

NGO ACTIVISM IN LIBRARIES OF INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract *This paper not only examines the origins, evolution & the historical magnificence of libraries credited to kings' munificence since ancient times, but also the contributions of governments, individuals and/or associations in the modern times; as well as exploring the transformative influence of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) on library development in India. It highlights how NGOs came into being and explores the contributions of NGOs to libraries, including establishment, development, maintenance, and expansion of libraries in India over the years. The research article delves into the ways in which NGOs have filled critical gaps in the library ecosystem, cooperating with stakeholders, facilitating the democratization of knowledge via libraries in both rural and urban India.*

Keywords: *Philanthropy, Non Governmental Organization, NGO, Libraries, India*

INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY OF NGOs WORLDWIDE AND IN INDIA

Throughout history, libraries have played a crucial role worldwide in safeguarding literature, preserving culture, and disseminating knowledge; a fact recognised by kings and philosophers. Traditionally, the scholarly literature was preserved in royal palaces or temples for custodianship. The establishment, development and maintenance of these archives were hugely dependent on a kings' or noble person's charity and munificence. Giving or charity is a fundamental aspect of many religions, such as Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity, where emphasis is given to the importance of planned giving, pre-committed giving, and proportionate giving under Daana, Zakat, and Tithe, respectively. Since time immemorial, patronage was extended in cash and/or kind, as contributions to charitable activities for benefitting the citizens or poor was encouraged. A lot of people contribute by way of gifting, charity, fundraising, contributions, donations, bequests, handouts, patronage, or philanthropy for varied reasons; some donate as means to give back to society as per their generosity and magnanimity, or sometimes even to save income during taxation, but mostly in keeping with their religious beliefs. This intent is sometimes recorded for posterity and popularity, or sometimes anonymously due to privacy or shyness. Over time individuals and institutions have established groups or associations which are Non Governmental Organizations to benefit the community, mostly within a geographical location which was soon regulated by government and international agencies.

Even before the abbreviation 'NGO' denoted Non Governmental Organizations and officially adopted by the United Nations (UN), such organizations existed in various forms and played vital roles in movements such as anti-slavery, women's suffrage, etc. NGOs as formal organisations have a historical legacy dating back to the late 18th century. The first few societies were The Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage was founded in Philadelphia, United States of America (USA) on April 14, 1775 (History.com, 2009); Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, founded in London, United Kingdom (UK) in 1787 (Wikipedia, 2024); and Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions founded in 1823 (Wikipedia, 2024) to abolish slavery; but it is Anti-Slavery Society formed on 17 April 1839 in London, UK (Anti-Slavery International, 2023), which is documented and recognised as the first NGO by many after the Slave Trade Act 1807 made slave trade illegal in the British Empire.

The term Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) was coined in the Article 71 of the UN charter in 1945. (Britannica, 2004) and defined as a 'voluntary group of individuals or organizations, usually not affiliated with any government, that is formed to provide services or to advocate a public policy Britannica (n.d.). For the first time, the World NGO Day was held on 27 February 2014 by the UN in Helsinki, Finland (World NGO Day Foundation, 2023) and since then 27 February marks the International NGO Day every year.

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As with the socio-economic-cultural developments happening worldwide, India was not far behind in establishing NGOs for social good. The history of giving in India is rooted in the country's rich socio-cultural philanthropic tradition of benefiting its people and the community. The concept of NGOs as we understand them today did not exist during those periods but there was a concept of Dharma (moral duty) that is closely related to the practice of Daana (giving) in Hinduism which can be traced back to Vedic times. One of the most celebrated instances was documented in the epic Mahabharata considered as Dharma and Itihasa (history) where Karna's charitable nature made him knowingly give away his prized possessions at the cost of his own life. Most people who followed Sanatan Dharma as a way of life believed in Yathashakti (per self-capacity) extending selfless services and Agnyata (anonymously) donating; hence, they did not record or document the giving as glorifying Daana was frowned upon. Monks of Jainism and Buddhism do not possess anything superficial and live on alms. But as part of the expected duties of the laity to the monastic community, Jain monks collect, preserve and protect valuable handwritten manuscripts by donating to Jnana Bhandagaras (knowledge warehouses) (Cort, 1995). Monasteries, religious places including temples which often served as centers for education and learning and sometimes as archives for storing manuscripts for future generations. Dharma-Satramu (rest houses) for shelter or Matha (monasteries) with Bhandagara or Pustakalay (Libraries) were built by kings, nobles, wealthy and the affluent from various dynasties are excellent examples of their philanthropic endeavours. It is a known fact that Nalanda Mahavihara, a Buddhist monastic university was established with significant funding by the Gupta dynasty and later on it was patronized and preserved by the Pala kings.

Over the period there were many invaders, some of whom later adopted the land and its people and established libraries such as Akbar and Jahangir, while some like Bakhtiyar Khilji destroyed the Nalanda library, which reportedly burnt for 3 months (Puru, 2014). Even the Britishers who came to India initially to do business via the East India Company ruled India for around 200+ years and established libraries like the Imperial Library at Kolkata, which was restricted to British officers and later to Indians working for the British, which in turn benefited the British only. The Britishers did not intentionally try to improve the lives of the people they were ruling in India through charitable acts; but their actions aimed at benefiting themselves inadvertently resulted as a charitable byproduct benefiting Indians, such as the development of railways and roads for transport. These efforts were later documented and popularized as deliberate philanthropic activities on their part.

