



Do NGOs Play towards Economic Development for the marginalized section? A Critical Analysis of NGOs in Majuli

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Abstract

NGOs have been playing a substantial role in the empowerment of the poor and social mobilization for eradicating poverty. It is realized that, poverty can be effectively eradicated only when the poor section starts contributing to the growth process through their active participation. NGOs can be considered as facilitator at grassroots level because of their touch with community. So, they can play a critical role in the group formation and development at grassroots level. The quality of the groups can be influenced by the capacity of the facilitator and NGOs can work as the facilitators and also help in social mobilization provide training to local people and capacities building of facilitators are being used by PRA technique. PRA is a family approach and a method of enabling local people to analyze their living conditions, to share the outcomes and to plan their activities. It involves handing over the stick from outsider to insider in methods and actions. The outsider's role is catalytic as a facilitator and convener of processes within a community that is prepared to alter its own situation. The NGOs which practice PRA method for planning, execution and implementation of their development projects are likely to be more people-centered for their bottom up approach to development. The PRA approach would improve transparency and accountability of the NGOs leading to their enhanced credibility. With this respect, it is seen that now a day, in India as well as North Eastern India, various governmental organizations as well as NGOs come forward and playing active and important role in rural development of a particular region or state and hence to bring the self-reliance of the poor and distressed people. In Majuli- the largest riverine island in the world, the various government and non-government organizations are coming forward for the rural development and socio-economic development of the Island which are economically backward.

Keywords: *Economic development, NGOs, PRA-Technique, Rural development, grassroots.*

Introduction: Development implies change, and this is one sense in which the term development is often used to describe the process of economic and social transformation within regions, countries. The process often follows a well-ordered sequence and exhibits common characteristics across regions and countries. Broadly speaking, economic development embraces the major economic and social objectives and values that societies strive for. According to Goulet (1971), the basic components in the wider meaning of development are life sustenance, self-esteem and freedom. Life sustenance is concerned with the provision of basic needs such as housing, clothing, food and education. Self-esteem is concerned with the feeling of self-respect and independence. No region or country can be considered as developed if it is exploited by others and does not have the power and influence to conduct relations on equal terms. Freedom refers to freedom from the three evils of 'want, ignorance and squalor' so that people are more able to determine their own destiny.

Goulet's three basic components of development are also related to Amartya Sen's version of development (Sen, 1983; Sen, 1984), defined in terms of the expansion of entitlements and capabilities. However, it is freedom that Sen views as the primary objective of development, as well as the principal means of achieving development. Removal of various types of un freedom's such as famine undernourishment, poor health and lack of basic needs; lack of political liberty and basic civil rights; and economic insecurity will help, according to Sen, achieving economic development.

Dudly Seers (1979), in his essay 'The Meaning of Development' observed that economic development broadly refers to three objectives which are universally accepted as goals of achieving economic development. These are, (i) Eradication of hunger which implicitly means enough food for

everybody, (ii) The second objectives is to provide job. Job does not necessarily mean paid employment. It can include studying, working on a family farm or keeping house. (iii) The direct link between per capita income and the number of people living in poverty is income distribution. Equality is considered as an objective of economic development. Hence the questions ask about a country's or region's developments are (a) What has been happening to poverty? (b) What has been happening to unemployment? and (c) What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have become less severe, then according to Seers (1979), beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the region or country considered.

Role of NGOs in Economic Development and NGOs in Majuli: During the last decade non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been increasingly tapped to implement development programs. In recent years, growing amounts of development resources have been channeled to and through NGOs in all sectors. And in turn, NGOs, working to alleviate poverty, improve social welfare, and develop civil society, have become more dependent on international donors, leading to an explosive growth in local NGOs in many countries. NGOs are not merely the providers of social services to the needy person but are actively involved in accelerating the process of development.

The field of development is so vast that efforts of Government alone are not going to be adequate. To achieve the goal, it calls for multidimensional and multilevel approach. In this context NGOs can play a vital role. NGOs can bridge the gap between the state organization and general people. The voluntary sector may be better placed to articulate the needs of the poor people, remote areas, to encourage the changes in attitudes and practices necessary to curtail discrimination, to identify and redress threats to the environment, and to nurture the productive capacity of the most vulnerable groups such as the disabled or the landless populations.

NGOs are playing an important part in the preparation, design and application of development strategies. Even though the influence and importance of NGOs vary according to the national context in which they operate, their growing presence and increase in number over recent years are undeniable, as is their active role in the search for developmental strategies. NGOs can bridge the gap between the government and the community. Community-based organizations are essential in organizing poor people, taking collective action, fighting for their rights, and representing the interests of their members in dialogue with NGOs and government. NGOs are also better at facilitating the supply of inputs into the management process, mediating between people and the wider political party, networking, and information-dissemination and policy reform. NGOs often are successful intermediaries between actors in the development arena, building bridges between people and communities on one side, and governments, development institutions, and donors and development agencies on the other. In an advocacy role, NGOs frequently represent issues and views important in the dynamics of the development process.

The major contribution of an NGO to development is to organize, mobilize and utilize resources within and outside the community for its development. The basic role is as an organizer. NGOs are one of the alternative development organizations and one of the inputs among technical, financial and other resources. The merits of NGOs are emerging from their limited scale of operation. The primary role of NGO is at local level as mobilize of people and their resources for an indigenous self-sustainable development.

