

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Protection and Promotion of Child Rights in the North Lakhimpur Sub-Division of Lakhimpur District of Assam



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Abstract: 'Child Rights' refers to those human rights which are very essential for all-round development of a child. These rights are fundamental rights which make their life meaningful. However, in today's world all children do not enjoy their rights equally. Among all sections of people children are the most neglected, exploited and vulnerable to almost all forms of social evils. In the developing countries of the world problems relating to children like infanticide, child marriage, child trafficking, child labour, child prostitution, drug addicted children etc. are very severe. As a developing country India has also been struggling with similar problems. In the North Eastern state of Assam also problems relating to children is seen almost in all parts of the state. Efforts are being made by the government and several other agencies to protect and promote the rights of children. The present study is an attempt to evaluate the role of Non-Governmental Organizations in protection and promotion of child rights. The study was carried out in North Lakhimpur Sub-Division of Lakhimpur District of Assam State. The study is based on both theoretical and empirical data. The methodology used for the study was in-depth interview through both Qualitative and Quantitative Research techniques. The study assumes significance as it intends to highlight the ground reality of the functioning of Non-Governmental Organizations in the study area.

Key Words: child rights, Non-Governmental Organization, protection, promotion, problems.

I. INTRODUCTION

Child rights violation is a very serious problem in today's world. Although each and every human being is entitled to some basic rights and privileges but in our society all sections of people do not enjoy these rights equally and one such section is the children who are often neglected, exploited and deprived of their basic rights and privileges.

Children are the most valuable asset of any society. They are the future of a nation. Therefore, in order to protect their rights all over the world efforts are being made by the governments of different countries and several other agencies including Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). However, despite such endeavours the rights of children are not yet protected in the hands of so-called civilized society of this globalized world. As per a report, "poverty, conflict and

discrimination against girls are putting more than 1.2 billion children-over half of children worldwide-at risk for an early end to their childhood. Many of these at-risk children live in countries facing two or three of these grave threats at the same time" [1].

The scenario in India is also the same. Even after 72 years of independence, society in India is not yet totally free from the evil practices which violate children's rights. Different studies and reports have clearly depicted the picture of dismal condition of children in India. "As per the 2011 Census, India has 158.7 million children in the age group of 0-6 years, comprising about 16% of the total Indian population" [2]. "It is estimated that around 40% of India's children are vulnerable to or experiencing difficult circumstances like children without family support, children forced into labour, abused/trafficked children, children on the streets, vulnerable children, children affected by substance abuse, by armed conflict/civil unrest/ natural calamity, etc., as well as children, who due to circumstances have committed offences and come into conflict with law" [3]. In India, caste and class discrimination leads to marginalization of children. Again, social exclusion also affects parenting and child maltreatment [4].

The Constitution of India and other governmental acts, laws, policies, programmes and schemes contain a number of provisions aiming at securing equal social status for children as well as protection of their basic rights. At the national level several NGOs have also been making efforts towards protection and promotion of child rights. However, in spite of such efforts millions of children in India even today are living a life of great distress without understanding the meaning of childhood. As a consequence of this, their childhood gets spoiled and dreams remain unfulfilled. In this regard Assam is also not free.

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In Assam various socio-economic problems like poverty, insurgency, conflict, border dispute, illegal migration, natural calamities such as flood and erosion and many other man made causes leads to the violation of child rights.

Specifically speaking, in the Lakhimpur district of Assam, problems relating to children is assuming a very serious form day by day. Situated in a remote corner of the state this district is overburdened with a number of socio-economic problems. During monsoon due to heavy rainfall every year the district is badly affected by natural calamities like flood and erosion which have adversely affected the socio-economic conditions of people of the district. Due to flood and erosion many people loss their agricultural land,

many become homeless, many dies including children and many other people suffers from various diseases after the flood. Consequently, the life condition of those people becomes very pathetic and their human rights get violated. Studies have revealed that in the post flood period many of such people sell their child as workers in the nearby state of Arunachal Pradesh in need of money [5]. Not only this, many other problems like child labour, child marriage, child sexual abuse, rape, child trafficking etc. are increasing day by day in the district. As per the information of the Child Welfare Committee of Lakhimpur district all total 144 cases of child rights violation has been registered in the district in the last two years (2017 & 2018). Out of these 144 cases 73 cases were registered in 2017 and in 2018 till 6th of June, the number of cases registered is 71 which are very disturbing. In the year 2017 in Lakhimpur district 17 cases of child marriage, 4 cases of rape, 1 case of child labour, 3 cases of child abuse, 2 cases of trafficking (4 numbers of children), 33 cases of runaway (36 numbers of children), 1 case missing child and 3 cases of surrendered children were registered. Data of the year 2018 shows that till 6th of June, 23 cases of child marriage, 7 cases of rape, 3 cases of child labour, 1 case of missing child, 1 case of trafficking, 2 cases of surrendered children, 25 cases of runaway and 9 other cases relating to children has been registered.

The above mentioned data are clear indication of increase in the number of cases relating to child rights violation in Lakhimpur district in recent years. Attempts are being made by the government and Non-Governmental Organizations in the district to protect and promote children's rights. Organisations like Khorapathar Sanmilita Yuvak Samaj, Dikrong Valley Environment and Rural Development Society, Jagriti Sanmilita Unnayan Kendra, Kachajuli Physically Handicapped (Deaf & Dumb) School & Training Centre etc. are very prominent in this regard.

