

Role of NGO in the Development of Sugalis: Case Study from a South Indian Settlement¹

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Role of NGOs in the development process of countries like India is very crucial, especially in the 21st Century. They have a greater role to play in the lives and livelihoods of the tribal and backward communities of India today. The present paper is an outcome of field work among Sugalis settlement in the Adadakulapalle as part of PhD work. Sugali is a dominant tribe (economically, socially, politically and numerically in Andhra Pradesh), inhabited in Anantapur District of South India. An attempt has been made in the paper to see the role of, Social Education Development Society (SEDS), an NGO in the development of a Sugali settlement. It is also attempted to understand how the information and support from the agency helped the community to become self-reliant. The drawbacks of the developmental interventions of the agency or civil society are also examined in the paper.

Introduction:

This paper examines the impact of developmental efforts, especially in the dry regions, made by the non-government agencies to bring desired socio-economic changes in the lives of marginalized tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh. The analysis is made in the context of changes that have taken place in the very concept of development and the shifts of responsibility by the welfare state. Till the emergence of new economic policy of Government of India and consequently liberalization of economic policies it is felt that the responsibilities of a welfare state must be not only as regulator but also provider of infrastructure so that the poor get freed themselves from the cycle of poverty (Gupta, 2004:1-5).

This new development opened floodgates for the entry of local, international non-government organisations (NGO's) as benefactors to the poor alongside the state. Meanwhile the meaning of the concept of development also changed. It is in this context the present paper attempts to understand the impact of developmental efforts, drought prone areas, made by an NGO called Social Education Development Society (SEDS) on Sugalis, a semi-nomadic Tribe, in a settlement called Adadakulapalle in Anantapur

¹ It is a draft paper only.

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District of Andhra Pradesh, South India. With this background, the paper analyses development processes in Adadakulapalle settlement, inhabited by Sugali tribal group in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh.

Baviskar (2001) has rightly mentioned that the decline of the State is accompanied by increasing attention towards civil society institutions. Among the social groups and associations of various kinds that are considered to make up civil society, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have become especially prominent in the last two decades. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged around the world - notably in the developing world - as major players in the developmental action (Meyer, 1996: 453). Given the profound implications of NGO involvement in development, there is a great need to critically examine the changing relations between NGOs, State agencies, multilateral and bilateral funding institutions, vis-a-vis social groups. The NGO sector in India is characterized by tremendous diversity and heterogeneity, ignoring this diversity, unfounded generalisations are often put forward and unfair comments and criticisms are offered. NGOs differ from one another in size, in funding, in functions; in the levels at which they operate; and in organisational structures, goals and membership (cited in Baviskar, 2001: 4-5). In India, there are 14,000 NGOs registered under the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act. In all there may be over 30,000 NGOs in India. The close collaboration between academics and the NGOs practical work is one of the reasons for the absence of rigorous studies. Social scientists have close links with NGOs, and since many NGOs operate in the cross-disciplinary space between academic research and activist intervention, they offer to academics many opportunities to pursue their work into the domain of non-academic practice.

There are many definitions of NGOs. The voluntary sector includes non-governmental, non-profit organisations. They may be engaged in a variety of activities: implementing grassroots/sustainable development, promoting human rights and social justice, protesting against environmental degradation, and many other similar tasks. Baviskar (*ibid*) as rightly mentioned that some activists resent and reject the term non-governmental organisation and instead designate themselves as social action groups, political action

groups or social movements. Anna Hazare's village development group at Ralegan Siddhi in Maharashtra and Ela R. Bhatt's Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Gujarat are both identified as NGOs but are very different from each other in terms of size, membership, funding, approaches, strategies and outcomes.

I quote from Baviskar (2001) who also said that while there are many definitions of NGOs, there are several classifications too. Shah and Cahturvedi (1983) divide NGOs in three main categories: techno-managerial, reformist, and radical. Hirway (1995) classified NGOs in Gujarat into welfare-oriented, development organisations, and empowering NGOs. Iyengar (1998) classified NGOs in Gujarat into four categories: Gandhian, service delivery organisations, professional organisations, and mobilisational organisations.

