



Utrecht University



## **Profiting off the 'Doing Good' Narrative:**

### **The Case of Women's Under-compensated Labour in Indian NGOs**

By

**Pranjali Das**

Submitted to:

Central European University

Department of Gender Studies

*In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Erasmus Mundus  
Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies (GEMMA)*

Main Supervisor: Dr. Eva Fodor (Central European University)

Reader: Dr. Berteke Waaldijk (Utrecht University)

*Budapest, Hungary*

2019



**Profiting off the 'Doing Good' Narrative:  
The Case of Women's Under-compensated Labour in Indian NGOs**

By

**Pranjali Das**

Submitted to:

Central European University  
Department of Gender Studies

*In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies (GEMMA)*

Main Supervisor: Dr. Eva Fodor (Central European University)

Reader: Dr. Berteke Waaldijk (Utrecht University)

*Budapest, Hungary*

2019

Approval signed by the main Supervisor



## *Declaration*

---

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 19,000 words

Entire manuscript: 23,838 words

***Signed: Pranjali Das***

## *Abstract*

---

In this thesis, I argue that NGOs in India thrive on the under-compensated labour of women by perpetuating a ‘doing good’ narrative. This narrative serves as an anchor as well as a driving force for the sector – where employees, especially women, are urged to exercise altruism to perform work that is perceived to be ‘natural’ to their gender – like exercising empathy, emotion management, and care work in shelter homes.

As NGOisation in India coincided with the liberalisation of the Indian economy in the early 1990s, this phenomenon witnessed an increased participation of women in the Indian labour market. Additionally, NGOisation introduced the focus on ‘empowerment of women’ within the lexicon of development work. During this period, a significant number of women joined NGOs because philanthropic work was perceived as an extension of their traditional gender roles of care work which limited resistance from their families. Though NGO work promised to deliver economic empowerment to beneficiaries from low income households, participation in NGO work proved empowering for women employees too as it significantly impacted their social identity and class positionings.

Here, I argue that, instead of challenging the traditional gender roles of work which encouraged the participation of women in the 1990s, today, NGOs in India continue to reproduce them by not acknowledging and under-compensating the emotional labour performed by women at work. I also argue that NGOs create employment opportunities for women with no formal trainings in social work, which harbours gratitude that (invisibly) binds women to these organisations. However, the opportunity to form strong social identities which are celebrated by their communities acts as an incentive for the women to continue working with the NGOs.

Based on the interviews of nine women employees from anti-trafficking organisations in Kolkata, India, this thesis explores the multi-tiered complexities that encompass NGO work in India.

## *Acknowledgments*

---

A 'thank you' is certainly not enough:

To my research respondents – I owe this entire project to you.

To Sahana di – who is a pearl of wisdom,

Thank you for existing.

To my friends back in Kolkata and Utrecht, and those here in Budapest,

Thank you for being a rock in this journey.

To Eva – my supervisor,

It was a pleasure. Thank you for caring. Thank you for pushing.

To my late-night study compatriots – what would I have done without you!

Thank you for pulling me through this.

And to Saurav – my partner,

Thank you for being my constant.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	i
Acknowledgments.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Context of Research.....	8
NGOisation: .....	8
The anti-trafficking rhetoric:.....	12
Location: .....	15
Organisation: .....	15
Methods, Positionality, and Challenges.....	17
Insider/Outsider Positionality – belonging or acceptance? .....	17
Methods:.....	19
Challenges:.....	22
Reviewing the narratives in literature .....	23
The ‘Doing Good’ Debate: .....	23
Understanding empowerment: .....	25
Empowering and/or class-enhancement and motivations: .....	28
Labouring emotions in NGO work: .....	31
Empowerment in ‘Doing Good’?.....	35
The ‘doing good’ narrative: .....	36
Investing emotions in NGO work:.....	41
The subjective experience of empowering women: .....	47
Conclusion .....	53
References .....	56

## Introduction

---

*‘...and suddenly “women” are everywhere’.*<sup>1</sup>

It was sometime in early 2017. I stormed into the pantry room of the office I was working at. A colleague, who was a dear friend, was waiting for me there. I went on a rant – venting out the issues I felt was plaguing development work because of its donor-driven<sup>2</sup> approach that put mental load on the operations team<sup>3</sup> of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This exasperation was a culmination of my seven years<sup>4</sup> stint with non-profit NGOs across India – a period during which I primarily engaged in developing strategies for program interventions. Part of my work required me to facilitate and participate in several brainstorming sessions to solve problems/disputes/bottlenecks posed by different stakeholders, including donors. What bothered me most was the donor-driven agenda(s) adopted by the NGOs. Though organisations prioritised donor expectations in conceptualising and planning their projects, some of the donors had a very skewed perception of how development work could be implemented on ground. Despite pledging generous sums of money for material enhancement or skill development of beneficiaries,<sup>5</sup> donors cared very little about the employees of the organisations. This substantially reflected in the labour policies and practices adopted by the NGOs. It is ironical because the expectations donors have from the programs cannot be implemented without the very employees they are indifferent about. Donors would be quick to demand unreasonable deliverables and outcomes but express scepticism about investing in Human Resources i.e. in personnel. Even if the NGOs had the resource to invest in personnel,

---

<sup>1</sup> Tharu & Niranjana, 1994 from Srila Roy, ‘The Indian Women’s Movement: Within and Beyond NGOization’, *Journal of South Asian Development* 10, no. 1 (April 2015): 96–117, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973174114567368>.

<sup>2</sup> Roy, Arundhati, “NGOisation of Resistance”, *Frontlines of Revolutionary Struggle* (blog), 26 September 2014, <https://revolutionaryfrontlines.wordpress.com/2014/09/25/ngoisation-of-resistance-arundhati-roy/>; Charles H. Kennedy, Ijaz Hussain, and S. Akbar Zaidi, ‘Reconsidering the Relationship between the State, Donors, and NGOs in Bangladesh [with Comments]’, *The Pakistan Development Review* 38, no. 4 (1999): 489–510, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41260187>.

<sup>3</sup> The team that designs, implements, and manages the daily operations of the NGOs projects.

<sup>4</sup> I worked full time with NGOs for four years – two years as a fellow to a social fellowship program working with the grassroots, and the remaining two years in two anti-trafficking organisations at senior management positions. Prior to that I had volunteering experience of three years. Therefore, collectively, my association with this sector is of seven years (2010-2017).

<sup>5</sup> The term ‘beneficiaries’, is commonly used to describe the target group of the NGOs – the communities or population they work with. Rather than treating this group as partners or clients since they constitute to be the most important stakeholders of NGOs, the term ‘beneficiary’ is used which only highlights an unequal power relation – giver/benefactor.

they would appeal to the morality and ethics of their applicants and employees, calling upon their passion and humanitarian values to work for significantly less remuneration compared to other industry standards.<sup>6</sup> While NGOisation in India had defined the structure of NGOs by professionalising them – emphasising on a skill-driven recruitment – this proved in favour of those who occupied the upper-management positions. Those who worked on the field suffered intensely.<sup>7</sup> I was deeply impacted by these observations during my period of work. Throughout the last year of my MA program, I dedicated most of my term papers to extensively understand the different aspects of NGO operations in a neoliberal state. This, eventually, influenced me to consider this thesis as an opportunity to explore how NGOs apply a ‘doing good’ narrative to recruit employees, especially women and use it to thrive on their under-compensated labour. I chose to study the experiences of women because NGOisation in India coincided with the liberalisation of the economy, that witnessed an increase in the participation of women in the labour market.<sup>8</sup> NGO work was one of the acceptable forms of work available to Indian women because it was perceived as an extension of the traditional gender roles performed by women that required exercising empathy and emotional labour.<sup>9</sup> Being in cognizant of this, I want to untangle how this phenomenon significantly genders NGO work and therefore, impacts the experience of empowerment as employees of NGOs.

As a development sector professional, I engaged in a range of roles that encompassed from strategizing for programs, to implementing them, networking and liaising with stakeholders, and sometimes participating in the recruitment processes too. The most uncomfortable moment for me had been when I was asked to sit with my colleagues to negotiate and finalise remuneration with the new recruits.<sup>10</sup> I witnessed a great deal of negotiation that went into reducing the costs of investments on personnel. My seniors would be keen to know about the passion of the applicants and then use that as a leverage to negotiate pay, proposing a sum which was significantly lower than other industry standards. They would use the trope that NGOs are philanthropic organisations that run on donations and charity, therefore

---

<sup>6</sup> Peter Manzo, ‘The Real Salary Scandal (SSIR)’, Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2004, [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the\\_real\\_salary\\_scandal](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_real_salary_scandal).

<sup>7</sup> Roy, Arundhati, “‘NGOisation of Resistance’”; Roy, ‘The Indian Women’s Movement’; Sangeeta Kamat, ‘The Privatization of Public Interest: Theorizing NGO Discourse in a Neoliberal Era’, *Review of International Political Economy* 11, no. 1 (February 2004): 155–76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969229042000179794>.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Kilby, Patrick. 2011. NGOs in India: The Challenges of Women’s Empowerment and Accountability. <https://Core.Ac.Uk/Download/Pdf/42086484.Pdf>.’, n.d.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Elite Women’s Role in Empowering Oppressed Women : Volunteer Work in NGOs in Kolkata.’, in *Recent Studies on Indian Women* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Because the organisations did not have a team dedicated to Human Resources management, senior management would participate in the recruitment process

applicants should be a little altruistic while making decisions. I was greatly amused when I heard shelter home care-givers and recruits for fieldwork were told that relationship building and display of empathy were not really difficult work to perform. Therefore, the need to compensate for it was regarded absurd. Here, I must include that I observed these comments most when I was working with anti-trafficking organisations in India. A large number of women are employed in anti-trafficking work primarily because nearly all the victims of trafficking for sex are girls and women. Organisations that provide rehabilitation services are required to hire women by the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (1956).<sup>11</sup> The correlation established between the higher participation of women in anti-trafficking NGOs with the argument that empathy and relationship building is not real work found my interest. Therefore, to unpack this further, I decided to study the role of women in NGO work – focusing on the anti-trafficking sector.

In this thesis, I argue that NGOs in India thrive on the under-compensated labour of women by perpetuating a ‘doing good’ narrative. This narrative serves as an anchor as well as a driving force for the sector – where employees, especially women, are urged to exercise altruism to perform work that is perceived to be ‘natural’ to their gender – like exercising empathy, emotion management, and care work in shelter homes. Instead of challenging the traditional gender roles of work, NGOs in India continue to reproduce them by not acknowledging and under-compensating the emotional labour performed by women at work. I also argue that NGOs create employment opportunities for women with no formal trainings in social work, which harbours gratitude that invisibly binds women to these organisations. However, the opportunity to form strong social identities which are celebrated by their communities acts as an incentive for the women to continue working in this space.

Currently, there are about 1.5 million NGOs working in India.<sup>12</sup> The generalisations about the sector shadows the diversity that is found within it. Organisations designated as NGOs significantly differ from one another based on their functions, operations, structures, principles, memberships etc. The umbrella term of ‘NGO’ includes, but does not limit to charitable institutions, research, religious, environmental and human rights organisations.<sup>13</sup> They range from loosely organised groups with a few paid or unpaid members to those with multi-million-

---

<sup>11</sup> ‘India - Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (No. 104 of 1956).’, 2013, [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p\\_lang=en&p\\_isn=93633&p\\_country=IND&p\\_count=507](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=93633&p_country=IND&p_count=507).

<sup>12</sup> ‘Overview of Civil Society Organisations: India’, accessed 5 June 2019, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/28966/csb-ind.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Overview of Civil Society Organisations: India’.

dollar budgets. NGOs are often with no governmental affiliation or support, but some are created and maintained by governments. There are social action groups and those struggling for social justice, legal support groups, research and communications support etc. Within this tremendous diversity, this thesis focuses on non-profit NGOs that work on combatting trafficking in India. They are all registered under the government, primarily funded by foreign donors, and recruit staff on payroll. I chose to study anti-trafficking organisations primarily because this domain of NGO recruit women in significant numbers. The gendered violence against trafficked women require the assistance of female NGO workers who are subjected to long working hours, paid lowly, and often receive nil mental health support to cope with the first-hand information of the trauma they are regularly exposed to. Since NGOisation promised that NGOs were responsible for empowering women, I chose anti-trafficking organisations to map out exactly how women – in this case the employees, experience empowerment after their performance of emotional labour.

Existing literature suggests that there aren't adequate studies on the membership of NGOs i.e., the workforce, what percentage comprise women, their education or career profiles, their aspirations etc.<sup>14</sup> Most scholarly works have been produced on the beneficiaries of the program and how NGOs work as an arm of neoliberalism.<sup>15</sup> With NGOisation in India, a substantial number of literature has been produced on how NGOs empower women (their beneficiaries) through micro-credit programs, since inclusion to economic programs was seen as an important determinant to measuring empowerment processes of women. While there has been some studies that explore the emancipatory experiences of upper class women in NGO work, there has been no significant studies on the how middle-class women experience it. In this thesis, I have tried to weave in the missing themes. While trying to reduce the gap in the existing literature, I have also tried to unpack how women's empowerment experiences co-relate to the narrative of 'doing good'.

For my project, I studied the experiences of women who, conventionally, have not been documented enough in literature. I interviewed nine women working with anti-trafficking

---

<sup>14</sup> Janine A. Clark and Wacheke M. Michuki, 'Women and NGO Professionalisation: A Case Study of Jordan', *Development in Practice* 19, no. 3 (2009): 329–39, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27752061>; Sudha Vasan, 'NGOs as Employers: Need for Accountability', *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no. 22 (2004): 2197–98, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4415081>; 'Overview of Civil Society Organisations: India'.

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth Maes, 'Volunteerism or Labor Exploitation? Harnessing the Volunteer Spirit to Sustain AIDS Treatment Programs in Urban Ethiopia', *Human Organization* 71, no. 1 (January 2012): 54–64, <https://doi.org/10.17730/humo.71.1.axm39467485m22w4>; S Klees, J, "'NGOs: Progressive Force or Neoliberal Tool?"; 1998, [https://www.tc.columbia.edu/cice/pdf/25634\\_1\\_1\\_Klees.pdf](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/cice/pdf/25634_1_1_Klees.pdf); David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism*. (Verso Books, 2006).

organisations in Kolkata, India. My interviewees, between the age of 24 – 65 years olds can be divided into two categories. The first category comprise of women who had been former beneficiaries of NGOs and are now employed full time with the same organisations. The second category are women who had the privilege to have been born and brought up in middle class families of India. Recording their narratives, I have tried to unpack the relationship between the doing good narrative, women's work and their empowerment.