During the colonial period, various social reform movements arose advocating social change, education for all, women's

rights, and other pressing issues of the time driven by individual reformers such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Kandukuri Veeresalingam, etc., but unfortunately their efforts were either documented in their regional language or not adequately documented for posterity. Sharma (2013) documents Atmiya Sabha, a philosophical discussion circle in Calcutta established by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1815 to promote free collective thinking and social reform, as one of the earliest recorded informal voluntary organisations in India; followed by other notable associations that emerged such as the Unitarian Committee in 1822, Brahmo Samaj in 1828, Dharma Samaj in 1830, and the Widows Remarriage Association in 1850; as well as various literary and educational organizations formed like the Royal Asiatic Society in 1834 and the Dhyana Prakash Sabha in 1840. The second half of the 19th century had witnessed a gradual evolution and expansion of voluntary efforts in India. During this time, a rising awareness among the middle class spurred socio-political and economic awakening leading to rise of notable organizations such as the Friend-in-Need Society in 1858, Prathana Samaj in 1864, Satya Shodhan Samaj in 1873, Arya Samaj in 1875, National Council for Women in India in 1875, Indian National Social Conference in 1887, and the Ramakrishna Mission in 1898 which played significant roles in strengthening the voluntary movement in India (Asian Development Bank, 2009). Many of these movements laid the foundation for the development of NGOs in India to address specific social issues using organized non governmental structures.

The Societies Registration Act (SRA) of 1860, enacted during British India, a legislation that aimed to establish the legal framework for NGOs, provided a major boost to voluntarism (Societies Registration Act, n.d.). Bengal Home Industries Association (BHIA) India's first officially registered NGO under the Indian Companies Act VII (Section 26) was founded by Sri Gaganendranath Tagore in 1917 (Mintage World, 2020). During this period, organizations such as the Servants of India Society in 1905, the Gokhale Education Society year in 1918, and the Servants of People Society in 1921 (Mohanty & Singh, 2001) were established.

Since independence the Indian government attempted to develop libraries and tried its best to provide uniform resources in all academic, public and special libraries, but due to many challenges including the expanse of land and population, as well as due to paucity of funds and various other challenges like human resources and technological innovations it could not extend the required facilities. Resources and funding were allocated based after evaluating a variety of factors like urban vs rural, size etc. Academic libraries are funded by their parent institutions and may also receive certain government grants. University Grant Commission (UGC) allocates grants to state and central universities under recurring grants for the purchase of books, periodicals, databases, and non-recurring grants for the

purchase of computers, equipment, and other infrastructure items. On the other hand, special libraries primarily rely on funding from their parent institutions or affiliated research bodies. In India, public libraries typically fall under the jurisdiction of the state government, with the exception of the national library, which operates under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India (GoI). Through the National Mission on Libraries (NML), public libraries in various states and union territories are established and maintained by providing financial assistance. This support to public libraries is extended via the Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation (RRRLF), which serves as the Nodal Agency of NML for administrative, logistic, planning, and budgeting purposes. Library Cess is collected by state governments under various heads, including surcharge on property tax, motor vehicle tax, entertainment taxes, among others, while some states collect it as a surcharge on property tax, buildings, or house tax. For example, under the Goa Excise Duty Act, 1964, Goa collects Library Cess as a surcharge on the excise duty at the rate of 0.50 (fifty paise only) per proof liter of Indian made Foreign Liquor (I.M.F.L.) and per bulk liter of beer (Government of Goa, n.d.). In Karnataka, it is collected under a surcharge on property tax (Government of Karnataka, n.d.), while Telangana collects 0.08% of property tax (Government of Telangana, 2014). These taxes collected are extended as funding to public Libraries as well as under education and research grants and are routed to academic libraries for establishment and development. Due to delay in funding or grants, the libraries are not in position to cater to users. As a response, NGOs stepped in to address the gap, driven by motives such as philanthropy, social contribution, and CSR have tried to develop areas lacking essential resources and infrastructure. Donations in cash and sometimes in the form of furniture, computers, etc., and occasionally bequests of land, houses, vehicles, etc., are extended by individuals or associations or trusts or private entities but they are few and far in-between. Usually used rare collections like out of print rare editions, manuscripts etc., are donated to libraries.

Due to government policy, various corporates donate according to their might under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives as a means to save money on taxes, rather than a philanthropic attitude. Due to this, many NGOs mushroomed with a few unscrupulous taking advantage and benefiting themselves instead of the intended group. Domestic, NRI or foreign donors may not require 12A & 80G for tax exemption especially if indulging in money laundering, so do not register. So, GoI got regulation where NGOs established under Section 8 of the Companies Act are governed by the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013, while the NGOs established as a trust or society are governed by the Societies Registration Act, 1860, and the Indian Trusts Act, 1882, require NGOs to register with the respective government bodies in their state or union territory

(Ministry of Corporate Affairs, n.d.; National Informatics Centre, n.d.) and made Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) certification mandatory for foreign donations. From 2017 to 2021 6,677 NGOs registration were cancelled by the government in India due to FCRA (PTI, 2022).

Different Types of NGOs: It is not only an individual or a group in the form of association or trusts, on a local, national or international level, and few trans-national federations of national organisations who indulge in philanthropic services. Many terms are synonymously used without understanding the meaning. One should learn to differentiate between Non Government Organisations (NGO) which can be for profit and nonprofit; Non-Profit Organization (NPO) like political organizations, schools, churches etc., or Not-for-Profit Organizations (NFPOs) like sports clubs, and advocacy groups, or Charitable Organizations like educational, religious, etc., serving the public interest, and Foundations does not solicit funds from the public. Not only establishing libraries or developing them, people have given unique innovative concepts like boat libraries or mobile rotating libraries. Pathuri Nagabhushanam started a boat library on the Krishna Bank canal from Pedavadlapudi to Kollur, in Andhra Pradesh in 1935 to promote libraries among the people (Boat libraries, 2023). Another interesting example: Munigal in 2013 introduced a unique innovative concept of 'Mobile Rotating Library' for Bodhaka Library, under Cepce India Society, introduced resource sharing when it was observed that due to limited resources and non-existent fund, storybooks borrowers in orphanages quickly read, so volunteers circulated books, so that children had more books to read in limited sources.

There are various NGOs contributing to various aspects of humankind, but in this article, we are concerned only with those NGOs that are contributing to libraries including public, academic and special. These NGOs have contributed to the establishment & development of various types of libraries in India such as community libraries, mobile libraries, school libraries, public libraries etc for the underprivileged and underserved marginalised socio-economic communities. NGOs have contributed by extending their services to include library infrastructure development, conducting digital literacy programs, organizing book donation drives, conducting book reading programs, implementing book exchange initiatives, facilitating skill development programs, curating special collections, conducting cultural and educational events, promoting resource sharing, and offering librarian training programs etc. A variety of examples are given below on various concepts the authors have come across.

