

ENVIRONMENTAL N.G.O'S: INSPECTING THE KEY ROLES AND INFLUENCES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: A decade back what once used to be mere discussions by the intelligentsia within the halls of the seats of power, has now transformed into a pan-national phenomenon of co-operation, participation and the vital space occupied by public outfits in the propagation of sustainable development. Not for profit organizations are prime agents in the process of sustainable development. According to eminent authors like Sandhu *et al* (2012); NGO and voluntary entities in the country cross the 3 million mark, a substantial chunk of the same is represented by organizations immersed in the area of environmental concerns. The writer(s) further note that only a minute segment of the above-mentioned chunk have made any relative influence on the overall sustainability gambit. Obstacles in the forms of robust socio-economical development, population explosion and lopsided management are exerting pressure on the sensitive issue of environmental conservation. In a view to preserve and conserve the environmental strata for future generations, this paper explores the role of Environmental NGO's in catering to environmental concerns like climate change, energy sustainability and usage, pollution issues, ecological conservation and the challenges of dis-balance. The current issue is to throw light on the activities of environmental NGO's pertaining to mobilization of opinions from various stakeholders regarding the discipline of environment sustainability and to define the critical institutional challenges faced by the same. A potential logical structure has been propounded to determine the operations and workings of the Environmental NGO's in their efforts to preserve the environment. During the past 10 years, extraneous agents have gained much momentum especially environmental N.P.O's. The continuum of E-NGO's in the public sector-industry matrix rests on the obtainment of a singular objective and the materialization of co-operative systems between both parties.

Key words: Environmental sustainability, Environmental issues, Environmental- N.G.O's

INTRODUCTION

Not for Profit organizations (N.P.O's) or Non-Governmental Organizations (N.G.O's) may be defined as entities that do not branch from any public agency/authority but have the potential to receive and be allocated financial resources from the latter. The central goal of such organizations is (but not limited to) social service. Tentative assumptions calculate the number of N.P.O's to be 3.3 million (as of 2009) in India (Shukla, 2010).

Indian laws lay down certain guidelines for an entity to qualify for the status of N.P.O. Among other requirements, registration in the form of a 'trust', 'society' or a 'private limited' is mandatory u/s 25 of the Indian Companies Act 1956. According to studies by academicians like Arora *et al* (2010); Non-governmental organizations that are devoted to issues concerning environmental sustainability undertake pressing

causes like Climate change, air pollution, deforestation, ozone layer depletion, waste management, biodiversity and land use, energy conservation, environmental degradation, land degradation. Popular N.G.O's working towards environment-related issues in India are Greenpeace India, Awaaz Foundation, Centre for Science and Environment, Goa Foundation, CERE India, Conserve, Foundation For Ecological Security, Exnora International, WWF India and Winrock International, India.

India's rapid growth in economic output and population have given birth to a bourgeois of problems ranging from the intoxication and adulteration of air and water to loss of forests and erosion of natural resources at rapid speed. It is an imperative that the public sector devices of India must itinerate measures that aim to reverse the process of environmental decadence.

All efforts must unilaterally aim for environmental sustainability. According to repertoires released by scientific and research organization called World Commission on Environment and Development, the definition for the notion of sustainable development is given as socio-economic progress to cater to the requirements of the present without damaging the future generation's ability to meet their own requirements. ('87). The study of environmental sustainability comprises aspects like maintenance and positive change in the long-run indicators of environmental quality. Exemplary work has been done by Vadoan (2011) in the field of sustainable development through the study titled "Role of NGO's in Environmental Conservation and Development". The author has extensively represented the quantum shift in approaches and policies of the United Nations in context to the Not for Profit Organizations engaged in environmental causes. The change in approach results in the growing coordination and partnership between UN organs and NGOs in all vital areas such as policy formulation, human rights, peace and disarmament, environmental Issues. It also discussed overall environmental activities carried out by International and National NGOs.