I conducted my fieldwork in Kolkata, the capital city of West Bengal in India. Kolkata, being one of the thriving metropolitan cities is home to Sonagachi which is Asia's largest red-light district. This attracts the operations of several NGOs who work on different components of sexual and gender-violence. Kolkata is also a major source, transit, and destination point for victims and survivors of trafficking due to the international border West Bengal shares with Bangladesh. The gendered nature of violence draws the participation of many women activists and professionals into the sector. Being a native speaker of Bangla, which is the regional language of West Bengal, I had the advantage of accessing and engaging with NGO workers without being confronted with language barriers that occurs in a country as linguistically diverse as India.

My research suggests that the 'doing good' narrative of NGOs serves as a brand for the sector. This allows those who are associated with it to be socially applauded – a form of non-pecuniary incentive of working at the NGOs. Additionally, NGOs contribute to the formation of strong social identities which are celebrated by their communities. These identities are important for women living in a society dominated by patriarchy. Also, the investment of emotional labour is real work in the anti-trafficking domain, even though organisations do not consider it. This type of labour performed by women is seen as a development of traditional gender roles (care-giving roles) practiced in the society from which NGOs profit. The final revelation is NGOs create empowerment opportunities for women, but these experiences are profoundly shaped by the women's social class experiences.

This research is divided into 4 chapters – the first chapter introduces the context of the research where I highlight how NGOisation – which gave birth to the narrative of 'doing good' coincided with the Latin American NGO boom that caused a structural stir in the country. The second chapter discusses the method, positionality and limitations of my fieldwork. The third chapter titled 'Reviewing the narratives in literature' introduces the existing scholarship on the

labour practices, empowerment and doing good narrative. In chapter four, titled ‘Empowerment in Doing Good’, I use data from my interview to substantiate my claims.

As noted by some scholars, research on the ‘doing good’ question is plagued by both ethical and epistemological difficulties since there arises a tendency to allow our own political convictions guide research and moralise or stereotype the organisations as we want.<sup>16</sup> This project, of course, expresses my political opinion about NGOs and how they impact the lives of their employees. Other than that, this project is not representative of the entire NGO sector. It is qualitative research on nine NGO workers who belong to two very different social and economic classes. Their experiences does open up the possibility for further research on the positionality of women as agential beings in an NGOised state.

---

<sup>16</sup> Donna F. Murdock, ‘That Stubborn “Doing Good?” Question: Ethical/Epistemological Concerns in the Study of NGOs’, *Ethnos* 68, no. 4 (December 2003): 507–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0014184032000160541>.

## *Context of Research*

---

*“NGOs have become the favoured child of official development agencies, hailed as the new panacea to cure the ills that have befallen the development process”<sup>17</sup>*

Crucial to fathoming the co-relation between the ‘doing good’ narrative and women’s under-compensated labour, it is imperative to understand the status of NGOs in India. In this chapter, I elaborate how NGOisation proliferated the mushrooming of NGOs drawing focused attention on the issues of women. Moving ahead, I briefly explain the anti-trafficking rhetoric in the country since I chose to study the experiences of women within this domain. Here, I discuss the dominant trends in this domain of NGO work. In the final sections, I discuss the relevance of choosing Kolkata as a location to conduct my fieldwork followed by the description of the organisations I chose to study.

### ***NGOisation:***

---

*“Anybody who is coming to any profession with a skill set, they are not doing ‘social work’. We bring something to the table, not charity. I call myself as professional in the development sector.”*

The above excerpt is a snippet from a conversation with one of my respondents. Armed with a BA degree in Political Science, Deepa<sup>18</sup> has been working in the sector since the last 5 years. She detests being identified as a social worker because in common parlance it stands as somebody who does charity work.<sup>19</sup> She emphasises on the contribution of her skills like anybody else would do in other professional sectors. Seeing oneself as professional in the NGO sector is representative of how NGOisation has filtered into the lives and language of NGO

---

<sup>17</sup>Michael Edwards and David Hulme, *Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World*. (West Hartford, Conn: Kumarian Press, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> Name changed to protect identity.

<sup>19</sup> Social worker in common parlance does not represent the ‘social work/worker’ status attributed in the UK or the US. Registered social workers are addressed as such, but non-registered people sometimes address themselves as social workers too.

workers. This is not necessarily to say that professionalising NGO work is bad, or the opposite is good,<sup>20</sup> rather it opens up debates on how the process of professionalisation impacts the lives of the employees; specially women who are inducted into this sector in large numbers.

NGOisation in India coincided with the economic liberalisation which was witnessed through the 1990s.<sup>21</sup> During this period the state withdrew funding from key areas like education, health etc. where NGOs stepped in – not merely to demand, but to deliver development.<sup>22</sup> The NGOisation occurring in India was much similar to the Latin American ‘NGO Boom’ in the 1980s which has been studied in-depth by noted scholar Sonia Alvarez.<sup>23</sup> During this period, both the regions observed proliferation of NGOs that increasingly focused on mainstreaming gender issues but were evaluated to be harmful for feminist movements and grassroots mobilisations. Both the regions experienced,

“a fear around the relegation of autonomy and agency to global funding imperatives, the privileging of specialist knowledge and solutions over structural analyses of power, the replacement of collective modes of decision-making with bureaucratized managerial practices, a move away from mass-based political struggles to a professionalized project of governance...”

NGOs that work with women or on women’s issues were regarded to have played a transformational role in organising Indian feminism from independent feminist formation in the 1970s to transnationalised and professionalised women’s organisations in the 1990s.<sup>24</sup>

There are two important characteristics that defined NGOisation in India. The first, the professionalisation of NGO work. Professionalisation refers to restricted membership, salaried workforces, strict rules, hierarchical divisions of labour, and typically seeking participation in mainstream politics.<sup>25</sup> NGOs reoriented from grassroots activism with voluntary mobilisation to formal entities with specific demands. The second – inclusion of women, rather a

<sup>20</sup> F. Murdock, ‘That Stubborn ‘doing Good?’

<sup>21</sup> Roy, ‘The Indian Women’s Movement’.

<sup>22</sup> Saurabh Gupta, ‘From Demanding to Delivering Development: Challenges of NGO-Led Development in Rural Rajasthan, India’, *Journal of South Asian Development* 9, no. 2 (August 2014): 121–45, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973174114536099>.

<sup>23</sup> Sonia E. Alvarez, ‘Advocating Feminism: The Latin American Feminist NGO “Boom”’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 1, no. 2 (January 1999): 181–209, <https://doi.org/10.1080/146167499359880>.

<sup>24</sup> Srila Roy, ‘Politics, Passion and Professionalization in Contemporary Indian Feminism’, *Sociology* 45, no. 4 (August 2011): 587–602, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511406584>; Roy, ‘The Indian Women’s Movement’.

<sup>25</sup> F. Murdock, ‘That Stubborn ‘doing Good?’; Alvarez, ‘Advocating Feminism’.

microscopic focus on understanding the status of women and introducing empowerment programs to tackle them. This period saw the emergence of women centric projects. Additionally, participation of women in the labour market was noted too.<sup>26</sup>

When the focus was shifted on women, it emphasised the importance of “women’s economic inclusion and productivity not via state welfarism (as state led development) but through the discourses of entrepreneurship and privatisation that mobilise feminist technologies of empowerment, self-esteem, and self-help”.<sup>27</sup> The ‘status of women’ as an index of development and good governance has also meant an expansion of spaces upon which feminist activism could take place but were associated, more and more, with practices of professionalization, managerialism and bureaucratization or ‘NGOisation’.<sup>28</sup> In other words, women’s development had been the core of activist movements during the 1970s-80s. But in the 1990s, NGOisation which was fostered by neoliberal development policies proposed the ‘empowerment of women’ through economic programs. They overlooked the need of having a holistic approach to empowerment.<sup>29</sup> This was the period when self-help groups (SHGs) were institutionalised and micro-credit financing gained currency to empower women. Their primary target were women from low income rural households. However, instead of generating income, SHGs created a system of saving money as a group, creating a credit pool enabling its members to draw out loans for investing in assets for income generation.<sup>30</sup>

If women from low income households were rendered as vulnerable and in need of economic agency by neoliberal development, urban metropolitan middle-class women were expected to encounter development in certain ways only. Even though there is a dearth in

---

<sup>26</sup> ‘Kilby, Patrick. 2011. NGOs in India: The Challenges of Women’s Empowerment and Accountability. <https://Core.Ac.Uk/Download/Pdf/42086484.Pdf>.’; ‘Elite Women’s Role in Empowering Oppressed Women : Volunteer Work in NGOs in Kolkata.’; Aditi Mitra, ‘Feminist Organizing in India: A Study of Women in NGOs’, *Women’s Studies International Forum* 34, no. 1 (January 2011): 66–75, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2010.10.003>; Roy, ‘The Indian Women’s Movement’; Saurabh Gupta, ‘From Demanding to Delivering Development: Challenges of NGO-Led Development in Rural Rajasthan, India’, *Journal of South Asian Development* 9, no. 2 (August 2014): 121–45, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973174114536099>; Lavanya Latha and Kotte Prabhakar, ‘Non-Government Organizations: Problems & Remedies in India’, *Serbian Journal of Management* 6, no. 1 (2011): 109–21, <https://doi.org/10.5937/sjm1101109L>.

<sup>27</sup> V Bernal, and I Grewal, *Theorizing NGOs: States, Feminisms, and Neoliberalism*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

<sup>28</sup> Roy, ‘The Indian Women’s Movement’.

<sup>29</sup> Roy; ‘Kilby, Patrick. 2011. NGOs in India: The Challenges of Women’s Empowerment and Accountability. <https://Core.Ac.Uk/Download/Pdf/42086484.Pdf>.’; Bernal, and Grewal, *Theorizing NGOs: States, Feminisms, and Neoliberalism*.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Kilby, Patrick. 2011. NGOs in India: The Challenges of Women’s Empowerment and Accountability. <https://Core.Ac.Uk/Download/Pdf/42086484.Pdf>.’

documentation of the such women as employees in the NGOs<sup>31</sup>, their association is invariably connected with careerism and corporatism. Feminism which was political and manifested through activism had now been converted into a nine-to-five career job as result of NGOisation. Connecting this to Alvarez's NGO boom in Latin America where this term was used not to refer to the increasing attention on women's issues by NGOs, rather it was attributed to the demand of a particular kind of formal, professionalised, and skilled gender expertise. Currently, Indian feminist movements do not employ the term 'NGOisation' simply as a descriptive term, but also refer to the increase in the number of NGOs working on gender and women's issues paralleling Alvarez's observation in Latin America. However, NGOisation is significantly perceived as an ideology that is harmful for feminism largely because it does not mobilise the grassroots for activism but promotes a donor-driven professional work with very little personal stake involved.

Therefore, in India, when the state withdrew provisions of key services like education and health because of the conditions laid down by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to open up the market to private investors,<sup>32</sup> NGOs stepped in to occupy this space. It also threw spotlight on women in two ways – mainstreaming of women centric economic projects for low income households, and career/corporatism for women from middle-class urban families. The neoliberal turn in development perceives the market as the best institution to deliver overall social good and perform women's empowerment. Empowerment would largely be facilitated by women's participation in cash yielding forms of production and consumerism – which was institutionalised with SHGs spearheaded by NGOs.<sup>33</sup> NGOs moved away from providing welfare and income-generation services to neoliberal practices of self-help which were now deemed as empowerment of women.

---

<sup>31</sup> F. Murdock, 'That Stubborn 'doing Good?'; Vasani, 'NGOs as Employers'; Aditi Mitra and J. David Knottnerus, 'Sacrificing Women: A Study of Ritualized Practices among Women Volunteers in India', *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 19, no. 3 (September 2008): 242–67, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-008-9063-y>.

<sup>32</sup> 'India - Structural Adjustment Credit Project (English) | The World Bank', accessed 6 June 2019, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/999451468260069468/India-Structural-Adjustment-Credit-Project>.

<sup>33</sup> K.N. Vijayanthi, 'Women's Empowerment through Self-Help Groups: A Participatory Approach', *Bulletin (Centre for Women's Development Studies)* 9, no. 2 (September 2002): 263–74, <https://doi.org/10.1177/097152150200900209>; Mr. Madanant Naik and Dr. Anthony Rodrigues, 'Women Empowerment Through Self Help Groups: Realities And Challenges', *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 22, no. 06 (July 2017): 01–09, <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2206120109>.

## *The anti-trafficking rhetoric:*

---

The National Crimes Record Bureau in its ‘2016 Crime in India Report’, which is the most recent law enforcement data available, states that a total of 8137 cases of human trafficking were reported across the country, a leap of 18 percent over the 6877 cases recorded in 2015. Out of these 8137 cases, over 7670 cases were of sexual exploitation and prostitution. West Bengal – a state on the eastern front of India that shares a porous border with Bangladesh, accounted for 3579 cases i.e. 44.01 % of the total. Geographical proximity to Bangladesh and Nepal, coupled with home to Asia’s two largest red-light areas – Sonagachi (Kolkata) and Kamathipura (Mumbai) invites the facilitation of internal trafficking. India occupies the status of source, transit, and destination point for human trafficking for sex. Scholars have argued that the growing levels of migration, poverty, extensive globalisation, privatisation, and neoliberal policies adopted by the government have forced women in significant numbers to compete with men in the labour market.<sup>34</sup> However, the dearth of employment opportunities coupled with sexual harassment at workplace pushes women from low income household with poor literacy skills and lack of family support to consider the sex trade for survival<sup>35</sup> mechanism. While a significant percentage of women enter the sex trade with agency – the degree of which is debatable, a greater percentage of women are trafficked into it with promises of better job or marriage. The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime states that out of over 19000 children and women who went missing from West Bengal in 2011, only 6000 have been traced. Poverty, domestic violence, abuse and the lack of opportunity and freedom, breeds conditions appropriate for these trafficking rackets.<sup>36</sup>

The Government of India in consultation with multi-sectoral stakeholders (civil society, INGOs etc) is working on strengthening the legislation against trafficking.<sup>37</sup> One of the biggest

---

<sup>34</sup> Niranjana Saggurti et al., ‘Motivations For Entry Into Sex Work And Hiv Risk Among Mobile Female Sex Workers In India’, *Journal of Biosocial Science* 43, no. 5 (September 2011): 535–54, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021932011000277>; Rakhi Dandona et al., ‘Demography and Sex Work Characteristics of Female Sex Workers in India’, *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 6 (14 April 2006): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-698X-6-5>; ‘ARCWP06-Gangoli.Pdf’, accessed 6 June 2019, [http://www.lse.ac.uk/asiaResearchCentre/\\_files/ARCWP06-Gangoli.pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/asiaResearchCentre/_files/ARCWP06-Gangoli.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Sunny Sinha, ‘Reasons for Women’s Entry into Sex Work: A Case Study of Kolkata, India’, *Sexuality & Culture* 19, no. 1 (March 2015): 216–35, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-014-9256-z>.