In recent years NGOs play an important role in India as a major collective actor in development activities at urban and rural area. The importance of the NGOs is increasingly being recognized as highly relevant to the problem of rural and urban poor. NGOs are drawing attention as alternative to government institutions in addressing the needs of the vast population at the grass-root level because of the inability of the governmental development agencies to reach all classes of people. The development of NGO sector is dynamic and diverse in nature and operates with tremendous variation in size, objective and circumstances over a variety of new issues and interests which displays a heterogeneous and incoherent character of these organizations.

From the very beginning, the importance of NGOs in Majuli is felt to be unlimited. Majuli is cut off from the outer world for the undeveloped communication system the island has. The contribution of different social organizations in the development of Majuli is praise worthy under the condition. Once various Namghar, Temples of villages and religious institutions played the vital role of NGO's or social organization in Majuli. To save the physical and geographical structure of Majuli i.e., to

cease the erosion of Majuli or to avoid flood devastation and to assist the natural calamity affected people, various social organizations and non-government organizations were setup in Majuli. Moreover many organizations are working in Majuli involving themselves with various activities to maintain the ecological balance, to preserve the near-extinct species of birds and animals, to create health awareness or to attract tourists from foreign countries.

Among such institutions, the most prominent are Majuli Island Protection and Development Council, Assam Science Society (Majuli Branch) AVARD-NE, All Assam Students Union, T.M.P.K., NEADS, REDS etc. Beside these, various other religious organizations of different villages such as temples and Namghars can be mentioned here which play important role in shaping the society.

Before talking about the other NGOs, the name of ANARD-NE's should be mentioned first. This was set up in 1996 by social activist Sanjay Ghosh who hailed from Rajasthan and established this non-government organization AVARD-NE (Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural development, North-East). For the active role of Sanjay Ghosh, this organization became the most popular organization to the rank and file of Majuli. To protect Majuli, this organization worked for ceasing and controlling river erosion and also for the upliftment of the people of the villages.

For the upliftment of the remote areas, this organization took steps to create awareness among the people for their own development. This organization showed the path of earning independently to the educated unemployed youths of the island apart from protecting Majuli from erosion by Brahmaputra. Unfortunately educated and eminent socialist Sanjay Gosh died on 4th July in 1997. With his death, the momentum generated by the organization for social revolution lost its direction and intensity as well.

Although there are 34 registered NGOs under Farm and Societies Registration Act 1860, all NGO's are not working actively due to lack of skilled persons, shortage of fund etc. At present there are only few NGOs which are working for socio-economic development of Majuli. These are IMPACT-N.E., REDS, Kalabhumi Majuli, River People, Shradha N.G.O., Sadbhavana etc.

The NGOs can play very crucial role in the socio-economic development of Majuli. They can bridge the gaps arising out of the islands geographical isolation, its physical and psychological distance from the main land. The NGOs can reach the people of Majuli in a more concerted and dedicated way than the government agencies which are mostly stationed outside Majuli. The geographical isolation of Majuli may also be a source of distraction for the NGOs from its cherished dreams. The NGOs may start practicing styles of functioning which are not people friendly and people oriented outside the glare of monitoring agencies. Therefore, a critical evaluation of NGOs organizational and functional activities is as important as a proper assessment of its role in the socio-economic development of Majuli.

The NGOs are taking steps to create awareness among the people of Majuli for their own development. The organizations show the path of earning independently to the educated unemployed youths of the island apart from protecting Majuli from erosion by the mighty river Brahmaputra.

The main occupation of the people of Majuli is agriculture and its allied activities. The occupation not only provides most of the food requirements but also gives employment to a large number of people. It is also a very suitable site for fishing and dairy farming. Despite it is industrially poor and backward because of geographical isolation, lack of materials and power, weak transportation facilities, yet Majuli is famous for its cottage and small scale industries.

Purpose of the Study: The main purpose of the study is to focus the role of NGOs in Rural socio-economic development for the poor section of people of Majuli Island, Assam through implementing different project by the NGOs in Majuli. The main objectives of the study are:

- i. To assess the Participatory Approaches adopted by NGOs and to find out problems, challenges encountered in employing PRA methodology in rural development works by NGOs.
- ii. To examine the income generation from NGO project.
- iii. To study and examine the role of NGOs in the field of Culture, Education and Health.

Significance of the Study: Non-government Organizations (NGOs) have a significant role in the upliftment of the socio-economic development of people in developed as well as developing countries. In present day world people's participations is considered as the most significant fuel for achieving socio-economic development. In this context NGOs in particular have become very

important in recent years, especially in the advocacy of such emerging policy concerns as the environment, women's development, ethnic protection, mobilization of people for participation in rural development project etc. NGOs are therefore called the engines of growth and development.

