NGOs and Tribal Development: A Multiple Case Study Analysis from Palghar District

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Abstract

Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) play an important role in addressing deep-rooted challenges such as marginalisation, that hamper the socio-economic progress of the tribal community in Palghar district of Maharashtra. They, in collaboration with the (state) government, serve as catalysts that can bring about systemic change. This study uses the multi-case study approach to examine NGOs working in the education sector and those that provide livelihood interventions in Palghar district (Maharashtra). Insights were drawn through semi-structured interviews, and a comprehensive analysis of documents and data mined by combing through relevant organisational websites. This paper has identified the significance of NGOs operating at the grassroots level, and that employ participatory approaches for tribal development. It also points out several key determinants—reach, accountability, transparency, management effectiveness, program efficacy, network proficiency, board competence, legality, and reputation—that shape their effectiveness, and suggests that these factors influence the overall impact and success of an NGO in addressing the challenges faced by the tribal population. This paper also strives to throw light on the intricate dynamics that contribute to the effectiveness of

NGOs in promoting development and assuaging the socio-economic plight of the tribal communities in the region.

Tribals in Maharashtra

Tribal communities have been an integral part of the Indian subcontinent for centuries and make up 8.6% of India's population. Each state has its own diverse set of tribes with unique cultures, languages, and traditions. Maharashtra, one of India's most populous states, is also home to a significant tribal population. Tribal communities in Maharashtra, collectively known as the 'Adivasis,' make up approximately 9–10% of the state's total population. These communities are primarily found in the hilly and forested regions of the Western Ghats, the Satpura range, and the Gondwana region. Each tribe has its unique cultural practices, festivals, and rituals. For instance, the Warli tribe is renowned for its wall paintings that depict daily life using simple geometric shapes. The Gonds are known for their Gond art, which is rich in detail and colour.

The tribal communities in Maharashtra have, historically, been marginalised, and have had their lands and resources exploited. They still face challenges like poverty, lack of education, and limited access to healthcare. While these communities struggle with issues related to displacement due to infrastructure projects, conflicts over forest rights, and the threat of losing their cultural identity in the face of rapid modernisation, there are ongoing efforts by the government and NGOs to improve their socio-economic status. The introduction of the Forest Rights Act (2006) was a significant step towards recognising the rights of the tribal communities over forest lands and resources.

Palghar is a Municipal Council city situated in the Thane district of Maharashtra. The district is home to a network of 1007 villages and 467-gram panchayats. Palghar, Vasai, Talasari, Wada, and Dahanu areas are home to industrial units producing textiles, chemicals, and steel. While in the forested mountainous regions of Jawhar, Mokhada, and Vikramgad, agriculture is the predominant economic activity, and they grow rice, finger millets and turmeric.

Thus, the primary occupations of many tribes in this region are farming, labour work, and forest produce collection. Over time, due to various socio-economic pressures, many have had to migrate to urban areas in search of work, leading to disruptions in their traditional way of life. Literacy rates among the tribal communities in Palghar have historically been low. The Katkari tribe is one of the 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) recognised in India, predominantly

inhabiting Maharashtra. They were nomadic forest dwellers, unfortunately categorised under the British Raj's Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, a negative label that has persisted to this day.

Their livelihood was traditionally dependent on the forest's resources, involving hunting and fishing. However, the rising tide of deforestation and urbanization has disrupted their lifestyle, compelling many to switch to manual labour. Being a PVTG, the Katkaris grapple with numerous socioeconomic adversities, including limited literacy, inadequate healthcare, landlessness, and marginalization. They also confront discrimination and exploitation, frequently forced to work as bonded laborers under grueling circumstances.

Tribal Development

In the context of tribal development, it is important to perceive development as a transformative process marked by rises in income, consumption, and accessibility to vital services like food, healthcare, and education (Behera, 2019; Kapoor et al., 2021). The term 'development' resonates differently within tribal communities compared to mainstream perspectives. Two distinct strategies were proposed for the development of tribal communities. One was a policy of segregation to preserve tribal identity and heritage by minimising external interventions. The second was the An alternative approach that recommended the integration of tribes into the broader national framework. Post-independence, numerous programs were instituted, leveraging special provisions in the Constitution of India, to address the socio-economic development of scheduled tribes (Dungdung & Pattanaik, 2020). Recognising the necessity for a more targeted focus on tribal development, a pioneering method called the Tribal Sub-Plan Approach was introduced. This marked a shift from a sectoral approach to an integrated area development perspective. Key elements of this consolidated Tribal Sub-Plan strategy encompass a region-and community-specific approach, implemented in a balanced and cohesive operational area. This approach takes into account the resources and requirements of local populations, reflecting a comprehensive and integrated strategy for tribal development (Puvvada, 2018).

Developmental Challenges

The tribal communities of Palghar have been rooted in their surrounding natural habitats. Their very existence is dependent on the resources of the surrounding land, and forests. These forests are reservoirs of non-timber goods such as honey, bamboo, medicinal herbs, among others, serving as economic pillars for these communities. However, urbanisation and infrastructure projects have curtailed their forest access. In the tribal region of Palghar, a substantial segment of the

population is poverty-ridden. The government has allocated specific lands for agricultural activities, and the sale of these lands is strictly forbidden. The push towards agriculture has its merits, especially from a food security standpoint.

Despite Maharashtra being one of the more developed states in India, certain districts within it struggle to effectively address the issues of hunger and malnutrition. Palghar has been identified as one of the districts with low food security within Maharashtra. According to a study conducted by Kakone, Dahanu emerges as the only tehsil deemed most secure in terms of food security. Talasari, Vada, and Palghar fall into the moderate category of food security, while Vasai and Vikramgad are classified in the low category. Mokhada and Jawhar are identified as the least food secure tehsils within the Palghar district. Notably, the average food security index for Palghar district stands at 0.32, marking it as the lowest in the entire state of Maharashtra (Pravin Kokane, 2019)(Dungdung & Pattanaik, 2020).

The majority of the padas (villages) occupied by tribals in districts like Jawhar, Mokhada, and Vikramgad are in the forest region, hence lack paved roads. This makes it inaccessible to vehicles during the monsoon season. Some villages are even without electricity. The area's medical facilities include one rural hospital, seven public health centers, 28 sub-centers, and one mobile squad. However, these facilities are situated 5 to 15 km away from the padas, with no reliable transportation system in place. Of the total 272 padas, only 202 have primary schools, which means children aged 6 to 10 from the others have to walk one to three kms to get to a school. The region lacks industries or significant commercial centers, which forces the population to rely predominantly on agriculture for subsistence. However, the hilly terrain limits the cultivable land to 76817 acres, a substantial portion of which is not fertile enough.

The main occupation of the tribes is agriculture and they lack other alternative sources of income (Deshmukh et al., 2020). Agriculture here is rain-dependent due to the absence of substantial irrigation facilities, resulting in farmers typically growing only one crop. Studies indicate that each family has a cultivable land holding of one to three acres. Given that the rainy season in India only lasts a few months, farmers often migrate to cities seeking labour work during the off-agriculture season to support their families back home. The economic difficulties aggravate the challenges faced by the community as their average annual income is less than one lakh rupees (Chavan, 2016). This limits their capacity to fulfil even basic needs. Also, the absence of alternative sources of income further increases their struggles (A. Singh & Sadangi, 2012). The concept of saving is not well developed and they do not engage with traditional banking systems (Viswanadha Gupta, 2018). The lack of a savings culture suggests that

community members might not set aside a portion of their income for future needs or unforeseen circumstances (Ashtankar et al., 2019). Instead, their financial transactions and savings occur within informal networks or through non-banking channels. This financial behaviour can be attributed to varied factors, including limited awareness of formal banking procedures, availability of banking facilities, trust and cultural practices (Ashtankar et al., 2019).

Despite Maharashtra's status as the most developed state that contributes over Rs 1,400 crore to CSR funding (CSR Outlook Report, 2022), certain districts with tribal populations within the state continue to report instances of malnutrition (Ghosh & Varerkar, 2019). The reasons for this crisis are limited income sources (S. S. Singh & Sharma, 2019), reliance on traditional livelihoods (Surve et al., 2022), and insufficient access to nutritious diet (Jain & Narnaware, 2020). As these tribals live deep within the forests, access to timely healthcare intervention is limited. The state has introduced many measures to combat child malnutrition in these tribal areas. This includes the MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME (MGNREGS) to provide year-round employment to tribals and increase their income for improved food and nutrition accessibility (Garje R, 2022).

Child deaths, owing to chronic illnesses and undernourishment[1,2] are a reality in Palghar, which is situated barely three hours away from Mumbai. Activists put this down mainly to the annual pattern of migration for work. There is also a lack of awareness regarding the accessibility of government schemes noted among the tribal migrants. Land rights have been a major concern for the tribals of Palghar. The Forest Rights Act (2006) has been pivotal in recognising the rights of the tribal communities over their ancestral lands and forest resources. Despite this, many tribes continue to face challenges in getting their rights recognised. They continue to face eviction threats due to infrastructure and other development projects. Growing urbanisation and external cultural influences threaten the unique traditions and identities of tribal communities, such as the Warli tribe. Land alienation, coupled with changing agricultural patterns, has made many tribal families economically vulnerable. Access to healthcare facilities remains a challenge, leading to higher morbidity rates.

Government Intervention

The Indian government has implemented several welfare initiatives like the Thakkar Bappa Yojana (TBY), also known as the Thakkar Bappa Integrated Tribal Habitation Improvement Programme Scheme . It was launched by the Tribal Development Department of the Government of Maharashtra in 2004–05, for the

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[1] https://www.mid-day.com/sunday-mid-day/article/why-palghars-children-continue-to-die-23308209
[2] https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1945843

development of tribal habitations in the state through community-level projects. As a significant number of tribals work at brick-kilns, the government has introduced the Maharashtra Building & Other Construction Workers Welfare Schemes. Additionally, an eSHRAM portal has been launched to establish a National Database of Unorganized Workers (NDUW), which will be linked with Aadhaar for comprehensive coverage.

Tribal Education

Education is always seen as a catalyst for the transformation of tribal communities. It plays a pivotal role as an agent of development and encourages the economic progress of these communities. All learners, including tribal children, have the right to a balanced education that prepares them for effective participation in society (Ministry of Education, 1993). This holistic learning consists of building knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values in five different domains of development, i.e., cognitive, physical, cultural, interpersonal (social), and intrapersonal (emotional, moral, aesthetic and spiritual). It equips tribes with the knowledge and skills to face the evolving challenges of life.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has been mandated with the integrated socio-economic development of scheduled tribes in the country. With a primary focus on addressing the educational needs of tribal children, the ministry has established residential schools known as ashram schools. Nationwide, there are 892 centrally-sanctioned ashram schools offering education till secondary level, along with boarding and lodging to children in the tribal regions. The ministry has also started 197 Eklavya Model Residential Schools, modelled after Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) and Navodaya Vidyalayas, to contribute to educational advancement, holistic development and self-reliance of tribal communities.