There are studies which explains the link between NGO, CBO, Civil Society and DWCRA is cordial and making a good success all over India and most importantly in Andhra Pradesh. Andhra Pradesh role in the country is highest in the SHG's and NGO's and they are acting as good agents of the development. Namerta (1995) as rightly said that the NGOs could only facilitates the undertaking of subsistence activities, and income from such activities was either equal to or less than the existing wage income. These activities made a difference to the people in so far as they could be undertaken during the lean season and that the problem of seasonal unemployment could be, to some extent, solved (Radhakrishna and Ray, 2005).

In Andhra Pradesh, we have different districts where different NGO's and CBO's are working actively among the people of the marginalized sections. In Ananthapur, we have some NGO's working for the development of the weaker sections. Here the reference can be made about Rural development Trust, which has its activity all over the district except in two Mandals, i.e., Penukonda and Hindupur. In the above two mandals there are two different NGO's are working in the respective mandals vigorously. Like wise we have Social Education and Development Society (SEDS) in Penukonda, Ananthapur District of Andhra Pradesh.

Methodology:

This paper is based on the data collected from Ananthapur district in Andhra Pradesh during the year 2003-2004. The present study is basically a qualitative study aimed at understanding the livelihood systems of the marginal communities and shocks, stresses and trends involved in their livelihood processes. In order to fulfil the objective of the study, qualitative anthropological tools and techniques are employed. These are mainly Observation (participant and non-participant type), Interviews (formal and informal) using detailed checklist, Key-Informant interviews, Case Studies, Focus Group Discussions, etc. Understanding the natives concepts and people's views regarding the livelihood systems of the people, existing systems of utilization, local knowledge of the different capitals involved and also, most importantly, role of vulnerability context in their daily life systems.

Data from secondary sources are gathered from books, articles, published reports, census reports, and government documents from the respective departments. Quantitative data with regard to demographic and economic aspects, and accessibility and availability of different assets, services, and also other information regarding the study was collected from primary sources through detailed census schedules.

Locating the Settlement:

The settlement under study is situated in the Penukonda Mandal in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh, South India and is about 10 kilometres away from Penukonda, the Mandal headquarters. Adadakulapalle is a multi-caste village consisting of 439 households of which 155 (35.6 %) households belongs to Sugali a Scheduled Tribe, who form a separate constituent of the village. The habitations of Sugali are called as Thandas, which locate Thandas a little away from the mail multi-caste villages are identified as the Thandas of the villages. Anthropologists are familiar with these multi-caste villages by the writings of M.N. Srinivas, Mckim Marriot and others. However, there are multi-castes villages, which incorporate the tribal populations also (S.C. Dube) and Adadakulapalle is one of such villages (Eswarappa, 2005).

The Thanda under study is included in Adadakulapalle village Panchayat of Penukonda Mandal. The Sugalis are divided into two thandas and known as Jalapalle Thanda or Patha Thanda (old Thanda) and Kothapalle Thanda (new Thanda) and two members represent one each from these wards in the Adadakulapalle Panchayat. Adadakulapalle Panchayat is reserved for Sugalis. Kothapalle Thanda is a new colony of houses built during the earlier Congress rule during 1989-94 in the same old Thanda area. The inhabitants of the Thandas belong to two different clans and each clan members live separately. Further, these two clans are affiliated to two different factions of the main village, who incidentally belong to two different political parties.

In Adadakulapalle the majority of Sugalis are small and marginal farmers. The type of land available in the village is dry land and only one Sugali farmer has a tube (bore) well in his land as against 90 borewells owned other castes in the village and the rest of the Sugalis depend upon monsoon. The major crops cultivated are groundnut, ragi and paddy. Ragi and Paddy are the staple crops and they constitute the staple diet of the farmers and agricultural labourers.

