

NGOs to PDOs: Structural-Political Approach to Poverty Eradication

Manoranjan Mohanty

1 DECLINING EFFECTIVENESS OF EXISTING INSTITUTIONS

Our environment is changing very fast. The NGO phase of developmental work has begun to wane. State agencies as well as non-governmental organisations have lost credibility with the common people at the grassroots level. Traditional political organisations namely, political parties and trade unions had long ceased to win the confidence of the people as far as solving basic problems of livelihood of the rural poor was concerned. Community organisations hardly ever had poverty alleviation on their agenda.

This critical view is particularly targeted at the NGO sector, because they had attracted the maximum attention of the policy makers, scholars and the media during the past two decades in the development process, especially in the poverty related work. Now we may be entering a new phase of seeking newer organisational initiatives in the context of the emerging environment of globalisation on the one hand and rising democratic aspirations on the other. This is the feeling one gets from the last ten years experience with anti-poverty programmes in the chronic drought prone Kalahandi region. But it seems to be a wider trend in the country as a whole.

It is argued here that there are many reasons for the declining effectiveness of the NGOs and new ways have to be evolved for activating all the existing forms of the state and non-state organizations. It is stressed that efforts are needed for forging new organisations which attend to the structural roots of poverty and which seek power for the struggling people to transform the existing structure. Thus the search for organisation of the people is sought to be linked with the issue of political power. All forms of organisation have their own value, but they

have to be tested on the structural-political scale so as to determine to what extent long term solutions to the problem of poverty in terms of land reforms, access to capital and human resources have been accomplished and how far the deprived sections have acquired rights to exercise control over their resources, plan their utilisation and monitor the development process.

The paper is divided into three parts. **The first part** locates our discussion in the present development discourse with a critical note on the concepts of empowerment and governance, which in our opinion have shifted the focus away from substantive issues of power and structural transformation. We argue that the civil society discourse and the accent on NGO are part of this framework, which have given a restricted, instrumentalist meaning to social mobilisation and participation. In **the second part** we take up the experience of the Kalahandi region and examine the types of organisational action that were at work. It is shown that both the state-initiated organisations and the NGO-led initiatives manifested serious limitations resulting in continuing failures in reducing poverty by any significant degree while new power structures grew up. In **the third part**, certain lessons are drawn and possibilities of building people's democratic organisations are discussed. It is emphasized that these organisations - many already exist in some areas – must design their work in such a way that all the action programmes of the state and non-state organisations are reoriented to the benefit of the poor people especially the oppressed classes, castes, women and minority groups and the poor regions. More importantly, they have to seize the political initiative for social transformation.

2. FROM EMPOWERMENT TO GOVERNANCE –NGOS IN THE NEW ENVIRONMENT

The new focus on governance in the era of globalisation and liberalisation has been evident in the policy documents at every level global to local. The state functionaries as well as the NGO functionaries are called upon to stress governance as the key to achieving their targets.

The Approach Paper to the Tenth Five Year Plan announces, "Reform of governance perhaps has to be one of the centerpieces of the Tenth Plan." (p.

47) and then goes on to spell out what it calls a programme for 'civil service renewal'. It is not only about making the state personnel and government institutions 'perform' and 'deliver' what is expected of them under the policy. In addition, the idea is to make governance the main preoccupation of everybody in all the institutions public and private. In the context of the poverty alleviation programmes, the emphasis is now squarely put on improving governance rather than on other explanations for persisting poverty such as faulty approaches. Orissa Government's Annual Plan for 2002-2003, for example, states: State Government has taken several initiatives to improve governance and to monitor the implementation of RLTAAP (Revised Long Term Action Plan) in the KBK (the undivided Kalahandi Bolangir Koraput) districts " (Vol 1. p. 14/25) One can cite many evidences to indicate the change in the mind set of the Indian ruling elite from examining roots of a problem and debating approaches to paying attention mainly to implementation.

The global emphasis on governance evolved together with liberalisation, and globalisation. First of all, it was pointed out that the inefficient state apparatus in the post-colonial countries along with a corrupt bureaucracy created obstacles to economic development. Secondly, the elite, which defended the autonomy of the nation state, was discredited as preventing economic growth and grabbing the spoils of the welfare state. Thus the post-colonial state was delegitimised by the tidal wave of globalisation. It was facilitated by the fact that indeed crises of state and development had intensified in most of the third world countries. There were numerous people's movements reflecting the expanded levels of democratic consciousness making new and legitimate demands on the state. The 1980s saw a variety of autonomy movements, agrarian struggles, tribal people's movements, anti-caste movements, environment movements and above all a fast growing women's movement. This is the time when the economies of UK and US had been revived while those of the USSR and Eastern Europe had become more crises-ridden. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the US emerged as the sole super power. The western capitalist countries now reinvigorated their policies to expand their market in world scale. They used the global economic institutions as well as the UN for this purpose. The national elites, which found it difficult to cope with the growing challenges to their power, now leaned upon the forces of

capitalist globalisation to maintain their power and the latter welcomed them if they adopted the terms of globalisation. Gradually it became clear that economic globalisation, military hegemony and communications monopoly were a unified package though with some internal contradictions.