<sup>36</sup> . (Sanyal and Deb 2017)

<sup>37</sup> The Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (1986) and sections from the Indian Penal Code (IPC) are used to regulate, evaluate, and prosecute offenders of sex trafficking. The Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection, Rehabilitation) Bill introduced to the Parliament in 2018 by the Ministry of Women and Children is yet to be passed. The Bill clubs two existing laws on trafficking (for sex and labour) and has included new offenses listed under trafficking. However, it has been subjected to opposition from the civil society because of the provisions being too vague and inconsiderate of the complexities involved.

achievements so far has been the decriminalisation of women in the sex trade. The Ministry of Women and Children launched Ujjwala – a comprehensive scheme for the prevention of trafficking in 2007. This scheme which has identified five specific components to resist and curb trafficking – Prevention<sup>38</sup>, Rescue<sup>39</sup>, Rehabilitation<sup>40</sup>, Re-integration<sup>41</sup> and Repatriation<sup>42</sup> which are majorly implemented through NGOs.<sup>43</sup> An NGO working in the anti-trafficking domain, even if they are not collaborating with the government under the Ujjwala scheme, still work on these five components. Despite limitations in their resources – financial or material, NGOs have been studied to be the most effective in taking lead in combatting trafficking in their countries and regions. The vast reach of the NGOs to the last mile communities of the country encourages the government to delegate or provide autonomy to the organisations in implementing development projects.

Gendering in anti-trafficking work:

In this project, I study women NGO workers who engage in the rehabilitation of vulnerable women rescued from trafficking. Rehabilitation in anti-trafficking NGOs is akin to care work performed in residential care homes, only the degree of ‘care’ to be provided is a bit complicated because of the physical, mental, and emotional trauma experienced by rescued women. Under the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (1956, 1986), the Government of India has provided for the establishment of “protective homes” which is described as,

“an institution, by whatever name called (being an institution established or licenced as such under Section 21), in which persons who are in need of care and protection, may be kept under this Act and where appropriate technically qualified persons, equipment’s and other facilities have been provided but does not include”.<sup>44</sup>

The ‘protective homes’ are known as shelter homes or family homes where rescued women are rehabilitated. Further on, the Act states:

---

<sup>38</sup> Prevention, which consist of formation of community vigilance groups/ adolescences groups, awareness and sensitization of important functionaries like police, community leaders and preparation of awareness generation materials, holding workshop, etc.

<sup>39</sup> Rescue, safe withdrawal of the victim from the place of exploitation.

<sup>40</sup> Rehabilitation, which includes providing safe shelter for victims with basic amenities such as food, clothing, counselling medical care, legal-aid, vocational training and income generation activities, etc.

<sup>41</sup> Re-integration, which includes restoring the victim into the family/community (if she desires) and the accompanying costs.

<sup>42</sup> Repatriation, which includes repatriation of the victim to their country of origin

<sup>43</sup> (MoWCD website).

<sup>44</sup> Immoral Traffic Prevention Act 1986: <http://childlineindia.org.in/CP-CR-Downloads/Immoral%20Traffic%20Prevention%20act%201956.pdf>

“The State Government may, on application made to it in this behalf by a person or authority, issue to such person or authority a licence in the prescribed form for establishing and maintaining or as the case may be, for maintaining a protective home or corrective institution and a licence so issued may contain such conditions as the State Government may think fit to impose in accordance with the rules made under this Act: Provided that any such condition may require that the management of the protective home or corrective institution shall, wherever practicable, be entrusted to women...”<sup>45</sup>

The gendered nature of trafficking for sex could be a reason for the Act to specify that it would be only under a woman that such protective institutions will be entrusted. The gendered nature of the crime ensures the maximum participation of women in rehabilitative care. A significant part of rehabilitation work involves care work. Using feminist scholar Diemut Bubecks’ approach to care work;

“Caring for is the meeting the needs of one person by another person where face-to-face interaction between carer and cared for is a crucial element of the overall activity and where the need is of such a nature that it cannot possibly be met by person in need herself”.<sup>46</sup>

In rehabilitation work, the ‘caring’ goes beyond just providing for physical care but about mental and emotional care too. This is where emotion work – the act of suppressing or evoking feelings in their beneficiaries is performed by workers the most which also witnesses the performance of deep acting and surface acting.<sup>47</sup> Arlie Hochschild’s pioneer research on emotional labour also outlines how the air attendants would support each other and form kinships during their performance of emotion work.<sup>48</sup> A phenomenon witnessed in most care work jobs, including rehabilitation work due to the intense emotional exchange. But this exchange is not restricted to just between the employees, but between the beneficiaries and employees too which fuses the personal with the professional.

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> D. E Bubeck, *Care, Gender, and Justice*. Clarendon Press. (Oxford university Press, 1995).

<sup>47</sup> ‘Intimate Labour and Social Justice: Engaging with the Work of Rhacel Salazar Parreñas’, n.d.; ‘Introduction: Special Issue on Technologies of Intimate Labour’, n.d.; ‘The Reproductive Labour of Migrant Workers’, n.d.

<sup>48</sup> Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, 20. anniversary ed., [Nachdr.], with a new afterword (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2007).

## ***Location:***

---

Kolkata, the capital city of West Bengal is attributed to be home to one of the oldest and largest red-light areas in Asia. Sonagachi – transliteration of which is the Golden Tree house, in addition to residential homes, is co-habited by an 11000 population of women associated with the sex trade. Walking down the winding lanes of Sonagachi, one can come across dilapidated buildings with boards notifying in Bangla “ইহা ভদ্রলোকের বাড়ী”/ “iha bhadraloker badi” which translates to “This is the home of a gentleman”, thus distinguishing themselves from the places that allow the practice of sex trade so as to not be disturbed by clients. This 11000 population isn’t a homogenous one. Women land up in Sonagachi for multiple reasons – some of which are due to trafficking or to escape abusive partners and poverty. Kalighat, is the other red-light area is in the south of the city which estimates to host 1000-1500 women who live and work there. Both Sonagachi and Kalighat, along with other red-light areas of the city have emerged to be the transit point for trafficked girls and women. West Bengal, in all, is considered to the source, transit and destination point for trafficking which witnesses a large influx of women from neighbouring states and countries (Nepal and Bangladesh). In common parlance, being in “line” means to be in the sex trade. For example, if a woman from Sonagachi says she has left the “line”, that refers to her quitting the trade.

As a location, Kolkata is an interesting case study for feminist activism. In an extremely short period of time, from being a largely homogenous movement that was dominated by the left and leftist ideals (most represented in the Left Front government which ruled the state for thirty-four uninterrupted years) to a more fragmented and dispersed one. This shift is ascribed to the increasing presence of NGOs that have become representative of women’s movement in the city, superseding a strong tradition of party-affiliated and autonomous women’s group that were shaped by leftist values.<sup>49</sup>

## ***Organisation:***

---

I conducted my fieldwork interviewing nine women from four organisations that are based in Sonagachi and Kalighat. The operations of these organisations are, however, not limited to these two red-light areas. They have their headquarters, crisis centres, drop-in centres

---

<sup>49</sup> Aditi Mitra, *Challenges Of Women Volunteers And Activists In Women 's NGOs In India: A Feminist Standpoint Analysis*, 2005.

etc spread across the state or in different parts of the city depending on their program interventions. Out of the four organisations, three work on the following components: rescue, repatriation, prevention, and their rehabilitation strategies are almost similar. These three organisations have shelter-care homes where they house children (of women in the sex trade, at-risk vulnerable children, rescued survivors of trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse) between the age 5-18 years old. Program strategies are designed and implemented based on the psycho-social needs of the children. Additionally, they work with adult women for their psychological, and socio-economic rehabilitation. One of the organisations have provisions for full-time residential support for these women. These three organisations have a strong community development and outreach support. They push their employees to mobilise women to come and engage in learning skills to reduce economic dependency on the trade. The fourth organisation, however, has a different approach. They mobilise their field workers to go and build relationships with women and tell them about the work of the organisation, but directly they never ask them to join their NGO. They wait for the women to come and show interest in being part of the organisation. This organisation has a thriving for-profit social enterprise that makes handcrafted products for exporting to the United States. The production and to an extent the management is conducted by the women from the community. Those who express their interest to join the organisation receive other rehabilitation assistance. This strategy was adopted by the NGO to maintain peace within the community – so that pimps and brothel managers will not be resistant towards their work.

Being a hub of trafficking and anti-trafficking initiatives, a lot of NGOs have mushroomed across West Bengal, with their headquarters based in Kolkata. The organisations I chose for my fieldwork happen to prominent organisations in Kolkata. One of them is attributed to have flagged the anti-trafficking discourse and activities not only in the city, but also in the country. These organisations play a crucial role in resisting trafficking in the country, and part of their rehabilitation program entails employing back women who were rescued by them, who are alums of their shelter-care programs.

## ***Methods, Positionality, and Challenges.***

---

*“Writing is also a way of “knowing” – a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it.”<sup>50</sup>*

A few years ago, I did not anticipate that I would be writing about issues impacting women’s employment in the NGO space. I did not proceed because I was not sure how to approach it. Conceptualising this project helped me to create an outlet where I could actively share my experiences, observations alongside the snippets from the lives and efforts of women whose journeys remain undermined. Initially, I had envisioned this project to highlight the laborious investment of emotions performed by women in NGOs. But gradually – through writing, using it as a method of discovery and analysis, I arrived at focusing on analysing the relation of the 'doing good' narrative with women's participation in NGO work. Using writing as a tool for exploring my relationship with this project, in this chapter, I articulate my positionality within this research. Following which, I introduce my interviewees and discuss the methods adopted. I conclude with a section of challenges faced while conducting this method.

### ***Insider/Outsider Positionality – belonging or acceptance?***

---

*“Holding membership in a group does not denote complete sameness within that group. Likewise, not being a member of a group does not denote complete difference”<sup>51</sup>*

The dichotomous relationship between the binary positions of insider and outsider to qualitative research work stands blurred in my project. This is primarily because I occupy both the positions but at the same time neither of them too. Having clarity over the positionality of a researcher conducting qualitative research is significant because their status or membership

---

<sup>50</sup> ‘Richardson, Laurel “Writing as A Method of Inquiry” In. Handbook of Qualitative Research (2000)’, n.d.

<sup>51</sup> Sonya Corbin Dwyer and Jennifer L. Buckle, ‘The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research’, *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8, no. 1 (March 2009): 54–63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105>.

to either of the identities essentially impact the collection and analysis of data.<sup>52</sup> Some scholars argue that researchers who belong to the group they are studying, allow them the advantage of using their existing knowledge to gain better insights into the opinions of their respondents.<sup>53</sup> Others have presented that the positionality of an outsider allows one to have a greater degree of objectivity and the ability to impartially observe and analyse behaviour without distorting the apparent meaning.<sup>54</sup> Mullings claim that the binary of insider/outsider freezes positionality of the researcher, assuming that they have fixed attributes.<sup>55</sup> She insists that no individual can consistently remain fixed in any of the two identities. In agreement with her argument, my research experience indicates that rather than ‘belonging’ to a particular positionality, it is also important to gauge how the researcher is ‘accepted’ by the respondents of that community that she claims to be part of. The positionality as insider or outsider critically depends on the acknowledgement of the respondents which reflects in their responses to the researcher.

I researched women employees in the NGO sector. Some of them identified as field workers, while the others identified as development sector professionals. In this project, women who described themselves as development sector professionals occupied the executive positions. I *used* to be an active member of this group – given my seven-year stint in this sector. I identified as a development sector professional too. I *used* to be an insider. I did not encounter any major issues in trying to connect with these women, also because we happen to share the same socio-cultural and economic backgrounds as members of the middle-class Bengali community.

Women who identified as field workers were the former beneficiaries of the organisations, who returned as full-time employees. There was another woman, who was not a former beneficiary, identified as a field worker too due to her work responsibilities. To this group of respondents, I was a complete outsider. I do not share the same life experiences as them. Though my capacity to understand and appreciate their experiences have never been questioned, their silence and initial curt replies did make it clear that however much I may

---

<sup>52</sup> Dwyer and Buckle.

<sup>53</sup> Beverley Mullings, ‘Insider or Outsider, Both or Neither: Some Dilemmas of Interviewing in a Cross-Cultural Setting’, *Geoforum* 30, no. 4 (November 1999): 337–50, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185\(99\)00025-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185(99)00025-1); Patricia Hill Collins, ‘Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought’, *Social Problems* 33, no. 6 (October 1986): S14–32, <https://doi.org/10.2307/800672>.

<sup>54</sup> Dwyer and Buckle, ‘The Space Between’; Amani K. Hamdan, ‘Reflexivity of Discomfort in Insider-Outsider Educational Research’, *McGill Journal of Education* 44, no. 3 (2009): 377, <https://doi.org/10.7202/039946ar>.

<sup>55</sup> Beverley Mullings, ‘Insider or Outsider, Both or Neither: Some Dilemmas of Interviewing in a Cross-Cultural Setting’, *Geoforum* 30, no. 4 (November 1999): 337–50, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185\(99\)00025-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185(99)00025-1).

empathise from the positionality of a former employee of this sector, I will never be able to comprehend their worldview completely. This echoes with my remark on the significance of acceptance and acknowledgement from the respondents.

