

Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Movements in Nepal in terms of Social Transformation.

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ABSTRACT

Nepal has been in a political transition phase since 1951 (to date) and has a short history of formal civil society organizations (CSO). Formalization of CS only began after 1951, when the authoritarian Rana regime ended through the democratic movement. After the Rana regime there was absolute monarchy, which also did not allow flourishing CS organization. CSO movements were synonyms to the democratic movement in Nepalese context. This notion of banning CSO movement by authoritarian regimes is not new. Though, the role of the CSOs was challenged and limited by the autocratic administration, informally, CSOs were active for public service delivery. Even in that autocratic era, a few organizations were established and continued their movements for the democratization, human rights, and environment conservation. The available research rarely discusses NGOs that funded outside the capital and their working modality. This article tries to fill that gap and tries to answer how CSOs contribute to social change through public service delivery and advocacy and presents a case study of the Association for Protection of Environment and Culture (APEC) which was one the first such NGOs established outside of the capital and was a threat to the authoritarian regime. APEC not only continued its major mission of human rights and conservation campaign, but initiated CSO leaders in establishing new NGOs in various locations. Actually formal CSOs mushroomed after the second democratic movement which ended in 1990. The role of CSOs is significantly important for the Nepalese environmental, economic, political, and social development and transformation.

(Keywords: definition, civil society, NGOs, transformation, history, movement, environment)

INTRODUCTION

In the Nepalese context, the role of NGOs and Civil Societies are still service and development oriented. Civil societies play important roles in the changing of individuals' lives by bringing together diverse groups of people to solve social problems. Individuals and local groups can fulfill their common public tasks; individuals would develop civic consciousness, which would manifest itself in a more active citizenry, healthier communities, and, ultimately, a strong democratic system (Perry and Thomson, 2004).

Nepali NGOs and Civil Societies were contributing to the global conservation and human rights movement even in the autocratic era prior to 1951 (Rana Regime and 1951 to 1990 absolute monarchy). In that period, civil society movements were primarily banned or had to follow what the authorities ordered even for service delivery. The civil society movement was a continuous process which couldn't be fully stopped by the authorities.

Nepal was isolated from the rest of the world until 1951 by the autocratic Rana regime. Having a similar culture and open boarder with India, Nepali citizens were not unaware of the World's changing social, economic and political environment, therefore the civil society movement continued even in those black days. Some civil society activists took the risk and established some NGOs and continued working for the democratic, human rights, and conservation movements. "Citizens and their collective endeavours constitute the basic fabric of any society. Individually and together, citizens have always acted voluntarily to improve their communities and societies" (CIVICUS, 2000). This write up supports this thesis of CIVICUS and suggests that the civil society movement can contribute for both democratization process and

service delivery, even in unfavorable socio-political situation.

There is very little literature available which reveals the role of civil society organizations in Nepal. Those available literatures are mostly telling the story of NGOs who registered in the capital and worked in the capital, but they are silent on how NGOs developed and worked outside of the capital. The informal form of civil society movement has a long history in Nepal, however, formally, NGOs movements took motion only from 1980 onwards.

The purpose of this paper is to record the unwritten history of civil society movements in Nepal and to explore the NGOs role for socio-economic transformation both from historical and current context. To achieve this goal, this paper first explains how civil society organizations were developed, what their current situation is, and what role they are playing in nation building. Secondly, this paper will examine NGOs products and services for socio-economic transformation of Nepal. Finally, this write up presents a case study of the Association for Protection of Environment and Culture (APEC) which was one the first such exemplary NGO established outside of the capital (an organization that I co-founded in 1983). The establishment of APEC was a challenge to the authoritarian regime.

To understand the contemporary world, we need to understand its historical grounds. I hope this paper will help to shed light on the development of civil society organizations in Nepal, the reason of their existence, and their products and product delivery. In Nepal civil society organizations are not as strong as they are in its major neighboring countries like India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. In the case of Bangladesh, NGOs are major actors for nation building and public service delivery. But in Nepal NGOs are still in the developmental phase. If we look at the political scenarios of Pakistan and Bangladesh, both have been facing authoritarian regimes, but civil society organization were not considered a threat to the state as they were in Nepal.