Despite government initiatives, the educational status of children among Palghar tribals has not improved significantly. There are many factors that contribute to the underperformance of tribal students, with language emerging as a significant hurdle in their education. The curriculum and teaching modules provided to them are primarily presented in official or regional languages, creating a barrier to effective learning. Another challenge is survival, which leads them to prioritise immediate needs over formal education. The economic constraints of tribal parents often prevent students from attending school. Children are regarded as supplementary contributors to income and are assigned household chores. This situation is especially applicable to female students, who not only handle

household duties but also shoulder the responsibility of caring for younger siblings. The absence of speedy economic returns from education makes tribal parents place their children in remunerative employment. The need for immediate financial support outweighs the perceived long-term benefits of education.

Schools in tribal areas face challenges due to insufficient infrastructure and essential facilities. Even the regular absenteeism of teachers significantly impacts the quality of education. The short supply of study resources and learning materials, the substandard condition of basic sanitary facilities hinders the learning experience and impacts the motivation of students. Hence, there is a need to enhance educational quality, teacher engagement, and infrastructural development in tribal schools. This can ensure a conducive and equitable learning environment for students in marginalised communities.

Role of NGOs

Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) play a supportive and complementary role to government initiatives in the development sector, but cannot replace them. The concept of an NGO is multidimensional in form and operation. Even the government is looking forward to the GO-NGO partnership bringing results in all its development initiatives. Several ministries, departments, and organisations of the central government are a part of this partnership system. Some such well-known partnerships include the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Women & Child Development, Department of Higher Education, Department of School Education and Literacy, National Aids Control Organization, Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology, Central Social Welfare Board, and Department of Youth Affairs and many more. NGOs play a pivotal role in enhancing the welfare of tribal communities in India. They supplement the efforts of the government, are innovative, flexible and can develop mechanisms to address the needs and aspirations of the tribal people. They operate with little investment, build confidence in people, and ensure greater participation in the community.

 NGOs are voluntary organisations with a mandate to yield valuable results while channeling private efforts for the promotion of social welfare. They are expected to have a democratic and decentralized approach to economic and social development. They can add value, satisfy genuine needs and fill gaps in knowledge (Vannucci,1989). Yet, many people are sceptical about the nature and purpose of these voluntary organisations. Participatory approaches and the

presence of self-motivated and service-oriented people are assets to these organisations. Aids and finances also play an important role in their functioning. NGOs can be classified on the basis of their orientation—charitable, service, participatory, and empowering. Sinha (1989) categorised NGOs into seven groups based on their approaches. They were grouped into charity, welfare, relief, rehabilitation, services, development of the socioeconomic environment, and development of human beings.

Factors Contributing to the Rise of NGOs

Many NGOs have seen unprecedented growth in the recent past and contributed to societal transformation. The trend of rise of NGOs in India has been influenced by many factors, including increased funding by international donors to local NGOs and increased momentum in civil society activism.

Research Objectives

Palghar, a district in Maharashtra, is home to a substantial tribal population. These communities, with their rich cultural heritage and traditions, have long been in need of infrastructural and social development. NGOs have been instrumental in bridging the gap between the tribal communities and the benefits of modern development. Their interventions are rooted in a deep understanding of tribal cultures, ensuring that development is both sustainable and respectful of traditions. This study is aimed at understanding the role of NGOs in tribal development in the Palghar district. The following sub-objectives were analysed:

- To study the aims and objectives of different NGOs for sustainable tribal development
- To analyse the contributions of NGOs towards tribal development in Palghar district
- To what extent are NGOs effective in improving the lives of beneficiary communities in Palghar District
- To identify potential opportunities that exist for NGOs, to support tribal populations

Research Methodology

The given study is an attempt to analyse how local NGOs have evolved over a period of time to undertake the issue of tribal development. The study was based on an in-depth case study approach to examine (1) the role of NGOs in solving the problems of tribal communities and (2) how grassroots NGOs expand their capacities and resources to consolidate their position in the development regime,

and (3) to what extent these NGOs were able to make a difference in the life of the people. A purposive sampling strategy was used due to the narrow focus of the study.
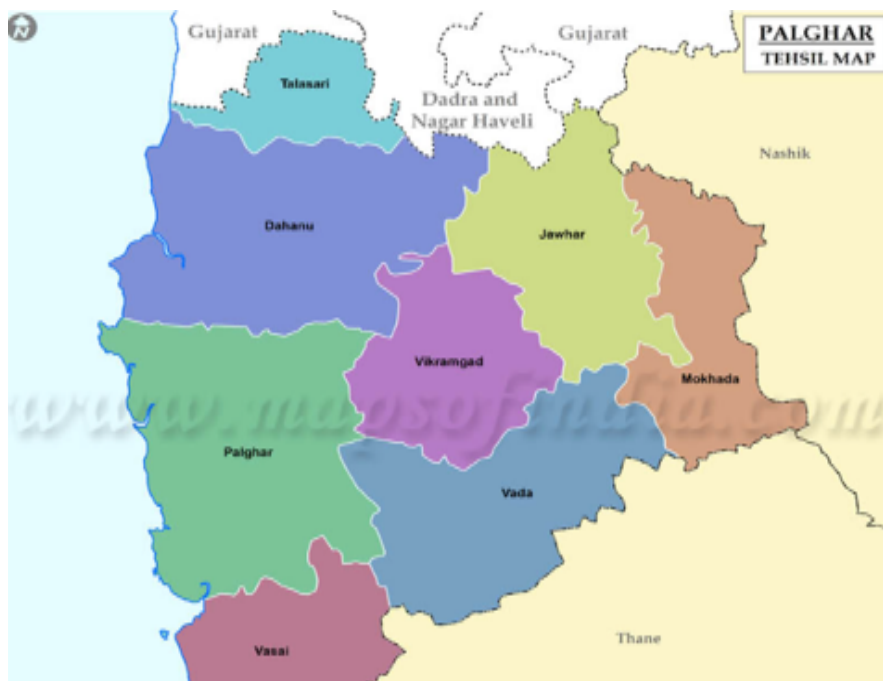
Taluka	Percentage of scheduled tribes to total population
Vasai Taluka	17.32
Palghar Taluka	35.12
Wada Taluka	48.85
Vikramgarh Taluka	54.4
Dahanu Taluka	64.93
Talasari Taluka	88.31
Jawhar Taluka	88.98
Mokhada Taluka	92.62

A systematic approach was adopted to create a list of NGOs actively involved in tribal development in Palghar district. The initial step involved using Google and snowball referencing from individuals actively engaged in Palghar to create a comprehensive list of NGOs. The inclusion criteria for these NGOs consisted of being a registered entity and showing a commitment to tribal development. Subsequently, a total of ten NGOs meeting these criteria were identified. Out of which, eight were selected for further study. These organisations were contacted, and informed consent was obtained for their participation prior to their inclusion in the study. The selected NGOs were characterised based on attributes, as outlined in Table 1. The cases were carefully selected to represent diverse initiatives focusing on livelihood generation and primary education for children within Palghar district.
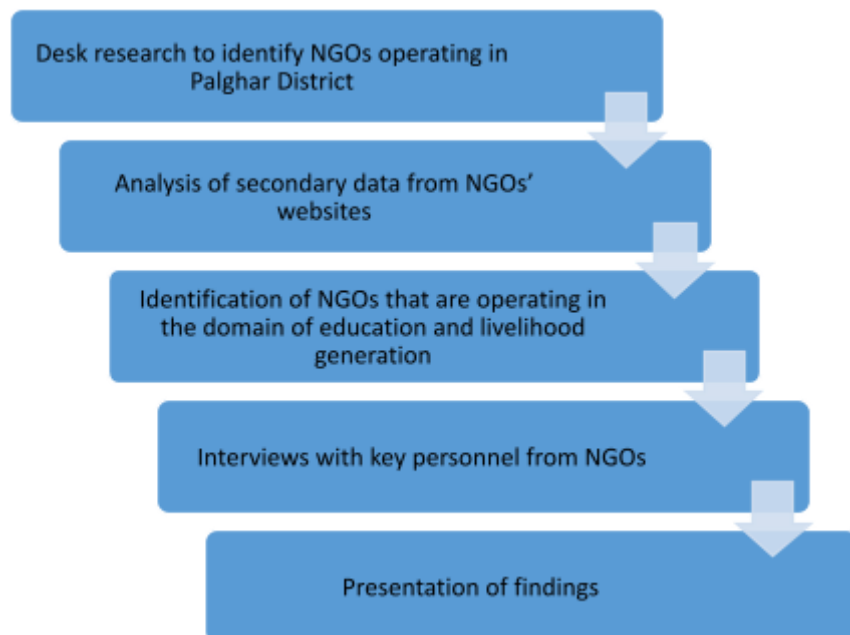
Table 1: NGOs with a focus area of Education

	Location		Objective	
	Taluka Wada, Palghar	16	To pursue quality related issues in Early Childhood Education	3
	Dahanu	40	To provide quality education to the tribal community	3
	Palghar	41	To provide holistic education to the rural and tribal children	2
	Palghar	17	To provide holistic development of children and youth with focus on Education	3

The data was collected using semi-structured interviews (n = 20) from the representatives of the selected NGOs. Table 2 provides a concise overview of the demographic profiles of the participants from the selected NGOs. These interviews served to explore the structure of the NGOs, the challenges and issues pertinent to their work, and the existing barriers impeding the scaling up of their strategies. Additionally, the study also examined relevant materials such as annual reports, impact reports, websites, content on social media, and reviews of related policy documents. The data for this study was collected from October 2022 to June 2023, with a field visit conducted in October 2022. During the field visit, the author engaged in transect walks, conducted interviews, and made observations across various talukas. Additionally, telephonic interviews were conducted, facilitated by contacts obtained through snowballing methods. 120 semi-structured interviews were also carried out with beneficiaries of the NGOs.

Table 2: NGOs with a focus area of Livelihood Generation

	Wada, Talasari, Vikramgad, Jawahar, Mokhada	26	Rural tribal community	3
	Dahanu	45	Development of tribal and forest-based communities.	2
	Palghar	10	Aims to empower underprivileged children and youth	2
	Palghar	14	Aimed at Education, Environment, and Empowering communities Together	2

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Before starting with these interviews, respondents' consent was obtained. Both the agency and individual participants were assured of anonymity. The authors examined these transcripts using the thematic analysis method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). They were then analysed using NVivo software. Each interview lasted for an average time span of 45–60 minutes and was conducted in both English and Marathi. The raw data yielded codes that were subsequently grouped into emerging themes. This approach allowed for a thorough understanding of the issues and challenges faced by NGOs engaged in tribal development in Palghar district.

