

# Role Of Non- Governmental Agencies (NGOs) In Rural Development: A Study Of Bengaluru Rural District

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## **Abstract:**

**Background:** Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have become vital players in promoting rural development, especially in developing nations where government resources and infrastructure may be inadequate. Their contributions span across various sectors such as poverty alleviation, healthcare, education, women's empowerment, environmental sustainability, and rural infrastructure development.

**Materials and Methods:** In the present study an attempt is made to assess the role of NGOs in rural development in Bengaluru rural district. A total of 400 respondents from various NGOs of Bengaluru district were selected through stratified random sampling. Hundred each respondents from North, East, South and West regions of Bengaluru district were included. They were administered a structured questionnaire and the roles were listed. The data were subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistics-chi-square.

**Results:** Results revealed that the Major roles of NGOs as perceived by the respondents are threats to public health (88.0%), followed by gender-related discrimination (86.0%), unfair labour practices (84.0%), Ethnicity related discrimination (77.0%), abuse of human rights (62.0%), inequalities and unfair treatment (85.0%), The respondents perceived to a lesser extent on roles of NGO in rural development for the issues like social exclusion (47.0%), racial discrimination (36.0%), age related discrimination (33.0%), and lastly loss of bio-diversity (30.0%).

**Conclusion:** Zone-wise comparison in Bengaluru rural district revealed that respondents from South and north zones had higher agreement as major role to reduce racial discrimination; age related discrimination, whereas respondents from North zone had higher agreement as a major role to reduce social exclusion than respondents from rest of the zones.

**Keywords:** NGOs, Roles, Rural development, Bengaluru rural district

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## **I. Introduction**

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have become crucial players in the development of rural areas, especially in developing countries. Rural communities often face significant challenges, including poverty, limited access to healthcare, low educational attainment, inadequate infrastructure, and environmental vulnerability. NGOs, by complementing government efforts, have taken on key roles in addressing these challenges and fostering rural development.

The role of NGOs in rural development is multifaceted. They focus on improving the economic, social, and environmental conditions of rural communities. Their interventions often include providing education, healthcare, financial support, empowering marginalized groups (especially women), promoting sustainable agriculture, and advocating for policy changes. Through such efforts, NGOs aim to reduce poverty, improve quality of life, and ensure long-term sustainability in rural areas.

### **Key Roles of NGOs in Rural Development**

**1.Poverty Reduction and Livelihood Enhancement:** NGOs play a significant role in alleviating poverty in rural areas. Through microfinance programs, skill development, and promoting local entrepreneurship, they create sustainable livelihoods. For example, the Grameen Bank, founded by Muhammad Yunus, has significantly impacted rural Bangladesh by providing small loans to poor individuals, especially women, enabling them to start small businesses (Yunus, 2007). Similarly, many NGOs facilitate income-generating activities such as agriculture-based businesses and handicrafts, boosting local economies (Lewis & Kanji, 2009).

**2.Education and Capacity Building:** Education is a fundamental component of rural development. NGOs actively work to improve educational access by establishing schools, conducting literacy programs, and providing vocational training. Organizations like Barefoot College, which trains women from rural areas to become solar

engineers, empower individuals with the knowledge and skills needed for self-reliance and sustainable development (Desai, 2014). Micro-finance initiatives in the rural areas contribute to improving both educational attainment and local employment prospects. Such microfinance models have been widely replicated and have proven effective in improving livelihoods and fostering entrepreneurial activities in rural areas (Kabeer, 2005).

**3. Healthcare and Awareness:** Many rural areas suffer from poor healthcare infrastructure. NGOs address this by setting up health camps, clinics, and training community health workers. In India, for instance, NGOs such as the Rural Health Care Foundation have worked to provide medical care and health education to underserved rural populations, reducing mortality rates and improving general health (Lewis & Kanji, 2009).

**4. Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality:** Gender inequality is prevalent in many rural communities, limiting women's access to resources and decision-making. NGOs have been instrumental in advocating for women's rights, providing access to education and healthcare, and offering financial independence through microfinance programs. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India is a notable example of an NGO that has empowered rural women by offering financial services, healthcare, and legal support (Desai, 2014). These efforts help foster gender equality and improve women's social and economic status.