To some extent this paper indirectly reveals the cause of slow and weak civil society movements of Nepal. Civil society organizations were considered as a threat to the government until 1990. However, the situation changed after second democratic movement which ended in 1990. NGO roles became more visible in the

Nepali public arena. In the Nepalese case NGOs activities can be seen in all sectors which related to social needs. Nepalese society is benefiting from NGOs and NGOs are benefiting from the social support.

Until 1990, international organizations and multilateral donor agencies were mainly supporting government programs. NGOs were marginalized and the significance of NGOs in nation building was shadowed due to government policy. When the country entered in the democratic era, the role of civil society organizations began to be realized in the public arena. People had very high expectation with the democratic government. However, within a year or two the independent civil society leaders realized that the government could not meet the expectations of people and new organizations began to form and that tendency is still continued in Nepal.

“The altruistic motives of people working in NGOs can overcome the incompleteness of contracts. . . One advantage that NGOs may have over the public sector is the freedom of from fixed civil service rules or standard operating procedures.”

“Donor enthusiasm has led to a massive proliferation of NGOs, many of them not all that motivated by altruism. . . [The motives of NGO leaders] may be exactly the same as those of a for-profit firm—requiring the same monitoring and care in contract enforcement” (World Bank, 2003).

The World Bank’s altruism notion fits with the Nepalese case. World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and other multilateral donors began to collaborate with Nepali NGOs. This notion fits with the Nepalese context, where NGOs run developmental activities using local resources as well as through collaboration with the government and international organizations. However, this notion began only after the democratic movements succeed after 30 years of struggle beginning in 1990.

After 1990, international organizations were also taking NGOs as local partners. International organizations are also benefiting from local NGOs because of local knowledge, continuous presence, specificity of target population, and small scale intervention of some NGOs afford them a major opportunity is in facilitating enabling

environments for participatory development and for the empowerment of excluded and disadvantaged populations (Lynch et al., 1997).

The Nepalese role of NGOs is similar to the Indian NGOs as Ebrahim (2005) notes, "NGOs are not simply passive recipients of these global ideas which are transmitted to them through international consultants or conditions in foreign funding. Instead, it shows that NGOs are frequently and actively involved in challenging, reshaping, and appropriating global discourses—especially on environment and sustainability—to suit their own needs and are sometimes even able to spark wider structural change at international levels". In the Nepalese case NGOs respond more quickly than the major government and the international organizations in providing primary services such as in health, water, and sanitation and primary education, often at lower cost (Lynch et al., 1997; Chand, 1998; Shrestha, 1999). This response of NGOs to resolve social problems can be seen mostly in the health, environment conservation, and human rights movements in Nepal.

Lynch et al. (1997) have correctly evaluated the role of NGOs to the education sector reform. They state, "the role of NGOs in the Development of Non Formal Education in Nepal and on a non formal basis...Often NGOs pioneer model and innovations which are generalized by bilateral and multilateral...Pressure to redefine education's mission and modalities of its delivery will be likely to demand increased rather than less involvement of NGOs and non formal methods of delivery" (Lynch et al., 1997). At least in the informal education sector, NGOs involvement has a relatively longer history than other sectors (Shrestha 1999).

BACKGROUND

There is a very short history of formal civil society and non-governmental organizations in Nepal. However, informally there is a long history of the civil societies' contributions to the social and economic development and transformation of Nepali society. Informal organizations equally hold a strong value in the formation of formal organizations. Traditionally, Nepali society is based on Hindu and Buddhist mythology with the equal consideration of indigenous traditions and cultures. There is harmony between society-to-society, religion-to-religion, and main stream

Hindu social system and minor Buddhists and Muslims communities.

Mostly social problems are solved with the mutual understandings among the group and local social leaders are regarded as social motivators. However this harmonious relationship is in challenge since 1990 (after second round democratic movement (2005) (third round just ended which made king powerless), religious groups and ethnic identity issues began to rise and harmony is in endangered situation (personal observation). There is still a thin understanding of "service to mankind is service to God". However this notion has been in challenge internally and externally because of the power politics and power struggle in the capital and urban areas. But until 1951, this notion of challenge was not significant in the rural Nepal, because the society was simple and was not affected by the political ideology. However, in the urban areas, society was transforming towards Western type social systems.