- *Non Government Organisations*
- Majority of NGOs are *non-profit* organizations like CRY (Child Rights and You), *Helpage India*, *Katha*,

Pratham Books etc.

- Few are *for-profit* NGOs or social enterprises or social businesses like *Better World Books* in the USA, *Araku Coffee*, and *SELCO India* in India etc.
- *Single person established an NGO*. Example: Palam Kalyanasundaram, a librarian from Kumarakuruparar Arts College, Tamil Nadu, India donated his entire salary and pension up to ₹30 crore to charity after working for 35 years. After his retirement in 1998, he established a non governmental social welfare organization called “Paalam” (bridge) working for orphanages and children’s educational funds, books, etc thereby earning the epithet of ‘Man of the Millennium’ (Suryah, 2023).
- *Single person without establishing an NGO has established a Library*. Example: The 86-year-old Vittalacharya Kurella, a retired college principal from Yellanki, Ramannapet in Yadadri Bhongir, Telangana, transformed his residence into a public library ‘Acharya Kurella Library’ housing 2,00,000 books was felicitated with the Padma Shri award in 2024 (Srinivasa Rao, 2024).
- *Group of persons formed an NGO to establish Library*. Example: Professors Shiva Shankar and Asai Thambi have set up 15 public libraries in some remote areas across Tamil Nadu (Deeksha, 2021).
- *NGO gets funds from crowdfunding to establish Library*. Example: Mumbai-based Pushpendra Pandya has founded a unique startup called ‘Crowdsourced Library’, books donated are recirculated among readers providing ‘real book reading experience’ from the onslaught of e-books (Draper, 2013).
- *Companies establish NGO under CSR which in turn establish a Library*. Example: JN Tata Endowment Fund (now Tata Trusts) founded in 1892 by Jamsetji Tata for the higher education of Indians (Tata Trusts, n.d.) and another initiative Parag is working to ensure that children across India can enjoy reading in diverse vernacular languages by establishing 1,074 libraries across 7 states and equipped them with ₹2.74 lakh books (Tata Trusts, n.d.).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although philanthropy was practiced since ancient times all over the world, it was not recorded or documented as people believed in giving anonymously and their giving was triggered by religion rather than humanitarian need or crisis. So, the authors have conducted an in-depth search to identify if there is literature available in academic databases and research portals regarding NGOs contributing to libraries. Although there is a lot of literature available on NGOs

worldwide, unfortunately it’s very limited in India. So, an exhaustive search was conducted on various search engines retrieving newspaper articles, blogs etc on NGO specific to libraries in India as listed below as per year:

ETV Bharat (2022) focuses on Kamala Davande, a teacher from remote tribal area of Bhainsdehi, Betul, Madhya Pradesh, set up a mobile library on a bullock cart distributing books to 87 children at her school when faced with the challenges of school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Bhola (2021) highlights Sanjay Kachyap, a tribal officer in Jharkhand’s who earned the sobriquet of “Library Man” as he established 25 libraries for underprivileged students. Shaan (2021) highlights Rebecca Mathayia, a student who established Karinthandan Memorial Library exclusively for the Paniya tribe in Wayanad, Kerala. Vedak (2021) conducted an exploratory study in his thesis to establish the effective role of libraries in Community Learning Centres (CLCs). Bhandral (2020) highlights how government-supported libraries have dwindled in number, and NGOs like The Community Library Project (TCLP), Buguri, and Let’s Open a Book have stepped up to fill the void especially during the COVID-19 pandemic in remote areas like Spiti Valley, Himachal Pradesh. Mohapatra’s (2020) showcased community-driven initiative of tribal women effort to instill a reading culture and avoiding excessive smartphone usage among youngsters of Malkangiri, Odisha. Pappu and Sawhney (2019) investigates a library program initiated by BREAD Society within selected government high schools across two Indian states. Sawant (2018) poster ‘Role of NGOs in library development in India’ highlighting the diverse range of organizations (nongovernmental organizations, corporate institutions, trusts, associations, multinational companies, and philanthropists) various contributions to improving library facilities and services in India. Somasundaram’s (2017) article provides a comprehensive overview of the initiatives undertaken by various NGOs like Basic Research Education and Development (BREAD) Society, Rural Relations, Pratham Books, Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC), A&A Book Trust, United Way Mumbai (UVM) etc aimed at promoting reading culture, addressing challenges of adapting to regional needs, and lack of access to reading materials in both rural and urban areas in India and need for unconventional spaces “mini-libraries” and “reading corners” across India. Tata Institute of Social Sciences (2017) conducted a field research study on the BREAD children’s library program in government schools of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states. Chegoni (2014) discusses the partnerships formed by an organization ‘Room to Read’ NGO, corporate sector, and public-private partnerships to establish school and community libraries to promote literacy in various regions of India. Hulagabali (2014) describes the establishment and management of Voluntary Libraries (VLs)

in Mumbai and Thane district in India. Muralidhar (2013) advocates the adoption of the recommendations put forth by the National Knowledge Commission, emphasizing the potential role of PPP in revitalizing public libraries. Munigal and Chakraborty (2013) focused on philanthropy with special reference to libraries in India stressing that smaller donations also have a significant impact. Pyati and Kamal (2012a, 2012b) discusses the establishment of community libraries by various NGOs for children in the slums of Bangalore, India. Saha and Sinha (2012) explores Tagore's idea of 'Chalantika Library' contributing to genesis and growth of rural libraries in West Bengal.

Many excellent articles have been documented in developed countries but very few from developing nations, especially from India. So, there is a need to document and publish articles regarding NGO contributions in Libraries in India.