In the light of this, the present study attempts to evaluate and analyse the role of NGOs in protection and promotion of child rights in the North Lakhimpur Sub-Division of Lakhimpur district of Assam.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of related literature is a very crucial part of any research studies. In order to prepare the framework of the present research study a number of related books, journals, magazines, reports etc. have been reviewed both in international as well as national and regional context. The

following are some of the important literature reviewed under the present research work:

The book titled "Child Rights in India Law, Policy and Practice" written by Asha Bajpai (2017) provides better understanding of the concept of child rights and various issues relating to children. This volume has highlighted the major laws, policy initiatives and schemes of the Indian government as well as other important international laws enacted for the protection of child rights. A very significant aspect of the book is that it covers the strategies adopted by the NGOs for the protection and promotion of child rights.

Book titled "Child Rights in India Challenges and Social Action" written by Geeta Chopra (2015) is a comprehensive document on the rights of children. In the book the author has discussed about the status of children and many other issues relating to children in India. Considering children as one of the most vulnerable sections of the society the author has tried to highlight the plight of children in India.

In their book "Education, Child Labour and NGOs" the authors Prachi Shirur and Srinivas Shirur (2007) have dealt with the problem of child labour, its magnitude, causes, consequences and initiatives undertaken by the government as well as NGOs to tackle this problem.

H. O. Agarwal (2007) in his book "Human Rights" discusses (in the fifth chapter) about the rights of vulnerable groups like children, women, migrant workers etc.

In the book "NGOs in the Human Right Movement" the author Kaushlendra Mishra (2008) has talked about the increasing role of NGOs in upholding people's rights and focus on the aims, objectives and the role played by the NGOs in the human rights movement. In other chapters of the book the author has systematically discussed about the role of Transnational NGOs in global affairs and many other similar subjects of national and international importance.

"NGOs in India: A Cross-Sectional Study" written by R. Sooryamoorthy and K.D. Gangrade (2006) discusses about the NGOs that work for the development of rural areas as well as of women and children. Further, in a separate chapter the authors have tried to discuss about the working of NGOs in the area of child care from a historical perspective.

"Challenges of Human Rights in India with Special Reference to North Eastern Region" edited by Kunjalata Dutta and Robin Saikia (2016) focuses on violation of human rights in Lakhimpur district of Assam with particular focus on the rights of children. "NGOs in North East India: A Kaleidoscopic Observation" edited by Seema S. Singha and Chimun Kr. Nath (2011) highlights the role of NGOs as the supporting agency of the government. The authors, in this book, have discussed about the significant role played by the NGOs in the protection of human rights throughout the world. The article titled "The Role of NGOs in the Enforcement of Human Rights: An Overview" written by Vaibhab Goel and Manoj Kr. Tripathi (2010) is a very useful article to understand the prominent role played by the NGOs in the enforcement of human rights. According to the authors, NGOs, particularly human rights NGOs, have the greater responsibility of enforcing human rights both at the national and international arena.

In their article “United Nations and the Problem of Women and Children Abuse in Third World Countries”

Saliwe Kawewe and Robert Dibie (1999) have tried to see the problem of gender inequality and exploitation of women and children from the lenses of Third World Countries. The authors opined that some of the worst manifestations of these problems such as child abuse,

child sexual assault, cheap labour, prostitution, forced girl marriages etc. are mostly found in the countries of Third World.

“Of Vulnerability and Coercion: A Study of Sex Trafficking in Assam” written by Saumya Ray (2015) reflects various circumstances under which women and girls become victims of trafficking. The author has also discussed about the nature, process and various causes of trafficking like poverty, conflict, natural disaster and so on. The article also highlights the working of NGOs in the area of child trafficking.

“The Many Faces of Exclusion” is a report published by Save the Children (2018) is a document on the current status of children across the globe. The report clearly reflects the difficult circumstances in which children lose their basic rights. The main focus areas of the report include poverty, armed conflict and discrimination against girl child. The report provides necessary information on the current status of children across the globe including India.

“Annual Report 2016-2017” published by CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF) (2017) provides a vivid picture of the present status of children in India. The report is a clear reflection of the working of ‘Child Line’ as a civil society organisation in India.

“Annual Report 2016” published by UNICEF (2017) is another comprehensive work on issues relating to children which reveals many facts about the current social status of children.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To review the role of NGOs in protection and promotion of child rights,
2. To identify the problems being faced by the NGOs in their effort towards protection of child rights.

IV. METHODOLOGY

In the present study both quantitative and qualitative methods are used. The study is based on both theoretical and empirical data. North Lakhimpur Sub-Division of Lakhimpur District has been selected as the study area.

The investigator selected four NGOs and data for the present study are collected by interviewing key persons and other members of the selected NGOs by using both formal and informal methods of interview. The investigator also visited the District Child Protection Office for the collection of relevant data. The investigator relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. For collection of primary data from the NGOs interview schedules are used. The questions are structured and comprehensive.

The investigator also visited two villages for collection of data. Household schedules have been used and the investigator noted down the information in the schedules provided by the respondents. The investigator has also

visited one school in order to collect necessary information wherein the investigator interacted with the students and used schedules for collecting data from the students. The investigator also visited a bazaar area to collect information. The investigator used separate schedules to collect information. In all these visits the investigator used direct verbal communication between the interviewee and interviewer.