There was also another tendency of transformation within society which is known as Sanskritization. Srinivas (1952, 1956, 1959, 1966), who introduced the term Sanskritization to Indian Sociology uses the term to refer to a process whereby people of lower castes collectively try to adopt upper caste practices and beliefs to acquire higher status. These processes are still working but have moved in another direction; that is westernization. Society is turning towards the class system from caste system. Western hegemony has strong influence with the elite people in urban Nepal and it is spreading to the rural Nepal in an accelerating rate.

The major role of civil society has not been changed, but modality of civil society is changing. The informal modality of civil society has been changing towards to formalized modality of civil society. There was a concept of service without any expectation and social reformers used to serve society anonymously. Authority and legal aspects were silent or had not much relevancy to handle the social problems, but for the transforming situation these legal or authoritative legacies have an important role. There is not much academic literature which can reveal this account of civil society in Nepal. One of the reasons for the lack of sufficient literature is due to less focus in research in the higher education system.

History of higher education in Nepal is still very young. Only in 1959 the first University "Tribhuvan University" was founded. Prior to that Nepali students had to go to India for higher education (prior to the establishment of the first college in the country, Tri-Chandra College in 1918, higher education in Nepal was nonexistent). During most of the 1970s, the Nepal government, through its national Tribhuvan University, inaugurated a youth civic service program called NDS (Rastriya Bikas Sewa). NDS was officially inaugurated in 1974, and grew to enjoy phenomenal support until 1979, when adverse political concerns forced its abrupt closure (Yadama and Messerschmidt, 2004). NDC was for the service delivery through TU's masters' level students to the local level but was not for the academic research. However, some of the students used their field stay as good opportunities for research (Bhandari, 2000).

There were a few schools but no colleges. There were, however, two areas for higher education; Sanskrit and English. Even in the Tribhuvan University (TU) the academic research component was not introduced until 1970. This was also not for general research but only research on Sanskrit with the help of German under the name of Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP).

The research trend in Nepal was introduced by the British scholars in the beginning and later from the Swiss scholars (Nepali, 1990). I could not trace the empirical evidences of history of research in Nepal. However, Nepali creative literature and Sanskrit literature is not silent about the role of and importance of civil society. There are folk songs, poems, novels, and essays in both Nepali and Sanskrit which tell about the presence of civil society.

Dahal and Timsina (2006) in a publication of CIVICUS acknowledged this notion about the unrevealed history of Nepal. They try to trace history of civil society in Nepal with the Vedic era. "Civil society in Nepal has a long history dating back to the *Vedic* age around 2000 BC. Civic life in Nepal was evident during the *Vedic* age when *dharma* (institutional duties and role), *shastras* (moral and legal treatises) and *shastartha* (philosophical discourses) shaped the intellect and character of the subjects and rulers, defined the governing norms of the society and polity according to *barnashram dharma*, and oriented people towards public welfare. The Buddha's

teachings of *Pancha Sheela* that evolved around 2,500 years ago laid down five rules of life, which have also had some influence on Nepalese society". Further they also point out the modality of civil society and its frame. They state "Nepal has traditionally hosted indigenous organizations such as *Gurukul* (voluntary residential school), *Guthi* (trusts), and *Parma* (voluntary contribution and exchange of labor). The community selects the few leaders/judges known as the *pancha bhaladmi* (five eminent people), who are mainly responsible for settling local disputes". Their historical account brings the real picture of history of civil society in Nepal. However, Dahal and Timsina (2006) lack the illustrations of other authors' works. Though I do not blame to them, because the purpose of this monograph seems to present the general scenario of civil society for this their work is worthy enough to appreciate.

Other authors such as Dahal (2001); Pigg (1992); Gautam *et al.* (2004); Yadama and Messerschmidt (2004); Ulvila and Hossain (2002); Paffenholz and Spurk (2006); Pandey (2006), Bhandari M (1997, 1998, 2000 and 2001) have also tried to explore the root of civil society development in Nepal. Similarly, Yadama and Messerschmidt (2004) have further revealed an account of historical root of civil society in Nepal, where they note that most of the socially conscious organizations, trusts, endowments, and societies of Nepal claim formal or informal roots in the region's ancient cultural-religious heritage, both Hindu and Buddhist, and are therefore deeply embedded in cultural traditions of the society". They compare this situation with India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, however, generalization of Nepali situation with Pakistan and Bangladeshi situation leaves room for criticism. The history of Nepal is very different than Pakistan and Bangladesh. These three countries were colonized by the British but Nepal was an ally of Britain in their rule of those other countries. Since then, Nepal has been supplying its citizens to the British army. Though there were similarities of local civil societies to manage the rural problems which still exist in the same line.