Nature of the Problem

It is of tantamount importance that E-NGO's should be able to attain their goals of environmental sustainability. The effectiveness of E-NGO's is gauged by their competency to consolidate the necessary resources, chart partnerships between industries and public sector apparatuses. The influence of E-NGO's can be ascertained through its capacity to utilize mass media and judicial vehicles like PIL to achieve a vantage point. Therefore, a light has been thrown on the fore-mentioned topic to understand the operational processes of popular Environmental NGOs and determine an operational frame for the same.

Objectives

The paper emphasizes the influence of Environmental NGO's in the field of environmental sustainability. The paper aims to make recommendations and suggestions for ramifications in their operational processes. Some specific objectives include to propound a

working model for E-NGO's, to conduct a comparative analysis of the subject ENGO's and to study the moral dogmas faced by E-NGO's.

Research Design

The proposed Environmental NGO model's effects will be studied in future environments by devising an apparatus to assimilate information. The model discussed hereto is qualitative in nature and the quantitative dimension has not been taken into cognizance.

Research Design	Propounded Model : Narrative Comparative Analysis : Descriptive
Data Collection Sources	Secondary : Articles, Internet Sites, Books

Study Scope

The scope of the present paper is limited to the above objectives and confined to secondary information of various Environmental NGO's. The outcome of this study provides insights and information to the surfacing role(s) of ENGOs, and the obstructions to achieve those objectives.

Goal I – To explicate the operational model of E-NGO's

The impact of ENGOs as a major change-agent in Environmental related concerns has transformed both in dimension and definition over the last few decades. Majority of the ENGO's debuted as small enterprises concentrating on one or few of following causes– Education, Training & Development, Environment based Research, Environment Monitoring and Measurement, Air or Water Pollution, Land degradation/Soil Erosion, Waste Management, Toxic & Chemical and Bio Waste, Preservation and Protection of Wild life and Ecologically sensitive zones. As time went by, many of such organizations have molded themselves into organizations that are highly professionally managed and demand respect from the mainstream. Being, a popular Not For Profit Organization known as Centre for Science and Environment commenced in around the 1980's as an organization aimed at developing mass awareness on Science, technology, Environment and progress. The last 3 decades has seen it growing into a highly mature and professional organization concentrating on matters like

Pollution Monitoring/Evaluation, Establishment of a knowledge Portal – a holistic website & a multitude of publications on Environment Issues, Initiating innovative benchmarks such as Green Rating points (GRP's) for the Industrial stakeholders, and immersion into other areas of direct, indirect and induced areas of environmental activism.

Several Environmental NGOs of today are partners with Government and Industrial bodies for the determination of a sustainable framework for further growth. Such NPO's render consultancy services to industrial conglomerates and corporate houses, and are vehemently immersed at various levels with public sector offices on casting of Environment friendly and sustainable development policies. Corporations are collaborating with ENGOS to determine, implement and evaluate their CSR policies. Utilizing the competencies of the media and the country's legal system, E- NGOs are now more efficient in discharging their functions. The dynamic roles played by Environmental

Not for Profit Organizations of today have more attributes pertaining to accountability and new challenges.

Managing E-NGO's, the working model

Majority of the Indian E-NGOs contain a definite goal and set of Environmental objectives they desire to attain. For ENGO's, it is of high importance to cumulate the relevant data precarious to the challenge as facts provide a strong base to represent any case/scenario that warrants judicial intervention. E-NGO's are dependent on Secondary and Primary sources of data to analyze the impending challenge(s). Repertoires and gazettes released by public agencies like the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Pollution Control Boards at the State and Central level, Conference papers and seminar presentations are the manifestations of secondary channels of data. At the same time, print and e-media publish pressing environmental issues which find interest among various ENGO's and entice the latter to take up the former as 'causes'.