**5. Environmental Sustainability** NGOs also play a crucial role in promoting sustainable agricultural practices, water conservation, and climate change adaptation in rural areas. They support farmers in adopting eco-friendly practices such as organic farming, efficient water management, and soil conservation, contributing to long-term food security and environmental health. For example, the Barefoot College's initiatives in rural India teach solar energy solutions that are environmentally sustainable and reduce dependence on non-renewable resources (Yunus, 2007). Literature indicates that NGOs work on projects such as soil conservation, water management, and organic farming to improve agricultural productivity while reducing the negative environmental impacts (Sen, 1999).

**6. Advocacy and Policy Influence:** NGOs are often at the forefront of advocating for policy reforms that benefit rural populations. They raise awareness about issues such as land rights, resource management, and fair trade, pushing for changes at local, national, and international levels. By engaging in grassroots mobilization and lobbying, NGOs influence policies that enhance the welfare of rural communities (Lewis & Kanji, 2009).

The literature consistently highlights the transformative role of NGOs in rural development. From poverty reduction and livelihood enhancement to education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability, NGOs are critical agents of change in rural areas. However, for NGOs to maximize their impact, they must address challenges related to sustainability, coordination, and local engagement. As rural development continues to be a priority for governments and international organizations, the role of NGOs in driving progress in various domains remains indispensable in the current situation. In the present study an attempt is made to analyse the perception of NGO members towards role of NGOs in rural development in Bengaluru rural district.

## II. Materials And Methods

A total of 400 respondents from various NGOs of Bengaluru district were selected through stratified random sampling. Hundred each respondents from North, East, South and West regions of Bengaluru district were included. The selection was based on the identification of various NGOs and respondents representing them. They were personally contacted and requested to answer the questionnaire on role of NGOs in rural areas. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher in consultation with the experts in the field considering all the possible options. Further, the questionnaire was subject to content validation too. The roles were identified and a list was prepared and the respondents had to answer on a five point scale-strongly agree to strongly disagree. Data collection took 6-9 months in 4 regions of Bengaluru rural district. Once the data were collected, they were analysed by frequency, per cent and chi-square tests. Table 1 presents the distribution of selected sample by responses on major role played by NGOs in reducing following social/other evil issues in rural areas across Zones and result of test statistics

## III. Results

**Table no 1:** Distribution of selected sample by responses on major role played by NGOs in reducing following social/other evil issues in rural areas across Zones and result of test statistics

Roles to avoid	Responses		Zones				Total	Test statistics
			North	East	West	South		
Racial discrimination	Strongly disagree	F	2	8	2	5	17	$X^2=41.599$ ; $p=.001$
		%	2.0%	8.0%	2.0%	5.0%	4.2%	
	Disagree	F	60	55	64	41	220	
		%	60.0%	55.0%	64.0%	41.0%	55.0%	