Further, Dahal and Timsina (2006) show the importance role of civil society for the socio-economic and political transformation. They show how civil society is distributed in Nepal in relation to service delivery. Their monograph does not present how civil society was targeted by the prior to democratic movement, what was the civil society organization's role outside the capital

valley. Their information is based on data provided by the social welfare council, which is supposedly an umbrella government organization for management of civil society and NGOs in Nepal. The data tabled by them do not represent the actual situation of civil society in Nepal but provides a sample situation. To some extent, these authors and other written documents tell the formal history of civil society movement of Nepal, however this paper reveals more about the untold story of civil society movement in Nepal, particularly of eastern Nepal, where comparatively, people were more educated and with sound economic ground.

A BRIEF HISTORY FORMAL FORM OF NGOS IN NEPAL

In the above paragraphs I noted how informal civil society organizations were formed and how they help the socio-economic transformation of Nepal. In this section I will summarize how formal NGOs were developed, followed by the contribution of social change makers who disguisedly helped to form civil societies in the rural areas. The purpose of illustrating the formal history of NGOs in Nepal is to document the unwritten history of civil society movement in Nepal.

A famous Ghanaian philosopher Tulsi Meher Shrestha started the NGO movement in 1923 with inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi. He started *Charkha* Movement as one of the first local NGOs (Chand, 1999). Further, he founded Mahaguthi which was a pioneer NGO for the independent, non-profit social service sector in Nepal. Since its inception "Mahaguthi" has been working in Nepal in various social development projects for the empowerment of the poor, helpless, neglected, and destitute. He also founded Tulsi Mehar Mahila Ashram in 1979. He was one of the first voices for Nepalese women and during the course of his life; he implemented many programs for the empowerment of women in Nepalese society (Chand, 1998).

Another history maker of Nepalese the civil society movement was Daya Bir Singh Kansakar. He founded a charitable trust with medical dispensary called *Paropakar Aushadhalay*. This organization later transformed into the name of *Paropakar Samsthan* (Paropakar Organization). This organization has been managing an orphanage, ambulance service, maternity hospital, and secondary school since its inception.

This organization was very important in late 50s, and saved several lives during the cholera epidemic in 1948. After Tulsi Mayer's contribution, Paropakar organization was second in Nepal, which was opened as international influence and impact on Nepalese society. "Such emergency-oriented volunteer movements are commonplace in society the world around".

According to my grandmother (late Laxmi Devi Bhandari) there were many volunteer aid societies booming up particularly in Kathmandu and other areas of Nepal after the devastating Nepal/Bihar earthquake of 1934. According to her there was also a volunteer organization named *Bhukampa Sewa Dal* (*helping hands for earthquake victims*). My grandmother who was in the hilly area "Terathum Districts" arranged a women helper group to help the local people. Her contributions to this movement are not documented (because she always wanted to serve anonymously). She told me that her volunteer groups were active in various forms in several locations in Eastern Nepal.

There were also other people who used to show up as "Sadhu" (or some time healers) (Sadhu is a Hindu austere or a monk, the Sadhu practice has a long history in India and Nepal, or may be in the rest of the world. It is believed that Sadhu give up their worldly ties in search of higher values of life. Ideally a Sadhu lives in the society (within a society of themselves) but is known as disconnected from their pleasures and pains. The word meaning of SADHU in Nepali is bearing of simplicity (natural path of living) in both in daily life and in Mind. Sadhus do not work and survive on begged cereal or on *bhiksha* (alms) provided by families. Traditionally they were supposed to go to only 10 houses for food. Another source of living was natural resources found in and around the natural forest.

According to my grandmother there were several individuals who were acting as SADHUs but they were actually social workers, social activists, or social change makers. If any SADHU gets married it was permitted by the society but they were not recognized as major participants in the CASTE system. However, according to my grandmother, some were hiding their identity for the total change in the society, because they were doing two jobs; one having family life secretly and another was providing social service and empowering local people for the democratic movement. There were several disguised people

at that time whose objectives were to transform the rigid social system into flexible and democratic system. Local leaders like my grandmothers were aware about those people and internally they were supporting them and for transformation advocacy.