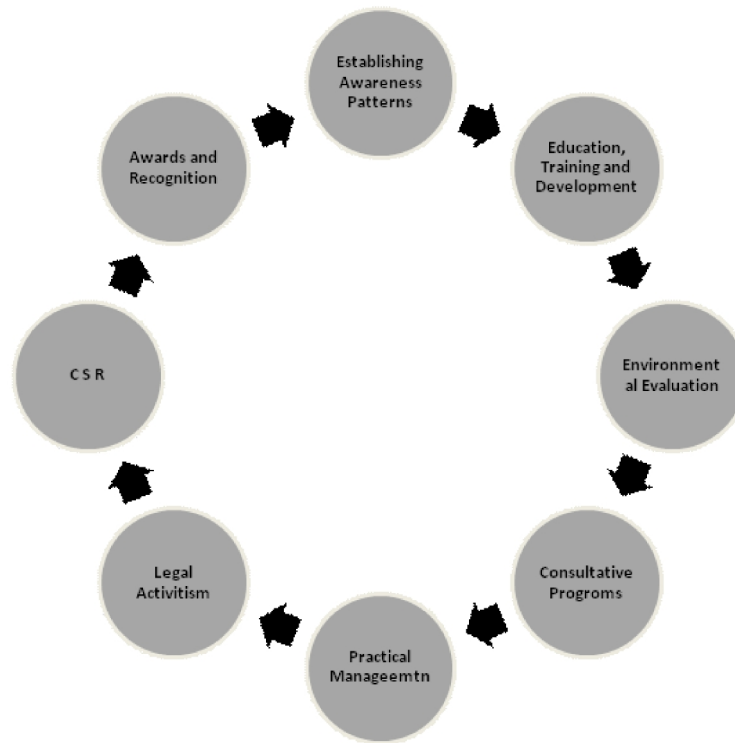


Fig. 1. adapted from Sandhu *et al.*, 2012, the process of E-NGO's

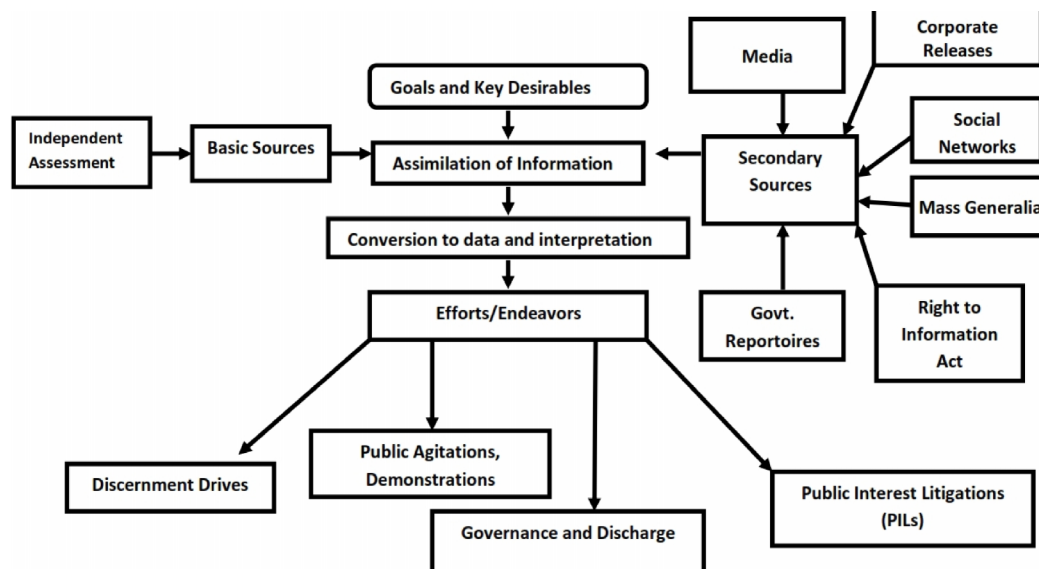


Fig. 2. Adaptation from DS' Working Model of a Typical Environmental NGO

Primary data is coagulated through popular efforts like filling of questionnaires, pro-active interaction with environmental stakeholders like native populace, private and public sectoral representatives and the general public. The Right to Information (RTI) Act is being extensively used to absorb data pertaining to Administrative Rules, Regulations and Policies on subjects like Environmental statues and their provisions, status of various environmental projects/schemes and government expenditure; it seems that ENGOs have turned The RTI into a powerful tool. The data gathering stage is followed by analyzing the information and concluding from the same. On the basis of the inferences and analytical study, ENGOs undertake action(s) which usually range from mobilizing opinions among the common public about Environmental Issues to initiating legal action against the violators through Public Interest Litigation (PIL) and re-instating the damages caused to the environment. Environmental NGOs involve in endeavors that comprise of Education, Training and Awareness to stakeholders, Environmental Vigilance, Protests (Eg: Chipko Movement, Ganga Bachao Andolan), Pro-active Effort (Eg: Cleaning River Ganges), or mobilizing support for Environmental Causes, or legal action against environmental offenders or PIL against laws and regulations that

deem detrimental towards the maintenance of environmental health (Fig. 2).

Utilization of RTI and PIL: prominent mediums for ENGOs

Public Interest Litigation is one of the key instruments being increasingly adopted by ENGOs to implement Environmental Statues, or usher in changes and amendments to existing laws regarding Environmental Issues. The popularity of PILs is the result of increased judicial momentum in the past decades. It has also been observed that PIL are incapable of meeting expectations in all the cases. Sometimes, the PIL pathway can delay the procedure of problem resolution. While, Courts and other judicial service offices encourage the approach through genuine litigation, on the other hand, there are several instances of bogus litigations raised in court to gratify selfish motives. Public Interest Litigations today, is the *vox populi* for the preservation and fight for environmental sustainability. The statement can be exemplified through the case story of the PIL filed by Tapas NGO in Delhi High Court which resulted in the banning of Polythene bags in Delhi from January 2009. The positive aspect was the introduction of bags/carriers made from bio-degradable

substances like Jute which facilitated the 'green change' in Delhi. Tapas NGO put 20000 posters and organized sit-ins at JantarMantar to create awareness against the harms of plastic bags (Joy, 2011).