The researcher employed analytical clustering on item nodes in association with cases. Through NVivo (version 14), thematic analysis has been conducted. The queries of word frequency per thousand words of each major theme, cluster

analysis, and hierarchy clusters of similar words have been deployed.

The input for the software were the NGOs annual reports, and the interview scripts for the qualitative phenomenon technique. The researcher applied arrangement, coding, sub codes setting, analyses, and their visualization based on annual reports and interview scripts generated from the selected NGOS.

The researcher opted to picturize the words that occur most often. The word cloud was used to highlight the words most frequently used by the respondents. The word tag cloud helps to understand the broadness of themes as per their sizes. Here we have two major themes: cultural projection and leadership. Figure 1 yielded a word count that was derived from the first thousand-word list assembled in the content. The words recurring the most under the section on development are government, NGO, community, activities, initiatives, village, education and so on. The core objective of NGOs operating in Palghar district is to promote sustainable development for the tribal community. This objective was evident from the content analysis conducted using Nvivo. By employing tools like Nvivo.

In the next step, cluster analysis was done through a word tree that was generated in NVivo to exhibit the pattern of similarities within the codes, and sub-codes. By the words similarity under classification of various codes (nodes) of parent themes, respondents' reviews were analysed cluster wise that were closer. The machine algorithm precisely axial the simultaneous codes by their group of contexts. Figure 2 displays the similarities between relative words and combines them in a cluster. Based on word similarity, it was observed that livelihood and training were grouped in the same cluster. This implies that providing appropriate training to tribal individuals can expand the opportunities for their livelihood. The economic development of an individual and community can lead to the overall development of the tribe.

NGO Assessment

Most of the time, grassroots NGOs operate without a clear action plan. Their strategies frequently depend on external funding sources, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) contributions, personal giving, and others. Many NGOs struggle to articulate their roadmap for fulfilling their organisation's vision. They lack an operational framework for achieving their mission, which often results in resource allocation based on immediate pressures rather than forward-thinking strategies. NGOs strive to enhance their efficacy, aiming for superior results for both their beneficiaries and donors (Drucker, 2011). However, many experience

high attrition and low performance (Golini, Kalchschmidt, & Landoni, 2015). The legitimacy and role of NGOs within the international aid framework have undergone increased scrutiny (Sianes, 2013).

Despite the proliferation of smaller NGOs over the last two decades, this expansion hasn't been accompanied by parallel innovations in organisational management, operations, interpersonal dynamics, behaviour, or internal and external collaborations (Bendell, 2006; Fowler, 2000). Consequently, it's crucial for NGOs to adopt a modern managerial style and a new management paradigm to elevate their efficiency and effectiveness (Bradley, Jansen, & Silverman, 2003; Mitlin, Hickey, & Bebbington, 2007; Najam, 2000; Sianes, 2013).

As such assessment of the effectiveness of NGOs requires a multifaceted approach that considers both financial and non-financial measures. These NGOs work with varied objectives, diverse themes, issues, scales, and approaches and involve many stakeholders with diverse interests. Hence, it is difficult to evaluate their effectiveness based on a single criterion (Perrow 1961; DiMaggio 2001; Kaplan 2001; Herman and Renz 2008; Moxham 2009). Research suggests that NGOs face challenges in effectively addressing poverty reduction, cost efficiency, sustainability, local involvement in projects, adaptability, and innovation (Edwards & Fowler, 2002; Jacobs, 2014). They depend heavily on financial support from grants and government funding to carry out their missions and deliver services to their beneficiaries. Hence, they have to deal with complex evaluation and reporting requirements, along with bureaucratic obstacles (Edwards & Hulme, 1992; Perera, 1995; Pfister, 2014; Thayer & Fine, 2004). They are expected to maintain accountability in multiple aspects of their operations (Amagoh, 2015; Ebrahim, 2003; Nalinakumari & MacLean, 2005; Slim, 2002).

Need for NGO Assessments

Assessment of NGOs is crucial for ensuring effectiveness and promoting transparency in the organisation. It helps them make informed decisions, improve their programmes, and build trust with stakeholders. Assessment helps determine whether they are achieving their intended outcomes and making a positive impact. This evaluation enables NGOs to identify areas for improvement, and growth, refine their programmes, and enhance their overall efficacy. This feedback can be used to strengthen organisational governance, enhance program design, improve financial management, and build capacity. It also promotes transparency by scrutinising an organisation's financial management, decision-making processes, and communication with stakeholders. This fosters

accountability and ensures that NGOs are using their resources responsibly and adhering to ethical standards. Donors and funding agencies rely on NGO assessments to make informed decisions when allocating resources.

By understanding an NGO's strengths, weaknesses, and past performance, donors can prioritise funding for those organisations that are most likely to effectively utilise resources and achieve their stated goals.

Regularly undergoing independent assessments enhances an NGO's legitimacy and credibility. Demonstrating a commitment to transparency, accountability, and effectiveness builds trust with donors, partners, and the communities they serve. NGO assessments can encourage innovation and adaptability by identifying opportunities for new approaches, partnerships, and technologies. This continuous evaluation process helps the organisations remain relevant and effective in a rapidly changing world. By promoting best practices and identifying common challenges, NGO assessments contribute to overall improvement within the non-profit sector. This collective learning helps raise standards, enhance effectuality , and strengthen the sector's ability to address global challenges. Hence, the selected NGOs were assessed on the basis of questions on origin, governance, finances, operations and their scaling-up strategies.

NGO Assessment Framework

The study was aimed at assessing the capabilities and to identify areas for improvement and development of select NGOs. For this study, eight NGOs were assessed using a structured framework. A conceptual framework, based on NGOs working for the betterment of tribal population, was developed to anchor this research. This framework was developed from several established toolkits used for evaluating NGOs, like Alliance International, the CII-ITC Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development, and the Tata Sustainability Group for NGO assessment. These toolkits are well-known for their comprehensive approach to assessing various aspects of NGO performance. Furthermore, discussions were held with multiple NGOs and community representatives in the Palghar district to ensure the framework's relevance to their needs. Their valuable feedback was incorporated to strengthen the questionnaire, enhancing its content and refining its approaches.

Data was collected through questions designed based on parameters such as personal and organisational attributes, objectives, strategies and activities,

organisational efficacy, accountability, communication, networks and partnerships, as well as leadership and professional involvement.

| Personal and Organizational Attributes	Organizational Goals, Strategies, and Activities	Organizational Effectiveness	Organizational Accountability
Communications	Networks and Partnerships	Leadership and Professional Engagement	

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions such as its name, year of establishment, duration of operation, headquarters, additional office locations, operational, and focus areas. Additionally, indicators such as accreditations, ratings, certifications, and awards were also examined.

	Trustee	Project Coordinators	Volunteers	Founded	Age
QUEST	7	6	80	2007	16
GramMangal	5	13	170	1982	42
Learning Space Foundation	3	10	150	2006	17
Keshav Srushti	10	20	300	1993	30
AROEHAN	9	18	200	2015	8
Seva-Sahayog-Fondation	10	25	118	2006	17
Nareshwadi Learning Centre	7	10	100	1983	40
Reachout Foundation	6	3	100	2013	10

The governance questions collected information on the board members including their positions, qualifications, total experience (in years), tenure as board members, relationship with the executive head of the organisation, and any political affiliations. Additionally, details about other staff members were gathered, including the number of full-time, part-time/project staff, and volunteers. Evaluation also included assessing the percentage of work conducted

across various geographic locations, reflecting their capabilities and capacities. Furthermore, it was noted whether projects undertaken in different regions were executed directly or in collaboration with local organisations. To assess NGO effectiveness, a comprehensive evaluation framework comprising six factors was developed. They are management effectiveness, network effectiveness, program effectiveness, board effectiveness, legality, and reputation.
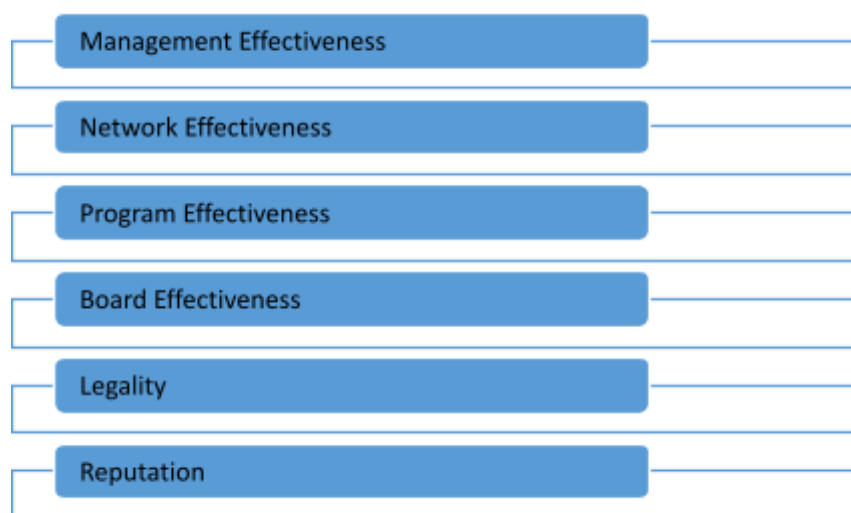
Management Effectiveness

Management effectiveness assesses the overall performance and sustainability of an NGO by evaluating key factors like clarity of its mission statement and core objectives, that are critical to its operations. The mission statement acts as a guiding principle for an NGO so that its activities align with its purpose and goals.

The availability of financial statements on their websites provide insight into the NGO's fiscal health and integrity. This is a necessary ingredient for maintaining trust and accountability with donors and stakeholders, and also reflects its transparency and accuracy of financial audits. The trend analysis for any NGO helps in identifying emerging patterns and potential opportunities or risks. Even the planning files help in outlining the strategies and actions required to translate its mission into reality effectively. While stakeholder studies facilitate meaningful engagement and collaboration, fostering support and relevance within the community it is serving.

