



Education Empowerment and the Role of NGOs: A Case Study of Children Home in Senapati District, Manipur

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Abstract: Children are considered to be the most valuable asset of a nation as the future prospects of a nation lies in the hands of children. Education is one of the tools to enhance skills to adjust and adapt in the society, without which it could not be ensure a skilled being in the present society. Children who have lost their parents, vulnerable and marginalized ones, are supported by NGOs, providing a place along-with education to secure life by empowering them towards self-reliance for a better future. The paper "Education Empowerment and Role of NGOs: A Case Study of Children Home in Senapati District, Manipur" attempt to study the educational services and facilities provided by the NGOs and the challenges faced by both the NGOs and the children. The paper is descriptive in nature and tools like interview method were employed for in-depth study.

Keywords: *Children home, NGOs, Education, Empowerment.*

1. Introduction

Education played a leading role for a better life of children and a powerful tool for empowerment. Empowerment emerged from social and educational psychology as a 'strategy for individuals to retain control of key aspects of their lives' (Cunningham et al, 1996), henceforth, education is a fundamental human right and has implication for an individual's

futures. Education helps in developing the skills, knowledge and confidence and require to reach ones' potentiality to participate fully in society, breaking the poverty cycle, influences in reducing inequality, and promote long term development in the society. It is also an effective tools for empowerment providing people with the knowledge, skills and confidence, that is, required to improve individual lives and contributes to the community (Mahanta, 2024). Accordingly, India's top priority is to provide education to all the children, including children of below poverty line. As India is overly populated and giving proper education to all the children, is one of the burdens for government policy makers. Civil Societies, like NGOs had ensured to give the rights to education especially to those students who belong to the marginalized and vulnerable group and they are working at the grass root level to educate those children (Yasmin, 2022). Presently, a numerable NGOs has been engaged in the field of educational empowerment for children in different parts of India.

1.1 Education and Role of NGOs

NGOs played a significant role in various issues including empowering through education. Tandon examined the current status of NGOs in Indian context, expressing that India has phenomenally growth in the number of NGOs and its network. There is a wide variety of NGOs and its network which are addressing both traditional and emerging development and welfare issues and concerns (Tandon, 1997). International organizations, like the World Bank and the United Nations, have also focussed on women's issues, especially the empowerment of poor women in rural areas. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, non-governmental organizations moved beyond the traditional focus of women's health and education to addressing the underlying causes of deprivation through the promotion of economic and social empowerment (Narayan, 2002; Sadik,1998.). NGOs have strived to strengthen the country's existing educational system as to majority of the students should get free education and raising awareness to educate all the children from the grass root level, giving a better life for the children. Consequently, NGOs' education programmes are more likely to attract female students than governmental operated schools (Sukontamarn, 2005). Sukontamarn studied how the entry of NGOs in primary education has affected educational outcomes of girls, and examines the mechanisms which account for the relative performance of non-governmental organization versus state schools in improving female educational outcomes. It revealed that the entry of NGO schools has especially increased girls' enrolment as compared to boys, 90%

of students who complete their primary schooling, they continue into secondary education and has been instrumental in referring female students from poorer families in schools. Jai Hind

Vishwakarma and Sonia Sthapak (2017) also stated that NGO's definitely playing an active role in the educational development of the society, especially with reference to rehabilitation of special need children. They suggest that NGOs have a great opportunity to develop all the sectors of education and played an important role to maintain the standards of education. Hence, it is imperative to ask questions, how do NGOs empower the needy children? In what ways do the NGOs empowered it? What are the challenges faced by both inmates and the organisation? Therefore, the present study took up a case study on two NGOs, namely, Manipur North Economic Development Association (MANEDA) and Compassion Children Ministry (CCM), that facilitated children home for needy children imparting and empowering the children through education to various communities in Senapati town of Senapati District, Manipur. The paper "Education Empowerment and Role of NGOs: A Case Study of Children Home in Senapati District, Manipur" attempts to study the cases of educational services and facilities provided by the NGOs and the challenges faced by both the NGOs and the children. The study is descriptive in nature, exploring the Children Homes run by Manipur North Economic Development Association (MANEDA) and The Compassion Children Ministries (CCM) through observation and interviewed to both administrators and children for in-depth understanding. Besides, secondary sources from books and journals, annual reports of the organisations also used to analyse the study.