RTI or Right to Information Act 2005 (RTI) empowers NGOs to source Information from a "Public Authority" (Government Departments). RTI Act renders ENGOs the ability to obtain relevant information such as knowledge on Laws and Government Regulations, actions pursued by public sectoral organization pertaining to environmental concerns. Through RTIs ENGOs draw the attention of the general public about the legal remedies, and any violations of law (or other statues having legal consequences) by individuals, groups or corporate houses, this instrument can be used as evidence of the tort. A case worth mentioning : during June 2010, a Not for profit organization operated by Rohit P. evoked an RTI Application with the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA) enquiring of their contingency Chemical Disaster Management Plan (CDMP). This was of vital importance due to the presence of a large number of Chemical industries in Gujarat State, any fallout could result into something of the magnitude of "The Bhopal Gas Tragedy" which took 30000 lives. The RTI intervention brought to the notice of all nodal agencies of the State Govt. (and public) that the GSDMA had no CDMP enforced to tackle a Chemical Disaster.

Coherence between The Administration and Environmental NGOs

A prime component in the field of environmental sustainability is the Government or Administration – irrespective of authority (Central or State). Organizations working towards the betterment of environment need to work in tandem with the respective *charge-de-affairs* like, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Central and State Pollution Control Boards/ Committees etc. Organizations that are devoted to environmental preservation need to partner with such public entities to achieve transparency and accountability, to form as focus groups for implementation of relevant regulations and acts, put efforts for providing solutions for Environment sustainability, to assist in the inclusion of general public in government

Programs/schemes, to provide technical information and expert assistance, and to act as evaluator of the scheme's/program's development and long term feasibility. The administration and Environment NGO should integrate with each other's processes to lay foundation for secure and green future. A right step had been taken in this regard by the Ministry of Environment and Forests In May 1992, an NGO and volunteer organizations cell was established within the portfolio to highlight the importance of existing and new NGOs. The sub-department provides single window services for all Not for profit related efforts. On a similar gesture, The West Bengal Pollution control Board (WBPCB) has determined 223 NGOs to create awareness regarding environmental causes and issues in state of Bengal. The state govt. frequently turns to E-NGO's for consultative purposes.