V. MEANING AND DEFINITION OF NGO

Non-Governmental Organisations, popularly known as NGOs are voluntary and service-oriented organisations. They are organisations of people which work for the betterment of the society. They are the non-profit making organisations for which they are also called Non-Profit Organisations or NPOs. ‘No profit no loss’ is the main principle of such organisations. These organisations help the government in implementing any projects and programmes at the grass root level for the welfare of people. They are also known as the Third Sector of any society after the State and market being the first and the second sector respectively [6].

The World Bank has defined NGOs as private organisations that pursue activities to relieve sufferings, to promote the interests of the poor, to protect the environment or to undertake community development [7]. NGOs have been established in almost all countries of the world. It has been estimated that in 1999 the number of NGOs worldwide was two million. In India it was estimated to be one million which is approximately half of the total number of NGOs [8]. “There are over 14,000 NGOs registered under the Foreign Contributions Regulations Act. In all there may be over 30,000 NGOs in India” [9].

It is to be noted that there are four main characteristics of any NGOs. These are:

- Voluntary in nature
- Independence from government and donors
- Non-Profit Organisation
- Public interest organisation [10].

VI. CHILD RIGHTS AND NGOS

In the present-day world, the problems relating to children is assuming a very serious form day by day. It is due to poverty, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, displacement and various other natural and manmade causes millions of children around the world are being left behind. Studies revealed that till now, only a few nations of the world have become successful in achieving the ideals set by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 to protect, preserve and develop children’s rights. Here, it is very necessary to understand the concept of child rights and child protection. ‘Child Rights’, in general terms, refers to those human rights which are very essential for all-round development of a child. These rights are fundamental rights which make their life meaningful.

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Right to health, right to food and nutrition, right to education, right to family life, right to recreation, right to an adequate standard of living, right to be protected from abuse and harm etc. are some of the rights enjoyed by the children. ‘Child Protection’ refers to protection of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 has clearly stated that the right to protection is a right of every child [11]. So far, many initiatives have been taken at the national, regional and international level to minimise the vulnerability of children as well as to cover them under the social protection net. However, in today’s world millions of children are not yet covered with any of the social protection mechanisms as a consequence of which they experience multiple vulnerabilities in their life. According to a report, almost two-thirds of children worldwide (1.3 billion) are not covered with any social protection mechanism and most of these children are living in Africa and Asia [12]. Realising the plight of millions of children several NGOs have come into existence to work for the welfare of children as well as to provide them protection against hazards or risk to their life. Covering a wide range of issues concerning children such as child labour, child exploitation, child trafficking, child marriage etc. these organisations have been making substantial contributions towards protection of children’s rights. Save the Children is one such NGO which has been working at the international level for many decades. Across the globe NGOs have been working to uplift the children, more particularly to the underprivileged children who live in exceptionally difficult situations. In India the contribution made by NGOs is tremendous towards the field of child rights. It is through the adoption of numerous policies, programmes and schemes NGOs have been trying to promote overall growth and progress of children all over the country. Some of the leading NGOs working particularly in the area of child rights in India are Forum for Creche and Childcare Services (FORCES), Concerned Action Now (CAN), Child Rights and You (CRY) etc. [13]. In Assam also a number of NGOs have been working for the wellbeing of children. Due to the magnitude of the problem governmental efforts need to be complemented by initiatives of NGOs on the issue of child rights. Accordingly, the role of NGOs as the custodian of child rights has become more effective in the present day.

VII. NGOS SELECTED FOR THE STUDY

For the present study four NGOs are selected from the North Lakhimpur Sub-Division of Lakhimpur district of Assam, India. These are Khorapathar Sanmilita Yuvak Samaj, Dikrong Valley Environment and Rural development Society, Jagriti Sanmilita Unnayan Kendra and Kachajuli Physically Handicapped (Deaf & Dumb) School & Training Centre.

VIII. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SELECTED NGOS

1. Khorapathar Sanmilita Yuvak Samaj (Reg. No. No. 16 Of 1971-1972 dated 04-05-1972 & NITI Aayog Unique ID: AS/ 2013/ 0056778

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This organisation was established in the year 1986. The prime objectives of the organisation are to

- work for the upliftment of the rural community
- work to execute the schemes of Child & Women Welfare
- work to execute the schemes of Youth Welfare and Games & Sports
- work for the welfare of SC(s), ST(s) and Other Backward Communities
- work for the welfare of disabled person
- work in the field of Drug Abuse & Alcoholism Prevention and Control
- work in the field of AIDS control & to create awareness among people
- work to generate awareness regarding adoption of Small Family Norms, Child & Mother Care & Adolescent mother etc.

Since its inception the NGO has been working for the welfare of the society and committed to bring about changes at the societal level by means of its active engagement with the community at the grass-root level. The organization has adopted various programmes for the welfare of children. It conducts workshops on disability issues and tries to bring forth the disabled person into the mainstream. Besides, the NGO also organises awareness programmes, street plays etc. to generate awareness among children regarding the importance of their rights. Through various competitions (like essay writing, painting etc.) the NGO tries to motivate the young children against the evil practices of the society. It also tries to create awareness among people regarding the ill effects of alcoholism and drug addiction. The organisation has conducted survey to identify children working as labours in hotels, restaurants, dhabas etc. The organisation organises training programmes for children for their moral and cultural development. Currently the NGO is running eight creche centres in eight villages of North Lakhimpur Sub-Division (under the Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India and Assam State Social Welfare Board) where children below six years of age are provided with sleeping, health care and other facilities. The organisation has the future plan to deal with issues relating to child health and also to work for the cultural and intellectual development of children.