When the post-colonial state was discredited, the West reached out to non-state actors in the developing countries. Thus emerged the NGO sector in the third world. The World Bank as well as the UN made it a part of their policy to directly involve them in all their programmes. – directly in effect, even though there are clearances required from the government. National and local plans and programmes now adopted the role of the NGOs as a component at every level.

The NGO phenomenon was now put in a theoretical framework of civil society as the sphere of non-state activities. It was argued that the more the activity of the civil society the more a country is democratic. In other words transfer of power from the state organs to civil society groups and organisations became the indicators of democratisation and development. Civil society in its current meaning is the sphere of articulate interest groups who are engaged in the pursuit of their interests. That civil society had in it powerful interests as well as less powerful or even powerless groups was not highlighted in this campaign to promote civil society in the third world and the former socialist countries. Even though the discourse on civil society has brought out these complications it still remains as a powerful concept - a weapon in the hands of those who wish to attack the state. (Mohanty 2000) There is much literature that highlights the class, caste, ethnic, gender and other contradictions in society and that the power structures in society are also closely connected with the operation of state power. (Mohanty 1998). The civil society focus practically ignored these multiple contradictions.

The new ideology of globalisation had an attractive agenda called 'empowerment' of civil society, of women, of people and of disadvantaged groups. Attractive because that was the demand of the oppressed groups for long. They wished to achieve political power and were not satisfied with trickle down process of growth or relief programmes or even small grants in the name of integrated development. Now they were told, that was what was being given to them.

Women's empowerment with Panchayati Raj was the most important accomplishment as a result of the 73rd amendment to the Indian constitution, which reserved one-third seats for women. The same was provided for in urban councils under the 74th Amendment. The whole country now celebrated political empowerment of women, (B. Mohanty 2001). This after all was the call in the world summits organised by the UN since the Copenhagen Summit on Social Development and the Beijing Summit on Women. But the concept of empowerment gave the illusion that only with statutory representation in the councils women achieved power. It over emphasised procedures of electoral democracy than substantive power. It shifted the focus from land reforms, succession rights for women, access to productive assets, employment opportunities, education and such other rights of women to formal representation. Even this reservation was a welcome development and it could be used by people's organisations to pursue their struggle. But this by itself did not amount to 'power for women'. (Mohanty 2000)

Rather than respond to the issues that can transform the power structure in society the new mantra that is being spread vigorously is that of governance. It is part of the global current pushed by the West. The **Human Development Report 2002**, which has an inspiring message as its theme – ***Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World***- leaves no doubt about the centrality of governance: *"Around the world, discussions on development are placing more emphasis on institutions and governance. These debates have focused on the effectiveness of the public institutions and the rules for making markets work and promoting economic growth – from professionalism and transparency of tax reforms to the capacity of judicial systems to enforce commercial contracts."*

(p.2). Indeed it has affirmed some key components of democracy - to make it so both in form and substance, that it is inconsistent with rule by a small elite, that it has to be built from within, that only a sustained human development requires promoting democratic politics and so on. Then it goes ahead to present a scale to gauge governance: *measures of democracy and political and civil rights*. Conceding that there can be controversies it spells out objective indicators as well as subjective indicators of governance. (pp. 36-45). One can expect now

that the whole world will internalise this ideology of democratic governance in the coming years like it did the concept of Human Development and Gender Empowerment Measure. Already considerable academic and NGO writings have appeared promoting the centrality of the NGOs in the pursuit of Governance. (R Mohanty and R Tandon 2002)

No one can minimise the significance of governance if it means effective implementation of policies or acting according to law and the rules to the last word. What is questioned here is the attempt to raise it to the level of an ideology that undermines the significance of politics. It is an apolitical ideology that assumes that questions involving structural change are already resolved and what remained was to implement the declared policies. In this case they are the market-oriented policies of globalisation and liberalisation. On the other hand struggles are continuing over basic rights to livelihood and dignity. In all societies there are movements going on for transformation of unequal status over caste, race and gender. In this context the governance ideology seeks to impose its policies and allow only those changes that are compatible with the logic of the market economy. The struggles carried out by the people's movements are considered disruptive of the programme for the high growth economy. Therefore, the workers are asked to refrain from strikes, peace and stability in society are maintained if necessarily by force and draconian laws. The welfare state may have retreated and public enterprises privatised. But the state is given actually more power- coercive power- to create conditions favorable to the market economy.