Coherence between Industry and E-NGOs

Corporate houses having industrial interests form the backbone for development of any socio-economic system. The environment has had tremendous negative impacts from industries like Mining, Chemicals and Fertilizers, Paper and Pulp, Leather, Steel and Cement. Un-challenged human activity like construction and mining in ecologically delicate areas, pollution of water and air, deforestation/loss of habitat and disposal of toxic wastes have compounded the risk towards environmental sustainability. In a bid to curb the negativities caused by industrial activities, the judiciary has enacted a number of legal statues like a) Ozone Depleting Substance (Regulation & Control) Rules, 2000 b) Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 c) Hazardous Waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 1989 d) Biomedical Waste (Management & Handling) Rules 1998. e) The Mines (Amendment) Bill, 2011. f) The Indian Fisheries Act, 1897 g) The Water (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 h) The Air (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 i) Indian Forest Act, 1927//Forest Conservation Act 1980 with amendments made in 1988. The problem persists even though Indian judiciary guarantees protection to the environment through the above mentioned acts. Industrial conglomerates and business houses tend to flout the enacted rules and regulations in order to achieve short term benefits. This is

where the critical position of ENGOs come into the fray, in enforcing the rule of the law pertaining to the protection of environment from myopic and self-centered designs of private corporations. Environmental NGO's can supplement the *suo-moto* actions committed by courts towards ensuring a greener and sustainable future. Both parties (E-NGOs and private industrial houses) have understood the potent of co-ordination to realize the larger opportunities to develop environmental friendly and sustainable products. Domestic and MNC organizations in India have strategically involved Environmental NGOs to study avenues pertaining to new product development, process optimization, project management and environmental planning. ENGO's are today outsourced by many corporations and industrial heads to handle Corporate Social Responsibilities. For example, PepsiCo India is collaborating with an NPO known as Exnora to turn waste materials into art forms in cities like Cuddalore and Panipat.

Media: Its role and impacts

ENGOs are co-operating with media and production houses to bring impending and existing environmental issues to the mainstream. Issues range from environmental degradation, climate change, dumping of toxic waste, Land degradation and environmental impact due to excessive mining, construction projects in eco-sensitive zones to air and water pollution by chemical and heavy industries all have the ability to capture the interest and motivation of readers and viewers thus becoming headlines. A fine example of the proactive role by the media would be of Lavasa Corporation associated with the creation of a planned Hill Resort-City. Attributing to the legal misconduct (violation of environment protection law) by the promoters of the proposed hill city, pressure was exerted by NGOs on the state administration so as to ensure the project was adhering to standards laid by the provisions of the concerned legal statute. This created a furor in the world of mass communication; this was the very first time in India that, environmental sensitivity defeated luxury-oriented-capitalist ignorance.

Goal 2: Illustrated in Table 1

Goal 3: Moral dogmas associated with ENGOs

The impact of NGOs and other voluntary Not for profit organizations in today's India is highly formidable. It is, but an imperative that ENGO's have found a more profound place in the vast expanse of 'environmental rights representation'. These organizations have paved the way for major amendments in environmental laws and are harbingers of changes in rules and regulation pertaining to environmental administration. At the same time, there is a grey side attached to the NGO growth trajectory in India. The issue of fund sourcing by NGOs still lack clarity and reports of 'dubious' activities raise eyebrows in many quarters of public and government tutelages. The genuinity and prudence of NGOs are being questioned due to unethical and frivolous activities being carried on by few organizations under the camouflage of Section 80 (c) and (g) of the IT Act. Among the stakeholders, few media and government outfits have been vocal in denouncing the same and have mooted measures to discipline and prevent unethical practices, apart from that power(s) and authorities of NGOs are to be curbed to check any kind of fall-out. It has been alleged that ENGOs involve themselves with causes that have immense propaganda potential instead of considering the more demanding issues. It has been observed that only a minute number of ENGOs in India pro-actively take up river cleaning drives or associate with the training or imparting knowledge to rural population in fields like sanitation and pollution which gives rise to a higher infant mortality rates.