My present positionality as a former development professional turned researcher based in a western institution conducting academic research on a group I had a membership of comes with layers of complexities. Undoubtedly, there was an imbalance of power relations between my respondents and me which arose from the fact that I was researching about labour practices. Though my respondents were aware of their anonymity being ensured, I sensed hesitation in their responses primarily because their employment at the organisation would be at stake. Criticism about working policies might not go down well. Additionally, I came through referrals too – personally knowing the founders of some organisations. I had to reassure them that our conversations were confidential and would not be shared with anybody within the organisation. They were careful with their responses, tried not to divulge information that might contradict the popular image of the organisation or put its reputation at stake – which would put their employment at risk.

### ***Methods:***

---

*“What is the best way to investigate - hear stories from people.”<sup>56</sup>*

Stories excite people. Stories connect people. Before this project began to take shape, I was sure that interviews would form the core of my research. I enjoy interviewing people because stories intrigue and inspire me – no matter how mundane or exciting they might be. I adopted interviews as my preferred method for qualitative research because there are innumerable stories out there, unheard and undocumented, often side-lined because they are perceived as unimportant or not ‘sensational’ enough. Prior research work largely portrayed women with very less agency, and more as a victim of the system. I wanted to learn about that bit of agency women have in deciding their own trajectories.

When I first wrote to the organisations to request interviews with their employees, a few of them reverted to re-confirm if I indeed wanted to talk to their team. I was repeated this question several times when I visited them on my fieldwork. What amused these organisations

---

<sup>56</sup> ‘Richardson, Laurel “Writing as A Method of Inquiry” In. Handbook of Qualitative Research (2000)’.

was that a researcher, albeit Indian, came all the way from Europe to study the ‘ordinary’ lives of the employees and not of the beneficiaries. According to my respondents, they have had researchers visiting them who expressed curiosity to learn only about the stories of their beneficiaries. My respondents claimed that though as an organisation they welcome researchers, however, some of them breach the basic code of conduct by posing uncomfortable or insensitive questions to the beneficiaries that had the potential to trigger trauma. To quote one of my respondents, “tragedy sells and furthers the career of a researcher, hence they come to study our girls.”

My respondents were candid about their displeasure against researchers. Following Naples’ feminist methodology of conducting research that minimises ‘taking advantage’ of researched subjects<sup>57</sup>, I attempted to create a space that encouraged a two-way dialogue with my respondents, where we shared our own journeys and observations.

I interviewed nine women from four NGOs between the age 24 and 65 years old. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Kolkata in April 2019. I opted for semi-structured to not limit my interviews based on the questions I prepared but rather use them to guide the conversation. I recorded the interviews upon attaining consent. Simultaneously, I took notes to frame further follow-up questions and supplement the recording. I maintained the practice of transcribing interviews the same day they were conducted. This helped me to re-evaluate my questions and conversation pointers. My questions ranged from asking about their career trajectories to their daily work responsibilities, their motivations and aspirations to conflict resolution. Responses, from both our ends, often turned anecdotal which helped to relax my respondents.

I reached out to nine organisations based in Kolkata that have been the pioneers of combatting trafficking in country. Of the nine NGOs, two had responded positively to my emails, and two others from this pool had to be persuaded by using my personal contact from prior networking. The following sections introduce my respondents and briefly elucidates the challenges that defined my fieldwork.

*My respondents:*

---

<sup>57</sup> Nancy A. Naples, ‘A Feminist Revisiting of the Insider/Outsider Debate: The “Outsider Phenomenon” in Rural Iowa’, *Qualitative Sociology* 19, no. 1 (March 1996): 83–106, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02393249>.

Despite being united in their common passion to combat trafficking, my respondents are representatives of diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. From the responses received, they can be broadly placed into two categories. Anti-trafficking work is one of those domains which is dominated by women – as victims and as activists. The first category of my respondents were seven women who had the privilege to grow up within the layered tiers of middle-class families in India. They have university degrees in social sciences. Currently, they are employed in mid to senior management roles. Their work responsibilities include overseeing the operations of their teams, setting-up new projects, working on conflict-resolution among staff and beneficiaries, engaging with beneficiaries to create robust rehabilitation processes. And sometimes, stepping in as counsellors too. One of my respondents had mentioned that sometimes she has to counsel the counsellor because of the intense work pressure and the level of emotion management involved. Though she mentioned this over laugh, later she revealed the gravity of the situation which will be discussed in chapter ‘Empowerment for Doing Good?’

My second group of three respondents can be further placed into two sub-categories. The first group would be two women who had been rescued by the organisations, rehabilitated in their shelter-care, and now worked as full-time employees with the same organisations. They were employed as House Mothers and drop-in centre-coordinators. A House Mother is a person responsible for taking care of the daily needs of the shelter care home residents who minor girls rescued from sex-trafficking. I did not probe into the personal histories of my respondents, rather allowed them to share as much as they wished to. Both my respondents were hesitant to divulge any detail about their past or their background. Only upon building up rapport, they were comfortable to share a few. For example, one of my respondents mentioned that she was a victim of intergenerational prostitution. The second group with a single member is a woman who is a survivor of domestic abuse. All three of my respondents do not have any experience of attending formal schools. They have been trained under the non-formal education programs run by the organisations. One of my respondents’ lives with her mother who until recently had been part of the sex trade too. The other respondent is married and lives with her family very close to the shelter care home where she supervises. The third respondent lives with her two children after she fled from her abusive husband.

For maintaining confidentiality, the names of my respondents have been changed and those of the organisations have been anonymised.

## *Challenges:*

---

My project was challenging on several layers. As this essentially involves studying the labour practices of NGOs to critique the ‘doing good’ narrative, interviewing employees proved to a Herculean task. As mentioned earlier, the initial response from all the organisations were to double check whether I really wanted to interview their employees. Their dissatisfaction towards researchers was justified due to violation of conduct by the former visitors. After several attempts to reach out to over nine organisations through email (of which I had no prior contact established with seven of them), I received positive response from two. The other two organisations, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, were reached through using my personal contacts from networking.

One of the most crucial challenges faced while conducting this research was getting access to talk to the employees who were former beneficiaries of the rehabilitation program of the organisations. One organisation allowed me to only interview their senior management. They were convinced that their beneficiary-turned-employees were not in the position to be interviewed about their work. This response came despite agreeing over email-correspondence that interviews with the beneficiaries-turned-employees would be granted. It was also challenging to interview the beneficiary-turned-employees partly because of some language barrier and their silent approach. I had to be very observant with them because there would gaps of silence between responses. I realised sometimes it was because they would struggle to articulate. While conversing in Bangla, I faced articulation issues too several times during our conversations. Being a post-colonial subject from a middle-class family, my entire education from school to university has been in English. My parents are from the generation that pushed their children towards English education due to the ‘career opportunities’ it opens up. Though I am a fluent native speaker of Bangla, yet I find myself substituting certain Bangla words with their English counterparts partly because of the convenience. One of my recurrent challenges was to speak to the beneficiaries-turned-employees in Bangla while using English sparingly. I did stumble at times and the senior management helped me overcome it. But it did pose as a challenge to ensuring smooth communication. However, sometimes I would also resolve this by using examples from my own work experiences to communicate what my questions meant. This significantly helped to get through them. If time wasn’t a constraint, ethnographic study of the employees’ experiences would also have been a suitable method in addition to more in-depth conversations.

## *Reviewing the narratives in literature*

---

Since I argue that NGOs perpetuate a ‘doing good’ narrative which flourishes on the under-compensated and gendered labour provided by women, here, it is critical to evaluate the co-relation between NGOs and women. In this chapter, I map out the existing scholarship to review the relationship between gender and NGO work, focusing on the narrative of empowerment it comes with. First, I review how the ‘doing good’ narrative is a product of NGOisation which promised the ‘empowerment of women’. Second, I explore how ‘empowerment’ as an experience has been conceptualised by scholars and how it is encountered by women across different social classes. Finally, I review how NGOs, rather than challenging the gendered assumptions of care work, serves to reproduce them – thereby gendering NGO work in the process too. Through the different strands of literature that I tried to connect, here, I attempt to show how NGOisation has not only brought women in the centre of mainstream social welfare programs but has served to propagate gendered nature of labour too.

### *The ‘Doing Good’ Debate:*

---

*“the power to do good is also the power to do  
harm”<sup>58</sup>*

The process of NGOisation experienced by developing countries opened up Pandora’s box for scholars and critics of the development sector. While NGOisation was fostered by the neoliberal structural readjustments proposed by institutions like World Bank and the International Monetary Fund promoting the withdrawal of state from welfare activities, its consequence on the regular affairs of NGOs have been thoroughly scrutinised and studied. The impact of NGOisation on grassroot mobilisation, political activism, gender mainstreaming, and agenda building were debated by scholars.<sup>59</sup> It was argued that whether one perceived the

---

<sup>58</sup> See Milton Friedman (1962) in William F. Fisher, ‘DOING GOOD? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices’, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26, no. 1 (21 October 1997): 439–64, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.26.1.439>.

<sup>59</sup> Srila Roy, ‘Politics, Passion and Professionalization in Contemporary Indian Feminism’, *Sociology* 45, no. 4 (August 2011): 587–602, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511406584>; Roy, ‘The Indian Women’s Movement’; Roy, Arundhati, “‘NGOisation of Resistance’”; Sarbeswar Sahoo, ‘Doing Development or Creating Dependency? NGOs and Civil Society in India’, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 36, no. 2 (June 2013): 258–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2012.743500>; Kamat, ‘The Privatization of Public Interest’.

NGOs as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ depended upon one’s politics vis-à-vis development itself.<sup>60</sup> Rather, it was significant to ask questions about if ‘development’ is a practice that furthers world capitalist expansion, and whether that expansion would be eventually beneficial or harmful.<sup>61</sup>

Linked to the process of NGOisation, the ‘doing good’ narrative manifested itself, though not explicitly, into two strands of literature. The first strand is of scholars expressing their approval or criticism of NGOisation as a process and more overtly addressing the ‘doing good’ narrative’s role in NGO operations. This body of literature adopted a macro perspective where NGOs were examined as an entity whose holistic operational processes had the potential to impact the entire development sector – whether in terms of grassroots mobilisation or activism and advocacy. Those who wrote in favour of NGOisation, pointed out that this only helped the NGOs to further their projects of helping people without getting entangled into the politics of the government.<sup>62</sup> Scholars more critical of this phenomenon expressed how NGOisation would impact grassroots mobilisation the worst because it only deepens the ‘neoliberal project’ by easing state privatisation, defusing dissent, class politics and disrupting grassroots mobilisation.<sup>63</sup>

The second strand of literature focuses on the motivations of people associated with the sector – what drove them to join the space and continue working there. Scholars have contended that NGOs often pursue an ideological mission on how a particular service should be provided, hence they depend on individuals who are motivated by the ideas or vision of an organisation or by their personal belief in the cause rather than by profit.<sup>64</sup> NGOs employees have been described as people who agree to donate their labour for public good which they find value in.<sup>65</sup> The donative labour hypothesis is linked to the motivation of the employees. Employees with NGOs are expected to be intrinsically motivated to work for public good/cause which they have believe in. Empirical analysis have confirmed that employees working with NGOs are more satisfied with their jobs than their counterparts in other for-profit ventures. Additionally, NGO professional have claimed that NGO work to them is meaningful since it allows them the

---

<sup>60</sup> See William Fisher (1997) F. Murdock, ‘That Stubborn ‘doing Good?’

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> See Zivetz 1991 in Fisher, ‘DOING GOOD?’

<sup>63</sup> See Gill 2000; Edelman 1999; Arellano López & Petras 1994 F. Murdock, ‘That Stubborn ‘doing Good?’

<sup>64</sup> Angela M. Eikenberry and Jodie Drapal Kluver, ‘The Marketization of the Nonprofit Sector: Civil Society at Risk?’, *Public Administration Review* 64, no. 2 (March 2004): 132–40, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2004.00355.x>.

<sup>65</sup> Maes, ‘Volunteerism or Labor Exploitation?’

chance to fulfil their lives.<sup>66</sup> They perceive NGO work to be similar to serving the nation. Further analysis have suggested that the NGOs provide non-pecuniary work benefits like enhancement of social status and self-empowerment that drives people to dedicate their labour to non-profit work.<sup>67</sup>

While these two strands explore two different aspects of NGO work, there is an absence in connecting the two arguments. The ‘doing good’ narrative is explored from a perspective where it highlights how the constitution of the NGOs change and the development projects they undertake. As discussed earlier, NGOisation in India took up women empowerment projects. However, there are insufficient discussions about how women employees of NGOs experienced empowerment. Though the second strand of literature focuses on the intrinsic motivations of employees and how non-pecuniary incentives work in favour of under-compensated labour, these literatures do not explore how the ‘doing good’ narrative drew people into the sector – which highlights the neoliberal practice of extracting the maximum (in labour) with minimum investments.

In this project, I have tried to reduce this crucial gap. I explore how the ‘doing good’ narrative actually impacts the recruitment and sustenance of the employees, especially of women. Liberalisation in India corresponded with NGOisation which invited more women into the labour market. The ‘doing good’ narrative played a significant role in encouraging the participation of women since in the traditional values of the Indian society required women to take permission from their in-laws to work and NGO work was perceived to be harmless. It also enabled experiences of empowerment and class enhancement which would be discussed in the next sections.

### ***Understanding empowerment:***

---

*“Development agencies often use the term ‘empowerment’ to refer to a range of activities, many of which have little to do with addressing*

---

<sup>66</sup> Brad Forenza and Caitlin Eckert, ‘Social Worker Identity: A Profession in Context’, *Social Work* 63, no. 1 (1 January 2018): 17–26, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swx052>.

<sup>67</sup> Forenza and Eckert; Maes, ‘Volunteerism or Labor Exploitation?’; ‘Elite Women’s Role in Empowering Oppressed Women: Volunteer Work in NGOs in Kolkata.’; Mitra, ‘Feminist Organizing in India’; Mitra and Knottnerus, ‘Sacrificing Women’; Mitra, *CHALLENGES OF WOMEN VOLUNTEERS AND ACTIVISTS IN WOMEN’S NGOs IN INDIA*.