METHODOLOGY

NGO Darpan (National Informatics Centre, n.d.), is a centralized directory with broad classification like housing, education & literacy, nutrition, etc., but there is no separate way to track data on how many NGOs are related to libraries

in India. Since there were not too many scholarly articles in journals and academic and research databases sources on NGOs contributing in Libraries in India, so various online newspaper articles, blog posts, magazine articles, were checked and corroborated results with the Internet using Google search engine and have found around 26 NGOs documented.

Findings from NGO Darpan

Table 1: Types of NGOs in India

Sr. No.	Types of NGOs	Number of NGOs
1	Private Sector Companies (Sec 8/25)	10,891
2	Registered Societies (Non-Government)	93,201
3	Trust (Non-Government)	69,108
4	Other Registered Entities (Non-Government)	2,822
5	Academic Institutions (Private)	2,006
	Total	1,78,028

Source: (National Informatics Centre, n.d. as of October 17, 2023).

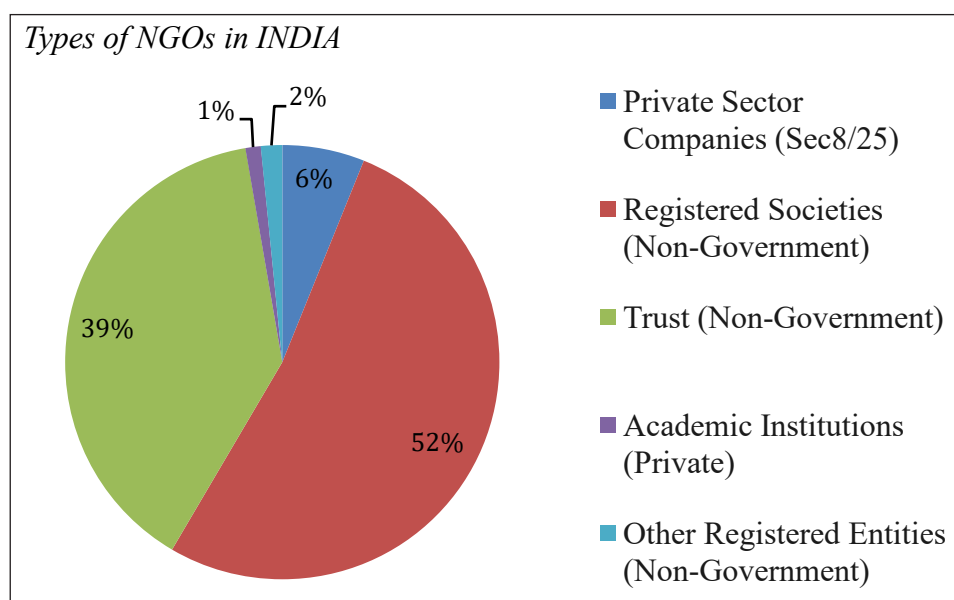


Fig. 1: Types of NGOs in India

NGOs in India are classified under 5 types, and presented in Table 1 and Fig. 1: Types of NGOs in India. As per data from NGO Darpan website from the table, the

largest number enrolled in the database are 93,201 (52%) Registered Societies and the least number 2,006 (2%) are Academic Institutions.

Table 2: NGOs in India Categorized by Different States/Union Territories

Sr. No.	State/Union Territory	Number of NGOs	State/UT
1	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	183	UT
2	Chandigarh	258	UT
3	Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu	57	UT
4	Delhi	13,684	UT
5	Jammu and Kashmir	2,037	UT
6	Ladakh	196	UT
7	Lakshadweep	8	UT
8	Puducherry	359	UT
	Total - UT	16782	
1	Andhra Pradesh	6447	State
2	Arunachal Pradesh	564	State
3	Assam	2917	State
4	Bihar	6271	State
5	Chhattisgarh	2316	State
6	Goa	331	State
7	Gujarat	8218	State
8	Haryana	4480	State
9	Himachal Pradesh	1015	State
10	Jharkhand	3310	State
11	Karnataka	10186	State
12	Kerala	4861	State
13	Madhya Pradesh	8103	State
14	Maharashtra	24658	State
15	Manipur	2817	State
16	Meghalaya	365	State
17	Mizoram	302	State
18	Nagaland	531	State
19	Odisha	5042	State
20	Punjab	2398	State
21	Rajasthan	6960	State
22	Sikkim	153	State
23	Tamil Nadu	12143	State
24	Telangana	4418	State
25	Tripura	583	State
26	Uttar Pradesh	26112	State
27	Uttarakhand	2583	State
28	West Bengal	13314	State
	Total - States	161398	

Source: National Informatics Centre. (n.d.).