2. Dikrong Valley Environment & Rural Development Society (Reg. No. RS/NLP/257/B/30 Of 2000-2001)

Since its inception on April 14, 2000, the NGO has been rendering services to people by keeping in mind some objectives which include-development of rural areas, welfare of women & children, welfare of person with disabilities, development of youth & adolescent, prevention of trafficking of women and children etc. Since 2012-13 the organisation has been working in the field of child protection especially in the field of trafficking and exploitation. It rescues victims of trafficking and exploitation from the places of their exploitation with the help of police and legal authorities.

Presently the organisation is running a project called “Ujjala Home” where such victims of trafficking are kept under safe custody. These victims are provided with basic amenities such as shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment etc. It also tries to facilitate reintegration of the victims into the family and society at large.

The organisation also conducts various programmes for welfare of children such as creche programme, family counselling etc. The organisation has also been taking initiatives to assist the needy disabled persons including children in procuring durable, sophisticated and scientifically manufactured modern standard aids and appliances that can promote their physical, social and psychological rehabilitation. It also works to empower the persons with disabilities. Further, the organisation works in the area of child labour. At present, the organisation is working as the core agency of the government and is running two National Child Labour Project Schools in Lakhimpur district.

Apart from these, the NGO also organises various training programmes, workshops, awareness generation programmes etc. for the welfare of women and children. It also works to provide primary need of shelter, food, clothing and care to the marginalized women and girls living particularly in difficult circumstances. Till date, the NGO has initiated a number of programmes aiming at improvement of health condition and education of children. The organisation has the future plan to organise programmes for the development of scientific thinking in school children in coming days.

3. Jagriti Sammilita Unnayan Kendra (Reg. No. 178/1983-84

This NGO was established in 1982 with the major mission of working for the development of women, children as well as of youths. The organisation mainly works in the area of nutrition, growth monitoring and pre-school training facilities for children. Currently the organisation is running a project called “Specialised Adoption Agency” (SAA) under the Government of India to provide food, clothing, shelter, education and other facilities to the orphaned, abandoned, surrendered children and children in need of care and protection (CNCP) below the age of 6 years. After providing special care and protection to the children the NGO arranges provision of adoption with proper legal procedure. The organisation is receiving financial assistance from the Ministry of Women and Child Development through the State Child Protection Society and State Adoption Resource Authority (SARA).

At present the organisation is also running another project called “Anganwadi Training Centre” (AWTC) which was started in 2007. The main task of this centre is to provide training to the Anganwadi workers (AWW) and Anganwadi helpers or Sahayikas (AWH) who are engaged in providing services to children for their survival, growth and development.

The organisation also conducts counselling programme for the drug addicted persons. The target group under this scheme includes all victims of alcohol and drugs with special focus on children, adolescent and youth. Additionally, the NGO organises awareness generation camps

both in villages and urban and semi-urban areas as well as in various educational institutions of Lakhimpur district. It also conducts free health check-up camps to provide children with basic health facilities.

4. Kachajuli Physically Handicapped (Deaf & Dumb) School & Training Centre (Reg. No. 105/93/94)

This organisation was established in 1993. The prime objective of the organisation is to impart education and training to the students who are differently abled (deaf & dumb) as well as to develop among them the skills to become self-reliant in future. It is mainly an organisation to provide educational and long-term training facilities to the deaf & dumb children below 18 years of age. Currently the organisation is running two residential schools cum training centres for the physically challenged (deaf & dumb) children with hostel facilities for students, both boys and girls. Hostel borders are provided with education, vocational training and skill development programmes. They are also provided with food, clothing, medical check-up and recreational facilities. After completion of their education and training the students are re-united with their parents or other family members by following formal procedures. Till today the organisation has organised a number of awareness camps in rural areas of Lakhimpur district to make people aware of their rights with particular focus on children. The organisation tries to safeguard the rights of children by providing them with basic amenities of life which is needed by a child during his childhood. The organisation also does the needful for children with disabilities in getting their disability identity card. From the discussion above it becomes clear that the four selected NGOs have been working for the protection and promotion of child rights in Lakhimpur district. The areas covered by the NGOs include child education, child labour, child abuse, child trafficking, child health etc.

IX. ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES OF THE SELECTED NGOS

In order to collect necessary information from the NGOs the investigator conducted schedule-based interviews with the key functionaries and other officials of the four selected NGOs. The responses received from the respondents are presented below:

Providing Shelter Except Khorapathar Sanmilita Yuvak Samaj all the selected NGOs are engaged in providing shelter to children who are vulnerable, differently abled and are in need of care and protection.

Activities on Education

Khorapathar Sanmilita Yuvak Samaj: Currently the organisation is running eight creche centres where all together 200 children below 6 years of age are provided with educational facilities.

Jagriti Sanmilita Unnayan Kendra: Presently running a project called “Specialised Adoption Agency” (SAA) to provide educational and other facilities to the orphaned, abandoned, surrendered children and also to the children in need of care and protection (CNCP) below the age of 6 years.