Table No 1) Distribution of Households by Caste/Community

Sl.No	Type of House	Type of Castes (No. of Households)				Total
		Scheduled Tribe	Scheduled Caste	Backward Castes	Other Castes	
1	Stone Houses	98	46	113	75	332
2	Mud Houses	28	10	21	---	59
3	Huts	29	04	15	---	48
Total		155	60	149	75	439

The livelihoods activities of Sugalis are cultivation, followed by daily wage works, and petty business (running own and rented autos and kirana (provisions) shop and hotel (tea and tiffin stall). Majority of them depend on agricultural labour, construction or repair works in and outside the village. Since the type of land available is dry land, they have to

depend upon monsoon for their cultivation. Frequent failure of the monsoons made the people to migrate to other areas. People from the Thanda explained that seasonal migration is high in the area as majority of them are marginal farmers and landless agricultural labourers. Almost half of the households in the Thanda migrate to towns in the off-season, according to the Gram Panchayat Sarpanch. One informant stated that they are helpless and there is no other way except to migrate to other areas. Some of them have settled in the towns leaving their old in the Thanda and support by their remittances. Younger people migrate to towns in the off seasons and come back to Thanda during rainy season, to cultivate land or work as farm labourers. Agriculture is their main source of livelihood followed by agricultural labour and seasonal migration. Cattle, goat, and sheep are the major livestock in the area. Several varieties of grass along with stocked paddy straw; maize stalk, groundnut and bhoosa are used as fodder. Individual households raise country chicken in their houses.

Since five years they did not have one good crop due to drought in the area and their lives and livelihoods have been threatened. Even when they get any yields, they are low and are further affected by the vagaries of the market. It further aggravates their poverty situation in the village.

People who suffer most from crop failures have no option but to migrate leaving women, children and the old in the village. Sometimes they do not get even a square meal in a day. Women face severe stress due to the migration of male members of the family. They have to take care of children as well as older people, in addition to cattle. As stated by some of the elderly Sugalis, some of the youth, who are educated, remain idle at home without any work. They hesitate to go for wage works available in the area and have become a burden to their parents.

NGO interventions in the Adadakulapalle *Thanda*:

As mentioned earlier, an NGO, Social Education Development Society (SEDS), has been working in the area for the last twenty-five years. It was established in the year 1980 and its headoffice is located in Mekalapalle village, which is 15 km away from the

Mandal headquarters. SEDS facilitates government-sponsored programmes and they also have their own programmes in the villages. Initially, they were working in two Mandals and now their coverage has risen to five Mandals (Penukonda, Somandepalle, Gorantla, Roddam, and Chilamathur) covering 209 villages. According to the Manager of SEDS, their main concentration is on Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and other weaker sections in all the villages. In each village they have a community level organizer who looks after their works. Adadakulapalle is one of the SEDS focused villages. SEDS has vocational training centre in Penukonda, the mandal headquarters. They select young people and give them training on welding, motor repairing, scooter repairing and television repairing. They provide accommodation in their hostel for all the boarders in Penukonda.

The major activities of the NGO are Land Development Programmes, School Development programmes (where they construct toilets and plant trees in the school surroundings), Horticulture programmes, Women Empowerment through the formation of Self Help groups (SHGs), Water Harvesting schemes and to provide Minimum Wage works to assist the marginal people and landless agricultural labourers. They have initiated a Village Organisation with all SHGs in Adadakulapalle. Village Organisation was started with two people from each SHG and at present, the total strength of the Village Organisation is 36. Village Organisation acts as a nodal agency in the village and undertakes all the developmental works. SEDS concentration is more on wasteland plantation, horticulture, water conservation and land development programmes.

Though SEDS' initial work focused on community organization, this soon evolved into efforts to deal with issues that were perceived to lie at the heart of the area's problems. Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh is the second most drought-prone region in the country (Prasad 1998). When SEDS started its activities, intense population pressure on the land and its natural resources had significantly contributed to the widespread hunger and general poverty experienced by the local population. In response, SEDS began an environmental campaign in 1984 that was soon transformed into its principal programme. The degradation of soil and depletion of water in the open wells

used by villagers made them feel that somebody has to come to save their ecology and to provide reasonable means of livelihoods to meet their minimum needs. SEDS' initial efforts, therefore, included homestead plantations, revival of tamarind orchards and community wood lots. By increasing the overall number of trees, SEDS was able to check soil erosion and began recharging the water table that had fallen drastically. In conjunction with kitchen gardens and individual plantations that provided means for subsistence and income generation, community awareness slowly began to increase and the first signs of acceptance by the local population emerged.