Social mobilisation in this context has acquired a new meaning. It is not for social transformation as was the original meaning. It is to enthuse people to participate in the newly accelerated institutions. The electronic media has developed as a major instrument of social mobilisation for the capitalist market. Development of communications has produced many new opportunities of all kinds of mobilisation ranging for religious-communal objectives to electoral purposes. In the context of the anti-poverty programmes it has come to mobilising target groups for the rural development schemes including the now popular Self Help Groups.

Participation was an essential value of democracy so that it could lead to self-governance. With the growth of the complex modern society, representative government became the practical mechanism for liberal democracy. It too has acquired a restricted meaning. People's participation in Gram Sabha is built into the Panchayat Raj system. The villagers as a whole are expected to decide on the appropriate beneficiaries for various schemes. (B. Mohanty, 2001) But it has degenerated into a formality of a meeting to put on record. Recent decades witnessed great interest in participatory development and even Participatory Action Research. In some places a new concept by the name of Participatory Adaptive Research (PAR) was launched to experiment new agricultural technology. (J.P. Singh, 2000). But participation has come to mean participation as per the norms of the new economy. Even the elected Panchayat functionaries are unable to participate in making of policies. They participate in the implementation of projects that come down to them. Thus the governance ideology has delimited the parameters of participation at the grassroots level.

In this environment all the organisations state as well as non-state, have adjusted their role to the challenges of the market forces. The nature of the NGO activity came under sharp debates in the new context.

There are many ways to classify the NGOs. One study speaks of four categories: welfare NGOs, Development NGOs, empowerment NGOs and social action groups (Murthy and Rao, : 74). According to this view the first two categories work as extension or in collaboration with the government while latter two often confront the state. Actually, the classification has to centre on a criterion. If the criterion is attitude towards the state – not just government, then there may be three kinds: extension NGOs who help the government to implement some of its policies perhaps more effectively, then there are those who are autonomous organisations and pick up those issues which may not currently attract the interest of the government and may have long term value. Then there are those groups who work for social transformation and therefore do confront the local power structure in course of their work. (Mohanty 1995)

The reality is much more complex. The globalisation milieu has changed the classification and standardised the popular meaning of NGO: a funded organisation working professionally on a developmental issue. That separates the Sarvodaya groups and the religious charities from the modern NGO. Action research has confused academic and service activities and many research institutes have appeared on the scene, which are actually modern NGOs. They have to be distinguished from numerous social action groups who would be offended if they are designated as NGOs. Today it has acquired such a negative meaning that at the grassroots level they are included in the same list of exploiters of the poor as the moneylender, the contractor, the bureaucrat and the politician. Therefore to take the NGO role as the central element in the process of democratisation and empowerment of civil society needs to be re-examined. Yet, as the Kalahandi experience tells us, every organised effort has to be utilised in the desperate human conditions, but only within a framework of people's democratic transformation. For the poor are now asserting their democratic right to shape their own destiny.

3. ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMMES IN THE KALAHANDI REGION: ROLE OF THE NON-STATE ORGANISATIONS

The national and the global outlook on the centrality of governance in the changing development scenario has been so pervasive that programmes on poverty alleviation continue to be formulated at the higher levels and sought to be implemented at the grassroots level. Local organisations including the Block, the Panchayats and the NGOs are given the role of the executing agency for the already formulated programmes. Since Central Government together with the international agencies contribute the bulk of the funding for the anti-poverty programmes the Planning Commission and the concerned Ministries of the GOI formulate these programmes. When a think tank of the government in power comes up with a new idea the earlier framework changes. One such shift was made when the IRDP and many other programmes were replaced by a newly integrated programme called Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) in 1999 after the NDA Government came to power. It again is a top down programme of the Indian state which asks the local organisations to carry out the

schemes No doubt people often make demands on the central government to pay special attention to the poor people and allocate appropriate funds to them. But that does not mean that the local organisations will not have the proposals from below from their perspective. In a structural-political perspective the process is reversed and the poverty eradication programmes will be formulated by the people's democratic organisations at the local level for which there would be statutory resource allocations. Let us examine this question in the context of the experience of the Kalahandi region.

Orissa has the largest proportion of the poor among the States of India with 47.15 % people below the poverty line in 1999-2000 according to the Planning Commission estimates In the Human Poverty Index Orissa has the second lowest rank of 31 among the States and the Union Territories of India, followed by Bihar. The order was the same both in 1981 and 1991. (National Human Development Report or NHDR: 2002:pp.142-143) though the value decreased from 59.34 to 49.85 indicating improvement in the aggregate profile of the State in terms of the deprivation in economic, educational and health related indicators which constitute human poverty according to the NHDR.