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Kachajuli Physically Handicapped (Deaf & Dumb) School & Training Centre: Currently the organisation is running two residential school cum training centres for the physically challenged children below 18 years of age.

Activities on Child Labour

Khorapathar Sanmilita Yuvak Samaj: The organisation works for enforcing policies initiated by the government in favour of children. It also conducts workshops and awareness creation programmes on child labour issue.

Dikrong Valley Environment and Rural Development Society: The organisation works to rescue children from their work place. Presently the organisation is working as the core agency of the government and is running two National Child Labour Project Schools in Lakhimpur district.

Jagriti Sanmilita Unnayan Kendra: This NGO is engaged in the awareness generation activities through a number of programmes which include demonstration, street plays, workshops and seminars.

Kachajuli Physically Handicapped (Deaf & Dumb) School & Training Centre: It provides vocational training in different trade and crafts to make children self-reliant. It also conducts awareness generating programmes to make people aware about the importance of child rights.

Activities and Programmes on Child Health

Health check-up camps: All the four selected NGOs are involved in organising free health check-up camps for the children. They also distribute food, cloths, medicine etc. among children for free.

Awareness Generation: The organisations are also engaged in the awareness generation programmes among people through workshops, street plays etc. (on various issues like the ill effects of Drugs & Alcohol, sanitation etc.) both in rural and urban areas including schools and colleges.

Health education and health promotion: The NGOs also conducts health education and health promotion programme for children living particularly in rural areas and also conducts health related surveys. The health education service is provided to children through counselling, demonstrations etc.

Activities and Programmes on Disabilities

Khorapathar Sanmilita Yuvak Samaj: The organisation collects and disseminates information about the safeguards created by the Disability Act passed by the Indian parliament. It also conducts workshops on disability issues and has also distributed clothes among disabled children living particularly in rural areas.

Dikrong Valley Environment and Rural Development Society: It takes initiatives to assist the needy disabled persons including children in procuring durable, sophisticated and scientifically manufactured modern standard aids and appliances.

Jagriti Sanmilita Unnayan Kendra: This NGO provides shelter, food, cloth, health facilities and education to children who are in need of care and protection (CNCP).

Kachajuli Physically Handicapped (Deaf & Dumb) School & Training Centre: It organises vocational and skill

development training programmes for the children with disabilities.

Activities on Child Trafficking and Rehabilitation

Presently Dikrong Valley Environment and Rural Development Society is working in the area of trafficking and rehabilitation. It works to rescue victims of trafficking from the places of their exploitation and to place them in safe custody by providing rehabilitation services. Currently the organisation is running a project called "Ujjala Home" where the traffic victims are kept under safe custody.

Recreational Activities

Kachajuli Physically Handicapped (Deaf & Dumb) School & Training Centre is providing recreational facilities to students staying in its hostels. The students are encouraged to take part in sports competition and are also taken out for educational tours.

Counselling and other Assistance

The Jagriti Sanmilita Unnayan Kendra and Kachajuli Physically Handicapped (Deaf & Dumb) School & Training Centre are providing counselling to the children and youths. Jagriti NGO is also providing counselling to the families or parents whose children are addicted to drugs & alcohol. Again, from time to time Khorapathar Sanmilita Yuvak Samaj and Dikrong Valley Environment and Rural Development Society also organises family counselling programmes.

X. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THE NGOS

After studying the four NGOs the investigator found that the major problem facing by the NGOs is finance. There is irregularity in the release of funds by the government as a result of which NGOs have to work in an atmosphere of uncertainty about the continuation of their projects.

Apart from this, the NGOs also face some other problems which are mentioned below:

➤ There is the problem of committed workers who perform their duties well.

Some organisations also face the problem of staff management as these organisations cannot afford to pay high salaries.

As a result, some workers do not want to go for field work and some teachers also do not want to come regularly to their work.

➤ Illiteracy among people is also a major problem. Due to illiteracy people do not understand the value of an ideal childhood.

➤ In some areas, NGOs do not get full support from all the people in their work place. Some people do not want to come out from their homes and take part in the programmes initiated by the NGOs. Besides, due to the prevalence of illiteracy among some sections of people NGOs find it difficult to motivate people to come out and participate in their programmes.

➤ Due to lack of effective transport facilities access to some remote areas is also a major problem for the NGOs.

XI. FIELD VISIT TO SELECTED VILLAGES

For the present study two villages (Pani Gaon and Bishnupur) are selected from the North Lakhimpur Sub-Division. From these two selected villages the investigator selected 166 households. For collection of necessary data, the investigator used the simple random method of data collection.

- **Pani Gaon Village**

Pani Gaon is a medium size village located in North Lakhimpur Circle of Lakhimpur district of Assam with total 280 families residing as per the census 2011.

- **Bishnupur Village**

Bishnupur is a medium size village located in Naoboicha Circle of Lakhimpur district of Assam with total 220 families residing as per the census 2011.