NGOs are playing an important part in the preparation, design and application of development strategies and their nature of work is multidimensional and multilevel approach. The findings of the study will be helpful to the NGOs to make them more effective towards socio-economic empowerment of the community. NGOs frequently represent issues and views important in the dynamics of the development process and they can mobilize the local resources. NGOs have comparative advantages in implementing projects because they are closer to the beneficiaries and work with greater flexibility, have greater motivation and work more cost effectively. They can promote participatory development by adopting PRA technique and creating Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for generating employment as well as income for the poor people. NGOs can even use the findings of the study for the problems related to the local people. In such ways, identification of ground level problems and the proper ways of resource utilization by the NGOs hold great benefit for the society as well. The picture that prevails in such areas raise many research questions such as, "Do the NGOs follow PRA techniques to run the NGO?", "what are their achievements in generating income and employment for the poor?"; "Do they succeed in enhancing the health and education awareness of people?" These are the vital areas where NGOs have crucial role to play in a strategically important and geographically isolated place like Majuli. Although Majuli shows high literacy rate and people of Majuli have expertise in different fields, the economy of the island is backward with subdued agriculture, industry, trade and commerce. These leave ample scopes for NGOs to work for the general transformation of the society of Majuli from a backward to a modern and vibrating one. The present study, therefore, identifies the role of NGOs in Majuli as a problem area for conducting an in depth study for facts finding.

Review of Literature: The role of NGOs play in field of rural development has been critically analyzed in large number of studies. These voluntary agencies, the NGOs with flexible organizational models (Heredia, 1988) and methods, are credited with using innovation in experimentation and providing entry points for radical works (Faust, 1996). NGOs are expected to perform better than governments in promoting participation and converting aid money into development (Mathur, 1997). In the context of the role of NGOs in Joint Forest Management, GOWB (1997) pointed out that Forest Department in West Bengal envisaged that the presence of a well-meaning NGO could be a helpful factor in cases where the 'villagers are poor and ignorant', and the FD, on the other hand, are subject to bureaucratic tradition. In Jharkand', also it was perceived that NGOs could help facilitate a partnership between Village Forest Management and Protection Committee and the FD and provide feedback, training and capacity building to help promote JFM in the state (GOB, 1994). Examining the role of NGOs play in development, Muchena (2004) pointed out that in most cases, NGOs compliment government efforts and stand ready to give critical solidarity to governments in many countries. In Zimbabwe, the NGO sector is a major contributor to economic development, employment and the fiscus.

Although the Government of India recognizes though lately, the need for empowerment of women and has taken several effective steps in this direction, the lot of Indian women especially in rural areas continues to remain marginalized. The Panchyat Raj Institutions too have not been able to involve women in activities related to sustainable development. For this purpose, NGO sector alone is best suited as an agency of change. By and large, the track records of well-organized and established NGOs speak for their better efficiency than the government machinery in motivating target groups, easier rapport with closer proximity to people, devotion to assigned goals and more cost effective in their operations. There are many NGOs already operating in the field of gender related economic development (Ahmed, 2005).

Lastly, seeking to assess the state of the art of PRA among the NGOs, Narayanasamy et.al (2005) discussed the problems and challenges encountered by the NGOs in employing PRA methods in rural development works.

Methodology of the Study: The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The geographical area of the study is the entire sub-division of Majuli Island of the Jorhat district of Assam.

Sample and Data of the Study: There are 34 registered NGOs in Majuli, but only few NGOs are found to be working at the time of survey, rests are there only on papers. Out of these active NGOs, a sample of 3 (three) NGOs, which have ongoing economic, educational and health projects in hand, are selected purposively for the study. The selected NGOs have 5(five) projects on Majuli. Out of these 3 (three) are economic projects able to generate income and employment and in the remaining 2 (two), 1 (one) is a health project and the other is a cultural education project. These are also identified for detailed study. Necessary information pertaining to the NGOs to the issues concerning the credibility of the selected NGOs are collected through group discussion with NGO officials, their publications, notes, office records etc and also from government offices.

For assessing income generation, a group of 30 (thirty) beneficiaries from each of 3 (three) selected economic projects are selected at random. Another group of 30 beneficiaries from each of the two health and cultural education projects are also selected at random for examining educational and health awareness and the status of people. In total, the sample of such beneficiaries comprises of 150 beneficiaries, both males and females. Data pertaining to the income of the beneficiary, their family income, education, employment status etc are collected from the beneficiaries with the help of a structured schedule through interview method. The relevant information are collected for two different points of time, the past and the present (i.e., at the time of survey) with a gap of 3-4 years in between to assess income generation from NGO projects.

Data Analysis: Both the qualitative and the quantitative data and information, thus collected, are arranged in systematic manner by applying suitable techniques and statistical tables and tools. Broadly, the data and information generated through field survey, group discussion, interview etc is arranged to meet the objectives set for the study. Data and information reflecting on the participatory approaches adopted by the selected NGOs are arranged. The principles of PRA method provided guideline for this purpose to assess the problems, challenges encountered in employing PRA methodology in rural development works by the NGOs. The beneficiary respondents were asked to evaluate the selected NGOs' activities on a scale of 1-5 points on selected important attributes that are based on the principles of PRA method. The respective NGO scored higher values in 1-5 scale if beneficiary expressed his/her view that the concerned NGO follows PRA attribute more effectively. On the other hand, low score indicates that the NGO follows PRA principle less effectively. The selected attributes are:-