Table 1: Percentage of Population below Poverty Line in Orissa and India

Year	Orissa			India		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
1973-74	67.28	55.62	66.18	56.44	49.01	54.88
1983-84	67.53	49.15	65.29	45.65	40.79	44.48
1993-94	49.72	41.64	48.56	37.27	32.36	35.97
1999-00	48.01	42.83	47.15	27.09	23.62	26.10

Source: Planning commission (2001)

It should be noted firstly; that while the rate of the decline in poverty at the all India level is substantial, in case of Orissa is much less. Second, between 1993 and 2000 there is only a marginal decline in total proportion below the poverty line whereas in case of urban poverty there is actually an increase. Taking account the methodological debates on the quantification of poverty one would get an even more dismal picture. But if we go down to the districts of Orissa the magnitude of poverty is much higher in some areas. Poverty is widespread both in the coastal as well as the inland districts of Orissa. While the inland region which includes Kalahandi had got wide publicity since the drought of 1985, the extent of poverty in the coastal region got exposed during the super cyclone of 1999 which claimed about 10,000 lives and destroyed 16 lakh houses, schools and other public facilities. However we get a clear idea of the performance of the anti-poverty programmes from the way they have operated in the KBK districts.

Table 2: Census of BPL Families 1992 and 1997 in KBK Districts

District	1992			1997		
	Total (lakh families)	BPL%		Total (lakh families)	BPL%	
Kalahandi	2.42	2.07	85.7 7	3.08	1.9 3	62.7 1
Nuapada	0.94	0.79	83.6 4	1.27	1.0 9	85.7 0
Bolangir	2.39	1.81	75.8 2	3.30	2.0 1	61.0 6
Sonepur	0.92	0.57	62.2 9	1.10	0.8 0	73.0 2
Koraput	1.88	1.63	86.5 9	2.65	2.2 2	83.8 1
Malkangiri	0.80	0.68	84.8 1	1.09	0.8 9	81.8 8

Nawrangpur	1.52	1.38	90.5 6	2.15	1.5 9	73.6 6
Rayagada	1.42	1.22	86.0 4	1.88	1.3 6	72.0 3

Source: Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Orissa, 2001

The above table shows the high incidence of poverty in the KBK region. In Nawapara District, which was carved out of the old Kalahandi District, the number of the BPL families has actually grown by over two per cent during the five-year period 1992-97.

Since 1985 Kalahandi has been in the news for drought related distress including reports of starvation deaths, sale of children and distress migration. What is significant is that such conditions have recurred since 1966 again in 1977, 1985 and almost every five years with enormous severity. Every Prime Minister since Rajiv Gandhi has visited the place to affirm commitment to alleviating poverty. After widespread condemnation of the failure of the Indian state in mitigating the recurrent distress of the people of the region, the Central Government decided to formulate a Long Term Action Plan (LTAP) for the KBK region as a whole. The common characteristics of this region acknowledged by the first LTAP document were; low per hectare yield of rice of 1430 Kgs, low irrigation (12%), heavy soil erosion, poor water retention capacity of the soil, low employment in the agricultural activity, high rate of out-migration from the State chronic malnutrition and nearly 90% of the population living below the poverty line. After circulating several drafts one version of the seven-year plan for 1995-96 to 2001-2002 was announced in 1995. It had a budget of Rs 4,859 crores with two objectives :i) Drought and distress proofing and ii) Poverty alleviation and Development Saturation (sic). As it turned out the amount was only Rs 561 crore than the cumulative amount of the all the existing schemes for seven years. On the ground the LTAP was a non-starter. During the first three years till 1998 only a meagre amount of Rs 20.49 crore was received as additional assistance. As the Annual Plan 2002-2003 puts it, "LTAP 1995-2002 did not take off for want of sufficient funds."(p: 14/3). Thereafter a fresh initiative was taken and the Centre

approved a nine year Revised LTAP for the period 1998-99 till 2006-2007 with an allocation of Rs. 6,251 crores. It was announced that the Centre will include the Revised LTAP as an integral part of the Tenth Five Year Plan and will provide about Rs 1000 crores per year as a Special Central Assistance for this project.

There was some reformulation in the objectives and strategies, but only in breaking up some of them into more specific items. The Revised LTAP aims were listed as: i) drought proofing, ii) poverty alleviation and improved quality of life in the KBK districts – the third figuring specifically as if the former plan did not aim at that through the stated policies. Similarly strategies were rearranged:

- a. building rural productive infrastructure (roads, bridges etc) and conserving natural resources (forest, soil and water)
- b. developing income generation programmes on a sustainable basis (SGSY, EAS, micro-credit support etc)
- c. mobilising and energising the rural poor (e.g. self help groups (SHG) Vana Samrakshana Samitis(VSS), Pani Panchayats, and Bhumi Panchayats).
- d. restructuring and energising social security system (e.g. emergency feeding, mobile health units, education among SC/ST girls)

Some of these did not figure as the main strategies in the earlier documents, especially the specific forms of mobilisation of the rural poor such as SHG, VSS, Pani Panchayat and Bhumi Panchayat. The question is whether they qualify to be called people's organisations. Since the framework imposed from above is one for efficient credit utilisation and management of reduced subsidies they have hardly acquired the legitimacy of grassroots democratic organisations. The allocations of funds were on familiar lines.