Management Effectiveness	Mission statement
	Financial Audit
	Trends analysis
	Planning file
	Stakeholder Study

Program Effectiveness

Program effectiveness is crucial in assessing the NGO's impact and efficiency in addressing specific issues and achieving results. The construct of program effectiveness can be measured in terms of achievement of NGO's objectives, beneficiaries' satisfaction, and the relationship with the government. The achievement of objectives involves measuring the extent to which the NGO's interventions align with its stated goals and targets. This involves assessing whether the intended outcomes, like quality of education or livelihood opportunities contribute towards the broader societal objectives. The beneficiary's satisfaction or customer satisfaction reflects the degree to which they perceive the programmes and services provided as beneficial, accessible and responsive to their needs. The positive feedback and engagement indicate the relevance and impact of the NGO's efforts. Even the relationship with the government emphasises its ability to collaborate with governmental bodies. It is very important for NGOs to adhere to regulatory frameworks. A positive rapport with the government enables resource mobilisation, policy advocacy, and implementation of programmes.

Program Effectiveness	Achievement of objectives
	Beneficiaries satisfaction
	Relationship with the government

Network Effectiveness

Network effectiveness of an NGO evaluates its ability to establish and maintain partnerships with relevant stakeholders. It also helps to amplify impact and outreach and sustain partnerships with pertinent stakeholders. In this context, an NGO's relationship with other NGOs is important. It is required to leverage the

collective resources and expertise to address challenges. Effective collaborations result in enhanced efficiency in program design and implementation. This also involves working with companies for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to enhance the organisation's scalability. It results in not only financial support but also offers opportunities for skills transfer, technology adoption, and sustainable development initiatives. Furthermore, NGOs have to maintain positive relations with the public and the media, which can help them in building trust, raising awareness, and mobilising support for their mission and initiatives. Another important link in the NGO ecosystem is building and cultivating relationships with a team of volunteers. They are vital for any NGO as they contribute valuable time, skills, and augment its community engagement efforts. NGOs also play a crucial role in extending advocacy efforts and influencing systemic changes. The policy-making processes help them work towards altering social and political structures, policies, and practices to create sustainable impact. The NGOs can even shape public policies but their success depends on effective leadership and governance. They can also engage in strategic planning, communication to achieve their goals and influence policy making.

Network Effectiveness	Relations with other NGO
	Relations with enterprise
	Relations with the public and the media
	Relationships with volunteers
	Policy making

Board Effectiveness

Board effectiveness is crucial for the success and sustainability of any NGOs. It pertains to the governing body's ability to supervise, monitor, design direction and provide oversight for the NGOs. Major activities included providing strategic direction, fundraising, communication, and training and development of NGO members. An effective board ensures that there is alignment between strategic planning and the organisation's mission, goals and strategy for impactful outcomes. Also, they play a crucial role in fundraising efforts by capitalising on their networks and resources. This funding vital is very important for the NGOs

operations and projects. The board members need to ensure transparent communication exchange among stakeholders. This can further help in building trust and collaboration. Also, training of new members helps in board continuity and effectiveness. This will help the incoming members to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute meaningfully to the NGO's governance.

Board Effectiveness	Raise funds
	Information communication
	Training of new members

Legality

Legality in an NGO context is very important as it will help it adhere to legal regulations and ethical standards. An NGO can safeguard its integrity and operational sustainability by maintaining legality. By adhering to laws and ethical guidelines, an organisation can showcase its commitment to transparency, accountability, and responsible governance. It also helps in building trust among donors, beneficiaries, and the community it serves. There are some key dimensions that contribute to the effectiveness and impact of an NGO: unique values, efficiency of operations and empowerment. Unique values reflect the NGO's distinctive mission, vision, principles and beliefs, guiding its actions. The efficient operations ensure that resources are utilised properly to maximise its impact. The empowerment of staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries, help them to participate actively and contribute to the organisation's mission. By emphasising on these aspects, NGOs can enhance their effectiveness, and ability to create positive change in the communities they serve.

Legality	Unique values
	Efficiency of operations
	Empowerment

Reputation

Reputation is a cornerstone of any NGOs success. It assesses the perception and credibility of the NGO from the eyes by donors, beneficiaries, partner organisations and the broader community. A positive reputation reflects trust, integrity, and effectiveness in delivering on promises. It not only enhances the NGO's credibility but also increases its attractiveness to potential donors and partners. Reputation extends beyond mere perception. It is also an outcome of consistent ethical practices, transparent communication, and demonstrated impact. NGOs should nurture their reputation through responsible governance, effective communication strategies, and impactful programming.

Reputation	Trust
	Satisfaction with NGO interventions
	Perceived Effectiveness with interventions

NGOs under Study

QUEST

QUEST has been dedicated to the education sector, with a specific focus on rural and tribal areas. Initially working towards the strengthening of the public education system, the organisation has partnered with government departments across multiple districts in Maharashtra, implementing impactful programmes for enhancing the quality of education. The core values of commitment to quality education, continuous growth, and positive impact [beneficiaries such as] on teachers, children, and communities have been integral to QUEST's mission. The diverse interventions and programmes initiated by QUEST include Palavee for Early Childhood Education, Anupad for step-by-step learning, and Goshtarang, a unique blend of theatre and pedagogy. Demonstrating adaptability, the organisation is expanding its reach to parents through pilot projects utilizing technology and print materials. In a significant move, QUEST has launched an English Language Teaching programme for elementary-grade children in the academic year 2022–23. Approximately 170 students from nine Zilla Parishad schools in Wada and Vikramgad blocks are participating in this year-long pilot initiative. The programme addresses the specific need for English language instruction in underprivileged classrooms in rural Maharashtra. The QUEST team

has collaborated with Tata Trusts to develop a tool for assessing School Readiness. The objective is to establish standardised benchmarks for school readiness across various domains, thereby contributing to the improvement of early education in rural areas.

Seva Sahayog Foundation

Established in 2009, Seva Sahayog Foundation is a non-profit committed to the development of underprivileged sections of society, particularly focusing on tribals in Palghar district. The foundation actively identifies and collaborates with needy and underprivileged segments, working alongside corporate houses to plan and execute projects. Their initiatives range from education, empowerment, environment, and more, addressing gaps at individual, institutional, and community levels. Engaging socially conscious individuals, groups, and corporates, the foundation promotes social awareness, provides volunteering opportunities, and raises funds through diverse channels. They ensure impact-oriented interventions at the grassroots level, striving to create positive change in the lives of those they serve. In the realm of education, Seva Sahayog Foundation runs various campaigns such as gifting school kits, Knowledge on Wheels, Digital Sankalp, Book Bank, Vidyarthi Vikas Yojana, Shiksha Vikas, Vidyashray, and other educational assistance schemes. Empowerment initiatives include Kishori Vikas, Smart Community, women empowerment, Gram Vikas, Chetana, Urmi, and youth skill development programmes. Environmental campaigns encompass Seva Kiran, urban forestation, water initiatives, and Nirmal Wari. One notable response to a pressing challenge involved tribal students in Shahapur Taluka, particularly those from Borale pada facing a hazardous daily journey by boat to reach school. In a swift and compassionate move, Seva Sahayog Foundation distributed jackets to these students, earning recognition from the community and the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. This exemplifies the foundation's dedication to addressing immediate needs and contributing to the well-being of those in underserved communities.

Keshav Srushti

Keshav Srushti in more than 40 years of existence has worked to improve the lives of villagers in the tribal talukas of Palghar district in Maharashtra. With a population of 29,90,116, the district is also home to a huge tribal population. Despite being close to Mumbai, it has its share of administrative and social problems, including unemployment, migration, education, and water mismanagement. The NGO has focused on education, livelihood, health, and

agriculture under the Gram Vikas Yojana, which aims to promote self-reliance and access to water, electricity, and infrastructure. Over the past five years, Keshavsrushti Gram Vikas Yojana (KSGVY) has expanded its work to 75 villages across four talukas. The impact of the NGO's work has been observed in the Wada, Vikramgad, Jawahar and Mokhada talukas. Some of the interventions are Gram Vikas Yojana, Bamboo Project, Solar farming, Knowledge on Wheels Education, Project Green Gold Livelihood, and Self-Reliance. The Gram Vikas Yojana has reduced manual labour and saved over 1000 hours for the villagers. The organisation has also launched the Madhav Sanskar Kendra, which has reached 52 schools in 52 villages, and has created over 1 lakh rakhi gift articles and kandils (hanging paper lamps). Additionally, Keshav Srushti has built over 100 toilets in three talukas and organised health checkups for over 800 students. The organisation has also trained 300 Vanvasi women and stitched over 10,000 school bags.

Learning Space Foundation

The Learning Space Foundation (LSF) is an NGO based in Palghar, actively engaged in education and community development initiatives since its establishment in 2006. With a commitment to improving rural education and creating enriching spaces for children, LSF has successfully executed numerous programmes encompassing education, health, agriculture, rural youth and women empowerment, and rural development over the years. In its initial five years, LSF expanded its footprint from Ganeshpuri to neighbouring villages such as Wada and Bhiwandi as part of its outreach programme. The foundation's primary focus is on aiding rural and disadvantaged communities, utilising a unique approach that involves recruiting and training local young students. LSF strives to provide services that traditional schools may not offer, catering to the specific needs of the communities it serves. The organisation aligns with the guidelines of the 2020 National Education Policy and has implemented a new model of education in remote villages of Thane and Palghar districts in

Maharashtra. This model caters to approximately 500 early and primary learners. It features a meticulous 360-degree assessment that evaluates a child's cognitive and life skills, ensuring a holistic approach to education. In 2022, the model underwent refinement and was rebranded as SarvaPrathamik, evolving into a comprehensive developmental programme designed to enable rural children to continue their educational journey despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Girivanvasi Educational Trust

Girivanvasi Educational Trust (GVET) was established in 1991 by the esteemed Padmabhushan Pujya Karamshibhai Jethabhai Somaiya. It actively engages with the local community and the families of children enrolled in the Nareshwadi School. A significant initiative involves supporting and mentoring 1450 women farmers from Gram panchayats, including Bahare, Dhanivari, Dhundalwadi, Divshi, Gadchincla, Ghadne, Haladpada and Shisane. These women receive guidance for livelihood generation, integrated with the GVET's Mother and Child Health (MNCH) programme components. Under the Village Improvement Program (VIP), women are trained in vegetable cultivation and horticultural crops. They are provided with initial assets in the form of vegetable seeds and saplings to kickstart their income generation initiatives. All children at the Nareshwadi actively participate in school and vocational education classes on campus, excelling not only in academic pursuits but also extracurricular activities and sports. The holistic approach adopted by GVET reflects its commitment to education, community development, and the well-being of vulnerable children and women in the region.