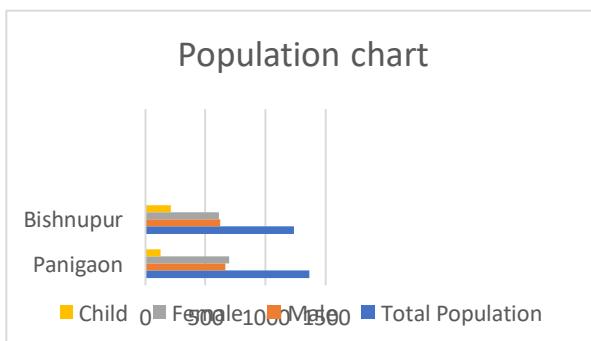


Fig. 1: Population Chart of Panigaon and Bishnupur

(Source: <https://www.census2011.co.in>)

The household schedules prepared for the study contain a number of open-ended questions which covers diverse aspects of the present research problem. During data collection the respondents were given enough opportunity to express their views without any interference by the investigator.

➤ **Responses received from the Respondents to various Questions during Data Collection:**

To understand the role of NGOs the investigator interviewed 166 respondents. The results and findings of the study are as shown below:

Question: Have you ever heard about child rights?

Table: 1 (Awareness about Child Rights)

| Yes | % | No | % |
|-----|----------------|----|-------|
| 122 | 73.5% (approx) | 44 | 26.5% |

The above table shows the positive and negative responses.

Question: What according to you is an ideal childhood?

Table: 2 (Idea about ideal childhood)

| Yes | % | No Response | % |
|-----|----------------|-------------|-------|
| 64 | 38.6% (approx) | 102 | 61.4% |

The above table shows the opinion of the respondents about an ideal childhood and the overall response received to this question was poor.

Question: Do you think child rights are important?

Majority of the respondents responded positively whereas some of the respondents did not answer this question.

Question: Do you think that all children are enjoying equal rights in our society?

Majority of the respondents said that most of the children in our society are deprived of equal rights and

opportunities. According to some respondents, the advanced sections of the society are enjoying all the rights and privileges. Thus, poor and economically backward children are deprived of their basic rights and opportunities as well as of fundamental freedoms.

Question: What role should parents play to provide a happy childhood to their children?

The overall response to this question was very poor. Some are of the opinion that parents should try to provide a good family environment to their children by providing equal educational opportunities as well as equal rights to their wards either boy or a girl child.

Question: Have you ever heard of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)?

Table: 3 (Knowledge about NGOs)

| Yes | % | No | % |
|-----|-------|----|----------------|
| 134 | 80.7% | 32 | 19.3% (approx) |

The data of this table reveals the respondents' knowledge about NGOs.

Question: Is there any Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) working for the protection and promotion of child rights in your locality? If yes, please describe their role in the field of child rights?

Table: 4 (Awareness about working of NGOs)

| Yes | % | No | % | No Response | % |
|-----|----------------|----|-------|-------------|-------|
| 96 | 57.9% (approx) | 19 | 11.4% | 51 | 30.7% |

The data of this table shows respondents' awareness about working of NGOs.

Some respondents opined that the NGOs which have visited their village organized awareness creation programmes on the importance of child rights,

free health check-up camps for children and skill development programmes etc. and have also distributed books, cloths, food among children.

Question: Do you think that the role being performed by the NGOs of your District is sufficient to protect child rights?

According to a small section, the role playing by the NGOs of the district is sufficient. But majority of them responded that they cannot determine the role of NGOs located in different parts of the district. Again, some other respondents said that they have no idea about NGO and child rights.

Question: Have you received any assistance, financial or otherwise from the local NGOs?

A small segment of the respondents said that free medical check-up service is the only assistance that they have received so far from NGOs.

Question: Are you satisfied with the working of these organisations?

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Table: 5 (Satisfaction on the working of NGOs)

| Yes | % | No | % | No Response | % |
|-----|--------------|----|--------|-------------|----------------|
| 68 | 41% (approx) | 21 | 12.6 % | 77 | 46.4% (approx) |

The above table shows the respondents' satisfaction on the working of NGOs.

Question: What according to you are the main causes for the violation of child rights in our society?

Some respondents said that poor economic condition of family, child labour, child marriage, lack of awareness, illiteracy, poor implementation of laws, policies and programmes etc. are the main causes for the violation of child rights in our society.

Question: Are you aware of any laws and Acts related to child rights?

Table: 6 (Awareness about laws and Acts)

| Yes | % | N o | % | No Response | % |
|-----|-----------------|--------|--------|-------------|----------------|
| 74 | 44.6% (approx) | 54 | 32.5 % | 38 | 22.9% (approx) |

The data presented in the above table shows the respondents' awareness of laws and Acts.

Question: Do you think that the existing laws and Acts are enough to solve the problem of child rights violation?

Table: 7 (Views on the existing laws and Acts)

| Yes | % | No | % | No Response | % |
|-----|--------------|----|----|-------------|-----|
| 53 | 32% (approx) | 15 | 9% | 98 | 59% |

The above table shows the respondents' views on the existing laws and Acts

Question. In your opinion what steps should be undertaken by the NGOs for the protection of child rights?

Respondents are of the opinion that the NGOs will have to play a more active role for the protection of child rights. Programmes should be initiated at the village level more frequently to raise awareness among people and particularly among children who are still unaware of their rights.

XII. FIELD VISIT TO NORTH LAKHIMPUR GIRLS' HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL

To study the ground reality the investigator also visited North Lakhimpur Girls' Higher Secondary School where he interviewed 40 students, selected randomly at a regular interval of five students from the class register book. The students were divided into two age groups- Group A (11-12 age) and Group B (13-14 age) each group consisting of 20 studentsThe diverse responses of the respondents are tabled below:

GROUP: A (11-12 Age Group)

Question: Have you ever heard about child rights?