During the Panchayat era (1960-90) some organizations in the service sector were opened through the government. Nepal Red Cross Society was founded in 1963. Daya Bir Kansakar served Nepali society until his death at age of ninety in 2001. He was modern Nepal's noble personality of unselfish service to others. Kansakar and Tulsi Meher social service movements had a very positive impact in the Nepalese society. They always encouraged service sector improvement in Nepal.

Similarly King Birendra (he was considered as a noble person) established The King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) in 1982 by the Legislative Act, mandated as an autonomous, non-profit and non-governmental organization, to work in the field of nature conservation in Nepal. This is one of the large autonomous organizations in Nepal for conservation of Nature. It was always headed by the King or by the Royal family, and had very limited access to the civilian at management level; however in field level this organization has very positive impact in conservation sector.

Current Context

In recent years the role and the situation of NGOs in Nepal represents a mixed picture. NGO history in Nepal is relatively short. During the Panchayat era, the autocratic regime had very tight control on social services through the NGOs and CBOs. It was so much control that only a few people were able to establish NGOs in Nepal at all. Until 1960 when Panchayat regime began there were only ten NGOs in Nepal. In seventeen years (1960 to 1977) the number reached thirty-seven. Those were mostly based on Kathmandu.

After democracy was established, NGOs mushroomed in the country. Until 1985 there were only few NGOs in Eastern Nepal. As a conservation activist, I started conservational activities from 1980 in eastern Nepal on a personal level. Plantation of *ficus religiosa*, *ficus bagalasis* (secret trees according to Hindu mythology) and campaign to protect migrated wild

elephants from India were the prime activities at the beginning. I was able to convince more people in this field, which lead to establishing a conservational forum. Miss Prajita Devkota, a high school girl, joined her hands in the conservation campaign on 1984 and encouraged to movement to take the shape of a forum (we married in 1986). We could not register the organization, but un-officially gave it the name, Association for Protection of Environment and Culture (BATABARAN RA SNSKRITI SANRAKSHAN SANGH), with broader objectives of conservation of nature and culture in 1985.

APEC-Nepal was the first conservation NGOs in eastern Nepal. Until 1990 there were 1850 members in APEC, out of 1850, 555 were very active; by 2002 active members' number reached about 4000. Most interestingly among those 555 very active members were many who opened separate NGOs in the region, however they remained members of APEC at institutional level.

The available literature does not reveal the role of NGOs for the leadership building. These new 555 NGOs were and still are located in the sixteen districts headquarters, as well as various local destinations. Their major focus is environment conservation, however, for survival and problem solving reasons they are active in lobbying, human rights, women's rights, education and some of them are also involved in income generating programs such as micro-credit or self-help programs.

As APEC insisted, they all are registered at the district level and half of them are also registered to the Social Welfare Council and Ministry of Population and Environment. This ministry is also a product of strong advocacy by the civil society and NGOs leader. NGOs leaders also advocated to adopt CITES rules and regulation in the forestry law in Nepal and environment policy law in Nepal. As a result the government prepared the policy document with the help of United Nation Development Program, World Conservation Union, and Dutch Government foreign aid program and adopt these international regulations as law in 1996.

Since the 1990 the number of NGOs and Civil Societies (CBOs) and their activities has been significantly increased in Nepal. There are varieties of NGOs in terms of their size, scope, point of reference and organizational competencies. About 11000 NGOs were

registered to the Social Welfare Council (SWC) in 2000, which was just a small portion of NGOs.

The majorities of NGOs were just registered in district administrative offices and were not aware about SWC or were not ready to register with SWC. Still there is no exact record of NGOs and CBOs, however, there are more than 35,000 NGOs registered only at Social Welfare Council (which is government's autonomous Institution which manages social services and funding) in 2005.

NGOs can be registered in the district level and provide services at local level with local resources. If NGOs need international funding they need to go through Social Welfare Council (SWC). However, it was not mandatory until 2001 or NGOs usually bypass the SWC, because of its bureaucratic system.

