

Status of Social Security among Grassroots Activists: Constraints and Scope

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Background

- ❑ Growth process driven by cutting edge technology led to *distortions, dilemma of choice, divergence in development and emergence of several global companies (MNCs/TNCs) being larger than many nation states in terms of turnover*
- ❑ Consequence: *resultantly humanity faces imminent challenges: COVID-19, climate change, ground water shortage, resource scarcity, growing inequalities etc.*
- ❑ Resolve: *an interdependent world can survive & thrive, humans can coexist with nature side by side, only if everyone behaves responsibly and is accountable to each other*

Background

- ❑ Globally policies are directed towards inclusive and sustainable development
 - *Changing business philosophy from shareholders to stakeholders*
 - *Access to healthy environment declared as human rights by UN HRC*
- ❑ India to achieve a \$ 5 trillion economy by 2025, SDGs by 2030, net zero/carbon neutrality by 2070- *a collective responsibility of Government, Businesses as well as Individual Citizens is an absolute necessity*
- ❑ NGOs/CSOs/Grassroots Organizations- *provide a common platform to connect policy makers, businesses and society to achieve the global agenda of sustainable development, to ensure the world to be a better living place*

Objectives of the Study

1. To understanding the nature and functioning of grassroots organizations;
2. To study global trends regarding social security for grassroots organizations;
3. To map the existing social inclusion schemes in India that can be leveraged by grassroots activists;
4. To identify the key challenges in adopting a social security framework for Indian grassroots organisations; and
5. Way forward: interventions required to mitigate such challenges

India's Philanthropic/ Voluntary Sector

- ❑ April, 2023: 1,64,282 active NGOs in India (*NGO Darpan portal of NITI Aayog*)
- ❑ These are non-profit or voluntary citizens' groups organized on a local, national, or international level

Grassroots Organizations

- ❑ *Knowingly unknown*- draw parallels with CSOs/NGOs/VOs/SHGs
- ❑ *Nature and function*- like minded local people voluntarily come together to pursue some common problems pertaining to their families, communities, and societies
- ❑ *Growth and evaluation*- a significant rise in numbers worldwide. Their role was very prominent during the COVID-19 crisis management

Constraints and Challenges-

Developing Countries (India)

- ❑ The incidence and severity of deprivation is very high...,
- ❑ A low degree of development of institutional set-up and formal social-security systems,
- ❑ Limited or inappropriate coverage of public support due to resource constraints,
- ❑ Lack of formal recognition of their existence and contributions made on various occasions,
- ❑ Lack of access to information and asymmetry of information as compared to their peers,

Constraints and Challenges-

Developing Countries (India)

- ❑ Lack of bargaining power due to relative powerlessness and vulnerability of the members,
- ❑ Lack of technical know how, skills and training,
- ❑ Lack of any funding/financing their activities,
- ❑ Volunteers are less in numbers than required,
- ❑ Inability to react to changing priorities of administration,
- ❑ Inability to present their own interests, and
- ❑ Unwillingness to cooperate as organizations with a similar focus

Social Security Provisions in India- *Trends & Patterns*

- ❑ Increasing trend of Government's spending on social services over the years- *from Rs.12.8 lakh crore in FY 2019 to Rs.21.3 lakh crore in FY 2023. Around 26% of total expenditure during FY 2019 to FY 2023*
- ❑ Increase in overall health expenditure in the aftermath of COVID-19 *to strengthen the public health infrastructure. National Covid-19 Vaccination Programme is the glaring example*
- ❑ Customized social protection schemes for different sections of population- *elderly, girl child, kisaan, street vendors, unorganized workers etc.*
- ❑ Special focus was given on aspirational districts *to provide and improve the services across health, education, financial inclusion and basic infrastructure*
- ❑ Transformation of welfare through technology- *JAM trinity, Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT), One Nation One Ration Card etc.*

Social Security Provisions in India-

Mapping of Existing Schemes

- ❑ Social Security initiatives related to Healthcare Infrastructure- *Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP), eSanjeevani, Ayushman Bharat, National Covid-19 Vaccination Programme, etc.*
- ❑ Social Protection for Rainy Day such as health insurance, natural disasters, old age- *Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's Atmanirbhar Scheme (PM SVANidhi), etc.*
- ❑ Social Security Initiatives for India's Aspiring Rural Economy *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY), Swachh Bharat Mission, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, etc.*
- ❑ Transformation of Aspirational Districts Programme- *ensuring inclusive services in health and nutrition, education, agriculture, water resources, financial inclusion, skill development, and basic infrastructure in the rural areas.*
- ❑ Progressing Labour Reforms/ National Skill Mission/ Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)

Scope and Way Forward

- ❑ Government's commitment to support activities of grassroots organizations
- ❑ Formal recognition of grassroots organizations and bring them into formal organizational structure- *Austria/ Czech Republic/ Hungary*
- ❑ Provision for funding/ financing the activities of grassroots organizations-
 - ❖ *By concerned Government Ministries/ Departments/ State Governments/ Local Governments or*
 - ❖ *Through creation of a dedicated 'Fund'/ 'Corpus' by the Government or through public-private partnership*
 - ❖ *Hungarian Government established the National Civil Fund*
 - ❖ *Project-based funding with grants to cover operational costs including basic activities and overheads*

Scope and Way Forward

- ❑ The current taxation regime is not adequate to motivate potential donors
- ❑ Systemic support from the State *including changes in legislation related to state grants or earmarked subsidies, tax reduction for donations and sponsorship, regulations for income-generating activities, etc.*
- ❑ Training and capacity building of office bearers/members for building confidence and harnessing efficiency
- ❑ A strong voice and cooperation among grassroots organizations should be encouraged

Scope and Way Forward

- ❑ A redistributive cooperation model to bring synergies and solidarity *among big CSOs, public institutions and small grassroots initiatives*
- ❑ Mechanisms to disseminate achievements and good practices of grassroots initiatives. An effective communication strategy *to disseminate the good works performed by grassroots organizations*
- ❑ Bringing general public, political executives, policy-makers and local administration *to the round-table discussion with CSOs.....*
- ❑ To appreciate the grassroots initiatives and their contribution, an institutional framework *such as 'panel of experts' or 'think-tank' may be created who can become the mouthpiece and advocate the grassroots interests.*

*Thank
you!*