Table: 8 (Awareness about child rights)

| Yes | % | No | % |
|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 9 | 45% | 11 | 55% |

The above table shows the awareness of respondents about child rights.

Question: Can you name two rights that children have?

Table: 9 (Knowledge about child rights)

| Number of respondents who answered this question | % | Number of respondents who did not answer this question | % |
|--|-----|--|-----|
| 7 | 35% | 13 | 65% |

The above table clearly reflects the knowledge of students about child rights.

Question: Would you like to learn about child rights?

In response to this question all the respondents (100%) answered positively. They said that they have interest in learning more about child rights.

Question: Have you ever heard of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)?

Table: 10 (Knowledge about NGOs)

| Yes | % | No | % |
|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 12 | 60% | 8 | 40% |

The above table shows the Knowledge respondents about NGOs.

Question: Has any NGO ever visited your school?

Table: 12 (Awareness about NGOs visit to school)

| Yes | % | No | % | No Response | % |
|-----|------|----|-----|-------------|------|
| 8 | 40 % | 3 | 15% | 9 | 45 % |

The above table reflects that 40% responded positively,

5% responded negatively whereas 45% did not respond to this question.

GROUP: B (13-14 Age Group)

Question: Have you ever heard about child rights?

Table: 12 (Awareness about child rights)

| Yes | % | No | % |
|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 18 | 90% | 2 | 10% |

The above table shows respondents' awareness about child rights

Question: Can you name two rights that children have?

Table: 13 (Knowledge about child rights)

| Number of respondents who answered this question | % | Number of respondents who did not answer this question | % |
|--|------|--|-----|
| 11 | 55 % | 9 | 45% |

The data in the above table shows knowledge of respondents about child rights.

Question: Would you like to learn about child rights?

In response to this question all the respondents answered positively.

Question: Have you ever heard of Non-Governmental Organizations?



Table: 14 (Knowledge about NGOs)

| Yes | % | No | % |
|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 14 | 70% | 6 | 30% |

The above table shows the respondents' Knowledge about NGOs.

Question: Has any NGO ever visited your school?

Table: 15 (Awareness about NGOs visit to school)

| Yes | % | No | % | No response | % |
|-----|-----|----|-----|-------------|-----|
| 10 | 50% | 3 | 15% | 7 | 35% |

The above table shows the respondents' awareness about NGOs visit to school.

Question: Are you aware of any laws and Acts related to child rights?

Table: 16(Awareness about laws and Acts)

| Yes | % | No | % |
|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 7 | 35% | 13 | 65% |

The table above shows the respondents' awareness about laws and Acts related to child rights.

XIII. FIELD VISIT TO DOOLAHAT BAZAR AREA

In order to have an understanding on the role of NGOs in the North Lakhimpur Sub-Division of Lakhimpur district the investigator also visited Doolahat bazaar area. The investigator prepared a schedule to collect necessary data. In this process the investigator used the convenient sampling method of data collection. For the present study the investigator collected information from 15 respondents. The information received from the respondents is presented below:

Question: Have you ever heard about child rights?

Table: 17 (Awareness about child rights)

| Yes | % | No | % |
|-----|----------------|----|-------|
| 7 | 46.7% (approx) | 8 | 53.3% |

The above table shows the respondents' awareness about child rights.

Question: Are you aware of any laws and Acts related to child rights?

Table: 18 (Awareness about laws and Acts)

| Yes | % | No | % |
|-----|----------------|----|-------|
| 4 | 26.7% (approx) | 11 | 73.3% |

The data in the above table reflects the respondents' awareness about laws and Acts.

Question: Do you think that all children are enjoying equal rights in our society?

Table: 19 (Opinion regarding equal rights)

| No | % | No Response | % |
|----|-------|-------------|----------------|
| 5 | 33.3% | 10 | 66.7% (approx) |

The data under this table shows the respondents' opinion regarding equal rights.

Question: Have you ever heard of NGOs?

Table: 20 (Knowledge about NGOs)

| Yes | % | No | % |
|-----|-------|----|----------------|
| 11 | 73.3% | 4 | 26.7% (approx) |

The above table shows the respondents' knowledge about NGOs.

Question: Has any NGO ever worked in your locality for the protection of child rights? If yes, what activities did they undertake during their visit?

Table: 21 (Awareness about working of NGOs)

| Yes | % | No | % | No response | % |
|-----|-----|----|------------------|-------------|-------|
| 6 | 40% | 1 | 6.7% (approx) | 8 | 53.3% |

The above table, reflects the respondents' awareness about working of NGOs.

The respondents who answered positively said that one or two NGOs have visited their area and organised various programmes like street plays, awareness generation programmes etc. on issues like child labour, child trafficking etc.

Question: Have you received any assistance, financial or otherwise from any NGOs?

In response to this question all the respondents answered negatively. According to them, till today they have not received any direct help or financial assistance from any NGO.

Question: Are you satisfied with the working of these organisations?

Table: 22 (Satisfaction on the working of NGOs)

| Yes | % | No | % | No Response | % |
|-----|-------------------|----|-------|-------------|-----|
| 4 | 26.7% (approx) | 2 | 13.3% | 9 | 60% |

The above table shows the satisfaction of respondents on the working of NGOs.