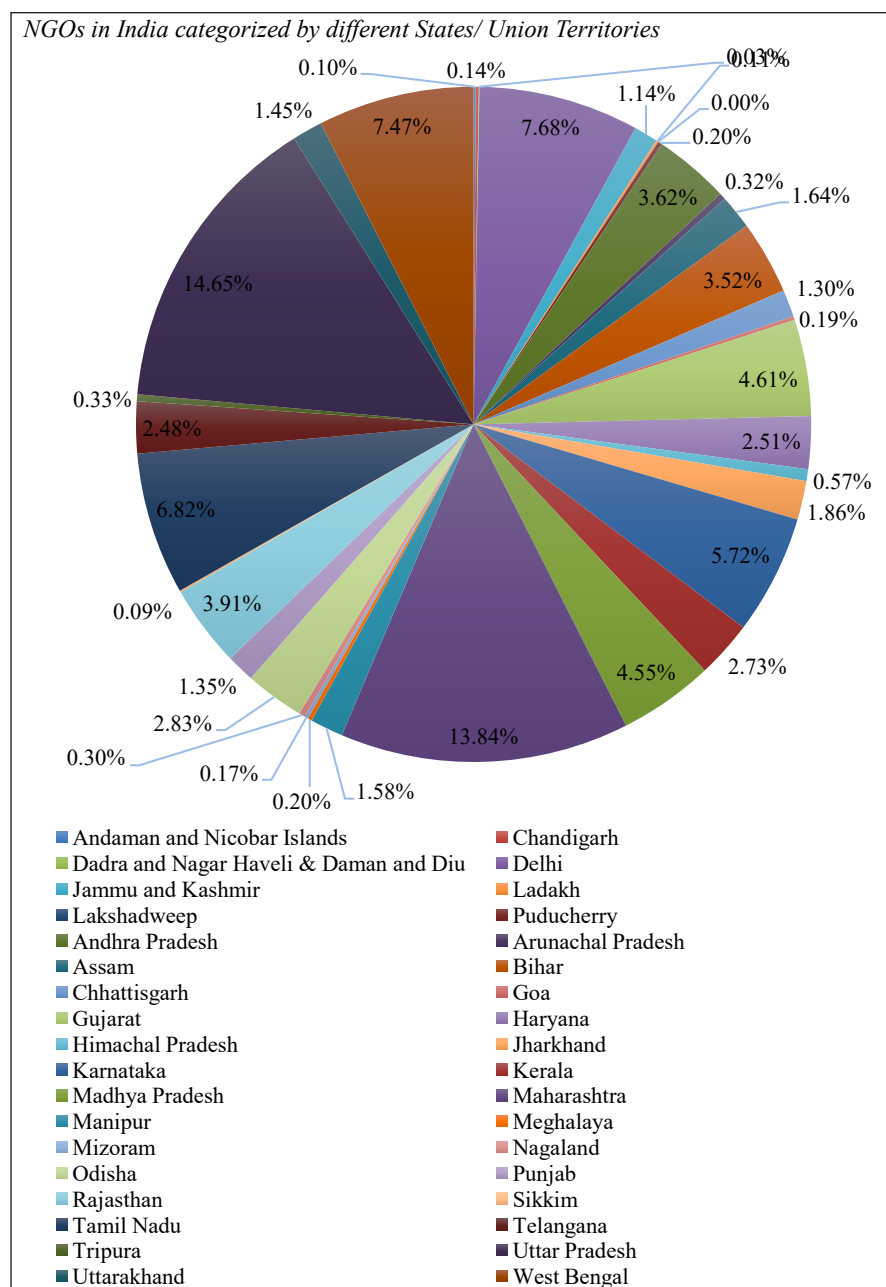


Fig. 2: NGOs in India Categorized by Different States/ Union Territories

There are 28 states and 8 union territories in India (Government of India, n.d.). Approximately 1,78,180 NGOs across 28 states and 8 union territories of India are registered on the *NGO Darpan* website of the GoI (National Informatics Centre, n.d. as of October 17, 2023). Data related to the number of NGOs in India categorized by different States/

Union Territories wise, and presented in Fig. 2. According to the data incorporated in the above Table 2, the largest number of NGOs 26,112 (14.655%) in Uttar Pradesh and the least number of NGOs 8 (0.004%) in Lakshadweep enrolled on the *NGO Darpan* website.

Table 3: NGOs in India Categorized by Different Sectors

Sr. No.	Sector	Number of NGOs	Sr. No.	Sector	Number of NGOs
1	Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries	30951	23	Micro Finance (SHGs)	20868
2	Aged/Elderly	31859	24	Minority Issues	20837
3	Agriculture	43060	25	Micro Small & Medium Enterprises	21825
4	Art & Culture	47161	26	New & Renewable Energy	14304
5	Biotechnology	15959	27	Nutrition	21597
6	Children	64909	28	Panchayati Raj	18908
7	Civic Issues	24922	29	Prisoner's Issues	6865
8	Differently Abled	28449	30	Right to Information & Advocacy	14915
9	Disaster Management	27043	31	Rural Development & Poverty Alleviation	43960
10	Dalit Upliftment	23546	32	Scientific & Industrial Research	10622
11	Drinking Water	35312	33	Skill Development	20409
12	Education & Literacy	1,02,396	34	Science & Technology	18869
13	Environment & Forests	47452	35	Sports	24511
14	Food Processing	25965	36	Tribal Affairs	20459
15	Health & Family Welfare	69283	37	Tourism	12365
16	HIV/AIDS	28490	38	Urban Development & Poverty Alleviation	22598
17	Housing	14301	39	Vocational Training	45779
18	Human Rights	32337	40	Water Resources	19766
19	Information & Communication Technology	26123	41	Women's Development & Empowerment	61328
20	Legal Awareness & Aid	25912	42	Youth Affairs	31943
21	Labour & Employment	30692	43	Any Other	29792
22	Land Resources	12717		TOTAL	12,91,359

Source: National Informatics Centre. (n.d.).

According to the NGO Darpan portal's records if we calculate all sectors there are 12,91,359 registered NGOs on this site out of which approximately 1,02,396 NGOs are associated with the Education & Literacy sector as libraries are classified under it. But it should be noted that an NGO is not confined to a single sector but contributes in more than one sector. Hence, the number of NGOs in terms of sectors is high but in reality, there are 1,78,180 registered

on DARPAN. Data related to the number of NGOs in India categorized by different sectors wise, and presented in Fig. 3 form (National Informatics Centre, n.d. as of October 17, 2023). According to the data incorporated in the above Table 3, the largest number of NGOs 1,02,396 (7.93%) in the Education & Literacy sector and the least number of NGOs 6865 (0.53%) in the Prisoner's Issues sector enrolled on the NGO Darpan website.

