 cited in Potter, Binns,

Elliott and Smith 2008:321). Particularly in India, it has been highlighted that NGOs play

a significant role in implementing Government policies. In addition to this, a large

number of NGOs have put pressure on the Government to improve the educational

situation in the country. It should also be kept in mind that due to NGOs, there has been

more resources directed to primary education than if just the Government would provide

education (Colclough 2010.

Oxfam India is an NGO that continues to work in the six poorest states of India (Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Orissa) to send the most vulnerable and underprivileged children back to school and empower them to break out of poverty.

NGO works through contributions and you too can support an NGO and change a child's life forever. While supporting a cause, you will also save tax. When you donate to an NGO like Oxfam India, you help in the following ways,

Enrolment

NGO helps in identifying the most vulnerable children in the poorest states of India. Due to unaccessibility and poverty, children miss out on school. Oxfam India helps enrol children in school under the Right to Education Act (RTE). Children who have dropped out and missed few years of schooling, Oxfam provides them with gap classes which help them get enrolled in their age-appropriate grade.

Awareness and Counselling

Through workshops and various activities, awareness is generated amongst parents and local communities about the importance of education. Oxfam India also conducts regular counselling sessions to encourage parents to send their children especially girls to school and help them participate in various activities.

Management Committees

Oxfam India forms school management committees comprising of teachers, students and parents to help them take accountability in children and school's development.

Skill-Development Workshops

Learning activities, sports and school committees help children in personality development and leadership. Oxfam India conducts multiple activities in schools that help them learn their rights, build skills and develop confidence.

Quality Education

To receive quality education other elements play a major role. Oxfam India helps in proper implementation of Right to Education Acts in schools across six poorest states in India, train teachers, strengthen school infrastructure, provide books and other learning materials to children and schools in need.

Despite the positive sides with NGOs, there is a wide range of weaknesses

associated with them. Some of the problems are that a great number of NGOs are

founded in order to create jobs for people, leaders are inexperienced and they lack

resources, skills and knowledge to actually carry out their work, hence, they are

ineffective. Another problem is that NGOs focus on short-term targets and that donors

influence the projects, a reason for this is that it is easier to receive funding, if the

projects are short-termed. In addition to this it is common that NGOs compete with each

other in order to attract clients, funding and political influence (Holmén 2010.

UNESCO--Educational Policies and Methods of Implementation

UNESCO is the linchpin organization of educational development in the world. It was established in 1945 as a forum of inter-governmental discussion and planning of the future of education. According to India Current Affairs, the agency has 195 member states including Palestine. Its headquarters is in Paris. UNESCO works as a leading agency of the ‘Education for All’ (EFA) movement. Even it is so far one of the most leading agency in multilateral education. Since its establishment in 1945, UNESCO works accompanied with governments of different countries, multilateral agencies, and non-governmental organizations, civil societies and even with different local communities to ensure equal universal education particularly from the grassroots levels of the societies. However, UNESCO works according to its purpose of the Constitution which includes contribution ‘‘to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations’’ (Constitution of the UNESCO, Article 1). The Constitution explicitly indicates free flows of thoughts about education, equality of educational opportunity, preservation of world cultural heritage and promotion of cultural and educational diversity. Although UNESCO is combination of education, science and cultural affairs but it highly emphasizes on education. Therefore, both ‘fundamental education’ (1947); and ‘compulsory education’ (1950s) are significant areas of the agency (Singh, 2011). Indeed, UNESCO is a state-centric agency in both its own operations and in its view of social organization, governance and change. At the ministerial level, the agency has assisted governments in their policy making and operations. Right to education was included as a question of human rights in 1948 to UNESCO. Initially, concept of fundamental education in UNESCO program eased to ensure universal

Accordingly, universal schooling and universal literacy both were important elements as right to education to the agency. However, UNESCO simultaneously focuses on equal educational opportunities within and between nations. In this way, educational phenomena of third world countries get more importance in light of UNESCO’s role. Torres (1946b) had entitled campaign against ‘illiteracy’ as a strategy of the new commitment of UNESCO to ensure equalization of educational opportunity across and within member states.

In essence, **UNESCO’s** major policies and pathways of implications are given below: 1. UNESCO underlines on achieving universal primary schooling and gender equity. 2. A UNESCO program gives importance on improving rate of literacy in adults and youth 3. The agency emphasizes on Early Child Care Education (ECCE) 4. Non Formal Education (NFE) and community learning centers both are important components of UNESCO’s educational policy implementation. 5. UNESCO conducts a series of professional development of teachers concerning their roles, qualifications, training and their salary packages to provide support to the government in ensuring the quality of Education for All (EFA). 6. It assists to provide expertise and foster partnerships to strengthen national educational leadership to offer quality of education for all. 7. UNESCO works as an intellectual leader, an honest broker, and clearing house of ideas. 8. Lifelong learning is a technique of UNESCO’s long term educational policy. In fact, the mission of UNESCO in education sector is to provide international leadership for creating learning societies through educational facilities for all population.