In 2001, Nepal suffered from a dictator King who tried to penalize every institution, therefore, it was very difficult for NGOs and CBOs to get external funding for the social service; though due to the international agencies in Nepal, International linkages of NGOs and CBOs were not broken.

Going back to the number of NGOs and CBOs again, NGOs and CBOs can provide non-political services to the society; in that case it is hard to know exact number of such organizations. On the basis of my inquiry, I estimate that there are more than 50,000 NGOs and CBOs in Nepal. Another major hurdle faced by Nepali NGOs is Maoist insurgency. They either panelized the civil society work in rural area or allowed to work only for their shake.

THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

NGOs and civil society are important in Nepal due to their role for the conservation of nature, providing services for needy people, and pursuing poverty reduction. They are implementing on a cost effective basis and follow the labor intensive approach. They encourage for community participation for conservation of nature and in development process and also apply for a non-hierarchical decision making structure as well as flexibility and adaptive nests to the local.

NGOs leaders in Nepal are also key figures of conservation activism and NGOs are vehicles of

human empowerment. They are facilitators for the development of a vibrant democratic civil society and also for democratization. They are trying to provide independent centers of power to check abuse of central and local authority. They have a significant role for human empowerment and work as political watchdog to some extent. They are providing education and to making people aware in sociopolitical aspect, wildlife management, forest protection. Because of increased education level, and understanding level people have realized their role and leading toward the conservation ethics and democratization.

In this situation, Nepali NGOs have a positive role for human empowerment, training, and democratization of the country. There are more than 35,000 registered NGOs and many unregistered NGOs working on the environment sector, forestry sector, wildlife sector and national development (poverty, human right, HIV/AIDS, health, etc.). Their role for nation development especially for the conservation of nature and natural resources, sustainable development and poverty reduction and people empowerment issue is noteworthy. They are not out of socio economic and political problems such as lack of transparency, accountability and so on. They need to be more organized and improved.

There is some misunderstanding between NGOs, States, and donors. NGOs are involved in environment conservation, economic and social development, states are responsible to handle or manage all activities including socio and economic development and donors help both of them. All of them have same goal in one point that is conservation of nature, poverty eradication, equity, social justice, human rights, etc. They have also another similarity that is human biasness. NGOs are not established fully for other peoples' sake. Their inner purpose is also to sustain themselves, make their own lives easy, and establish social honor. Likewise politicians also need to handle the country and they need to manage the people, therefore, there first priority is to keep themselves in power.

The motives of donor agencies often depend on their location and the sources of their funding. Of course that money comes from tax or donations from developed nations. The decision makers for donations come from developed country, therefore, their responsibility are not necessarily to the poor people of developing country but goes

to the donor themselves. For the States particularly they need donations or loans from the development agencies (donors), so they try to be closer to the donor.

Likewise, 99% of NGOs are not self-sustained. They need constant influxes of money. States form the developing nation can provide the technical support but not much financial support. So, they are also relying on the development agencies. But for the NGOs it is not easy to be near to the donor. NGOs need to prepare effective reports in English. Their main work is how to prepare good proposals and how to make develop impactful reports, and so on. At the same time it is not their fault because donors need them, and for donor documents are the main source of identification of genuine or good NGO.

There are some NGOs who completely work in a particular area, but most of them work in different sectors for survival. Many NGOs are only working in conservational fields and most of them provide environmental training. In Nepal, most of developed countries' overseas development offices are present, like the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and various international nongovernmental organizations.

Overseas development agencies such the Danish Development Agency are helping the conservation of forest, training for forestry conservation, are working for the Cleaner Kathmandu Project, and much more. Bilateral donors Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Japan, The Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America and multi lateral donor ADB, EC, FAO, IFAD, ILO, IMF, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNFPA, WB, WFP, WHO are all working for and helping Nepal. They have manpower empowerment program for Nepal and are also providing funds to the education institution for environment training.

NGOs and CBOs Role on Social and Economic Transformation

Primarily NGOs and CBOs help for the development and operation of infrastructure through various development activities such as in land development, establishment of business communities, and maintenance of public concerned infrastructures (drinking water wells or

public toilets and solid waste collection services). NGOs can contribute community-based economic enterprises and provide necessary technical moral assistance to the respective governments as well as to the international agencies. NGOs can solve the specific problems of the local areas and are often quicker than the government bureaucracy. In communications, NGOs are fast and efficient. They translate the people's concern and provide the service to the local communities with the involvement of locals. They run the awareness program or raise the awareness about the external environment, which helps people to plan and act for the better life.