	Can't say	F	0	10	0	9	19	
		%	0.0%	10.0%	0.0%	9.0%	4.8%	
	Agree	F	23	9	17	17	66	
		%	23.0%	9.0%	17.0%	17.0%	16.5%	
	Strongly agree	F	15	18	17	28	78	
		%	15.0%	18.0%	17.0%	28.0%	19.5%	
Unfair labor practices	Strongly disagree	F	0	0	1	0	1	X <sup>2</sup> =10.394; p=.581
		%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.2%	
	Disagree	F	5	5	7	4	21	
		%	5.0%	5.0%	7.0%	4.0%	5.2%	
	Can't say	F	8	15	9	9	41	
		%	8.0%	15.0%	9.0%	9.0%	10.2%	
	Agree	F	31	36	30	28	125	
		%	31.0%	36.0%	30.0%	28.0%	31.2%	
	Strongly agree	F	56	44	53	59	212	
		%	56.0%	44.0%	53.0%	59.0%	53.0%	
Gender-related discrimination	Strongly disagree	F	5	6	5	5	21	X <sup>2</sup> =15.259; p=.228
		%	5.0%	6.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.2%	
	Disagree	F	4	9	13	5	31	
		%	4.0%	9.0%	13.0%	5.0%	7.8%	
	Can't say	F	1	0	1	1	3	
		%	1.0%	0.0%	1.0%	1.0%	0.8%	
	Agree	F	67	63	60	53	243	
		%	67.0%	63.0%	60.0%	53.0%	60.8%	
	Strongly agree	F	23	22	21	36	102	
		%	23.0%	22.0%	21.0%	36.0%	25.5%	
Age related discrimination	Strongly disagree	F	2	6	0	4	12	X <sup>2</sup> =47.152; p=.001
		%	2.0%	6.0%	0.0%	4.0%	3.0%	
	Disagree	F	60	65	68	44	237	
		%	60.0%	65.0%	68.0%	44.0%	59.2%	
	Can't say	F	0	10	0	9	19	
		%	0.0%	10.0%	0.0%	9.0%	4.8%	
	Agree	F	23	8	17	16	64	
		%	23.0%	8.0%	17.0%	16.0%	16.0%	
	Strongly agree	F	15	11	15	27	68	
		%	15.0%	11.0%	15.0%	27.0%	17.0%	

**Racial discrimination:** Out of 400 respondents, 17 (4.2%) of them opined strongly disagree, 220 (55%) of them opined disagree, 19 (4.8%) of them opined can't say, 66 (16.5%) of them opined agree and 78 (19.5%) of the respondents opined strongly agree for the issue racial discrimination. On a whole, majority of the respondents opined disagree. Zone-wise, in north, 2 (2%) of them opined strongly disagree, 60 (60%) of them opined disagree, 23 (23%) of them opined agree and 15 (15%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In east, 8 (8%) of them opined strongly disagree, 55 (55%) of them opined disagree, 10 (10%) of them opined can't say, 9 (9%) of them opined agree and 18 (18%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In west, 2 (2%) of them opined strongly disagree, 64 (64%) of them opined disagree, 17 (17%) of them opined agree and 17 (17%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In south, 5 (5%) of them opined strongly disagree, 41 (41%) of them opined disagree, 9 (9%) of them opined can't say, 17 (17%) of them opined agree and 28 (28%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. The chi-square value for the association between zones and responses was found to be 41.599 with a significance p value of .001 indicating that respondents from north and south zones agreed more than respondents from rest of the zones.

**Unfair labour practices:** 1 (0.2%) of them opined strongly disagree, 21 (5.2%) of them opined disagree, 41 (10.2%) of them opined can't say, 125 (31.2%) of them opined agree and 212 (53%) of the respondents opined strongly agree for the issue unfair labor practices. On a whole, majority of the respondents opined strongly disagree. Zones-wise, in north, 5 (5%) of them opined disagree, 8 (8%) of them opined can't say, 31 (31%) of them opined agree and 56 (56%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In east, 5 (5%) of them opined disagree, 15 (15%) of them opined can't say, 36 (36%) of them opined agree and 44 (44%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In west, 1 (1%) of them opined strongly disagree, 7 (7%) of them opined disagree, 9 (9%) of them opined can't say, 30 (30%) of them opined agree and 53 (53%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In south, 4 (4%) of them opined disagree, 9 (9%) of them opined can't say, 28 (28%) of them opined agree and 59 (59%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. When the association between Zones and responses was analysed, the chi-square value was found to be 10.394 with a p value of .581 indicating that there is no significant association between Zones and responses for playing a role to avoid unfair labour practices.