Data presented in the above tables reveals that in the Doolahat bazaar area some sections of people still have no idea about child rights.

A section of the studied population has not heard the term NGO till today. Only a small section of the population is aware of laws and Acts related to child rights. Again, only a small segment of the population is satisfied with the working of NGOs.

XIV. CONCLUSION

The problem of child rights violation is a worldwide and multidimensional problem with serious socio-economic and psychological ramifications. Despite the concerted efforts of the governments and other agencies at the national and international level to protect children's rights the problem of child rights violation still exists in the present-day world.

In the North Lakhimpur Sub-Division of Lakhimpur district several NGOs have been playing a crucial role in child rights protection. After studying the working of selected NGOs and analysing the data it is found that despite their limitations the NGOs have been playing an important role for the protection and promotion of child rights. The findings of the study are as follows:

➤ All the four studied NGOs have different ongoing projects like creche centres, Ujjala Home, Specialised Adoption Agency etc. Many vulnerable children and their families are getting benefits from these projects. However, the data collected by the investigator through field survey reveals that regarding awareness generation and providing service to people in rural areas the role of NGOs is not very satisfactory.

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The data of the study shows that in rural areas a large section of people still does not have any idea about child rights and NGOs. The main cause behind it is illiteracy among people. Unless and until these sections of people are educated, they will not understand the value of child rights.

➤ In rural areas a section of people is unaware of the laws, policies and programmes enacted and adopted by the government for the protection of child rights.

➤ In rural areas NGOs are engaged in activities like organising awareness camps, health camps, distribution of books, clothes among children etc. During data collection the investigator did not find any other ongoing projects or programmes for the welfare of children in the studied villages.

➤ In rural areas people are not fully satisfied with the working of NGOs. Only a small segment of the studied population has expressed their satisfaction on the working of these organisations. The interesting fact is that a large section of the studied population has no idea about the working of NGOs.

➤ NGOs have been working for the creation of awareness among school going children. However, during investigation it is found that all the school going children are also not aware of the rights and privileges that they are entitled to. NGOs work in this regard seems to be insufficient.

➤ NGOs studied have been running only a few projects for the protection and development of children's rights. These projects are not enough to protect all categories of children's rights.

➤ NGOs have also been facing a number of problems in their endeavour towards protection of child rights. The most important one is the problem of finance. The study data reveals that the NGOs are operating with limited resources in the field of child rights. The funds released by the government are not regular due to which NGOs have been facing problems in the management of their organisations as well as running their projects and programmes.

➤ Information collected from the Child Welfare Committee of Lakhimpur district and other studies have made it clear that child marriage, child labour, child trafficking etc. are still going on in Lakhimpur district which violates child rights.

XV. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the study, the following suggestions can be forwarded to protect and promote children's rights and to remove the lacunas involved in the NGOs efforts towards protection of child rights:

➤ Proper field study and survey in the area of child rights by the NGOs is very important to know about the problems being faced by children in the society. NGOs should try to conduct such study and survey before implementing any policy and programme.

➤ Parents should be given importance by the NGOs particularly from the poor socio-economic background. Special programmes of imparting education to the illiterate parents may also be undertaken by the NGOs.

➤ At the village level sub-branches can be opened by the NGOs by selecting members from across different sections of people of the village concerned. Powers should be transferred

to such groups to look after the implementation process of the schemes, policies and programmes. By doing so, NGOs can gather proper information about the problems of people residing in rural areas.

➤ Child development should always be given priority by the NGOs in their effort towards development of the society as a whole. In rural areas NGOs should try to identify parents those who are illiterate and try to provide them better knowledge about child rights. Because, due to ignorance some people do not understand the importance of rights in the life of a child.

➤ While organising awareness camps NGOs should try to give special importance to the illiterate parents mostly from poor economic background. NGOs should also try to increase their manpower in order to ensure effective implementation of their policies and programmes.

➤ Selection of areas for organising awareness camps should be done with a prior assessment of that particular area. By doing so, NGOs will be able to know whether child rights violation is going on or not in that particular area.

➤ NGOs should organise awareness programmes at the school level more frequently to make the children understand the value of rights in their lives.

In doing so NGOs can also take help from the teachers and the experts in the area of child rights. Again, special importance should be given to the students of poor economic background so as to minimize the dropout rate of such students.

➤ Government should also support the efforts of the NGOs by releasing the funds regularly, so that these organisations can run their projects and programmes effectively.

➤ Timely and proper monitoring of the policies and programmes by the government authorities concerned is also very important. There should be inspection of the NGOs on regular basis so that these organisations function properly.

➤ Local media should play an active role to bring into focus the cases of child rights violation and always have the willingness to provide all the necessary assistance to the NGOs in their effort towards protection of child rights.

➤ The study data reveals that the selected NGOs for the present study are running only a few projects and programmes for the protection and development of children's rights. These NGOs should try to work in every aspect of child rights protection. These organisations should also try to procure more and more projects on child rights. Then only it will be possible for the NGOs to protect all categories of children's rights in the true sense of the term.

Therefore, in order to achieve success in their effort NGOs will have to play a more active role in creating awareness among common people particularly the parents as well as among children regarding the need and importance of child rights. For doing so, NGOs will have to try first to educate the uneducated people of the society to make them understand the need and necessity of rights in the life of a child.



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