At the same time, when these efforts took root, their interrelation with community on issues such as organization and mobilization became increasingly apparent and SEDS began to redirect and expand its efforts in this area. In 1988, the group began Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRAs), which consisted of direct consultation with villagers before watershed work was initiated in their community. Inputs were gathered from the people, as they knew the land best and would be the beneficiaries of any improvements made to it. In this manner, SEDS was able to assure maximum results and, at the same time, it built a solid rapport with villagers.

Further reason behind this interaction came from SEDS' continued focus on a pragmatic approach to its work that encouraged participatory development. Acknowledging the failure of charity to achieve long-term results, SEDS' efforts relied on community involvement and the standard principle of 'helping people to help themselves'. When trees were given free as part of the initial drought-relief efforts, they were not cared for. It was soon discovered that such handouts were not valued and, therefore, not looked after once SEDS stopped supervising completed project areas. The group, therefore, began emphasizing on sustainability through direct community involvement in its efforts and this was evolved as the central focus of nearly all its works, including watershed development. Apart from watershed development, health, children education and awareness received particular attention and were developed into extensive programmes that helped define and orient the overall organizational set-up.

By the mid 1980s, SEDS had initiated its action on the health conditions of the people in the region. Rampant diseases, high infant mortality and extremely poor sanitary conditions spurred the organization. Toilets were constructed and proper sanitation habits were explained. Traditional village midwives were given basic medical training and using their skills formed a network of village health workers. Eventually, the NGO built its own clinic and, in addition to its ongoing trainings, began holding health camps with licensed doctors from a hospital in Bangalore. This has helped to improve the health conditions of the people substantially in this area.

Another crucial aspect of the health programme observed was its focus on children. Recognizing a high incidence of malnourishment, SEDS began a nutritional or kindergarten programme for children below 5 years. Soon afterwards a widespread child sponsorship programme was incorporated with the cooperation of Action Aid Australia, a group that had previously been involved with watershed funding. Eventually this came to also include a hostel on the SEDS farm in Anandapuram that cares for, especially, destitute children.

Obviously with a stronger emphasis on children through its sponsorship programme, it was imperative that SEDS involved itself in local educational issues. It began subsidizing teachers' salaries at local schools and contributed to the construction of school buildings and facilities. These efforts within the villages allowed the group to tie together its community organization, watershed programme, and children and educational programmes so that inter-reliance began to form and each took on to influence the others.

As the web of its programmes and their interactions steadily increased over the years, SEDS was able to cement its standing in the region and expand its influence throughout the region. With its achievements in each sphere, be it watershed development or improved health conditions, the respect that it earned from the local population gave it renewed strength and confidence to branch out into those areas it perceived to be needed.

In its initial phases, the organization lacked funding and support, both from within and outside the communities. Despite death threats, intense pressure from other unreceptive NGOs and severe shortage of funds, it continued its challenge of trying to change the 'village mentality'. Thus, the organization was able to not only survive but also prosper. As the first signs of success began to appear, SEDS earned the respect and support of villagers and now draws one of its principal strengths from this fact. Without the understanding and acceptance by the local community it would never have been able to remain operational for more than 20 years.

As this understanding and respect were steadily earned and its various programmes continued to develop despite the numerous challenges the organization faced, SEDS evolved into the organisation it is today. Its health programme has helped to virtually eradicate child malnourishment, significantly improved sanitation habits and dramatically decreased the child mortality rate. Under the watershed programme it has planted nearly 10 million trees. As part of children's programme it started a hostel with 27 residents, constructed a school on the SEDS farm and also sponsors 67 local children (SEDS, 2002-2004).

While most NGOs prove to be fly-by-night operations, SEDS has remained steadfast and has been expanding for more than two decades. Its consistency and pragmatic approach have built a good rapport with both local communities and donor agencies that facilitate its current projects and programmes and assure the continuance and expansion of SEDS to assist the local population and environment.