Nareshwadi Learning Centre

The Nareshwadi Learning Centre (NLC), situated on a sprawling 12-acre campus within the lush green surroundings of the Experimental Farm of Girivanvasi Pragati Mandal (GVPM) is overseen by the GVE trust. GVPM, initiated by Karamshibhai in 1974, serves as an Integrated Rural Development model. The Nareshwadi centre encompasses various components, including the Leelaben Kotak Primary School, the K J Somaiya Secondary School, the Vocational Education and Training Centre (VETC), hostels for both girls and boys, the Children's Home approved by the Women and Child Welfare Department of the Government of Maharashtra, the School Health Centre, and the School Farm and Nursery. Additionally, it houses the Skill Training Centre, operating as a Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana Centre (PMKVY). The Balgruh at Nareshwadi plays a crucial role in integrating children into the broader community through its diverse on-campus activities. Approximately one-third of the children are orphans, while two-thirds come from single-parent homes. Many of these vulnerable children have been rescued from challenging environments, such as scrap yards, brick kilns, streets, and violent situations. Placed in the secure environment of Nareshwadi, they receive dedicated care from house parents and counselors under close supervision of the management. The Trust fully supports their education and living expenses.

AROEHAN

AROEHAN, a non-profit organisation, began in 2006 as a field action project by the College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan, and was registered in 2014. The NGO operates with a firm belief that tribal communities are the nation's heritage and an essential part of the ecological ecosystem of our country. So, they are focusing on education, health and nutrition, water conservation, good governance and teaching the tribal communities livelihood skills, which would enable them to live well and thrive. AROEHAN aims to reduce migration by 50%, eliminate malnutrition deaths, and establish an educational hub with STEM learning. The NGO's presence in Mokhada, Jawhar, Palghar, and Dahanu talukas of Palghar district has established their standing in the fields of water conservation, health and nutrition, and solar-based irrigation. They can be credited for introducing farmers to second cropping during the rabi season by growing vegetables and engaging in floriculture. AROEHAN began its journey with a primary focus on education for children from less privileged backgrounds with an unshakeable conviction that education is the only means of getting children off the streets, opening their minds and giving them the necessary means of taking charge of their destiny. The support extended to these children is holistic in nature, and spans from early childhood to livelihood. This in turn empowers the child physically and mentally to pursue greater heights in his/her life.

Grammangal

Established in 1982, Grammangal is dedicated to delivering holistic education to rural and tribal children in Palghar and Dahanu talukas. The NGO employs teaching methodologies firmly rooted in Cognitive Science, Child Development, and Learning to foster stress-free, joyful, and enriching learning experiences. Recognised for its innovative approach, Grammangal has expanded its involvement to encompass teacher training and education quality improvement programmes.

The overarching mission of Grammangal is to develop and promote a scientific education system that ensures every child receives quality education up to the age of 18, free from discrimination, and within an environment conducive to joyful self-learning. This educational philosophy draws inspiration from research in Cognitive Development, Neuroscience, Child Development, and Learning, as well as Jean Piaget's constructivism theory, advocating for independent learning and problem-solving skills throughout a child's life.

Grammangal actively implements various initiatives, including Balwadis (pre-schools), Schools, Vikas Ghar, Subject Laboratories, Teacher Training, Teaching Learning Materials, Community Engagements, and Dissemination of Knowledge. Collaborating closely with the government, Grammangal's consultants have played a pivotal role in setting guidelines for curriculum development, particularly contributing to the creation of a structured curriculum for Early Childhood Education in Maharashtra. The organisation steadfastly pursues its mission of providing quality education to every child, emphasising equal opportunities, nondiscrimination, a nurturing environment, and appropriate facilities for joyful self-learning. To extend their impact to every child, Grammangal strategically partners with the government, believing in strengthening existing systems rather than creating parallel ones. Collaborations with Zilla Parishad, Municipal Corporations, ICDS departments, and transformative efforts in schools and Anganwadis across Maharashtra exemplify Grammangal's commitment to inclusive education.

Findings and Discussions

The field survey conducted on the tribal population in Palghar district has yielded many insights about their lifestyle and the challenges they face. These tribal communities depend strongly on agriculture for sustenance with marginal land holdings. Hence, they have limited resources available for farming activities. This limitation poses challenges to their agricultural productivity and livelihood sustainability.

Another important aspect is their dependence on rainwater for farming. The tribal communities in this region have a rain-dependent farming cycle that lasts from June to November. After this time, water becomes scarce and the communities struggle to sustain their agricultural practices. Therefore, many tribal individuals and families migrate to other cities for alternative sources of income. They often take up daily wage jobs, frequently working in harsh conditions such as brick kilns, which typically involve hard physical labour.

While working in brick kilns provides an alternative source of income for tribal communities during the non-farming season, it also brings challenges related to working conditions, health risks, and overall well-being and may not always provide a sustainable or dignified livelihood option.

These tribal communities possess a medium level of farming experience and lack exposure to smart farming practices. This underscores the need for targeted interventions, including training, technology transfer, and capacity-building initiatives, aimed at enhancing their agricultural skills and introducing them to modern and efficient farming methods. Also, there is a low social participation from these communities in the broader society. The post-migration scenario and limited engagement in community activities indicate a certain degree of social marginalisation. Hence, it becomes crucial for development programmes to address not only the economic challenges but also the social dynamics within the communities. NGOs and other development agencies are encouraged to adopt strategies that promote community involvement, foster collaboration, and ensure cultural sensitivity in programme design to effectively meet the unique needs of the tribal families in Palghar district.

Cultural input should be interwoven into the curriculum and every facet of their education. The process of teaching-learning for tribal children should be culturally appropriate and relevant. Research has indicated that culture has a powerful influence on learning. A lack of cultural input could happen due to a shortage of appropriate resources, expertise and professionals. It is also due to a lack of understanding of how culture can be incorporated into the learning process. The learning of students can be maximsed when their educational environment is culturally compatible with their home environment. It is very important to develop structures and processes that help educators from early childhood centers to secondary schools to formulate a learning journey that consists of relevant cultural content, values, and appropriate learning styles. NGOs can attempt to develop culturally effective resources that build on strengths and improve identified weaknesses. The learning process also gets influenced by affective factors. For example, when students feel psychologically secure and have a positive sense of self-worth (Dreikurs & Pearl, 1972; Erikson, 1963; Glasser, 1986; Maslow, 1954), they can reflect and learn more.

Contribution of NGOs

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a significant role in addressing various social and economic challenges. Their work is essential for addressing the various challenges and promises to bring about positive social change in Palghar district. Their contributions are particularly significant in the thematic areas of health, education, livelihood, child development, women empowerment, water, and sanitation.

The selected NGOs have significantly contributed to holistic community development in Palghar district. Those in the livelihood sector aim to empower individuals and communities to achieve economic self-sufficiency. They provide vocational training, microcredit loans, and support for agricultural development and entrepreneurship.

Under the Gram Vikas initiative, KSGVY is actively working towards bringing positive transformations in 75 villages within Palghar area. They are running campaigns for Agriculture (Krishi and Jal), Education (Shikshan and Sanskar), Healthcare (Swasthya and Swachata), Business and Skill Development (Udyog and Kaushal Vikas), Environment and Sustainability (City Forest). The AKSHAY SAHAYOG initiative by Keshav Srushti aims to support families in Palghar impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the context of tribal development, education acts as a gateway to new ideas. It empowers communities with essential skills, knowledge, and critical thinking. This enables them to make informed decisions particularly regarding health and livelihoods. ducation also acts as a catalyst for self-reliance, thereby breaking the cycle of historical marginalisation. Thus, it can be inferred that education can be a powerful force in driving tribal development towards a more sustainable and empowered future.

In Palghar district, tribal communities are mostly agriculture farmers and migrant workers that live in culturally distinct padas. Each village has a hamlet designated for tribals, known as a pada, housing a specific tribe. These padas vary in population, accommodating approximately 60 to 600 tribal residents (Hegade S., Kamble A. 2020)(Jadhav & Govil, 2023). Tribal development in Palghar district pivots on active tribal involvement, as evident by initiatives like Keshav Srusti, Nareshwadi Learning Centre, and other NGOs. Most of the initiatives taken up by the NGOs have adopted culturally sensitive approaches to address the development needs of communities. This helps in fostering a sense of ownership and collaboration for inclusive tribal development.

The presence of a robust educational ecosystem is important for the development of any village. This helps both children and the youth of the given place. The purpose of education is not only to bring academic growth but also

empowers the younger generation with essential skill-sets for facing life. A well-structured educational framework preparing the community to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic fabric of the village.
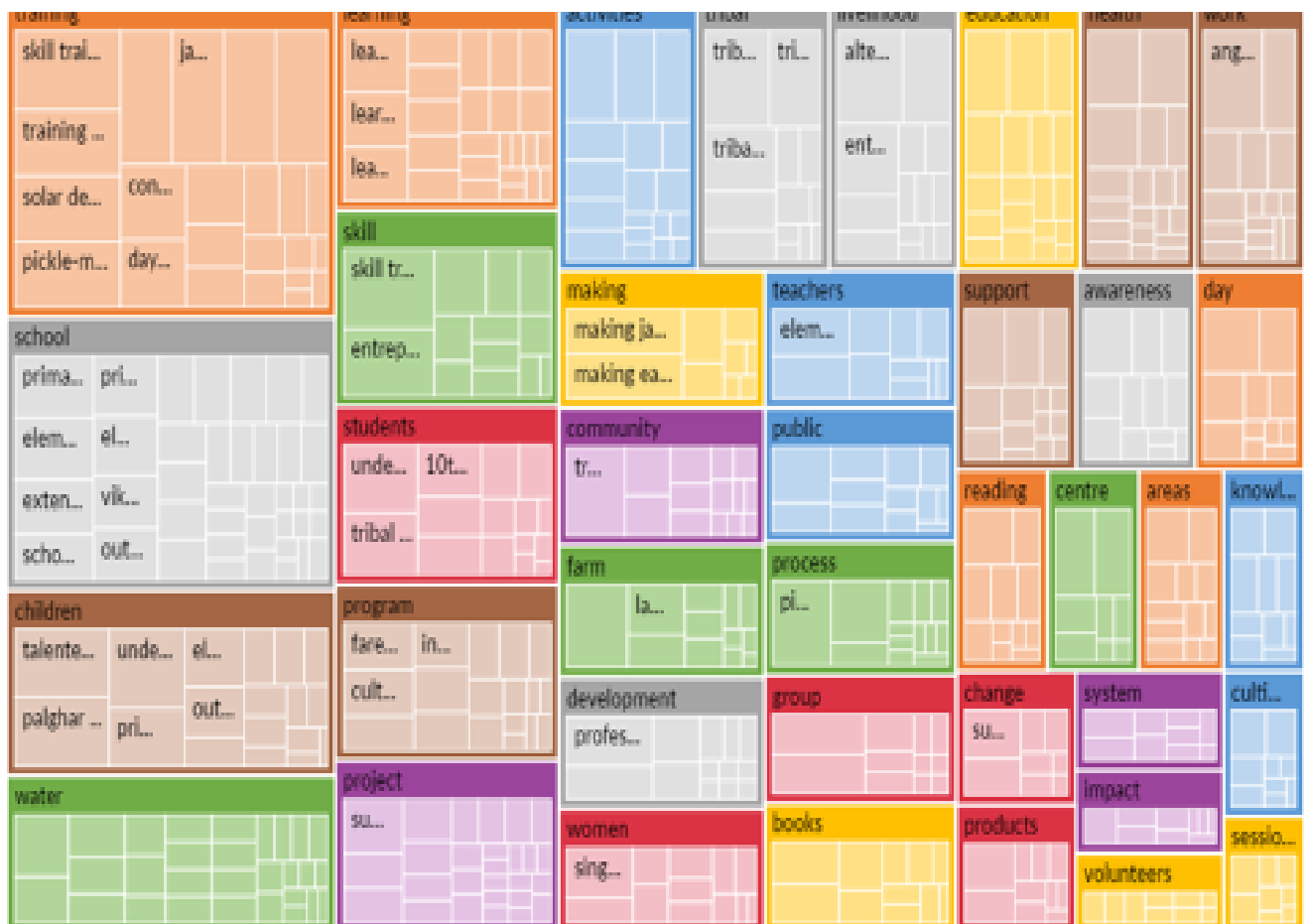
Emerging Themes from Content Analysis