**Gender related discrimination:** 21 (5.2%) of them opined strongly disagree, 31 (7.8%) of them opined disagree, 3 (0.8%) of them opined can't say, 243 (60.8%) of them opined agree and 102 (25.5%) of the respondents opined strongly agree for the issue gender-related discrimination. On a whole, majority of the respondents opined agree. Zones-wise, in north, 5 (5%) of them opined strongly disagree, 4 (4%) of them opined disagree, 1 (1%) of them opined can't say, 67 (67%) of them opined agree and 23 (23%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In east, 6 (6%) of them opined strongly disagree, 9 (9%) of them opined disagree, 63 (63%) of them opined agree and 22 (22%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In west, 5 (5%) of them opined strongly disagree, 13 (13%) of them opined disagree, 1 (1%) of them opined can't say, 60 (60%) of them opined agree and 21 (21%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In south, 5 (5%) of them opined strongly disagree, 5 (5%) of them opined disagree, 1 (1%) of them opined can't say, 53 (53%) of them opined agree and 36 (36%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. When the association between Zones and responses was analysed, the chi-square value was found to be 15.259 with a p value of .228 indicating that there is no association between Zones and responses on gender-related discrimination.

**Age related discrimination:** 12 (3%) of them opined strongly disagree, 237 (59.2%) of them opined disagree, 19 (4.8%) of them opined can't say, 64 (16%) of them opined agree and 68 (17%) of the respondents opined strongly agree for the issue age related discrimination. On a whole, majority of the respondents opined disagree. Zones-wise, in north, 2 (2%) of them opined strongly disagree, 60 (60%) of them opined disagree, 23 (23%) of them opined agree and 15 (15%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In east, 6 (6%) of them opined strongly disagree, 65 (65%) of them opined disagree, 10 (10%) of them opined can't say, 8 (8%) of them opined agree and 11 (11%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In west, 68 (68%) of them opined disagree, 17 (17%) of them opined agree and 15 (15%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In south, 4 (4%) of them opined strongly disagree, 44 (44%) of them opined disagree, 9 (9%) of them opined can't say, 16 (16%) of them opined agree and 27 (27%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. The chi-square value was found to be 47.152 with a significance p value of .001 indicating that respondents from north and south zones agreed more than respondents from rest of the zones.

**Table 1 cont'd**

Distribution of selected sample by responses on major role played by NGOs in reducing following social/other evil issues in rural areas across Zones and result of test statistics

Roles to avoid	Responses		Zones				Total	Test statistics
			North	East	West	South		
Ethnicity related discrimination	Strongly disagree	F	3	3	2	3	11	X <sup>2</sup> =10.048; p=.612
		%	3.0%	3.0%	2.0%	3.0%	2.8%	
	Disagree	F	4	6	4	4	18	
		%	4.0%	6.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.5%	
	Can't say	F	11	10	23	18	62	
		%	11.0%	10.0%	23.0%	18.0%	15.5%	
	Agree	F	31	28	29	30	118	
		%	31.0%	28.0%	29.0%	30.0%	29.5%	
	Strongly agree	F	51	53	42	45	191	
		%	51.0%	53.0%	42.0%	45.0%	47.8%	
Threats to public health	Strongly disagree	F	6	9	9	0	24	X <sup>2</sup> =20.982; p=.051
		%	6.0%	9.0%	9.0%	0.0%	6.0%	
	Disagree	F	9	0	8	4	21	
		%	9.0%	0.0%	8.0%	4.0%	5.2%	
	Can't say	F	1	0	1	1	3	
		%	1.0%	0.0%	1.0%	1.0%	0.8%	
	Agree	F	39	44	39	45	167	
		%	39.0%	44.0%	39.0%	45.0%	41.8%	
	Strongly agree	F	45	47	43	50	185	
		%	45.0%	47.0%	43.0%	50.0%	46.2%	
Social exclusion	Strongly disagree	F	3	5	6	3	17	X <sup>2</sup> =40.842; p=.001
		%	3.0%	5.0%	6.0%	3.0%	4.2%	
	Disagree	F	0	9	3	4	16	
		%	0.0%	9.0%	3.0%	4.0%	4.0%	
	Can't say	F	28	57	48	44	177	
		%	28.0%	57.0%	48.0%	44.0%	44.2%	
	Agree	F	50	18	28	35	131	
		%	50.0%	18.0%	28.0%	35.0%	32.8%	
	Strongly agree	F	19	11	15	14	59	
		%	19.0%	11.0%	15.0%	14.0%	14.8%	
Loss of biodiversity	Strongly disagree	F	3	6	3	7	19	X <sup>2</sup> =9.801; p=.633
		%	3.0%	6.0%	3.0%	7.0%	4.8%	
	Disagree	F	68	62	66	61	257	