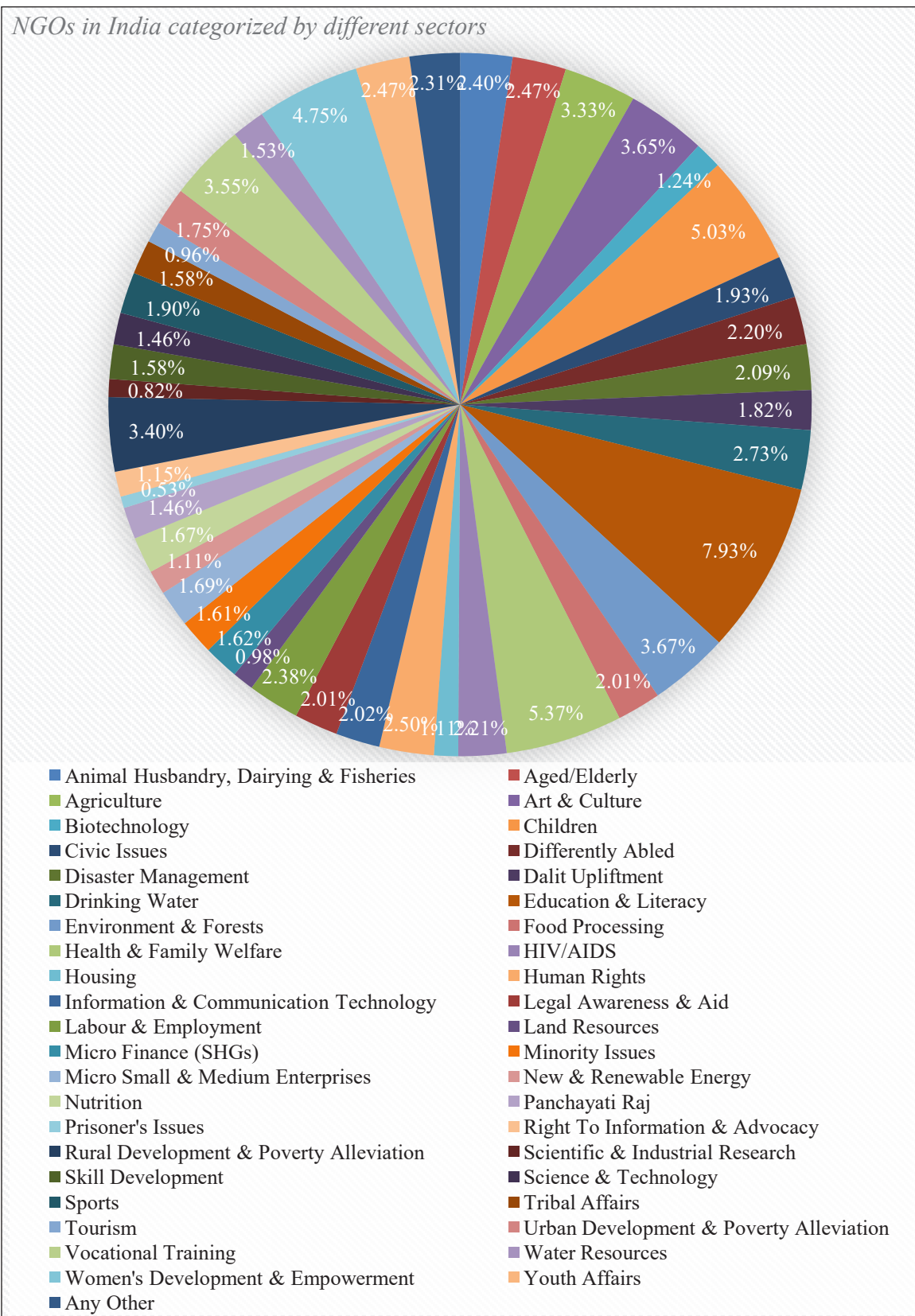
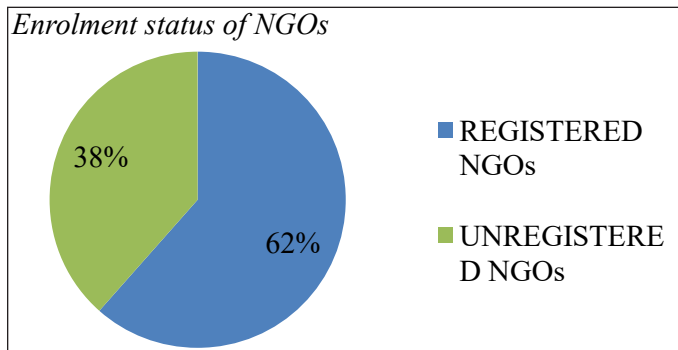


Fig. 3: NGOs in India Categorized by Different Sectors

Table 4: Enrolment Status of NGOs in NGO Darpan

NGOs	Number
Registered NGOs	16
Unregistered NGOs	10

Source: National Informatics Centre. (n.d.)

**Fig. 4: Enrolment Status of NGOs in NGO Darpan**

Registered NGOs are 16 (62%) and unregistered NGOs are 10 (38%). NGO Darpan data related to the enrolment status of NGOs setting up libraries in India, is presented in Fig. 4 form as on 17 October 2023. There may be a variety of reasons why an NGO chooses not to register. One of the reasons may be that as an individual one cannot register on NGO Darpan. Other reasons range from not meeting eligibility criteria, lack of awareness about registry or even onerous registration process or documentation makes it difficult to register or bureaucratic or regulatory scrutiny concerns. It is interesting to note that while it is not necessary for an NGO to register with NGO Darpan to engage in charitable activities. Registering on the online registry helps the government streamline and ensure that NGOs operate within the legal framework, following government regulations. However, registration becomes necessary if the NGO intends to start collecting funds and seeks tax exemption under Section 80G. Additionally, registration is required to apply for 12A, 80G, or FCRA to regulate foreign funding into India. As registering provides legitimacy and credibility to an NGO while ensuring transparency and accountability with various government regulatory authorities and highly advisable not only differentiates from the rest. The process of NGO registration is based on the type of the NGO; as it can be registered as a Society, Non Profit Company or Trust. There is no single dedicated act in India that deals with the registration of NGOs. There are three main acts that guide their registration and regulation.

- The Societies Registration Act, 1860 provides for the registration of societies for various scientific, literary or charitable purposes.

- The Indian Trusts Act, 1882 NGOs with property can also be registered as *Public Charitable Trusts* with the *Sub Registrar* office of the *Revenue Department* in the locality of the Trust office address.
- The Companies Act, 2013 commonly known as Section 8 Company primary objectives are to achieve non-profitable goals and must fall under the promotion of trade, arts, charity, environmental protection, social welfare, and other relevant areas. (Gupta, 2023). Participation on *NGO Darpan* platform has become obligatory for NGOs receiving funds from the government or operating under the FCRA.