*the power relations among the various actors or groups in society.*"<sup>68</sup>

In this section, I attempt to understand how 'empowerment' as an experience has been conceptualised by scholars. Since I argue that NGOisation claimed to bring empowerment of women central to the process of development work and that women's experiences of empowerment are shaped by their social experience, I use this space to map out the dominant perceptions of development scholars who claim that the growing popularity of this word has led to a broadening of its definition. Authors assert that the overuse of the concept has diluted its meaning and contributed to its shift from understanding the term in relation to power.<sup>69</sup> Some authors have asserted that the term 'empowerment' has become just another buzzword in development practice for the purpose of securing donations and aid.<sup>70</sup> Though a large body of research on empowerment exists from the perspective of different disciplines like economics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science, management and development, authors claim that a comprehensive and operational definition that can be used at grassroots level for planning, strategizing, and evaluating development interventions is lacking and probably is not feasible too.<sup>71</sup> Development scholar Smita Mishra Panda writes,

“While there is much debate at the theoretical level as to what empowerment comprises and how best it can be achieved, there has been little primary research at the grassroot level to contribute to our understanding of what empowerment means in every day terms.”

The tension between theorising empowerment and praxis exists in most literature on development work. Upon reviewing the existing definitions of empowerment, Mishra compiled a list of key elements that define empowerment – which stand as “power, autonomy and self-reliance, entitlement, participation and process of building awareness and capacity”.

---

<sup>69</sup> 'Kilby, Patrick. 2011. NGOs in India: The Challenges of Women's Empowerment and Accountability. <https://Core.Ac.Uk/Download/Pdf/42086484.Pdf>.'; Andrea Cornwall and Deborah Eade, eds., *Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (Rugby, Warwickshire: Practical Action Publ. [u.a.], 2010).

<sup>70</sup> Cornwall and Eade, *Deconstructing Development Discourse*.

<sup>71</sup> Naila Kabeer, 'Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment', n.d., 30; Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India, Economic Development and Social Opportunity* (Oxford university Press, 1995); Smita Mishra Panda, 'Women's Empowerment through NGO Interventions: A Framework for Assessment', *Social Change* 30, no. 3-4 (September 2000): 44-63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004908570003000405>.

She added that these elements are applicable to individuals as well as group level understanding of empowerment.

Like Mishra, several scholars have articulated the meaning of empowerment within development work and how it impacts the group it is intended for, which in most cases are women.<sup>72</sup> However, scholars Femida Handy and Meenaz Kassam have pointed out that,

“Although the notion of women’s empowerment has long been legitimized by international development agencies, what actually comprises empowerment and how it is measured is still being debated. Malhotra, Schuler, and Boender’s (2002) excellent review of this debate highlights the many ways that empowerment can be measured and suggests that researchers pay attention to the process in which empowerment occurs.”<sup>73</sup>

Handy and Kassam’s argument serves as a reminder of the fact that empowerment as a concept has long gained currency in the world of development work. Their suggestion on the necessity of researchers attending to the process of development implies the current dearth of significant research work available. This is fascinating because NGOisation’s focus on economic empowerment of women stimulated the growth of scholarship on understanding the process of being empowered as beneficiaries of the organisation. As mentioned earlier, most studies published on women’s empowerment narrate the interventions in the micro-finance and micro-credit sphere. These programs were promoted by organisations as strategy to alleviate women from poverty, thereby empowering them in the process.<sup>74</sup> The fundamental understanding of empowerment in this sector has been tied to economic prosperity – which is significant in a developing country like India where (rural) women face constraints in terms of cultural and traditional taboos that emerge from patrilineal inheritance to patrilocal residence, lack of education, access to capital, technology etc<sup>75</sup>.

In South Asia, there are two approaches commonly used by development agencies including NGOs: (a) empowerment through economic interventions to improve women’s economic status through employment, income generation and access to credit; (b) empowerment through integrated rural development programmes, in which strengthening

---

<sup>72</sup> John Drury, Atalanti Evripidou, and Martijn Van Zomeren, ‘Empowerment: The Intersection of Identity and Power in Collective Action’, in *Power and Identity* (Psychology Press, n.d.); Kabeer, ‘Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women’s Empowerment’; Samereh Abdoli et al., ‘Seeking New Identity through the Empowerment Process’, *Iranian Journal of Nursing and Midwifery Research* 19, no. 2 (2014): 145–51, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4020023/>.

<sup>73</sup> Femida Handya and Meenaz Kassamb, ‘Women ’ s Empowerment in Rural India’, 2005.

<sup>74</sup> Kabeer, ‘Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women’s Empowerment’.

<sup>75</sup> Panda, ‘Women’s Empowerment through NGO Interventions’.

women's economic status is just one component along with education, literacy, provision of basic needs and services, awareness, and reproductive health. Though development work attributes economic empowerment as the core to improving the different verticals of women's lives, there are several studies that suggest that women may be empowered in one area of their lives which might not impact the other spheres.<sup>76</sup> While it's difficult to resolve how empowerment plays out, Handy and Kassam described empowerment as,

“the restoration to individuals of a sense of their own value and strength and their own capacity to handle life's problems”.<sup>77</sup> We believe it can be measured by the capacity to handle problems in each of the following spheres: personal, economic, familial, and political. We follow the literature and include household and interfamilial relations, a central locus of women's disempowerment in India<sup>78</sup>.

Going beyond the mere economic aspect, Handy and Kassam's purview of holistic empowerment will be central to this project. This conceptualisation of empowerment resonates with the experiences of my interviews, most of whom chose to engage in NGO work for reasons not limited to financial independence/economic empowerment.

### ***Empowering and/or class-enhancement and motivations:***

---

*“The effect of women's empowerment creates a powerful influence on family, community norms, and values and finally the laws that govern these communities”*<sup>79</sup>

The existing scholarship on the empowerment of women can be broadly divided into two categories. The first category draws attention to the experiences of women in urban and rural landscapes from low income households. Here, they inhabit the NGO space both as beneficiaries<sup>80</sup> and as employees. The literature available pivots on the agency of women in

---

<sup>76</sup>; Kabeer, 'Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment'; Panda, 'Women's Empowerment through NGO Interventions'.

<sup>77</sup> See Bush & Folger, 1994, p. 2 in Handya and Kassamb, 'Women's Empowerment in Rural India'..

<sup>78</sup> See Batliwala, 1994; Bisnath & Elson, 1999; Datta, 2003; Mosedale, 2005; Narasimhan, 1999; Sen & Grown, 1987 in Handya and Kassamb.

<sup>79</sup> See Page & Czuba, 1999 in Handya and Kassamb.

<sup>80</sup> The term 'beneficiaries', is used to describe the target group of the NGOs – the communities or population they work with. Rather than treating this group as partners or clients since they constitute to be the most important

terms of financial independence and how NGOs have ‘empowered’ them. This sort of scholarship typically studies the intervention of NGOs working on micro-finance projects as discussed in the previous section.<sup>81</sup> The second category highlights the experience of women in NGOs from upper class families. There is a dearth of literature available on this section of the society. Women, in this category, usually engage in leadership positions which are either practiced pro bono or remunerated well. Aditi Mitra, a sociologist and development scholar from University of Colorado extensively researches on this section of elite women who participate in NGO work for self-empowerment. In some of her prominent works, Mitra along with her co-authors studied the ability of elite women to negotiate their life choices (family, class privilege, labour opportunities) and understand feminist organising and empowering (negotiating with government and social institutions).<sup>82</sup> Based on ethnography, participant observation and extensive interviews, Mitra analysed the experiences of these women who acknowledged that NGOs empowered them. However, they also revealed that it would not have been possible if their in-laws did not ‘permit’ them to participate. Mitra analysed that the encouragement of the families was received on two grounds. First, NGO work was perceived by their families as an extension of the traditional gender roles performed by women that requires exercising empathy and emotional labour. Second, women’s participation in NGO work was perceived to enhance the social status of the family even within an already privileged circle.<sup>83</sup>

Despite their different socio-economic class positionings, both the categories of women engaged in NGO work because it boosted their social statuses. Though scholarship on the first category of women analysed that the ‘satisfactory feeling of doing good’ acted as an impetus

---

stakeholders of the social sector, the term ‘beneficiary’ is used which only highlights an unequal power relation – giver/benefactor. For the lack of an alternative word that takes into cognisance the power (im)balances, I will continue with the term ‘beneficiary’ but within quotation marks.

<sup>81</sup> ‘Talking of Gender: Words and Meanings in Development Organisations: Development in Practice: Vol 17, No 4-5’, accessed 6 June 2019, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09614520701469591>; Kathleen O’Reilly, ‘Resolving a Gendered Paradox: Women’s Participation and the NGO Boom in North India’, in *Theorizing NGOs*, ed. Victoria Bernal and Inderpal Grewal (Duke University Press, 2014), 143–65, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822377191-008>; Mitra, *CHALLENGES OF WOMEN VOLUNTEERS AND ACTIVISTS IN WOMEN’S NGOS IN INDIA*.

<sup>82</sup> ‘Elite Women’s Role in Empowering Oppressed Women: Volunteer Work in NGOs in Kolkata.’; Mitra, ‘Feminist Organizing in India’.

<sup>83</sup> Mitra, ‘Feminist Organizing in India’; Mitra and Knottnerus, ‘Sacrificing Women’.

to join the sector and organisations encouraged them invoking moral and ethics.<sup>84</sup> It was the positive reception of the women by their community members that invigorated them to continue the ‘good work’. It can be deduced that they were viewed as role-models for the community – as women who could determine the course of their lives while simultaneously helping others to do so too. For the upper class women, NGO work permitted them an escape from their home-bound lives and presented the opportunity to engage in a work that evoked feelings of satisfaction while not compromising their familial responsibilities.<sup>85</sup> Here, for both the groups of women, NGO work was predominantly performed for two reasons – it gave them a sense of satisfaction for doing good for others, and it enabled them to enhance their social class. Both the groups experienced ‘empowerment’ in ways which goes beyond tangible monetary incentive.

From the selected strand of literature, it is evident that the beneficiaries of NGO work are women from low income households, while women from within the same communities and also from the upper class are involved in providing labour. Most of the labour provided are/were compensated by wrapped in the discourse of ‘doing good’. The internalisation of patriarchal beliefs that push women to imagine that social work are extensions of their womanhood – of being a mother and wife have been capitalised by the NGOs. A very important strand of analysis here is through the lens of class. As we see a shift in the study of empowerment from lower class to upper class, we can note a different form of empowerment narrative being spun around for the upper class women. Their association with NGOs are being labelled as an empowerment and they perceive it similarly too. As families are allowing the women to associate with NGO work which directly impacts their social status, women are finding themselves experiencing the labour market for the first time. Incorporation into leadership positions (because of the social and financial capital they bring), a relative degree of autonomy within the organisation, and channelizing the ‘expected’ maternal care work

---

<sup>84</sup> O. Akintola, ‘What Motivates People to Volunteer? The Case of Volunteer AIDS Caregivers in Faith-Based Organizations in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa’, *Health Policy and Planning* 26, no. 1 (1 January 2011): 53–62, <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czq019>; Maes, ‘Volunteerism or Labor Exploitation?’; Mitra, *CHALLENGES OF WOMEN VOLUNTEERS AND ACTIVISTS IN WOMEN’S NGOS IN INDIA*; Rehema C. Batti, ‘Challenges Facing Local NGOs in Resource Mobilization’, *Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 3 (2014): 57, <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.hss.20140203.12>; ‘Elite Women’s Role in Empowering Oppressed Women : Volunteer Work in NGOs in Kolkata.’

<sup>85</sup> Mitra, A & Van Delinder, J (2007) Elite women’s role in empowering oppressed women: Volunteer work in NGOs in Kolkata, India. In K.K & Lowry, J.H (Eds.) Recent studies on Indian women. Jaipur, India: Rawat Publications

Mitra, Adrija & Knottnerus, David. J. 2008. "Sacrificing Women: A Study of Ritualised Practices among Women volunteers in Indi." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations* 242-267.

instincts create a form of empowerment for them. Empowerment becomes a very subjective experience, with relative meaning. For most women, this association is a step up from their closed household doors which instil feelings of empowerment – taking charge of a life that is outside their families

### ***Labouring emotions in NGO work:***

---

Almost three decades ago Arlie Hochschild conceptualised emotional labour – the management of one’s feelings by inducing or suppressing the real emotions of a service provider, to sustain an outward countenance that produces desirable feelings among their clients.<sup>86</sup> Since then a large body of scholarship has evolved where various occupations and the corresponding emotional labour they demanded have been studied.<sup>87</sup> Scholars have described emotional labour as the act of displaying appropriate emotion to conform with display rules,<sup>88</sup> the effort planning and control needed to express emotions by the employing organisation during interpersonal transactions,<sup>89</sup> the process of regulating feelings and expressions for organisational goals<sup>90</sup> etc. The foci of these studies had been what sociologists describe as service-work or care work. Most of the literature enumerated how the emotional investments expected out of employees are gendered and exploitative,<sup>91</sup> sometimes used as disciplinarian tool that is detrimental to the individual.<sup>92</sup> Here, it must be noted that their conceptualisations were done in relation to service sector jobs where direct financial transactions between the provider (the organisation) and the receiver (client) of service and

---

<sup>86</sup> Arlie Russell Hochschild, ‘Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure’, *The American Journal of Sociology* 85, no. 3, (1979): 551–75, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2778583>; Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.

<sup>87</sup> Anat Rafaeli and Robert I. Sutton, ‘Busy Stores and Demanding Customers: How Do They Affect the Display of Positive Emotion?’, *The Academy of Management Journal* 33, no. 3 (1990): 623–37, <https://doi.org/10.2307/256584>.

<sup>88</sup> Ashforth, BE & Humphrey, RH 1993, ‘Emotional labor in service roles: The influence of identity’, *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 88-115.

<sup>89</sup> J. Andrew Morris and Daniel C. Feldman, ‘Managing Emotions In The Workplace’, *Journal of Managerial Issues* 9, no. 3 (1997): 257–74, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40604147>.

<sup>90</sup> Pieter Van Dijk, Liam Smith, and Brian Cooper, ‘Are You for Real? An Evaluation of the Relationship between Emotional Labour and Visitor Outcomes’, *Tourism Management* 32, no. 1 (2011): 39–45, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.11.001>; Dieter Zapf and Melanie Holz, ‘On the Positive and Negative Effects of Emotion Work in Organizations’, *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 15, no. 1 (March 2006): 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13594320500412199>.