1. **Facilitation:** NGO people help local people to do all or most of the investigation, analyze, presentation and planning of their problem.
2. **Attitude:** NGO professional follow (i) **local norms** (try to be a part of local community); (ii) **listen** to local people (rather than lecturing); (iii) maintain **visiting time** and visit regularly project areas; (iv) **respect local** people's knowledge, skill, and expertise.
3. **Behavior of the professionals and culture of sharing:** NGO professional try to (i) **learn problems** from local people; (ii) **embrace errors**; (iii) continuously **share information** with local people.
4. **Reversal of Learning:** NGO professionals try to (i) learn **rural problems** from rural people; (ii) enable people to participate at **every stage** of development.
5. **Learning Rapidly and Progressively:** NGO professionals employ flexible and adoptable learning process depending upon local conditions.
6. **Off-setting Biases:** NGO professionals (i) **listen to local people**, (ii) **don't impose** anything on them, (iii) helps most **needy** people.
7. **Optimizing Trade-off:** NGO professionals collect relevant information only.
8. **Triangulation:** NGO professionals collect information from different groups of people (for cross checking).
9. **On the Spot Analysis:** NGO professional help local people to analyze data on the spot (and not in their office).
10. **Information Sharing:** NGO professional share information with all people.
11. **Resource mapping:** A group process in which **picture of local resources** such as income and occupation of the population, rainfall and temperature, agricultural activities, education profile, health profile, BPL families, small scale and cottage industries, migration and demography etc. **is drawn in cooperation with the local men and women.**

Since the entire exercise of evaluating the PRA principles adopted by the NGOs are based on the perception of the beneficiary respondents about that, the data collected from them on their general level of awareness (in a scale of 1-5) are also arranged in this section to judge the reliability of their observation on the NGOs. Here also higher score indicates higher awareness and lower score indicates lower awareness level of the respondent.

One of the basis minimum norms that NGOs should practice and follow is that the NGOs should have vision, aims, objectives and finally achievements to speak of good governance and credibility. If NGOs have no achievements to their credit, they will lose much of their credibility in the society. This issue is examined by assessing the achievements of the NGOs in terms of income generations and employment generations for the beneficiaries from NGO projects. The level of awareness generation of people from NGO projects on Health and Education is also judged with the help of data collected from field survey covering these aspects. The concept of rural development, now days, lies much importance on people's participation. The review of literature section of this study throws light on how NGOs can act as incubators or laboratories of democracy and development. There is need for greater involvement of people in the process of widespread growth and qualitative rural development process. The voluntary organizations can help the rural people to improve their socio-economic conditions on the basis of self help and thus to make organized, collective community action for developmental change based on the decisions of the local people themselves. The PRA methodology ensures people's participation at every stage of development of initiatives undertaken by NGOs. For these reasons, it is necessary to examine the actual outreach of NGOs in terms of funds mobilized and utilized by them for the development of Majuli. It is equally important, for these reasons to examine whether the NGOs are guided by PRA principles to achieve their objectives for the rural development of Majuli and finally to evaluate their achievements in that direction in terms of income generation, employment generation and enhancement of people's awareness regarding health and education, the two most important social capital that play miracle role in rural development.

The present study is, therefore, designed in such a way as to cover all such aspects to assess the role of NGOs in rural development of Majuli.

Main Findings: Results and Discussion:

A. Participatory Approaches and Income Generations: The principles of PRA method provided guideline for this purpose to assess the problems, challenges encountered in employing PRA methodology in rural development works by the NGOs. The beneficiary respondents were asked to evaluate the style of functioning of the selected NGOs feature on a scale of 1-5 points on the basis of selected important attributes that the principles of PRA method. Since the entire exercise of evaluating the PRA principles adopted by the NGOs are based on the perception of the beneficiary respondents about that, the data collected from them on their general level of awareness (in a scale of 1-5) are also arranged to judge the reliability of their observation on the NGOs. The achievements of the NGOs are also examined by assessing the income generations for the beneficiaries from NGO projects. The levels of awareness generation of people from NGO projects on Health and Education, which are pre-requisites for rural development, are also judged with the help of data collected from field survey covering these aspects.

Ratings of NGOs on the basis of PRA Attribute: For these purposes, 5 ongoing projects of 3 selected NGOs are taken and samples of 30 beneficiaries from each project are drawn at random. Therefore, the total size of the sample of beneficiaries taken for empirical study is 150 comprising of both males and females. These beneficiaries are interviewed to know their ratings about the NGOs on selected PRA attributes. Eleven PRA practices are taken into consideration and each beneficiary was asked to evaluate the performance of his/her NGO on a 1-5 scale. Higher points given by a beneficiary on a particular attribute means that the concerned NGO follows that PRA practice more, lower points imply just the reverse. The average score obtained by each NGO from their beneficiaries on 11 attributes are shown in Table-1, Table -1 shows the average ratings of NGOs received from the respondent beneficiaries on questions such as "Do you think that the NGO people help you to do all or most of the investigation, analyze, presentation and planning of your problem (Facilitation)?" "Do you think that the NGO professional follow (i) **local norms** (try to be a part of local community); (ii) **listen** to you (rather than lecturing); (iii) maintain **visiting time** and visit regularly your project areas;

(iv) **respect your** knowledge, skill, expertise (Attitude)?” etc. The averages of the ratings received by the selected NGO from the beneficiaries of their projects are estimated.

