

**Paradigm Shift in the Lives of the Less Privileged - A Select Study with
Special Reference to *Navjeevan Seva Mandal*:
A Voluntary Social Service Organization**

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India poised as one of the fast developing countries in the third world, having diverse cultural and religious backgrounds and more than 60% of its population live in rural and tribal villages. But unfortunately majority of them experience multiple exploitations through people in different levels at one or other occasion that leads to poverty and its de-effects. In order to cut across this undesirable poverty scenario and to achieve the vision of National leaders that “the rural and tribal are mainstreamed and allowed to enjoy their real life in their rural and tribal settings”, it is essential that every citizen should realize their responsibility to help and care one another so that the rate of socio economic inequality is reduced and balanced. Taking heed of the socio economical deterioration state of Indian tribal and rural poor, the like minded leaders from Friends Missionary Prayer Band have formed an organization in 1984 under the NGO frame work called Navjeevan Seva Mandal which means “New life service organization”.¹

History of NSM

Navjeevan Seva mandal is a developmental organization started to develop the people in the mission fields reached by the Friends Missionary Prayer Band (FMPB). Friends Missionary Prayer Band is a missionary organization involved in evangelistic work in different states of India sending missionary from Tamil Nadu since 1967. Dr.Chandrasekar was the Vice President of Friends Missionary Prayer Band since 1970 and the same time he had been working as Vertinarian in IVPM, Ranipet. He was the founder director of Navajeevan Seva Mandal.² NSM was started to take care of the developmental activities of FMPB as sister organization. Initially it was functioning funded by World Vision of India in Gujarat and it had a wider opportunity of expanding all over the country where FMPB was working.³ NSM as a voluntary social organization was registered in Delhi in 1985 and of 1991 in Tamilnadu under Societies Act.⁴

Vision Statement

To serve the poorest, most backward, illiterate and exploited people, particularly tribal's and those living in remote parts of India, mountains and forests.⁵

Focus of NSM

The focus of NSM was on health and economic development of tribal groups and facilitate education of tribal children through the establishment of homes in

different states. The target population of NSM was primarily for the tribal villages where poor and marginalized people live. The services were provided to the community without reference to caste, creed or religion.⁶

Source of Income

NSM receives its fund for its many activities from a number of national and international agencies. Initial funding was provided by World Vision of India (WVI) followed by CASA, Stromme Memorial Foundation (SMF) – Norway, Indien Hilfe-Bangalore, Action Aid – Bangalore, The Bridge Foundation (TBF) – Bangalore, SKIP – Bangalore, Foundation for Christian Education (FCE) – Holland CROSS LINK – UK and Holistic Child Development (HCDI), (KHN, Nagpur). As part of its effort to encourage local support, local sponsors for children have been identified as well as local fund raising of NSM staff. In addition there is an annual contribution of FMPB.

Publication

From August 2004 the Navajeevan Magazine is being issued as a bi-monthly under the name of ‘Aatharam’ in Tamil and quarterly periodical in English.⁷

Performance of NSM

NSM is serving the tribal and rural poor particularly the women and children in 10 Indian states through 61 development projects which serves around 7000 children for their total developments and 12379 families through its five core development programs called “Educational Development, Health Development, Youth Development, Women empowerment and Relief and rehabilitation. There are 353 staff working in NSM to bring its vision practical and true.⁸

Activities of Navajeevan Seva Mandal

With love and compassion for the weaker section of the society, particularly the children and women, NSM has implemented small and bigger level development programs. Navajeevan Seva Mandal maintained the following projects and programs during the year and has implemented the activities as detailed below:⁹

| S.No. | Name of the program | No. of Projects |
|-----------------------|--|------------------------|
| 1 | Residential child care projects | 23 |
| 2 | Child care in the community (CDC+CFCD) | 13 |
| 3 | Child care through day care centers | 12 |
| 4 | Medical and health care projects | 5 |
| 5 | Social welfare & HIV AIDS project | 4 |
| 6 | Educational projects | 2 |
| 7 | Vocational training centers | 3 |
| 8 | Agricultural development programs | 2 |
| Total projects | | 64 |

The mission statement of Navajeevan Seva Mandal promotes leadership through the socio-economic and spiritual transformation of the vulnerable to raise the healthy self-reliant and sustainable community.¹⁰

Social issues addressed by the society are:

- a) Arresting migration by improving livelihood options and sustainable income generation activities.
- b) Redeeming & rehabilitating children from child marriage and child abuse
- c) Rehabilitating the most vulnerable in the society (HIV/AIDS infected & affected)
- d) Removing illiteracy through formal and adult literacy education
- e) Restoring ethical life through Christian values based on Gods word
- f) Empowering the women through, training, exposure and Self Help group activities.
- g) Reducing poverty and its negative impacts through income generation programs
- h) Empowering the community through advocacy and awareness building.
- i) Preventing infant and mother mortality rate through health care & awareness programs
- j) Protecting mothers and children from malnutrition through nutritional supplements and health care training.¹¹

Residential child care program: Navjeevan Children Homes:

The society Maintained 23 Children's Homes during the year caring for 1920 Children (1275 Boys and 635 Girls).

Raising second generation leadership being the primary target of NSM ministries, children education is prioritized and children from the underprivileged communities are given educational supports through hostel facilities, special tuition centers, motivation and were taken for educational tour and exposure visits through which they got motivated for educational excellence that helped them to pursue higher education. Tribal Children who were viewed, good for nothing and have no IQ for education are now becoming school teachers, nurses police men, Engineers, pastors, missionaries and Govt. officers at various levels. Indeed it is the contemporary miracle. Also, the compassion of the missionaries who have denied their family welfare and lived among them to develop these underprivileged in their physical, mental, spiritual, social and political growth.¹²

Navajeevan Seva Mandal has worked hard and concentrated on raising and strengthening the second generations leadership which is the only hope that the tribal parents develop in their life that their children would get good education and one day they will become the leaders of their community and fight against the exploitation and polarization and bring hope to their impoverished society.¹³

Children's Health and Welfare

Health care is another area of concern of hostel projects since most of NSM home children come from very poor family backgrounds. Therefore the hostels give special importance for their health because health is another essential in order to expect mental growth. The children of Navajeevan Homes were given good facilities for recreation. They played football, hockey, cricket and other games in the evening.

Two medical checkups were provided to children in most of the hostels particularly in tribal locations where the risk of Malaria and other diseases are very high.¹⁴ The height and weight of the children were recorded in the months of June and December.

Children were given soap, oil and other toiletries regularly. Parents are also provided extra toiletries. Children specially are taught to keep all their belongings neat and clean. Two sets of uniform were given to the students during the reopening of schools for the academic year.¹⁵

Child Care in the Community (CFCD & CDP) 13 projects

Child focused Community Development Projects (3)

With the support of KNH and HCDI, NSM implement two community based child development project namely, i) Sayathri Hills CCD project, Dangs, Gujarat: 819 children; and ii) Ashray CCDproject, Dharampur, Gujarat: 800 children; in which the children and women are mainly focused with the aim to enter into mainstream of life and to enhance the living standard of girl children who are neglected though they are recognized as the Home makers. Child rights, gender imbalance, bonded labour system, child labour system, male domination, ecological imbalance, health negligence and many other social issues that affects the tribal community particularly the children and women are mainly targeted and tackled through the partnership effort with the community, panchayat institutions and other NGOs who work in the vicinity.¹⁶

There are 4000 children taken care of through the community based CFCD and CDC projects located in 11 states of India. It is accepted by everyone that if the socio-economic condition of a family improves naturally the living condition of the child will be also desirable and the child gets sustainable support from the parents for its all-round growth.¹⁷

People were given awareness in number of issues which set the trend for development take off in terms of their living status and community participation.

More than 6000 tree saplings have been distributed by out involvement in 20 villages supported by HCDI in reducing the Global warming and intervening the ecological imbalance.

Child Development Centers (CDC 8)

| S. No. | Name of the project | No. of children benefitted |
|--------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1. | Navjeevan Bal phalaie Kendra, Budlada, Punjab | 250 |
| 2. | Navjeevan Bal vikas yojana, karchond, Gujarat | 243 |
| 3. | Karuna child development center, bedpan, Silvasa | 264 |
| 4. | Navjeevan child development center, Shirahatti, Karnataka | 240 |
| 5. | Hosajeevana child development center, shiggaon, Karnataka | 181 |
| 6. | Navjeevan balvikas Kendra, devmogra, maharashtra | 200 |
| 7. | Kirupa bal vikas yojana, hanvaachond, Gujarat | 214 |
| 8. | Asha bal vikas kendrea, ratia, Haryana. | 170 |
| Total | | 1762 |