<sup>91</sup> Maes, K. (2012) “Volunteerism or Labor Exploitation? Harnessing the Volunteer Spirit to Sustain AIDS Treatment Programs in Urban Ethiopia” [Accessed: 3 April 2019] Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24077802>

<sup>92</sup> Eleanor K. Johnson, ‘The Business of Care: The Moral Labour of Care Workers’, *Sociology of Health & Illness* 37, no. 1 (2015): 112–26, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12184>.

emotions was performed. Therefore, the need for the organisations to have greater control over the emotional management of their employees was a priority. Often the control of the organisation over the emotions of the employees were exhibited through various means – using spiritual, philanthropic and the ‘doing good narrative’. These literatures, however, do not investigate or analyse the motivations for sustained performance of emotional labour by workers for their clients when no direct financial transaction or incentive is involved. NGO work does not involve direct financial transaction between the beneficiary and the worker, rather a third party (donor) provides the financial incentive. This alludes to the question – what are the motivations that propel NGO workers to dedicate their emotional labour into this space which is characterised by low pay and almost nil social security.

This analysis gives rise to an urgent question about the accountability of the NGOs to empower their own employees. Some scholars discuss how NGOs are more accountable to their donors than their ‘beneficiaries’ and stricter government regulations have forced NGOs to provide fiscal accountability to the government.<sup>93</sup> However, most scholars have written about the accountability of NGOs to their employees, not of the NGOs for their employees. Accountability for their labour practices is significantly missing from the analysis of most development work centric literature. This drives me to think if NGO employees’ labour are taken for granted because of its philanthropic nature. Since a definite type of accountability is missing from the NGOs, the possibility of labour exploitation in the name of ‘doing good work’ arises.

In the previous section, I discussed how financial incentives cease to become the most significant motivational factor for women in NGO work. The strong desire to enhance their social status drove women from the two extremes of socio-economic class to engage in NGO work. Therefore, they agree that any work that requires exercising empathy and emotional labour comes ‘naturally’ to them. Scholars noted that NGOs usually have two types employment opportunities – one is at the policy or leadership level, the second is for service work. Engagement at the policy level involve working on leadership or policy influencing role. Service employees/volunteers were people employed on the ground of using their ethics and compassion, a role that involved extensive interaction with people. They are ‘trained’ to

---

<sup>93</sup> Baviskar, B.S 2001 ‘NGOs and Civil Society in India’ in Sociological Bulletin, Vol. 50, No. 1 Indian Sociological Society, pp. 3-15  
 Sheth DL& Sethi H. 1991 "The NGO sector in India: historical context and current discourse." International Journal of Voluntary and Non-profit Organisations 49-69. [Accessed on 26 December 2018] <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27927310>.

rationalise their work on grounds of spirituality and ethical labour.<sup>94</sup> This section of people is known by different names – field workers, social development workers, outreach workers, social workers etc. As employees they experience a myriad of emotions in their daily work that requires them to perform emotion work and emotional labour.

The practice of employing women for performing emotional labour which is essentially gendered is problematic because rather than challenging the traditional gendered roles that are constructed through patriarchy, NGOs which are the flagbearers of women's development perpetuate it. The under-compensation of gendered labour also furthers a neoliberal agenda of the organisations. Here, they subscribe and perpetuate gendered notions of emotional labour to rationalise with women that empathy is a natural attribute of women, therefore a trait that should not be monetised, but seen as a humanitarian contribution. The neoliberal agenda of extracting maximum output (in terms of labour) with minimal investments (employee support programs) manifests itself. Additionally, women from the service-section perform these works because other than evolving as a role model of their communities, such engagement increase their prospects of getting married,<sup>95</sup> or securing a job which would mean an upward social mobility. The women rationalise their emotional investments with the aim to create a scope for greater social mobility. This is incredibly important if NGO work is being studied in India because of the significance of class and caste practices that weave into the social fabric of the country.

Scholars have concluded that NGO workers negotiate new approaches to challenge existing traditional gender roles yet in critical ways contribute to their reproduction by utilising taken-for-granted symbolic models and action repertoires derived from their experiences and wider society.<sup>96</sup> They studied that patriarchy in India emphasised the importance of motherhood as idealised and ritualised. Through structural practices that ritualised certain roles, the glorification of the image of care-giver is perpetrated and social work is concluded as a manifestation of the same. Despite having greater access to education and relatively greater control over their lives, upper class women face oppression and discrimination differently but mostly remain quiet because of societal pressures and shame. Therefore, though the

---

<sup>94</sup> Maes, 'Volunteerism or Labor Exploitation?'

<sup>95</sup> O'Reilly, K (2014) "Resolving a Gendered Paradox: Women's participation and the NGO Boom in North India." In *Theorizing NGOs: States, Feminism, and Neoliberalism*, by V. Bernal and I. Grewal, 146-165. Durham and London: Duke University.

<sup>96</sup> Mitra, Aditi & Knottnerus, David. J. 2008. "Sacrificing Women: A Study of Ritualised Practices among Women volunteers in Indi." *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations* 242-267.

beneficiaries of NGO work are mostly women from lower social class, through such NGO work, upper and middle class women find their empowerment – of ‘doing good work’. Contributing to the existing body of literature, I bring to perspective how believing in empowerment through ‘doing good’ can actually be counter-productive, leaving women emotionally drained, under-compensated, and possibly under the impression that they cannot achieve better for themselves. I discuss this claim substantiated by the stories of my respondents in the following chapter.

## *Empowerment in ‘Doing Good’?*

---

*“Women's community participation: benevolent service, social action, capitalist exploitation, or empowerment? The work that women do in communities is all of these.”<sup>97</sup>*

Diving into the experiences of my nine respondents, observations from the field, in addition to my prior professional experience in the NGO sector, this chapter discusses the core argument of my thesis – that NGOs thrive on the under-compensated labour of women by perpetuating a ‘doing good’ narrative. This narrative significantly genders NGO work and plays an important role in the experience of empowerment encountered by the women employees. Divided into three sections, the first section of this chapter explores the ‘doing good’ narrative of NGO work which forms the foundation of this sector. This narrative creates opportunities for women to form strong social identities that are celebrated by their communities. These identities are significant for women living in a patriarchal society like India where gender, class and caste mould one’s experiences. The second section presents how NGO work, especially in the anti-trafficking domain require the investment of emotional labour. This type of labour which involves care work is unfailingly performed by women which is perceived as an extension of traditional gender roles practiced in the society where care work is regarded as women’s work and NGOs stand to profit from it. Finally, I discuss that though NGOs create opportunities of empowerment for its women employees, it is profoundly shaped by the women’s social-class experiences.

Before I delve further, I want to briefly elucidate organisational dynamics for better understanding of the positionality of my interviews. The social sector, despite the altruism and volunteerism characterising it, has its own set of hierarchies among its stakeholders – the NGOs, beneficiaries, funders, the government etc. Here, I refer to the system of hierarchy embedded within the employment structure of the NGOs especially those that work with the grassroots. There is very little truth in the statement claimed by NGOs that they are non-hierarchical in nature and their responsibilities are horizontally distributed. NGOs follow deep hierarchal structures. While the top of the pyramid is occupied by founders or directors or chief

---

<sup>97</sup>Wendy Kaminer - *Women Volunteering\_ The Pleasure, Pain, and Politics of Unpaid Work from 1830 to the Present* (1984, Anchor Press).’, n.d.

executives, following shortly are the senior management team of program managers, who are reported to by the program officers or associates, and finally the field workers. This is not the definite structure, but most of the NGOs hire, categorise and compensate their employees based on such a constitution

### ***The ‘doing good’ narrative:***

---

The ‘doing good’ narrative is an impressive and powerful construction of the NGO sector, which I believe, has come to constitute one of its driving forces too. Other than sporadic doubts about the sector’s accountability,<sup>98</sup> NGOs have secured the label of doing good work i.e., work that alleviates suffering and empowers their beneficiaries,<sup>99</sup> thereby obtaining the higher ground on the moral positioning of professions. Though a significant body of literature is dedicated to the accountability of NGOs and their intervention programs, in-depth analysis of the sector’s labour practices are yet to be popularised in research work. Typically run through donations that must be raised from time to time, NGOs design their ecosystems in a way that allows the maximum utilisation of resources available to them. Negotiations are most witnessed regarding investments in human resources. With the apparent dearth of funding due to government regulations<sup>100</sup> and the non-revenue generating nature of the sector, NGOs seek to recruit individuals who agree to contribute their professional skills for a humanitarian cause at a lower compensation. Or they seek to recruit people displaying passion for a cause, invoking their ‘ethical labour’ – involving their own good will and humanitarian values,<sup>101</sup> while simultaneously providing an opportunity for the fulfilment of this passion. Often these individuals are recruited without significant pecuniary incentives, and sometimes are discouraged from demanding higher compensations too. They are countered with arguments like ‘social work should be selfless’, and ‘it is doing good for the society’, thereby putting the NGO workers into conflicting situations where, on one hand, they need a better remuneration for sustenance, but are trained to rationalise the low pay with the logic that their profession

---

<sup>98</sup>Jonathan Fox, ‘The Uncertain Relationship between Transparency and Accountability’, *Development in Practice* 17, no. 4/5 (2007): 663–71, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25548267>; ‘Kilby, Patrick. 2011. NGOs in India: The Challenges of Women’s Empowerment and Accountability. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/42086484.pdf>.’; ‘Latha and Prabhakar - 2011 - Non-Government Organizations Problems & Remedies .Pdf’, n.d.; Michael Edwards, ‘Have NGOs “Made a Difference?”’, n.d., 17.

<sup>99</sup>Maes, ‘Volunteerism or Labor Exploitation?’; Sahoo, ‘Doing Development or Creating Dependency?’

<sup>100</sup>Rama Lakshmi, ‘India Cracks down on Foreign Funding of NGOs’, *The Guardian*, 11 June 2013, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/11/india-crackdown-foreign-funded-ngos>; Eikenberry and Kluver, ‘The Marketization of the Nonprofit Sector’.

<sup>101</sup>Ilana Feldman, ‘The Quaker Way: Ethical Labor and Humanitarian Relief’, *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 4 (November 2007): 689–705, <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2007.34.4.689>.

demands them to be selfless.<sup>102</sup> Since NGOs do not always succeed in offering enough monetary compensation, the ‘doing good’ narrative constructed by their humanitarian work allows the NGO workers to actually create non-monetary inducements that motivate the individuals to sustain their association within the organisation.<sup>103</sup> But, these inducements depend upon factors like the geopolitical location of the NGOs, the class and social status of the people engaging in NGO work. In this section, I present how this ‘doing good’ narrative plays a significant role in shaping the labour policies and practices of the NGOs, thereby impacting the employees’ performance, outlook, and perception about their own identity and contributions to their work. Here, I point out two things:

1) NGOs create employment opportunities for people with no formal trainings in social work, especially for women from certain social backgrounds. This harbours gratitude which (invisibly) binds women to these particular organisations where they continue to work and perform emotional labour because of the gendered nature of the work – especially care work within anti-trafficking organisations.

2) The narrative of ‘doing good’ acts both as an anchor and a driving force in the social sector. While people, especially women, are encouraged to use their ethics to fulfil roles which they are convinced off as ‘natural’ to their gender. Additionally, they agree to work for less pecuniary incentives because the humanitarian angle of the sector appeals as a status enhancing opportunity that creates the possibility of a better future. By using this narrative, NGOs secure labour that is inadequately compensated compared to other industries, primarily because ethics is evoked.

In India, the first social work school was set up by in 1936, modelled after the American system of social work.<sup>104</sup> There are over 1.5 million organisations registered as NGOs in the country,<sup>105</sup> and people from diverse educational and training backgrounds constitute the working population of this sector. Though there are people who are formally trained or graduated in social work, the exact number of that population is hard to determine, considering the vastness of the sector. For example, I graduated in literature but worked with NGOs for a period of seven years. I vividly remember my interviews, where I was never asked about the

---

<sup>102</sup> Discussed elaborately in one my term papers authored at Utrecht University titled, ‘Social Work: The Case of Undervalued Labour’. Available on: <https://ceu.academia.edu/PranjaliDas>

<sup>104</sup>K.S. Mandal, ‘American Influence on Social Work Education in India and Its Impact’, *International Social Work* 32, no. 4 (October 1989): 303–9, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002087288903200407>.

<sup>105</sup> ‘Overview of Civil Society Organisations: India’.

relevance of my BA degree to the profile I applied for, rather, the interviewers were curious to know about my passion and motivation. All my colleagues came from diverse backgrounds too and there would only be a handful of them who received some diploma or certifications in social work. However, as mentioned in the introduction, NGOs are fairly hierarchical too. The lowest rung of the organisational hierarchy are occupied by field workers. These field workers do not always have formal educational training, and most of the times are recruited from the community.<sup>106</sup> In the case of the organisations I interviewed at, some of the field workers were former beneficiaries of the organisations who had been recruited as an extended part of their rehabilitation program. Anita, 30, a former beneficiary but now appointed as the House Mother of the organisations' shelter care program shared her journey. She said,

“*Boro aunty*<sup>107</sup> enrolled us in the shelter home. I was 15. But three years later, I started working here. I did not really leave – it does not feel like I’ve left at all. Before it was residential, now it’s just that I live outside. I don’t feel like I’ve left. The only difference is that I have now responsibilities to fulfil as a staff. I had a guardian before, now I’ve become a guardian here. This place has become my family. I haven’t really ever thought about leaving.”

Anita describes how she was initiated into the organisation. After being rescued from one of the red-light areas in the city, Anita lived in the shelter care for three years during which she was trained into a diverse range of skills which included handcrafts and stitching. Unfortunately, she was denied the opportunity to work elsewhere because of her background in the sex-trade that fostered prejudice among the recruiters. After she turned 18, under the government’s mandate,<sup>108</sup> she could not continue living in the shelter home as a beneficiary. The founder of the organisation invited her to work as a full-time professional. She joined as a care-giver at the shelter home, later on she graduated into the House Mother, for which she was responsible to look into the daily operations. As evident from the excerpt, Anita can never imagine leaving this organisation. This wasn’t because of the bond she had formed with her

---

<sup>106</sup> O’Reilly, ‘Resolving a Gendered Paradox’; Kilby, Patrick. 2011. NGOs in India: The Challenges of Women’s Empowerment and Accountability. <https://Core.Ac.Uk/Download/Pdf/42086484.Pdf>.; C. Batti, ‘Challenges Facing Local NGOs in Resource Mobilization’.