Training

- Training programs
- Pickle making
- Mushroom farming
- Black gram
- Jasmine
- Candy making
- Masala Production
- Soft skills
- Computer skills

Education

- Primary School
- Elementary school children
- Elementary school teacher
- School dropout rate
- Learning loss
- Ashram School Children
- School kit project
- Child-friendly school

Skills

- Entrepreneurial skills
- Leadership skills
- Soft skills
- Public speaking
- Computer skills
- Digital learning

Tribal Development

- Skill development centers
- Village development programs
- Water Conservation
- Farming
- Plantation
- Literacy

Livelihood

- Providing livelihood opportunities
- Livelihood centers
- Allied livelihood
- Entrepreneurship livelihood

NGOs such as Seva Sahyog and AORHEN consistently organise diverse training programmes for the empowerment of the tribal communities. These initiatives focus on creating vocational alternatives, like pickle making, mushroom farming, black gram cultivation, jasmine cultivation, candy making, and masala production. The practical training provided by these NGOs plays a crucial role in developing sustainable livelihoods among tribal populations. Additionally, soft skills and computer proficiency training are offered to enhance overall capabilities. Despite these efforts, challenges persist, with high dropout rates in primary schools leading to learning loss. The Ashram and Zilla parishad schools in the Palghar villages have been characterised by poor infrastructure, unhygienic food and drinking water, and lack of interesting school experience. There is an evident disparity in education quality in Ashram schools dedicated to tribal children. Projects such as free school kit and footwear distribution, actively undertaken by NGOs aim to address these issues directly. These initiatives hope to ensure that essential resources can reach tribal children and motivate them.

NGO Effectiveness

Sentiment analysis plays an important role in evaluating the effectiveness of NGO communication and outreach strategies. The analysis of public sentiments helps NGOs gain insights into their initiatives. Positive sentiments are indicators of effective communication with the intended audience. It showcases the support garnered from the audience and aligns with their values and interests. This positive impact is crucial for building trust and encouraging support. It can help the NGOs sustain public engagement and take their missions for social change forward. The negative sentiments highlight potential issues or miscommunication that need to be addressed. This analytical approach allows NGOs to adapt and refine their strategies, ensuring alignment with public perceptions.
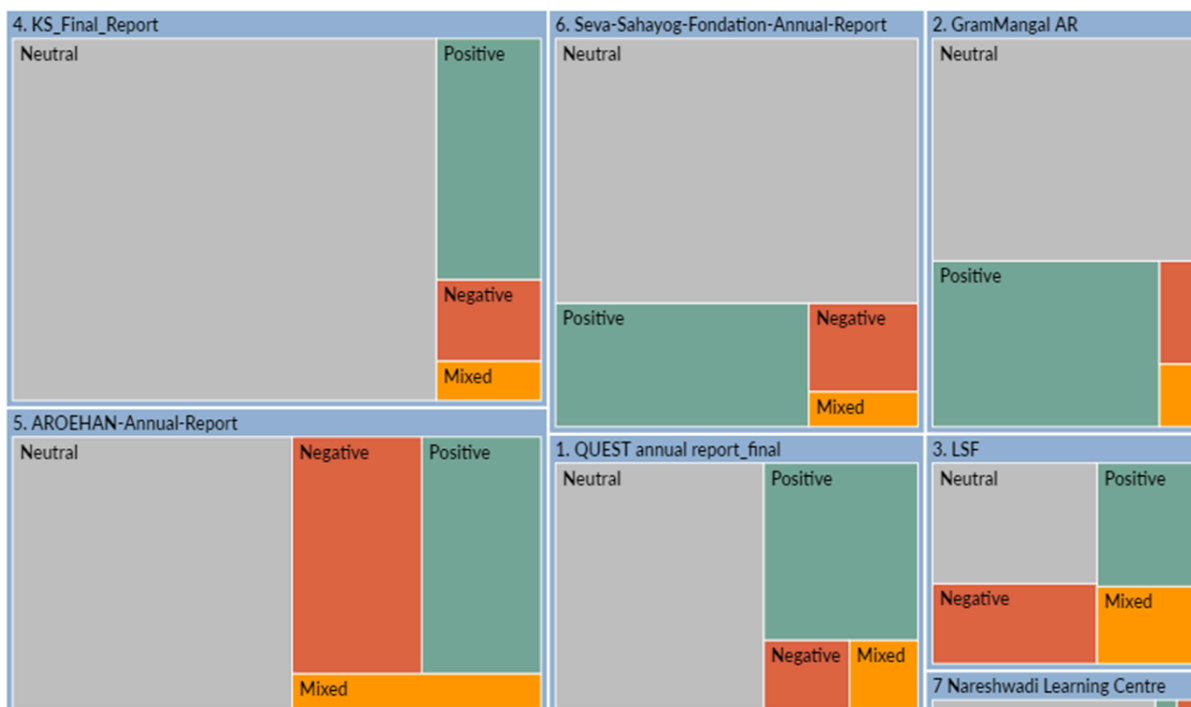
	A: Very negative	B: Moderately negative	C: Moderately positive	D: Very positive
1. QUEST	17	30	41	23
2. GramMangal	2	12	33	11
3. Learning Space Foundation	37	52	59	18
4. Keshav Sruhti	12	19	50	17
5. AROEHAN	16	38	51	16
6. Seva-Sahayog-Fondation	14	17	84	16
7 Nareshwadi Learning Centre	1	0	2	0

In the context of NGOs, sentiment analysis of selected seven organisations reveals noteworthy variations. Seva-Sahayog-Fondation has received the highest positive sentiments, suggesting a strong public perception of their impactful work.

At the same time, the Learning Space Foundation has more negative sentiments, indicating public concern or potential areas for improvement. This type of understanding of public sentiment can help NGOs refine their approaches and strengthen positive perceptions.

Items clustered by word similarity
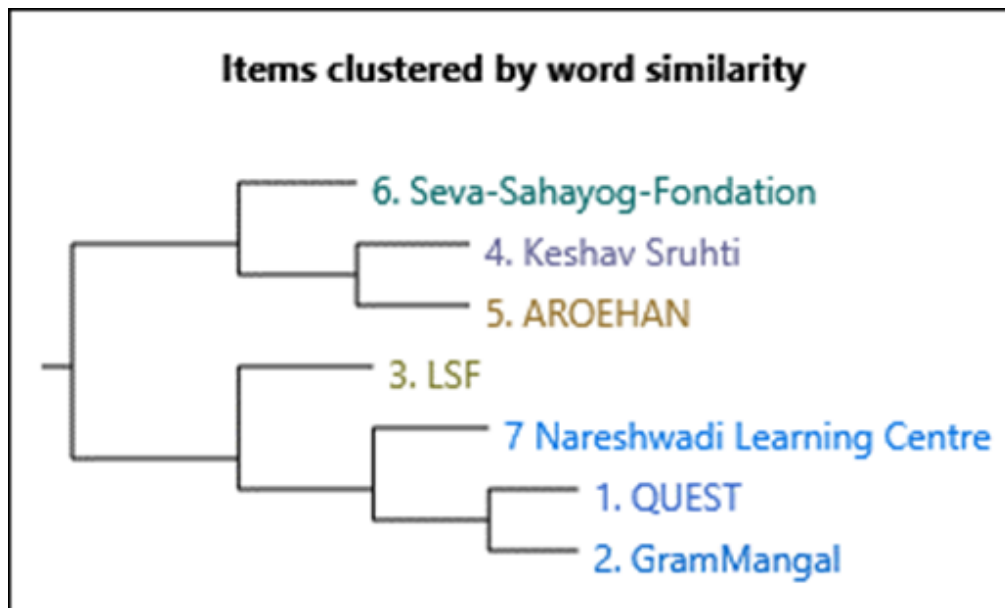
Using cluster analysis, the selected NGOs were grouped on the basis of their primary focus areas. It was observed that Keshav Sruhti, AROEHAN, and Seva-Sahayog-Fondation formed a cohesive group, focusing on livelihood and community development. In contrast, NGOs such as QUEST, GramMangal, Learning Space Foundation, and Nareshwadi Learning Centre were distinctly associated with tribal children's education initiatives. The analysis shows that these NGO clusters are doing exemplary work with respect to their developmental objectives. They are aligning their efforts with well-defined objectives and making a tangible impact. This has become possible through the successful implementation of projects and achievement of milestones contributing to sustainable development. For instance,

AROEHAN has executed numerous projects benefiting mothers, children, youth, women groups, and marginalised farmers across 150 Gram Panchayats. Indirectly impacting around six to seven lakh individuals, these initiatives span tribal blocks in Palghar, including Dahanu, Jawhar, and Mokhada.

The NGO has contributed to the holistic development of communities, addressing diverse needs and fostering positive change in the tribal districts of Palghar.

Grammangal and UNICEF have collaborated to implement a pilot project in Pune and Palghar, emphasising sustainable development through a "pilots to policy to results-at-scale" model. This approach involves partnering with the government in selected regions to showcase the integration and strengthening of learning within existing programme interventions related to Nutrition, Education, and Health. The overarching goal is to enhance coordination and convergence for holistic Early Childhood Development (ECD). This integrated intervention, targeting children aged 0–6, is strategically designed for scalability. The expected outcomes aim to demonstrate the feasibility of the concept, generate evidence for advocacy, and encourage the government to replicate interventions independently, ensuring quality standards, system strengthening and equitable outcomes.