The NSM offers 8 child development centers in different parts of India. Children in these projects were provided nutritious food, educational support and spiritual counseling etc. though they were sent every day to sleep with parents, the child care including their health affairs have been taken care of by the project.¹⁸

Mother and Child Survival Projects (3)

This project has provided pre, neo and post natal care to 168 mothers in 35 villages located in very remote forest areas, being supported by Caruna Bal Vikas (CBV). Nearly 945 children are benefitted through Navajeevan day care centers located at different places like Delhi, Gujarat, Jharghand, Punjab and Tamilnadu.¹⁹

Medical & Health Care Projects (5 projects)

Realizing the health care need of the target villages and target communities particularly the rural and Tribal poor, NSM had been extending medical service since 1984 through,

- a) Health care clinics in remote and interior forest prone villages.
- b) Health awareness education through visual and folk drama medium.
- c) Villages Health workers training
- d) Health linkages with Government and NGO medical institution.

- e) Coverage's on pre-neo and post natal care.
- f) HIV/AIDS awareness and
- g) Associating with government and NGO medical institution on national health care programs.²⁰

About 8102 rural women and 2650 men from 87 villages in Shirahatti taluk Gadag district in Karnataka have been provided health awareness and health care network facilities through the national health awareness program launched by Rural Unit for Health And Social affairs (RUHSA), Vellore. Men and women were gathered in the PHCS and panchayat offices where the medical personals were invited to explain them the health facilities available under national health care scheme. NSM health care personals work as the liaison unit between the target community and Govt. Health care services. Govt. Doctors are invited to the clinics located in very remote villages. Awareness and counseling sessions were conducted for the children, adults and women separately that they would be freed from their superstitious beliefs.

Health coverage programs such as the national polio eradication program, malaria eradication program, mal nutrition program, care to pregnant women and babies area successfully carried out.²¹

Relief and Rehabilitation

NSM gets ready to serve children at risk, people in crisis, women in life danger and others affected due to natural calamities such as Tsunami, earthquakes, flood and so on. NSM raises funds and utilizes them through experts who volunteers or NSM staff in that particular region.²²

The society under took work of relieving the sufferings of people affected by the tsunami waves on the 26th December 2004 in partnership with IMA, Holistic Child Development India, Global Geneva, Salt and other organizations. The work was organized at two centers of Cudalore and Kovalam.²³

Social welfare & AIDS projects (4 projects)

During the year 2010-2011, these projects were implemented to concentrate on health, medical care, educational support, nutrition support, psycho, social support, social protection/economic strengthening, legal support and to give alternate care to fulfil the needs of children.²⁴

HIV/AIDS project in Delhi

Navjeevan Seva Mandal has started the CFCD project very early in 1997 based at Delhi with the help of Holistic Child Development india. NSM began to minister among the infected children providing them a home based care and support at Rohini. The project started with just a handful of affected and infected children, today it has expanded the support to more than 514 children.²⁵ They are regularly visited by our staff to provide them social security and counseling on education and personal health etc. 219 families (86 widows, 10

widowers and 123 parents) were supported through SHG programs so that they would get regular income through home based income generation activities which helps them to obtain medicines and food materials for their survival.

1. Children at Risk (HIV/AIDS) Project, Delhi.
2. Gnanajothi (HIV/AIDS) Project, Vellore, Tamilnadu.
3. Neerodai (HIV/AIDS) rehabilitation Project, Vellore, Tamil Nadu.
4. Support for the Leprosy and Blind, Sevoor, Tamilnadu.²⁶

About 25 HIV/AIDS infected women are given care and support through Neerodai project at Vellore. It provided opportunity to earn and care their family members through Paper production unit. They make medicine cover for Christian Medical College hospital.²⁷

Women who lost their hope in the society are given opportunity to rebuild their trust on God and to remove their trauma & Stigma through counseling and prayer. They are supported to earn their livelihood through small scale income generation program and hence they are able to regain their individual identity in the society where they have been neglected due to their sickness.²⁸

Leprosy and the Blind Friends Fellowship Meeting

Around 40 blinds, 35 handicapped and 45 lepers who have been begging on the streets were given an opportunity to meet each other once in every month. A common fellowship lunch was provided every time they met at Sevoor. Blind, leprosy and other disabled are attending the friends program at Sevoor.²⁹