With a large expansion and continued focus on the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) that have become the central aspect of its community efforts, SEDS has begun focusing increasingly on the sustainability of its efforts and the transfer of responsibility to villagers. Through education and involvement it is attempting to create a situation whereby its direct involvement in local affairs would no longer be necessary and it would be able to serve merely in a consulting role to communities that take the initiative to realize the necessary reforms and improvements on their own accord.

However, the full accomplishment of this ideal is still far away, though significant progress has been made. Overseeing and organizing watershed developments, caring for desperate children, providing education and community support, and tending to the various basic health needs are still SEDS' defining characteristics.

a) Land Development Programme (LDP):

Under this programme, wastelands have been converted into agricultural fields through soil conservation. Soil conservation works include Stone Bunding, Gully checks, Spill ways, Woodlots, fire tracing, ploughing, and trenching activities (Table 5.1).

All these works are being undertaken in the summer season, which provides some wage works to the people of the village. By collecting some contribution from the beneficiaries SEDS had undertaken some of the works like stone bunding, ploughing, fire tracing, and trenching. Of the total cost, the beneficiary invests 25%, and the NGO puts in 75%.

Table 5.2: Works Undertaken by SEDS during 1996-2007*

S.No	Activities Undertaken in Adadakulapalle Settlement	Parimanamu	Expenditure	Total Working Days
1	Matti Gatlu (Mud Tanks)	71929 meters	7, 19, 290	17, 983
2	Rathi Gatlu (Rock Dams)	17216 meters	1.72, 160	4307
3	Rathi Maravalu	811 (No)	1.45, 980	3649
4	Gulli Checks	371	2.96, 800	7420
5	Water Storage Ponds	45	45, 000	1125
6	Kuntalu	5	2, 00, 000	2500
7	Check dams	11	11, 22, 550	18, 064
8	Tree Plantation	390701	24, 80, 8000	62020
9	Seeds Implantation	2500 Kgs	52,800	1320
10	Horticulture	80Acres	3, 87, 600	9690
11	Roads	20 Kms	1, 00, 000	2500
12	Social Protection of Forests	4000 Acres	6, 50, 000	16250
13	Wells Repairing	3 (No)	24, 000	6000
14	Pudika Thisinadi (Check Dams and Kuntalu)	16	1, 65, 000	4125
15	Round Sheds and Committee	4	61, 000	1500

	Hall			
16	Bores	7	1, 40, 000	-
17	Supply Channels	8Kms	2, 32, 000	5800
18	Fish Rearing	--	50, 000	
Total Expenditure			70, 44, 980	

* Source: SEDS Office, Mekalapalle

The land development programme has benefited the *Sugali* in the *Thanda* to a certain extent only. The implementation of the programme was initiated in the year 2001 and some benefits were derived in the following year. Subsequently, due to failure of monsoons, the programme did not take off. Moreover, as mentioned before, since majority of the *Sugali* are landless, this programme has not been of much relevance to them.

Case Study of the Beneficiary from Adadakulapalle Settlement:

Ranga Naik, 55 years old, studied 5th class, has two sons, who are separated after their marriage, has 16 acres of land in the village. The type of land is dry land and do not have water facility before. SEDS have chosen him as beneficiary and started the land development programme in the year 2000. Further, Soil conservation works were initiated with the help and support from the NGO. NGO also assisted him to go for digging bore well in his land. Later, SEDS suggested him to adopt horticulture cropping by providing saplings of Mango, Chinta (Tamarind), Eucalyptus, etc. He also reported that there are 340 mango plants in 8 acres of land, 240 tamarind plants in 6 acres of land and eucalyptus in 2 acres of land. Watering to these plants is provided through water tanker of NGO. Ranga Naik has complained that there is severe problem of forest wild pigs and cows in the area. To protect the seedlings from the forest pigs and cows, the NGO has appointed watcher, beneficiary only, by paying Rs 600/ per month as a salary. Due to this problem he has to stay and sleep there in the *polam* (Agricultural Field) leaving his wife at home, who stayed alone in the house. His *polam* (land) is far off from the village, which is nearly 3kms and electricity is not there for the land. They have complained number of times to the officials but so far they have not done anything. Officials have conveyed to them that providing electric facility to the fields is difficult

since the lands are far away from the village and power lines are not available in the nearby area.