Table-1
Average Ratings on NGO's Adherence to PRA Principles

PRA Practices	Average Score obtained by NGOs (1-5 Scale)					
	NGO-I		NGO-II		NGO-III	All
	Project-1	Project-2	Project-1	Project-2	Project-1	5 Projects
(a) Facilitation	4.03	4.23	3.70	3.70	4.13	3.95
(b) Attitude	4.3	4.45	4.17	4.36	4.07	4.27
(c) Behaviour & Culture of Sharing	4.32	4.47	3.97	4.06	4.22	4.20
(d) Reversal of Learning	3.88	3.90	3.68	3.61	3.68	3.75
(e) Learning Rapidly & Progressively	3.96	4.33	4.63	3.90	4.00	4.16
(f) Off-setting Biases	4.32	4.78	4.13	4.41	4.37	4.40
(g) Optimizing Trade-off	4.26	4.80	4.50	4.43	4.73	4.54
(h) Tri angulations	4.16	4.46	4.33	4.03	4.33	4.26
(i) Spot analysis	4.63	4.90	4.70	4.03	3.83	4.41
(j) Information sharing	3.96	4.00	3.86	3.96	3.90	3.93
(k) Resource mapping	3.11	3.59	3.50	3.38	2.14	3.14
Average Ratings	4.08	4.36	4.11	3.99	3.95	4.09

The selected projects under NGOs are as under:-

1. **Project-1 of NGO-I: HIV/AIDS Targeted Intervention Project.**
Project-2 of NGO-I: Shelter Project.
2. **Project-1 of NGO-II: Selling Outlet Project.**
Project-2 of NGO-II: Socio-Economic Development of Women Weavers in Majuli.
3. **Project-1 of NGO-III: Cultural Educational Project.**

The average ratings reveal that NGO-I received highest ratings on average from its Project-2 beneficiaries while NGO-III received lowest ratings on average from its Project-I beneficiaries. Project-I of NGO-I is a health project, namely, **HIV/AIDS Targeted Intervention Ptoject**. Project-II of NGO-I is an income generating economic project namely **Shelter Project**. Project –I of NGO-II is also an income-employment generating economic project viz., **Selling Outlets Project**. Project-II of NGO-II is also an income-employment generating economic project viz., **Socioeconomic Empowerment of Women Weavers of MajulI** (which is found just completed at the time of survey). Project-I of NGO-III is **Cultural Education Project**, the name indicates the nature of the project. The average ratings received by all NGOs for all projects is highest (4.54) in case of PRA attribute ‘Optimizing Trade-off’ indicating that the NGOs in average collect relevant information only from the beneficiaries. The second highest average score (4.41) is received for attribute ‘Spot Analysis’ implying that the NGO professionals help local people to analyze data on the spot (and not in their office).

Table-2
Attribute-wise Deficiency Score of NGOs

PRA Practices	Average Score Obtained by NGOs In (1-5) Scale	Average Deficiency From Complete Adherence	Deficiency Percentage
(a) Facilitation	3.95	1.05	21
(b) Attitude	4.27	0.73	14.6

(c) Behaviour & Culture of Sharing	4.20	0.80	16
(d) Reversal of Learning	3.75	1.25	25
(e) Learning Rapidly & Progressively	4.16	0.84	16.8
(f) Off-setting Biases	4.40	0.60	12
(g) Optimizing Trade-off	4.54	0.46	9.2
(h) Tri angulations	4.26	0.74	14.8
(i) Spot analysis	4.41	0.59	11.8
(j) Information sharing	3.93	1.07	21.4
(k) Resource mapping	3.14	1.86	37.2

Although all the NGOs have received high ratings from their beneficiaries implying their PRA style of functioning, there are areas also where they are found to be falling short of complete adherence to PRA practices. The PRA attribute-wise such deficiency percentages are shown in Table-2. Table-2 shows that the NGOs, in average, have received very poor ratings from beneficiaries in Resource Mapping. Their deficiency in this area in a scale of 1-5 is 37.2 percent followed by 25 percent in Reversal of Learning, 21.4 percent in Information Sharing and 21 percent in facilitation among the noticeable. On the other hand, the NGOs performance in the areas of Optimizing Trade-Off, Spot Analysis and Off-Setting Biases are remarkably good as the deficiency score of NGOs in these areas are quite low.

Table-3
Awareness level of Beneficiaries of all Projects

Name of NGO	Project	Score of Awareness level of Beneficiaries in (1-5) scale								
		Attends NGO meetings	Attends political meetings	Knowledge about national politics	Knowledge about sports	Knowledge about culture	Self-confidence	Collective effort for development	Aware about Problem of Majuli	Attitude towards NGOs
NGO-I	1. T I Project on HIV/AIDS	3.9	3.7	3.4	3.1	3.6	4.3	3.8	3.7	4.4
	SHELTER	4.6	4.2	4.5	4.0	4.4	4.9	4.4	4.5	4.6
NGO-II	2. Selling Outlets Project	4.1	3.4	3.6	3.1	4.4	4.7	4.1	3.9	4.3
	1. Socio-economic empowerment of women weaver's in Majuli	3.9	3.4	3.2	3.3	4.0	4.3	3.8	3.9	4.2
NGO-III	1. Kalabhumi Cultural Educational Project	4.0	3.2	3.3	3.9	4.1	4.3	3.7	3.6	4.3