1.3 Manipur North Economic Development Association (MANEDA)

MANEDA is a non-profit and non-Governmental Organisation, based in Senapati town of Manipur, India. It is established in the year 1991, registered under Manipur Societies Registration Act 1989, No. 316 of 30th Nov. 1991, and of various Acts and Societies. The mission of MANEDA is 'to work with the marginalized and vulnerable group of the society to eradicate poverty by overcoming the injustice and inequality exerted on them/ that causer it'. It also works on the issues of livelihood, disability, health and primary education, environment, gender and peace promotion. 'Hope Home' is one of the projects under MANEDA, providing home to girls who are orphaned, semi-orphaned, abandoned children or those in need of care and protection, since 2013. The home is situated at Katomei Centre Village which is approximately a kilometre away from Senapati District Headquarters. The objectives of Hope Home are to empower vulnerable and marginalized girls under the age of 18 to break the cycle

of poverty and inequality, enabling them to exercise their rights and live with dignity, thereby contributing to a more just and equitable society. The home is supported by the Social Welfare Department, Government of Manipur, under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE), Government of India. During field visit, 62 girls were provided shelter and cared by the Superintendent, Case Worker, Councillor and a Warden besides monitored by the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Senapati, District Police, and various district stakeholders of the district. The Hope Home facilitated food and shelter. It has one cook, a local dweller woman, who cook food for the children and a women warden who supervise daily activities to the children. Children up to the 8th standard are sent to government school, Katomei Centre Upper Primary Government School, however, the children of Class 9th and 10th standard have been sent to the private schools which are located in the town. It also facilitates Mathematics and Science subject teachers in every working Saturday, hired for Class 9th and 10th standard children as a tutor in the home by the organization.

1.4 The Compassion Children Ministries (CCM)

CCM is a voluntary and a non-profit organization founded in 2005 and registered as a society under the Government of Manipur. CCM has been working for empowering vulnerable children and widows living in the contexts of poverty, providing holistic development for women, orphan children and the young ones in Northeast India. In order to meet the physical, educational, spiritual, and social needs of the vulnerable indigenous tribal women and children, the ministries meticulously organized programmes and activities, like Teacher's Day celebration, Fathers' Day and Mothers' Day celebration, Summer Camp, Picnic, Children's Day and Independence Day celebration and so on. The mission of CCM is to create a safe and healthy environment where underprivileged children learn to understand their value, empowered to pursue their dreams and to provide quality education, food and shelter, personal development goals, life skills preparation, and options for vocational training. Further, it also fostering to transform underprivileged children into healthy and responsible members of the society. Under the policy of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child, the Compassion Children Ministries also ensures underprivileged children to facilitates, such as, Family Environment, Stable, Loving and Nurturing Environment, Healthcare and Nutrition. Clean water and Electrical Power, Education, Equality, Guidance, Heard and Participate,

Citizenship, Abuse and Neglect Prevention, Dignity and Freedom and Spiritual Development. CCM projects related to children home and education empowerment are as follows:

(a) CCM caring home for Girls: CCM home provides separate bedding for each girl and presently, 56 girls are accommodated. The project is recognized by the Social Welfare Department, Govt of Manipur, under the ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India.

(b) CCM Caring home for Boys: It is a separate dormitory for boys furnished with good facilities and 52 boys have accommodated presently. It is supported by CCM itself without any aids from any agencies with the objectives to nurture every child and provide them with care and protection; and to indiscriminately help children who have been orphaned, abandoned, abused, are at risk, destitute or who are differently-abled particular to boys.

(c) Compassion Residential Academy: CCM has their own residential school in their own campus and was designed to facilitate the needy children, such as orphans, the abandoned and surrendered, and those who have dropped out of school. The academy provides quality education between the age of 5-14 years. The objectives of the academy have to provide free education and rehabilitation; support holistic development of children through educational, social, emotional, and spiritual programs that promote their physical and mental well-being and contribute to their future success; empower children to break the cycle of poverty and injustice by providing them with the tools, knowledge and skills, needed for a brighter future.

2. Children's Home

The term Children's Home has many meanings to individuals and organisations. According to inter-mission India, it is a place, "children are given holistic care, including safe living accommodation, nutritionally balanced food, constant health care, recreational and cultural activities, counselling, personality development, mentoring, life-coping skills and quality education along with uniforms, clothes, and books for children from very poor backgrounds and broken families", who are either orphans or children of single parents (<https://inter-mission.in>). It becomes a residential institution and a place for the vulnerable children whose parents are deceased, single parent who cannot support their children financially. Cares are given to every child which include quality education, safe accommodation, healthcare, recreational and cultural activities, personality development, counselling etc. providing essential services and support, to children under the age of 18 years.