<sup>107</sup> *Boro* in Bangla means elderly or older. ‘*Boro aunty*’ is an affectionate term used by Anita and the girls at shelter care home to refer to the founder of the organisation.

<sup>108</sup> Under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act of India (2000) minors are entitled to receive care and support at government shelter homes. The Immoral Traffick Prevention Act (1956) outlines women over the age of 18 are entitled to shelter and support from the government too. In case of Anita, the organisation she was affiliated to, had the licence to only operate a home for minors. Upon turning adults, if they still needed support, they would be sent to other government homes for women. Anita decided against taking up that opportunity, therefore she was mandated to leave the shelter home.

colleagues or beneficiaries. Anita had mentioned to me later that she maintained distance from the beneficiaries so as to not form any deep emotional ties that would impact her professional life. She did not consider leaving the shelter home primarily because of two reasons, first – the discrimination she felt outside this organisation/NGO space influenced her decision to continue working here. Second, she could not visualise a life outside the walls of her shelter home and the organisation could not help her in visualising one too – this space had evolved into a comfort zone for her. Beena, a 45-year-old domestic abuse survivor who started her work in the informal sector as a domestic help and now worked as a field worker reiterated Anita's words. She said,

“I don't know if I will live in the next five years, but in any case, I will continue to work with this organisation. I have not thought about leaving this place. Here I have received the scope to connect with people. The work brings me satisfaction. The reasons for joining this work are very simple for me. Obviously financial motivation was the first one. The second one is emotional connection – I like it. Even if I am not paid, I will still come. The children and the mothers draw me to come to work every day. If I am able to inspire at least one woman on each day, I feel my purpose has been solved.”

Prior to her full-time stint with this organisation, Beena worked as a domestic help and supported her abusive husband and three children. After days of repeated torture, Beena decided to leave Delhi, the city where she was living, and came to Kolkata with her children. Through references Beena found the job she is currently employed at. She sees the reflection of her struggling days in the lives of the women. Therefore, it has become imperative for her to inspire the women to break their chains of abuse. Beena did not have any 'professional skills' per se. By professional skills, I refer to transferable skills like team work, leadership, managerial, etc. She did not have any work experience in the social sector too. She got this job through references and has been working here since the last three years. By now, she has gained professional skills of a field worker – however, she does not identify the scope she has to transfer her skills into a different organisation which could possibly allow her to have a greater impact than she has currently. Beena expressed her gratitude to this NGO which employed her, and she does not wish to 'betray' it by switching organisations, even if it means compromising on a better pay and greater impact – since both are equally important to her. Anita and Beena are examples of NGOs offer opportunities to people with no formal trainings to induct into social work. That being said, it is significant to note here that the responsibilities bestowed

upon them are those that are traditionally associated with or as a ‘woman’s work’. Anita is a House Mother, she is primarily responsible for 80 children between the age of 7-18 years. She has a team of four staff who assist in smooth operation of the shelter care. Initially, she had joined the organisation as a care-giver where she had to look into the emotional, mental, and physical health of the children – work that encompassed cleaning, feeding, cooking, delegating, sometimes staying up the night to put younger children to sleep. Now as a House Mother, though her responsibilities have increased which includes some administrative work too, her primary ‘work’ still remains those that would be traditionally perceived as a ‘woman’s work’. This is significant to point out because Anita had received trainings on a range of skills at the shelter home when she lived as a beneficiary. But none of the skills that she acquired as a trainee were used by the organisation to offer her employment. She could have been recruited as a trainer or assistant trainer to the skill training program – which are still operational at the NGO. Rather, the organisation chose to give her responsibilities for which a woman does not need any training because it comes ‘naturally’. As for Beena, the gratitude she expresses towards the organisation for allowing her the opportunity to work there gets manifested in her loyalty to remain with them. The same could be said for Anita. However, this also raises the question about their decision to stay with their respective organisations – whether that is influenced out of loyalty, or the fear of never getting any better jobs because of the recruiters’ prejudice. Sana, a 27-year-old, program assistant with an M.Phil. in Women’s Studies who is a colleague of Anita mentioned,

“It is actually difficult to have the girls placed, because of their backgrounds. Nobody wants to recruit women who have been in the sex trade. Although, we do have some of them working with our partner organisations and some companies. But overall it is very challenging to place them because of the stigmatisation of prostituted women – doesn’t matter even if they were victims of trafficking.”

The challenges experienced by organisations for placing the women are well known by the women themselves. However, the women do not realise or are never made to realise that once they have acquired work experience, they are eligible to explore opportunities with other organisations. The work experience and skills overshadow their backgrounds which could have potentially created prejudice. As part of their rehabilitation process, NGOs should encourage their beneficiaries who return as employees to seek opportunities outside the comfort zone created by these NGOs and the women themselves. The process of rehabilitation, then stands,

as a success. Rather, the NGOs utilise this source of labour which is often compensated below industry standards<sup>109</sup> because a ‘favour of providing employment’ is performed for the women.

Sociologist Sudha Vasani in her article on NGOs published in the Economic and Political Weekly wrote,

“As employers, NGOs in many ways are emerging worse than the state or many private sector organisations. Under the halo of ‘non-profit’, the people who profit least are NGO employees at the lowest level”<sup>110</sup>

These thoughts were echoed by five of my respondents some of whom worked in middle management positions. With zero social security provisions like pensions, provident funds, health insurances in any of the organisations, the NGOs they worked for apparently paid only enough remuneration to their field workers to make both ends meet. Anam, aged 27, a program coordinator with an organisation who had entered the sector as a social worker commented,

“The NGO sector functions under the garb of sanctimony. That ‘we’ are ‘doing good’ for the society. But this appeal of the social sector should change. If it is an organisation that is working for women’s right to a decent standard of living, at least pay a decent amount to your employees, so they afford the decent standard of living you promote through your work. Those who stick around in the NGO space, especially women, I’m sorry to say but have to marry proper – which was what people in my organisation did”

To continue doing the ‘good work’, women in Anam’s organisation had to marry men with stable and better paying jobs to fund their sustenance. The reason they did not or could not quit the organisations they were working for is primarily because it gave them a sense of freedom and emancipation which allowed them the opportunity to form their own social identities appreciated by their own communities – which will be discussed in the next sections.

### ***Investing emotions in NGO work:***

---

After Hochschild’s conception of emotional labour, a significant body of literature have dedicated their foci on the performance of emotional labour in the service sector. Hochschild defined emotional labour as that form of labour which,

---

<sup>109</sup> Manzo, ‘The Real Salary Scandal (SSIR)’.

<sup>110</sup> Vasani, ‘NGOs as Employers’.

“requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others – in this case, the sense of being cared in a convivial and safe place. This kind of labour calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honour as deep as an integral to our individuality”<sup>111</sup>

While Hochschild conceptualised this referring to the aviation industry, the underlying sentiments that characterise this labour is significantly present in NGO work as well. Field workers who occupy the base of the hierarchal pyramid hold one of the most significant positions in the organisation. Their work entails them to be the contact person between the NGOs and the beneficiaries. They are entrusted with the responsibilities of collecting data from the grassroots, understanding the requirements and the needs of the beneficiaries, communicating the same to the organisation, implementing the program on the field under the supervision of the management. Similar responsibilities are performed by shelter care workers who are responsible for the emotional, physical and mental well-being of the beneficiaries. Women who work in the anti-trafficking NGOs have to divert their energies to create safe spaces for their beneficiaries, to build a space of trust and comfort.<sup>112</sup> Their everyday work is centred around their ability to manage emotions – of their own and others, because of the vulnerable population they work with. Therefore, emotion work and emotion management constitutes an important aspect of their work. Upon my inquiries on how safe space is created, one of my respondents, Tanya, a 24-year-old with a master’s degree in social work, employed as a social worker replied,

“It takes a while to facilitate safe space. Sometimes I have to work and speak in a way that makes them safe, take out time to listen to them even if I am busy. Even if I am frustrated, I still have to control my emotions and work. They [the beneficiaries] want quick fix. If they have an issue, you need to go and fix it now. There is a lot of pressure because I usually cannot take sides.”

Tanya works with an NGO that has a social enterprise wing which encourages women who are actively working in the red-light area to seek an alternate form of employment through producing handcrafted products which the organisation sells on their behalf. Other than having the social enterprise wing, the organisation has different intervention programs that assist in

---

<sup>111</sup> Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.

health and education initiatives. Having been here for a bit over two years, Tanya finds herself struggling to maintain harmony within her organisation. Even with her academic training in social work and two years of experience, she finds it challenging to balance her emotions. While she has the responsibility to attend to her beneficiaries, she is acutely aware of how much she has to regulate her own behaviour to not tamper the relationship she and her colleagues have built that has contributed to the women entrusting their faith in them. Echoing her experiences, Ganga, 40, affiliated to a different organisation also based in Sonagachi, reflected upon the question of creating safe spaces. She said,

“When you build a place of trust, they can share their feelings. You must create a place of trust, a space where they can share and receive support. A place of security... They never had a place of security in their lives. I had to convince them I was a friend. I had to treat them as humans because we are never treated as humans in our trade.”

Ganga’s comments provoke two significant discussions. First, they reiterate Hochschild’s words on how emotional labour requires one to induce feelings of safety in the other person, for whom it is being performed. Here, Ganga elaborated on how significant it was to build emotional connections with the beneficiaries to allow them to trust her, only then she could proceed to help them. The second interesting point is her shifting positionality in this comment. Ganga is a former beneficiary of the organisation. She used to be part of the sex trade, which she had been wanting to quit for a while. She initially joined the organisation as a member, to participate in its rehabilitation program and as an extension of the same program, she returned as a full-time employee with the organisation. Her primary work responsibilities include looking after the children who attend the drop-in centre and establish outreach connection with women practising the trade in the red-light area. While she associates herself with the organisation as its employee, her prior connection to the trade allows her to introduce a perspective that enables her to practice empathy in her everyday work. Ganga continued,

“Little things impact. I heard them [the women] because nobody would. I was questioned why they only speak to you, I said because I give them the respect, I value them, and this connects me with them. For example, if I have a personal problem, I know you cannot do anything. But if you hear me out, it will unburden me. I might find some resolution while having the conversation with you. The key is to listen to them, us. To allow them to speak.”

From Ganga's experiences, it can be deduced that empathy and patience are pre-requisites to perform emotional labour successfully. All my respondents mentioned the significance of creating a space for the beneficiaries which allow them to share their experiences. Other than this, often harrowing incidents occur within shelter homes that requires the quick action of the shelter care workers. During my interview with Sana, she narrated,

“The work is very challenging since it involves dealing with the mood swings of the girls. Like in the morning she is absolutely fine [but] when I'm about to go home, she is furious, [and] breaking glasses. I used to wonder why is she behaving like this? This is the manifestation of her frustration. Manifestations are different. Someone gets pleasure from beating up their sister, someone is showing their anger by breaking glasses, throwing things, slicing hands etc. A regular affair [here is] – cutting hands. There was an incident during some Eid,<sup>113</sup> where they sliced their hands and wrote the names of their boyfriends with their blood on the wall. Someone called Bhanu, a residential staff, she had to deal – there were 14 girls who did that. They got salt to sprinkle over the cut. It was hurting them, but they would still do it. That's what satisfied them.”

Both within Sana and her colleague Bhanu's ambit of work, there is no scope for them to express any kind of negative or distressing emotion at the moment of crisis, or otherwise. Even if they are subjected to hostilities directed towards them or among the beneficiaries, they are nevertheless expected to put across their empathetic self on the front and resolve the crisis at hand. This leads to experiencing emotional dissonance – a conflict between experiencing a certain set of emotions but displaying a different one to conform to the expectations at work. Echoing Sana's comments, Anita mentioned,

“There are days when we experience sadness or happiness from [events happening] outside [the workplace] and that [feeling] stays. When we come to the office, we cannot express these. We always have to remember that [whatever happens at] home cannot interfere at work or the other way around. Sometimes, work has interfered at home but then I tell myself this is my work and I cannot let it consume my domestic life and peace.”

---

<sup>113</sup> A religious holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide.

Anita's narrative throws a very powerful perspective on how emotion management is not limited to the workplace but has to be performed at home too. It can be deduced that the practitioners have to be constantly aware of their feelings and emotions to address them suitably – so they do not interfere in other aspects of life.

While the performance of emotional labour is evident in their work, it is critical to note here that none of my respondents were fully aware that their work would require them to manage their emotions on a regular basis. This could imply that the organisations never considered it to be crucial to share with their employees because of the assumption that emotion work is natural to women. One common experience that binds everybody's narratives is that none of them have any fixed job descriptions (JD) or key responsibility areas (KRAs) therefore have to perform on whatever task was assigned to them. Upon asking about her JD, Beena replied,

“Initially, I wasn't told clearly about my job description. Or maybe I was told, but I did not understand correctly. I gradually figured out that I have to talk to the mothers, get them here [at the centre]. I had to talk to them in their language, in a way that they could understand me.”

One of the main KRA's for Beena was to talk to the women, introduce them to the organisation's program. Beena had to invest in building rapport to actually arouse interest among the women then who would want to know more about the NGO. Beena admitted that amidst her conversations, women would share their encounters of physical and sexual violence which deeply affected Beena. However, she could not express her reluctance to listen to them. Tanya shared similar experiences too,

“I have been assigned a JD but most of my work is outside of it. Among other work, I interact with the women, I check their medical status. I look for physical signs of violence, I take them to the hospitals. Most of the times the government hospitals do not listen to them, then I have to raise my voice for them. There are a few HIV+ women too. I have to ensure they receive nutrition and the medicines in addition to our monthly financial support. I do regular check-ups, liaison with the diagnostic units, maintain their individual files. I also perform counselling. I conduct therapy of 21 women, their literacy training. Actually, we had two social workers, both of them left. So now I have to handle all the beneficiaries of four units of our program for mental health support.”