		%	68.0%	62.0%	66.0%	61.0%	64.2%
	Can't say	F	1	1	0	1	3
		%	1.0%	1.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.8%
	Agree	F	0	0	2	3	5
		%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	3.0%	1.2%
	Strongly agree	F	28	31	29	28	116
		%	28.0%	31.0%	29.0%	28.0%	29.0%

**Ethnicity related discrimination:** 11 (2.8%) of them opined strongly disagree, 18 (4.5%) of them opined disagree, 62 (15.5%) of them opined can't say, 118 (29.5%) of them opined agree and 191 (47.8%) of the respondents opined strongly agree for the issue unfair labor practices. On a whole, majority of the respondents opined strongly disagree. Zones-wise, in north, 3 (3%) of them opined strongly disagree, 4 (4%) of them opined disagree, 11 (11%) of them opined can't say, 31 (31%) of them opined agree and 51 (51%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In east, 3 (3%) of them opined disagree, 6 (6%) of them disagreed, 10 (10%) of them opined can't say, 28 (28%) of them agreed and 53 (53%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In west, 2 (2%) of them opined strongly disagree, 4 (4%) of them opined disagree, 23 (23%) of them opined can't say, 29 (29%) of them opined agree and 45 (45%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In south, 3 (3%) of them opined disagree, 18 (18%) of them opined can't say, 30 (30%) of them opined agree and 45 (45%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. When the association between Zones and responses was analysed, the chi-square value was found to be 10.394 with a p value of .581 indicating that there is no association between Zones and responses on ethnicity related discrimination.

**Threats to public health:** 24 (6%) of them opined strongly disagree, 21 (5.2%) of them opined disagree, 3 (0.8%) of them opined can't say, 167 (41.8%) of them opined agree and 185 (46.2%) of the respondents opined strongly agree for the issue ethnicity related discrimination. On a whole, more of the respondents opined strongly disagree. Zones-wise, in north, 6 (6%) of them opined strongly disagree, 9 (9%) of them opined disagree, 1 (1%) of them opined can't say, 39 (39%) of them opined agree and 45 (45%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In east, 9 (9%) of them opined strongly disagree, 44 (44%) of them opined agree and 47 (47%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In west, 9 (9%) of them opined strongly disagree, 8 (8%) of them opined disagree, 1 (1%) of them opined can't say, 39 (39%) of them opined agree and 43 (43%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In south, 4 (4%) of them opined disagree, 1 (1%) of them opined can't say, 45 (45%) of them opined agree and 50 (50%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. When the association between Zones and responses was analysed, the chi-square value was found to be 20.982 with a p value of .051 indicating that there is no significant association between Zones and responses on threats to public health.

**Social exclusion:** 17 (4.2%) of them opined strongly disagree, 16 (4%) of them opined disagree, 177 (44.2%) of them opined can't say, 131 (32.8%) of them opined agree and 59 (14.8%) of the respondents opined strongly agree for the issue social exclusion. On a whole, more of the respondents opined can't say. Zones-wise, in north, 3 (3%) of them opined strongly disagree, 28 (28%) of them opined can't say, 50 (50%) of them opined agree and 19 (19%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In east, 5 (5%) of them opined strongly disagree, 9 (9%) of them opined disagree, 57 (57%) of them opined can't say, 18 (18%) of them opined agree and 11 (11%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In west, 6 (6%) of them opined strongly disagree, 3 (3%) of them opined disagree, 48 (48%) of them opined disagree, 28 (28%) of them opined agree and 15 (15%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In south, 3 (3%) of them opined strongly disagree, 4 (4%) of them opined disagree, 44 (44%) of them opined can't say, 35 (35%) of them opined agree and 14 (14%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. The chi-square value was found to be 40.842 with a significance p value of .001 indicating that majority of the respondents of north zones agreed more than respondents from rest of the zones.