ENGO's today are aiming at the audiences-ship of MNC and Industrial Conglomerates which provides a publicity leverage to the former and the media houses are very prompt to respond to situations which have corporate involvement. Perfect example being the hyper-bole attached to the issue of toxic chemicals discovered in aerated drinks, it made headlines and the media cashed in on the occurrence, apparently the issue of intoxication of ground water was marginalized. Therefore, the pesticide residue was also in drinking water and milk but MNCs were taken to task and not the Municipal

Table 1. Goal 2 - Comparative Analysis of India based popular Environmental NGO's/NPO's

Goal 2: Comparative Analysis of India based popular Environmental NGO's/NPO's		
Name	Area(s) of Concentration	Efforts/Influence
Greenpeace	Climate related issues, Nuclear disarmament, toxic waste disposal, Anti-commercial fishing/ whale killing, Environ-mental decadence.	The organization conducted a Round table of large electronic goods producers on the issue of e-waste. This resulted to the establishment of a legal decree governing the mngt of e-waste; It brought forth the existence & circulation of Genetically Modified eatables in India, this gave way to an investigation committed by Director general of Foreign Trade (DGFT).
Centre for Environmental Research and Education	Information Dissemination, Awareness, Training and Propagation of Environ-ment related issues	This ENGO was founded by conglomerates like Tata power, TCS, HL, IndusInd Bank ; It gauges and analyses carbon footprint trends & facilitates the ceiling of carbon emissions; Holds symposiums & workshops in many companies like Indian School of Business, Oberoi Hotels Corpn, DanikJagran on sustainable practices.
CSE India	Educational Drives on Environment, Sustainable Development Practices, Ozone Layer/Global Warming, Air Pollution, Water Resources and Administration, Training and Food Safety & Adulteration Prevention	In the year 2003, they made headlines by exposing the usage of insecticides and pesticides in aerated beverages like Pepsu and Coke-Cola, this prompted the government to established the Joint Parliamentary Commission on Health and Safety; Measures the degree of "green performance" by industries and provides Green Development, Food Safety & Ratings Points on the basis of the same; Created "Green Awards" to motivate sustainable tendencies among industries.
EXNORA International	Environmental, Preservation, Environmental Decadence, Waste Management.	Operates through Community centric organizations. It consists of 5000 units that cater to 30000 neighborhoods for the cleaning of streets and maintaining of environment.
WWF India	Environmental Conservation, Prevention of Non-judicious consumption, Curbing Water ,Air and Soil Pollution, Toxic Waste Management and Prevention of Irregularities in Disposal.	Catering to the preservation and conservation needs of vital regions such as Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, Sunderbans Tiger reserves; Established Centre for Environment Law (CEL) -involved in policy and analysis, campaigning, legal Intervention in Environmental Laws
CONSERVE	Waste Management/ Recycling/ Upcycling, Training, Development & Education.	Educated tons from Delhi's underprivileged section to clean the streets and off plastic and other un-biodegradable wastes and turn them into fancy handbags, toys and other articles. A process known as "Up-cycling"
Goa Foundation (G.F)	Environmental Development, Solid Waste Management, Statutory Responsibility	Sought numerous Public Interest Litigations in High Court and the Supreme Court on Environmental Reports; Launched a periodical Curry & Rice updating citizens'environment Report ; Instrumental In removing Plastic litter from Goan Environment; Part of Goa State coastal Zone Mgmt. Authority and Supreme Court monitoring committee on Hazardous wastes.
AWAAZ Foundation	Air Toxicity, Toxic Heavy Metal and Radioactive Substance Management, Protection of Trees and Forest Cover,Noise Pollution.	Lead to the amendment in policy of the State of Maharashtra pertaining to silicone Mining. ecologically critical regions, Boosted Infrastructure using alternative and sustainable technology use of natural & recycled sand.
Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)	Conserve Ecologically sensitive area, Land & water resources	Involved with 2208 rural based representative organizations across 27 districts across 6 states in preserving 1, 30,000 hectare of recyclable wasteland, degraded grazing lands and forest lands.
CPR Environmental education Centre (C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation)	Environmental Projects, Environmental Education, Training, Development.	Promotes environmental awareness, to produce and disseminate basic educational and reference material on environment and to take up environmental projects. It works in the field of environmental education. Publications: Books on environment, posters, audio cassettes, web site on environment education.
Kalpavriksh	Citizen Action group, Environmental Research, Formation of focus groups, Community/Youth Participation	It is a citizen's action group set up to inculcate understanding and concern on environmental issues, especially among the youth. It also aims to conduct research in environmental problems, to campaign on environmental issues and to evolve a holistic environmental perspective. It imparts environmental education in schools and colleges by forming a network of nature clubs, conducting bird watching expeditions and nature trails and has developed workbooks for the school level. Publications: The Little Green Book. Narmada - a campaign newsletter. What is that bird (An illustrated guide)