Table 3: Projected Outlay for LTAP 1998-99 to 2006-07

Scheme	Central share	State share	Total (Crores Rs)
Agriculture	74.93	10.1	84.94
Horticulture	72.52	1.62	74.14
Watershed development	696.86	81.42	878.28

Afforestation	361.94	14.11	376.05
Rural Employment	2235.05	558.76	2,793.81
Irrigation	812.11	812.11
Health	150.95	150.95
Emergency Feeding	88.50	88.50
Drinking Water Supply	67.74	67.74	135.48
Rural connectivity	534.70	65.00	599.70
Welfare of ST/SC	257.12	257.12
Total	5452.42	798.66	6,251.06

Source: Annual plan Orissa 2002-2003: 14/4 (slight difference in total because of rounding off)

Rural employment attracted the maximum funding because of the need to provide earnings through construction and similar work in the times of distress. Irrigation and watershed development naturally deserved high priority in drought prone areas followed by rural connectivity mostly road construction. Relatively low priority given to afforestation and horticulture in an area where the tribal population is so high is noticeable though the tribal people would benefit from the other items as well. But the high priority items are those, which involve contractors, political manouvres at the Panchayat Samiti level, and various other means of patronising middle men. In other words, the reasons for which the IRDP and other rural development programmes over the decades failed to make a serious dent in the situation poverty will continue to operate in this very special programme. This programme has now become a symbol of the welfare role of the Indian state even in the era of globalisation and liberalisation that seeks cutting of subsidies and fiscal deficits.

The programmes under the LTAP are distributed among different Departments of the Government thus depending heavily on the bureaucracy and the ministerial interest of the concerned Department. However, a "senior" level officer is appointed for the LTAP as a whole and has been posted in Koraput since 2001. The fact is that no senior level officer likes to be posted in the KBK region with its

present living and working facilities especially because he/she is then eligible to live in Bhubaneswar or New Delhi. The only exceptions are the Revenue Divisional Commissioners for the three divisions of the State who live in Cuttack, Sambalpur and Berhampur. Unless of course, some highly motivated senior officer offers his/her services to work for the upliftment of the poor in the KBK region. But that is only one aspect of 'governance' problem relating to the coordination between Departments of the Government, making funds released on time and monitoring implementation. The perspective governing this plan is itself defective because it relies more on bureaucracy than on Panchayats and NGO's let alone other people's organisations. In 2003, the Planning Commission and Government of Orissa decided to authorize the KBK Commissioner to directly draw its annual allocation of nearly Rs. 1000 crores thus simplifying the procedures, which had created hurdles thus far. But the perspective remained in changed.

The intention of the plan makers is noble, though. A State Level Committee with the Chief Minister as its head and a Project Level Committee with the Chief Secretary as its head have been constituted to periodically review and monitor the LTAP. The Planning Commission has also been involved in monitoring it through the Institute of Applied Manpower Research, New Delhi. But whether the concerned people, the poor of the KBK have any role in monitoring the plan through some mechanisms does not seem to be part of the thinking of the planners. As we mentioned before they have no role in the formulation of the plan.

Three kinds of following organisational mechanisms have emerged on the ground which can be distinguished from one another in terms of their relationship with the state – a criterion that has implications for funding, mobilisational perspective and approach to poverty eradication and social transformation:

3.1 Panchayat Institutions

We will specifically examine the extent to which the panchayat raj institutions have led to poverty eradication through social mobilisation. In other words, how far have the people in the villages seized the initiative offered by panchayati raj institutions to improve livelihood conditions and plan long-term measures of development. The Kalahandi experience tells us that people remain passive recipients of funds and services under various schemes because of the kind of policies that have been in force. The only visible difference is the presence of women members in panchayats who have been able to orient some of the development programmes towards women's interests.

The SGSY was announced in 1999 by integrating IRDP, DWCRA, TRYSEM and few other schemes including EAS. Later another wage employment scheme Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana was announced. These schemes are also to be implemented through panchayats. Besides wage employment schemes there are investment support schemes as well. In addition the panchayat is also involved in administering the PDS and emergency relief distribution including feeding centres.

Three problems have been noticed during the past decade in this context. Firstly, the DRDA operates through the BDO who administers funds despite the existence of a Panchayat Samiti. The channelising of funds is such a bureaucratic process that funds reach much after the scheduled time and in small quantity. It is pointed out that because the state government is not able to give its share of 25%, the central fund doesn't get released. Secondly, the power nexus at the ground level siphons the funds away from its targets. The party in power, the bureaucrat and the contractor manipulate the construction projects. In many places in Kalahandi the influential local leaders have continued to control the implementation of projects (Sainath, 1996). The third problem is the meagre quantum of development support to the poor. This is a problem in other parts of the country including Kerala (Kannan and Francis). Very often construction works provide employment to the distressed population for no more than one or two weeks under the food for work programme. The BDO as well as the Sarpanch complain of paucity of funds for providing longer period of work.