How reliable is the observation of the respondents (beneficiaries) regarding the functioning of the NGOs? As direct assessment of this is not possible, an attempt is made here to ascertain the reliability of the views of the respondents by examining their awareness level. In Table-3, the awareness of the beneficiaries is measured in a scale of 1-5 in nine different areas of activities which are: beneficiary attends NGO meetings (higher values are assigned for high attendance rates), beneficiary attends political meetings (higher values are assigned for high attendance rates), beneficiary's knowledge about national politics (higher values are assigned for higher level of knowledge), beneficiary's knowledge about sports (higher values are assigned for higher level of knowledge), beneficiary's

knowledge about culture (higher values are assigned for higher level of knowledge), beneficiary's self-confidence (his/her confidence level is judged on the basis of his/her attitude towards questions asked to her/him in the areas of sports, national politics, culture etc, higher confidence observed is assigned higher values), beneficiary's participation in collective efforts for development (higher value for higher participation), beneficiary is found to be aware about the problems (flood, soil erosion, unemployment etc) of Majuli (higher values are assigned for higher awareness exhibited) and lastly, beneficiary's attitude towards NGOs (higher values are assigned if he/she is found to be able to critically evaluate the role of NGOs in economic development). The average score of the beneficiaries project-wise is shown in Table-3. It is found that the average score ranges from lowest 3.1 to highest 4.9 in the scale of 1-5. This indicates that the beneficiaries have more or less high level of awareness about their surroundings. This justifies analysis of NGOs performance on the basis of beneficiaries' views about that.

To throw more light on the reliability question the degree of association among awareness level of beneficiaries (AWARE), education of the beneficiaries (EDNB) and PRA ratings (PRAR) are examined by estimating the binary correlation coefficient values of the variables which are shown in Table- 4. It is found that the observed awareness level of the beneficiaries is highly positively and statistically significantly correlated ($r = 0.558$) with the education level of the beneficiaries. The correlation coefficient value of the variables 'awareness level of the beneficiaries (AWARE)' and 'PRA ratings (PRAR)' is also found to be very high, positive and statistically significant ($r = 0.637$). These together lend support to observations that (i) beneficiaries having higher level of education have higher awareness level and (ii) beneficiaries having higher awareness level have given higher ratings to the NGOs who have been found to be following PRA techniques. These further justify analysis of NGOs performance on the basis of beneficiaries' views on adherence of NGOs to PRA techniques.

Table-4
Correlation Matrix

		EDNB	AWARE	PRAR
EDNB	Pearson Correlation	1	.558(**)	.323(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
	N	150	150	150
AWARE	Pearson Correlation	.558(**)	1	.637(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
	N	150	150	150
PRAR	Pearson Correlation	.323(**)	.637(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
	N	150	150	150

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Income Generations from NGO Projects: It has already been emphasized that in a place like Majuli, NGOs have crucial role to play in economic development. The success of NGOs in achieving that objective is reflected by its ability to help generation of income for the people. The performance of selected NGOs is examined on the basis of the level of income generation among the beneficiaries of NGO projects of the selected NGOs. For this purpose, only three projects of two NGOs are taken into consideration since these projects are meant to generate income and employment among its beneficiaries.

Table-5
Family Income Profile of Beneficiaries Households

Name of NGO	NGOs Project/ economic activity	No. of beneficiaries	Average Annual Income		Percent age growth in income overtime	Standard Deviation(SD)		Percent age change in SD
			Back* (Rs.)	Current** (Rs.)		Back*	Current**	
NGO-I	1. SHELTER Project	30	103700	124133	19.70	56507.64	67423.38	19.32
NGO-II	1. Selling Outlets Project	30	121223	135733	11.97	70108.35	70785.39	10.97
	2. Socio-economic empowerment of women weavers in Majuli	30	100333	123646	24.23	83981.28	103505.56	23.25

*Back- at the time of Beneficiaries joining the NGO project**current – at the time of Survey (2010)
The average income of the beneficiary-households and its growth over a period of 3/4 years, from the year (2006, 2007 or 2008) of joining NGO project to the date of survey in 2010, is shown in Table-5. Two NGOs, out of three selected for the study, have economic projects and therefore, these two NGOs are taken for analyzing income generation.

Table-5 shows the average annual income of the household of the beneficiaries at two points of time: at the time when one member of the household (beneficiary) received economic assistance from NGO (referred to as 'Back' in the Table) and after 3-4 years of working in NGO sponsored project (referred to as 'current' in the Table). It is found that under SHELTER project the annual income of the beneficiary households has increased by 19.7 percent over a period of 3-4 years (from Back to Current). The corresponding family income growth of beneficiary households under NGO projects Selling Outlets and Socio-economic Empowerment of Women Weavers is 11.97 percent and 24.23 percent respectively. However, inequalities in family income over the same period have also increased in beneficiary households as is evident from percentage change in SD values overtime.

(A) **Role of NGOs In The Field of Culture, Education and Health:** The role of NGOs in the field of education and health awareness building is examined by considering two projects of two NGOs. This are:-

1. Targeted Intervention Project on HIV/AIDS launched by NGO-I (denoted as Health Project) and
2. Cultural Education Project launched by NGO-III (denoted as Education Project)

In the Health Project of NGO-I, the objectives of the NGO are to implement awareness programme on environment, health, sanitation and ill effect of drugs and alcohol. The aim is also to spread awareness among the people about medicinal plants and also to encourage people to plant the medicinal trees. The NGO with this project has made significant contribution in spreading literacy, health awareness among the people of Majuli. The main activities under this project include capacity building training to disseminate the knowledge and information on HIV/AIDS. The NGO has been conducting free health checkup camps. Large number of people of Majuli have attended such camps and also received treatment under the Health Project. The High Risk Groups (HRGs) have also

received quality STI services. At the time of survey, it was found that HRGs comprising of 451 persons have received presumptive treatment, 178 number of persons have received symptomatic treatment, regular medical checkup facility has been availed by 306 number of persons, 110 number of persons have undergone free syphilis tests and many more persons have availed different types of medical helps from the Health project of NGO-I. Out of these beneficiaries, 30 beneficiaries were contacted to examine the role of NGO-I in health sector.