Since information related to libraries in the database of *NGO Darpan* was not found, the authors searched on internet and prepared a list of 26 NGOs from India and listed below:

- A & A Book Trust was founded by Arvind Kumar and Arundhati Deosthale in 2007 has established 3,800 school libraries and distributed 135,000 books directly to children in India (A & A book trust, 2023).
- Aarohan was founded by Rani Patel in 2005, to help disadvantaged slum children and women (Aarohan NGO, n.d.).
- AksharBharati, an NGO founded in 2007 in Pune, Maharashtra runs four 'Libraries on Wheels' (LoW) and has set-up 800+ school libraries, reaching 1,75,000+ children from 13 states (Sewa International, 2020; AksharBharati, n.d.).
- Akshara Foundation was founded by Rohini Nilekani in 2000 in Bangalore, Karnataka launched 'Akshara Classroom Library Program' to establish libraries in 2,700 classrooms aimed at improving teaching-learning standards in government schools across the state in 2014 (Akshara Foundation, 2023).
- AWIC (Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children) was founded by K. Shankar Pillai in 1981 in Delhi launched the Children's Library Project in 1983 aimed to promote reading by establishing 114 children's libraries (AWIC, n.d.).
- Books for All (BFA) was established by Pravin Bhasin in Noida, Uttar Pradesh in 2009 works for the development of underprivileged children, youth & women from urban villages and has set up 'Library cum Creativity Centres' in six schools in urban villages, 44 'Hanging Libraries' in schools in 4 states of India. (Books for All, 2021).
- Basic Research Education and Development (BREAD) Society, was established in 1989 in Andhra Pradesh (undivided) and after bifurcation aims to develop reading habits and reading skills by establishing 1,810 children's libraries for students in government schools in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh benefitting around

14,00,000 students (BREAD Society, n.d.).

- Dulkal NGO was established in 2019 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, set up regular, street, and mobile libraries to benefit children in government schools and rural communities and has successfully established 2 school libraries and 1 community library in rural areas. The concept of the “mobile libraries” program with 70 mobile libraries operating in villages, including 25 in tribal areas, with a collection of around 5,500 books. They have also set up 6 “street libraries” for children in Pirattiyur, Tiruchirappalli, and also engage in creating audio books for visually-challenged children (Philip, 2020).
- Eklavya Foundation was started in 1982 in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh initiated the Bhopal Education Resource Center (BERC) program, in 2000 which aims to develop interest in reading, writing and expression skills in students, through the production of wall newspaper and renovation of libraries. It established 130 libraries in government primaries in Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh, and publishes 30-35 new book titles per year (Eklavya, n.d.).
- Guzarish, a Delhi-based NGO established in 2015 was initiated through crowdsourcing platform ‘Books for All’ in 2016 that allows used & new books to be donated or purchased and have distributed around 4 lakhs books to kids across 15 states and set up book distribution drives in more than 75 government schools to cater to kids directly (Shruthi, 2018; Books For All A social initiative by NGO Guzarish, n.d.).
- Himmotthan Society was founded in Uttarakhand in 2002 by Sir Ratan Tata Trust through Central Himalayan Education Initiative (CHEI), a school library program and established 65 school libraries (Himmotthan Society, n.d.).
- Hippocampus Reading Foundation (HRF) established in Bangalore, Karnataka in 2004 established 52 libraries for children of Bangalore slums, government schools in cities and the rural areas to develop reading skills and introduced ‘GROWBY Reading’ program in 2007 (Hippocampus Reading Foundation, 2019).
- Kahani Tree, founded by Sangeeta Bhansali in 2006 in Mumbai in partnership with the United Way of Mumbai and their ‘Let’s Read’ initiative have successfully established 220 mini-libraries for children across the country (Kahani Tree, n.d.).
- Kalisu Foundation was established in 2013 in Mysore, Karnataka, works for the development of underprivileged communities in India and has successfully established 33 classroom libraries in government schools (Kalisu Foundations, 2023).
- Let’s Open A Book is a Delhi-based NGO founded by Ruchi Dhona in 2019 has established reading corner libraries in 60 schools in the region (Let’s Open A Book, n.d.).
- Open Eyes Foundation (OEF), established by Sandeep Kumar in Chandigarh in 2017, promotes education and reading by collecting used education material from homes, educational institutions, and other organizations, and distributing them to those in need. OEF operates mini libraries called “Library of Honesty,” typically housing around 70 novels covering diverse themes such as motivation, self-help, and fiction. Additionally, the foundation runs “Hope on Wheels,” a mobile library serving for students, underprivileged children, and slum people (Open Eyes Foundation, 2023).
- Pratham Books was set up by Rohini Nilekani, Ashok Kamath, and Rekha Menon in 2014 to complement Read India has established more than 25,000 “Library-in-a-Classroom” (LIC) libraries, and has published over 7,000 original titles in 24 Indian languages, reaching more than 50 million children (Pratham Books, 2020).
- Regenboog India Foundation was founded by Madhan Mohan, in 2006 in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, launched the ‘Mobile Library’ project in 2008, distributing around 23,000 books to children in 103 government schools through a Mobile Library vehicle and five motorcycle libraries. It launched a new initiative called ‘Fridge library,’ wherein old refrigerators are purchased and converted into mini library bookshelves in open public spaces (Regenboog India Foundation, n.d.).
- Room to Read was founded in Nepal in 1999 by John Wood and Dinesh Shrestha began the “Reading Room Program” in 2003 by establishing 7,311 libraries in government schools across 10 states in India (Room to Read, 2023).
- Rural Education and Development (READ) Global was set up in Junbesi, Nepal and by Antonia Toni Neubauer in 1991 and launched READ India in 2007. READ establishes Community Library and Resource Centers (READ CLRC) to promote a reading habit for children, women, and men throughout India (Read India, n.d.).
- Rural Relations Foundation was founded by Pradeep Lokhande in 1996 in Pune, Maharashtra, spearheading the Non-Resident Villager (NRV) movement, which has facilitated the installation of 5,800 Gyan-key libraries in rural secondary schools (Rural Relations, 2019).