It was hoped that regularity of elections, statutory role of Gram Sabha and reservation for women, SC and ST together would create a new democratic institution in the form of panchayati raj. Rather than being the lowest level institution of the state it would be a mediating political institution between state and society. But in practice it has not fulfilled the expectations. One reason is admitted by the Planning Commission in the Approach Paper to the Tenth Plan: *"the near absence of revenue raising powers is leading the PRIs to a sense of dependence rather than empowerment which was the original intent of the Constitutional Amendment..... the panchayairaj system has not been able to enhance, participation and empowerment as effectively as it would be desired"* (p. 53). But its limitations arise out of the very approach to panchayati raj. They are still seen as agencies of implementation of central policies as against institutions of self-governance on substantial issues. The 29 subjects listed in Schedule XI are hardly adequate for this purpose. Even these subjects have not been delegated in their entirety through the panchayats. In Orissa only six subjects had been notified till 2001. Of course, in several States even regular panchayat elections have not taken place.

3.2 Autonomous Organisations

There are two kinds of autonomous organisations, philanthropic and professional. Together they constitute the voluntary sector. There is however, much literature on the evolution and characteristics of the voluntary sector. The Planning Commission has paid more attention to this sector in preparing the Tenth Plan than ever before. Report of the Steering Committee: Jan 2002) For our purpose the this two fold categorisation is relevant.

In the first category the Sarvodaya organisations and some missionary organisations have been active in Kalahandi area for nearly two decades. The Kalahandi Vikas Parishad (KVP) was set up in 1987 on the initiative of Sarvodaya Relief Committee. It essentially relied on mobilising local labour for digging ponds and wells for agricultural purposes. It also had organised emergency programmes for medical treatment for which it collected medicines from charitable sources. In 1996, it took the help of CAPART in 1996 and started a

handloom project, which involved supporting cotton growers, processing cotton, weaving cloth and making garments. The looms employed 100 tribal women in Komna. Slowly it began to show success in ensuring continuous sources of earning for its workers. But its approach hardly matched with the market economy and therefore KVP faced serious problems of marketing its products in 2002. But it has presented itself as a model of self-reliant production. Yet, it remains as a production organisation rather than a people's democratic organisation that combines economic programmes with a socio-political action plan.

The Lutheran Mission (LC) has operated in Nuapada since the late 1980s. Promoting horticulture and agriculture by providing irrigation and seeds is one of its major programmes. Unlike the KVP the LC is a international network. Therefore, it has assured source of funding. In many ways it is also close to the modern professional NGOs.

Among the funded professional organizations or the NGO's, Lokadristi, Antodaya, FARR, Gram Vikas, Parivartan, Agragamee, Sahabhagi Vikas Abhiyan and VISWAS are some of the active organisations in the Kalahandi region.

Lokadristi:

Lokadristi has been engaged in three kinds of activities: consciousness raising, water-shed development and women's Self Help Groups (SHG). In 1990 it took the initiative to organise in depth discussions on Kalahandi's food crisis and distress situation. It has continued such activities all these years bringing various NGO's, academics and officials to a common forum. As for water-shed development, its project in Vainsapani done in collaboration with Agragamee has been most note-worthy. It took up several other agriculture development projects in Khariar and Boden Blocks. Self-Help Groups among women is its latest focus of activity. It has organised nearly 1500 self-help group in the region.

Gram Vikas:

Gram Vikas is a much bigger NGO with a number of developmental projects especially geared towards serving the tribals, dalits and women. It has taken clusters of villages in certain areas of Thuamul Rampur for its activities which range from dug-well maintenance to immunisation and Balbadi programmes. It works closely with ITDA for many of the tribal development programmes.

Antodaya and **Parivartan** too focus on tribal development. They have promoted grain banks in some of the villages and launched a number of employment generation schemes. **FARR** (Friends Association for Rural Reconstruction) has been particularly interested in promoting agricultural productivity. Together with the block development schemes its programmes provide assistance in reclamation of land, distribution of seeds and provision of irrigation.

The **Sahavagi Vikas Abhiyan (SVA)** which is connected with a farmers association called Paschima Orissa Krishijbi Sangha (Western Orissa Farmers Association) not only promotes agricultural development but also mobilises farmers for pressurising the state to secure remunerative prices for food-grains produced by the farmers. Though it also works in tandem with government in some of the schemes, it has the public image of an independent, sometimes anti-state organisation fighting for farmer interest.