The education project namely Cultural Education project and Rajib Gandhi Memorial Tribal Cultural Institute is launched by NGO-III with objectives to generate awareness among people of Majuli about the benefits of education and culture, to explore and extend the rich traditional culture of North-East, to train up the growing children on heritage cultural fields like Dance, Gayan, Badan and Music, particularly satriya classical art and cultural tradition of Majuli in its original form inherited from Srimanta Sankardeva and his progenitors.

The NGO is providing training to the interested batches of students at Satriya Sangeet College, Garamur with full association and co-operation of the Asom Sattrā Mahasabha at Garamur, Majuli. There are 200 numbers of students in this college, as found at the time of survey. The organization has been conducting the awareness programmes for the people keeping in mind the social status and living standard of people. In conformity to that the NGO has established two institutions namely (i) Kalabhumi, Majuli Sangeet College and (ii) Rajiv Gandhi Memorial Tribal Cultural and Training Institute. Moreover, this NGO has programmes under the instruction of the Govt. as well as programmes in its own field to meet the needs of the society. The members of the organization conduct various awareness activities programmes through street play and road drama etc for creating awareness among the people of the island about benefits of education, social ills etc. In Rajib Gandhi Memorial Tribal Cultural Institute, the total beneficiaries, as at the time of survey, were 30. Out of all the beneficiaries of the education project, 30 beneficiaries were selected at random for interviewing to examine the role of NGO-III in promoting education and culture.

Table-6
Health and Education Awareness of Beneficiaries
(Average score NGO and Project wise in 1-5 scale)

Activities/Awareness About	NGO-I	NGO-III	Overall Average Score
	Project-1	Project-1	
(a) Attends awareness campaign	4.1	4.1	4.0
(b) Sense of cleanliness of respondent	3.8	4.2	4.1
(c) Knowledge about AIDS/HIV	4.5	3.3	3.9
(d) Knowledge about human body	3.6	3.9	3.8
(e) Knowledge about merits of good health	3.8	4.3	4.1
(f) Knowledge about merits of good education	3.9	4.5	4.1
(g) Attitude towards family members	3.8	4.1	4.0
(h) Attitude towards daughter's education	3.9	4.7	4.3
(i) No sex preference	4.4	4.8	4.4
(j) Knowledge about health care facility	3.9	3.1	3.4
(k) Knowledge about education facilities	3.2	3.1	3.2
(l) Knowledge about ill effect of smoking, alcohol, drugs	2.8	2.8	3.1
(m) Opinion about early marriage of daughter and son	4.3	4.7	4.5
(n) Knowledge about safe drinking water	3.4	4.2	3.6
(o) Knowledge about sanitation	2.6	4.3	3.1
(p) Knowledge about smokeless cooking system	3.3	4.6	3.8
(q) Knowledge about vaccination	3.5	4.4	4.1
(r) Knowledge about prenatal & postnatal care	3.7	3.5	3.9
(s) Knowledge about ORS	4.2	4.9	4.7
Average	3.72	4.08	3.9

The selected 60 beneficiaries of the above mentioned two projects of the two NGOs are associated with Health and Education and Culture projects for near about 4 years. In order to examine the awareness level of the beneficiaries about the benefits of good health and good culture and education, they were interviewed extensively and on the basis of interview and personal observation their awareness level is quantified in a scale of 1-5, 1 signifying very low level of awareness and 5 signifying very high level of awareness. Higher observed awareness level is assigned higher value in the scale. The awareness/knowledge level of beneficiaries about 19 attributes such as their sense of cleanliness, knowledge about HIV/AIDS, knowledge about human body, knowledge about education facilities available at local and outside level, their attitude about daughters' education, sex preference etc. were measured in the scale. Table-6 shows the average awareness score of the beneficiaries' project and NGO wise. It is found that the beneficiaries of Health project of NGO-I has an average awareness level of 3.72 in the scale of 1-5 whereas the beneficiaries of Culture and Education project of NGO-III has an average awareness score of 4.08 in the scale of 1-5. The beneficiaries of Health project have exhibited very low level of awareness in the areas of 'knowledge about sanitation', 'knowledge about the ill effects of smoking, alcohol and drugs', 'knowledge about education facilities', 'knowledge about safe drinking water' and 'knowledge about smokeless cooking system'. On the other hand, the beneficiaries of Culture and Education Project have exhibited very low level of awareness in the areas of 'knowledge about AIDS/HIV', 'knowledge about health care facility', 'knowledge about education facility' and 'knowledge about the ill effects of smoking, alcohol and drugs'. However, the overall level of awareness of the beneficiaries on 19 defined attributes is found to be satisfactory which may be attributed to their association with NGO projects.