UNICEF

1946. UNICEF is created by resolution 57(I) of the United Nations General Assembly on 11 December 1946 to provide supplies and assistance to children after World War II. Originally known as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, UNICEF starts as a temporary relief fund of the United Nations.

EAC and the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) are partnering in Chad, Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen to bring quality basic education to over 3.3 million children.

UNICEF was created with the purpose of working with others to overcome the obstacles that poverty, violence, disease and discrimination place in a child’s path. UNICEF is committed to ensuring that all children – regardless of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background or circumstance – realise their right to a quality education. To that end, UNICEF supports innovative programs and initiatives that focus on the worlds most excluded and vulnerable children, including girls, the disabled, ethnic minorities, the rural and urban poor, victims of conflict and natural disasters and children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS.

UNICEF helps governments, communities and parents build the capacities and skills they need to fulfil their obligations to children. These obligations include ensuring the right of all children to free, compulsory quality education, even during a humanitarian crisis, in the recovery period after a crisis or in fragile and unstable situations. UNICEF also focuses on gender equality and works towards eliminating disparities of all kinds.

UNICEF is committed to ensuring all children in India have access to inclusive and equitable quality education.

Every girl and boy in school and learning

India has many accomplishments to celebrate in education. More than 70 million children attend pre-primary school, there is a near universal primary enrolment and there is a consistent increase in upper primary (lower secondary) participation.

Out of 100 students, 29 per cent of girls and boys drop out of school before completing the full cycle of elementary education, and often they are the most marginalized children.

The Government of India’s Right to Education Act has been instrumental in the reduction of the number of Out of School Children (OOSC) aged 6 to 14 years, from 13.46 million in 2006 to six million in 2014 (Source: RI-IMRB Surveys, 2009 and 2014). Out of the six million children that are still out of school a majority are from marginalised communities including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and religious minority groups.

Challenges remain because most of the children who are in school are not learning at grade appropriate levels. Poor quality teaching and learning practices result in lower school attendance and children drop out due to early marriage, child labour or because they are subject to violence or abuse. Seasonal migration, poverty, lack of access to and awareness of social protection measures also lead to children dropping out of school.

Inequities in access to quality early childhood education: In India, there are approximately 20 million children, between the ages of 3-6, that are not attending preschool. This is primarily because of lack of basic infrastructure, qualified early childhood educators and appropriate learning materials. Low school readiness levels in cognitive and language skills prevail for children in government-run Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) as well as the private preschools. (Source: Longitudinal study, Center for Early Childhood Education and Development, Ambedkar University, ASER Centre)

Large numbers of out of school children (OOSC): There are close to six million out of school children in India. Out of 100 students, 29 per cent of girls and boys drop out of school before completing the full cycle of elementary education, and often they are the most marginalised children. The majority (75 per cent) of the OOSC are concentrated in six states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal.

In school and not learning: Large scale learning assessments and surveys[1] have consistently pointed to the poor learning levels of children even after eight years of elementary education. A critical factor impacting learning outcomes is the absence of strong foundation provided by quality early childhood education. Another is the dearth of well-qualified and trained teachers. Even when recruited, teacher absenteeism remains a concern due to poor governance.

**The solution**

UNICEF is working closely with the Government of India, civil society and private sector across 17 states to make sure all children, particularly the most disadvantaged, participate in quality early childhood and elementary education with learning outcomes at grade appropriate levels, by 2022.

The aim is to ensure quality, grade-appropriate education from early childhood through elementary for all boys and girls. This is done through system strengthening with government at all levels and effective coordination, implementation and monitoring of the education programme.

Girls taking part in the menstrual hygiene management (MHM) intervention programme in Agarwal Vidyalaya (School) in western Indian state of Gujarat.

Girls taking part in the menstrual hygiene management (MHM) programme in their school in western Indian state of Gujarat.

We aim to reduce the number of out of school children by three million through timely enrolment, regular attendance and flexible learning for elementary and secondary aged children.

UNICEF also supports the government in strengthening life skills development (skills for learning, self-empowerment, social skills and employability) for children aged 3 to 18. These soft skills are prerequisites that allow children to negotiate the very dynamic Indian societal context.

With a special focus on girl child, UNICEF is working with the Government to improve learning levels by 15 per cent while ensuring foundational and transferable skills development.

Government schools in India are the largest providers of education. However, data indicates that parents are increasingly enrolling their children in private schools. The government has opened its doors to Public-Private Partnership to introduce innovation and create models of quality within the government system.

UNICEF advocates for and ensures rights based and democratic education that addresses social and gender inequalities in education, in its work with the private sector.