3.3 State initiated Groups

The third category of organisations are state initiated groups among whom Mahila Samiti and co-operative societies (theoretically not state-initiated) are continuing from the earlier times of IRDP and even of community development. The SHG is a new organisation, which is a product of the reforms policies. DWCRA did involve the existence of Mahila Samities but from the mid-90s women's credit groups got reorganised under the new scheme of SHG. To provide credit to the poor so that they don't go to the moneylender the SHG scheme was launched through NABARD. The potentiality of this programme is widely recognised. All NGO's have been asked by the government to take initiative in setting up Self-Help Groups. Special attention is given to the

formation of women SHG. Lokadristi, Parivartan and Antodaya have taken special interest in forming Self Help Group of women.

It should be pointed out that the Panchayats have been sidelined by and large in the promotion of SHG. The bank, the NGO and the SHG complete the cycle. Much depends on the motivation of the NGO on making them work and not exploit them. Secondly, SHG is based on the philosophy of micro-credit. Groups and individuals among the groups may make some earning from the SHG activity. But the scale is so small and the dependence on the bank and the NGO is so great that they do not acquire capacity to evolve into people's democratic organisations. Money collected by SHG goes to the main bank in Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and not invested in the region.

4. LESSONS AND POSSIBILITIES: PDOs AS NEW CATALYSTS

There are three lessons from the range of organisational actions in Kalahandi in the context of anti-poverty programmes. Firstly, there is a disjunction between the panchayats and the NGOs and between panchayat and organisations such as Self Help Groups. The state bureaucracy has promoted professional NGO's for organising Self Help Groups. Panchayats are seen as faction-ridden and inefficient institutions. The second lesson is that when the programmes do not emerge from people themselves they do not acquire legitimacy. They remain as government programmes either operating directly or through NGOs. It had happened with IRDP, it is likely to happen with SGSY. So the efforts of NGO's and other non-state organisations to help in "empowering people" are seen as comparable to government efforts. Therefore, the uniqueness of a civil society initiative does not operate in practice.

The third lesson relates to the linkage of the non-state organisations with the rural society. Except for the panchayats the other organisations are imposed from above. The NGOs are external agencies by character. Even when they involve the local youth the latter often assume the role of a subordinate staff. In some areas of Kalahandi professionals belonging to the region have also set up NGOs.

But in course of their work they develop a standard professional character determined by the global and national norms.

What then is the alternative? We have indicated that they have to be **people's democratic organisations (PDO)**. Firstly, they have to be locally rooted. Even when people take an initiative from another area they should be acceptable to the local people. Leadership and cadres should come from the local people. Secondly, they should be democratic in orientation, functioning and objectives. Every single programme should be placed in a framework of democratizing the power structure. This means that in these organisations representatives of landless, small peasants, artisans, SC, ST, OBC and women should play a crucial role in decision-making. Even though some existing programmes identify target group beneficiaries, unless they are placed politically to take such decisions the arrangement may not achieve democratic objectives. Thirdly, a PDO has to be autonomous in terms of resources. The village resources even in poorer areas have to be its main base. Once it consolidates its autonomous identity then it can handle grants and loans from government, bank and other funding agencies. Fourthly, PDO has to take many new forms in the context of the complex social relations on the one hand and the challenges posed by the forces of globalisation and liberalisation on the other. Those in the age of information technology. Hence the multiform organisational choice before rural poor especially rural labour is an important perspective, which may involve not only the known forms of organisation such as unions, co-operatives and NGOs but also new forms (Radhakrishna and Sharma: p. 11). Unions of agricultural labourers on class lines does give results in situations of capitalist agrarian relations. But there are many forces, which intervene in the situation to divert the course of union politics (Gill. 339 in Ibid). This is why class politics has to be connected with caste, ethnic and gender dimensions to realise prospects of labour organisation in rural India. Thus on the whole the PDO has to struggle for people's rights asserting right to food as a basic human right (M. Mohanty: *People's Rights*: 1998) and connecting this right with the expanding notion of rights in India. (M.Mohanty: 2002)

This greatly depends on the political milieu existing in the region. Kerala's experience with poverty alleviation has centered on the effective role that state has played through its various programmes. Here the emphasis is on successful performance of the mechanism of State government in Kerala. It has implemented the primary and preventive health care system, the PDS, the mid-day meal for school children, supplementary nutrition for pre-school children and nursing mothers and old-age pension to destitute and rural labourers and also the social insurance for the workers in the informal sector (Kannan and Francis 2001). In addition to these measures of "protective social security", the state has taken a number of measures for "promotional social security" like free school education, housing programmes, employment generation programmes and SC, ST development policies. The state mechanisms have used panchayats for these programmes. This has been possible because of the climate of political awareness and political mobilisation. It is true that even then the incidence of poverty remains considerably high because the benefits from these programmes are still too meager to lift the poor above poverty line (ibid: 431). But the Kerala experience provides indications of possibilities of growth of PDOs, which can demand delivery of services from the state and monitor the policy process. The experiment with Planning from below or district planning formulation with involvement of panchayats is a product of that process.