The strategic alignment of these NGOs with thematic areas was attempted to direct resources to areas of utmost need, significantly influencing operations. This approach contributed to achieving more precise and sustainable development outcomes, specifically in the areas of livelihood enhancement or educational advancement. The focused allocation of resources enables NGOs to maximise their impact, addressing specific developmental goals and making a meaningful difference in the targeted areas they aim to uplift and empower.

Findings from NGO Assessment

As the prominence of NGOs continues to grow, there is a need to evaluate the efficacy of their interventions. A rise in the number of NGOs, along with increasing flow of funding from governmental and corporate sources, has raised concerns about their performance and accountability (Edwards and Hulme, 1995). As NGOs depend on donations, grants, and public trust, they have a responsibility to share how they have used the resources and the outcomes they achieved. The NGO assessments can help different stakeholders like donors, beneficiaries, and the public, to get insights into an NGO's financial management, governance practices, and overall performance. By holding NGOs accountable for their actions and outcomes, assessments help maintain trust and credibility within the community and among supporters. They also enable these organisations to measure their impact and effectiveness in addressing social issues. NGOs typically operate with specific goals and objectives aimed at improving various aspects of society, such as education, healthcare, environmental conservation, or human rights.

Assessments provide valuable data and evidence to evaluate whether these goals are being met and if the organisation's activities are making a meaningful difference in the lives of the beneficiaries. By measuring impact, NGOs can identify areas of success, as well as areas needing improvement, allowing for informed decision-making and strategic planning.

	QUEST	GM	LSF	KS	Aroehen	SS	NLC	RF
Mission statement	5.3	2.2	3.1	2.2	5.5	5.5	5.2	1.5
Financial Audit	5.2	3.2	3.9	4.2	4.8	3.5	2.8	2.5
Trends analysis	4.6	3.5	3.5	4.3	4.3	4.5	3.4	2.9
Planning file	3.3	3.4	3.6	2.6	3.6	3.5	3.7	1.5
Stakeholder study	4.3	4.1	3.2	5.5	5.1	5.5	4.1	2.8
Management Effectiveness	4.54	3.28	3.46	3.76	4.66	4.5	3.84	2.24

The factor of management effectiveness was measured on indicators namely mission statement, financial audit, trends analysis, planning file, and stakeholder study. The responses were collected from the representatives of NGOs and beneficiaries. Their perceptions were captured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), enabling an understanding of their viewpoints. Upon analysing the collected data, it was noted that NGO AROEHENn has performed well. It has exhibited clarity in articulating its mission, vision, and goals statements, indicating a clear organisational direction. Furthermore, its website featured financial reports spanning over the last three years, demonstrating transparency and accountability in financial management practices. Moreover, AROEHEN showcased its diligent planning efforts, evident from the maintenance of a detailed planning file outlining agendas for the next three and six months. The incorporation of testimonials and impact stories within their planning framework reflects their dedication to stakeholder engagement and impact assessment, showcasing a comprehensive approach to organisational management.

EDUCATION	EMPOWERMENT	ENVIRONMENT
• School Kits – 5 Lakhs till now • Scholarships – 4031 students till now • Text book lending - 2100 students till now • Sports Training – 2 academies 200 students • School infrastructure repair / development - 130 schools • WASH Projects – 20 schools • Science laboratories - 250 schools • Community learning centre – 139 centres, 5550 students / year • Mobile Science laboratories – 6 vans, 28,000 students / year • Community Knowledge hub – 5000 students	• Adolescent girls development center - 80 centres, 3100 girls / year Urmi- : 21986 • Women skill development – 1350 women • Digital Learning centres – 3 centres, 450 youth • On field agricultural trainings - 450 farmers from 15 villages	• Biogas plants – 14 plants • Solar Panels – 86 Schools • Rainwater Harvesting system - 11 locations, 1.25 Crore litre water / year • Urban Forestation – 6 sites, 10,100 saplings

Individual — Institution — Community

What we do

To identify needy segments and connect them with Corporate Houses for social transformation.

Planning and implementing projects with our ground-level and in-office workforce.

Promote social awareness and provide people a platform to contribute towards the betterment of society through volunteering opportunities.

Raising funds through Systematic Donation Plan, CSR funding, and personal donations.

Ensure impact oriented interventions at the grassroots level

Source: https://sevasahayog.org/about-us/

NGOs Seva Sahyog and Quest have also achieved high scores, attributed to their well-defined mission, vision, and goals statements. These NGOs have conducted financial audits, suggesting that their financial management practices are strong, although there may be some room for improvement. They have shown a moderate level of proficiency in trends analysis, indicating an ability to assess and respond to changing environments and emerging issues. The scores on planning files are relatively lower compared to others, suggesting room for improvement in the NGOs planning processes and documentation. They excel in stakeholder study, showing deep engagement and understanding of stakeholders' needs and perspectives.

	QUEST	GM	LSF	KS	Aroehen	SS	NLC	RF
Achievement of objectives	4.2	4.1	2.9	4.9	3.7	3.9	3.9	3.1
Beneficiaries' satisfaction	3.7	3.2	3.9	2.8	2.8	2.4	3.2	3.6
Relationship with the government	5.6	4	3.8	4.9	2.9	2.8	3.7	2.9
Program Effectiveness	4.50	3.77	3.53	4.20	3.13	3.03	3.60	3.20

The study suggested that Quest has achieved remarkable success in terms of program effectiveness, specifically in achieving objectives, satisfying beneficiaries, and fostering a positive relationship with the government. In terms of achievement of objectives, Quest received a high rating of 4.2, indicating that it has effectively met its intended goals. Similarly, beneficiaries expressed a relatively high satisfaction level of 3.7 with the organisation's programmes in quality education. Additionally, Quest's strong relationship with the government, evidenced by a high rating of 5.6, suggests effective collaboration and communication between the organisation and governmental entities. The NGO has taken on the responsibility of mentoring many Zila Parishad schools, focusing on refining teaching pedagogy and training school teachers. Hence, it can be concluded that Quest's performance in program effectiveness stands out among the other organisations, demonstrating its effectiveness in goal attainment, beneficiary satisfaction, and governmental relations. Adding to the above, even Keshav Struti and Grammangal have demonstrated good performance in program effectiveness, although to a lesser extent than Quest. Keshav Struti, with ratings of 4.1 for achievement of objectives and 3.2 for beneficiary satisfaction, as well as Grammangal, with ratings of 3.77 for achievement of objectives and 2.8 for beneficiary satisfaction, both reflect the commendable effort made in delivering effective programmes. However, when considering the relationship with the government, Quest stands out as mentioned above, followed by Keshav Struti with a rating of 4.0 and Grammangal with a rating of 3.8. Overall, while Quest leads in program effectiveness across various metrics, Keshav Struti and Grammangal also demonstrate commendable performance in delivering effective programs, albeit with slightly lower ratings compared to Quest.

	QUEST	GM	LSF	KS	Aroehen	SS	NLC	RF
Relations with other NGO	3.4	3.1	3.1	2.4	3.9	3.2	2.9	2.3
Relations with enterprise	3.3	2.9	4.2	3.4	3.8	4.1	3.8	2.4
Relations with the public and the media	3.2	3.4	4.1	2.5	3.7	4.3	2.7	2.5
Relationships with volunteers	4.9	4.1	4.1	3.8	5.5	4.9	2.6	3.1
Policy making	3.7	3.9	3.3	2.8	4.5	3.8	2.7	2.9
Network Effectiveness	3.7	3.48	3.76	2.98	4.28	4.06	2.94	2.64

TNetwork effectiveness has been measured in terms of relations with other NGOs, enterprises, the public and the media, and relationships with volunteers and taking part in policy making. From the above table, it's evident that AROEHEN has demonstrated strong performance in network effectiveness, scoring the highest among the listed organisations. It is closely followed by Seva Sahyog and Learning Space Foundation. AROEHEN exemplifies an overall strong network effectiveness score of 4.28, followed closely by Seva Sahayog and Learning Space Foundation, scoring 4.06 and 3.76 respectively. While they trail slightly behind AROEHEN, they still display significant strengths in building and maintaining relationships with various stakeholders, as well as actively engaging in policy making processes. Overall, AROEHEN, Seva Sahyog, and Learning Space Foundation emerge as leaders in network effectiveness, showcasing their ability to foster strong connections and collaborations across multiple sectors, thereby enhancing their organisational effectiveness and impact.

	QUEST	GM	LSF	KS	Aroehen	SS	NLC	RF
Raise funds	4.1	3.3	3.5	4.5	4.1	5.1	3.5	3.1
Information communication	3.3	2.5	3.6	2.5	4.2	5.2	3.4	3.6
Training of new members	4.5	3.6	3.7	3.4	4.4	5.3	3.2	2.9

Board Effectiveness	3.97	3.13	3.60	3.47	4.23	5.20	3.37	3.20

Board effectiveness has been evaluated based on the ability to raise funds, facilitate information communication, and provide training to new members. From the collected data, it's evident that Seva Sahyog, AROEHEN, and Quest have demonstrated strong performance across these indicators. Seva Sahyog stands out with notable scores in all three aspects: raising funds (5.1), information communication (5.2), and training of new members (5.3), contributing to an overall board effectiveness score of 5.20. AROEHEN is next, showcasing remarkable performance , particularly in raising funds (4.1), information communication (4.2), and training of new members (4.4), leading to an impressive board effectiveness score of 4.23. Similarly, Quest demonstrates strength in these areas, with respectable scores in raising funds (4.1), information communication (3.3), and training of new members (4.5), resulting in a solid board effectiveness score of 3.97. It can be inferred that Seva Sahyog, AROEHEN, and Quest emerge as top performers in board effectiveness, showcasing their capabilities in fundraising, communication, and member development within their respective boards.

	QUEST	GM	LSF	KS	Aroehen	SS	NLC	RF
Unique values	4.1	4.2	3.3	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.5	3.3
Efficiency of operations	3.2	3.3	3.6	3.9	4.3	4.5	4.6	3.1
Empowerment	4.1	3.6	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.8	4.7	2.9
Legality	3.80	3.70	3.80	4.17	4.30	4.47	4.60	3.10

Legality has been measured based on unique values, efficiency of operations, and empowerment within the organisations. From the above table, it is evident that the Nareshwadi Learning Centre, Seva Sahyog, and AROEHEN have performed exceptionally well across these indicators. Nareshwadi Learning Centre demonstrates strong performance in unique values (4.5), efficiency of operations (4.6), and empowerment (4.7), contributing to an impressive legality score of 4.60, followed by Seva Sahyog with commendable performance, with a strong legality score of 4.47. Similarly, AROEHEN showcases strength in these areas, with notable scores resulting in a solid legality score of 4.30. Overall, Nareshwadi Learning

Centre, Seva Sahyog, and Aroehen emerge as top performers in legality, demonstrating their adherence to legal standards and their commitment to unique values, operational efficiency, and empowerment within their respective organisations.