**Loss of biodiversity:** 19 (4.8%) of them opined strongly disagree, 257 (64.2%) of them opined disagree, 3 (0.8%) of them opined can't say, 5 (1.2%) of them opined agree and 116 (29%) of the respondents opined strongly agree for the issue loss of biodiversity. On a whole, majority of the respondents opined disagree. Zones-wise, in north, 3 (3%) of them opined strongly disagree, 68 (68%) of them opined disagree, 1 (1%) of them opined can't say and 28 (28%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In east, 6 (6%) of them opined strongly disagree, 62 (62%) of them opined disagree, 1 (1%) of them opined can't say and 31 (31%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In west, 3 (3%) of them opined strongly disagree, 66 (66%) of them opined disagree, 2 (2%) of them opined agree and 29 (29%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In south, 7 (7%) of them opined strongly disagree, 61 (61%) of them opined disagree, 1 (1%) of them opined can't say, 3 (3%) of them opined agree and 28 (28%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. When the association between Zones and responses was analysed, the chi-square value was found to be 9.801 with a p value of .633 indicating that there is no significant association between Zones and responses on loss of biodiversity.

**Table 1 cont'd**

Distribution of selected sample by responses on major role played by NGOs in reducing following social/other evil issues in rural areas across Zones and result of test statistics

Roles to avoid	Responses		Zones				Total	Test statistics
			North	East	West	South		
Abuse of human rights	Disagree	F	1	1	0	1	3	$X^2=3.534$ ; p=.939
		%	1.0%	1.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.8%	
	Can't say	F	36	36	40	35	147	
		%	36.0%	36.0%	40.0%	35.0%	36.8%	
	Agree	F	22	24	16	23	85	
		%	22.0%	24.0%	16.0%	23.0%	21.2%	
Inequalities and unfair treatments	Strongly disagree	F	41	39	44	41	165	$X^2=10.736$ ; p=.294
		%	41.0%	39.0%	44.0%	41.0%	41.2%	
	Disagree	F	2	8	4	5	19	
		%	2.0%	8.0%	4.0%	5.0%	4.8%	
	Can't say	F	27	20	29	23	99	
		%	27.0%	20.0%	29.0%	23.0%	24.8%	
	Agree	F	20	12	21	20	73	
		%	20.0%	12.0%	21.0%	20.0%	18.2%	
	Strongly agree	F	51	60	46	52	209	
		%	51.0%	60.0%	46.0%	52.0%	52.2%	
		F	35	33	31	35	134	
		%	35.0%	33.0%	31.0%	35.0%	33.5%	

**Abuse of human rights:** 3 (0.8%) of them opined disagree, 147 (36.8%) of them opined can't say, 85 (21.2%) of them opined agree and 165 (41.2%) of the respondents opined strongly agree for the issue abuse of human rights. On a whole, more of the respondents opined strongly agree. Zones-wise, in north, 1 (1%) of them opined disagree, 36 (36%) of them opined can't say, 22 (22%) of them opined agree and 41 (41%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In east, 1 (1%) of them opined disagree, 36 (36%) of them opined can't say, 24 (24%) of them opined agree and 39 (39%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In west, 40 (40%) of them opined can't say, 16 (16%) of them opined agree and 44 (44%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In south, 1 (1%) of them opined disagree, 35 (35%) of them opined can't say, 23 (23%) of them opined agree and 41 (41%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. When the association between Zones and responses was analysed, the chi-square value was found to be 3.534 with a p value of .939 indicating that there is no significant association between Zones and responses on abuse of human rights.