Such organisations are no doubt still rare in most places. For this state of affairs political parties have to share some responsibility. Their local units have been so preoccupied with fighting elections and those of trade unions with mainly wage and working conditions, that they have not paid attention to developmental tasks. Revolutionary parties considered such tasks as agricultural developments, education and health as "economism" and were more concerned with carrying out land redistribution and political mobilisation. They think that after winning elections and coming to power they can formulate appropriate policies for development.

Thus unless political parties and trade unions change their outlook prospects of the emergence of people's democratic organisations will be bleak. In Kalahandi political parties have hardly taken the issue of poverty and hunger as major

issues in their elections or party organisational activity (Mohanty, M. 1999). However, they have tried to take advantage of the relief measures and increase the prospects of their cadres. But politics of hunger raises many more questions than this (Currie: 2000).

The PDO's have to start from the present environment. They have to emerge as powerful political forces so that they can influence the panchayat elections and its functioning and policies. They may not be able to transform the NGOs but they can put a check on the latter to ensure that the NGOs work for the benefit of the people. In those parts of the country where political mobilisation has been effective the panchayats, NGOs and state-initiated groups have all been challenged to deliver goods. Thus the society is expecting to see the emergence of new organizations, which can overcome the limits of the present day panchayats, NGOs and Self Help Groups.

Untill then social mobilisation, participative development and empowerment will remain restrictive concepts legitimatising the top-down process of development currently promoted by the governance's framework of the Indian state and the forces of globalisation.

REFERENCES

Antodaya, **Annual Report 1999** (Bhubaneswar, Action Aid)

Currie, Bob (2000) **The Politics of Hunger in India**, Macmillan, London.

Dev, S. Mahendra (etal), (2001) **Social and Economic Security in India**, Institute of Human Development, New Delhi

Developing Countries Research Centre, **Poverty Eradication and Role of Local In`stitution a study of Kalahandi Region**, Proceedings of a workshop 10-11 April 1998 at Khariar (DCRC, DU, Delhi 1998)

Developing Countries Research Centre, **Poverty Eradication and Role of Local Local Institution in Comparative Perspective with Focus of Kalahandi**,

Bhojpur and Chittor : A Structural – Political perspective report submitted to the ministry of rural areas and employment Government of India (DCRC, DU, Delhi 1998)

Gram Vikas, **Annual Activity Report** (1990-2000) Berhampur, Ganjam.

Approach paper to the Tenth Five Year Plan 2002-2007, (2001) Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi

National Human Development Report 2001, (March 2002), Planning Commission, New Delhi

Mohanty Bidhut, Panchayats, (April 2002), **Women and Food Security: Challenges in the Era of Economic Reforms**, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi

Mohanty, Manoranjan, (2000), **Contemporary Indian Political Theory**, Ch 7 "On the Concept of Empowerment", Samskriti, New Delhi

----- (2002) "Changing Definition of Rights in India" in Sujata Patel et al (eds.) **Thinking social Sciences in India: Essays in honour of Alice Thorner** Sage, New Delhi

----- (1999) "Kalahandi: Destitution and Under Development" in Ambrose Pinto (ed.) **State, Development and Alternatives**, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.

----- (1998) "Social Movements in Creative society" in M Mohanty et al (eds) **People's Rights**, Sage, New Delhi.

Mohanty Ranjita and Rajesh Tandon, (2002), **NGOs and Governance** Sanskriti, National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management, New Delhi

Socio Economic Dynamics and Development Strategy for Participatory Adaptive Research Project (2000), Hyderabad

Murthy, Rajni K and Rao, Nitya, (1997), **Addressing Poverty: Indian NGOs and Their Capacity Enhancement in the 1990s**, Friedrich Eberit Stiftung, New Delhi

Orissa Government of, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, **Economic Survey (2001-2002)**, Bhubaneswar

Orissa Government of, Planning and Co-ordination Dept., **Annual Plan 2002 – 2003**, Volumes I & II, Bhubaneswar

Parivartan, **Annual Report 1999** (Bhubaneswar, Kalahandi)

Radhakrishna, R. and Sharma, Alakh, N. (ed.), (1998) **Empowering Rural Labour in India: Market, State and Mobilisation**, Institute for Human Development, New Delhi

Report of the Steering Committee on Voluntary Sector For the Tenth Five Year Plan, (2002-2007) (January 2002), Planning Commission, New Delhi

Sainath, P. (1996), **Everybody Loves a Good Drought** Penguin, New Delhi

UNDP, **Human Development Report 2002**, Oxford, New Delhi

World Bank, **World Development Report**, (1990) Oxford University Press, New Delhi