	QUEST	GM	LSF	KS	Aroehen	SS	NLC	RF
Trust	3.3	4.8	4.5	4.1	3.6	3.1	5.5	3.5
Satisfaction with NGO interventions	4.3	4.6	4.3	4.5	4.3	3.2	4.3	2.9
Perceived Effectiveness with interventions	3.3	3.1	4.9	3.2	3.9	3.3	3.6	2.4
Reputation	3.63	4.17	4.57	3.93	3.93	3.20	4.47	2.93

The factor of reputation has been evaluated based on trust, satisfaction with NGO interventions, and their perceived effectiveness. From the above table, it can be observed that the Nareshwadi Learning Centre, Learning Space Foundation, and Grammangal have performed exceptionally well across these parameters. The Nareshwadi Learning Centre demonstrates strong performance in trust (5.5), satisfaction with NGO interventions (4.3), and perceived effectiveness with interventions (3.6), contributing to a high reputation score of 4.47. Learning Space Foundation also exhibits commendable performance, particularly in trust (4.8), satisfaction with NGO interventions (4.6), and perceived effectiveness with interventions (4.9), leading to a strong reputation score of 4.57. Similarly, Grammangal showcases strength in these areas, with notable scores in trust (4.5), satisfaction with NGO interventions (4.3), and perceived effectiveness with interventions (3.6), resulting in a solid reputation score of 4.17. It can also be inferred that these NGOs have a long-standing presence in the given district and tribal communities are well-aware of their interventions, contributing to their strong reputation scores. Overall, Nareshwadi Learning Centre, Learning Space Foundation, and Grammangal emerge as top performers in reputation, demonstrating their trustworthiness, effectiveness, and impact within the communities they serve.

	QUEST	GM	LSF	KS	Aroehen	SS	NLC	RF
Management Effectiveness	4.54	3.28	3.46	3.76	4.66	4.5	3.84	2.24
Program Effectiveness	4.50	3.77	3.53	4.20	3.13	3.03	3.60	3.20
Network Effectiveness	3.7	3.48	3.76	2.98	4.28	4.06	2.94	2.64
Board Effectiveness	3.97	3.13	3.60	3.47	4.23	5.20	3.37	3.20
Legality	3.80	3.70	3.80	4.17	4.30	4.47	4.60	3.10
Reputation	3.63	4.17	4.57	3.93	3.93	3.20	4.47	2.93
Average	4.02	3.59	3.79	3.75	4.09	4.08	3.80	2.89

The above table gives an overview of the performance of eight NGOs across six key factors: Management Effectiveness, Program Effectiveness, Network Effectiveness, Board Effectiveness, Legality, and Reputation. Upon analysis, it was found that AROEHEN, Seva Sahyog, and Quest emerge as effective NGOs across the evaluation criteria, showcasing their strong performance and impact within their respective domains.

Conclusion

The study findings acknowledge the admirable efforts of the eight selected NGOs in uplifting the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities in Palghar district. These NGOs have been instrumental in bringing about positive transformations and systemic changes within the district. Their interventions have focused on improving the quality of education at pre-and elementary school levels. Through diverse programmes, projects and publications, they engage with school systems, individual schools, government entities as well as the broader community. Their aim is to cultivate a joyful learning experience, and lay the foundations of lifelong learning.

Some NGOs are dedicated to village development initiatives in Palghar, addressing essential needs such as access to water, electricity, and infrastructure. They are also promoting economic sustainability through cottage industries and agriculture to arrest the trend of local migration of tribals. Their interventions such as smart farming and skill development are aimed at improving living standards and promoting self-sufficiency.

Moreover, these NGOs extend their support to families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly those who have lost their breadwinners. Recognising the importance of empowerment and education, they provide upskilling opportunities to surviving family members, equipping them with the necessary skills for employment or entrepreneurship. Additionally, they sponsor the education of children from these families, ensuring that the disruption caused by the loss of a family member does not impede their access to education and future opportunities.

However, alongside their achievements, the study also shed light on the challenges faced by these NGOs in the implementation of their initiatives. These challenges consisted of a lack of skilled personnel at the grassroots level. The local populace exhibited inadequate communication abilities and leadership aptitudes. Furthermore, once trained, individuals were reluctant to reside in rural areas due to better prospects and remuneration in urban settings. It was also observed that the absence of effective leadership at both the upper and middle levels stop them from pursuing capacity building initiatives. Certain NGOs expressed contentment with their current state and lack of income generation and fundraising skills. They even exhibited reluctance towards replicating NGOs operating in different regions.

The effectiveness of programmes can be hindered by factors like social and political dynamics, as well as the demographics of the operational area. Many times, the programme duration gets extended due to increased expenditure and limited outcomes. Insufficient funding can also impede the ability to recruit suitable personnel. Ineffective monitoring and evaluation systems further compound these challenges,and lead to further problems with their network effectiveness, particularly with the increasing involvement of corporate houses in funding through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. While these initiatives aim to contribute to social welfare, many NGOs find the compliance requirements and the associated paperwork quite complex and resource-intensive.

The paperwork associated with compliance often involves extensive documentation, reporting, and record-keeping, which can be difficult for NGOs with limited administrative support. Moreover, staying up-to-date with evolving regulations and requirements adds another layer of complexity to the compliance process. As a result, NGOs may struggle to allocate sufficient time,

manpower, and resources, which can lead to delays, errors, or even non-compliance issues.

These challenges not only pose operational hurdles but also potentially impact the organisation's reputation and ability to access funding or partnerships.

Corporate entities often require impact assessment reporting to evaluate the efficacy of their investments in social initiatives. However, quantifying the tangible benefits experienced by beneficiaries presents a considerable challenge. The complexities of assessing impact metrics, such as measuring long-term outcomes and casual attribution, contribute to the difficulty in providing concrete evidence of success. This not only hampers the ability of the NGOs to demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs but also leads to a sense of scepticism and distrust among corporate entities. This may lead to a strained relationship between NGOs and corporate partners.

Also, the shortage of individuals with expertise in both social work and corporate environments results in a gap in mutual understanding and collaboration between NGOs and corporate entities. This deficiency in cross-sectoral collaboration hinders their ability to effectively coordinate efforts and leverage resources for maximum impact. This gap not only impedes the ability to amplify the impact of their initiatives but also undermines the overall progress of development efforts in the region. Without effective collaboration and alignment of goals between NGOs and corporate entities, the potential for sustainable and transformative change in Palghar is limited.

The issue of misuse of resources is a significant challenge faced by NGOs in Palghar. Limited oversight, inadequate financial management practices, and insufficient transparency can lead to funds being misallocated or misappropriated, diverting resources away from intended beneficiaries and programme objectives. This misuse of resources not only undermines the effectiveness of NGO interventions but also erodes trust and credibility within the community and among donors. Ineffective programme implementation is often a consequence of the aforementioned challenges, including mismanagement of resources, lack of compliance, and inadequate capacity. Initiatives may fail to achieve their intended outcomes due to poor planning, inadequate monitoring and evaluation, or insufficient coordination among stakeholders. This not only

results in wasted resources but also perpetuates the cycle of poverty and inequality within the community.

The lack of stakeholder engagement further intensifies these challenges. Meaningful engagement with beneficiaries, local communities, government agencies, and other relevant stakeholders is essential for designing and implementing sustainable development initiatives. However, limited communication, consultation, and collaboration can lead to interventions that are not aligned with community needs or priorities, making them less impactful. The absence of strict ethical guidelines and a code of conduct further compounds these issues. In organisations with loose structures and a dearth of qualified professionals, there may be inadequate mechanisms in place to ensure integrity, and accountability. This can result in instances of corruption, conflicts of interest, or unethical practices.

The absence of trust within the NGO sector can pose significant obstacles in securing essential funding, resources, and recruiting effective personnel. Trust serves as the cornerstone of successful partnerships and collaborations, particularly in the philanthropic and development sectors. Without a strong reputation for transparency, accountability, and impact, NGOs may find it challenging to attract the financial resources needed to sustain their operations and implement programs effectively. Donors and funding agencies are more likely to allocate resources to organisations with a proven track record of delivering results and managing funds responsibly.

Similarly, a bad reputation can deter skilled professionals from collaborating with NGOs. Talented individuals seek opportunities where their contributions are valued and where they can make a meaningful difference. However, if an NGO's reputation is marred by concerns about ethical conduct or mismanagement, prospective employees and partners may be reluctant to associate themselves with the NGO. Moreover, a lack of trust can hinder collaboration and partnerships with other stakeholders, including government agencies, community leaders, and local organisations. Building trust is essential for establishing productive relationships and leveraging collective resources and expertise to address complex social challenges effectively.

Suggestions

Addressing these challenges requires promoting greater communication, building trust, and facilitating partnerships that prioritise shared objectives and mutual benefit. The adoption and use of technology presents a viable solution to address many of the above-mentioned issues. By utilising digital platforms and

communication tools, NGOs and companies can bridge the gap, and facilitate the sharing of resources and expertise. By adopting technology, NGOs in Palghar can enhance their network effectiveness, build meaningful partnerships with corporate entities, and magnify their impact on the community's socio-economic development. Challenges related to compliance require strategic planning, investment in administrative capacity, and external support or partnerships. Streamlining processes, leveraging technology for documentation and reporting, and seeking guidance from legal or compliance experts can also help NGOs navigate compliance requirements more effectively, and thereby, ensure that their operations remain transparent, accountable, and sustainable in the long run.

All of these challenges require a multi-layered approach that focuses on strengthening governance structures and enhancing financial management practices. It should also promote stakeholder engagement, and bring transparency in the processes. Investing in capacity building, establishing clear policies and procedures, and promoting a culture of accountability and professionalism are essential steps toward building resilient and effective NGOs in Palghar. By demonstrating a commitment to these principles and actively working to rebuild trust within their communities and among stakeholders, NGOs can enhance their reputation and credibility, thereby increasing their ability to secure funding, resources, and skilled personnel needed to advance their mission and impact.

Nevertheless, despite these challenges, the study affirmed the resilience and determination of the NGOs to overcome obstacles and continue their efforts in empowering the tribal communities of Palghar. The findings thus underscored the need for ongoing support and collaboration to address the challenges faced by these organisations, ensuring that their impactful work continues to benefit the socio-economic development of the region's tribal population.

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