b) Capacity Building:

The SEDS have trained around 20 youth from the village in the last four years at their vocational training centre located in Penukonda. As mentioned earlier, they have been training them in different trades. Almost all of them found employment in the nearby towns and settled there itself. Some of them have established their own private enterprises competing with non-*Sugali*. Students who have undergone training informed that it is very good and they will definitely become self-employed after their training. It is also noticed from the youth who have undergone training, in the vocational centre, that they are earning reasonably good amount to survive without depending on their parents for their personal expenditure.

c) Efforts to improve Women's Participation in Development:

Women constitute 48.1 percent of the country's population. They are playing an important role in various fields such as agriculture, dairy farming, handicraft, etc., but their contribution in these fields has not been viewed as economic activity. A large number of them work in the primary sector as unskilled workforce and get wages lower than men. A large number of women are illiterate. Hence, most of them suffer from economic subjugation, powerlessness, isolation, vulnerability and poverty. The issues of economic uplift of women and their empowerment have been the prime concern of the government in various schemes. The government felt that NGOs might be involved in this area for implementation of some of the programmes such as DWCRA by organizing self-help groups (SHGs).

It can be noted from the above that the SEDS working in this area has been focusing mainly on the economic development schemes by involving, particularly, youth, women and poor and marginal farmers. As there are functionaries of SEDS at the grass-root level to organize local communities in the village, there is a possibility of effective implementation of the developmental schemes. SEDS deals with the primary concerns of

the people – food and clothing. To make people self-reliant, the NGO plans to slowly withdraw so that dependency of the people on external agencies may be minimized.

There are four SHGs functioning in the Adadakulapalle *Thanda*. The women were attracted to the benefits such as savings, availability of loans for purchase of sheep, buffalo and other cattle. After the formation of one group, people realized the importance of such groups and slowly new groups emerged. The group members meet regularly and decide the future course of action. In these meetings the SEDS functionaries educated them about savings, health, etc. Due to regular meetings and Gram sabhas conducted by SEDS their awareness level has increased enormously about their health, children's education and, most importantly, savings. As savings accumulated, women members are able to withdraw money during emergency situations. According to 42 years old Radha Bai, before the formation of the groups, if anybody was ill in the family, they had to rush to the moneylender for help. But now, they have SHGs to help them and they borrow money from the group in times of need.

d) Self-Help Groups and Women Empowerment:

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are the most integral aspect of SEDS' community outreach programmes. It is through these organizations that SEDS empowered both individuals and communities, providing them with the tools to form their own governing systems, lobby the State and federal government, start their own businesses and manage their own financial affairs. Originally formed with male members, the groups are now exclusively female and a large part of their focus has shifted to the concept of women's empowerment in a strongly male-dominated society.

SHGs are organized with 10-15 women headed by two group-elected leaders who serve primarily as cheque signers in financial matters. Though ideally SEDS would like to encourage the incorporation of different socio-economic groups within SHGs, it was often proved difficult and hence, they are generally formed along caste or community or family lines. The groups meet once a month to discuss community and individual problems, financial matters and any other issues that might arise.

A central aspect of the programme is the financial functioning of the SHG. With contributions from each member and group savings a bank account is opened. Individual members can subsequently gain access to the funds by petitioning the group for a loan, which is generally used for income generation purposes (such as the opening of a store, or the purchase of livestock and raw materials for some personal or group economic enterprise). The driving principle behind this system is to break the villagers' previous dependence on moneylenders who were charging exorbitant interest rates. In this manner, each group is able to establish their own guidelines for payment schedules and interest rates, alleviating individual members' burdens.

Recently, through the financial aid of EED (Evangelischer Entwicklungshilfe Dienst - Protestant Development Aid Service) SEDS has begun distributing loans to groups for use in SHG income generation projects. For each member, a group receives Rs. 750 which is then collectively managed and utilized for whatever plan the group has devised. Such projects currently being explored include the purchase of livestock such as goats and cattle; the selling of flowers, vegetables and milk; and ironing and tailoring businesses. Interest charged on the loans is two percent and any sum collected over and above the initial loan is placed into the collective accounts of the groups.