Family breakdown, abuse or neglect, behavioural difficulties, risk of giving missing, transition and rehabilitation etc. are some of the reasons for children to reside in children's home. (<https://www.ajg.com>). However, in the study, the case of CCM's children's homes, some individuals, like orphan, continued to reside and accommodates even after 18 years of age, based on government provision. It provides proper education without any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, religion, etc. and make a self-reliant individual in their stay. 'Hope Home' is one of the Children's Home under MANEDA, for girls, and 'CCM Caring Home for Girls' and 'CCM Caring Home for Boys' are the Children's Homes run by CCM. The case study of these Homes are as follows:

2.1 Cases of Hope Home (MANEDA)

- (1) A girl, 14 years of age from Kom community, joined in this year and studied in class 8th standard, Katomei Centre Upper Primary Government School, reveals that her mother pass away last year and her father sometimes resort to violence when he was drunk. She has five siblings living in deteriorated condition. Knowing their conditions, her aunt brought her to this home for her safety, education and future career.
- (2) Another girl from Tangkhul community who is studying in 3rd standard stated that both parents are alive but they are poor and her parents have no option and kept her to this home. She aims to become a teacher. Every year, the organization celebrated her birthday which was her excitement.
- (3) Priya (name changed), a 13 years old girl from Maram community, is a determined and ambitious student currently studying in class 6th standard. Despite facing financial hardship, she dreams of becoming a doctor and help the poor and needy people. She comes from a large family with 8 siblings and her father pass away when she was small. Therefore, her mother alone could not afford her education. However, her vision for learning is unwavering. So, in pursuit of her dream, she made a hard decision to leave her family and study in children's home, where she could continue her studies. Though she often feels homesick especially during her mother's visits, she remains focussed on her goal. She had learnt how to speak English only after staying in children's home and she really enjoy spending time with her friends. She believed that education is the key to transform life and is determined to overcome every obstacle in her path. With her resilience and dedication, she aspires to serve the society as a compassionate doctor, bringing hope and care to those in needs.

- (4) Puja (name changed), a Maram girl resides in the children's home, has three siblings. Despite her challenges, she remains dedicated in her studies and is currently studying in class 4th standard. She stayed in this home after losing her father as her mother was unable to support her education. Though she deeply misses her mother, she remains determined to pursue her studies in children's home. Occasionally, her mother visits and gives her a small amount of money to buy eatables. She finds joy in the children's home, yet she never lost hope to become an engineer and aspires to support her family and help needy people too.

2.2 Cases of Caring Home for Girls and Boys (CCM)

- (1) A boy from Nepali community, studying in class 10th standard of a private school in Senapati town is supported by CCM. He stayed since 2017. He reveals that he doesn't have any idea of parents. He had five brothers; two of them stayed in the same Compassion Children Ministry, Karong, Senapati. Presently, one brother engaged as a truck driver and the other in Bangalore for further studies. Further, he states that he doesn't have any idea of the rest of his brothers. All his expenses are sponsored and borne by the Ministry.
- (2) A boy of Poumai Naga tribe, who is studying in class 12th standard of science, reveals that he has parents but could not support his study. He stayed since 2018 and has a plan of taking coaching after 12th standard to absorb in government job in order to support for himself. He is willing to help the ministry. He stated that he got free education supported by the ministry except pocket money sent time-to-time by his parents.
- (3) Tina (name changed), a bright and determined young girl from Tangkhul community is one of the residents in children's home (CCM). She hails from Ukhrul district and her parents divorced when she was very young, leaving her under the sole care of her father. She has been staying in children home for the last five years and presently appearing Board (matric) examination with great dedication. She also states that her father cannot provide all her needs and her aunt arranged her to stay in children home to get education and achieve to be someone in life. Her aim in life is to become a doctor and determines to serve the poor and needy people in the society, providing them with medical care as her community is still lacking behind. Despite the challenges, Tina remained focused on her goals, determined to create a better future for herself in particular and for the society in general. She stated, she enjoyed her life in children's home, however, the things she lacks is in accessing modern technology and suggesting to have smart class rooms to enhance her studies and learning more efficiently.

(4) Rekha (name changed), a young girl from Poumai community, resides in CCM for the past nine years, stated that she lost her mother at birth, the time of her younger sister was born, later her father got remarried with another. Due to her family circumstances, her relatives arranged and sent her to the children's home for studies when she was only at the age of 5 years. Currently, she is pursuing a bachelor degree of science in zoology and is deeply committed to her studies. She aspires to continue her studies in order to become a self-reliant individual. She wishes to have a well-equipped library with more collection of books in children's home, so that she can spent more time in reading.