Corporation or government at large who needs to ensure clean drinking water for its citizens. The agitation revolving around the establishment of the Koodankulam Nuclear Plant serves as an exemplary situation where local NGO's are accused of seeking foreign aid to imbibe mass hysteria of a potential nuclear collapse among the natives. The hon'ble PM has also pointed out that "There are NGOs often funded from US and the Scandinavian countries, which are not fully appreciative of the development challenges that our country faces".

According to recent findings, developmental projects (in the form of key infrastructural areas like Power and Mining) to the tune of Rs 300 Billion remain stagnated largely due to superficial obstructions and confrontations by ENGOS; writer Chawla (2012) reinstates the same. For many commercial corporations, Not for Profit Organizations have also become clandestine instruments to ensure desired business outcomes and injure competitor health. The landmark judgment of Kalyaneshwari Vs Union of India where the plaintiff pressed charges against the defendant (business house having interest in asbestos production) of endangering health of humans through the production of asbestos sheets/products in the State of Gujarat. The litigation sought for the cease of production at the unit. The court on inquiry found that the case did not come under the purview of rules and regulations pertaining to human health but public safety was the *locus standi* of the issue. On further inspection it came under the notification of the court that the PIL was directed to create a demand for a substitute product of asbestos by a competing firm. The litigation was nullified and rejected. The Supreme Court penalized the litigant with a fine of Rs 100,000. Authors like Nair (2012) have noted that the use of unethical practices by a growing number of NGOs is a worrying trend, and needs to be checked

CONCLUSIONS

Not for profit organizations devoted to the cause of environment and sustainable development have surfaced as robust endeavors towards a sustainable future of India. The discussed working model stratifies the crucial role played

by elements such as RTI , PIL , media involvement and the partnership among government and Industry. The success of achieving the desired environmental goals and objectives depend on the synthesis and level of cordiality between the constituents of the working model. The analysis of the working of the few subject ENGOS help us to understand the developmental part played by the same in key delivery areas like policy implementation and amendment, co-operating with industries to curb carbon emissions, bringing awareness among the rural populace preservation of forests and optimizing on income-potent wastelands, shedding light on the concurrent issues of multi-modal pollution.

The fraudulence caused by NGOs through RTI and PIL mechanisms has marred the image of voluntary organizations, the menace that is prevalent has to be curbed through direct actions from legal bureaus, which is why all public agencies who serve as stakeholders of sustainable development have generated stricter approaches towards malicious litigations. The bond between ENGO's, Private Sector, Administration and general public is weakening largely due to the apparent information-cap imposed by NGOs in their workings and operations. Therefore, the onus comes on NGOs to revamp their systems, processes and revise their code of conduct and aim for a more integrated and holistic tendencies and vision towards sustainable development and environmental conservation.

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