NGOs' and CBOs' role in the economic and social transitional period is always crucial and usually beneficial. They facilitate and organize training according to local need. NGOs' programs are easy to monitor and evaluate with the participation of all concerned stakeholders. They are basically responsible to the local people; therefore, they run the project transparently. The most important role of NGOs is telling the truth. They illustrate and show the evidences of global change, cultural change, and socio-economic change from various sources and encourage locals to participate and cope with the changing environment. NGOs role of advocacy for and with the Poor is the one of the major role for global transformation (William, 1991).

NGOs and CBOs can participate in development activities from project identification phase to monitoring and evaluation stage. According to World Bank Operations Policy Department document (World Bank, 1995) NGOs and CBOs provide information on local conditions, participate in environmental and social assessments, organize consultations with concern parties, and transmit expressed needs and priorities of local communities to project staff, act as a source, model or sponsor of project ideas and implement pilot projects.

In project design they act as the consultant to the government, to local communities, assist in promoting a participatory approach to project design and channel information to local populations. In the financial sector or funding arrangements NGOs and CBOs act as financier or co-financier. They provide service and facilitate for local or external funding. In project implementation phase, they provide delivery of services, training, construction, or manage the

project. They promote community participation in project activities, provide financial intermediary role, act as a supplier of technical knowledge to local beneficiaries, serve as advisor to local communities on how to take advantage of project-financed goods or services, work as implementer of complementary activities and support and a beneficiary of an NGO funding mechanism established by the project. In the final state of the project they evaluate and monitor the project. NGOs also facilitate participatory monitoring and evaluation.

Is it Really a Transformation?

“Transformation is foremost a continuing process. It does not have an end point. Transformation is meant to create or anticipate the future. Transformation is meant to deal with the co-evolution of concepts, processes, organizations and technology. Change in any one of these areas necessitates change in all. Transformation is meant to create new competitive areas and new competencies. Transformation is meant to identify, leverage and even create new underlying principles for the way things are done. Transformation is meant to identify and leverage new sources of power” (Cebrowski, 2006).

Nepali NGOs have been the key actors in generating the socio-economic and political ground for transformation. Transformation is a process which can apply in every case in the biophysical and anthropogenic arena. However, transformation does not happen fast without intervention. Transformation is a global or a local phenomenon in both natural and socio-economic economic terms. Tsunamis, natural disasters, epidemics, and social catastrophes can be both global and local, however, in the current world such issues in a particular spatial location can have global impacts and raise global concerns.

Nepal is excluded from this broader frame. To raise global concern NGOs and CSOs are always in front. The mushrooming NGOs and CSOs in Nepal can therefore represent transformation at the local level, but can also have a global impact in broader terms. Transformation is an anthropogenic, social, and environmental process which is occurring everywhere in Nepal through NGOs intervention (through various advocacy campaigns, publications, program intervention and lobbying). However, it is difficult to qualify and quantify the parameters of National

transformation. In a following paragraph I will summarize the NGOs and CBOs role to transfer Nepali economic, social, and biophysical situation in relation to development.

The meaning of development is dependent with the particular situation and person and the context where it used. It is often used in a subjective way; however, it is not absolutely subjective. The basic concept of development comes from the various myths and religious thoughts, which are related to evolution of capitalism. Theories have been developed to explain how the process works and what its impact has been on society.

Development in the recent decade is linked with the globalization. According to the IMF and World Bank (1995), globalization can be characterized as a trend towards greater integration and interdependence between countries and regions of the globe. These growing linkages are often economic and political, but globalization also has important social, environmental and cultural aspects. And according to Diaz-Bonilla and Robinson (2001) globalization refers to the multiplication and intensification of economic, political, social and cultural linkages among people, organizations, and countries at the world level. The second dimension is the tendency toward the universal application of economic, institutional, legal, political and cultural practices. Globalization is correlated with global transformation. The impact of globalization is an outcome of mushrooming NGOs and CBOs in Nepal.