**Inequalities and unfair treatments:** 19 (4.8%) of them opined strongly disagree, 99 (24.8%) of them opined disagree, 73 (18.2%) of them opined can't say, 209 (52.2%) of them opined agree and 134 (33.5%) of the respondents opined strongly agree for the issue inequalities and unfair treatments. On a whole, majority of the respondents opined agree. Zones-wise, in north, 2 (2%) of them opined strongly disagree, 27 (27%) of them opined disagree, 20 (20%) of them opined can't say, 51 (51%) of them opined agree and 35 (35%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In east, 8 (8%) of them opined strongly disagree, 20 (20%) of them opined disagree, 12 (12%) of them opined can't say, 60 (60%) of them opined agree and 33 (33%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In west, 4 (4%) of them opined strongly disagree, 29 (29%) of them opined disagree, 21 (21%) of them opined can't say, 46 (46%) of them opined agree and 31 (31%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. In south, 5 (5%) of them opined strongly disagree, 23 (23%) of them opined disagree, 20 (20%) of them opined can't say, 52 (52%) of them opined agree and 35 (35%) of the respondents opined strongly agree. When the association between Zones and responses was analysed, the chi-square value was found to be 10.736 with a p value of .294 indicating that there is no association between Zones and responses on inequalities and unfair treatments.

#### IV. Discussion

Major findings of the study are

- Major roles of NGOs as perceived by the respondents are threats to public health (88.0%), followed by gender-related discrimination (86.0%), unfair labour practices (84.0%), Ethnicity related discrimination (77.0%), abuse of human rights (62.0%), inequalities and unfair treatment (85.0%),
- The respondents perceived to a lesser extent on roles of NGO in rural development for the issues like social exclusion (47.0%), racial discrimination (36.0%), age related discrimination (33.0%), and lastly loss of bio-diversity (30.0%).
- Zone-wise comparison in Bengaluru rural district revealed that respondents from South and north zones had higher agreement as major role to reduce racial discrimination; age related discrimination, whereas respondents

from North zone had higher agreement as a major role to reduce social exclusion than respondents from rest of the zones.

One of the primary roles of NGOs in rural areas is addressing poverty, which remains one of the most persistent issues in these regions. NGOs are actively involved in providing income-generating opportunities, microfinance, and skill development programs. The Grameen Bank, established by Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh, is a classic example of an NGO that has significantly reduced poverty through micro-credit schemes. (Yunus, 2007). Similarly, in India, NGOs like the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) have focused on improving the livelihoods of rural women by providing access to credit, training, and market linkages (Desai, 2014). Access to healthcare is a significant challenge in rural areas due to limited medical infrastructure and a shortage of qualified healthcare workers. NGOs address these challenges by providing essential health services, promoting preventive healthcare, and raising awareness about hygiene and sanitation. Organizations like BRAC in Bangladesh and Rural Health Care Foundation in India have played an essential role in providing healthcare services to underserved populations. These organizations operate mobile health clinics, offer low-cost medicines, and train local community health workers to ensure healthcare access even in the most remote areas (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). The role of NGOs in improving maternal and child health has been widely documented, with organizations running vaccination campaigns, offering prenatal care, and addressing malnutrition (Sen, 1999). Through these efforts, NGOs help reduce preventable diseases and improve life expectancy in rural communities.

Gender inequality is a pervasive issue in many rural areas, with women often facing limited access to resources, education, and decision-making power. NGOs have played a crucial role in empowering women, particularly in rural settings, by promoting gender equality and providing opportunities for women to participate in economic, political, and social activities. According to Kabeer (2005), NGOs have been instrumental in challenging traditional gender norms and providing women with access to credit, healthcare, and education. NGOs play an essential role in promoting sustainable agricultural practices, resource conservation, and climate change mitigation. Rural communities are highly dependent on agriculture and natural resources, making them particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation. NGOs support rural farmers in adopting eco-friendly practices such as organic farming, water conservation, and soil management to ensure sustainable agricultural productivity (Sen, 1999).

## **V. Conclusion**

In conclusion, NGOs play an indispensable role in rural development by addressing the gaps left by governmental and market mechanisms. Through their focus on poverty alleviation, education, healthcare, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and advocacy, NGOs contribute to the well-being and empowerment of rural communities. Their impact is often transformative, offering innovative solutions to complex challenges faced by rural populations. However, the effectiveness of these efforts depends on sustainable funding, local engagement, and coordination with government entities.

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