Educational Projects

St. Stephen English Medium School of NSM, Selamba, Gujarat

English medium in education is becoming an inevitable stream because everyone would like to educate their children in English medium so that children would achieve better prosperity. Realizing this NSM started St. Stephen English medium school at Selamba, in Gujarat on 25.7.1998. It is a self supportive school through Navajeevan funds.³⁰ It has grown through the years and presently there are 600 children studying in the school. This school mainly started for the socio-economic development of the tribal people.³¹

Youth Development Programmes

Youth and life settlements

NSM offers to train youth on various subjects so that they do not fall prey into the hands of communal elements but be able to prove themselves as a reputed individual who are committed to care for their family and are dedicated to serve their society and the nation. To achieve this goal NSM extends vocational guidance, training and Financial support to underprivileged youth on

- a) Life skill and leadership skill education and training.
- b) Vocational and skill training.

- c) Youth groups & saving.
- d) Social and community action plans.
- e) Information assimilation and net working with working youth.
- f) Functional literacy.³²

Around 1655 youth are provided various training opportunities in different training institutes that they get some kind of employment opportunity by which they are able to help their families and to serve the community. 70% of the children who have completed Higher secondary education have pursued higher education's such as B.A, B.Th, B.Ed, B.Sc nursing, Dip. Nursing, poly technique etc and 30% have joined professional courses, vocational and ITI training. More than 15 students have got employed in reputed companies and NGO organizations.

In addition to skill and vocational training the young girls were given "Ghragani" training and the young boys were given life skill education. More than 90 youth have been supported to start their micro enterprises through which they can earn their living.³³

Theological Training Programme (2010-2011)

Interested youth were motivated to pursue theological education in Tamilnadu and Calcutta. The students who have completed biblical trainings have joined FMPB, CNI and other organizations where they earn good name through their hard work and commitment.

Vocational Training Projects

1. Navjeevan Tailoring training center at kattupadi, Vellore – 6
2. Navjeevan Tailoring training center velam, Ranipet – 6
3. Navjeevan Tailoring training center Denkanikottai – 60
4. Navjeesvan Tailoring training center Bramapuram – 18

Young women are given opportunities to learn tailoring as a skill to earn their living. Muslim girls who do not go outside their house in Denknikottai are able to attend the tailoring centers.³⁴

Women Empowerment and Self Help Groups

Self Helps groups have been initiated for the women in the interior villages with the primary aim to create awareness. Economic assistance is provided through SHGS for rearing goats and buying milch cows.³⁵ NSM gives priority to women and child development through comprehensive development activities such as:

- a) Women and literacy
- b) Women rights and child right awareness and assertions
- c) Women involvement in panchayat raj and political institutions.

- d) Women in family and community decision making
- e) Women self help groups & credit groups, thrifts and Banking.
- f) Micro level home based income generation programs

NSM is covering more than 20000 women and 6000 children through its development programs in 11 states. NSM would like to intervene with its development activities at least 50000 women and 10000 children by 2020 across the nation.³⁶

Impact of NSM

Primarily NSM became a catalyst among the downtrodden to organize themselves into a united people group. The following were the methodologies:

- a) To raise critical awareness: Through many awareness programmes of the situation of the oppression and exploitation in which they live. Their wealth of land, water, forests were taken by non-tribal population of towns and cities. They were dehumanized.
- b) Impart cultural education: To bring changes in their lifestyle
- c) Enable to realize their own strength- through unity, co-operation and organization to bring about growth and change in their lives as individuals and as a community.
- d) Enlighten them to change –NSM educated these people to change their negative self image so that they can feel proud of themselves and equal citizens of India.
- e) Encourage them to know about their various rights-on legal, social, political and above all about their human rights ,through the NSM'S various programmes and activities .
- f) Help and encourage them to organize themselves into youth groups and mahilamandals.

As a result, the people had undergone sea-changes in various spheres like Impact on their cultural- impact in their social life- impact in their economic life-impact in their educational life-impact in their religious life-and on their political life.

There are many mission organization like Navajeevan Seva Mandal involved in various types of social services. But involving in social action along with the social services is also very important. It means liberating people from different types of bondages, oppression and suppressions. These missions are successful as the people are liberated from their bondage of illiteracy ignorance, superstition, poverty, exploitation, bonded labor hood, indebtedness, and other social evils. Yet the country needs a lot more NGO's apart from the active role of the elected governments, to play a pivotal role in the upliftment of the poor and needy.

End Notes

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