3. Discussion

From the case study of 'Hope Home' (a project of MANEDA), most of the inmates are minor girls studying in upper primary, raised by the single parents. Due to financial constraints, their parents are unable to send them to school for their studies leading them to stay in children home though they are still in need of parental care. In such cases, the warden takes the role of a care giver along with their co-workers, providing necessary support and guidance. Children are well trained especially their discipline and manner. Children have strong attachment Children's Home as their parental home. The warden deals the children with kindness and warmth embracing cares in fostering a respectful and dutiful environment in every situation.

CCM's Compassion Residential Academy, a residential school endorses to impart quality education between the age of 5-14 years, that is, up to eight standards, providing free education for needy children. Despite the poverty, challenging and remote geographical terrain, malnutrition, widespread illiteracy and ethnic clashes between various groups and tribes in the district of Senapati district of Manipur, CCM has initiated Children's Home and Residential School to impart education, giving a ray of hope to live and empower the children. For higher studies, children are sent to various schools and colleges borne by the Ministry, and few girls and boys have been graduated. Adolescents, both boys and girls, who are pursuing their higher studies have a strong determination for their careers. They are trained and given responsibilities, such as splitting of firewood, helping to look after piggery farm, leading the junior in any activities in the children's home in their leisure time. The challenges of the ministry are financial crisis, especially the Boys' Home, as it is self-supported home without external aids. Besides, indiscipline related to children, such as run-away from home despite of giving various counselling, and a mindset to discontinue their studies are some occurrences to

be mentioned. Grown-up boys and girls have also a risk, like they even choose to abandon their studies, preferring in favour of earning money. Such situation becomes the challenges for the proprietor to handle it. However, children are guided patiently, encouraging them to stay with focus in their education and not to be distracted by other pursuits.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

From the discussion, NGOs definitely played a crucial role for the needy children, providing children's home and ensuring better educational opportunities. Such NGOs' efforts should be praised, recognized and regarded as role model. Jai Hind Vishwakarma & Sonia Sthapak (2017) appraised the NGOs for giving such great opportunities of education that played an important role by maintaining standards and quality education. However, all children home run by NGOs does not provide schools for children, like in the case of MANEDA's Hope Home, children are sent to government schools upto the eight standards and to private schools, especially for higher classes. Further, to impart quality education, besides infrastructure, it also requires trained professional man-power and adequate funds. Mazibuko analysed the role of non-governmental organisations in educational advancement in developing countries, stating that in most cases, NGOs depend on donation for the resources, required to perform their functions (Mazibuko, 2000). However, it is evident in case of Caring Home for Boys, run by CCM, has self-sustained children's home, managed by its own expenses through revenue integrated from livestock farming - piggery farm, CCM fresh Dairy - produced both for milk and meat, and organic kitchen garden. Here, one can perceive that NGOs have become a role model of educational empowerment, helping local people to alleviate in the field of education and to generate income sources of self-sustenance. There are many NGOs that receives funding from the government, even from international levels, however, there is, like CCM, run by an individual without any aid from the government with persistent effort and struggles to help the needy children. We should not ignore to support such organisation either financially or morally as it will have a huge impact towards a healthy and sustainable future generation in the society.

Moreover, it is evident in the study that small town, like Senapati, there is increasing number of orphans, abandoned child and needy people. In this fast-changing world, it is the need of an hour and our responsibility to care for needy children to rehabilitate, and need to increase the number of children's home even in rural areas. With the impact of globalisation, it has been stretched even to rural hinterland. Therefore, there is a need for such children home

even in the rural areas with educational facilities to empower life skills. However, these can be achieved through involvement of various stakeholders, like local leaders, civil organisations along with government's participation to enhance and ensure the wellbeing of persons, such as orphans, abandon child, person with disabilities, without leaving solely to the government and families with single parents. It is imperative to ensure financial assistance from various agencies including government, well-wishers, and even international agencies for smooth and effective functioning, otherwise it will be defunct even the existing organisations who are really working for such cases.

In this study, it covers only two NGO's children's home. There are many such NGOs that empower children through education with-or-without government aids. Therefore, the researchers encourage for further studies on the issues of NGOs' roles in education from different parts of the country by analysing how it empowered the children through education, and also to know the challenges faced by them.

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