Conclusion and Recommendations: In the study, it is found that the NGOs in Majuli are playing a crucial role towards the socio-economic development of the people. The NGOs in Majuli have already made some contribution in spreading literacy, health awareness and generation of income and employment in the Island. The NGOs which are found working at Majuli include the following; IMPACT-N.E., REDS, Kalabhumi Majuli, River People, Shradha, Sadbhavana and MIPADC etc. The NGOs are taking steps to create awareness among the people of Majuli for their own development. The organizations show the path of earning independently to the educated unemployed youths of the island apart from protecting Majuli from erosion by the mighty river Brahmaputra.

The study reveals that the three NGOs are people friendly and has been working as facilitator of development programmes for the people of Island. These NGOs are implementing different project like income and employment generation, cultural, education project and health project. However, from the field survey it observed that although there are 34 Numbers of registered NGOs in Majuli but, only few of them working for the people of island and rest are non-functioning.

The success of NGOs in the development process largely depends on the size of fund available with the NGOs and their constitutional and organizational setup and style of functioning. It observed that the NGOs are lack of fund for smooth function the organization. NGOs in Majuli have a number of problems such as lack of finance, lack of co-ordination among the organization, lack of skilled power, supervision, lack of infrastructure, in-adequate staff etc. At the time of field survey it observed that NGOs members are expressed their view on Govt. organization regarding delaying allotment of project scheme.

The study revealed that among the selected three NGOs, IMPACT-NE been implementing large numbers of project and other two NGO have implemented few project.

NGO must follow guidelines and principles of PRA and practice participatory management approach to achieve their development goals. NGO should evolve an appropriate mechanism for regular planning, monitoring and reviewing of programmes undertaken by them in a consultative decision making mode. The PRA approach can improve transparency and accountability of the NGOs leading to their enhanced credibility.

Recommendations: Based on the primary data are collected for the case study, few recommendations are made here, which may certainly help the NGOs working in Majuli Island. The following are some important recommendations:-

- a. **NGO should follow the PRA guidelines:** It has been found that all NGOs in Majuli do not follow the PRA guidelines for their functioning towards the community and it is observed that the PRA guidelines are helpful in every condition for achieving rural development. PRA is a

scientifically conceived concept on continuous field trails, tailored to socio-economic and geographic reality and its requirements. So PRA methodology can bring more success to NGOs working in the field of rural development.

- b. **Co-operation among the organizations:** At the time of field study it is observed that all NGOs in Majuli do not cooperate with one another rather they criticize each other. For the greater interest of the society, all the NGOs should work together to achieve development goals for the people of the Island.
- c. **Dedication to society:** - As a non-profit and social welfare organization, NGO members are to be more dedicated as social workers to the causes of the society. Every member should be ready to help the neediest person and they should participate at every stage of social activities.
- d. **To Identify target groups:** - The organizations working for social welfare should be able to identify the neediest persons in the society. On the basis of identified target group the organization should provide service to the poor and needy people.
- e. **To Involve more people:** - It is observed that all the NGOs working in Majuli are unable to involve more people from the Island and the organizations should remember that their social welfare mission would be achieved whenever they engage and cover maximum number of people of the area.
- f. **To revive non-functioning NGOs:** - The study found that there are 34 registered NGOs in Majuli but most of them are on paper and they are contributing nothing to the social welfare of the people of Majuli. There is strong need for reviving all the registered organizations in Majuli and every NGO must take correct steps in that direction for the people of the Majuli.
- g. **Awareness Building:** - There is a strong need to create awareness in the society to recognize the critical role of NGOs in the socio-economic upliftment.
- h. **To impart training to the NGO members:** - Training for the NGO members is very important and they should be trained up through reputed training institutions and resource persons in the field of social welfare and rural development programme.
- i. **Formation of SHG:** - In the field of self-reliance, the NGOs can achieve success through the formation of Self-help Groups in rural area. Microfinance, may lead to capacity building through the SHGs.
- j. **Linkage with Govt. agencies:** - it is observed that in the field of social welfare, the NGOs alone are unable to provide all types of services to the society. The organizations should work together with different government agencies like Central Social Welfare Board, State and District Social Welfare Board etc.
- k. **To Create Awareness in rural areas:** - From the field study it found that the NGO members are unwilling to go to interior places of the area. NGO members should be encouraged to go to interior places and provide services to the community where poverty is perpetual in nature.
- l. **More projects should be launched:** - The field study observed that only few NGOs have large number of projects schemes and other NGOs are unable to get government projects. The NGOs working in Majuli should apply more and more projects. More benefit of the society is possible when NGOs are implementing more project schemes with diversification of objectives.
- m. **To adopt new policy for Rural Development:** - The organization working for society should adopt new rural development policy and involve more and more rural people for participating in their own development. Rural development is impossible until and unless the rural people participate in their own developmental works.
- n. **To take more responsibility:** - As social welfare organizations, NGOs should take more and more responsibilities for the societies for whom they are working. The NGO should be the torch bearer for the poor and deprived community and work without selfish motives. It is their responsibility by their constitution to support the underprivileged society.
- o. **Inadequate Staff:** - The NGOs in Majuli are found working with in-adequate staff. This may be because of their lack of sound financial position which they could not recruit the required number of staff. For the smooth functioning of the organization, it is a very important to recruited the manpower that they require.
- p. It is observed that majority numbers of NGOs are managed by and setup by a single person and they don't follow the rotation method for selecting the chairperson of the organization. It is

important that NGOs should follow the election procedure for selecting chairperson of the organization.

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