In Nepal, transformation is taking place in every sector such as in political sector, economic sector, social sector, and cultural sector. NGOs and CBOs are key stakeholders to bring change in Nepal. Particularly transformation can be noticed in the following:

- Socioeconomic sector such as on national planning (there was top-down approach but now bottom up approach is in practice)
- Environment conservation (only government agencies were involved in conservation but now NGOs and CBOs are major players; community forestry programs are implemented and people are responsible for managing local environment)

- Business (business were centralized but now thousands of corporations are in business exporting their product to the global market)
- Industrial sector (there were government industries, but now most of them are privatized, there were no multi-national companies in the country, but now there are hundreds of multinational companies)
- Cultural sector (there was rigid cultural system in the Nepal based on Hindu orthodox system, now Nepal is open to all religion, it is not more Hindu Nation)

There is a participatory approach in development planning, decision making process, implementation, and monitoring processes. Nepal has signed or is a signatory to most of the humanitarian and environment related international treaties, conferences, and agreements. International funding, collaboration, support, for community empowerment, environment, biodiversity, and cooperatives, service, self-sustaining programs is improving through NGOs and CBOs. In this regard, Nepal's NGOs and CBOs role is very important. They are also equally involved in the international campaigns and advocacy.

However, the country is in turmoil because of political instability. The total open market system, capitalistic model is not currently feasible in Nepal. International organizations' roles are not very favorable to the rural poor. The gap of rich and poor is advancing day-by-day. There is no research about the impact of international organization in Nepal. I am planning to conduct a detail study about the role of International Agencies in Nepal.

CONCLUSION

"The End of our Foundation is the knowledge of Causes, and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of Human Empire, to the effecting of all things possible". (Francis Bacon, *The New Atlantis*).

UNESCO (2007) under the heading of who makes up civil society, states that the context of education for all, civil society can be understood as all non-governmental and non-profit associations involved in education. It embraces groups such as campaign networks, teacher

unions and religious organizations, community associations and research networks, parents' associations and professional bodies, student organizations, social movements and others; similar type of explanation is there in defining the civil society organizations.

There is no consistency in defining civil society organization, however, the available literature clearly acknowledge the unavoidable role of civil society in social, economic, political, and most importantly, global environment issues. Most of these definitions are from western world scholars who either have no knowledge about the developing world social systems, norms, and accounts of civil society, or they simply disregard them. Since the Rio (1992) World Summit, this tendency has been changed. There is rapid growth of research about the role of civil society in the non-western world. Western hegemonic explanation of civil society is changing. However, the developing world's situation is not changed as civil society organizations (NGOs, CBOs, private enterprises, etc.) have been mushrooming in recent decades. The following Nepal scenario can be an example of this type picture.

Savada (1991), states that Nepal is often characterized as a country caught in two different worlds, having one leg in the sixteenth century and another in the twentieth century. Entrenched in a feudalistic social structure, the deeply tradition-bound society increasingly was experiencing the pervasive influence of Western material culture. Most affected were the parts of the population that came in regular contact with Westerners. Nowhere was this juxtaposition of local traditional values and Western material culture more pronounced than in the Kathmandu Valley--the country's most urbanized region". This description exactly fits with the current situation in Nepal. The traditional norms, values, and social system are shiftily changed in the cities but not in the rural settings. Cast system is still in practice and social services are not equally delivered. Education and awareness is very important to change such system. To cope this most of the national and international organizations are concentrate on lobbying, awareness campaign and formal and non-formal education.

The role of civil societies is always crucial in managing the social problem. Nepal maintains endemism in many ways including the service to

the man kind and service to the nature. Nepal is unique in terms of culture, religion, and geography. Services are dependable with the social norms and values, which are transferred from generations to generations. These kinds of transferred services to human beings or to nature have been organized as traditions or cultural rituals in the society.

Nepal is aware of the current world situation. The government of Nepal has established different bodies to tackle with the civil society organization. The role of international governmental and nongovernmental organizations is significant to boost up the local organization in Nepal. Civil societies are active not only in the socio-economic development of the country but also very active in the democratization of Nepal. NGOs like APEC-Nepal have a significant role for the transforming Nepal's face. They are actively involved in the domestic issues as well as to regional and global issues such as human rights, women rights, child labor, and environment conservation.

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