Through workshops and meetings in which government functions and methods are explained. SEDS has also attempted to give the groups the means to petition and pressure local government officials for services and concerns that they might have or desire. The overall objective is to empower the rural population as a workforce (conveying the concept of power in numbers), and to increase involvement in local politics. These groups then will be in a better position to manage their communities and lobby on their own for better housing, electricity, education, food distribution and sanitation.

The SHG programme is the obvious key to the community aspect of SEDS current work, but might also be considered the most important for its future. The ideal

goal of a social and development group is often to make itself obsolete. Though the odds are generally against such overwhelming success, the first step is to educate and provide for the local population so that it might be able to achieve the same results of environmental and social improvement on its own. This is where the empowerment of community members is crucial. The focus on women in this process gives the double benefit of augmenting their role within the society at the same time that the society's position itself increases in power and prominence.

The Self-Help Groups, with their financial, governmental, social and educational responsibilities are an ever-evolving and very successful programme. Their continuing development gives hope that within a short period the communities will gain the ability and knowledge to uplift them without the need of outside assistance.

Obstacles to Development:

In spite of the above-mentioned efforts of NGO, Sugalis position in the Thanda has not changed significantly. One dominant reason for such static conditions in spite of efforts made to effect change is obviously as in any other part of the country due to the apathy of the government functionaries at different levels (Eswarappa, 2005). Local conditions such as poor infrastructural development, failure of monsoons, interests of the communities are also to some extent responsible for the inertia.

It is contended that even the NGO does not perform its function objectively. It is believed that the NGO is favouring one section of the Sugalis in the Thanda and delivers all its services to the same section of the Sugalis and deliberately neglecting the other. This is due to the party politics prevalent in the village. The NGO manager, who is based in the Thanda, has resigned from his post to put his supporter as Telugu Desam party candidate in the last Local Body elections. Some of the youth from the Thanda openly opposed to the NGO's stand but it was of no use. The manager accepted the role-played by him in the last elections and said that there was no other way for him except to support Telugu Desam party for their survival and existence in the area. Thus, the party politics have a direct bearing on the development efforts, either by NGO or government machinery.

The levels of interaction of Sugalis with both the government officials and NGO can be seen in terms of their involvement in the party politics and factions. Ruling party is always ahead in the factional politics in the village and Sugalis have to take sides with one of the party's or factions. Present Sarpanch was elected on Telugu Desam party ticket twice and his group is representing one section of the Sugalis in the village. The NGO is also supporting this group in the village at the cost of the other section.

Even though there is no significant socio-economic change of the Sugalis compare to the non-Sugali population in the village, it cannot be denied some qualitative change in the lives of the Sugalis. In terms of quantity that is the number of households who cross the below poverty line due to the efforts of the government and the SEDS, there is initiation of change among Sugalis which may take some time to yield perceptible results. Some micro level changes, which are qualitative in nature likely to produce results, have been noticed in the study. It shall now be attempted to understand these changes.

Conclusion:

In order to understand the impact of the interventions of the civil societies or agencies to bring socio-economic development, the paper tries to understand the agency/NGO role in the development process at micro level. At the micro level, the programmes are beset with problems relating to coordination of various elements that necessarily intervene and intersect the areas of operation. These include human elements – discharging the duties of the functionaries, location of the institutions, power politics and natural local conditions. There is a complex relationship of these elements. Thus, it is here the introduction of right to information act has relevance to understand the problems better and make beneficiaries more involved. Civil society organisations have expressed a genuine interest in liaising and working towards building strategic partnerships with government where possible to assist in the implementation process. Civil society is also likely to take a lead in raising public awareness about the new law (Devasher, 2005).

For success of any programme, proper configuration, manipulation and exploitation of these elements for advantage become necessary. Whoever, either an individual or agency, is able to handle judiciously and overcome these problems will be a successful

player. To some extent in this case NGO played better than that of the government. Economic focus ensuring support of cultural elements seems to yield desired result, as can be thinly drawn from this study.

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