- Sarvahitey was started in 2015 in Delhi, establishing over 300 libraries for underprivileged communities in geographically and culturally isolated areas, backward regions, tribal areas, and Naxal-affected regions across 14 states and Union Territories of India through 'Project Paper Bridge' (Sarvahitey, 2021).
- Share A Book India Association (SABIA) was founded in 2016 by Preeti Birgi and Srishti Parihar, from Kota, Rajasthan in December 2020 establishing 175 government school libraries and 10 community libraries to improve reading abilities among underprivileged children across 16 states and 3 Union Territories in the country. As a result, 25,000 children have been positively impacted by these programs (Share A Book India Association, 2023).
- Tata Trusts, founded in 1892 by Jamsetji Tata under the name 'JN Tata Endowment Fund' for the higher education of Indians (Tata Trusts, n.d.), has consolidated all philanthropic activities of the Tata family over time. The Parag Initiative of Tata Trusts, has successfully established 1,074 libraries across 7 states, equipped with 2.74 lakh books, creating spaces where children read for pleasure (Tata Trusts, n.d.).
- The Community Library Project (TCLP) started in 2014 in Delhi and has set up 3 community libraries for free borrowing in Khirki, South Extension Kotla, and Sikanderpur, Gurgaon by 2015 (The Community Library Project, n.d.).
- United Way Mumbai (UVM) is a non-profit organization working in urban and rural communities founded in 2001 in Mumbai, Maharashtra and collaborating with a network of 500+ NGOs and numerous corporates CSR programs. Through the 'Let's Read' program with the aim of fostering reading among underprivileged children, 31,670 books to 6,334 children, were distributed and 128 mini-libraries in 74 schools were set up (United Way of Mumbai, n.d.).
- Please note that examples included above about Palam Kalyanasundaram, Vittlacharya Kurella, Shiva Shankar Asai Thambi and Pushpendra Pandya was taken from an online newspaper and not available elsewhere on websites etc to provide authentic details, and since they are individuals, they were not included in 26 list of NGOs.
- The Tata Trusts is the oldest NGO established in 1892, and Dulkal is the newest NGO established in 2019.
- Out of 26 NGOs, 7 NGOs (27%) cater to rural areas, 10 NGOs (38%) cater to urban areas, and 9 NGOs (35%) cater to both rural and urban areas.
- It is very interesting to note that all 26 (100%) NGOs donate only books and not cash.
- The total number of Indian NGOs is 22 (85%), and 4 (15%) being international NGOs working in India. There are 14 (54%) NGOs run by individuals as societies, 1 (4%) NGO is run by Corporate/ Industrial as a Trust and 11 (42%) NGOs run as Trusts.
- There are 9 (35%) NGOs in metros (Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai) with the highest 5 (19%) NGOs in Delhi, and 17 (65%) NGOs in the rest of India.
- There are 14 (54%) NGOs that are specifically focused on library-related activities such as education, literacy improvement, promoting reading, donating books, organizing story time events, etc., and 12 (46%) NGOs of a general nature have contributed to library development.
- Out of the 26 NGOs, 5 (19%) are inactive after 2020, while 21 (81%) are still active.
- A total of 51,173 libraries have been established by the aforementioned 26 NGOs including 50,302 (98.30%) school libraries, 445 (0.87%) community libraries, and 80 (0.16%) mobile libraries.

SUGGESTIONS

All stakeholders within the library environment like academic institutions, its management or administration and its staff at all levels including library staff, users and their family, as well as NGOs, and government should be on the same page as it is critical that the NGO ecosystem for strengthening the infrastructure for building community resilience. Government should have a flexible policy. NGOs and individuals volunteering and donating time, money and resources should be selfless and transparent in their activities. Community as well as local authorities involvement should be mandated. Collaborate with publishers, and local businesses. Understand end user limitations regarding literacy/illiteracy, digital literacy, digital divide etc. Understand various limitations with regards to human resource, Infrastructure, ICT, etc., then prioritize and address deficiencies before implementing. Funding to provide basic infrastructure, ensuring access to clean drinking water, well-maintained toilets, and improved ventilation in educational institutions where NGO run libraries. Increased funding to enhance/strengthen infrastructure by establishing a strong ICT network, providing free internet & Wifi which is completely

FINDINGS FROM COLLATED LIST OF 26 NGOS

- Out of 26 NGOs, the majority 16 (62%) are registered on the *NGO Darpan* website, and the remaining 10 (38%) are unregistered.

dependent on electricity, hence alternate arrangements for generators have to be made during power outages. There are also challenges of no trained library staff to manage these libraries established by NGOs. There are no computers for staff and users in the library so the intranet with Open Resources cannot be extended. There are other limitations like the users cannot afford to buy expensive electronic gadgets, so devices need to be extended on loan. Encourage the establishment of well-equipped libraries with a diverse collection of books so as to cater not only to academic needs of students but also to their varied interests. Even if there is one differently abled or divyang user then Institution or NGO should ensure to implement Marrakesh Treaty where users need big font texts or audiobooks and other assistive technologies to aid partial blind, autism and dyslexic users as well as Braille books for blind. Specialized training for educators/librarians should be implemented. Have drop boxes for toys, mobiles, laptops, medicines etc. Toy libraries or mobile/laptop libraries can be established for kids from rural and urban slums as well as socio economic tribal areas. A need was felt for devices for education during COVID-19. People benefitting from the NGO should also ensure to take care of resources extended to ensure the next generation benefits. Last but not the least consulting a CA or lawyer is advisable to understand the limitations and consequences of registering an NGO either as a Trust or Society and keep all activities transparent. Propose training programs for library staff to enhance their skills in managing and curating library resources effectively. Awareness sessions for all stakeholders should be periodically conducted and user surveys done to know the efficacy of any program introduced.

CONCLUSION

The treasure trove of ancient scriptures/manuscripts stored in archives to the modern digital libraries require efforts not only by governments but to a greater extent from passionate individuals giving back to the society, as well as NGOs with philanthropic vision who are advocating establishing and safeguarding these collections and cutting down digital divides.

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