Both Tanya and Beena’s work expose them to violence that has been, unfortunately, perceived as normal among their beneficiaries. They perform work that goes beyond the JDs they were initially hired for, and now do not have any concrete JDs to define their work responsibilities. Sana’s perspective on JDs reveal a crucial perspective significant to my argument too,

“We are encouraged to learn about their difficulties and how we can support them. These are the primary expectations, whatever maybe the role. If you are practising social work, you need to be careful and caring, be a caregiver – it’s a presupposition”

NGOs demand their women employees to perform emotion work without explicitly stating that in their job descriptions, without realising the difficult nature of this work. They harbour the assumption that those entering NGOs require to practice caregiving and empathetic skills, highlights a very gendered nature of work expectations from their employees. This is not only performed by the organisations but also institutionalised by the law. The Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (1956) explicitly covers trafficking only for sex and just for female victims.<sup>114</sup> Due to the gendered nature of the crime (this becomes gendered primarily because the law expresses its bias), the law declares that only women can be employed in the shelter homes and rehabilitation programs by the organisations. While this makes sense on a legislative level, complications occur in the execution of the law. There is a significant gap that exists between the growing demand for labour by the NGOs, and the supply of trained officials – by trained here I refer to those who have received diplomas in social work or development practice. Most of the recruitment drives in this sector are based on employing people who have ‘passion’ or a ‘desire to cause social change’. Since NGO work demands the unconditional performance of emotional labour and a significant percentage of the employees in this sector are women, it only hints at the gendered nature of the sector which reproduces the gendered notion that emotional labour is best performed by women.<sup>115</sup> This was significantly reflected during my interview with Priya, a 65-year-old counsellor, who said,

“I am already emotionally very much controlled. I was a de facto boy. A tomboy my father thought of me, even now when I’m walking and subconsciously I assume

<sup>114</sup> ‘India - Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (No. 104 of 1956).’

<sup>115</sup> Rebecca J. Erickson, ‘Why Emotion Work Matters: Sex, Gender, and the Division of Household Labor’, *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67, no. 2 (May 2005): 337–51, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-2445.2005.00120.x>; Mary Ellen Guy and Meredith A. Newman, ‘Women’s Jobs, Men’s Jobs: Sex Segregation and Emotional Labor’, *Public Administration Review* 64, no. 3 (May 2004): 289–98, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2004.00373.x>.

a masculine gait, I correct myself. Therefore, I have emotions, but they are very controlled and measured. If my children share their problems with me, I assure them that everything will be okay. I was very brash as a kid, I try to apply emotion management in all aspects of my life.”

Priya, throughout our conversation, insisted that she has her emotions remarkably controlled. She did not attribute it to her professional training as a counsellor – a course that she enrolled in her early fifties after her children had grown up and she wanted to engage in something ‘meaningful’. Rather, she attributed her controlled behaviour to her traits which she thinks off as masculine. Priya mentioned that she raised her two children – a boy and a girl without any discrimination in her household, the description of how labour is divided in her household alluding that women are the primary care-givers, the connection she established between her masculine traits and the management of emotions suggest that she ascribes to binary thinking too. This perspective reproduces the notion that NGO work is gendered, and emotion labour is best performed by women.

### ***The subjective experience of empowering women:***

---

*“Within gendered participatory approaches to development is a gendered paradox: NGOs are charged to bring women into the social and economic lives of their communities, yet they cannot accept their own women employees as full participants”<sup>116</sup>*

Central to development work, efforts to empower women have received great attention over the years of NGOisation in the country. However, the empowerment programs were principally designed for women from low income households or vulnerable communities. Previous scholarship have mapped out how NGOs empower their beneficiaries, but very little has been discussed about the stake of NGOs at empowering their women employees. This is interesting because NGOs opened up opportunities for greater integration of women in the labour force. Though studies have engaged with the emancipatory experiences of women from upper class, it has been noted that their empowerment was actually the enhancement of their

---

<sup>1</sup> O'Reilly, Kathleen. 2014. “Resolving a Gendered Paradox: Women's participation and the NGO Boom in North India.” In *Theorizing NGOs: States, Feminism, and Neoliberalism*, by V. Bernal and I. Grewal, 146-165. Durham and London: Duke University

social status. Upper class families urged women to join NGOs to be celebrated among their social class. The experiences of those who occupy the space between the emancipatory experiences of the upper class and that of the lower social class women are absent. In this section, I draw attention to the experiences of empowerment by two particular groups of women – women from middle class families who entered NGOs as professionals, and women who are former beneficiaries of the NGOs they are employed under. Here, I point out that the women from both these social classes experience empowerment or emancipation shaped by their class positionings too. Former beneficiaries use their NGO membership to establish their individual identities in the society. Despite being lowly paid and overwhelmed with work, they consider their membership with the organisations as a ticket to assert their identities in a class, caste-based society like India. While middle class women question the narrative of empowerment constructed by NGOs but are unable to challenge it because it impacts their own social class identities too.

Ganga and Anita’s trajectory of experiencing empowerment are quite similar. While Anita had been rescued from trafficking and was provided shelter, Ganga was active into the sex trade and was looking for opportunities to quit. Though Anita and Ganga were both victims of systemic gender oppression, they were further oppressed because of the ostracization they received from the society for being active in the sex trade. While Anita was trafficked and pushed into the sex work, Ganga’s mother who was a former sex worker initiated her into the trade. The NGOs presented an opportunity to both these women to re-write their stories. Other than providing a dignified livelihood,<sup>117</sup> the NGOs provided mobility to these women which were non-existent to them before. Both Anita and Ganga now have the resources and support to move around the city and country which was unthinkable to them before. Ganga stated,

“Before, I had no confidence. I was afraid of stepping out, being recognised. I don’t worry anymore. I have learnt a lot of things here I did not know. Working here has also allowed me to travel. I went to Delhi for the first time in my life sitting in a train. We had a lot fun.”

Ganga narrated an incident from her work trip. Her facial expressions while describing the trip spoke more than her words. She animatedly discussed how liberating the trip was, reminiscing the fond memories she built. Otherwise posing a reserved demeanour, this was the only

---

<sup>117</sup> Sex work is not legally recognised as work in India. The stigmatisation attached to sex work along with legal non-recognition takes away the dignity of labour in sex work.

instance when Ganga dropped her guard and expressed her feelings. Her gratitude to the organisation was visible. And so was the fact that she wouldn't have experienced this if it had not been for this NGO.

Beena's trajectory of empowerment is a little different from Anita and Ganga's. Prior to joining the organisation, Beena revealed she had been a published author. Her colleague added that Beena was awarded by one of the celebrated publishing houses in India. She had authored autobiographies on her life as a domestic help and an abuse survivor. She still earns royalty from her book, but the amount isn't a significant sum to sustain her. Beena revealed that initially she was sceptical about joining this organisation when she realised she had to work in the office at the red-light area. She admitted to her prejudice,

"I used to be a writer, I wrote and published in Bangla, which was later translated into 17 languages. When I moved to Bengal, I needed a job – a lot of people knew me. I was referred to work here at the Sonagachi centre, but I wasn't clearly told what the work was about. First, I used to feel bad, that people know my reputation as an author, and now how would they perceive my association here. Gradually I realised I must work here and realised that I should not care about what others think about my work– *"mone bol niye neme porlam*<sup>118</sup>".

Beena admitted that her judgement was clouded from past biases which was influencing her decision to take up NGO work. In India, we have a social syndrome known as '*log kya kahenge?*' which roughly translated from Hindi to English stands as – what will people say/think. As individuals we are deeply concerned about what the society thinks about us. Unfortunately, these impact people's decision making too. Beena was sceptical primarily because she was scared her reputation would get tampered if she worked in the red-light area even if it was with an NGO. Beena added that her work in the sector gave her immense confidence, and she gradually felt motivated to see she could influence the lives of the women positively, however small the number was. Beena uses her own life struggles to connect with the women. She tries to inspire them from her own trajectory of being a victim to a survivor. Beena exclaimed,

---

<sup>118</sup> '*mone bol niye neme porlam*' – a common expression in Bangla. This means she toughened up to plunge into facing her fears.

“The Beena of the past knew how to write, but the Present Beena is powerful and is also an activist. After coming to the NGO, I feel I have got power. I don’t know about my future, but I can see myself becoming stronger; ‘*shoktishaali*’.<sup>119</sup> I want to be in this field only.”

Beena revealed that she is no longer afraid of her work, or to disclose to people that she work in the red-light area.

“If they ask me if I work in Sonagachi, in the ‘line’<sup>120</sup> I answer with a yes. If anybody asks, I reply yes. I used to hide before but not anymore. I do not feel the need to justify. Firstly, I am in charge of my life, I do not need to justify to anybody – what does your conscience tell you when you ask yourself – that you are questioning a woman about her character... and how does it matter to you – whatever answer I will give, you will still doubt me, so be it. I will answer exactly the way you phrase your question. If I can show somebody the right direction, then only I have the right to say what is right – cannot judge by saying bad. It is the men who are responsible for the plight and they are the ones who then go against”

Beena’s empowerment lay in the fact that she could exercise her agency in making decisions for herself. Rather than cowing down to societal pressure, she feels confident to counter question the virtuosity imposed on women. The fact that Beena has to answer questions regarding her association with the red-light area is also because of her social class positioning. None of my middle class respondents from ‘respectable backgrounds’<sup>121</sup> had ever been asked to justify or clarify their involvement in the red-light area. Beena’s socio-economic positioning makes her prone to receive questions that implies the possibility of questioning her dignity.

While Anita, Ganga and Beena navigate their professional lives to secure a robust social identity for themselves, my other respondents share very different perspective of empowerment. The remaining respondents expressed very critical views about role about NGOs in empowering them. While they are aware of their primary responsibilities being in empowering their beneficiaries, they express doubts over their own empowerment in this

---

<sup>119</sup> The Bangla word ‘*shoktishali*’ means strong and powerful in English. Beena repeated this word multiple times to describe herself.

<sup>120</sup> Refer to the chapter: Context of Research.

<sup>121</sup> ‘Respectable backgrounds’ is with regards to dignity of labour. None of the respondents came from backgrounds which had stigma attached to their profession, therefore, in common parlance – they are referred as people coming from respectable backgrounds.

process. Smita, 38 years old, program managers of Anita and Anam, was quick to point out that empowerment as an experience is not limited to the NGO sector. Middle class women negotiating with their families' restrictions to join the labour force could experience empowerment in any sector. Kavita and Tanya both added that empowerment is a concept that is sold by NGOs to raise funds. While empowerment in the sense of giving resources does work in the ground, the women are never made self-sustainable which should be the real deal of empowerment. Tanya commented,

“60/40. NGO work 60% is empowering, but It depends on which NGO working you are for. For example, there are thousands of NGOs but some of them are bad and they only work for funds. This contributes to people's misconceptions about NGOs for money laundering. Some NGOs work for other women's livelihood but that does not mean empowering. We need to question if we are working for the organisation's empowerment – that is stacking it with money or are we working for the individuals.”

Tanya's scepticism is a result of the NGOisation<sup>122</sup> in the country. While she is passionate about the cause and the work excites her, she is not sure about the intentions of people in leadership roles. She did not question her own organisation but expressed scepticism about others. Kavita expressed similar concerns too. She expressed her discontent with the senior management of the organisation because of the constraints to operate independently. She believes her organisation has become too structured and adopted a donor driven agenda that impacts the qualitative focus of the interventions on ground. Empowerment programs, according to Kavita, are farcical. To quote her,

“Empowering women? Don't ask me this question. This would be against the organisation's interest and what my colleagues expressed about their empowering experience”

My respondents who belong to the bracket of middle class expressed concerns about their organisations' empowerment approach. They did not express or addressed how NGO work empowered them. The clarity with which Beena, Anita and Ganga could narrate how they gained from NGO work, the rest of my respondents could not really pin point on particular experiences or skills that contributed to empowering themselves. However, some of them did

---

<sup>122</sup> Refer to the chapter: Context of Research

mention how working with NGOs made them ‘stand out in public’ i.e. the recognition they received among strangers provided them a sense of satisfaction and motivation. Rachana, a program coordinator, narrated an incident where she was visiting a tribal village in Ziro Valley, tucked into the north eastern part of the country. She was hosted by a local family who were impressed by her work and wanted the daughters of their family to follow her footsteps. Rachana recalled the satisfactions she experienced from being perceived as a role model. She mentioned that recognition from such families meant more to her than having a status enhancement within her social class.

To sum up the argument in this chapter, the interconnectedness of the sub-arguments present the complexities that underly NGO work. Beneficiary turned employees provide a nuanced point of entry to field work – occupying the positionality of being an outsider and insider at the same time. Yet their efforts are yet to be rewarded by the organisation – in terms of organisation support for coping with emotion work. Enhancement of social status forms an incentive for middle class women too, but in ways that are significantly different from that of their colleagues who were former beneficiaries. While NGOs create opportunities for empowerment their beneficiaries, there is a clear absence of the scope of empowering their women employees. Rather than challenging the gendered division of work, the NGOs tend to reproduce it by recruiting women to perform work that has been traditionally reserved for them.

## Conclusion

---

*“A hazard facing mass movements is the NGOisation of resistance. It will be easy to twist what I’m about to say into an indictment of all NGOs. That would be a falsehood.”<sup>123</sup>*

*~ Arundhati Roy.*

The quote from above is taken from Roy’s ‘NGOisation of Resistance.’ A passionate piece where Roy reveals her resentment towards the structural changes within the civil society that is defusing political anger and wiping out resistance. Like Roy, my work does not intend to indict the entire sector of NGO. First, the sector is too diverse to generalise. Second, my study is based on a small and carefully selected sample, albeit supported by prior research conducted on it, which makes it further impossible to generalise and indict the whole sector in India. However, my research does bring forward some distinct experiences of specific women whose primary identities are shaped and at times celebrated because of their participation in NGO work.

Through this project, I displayed the contradictions and complications that constitute the social sector. Though NGOs were in-charge of bringing women’s empowerment issues – economic or otherwise, at the heart of development work, they actively never attempted to empower or consider the empowerment of their own employees. Some of my respondents did mention having their moments and experiences of empowerment after joining NGOs, but there was little evidence to suggest that those moments were consciously planned by the organisations to support their staff.

In addition to the lack of constructive opportunities for co-creating experiences of empowerment, NGOs continued to profit off women’s labour without challenging the gendered assumptions of it. As I mapped out in my project, the phenomenon of NGOisation in India introduced the proliferation of NGOs since the early 1990s. This was due to the withdrawal of the Indian states’ funding from important public services programs like health, sanitation, education etc. As a result of which NGOs became in charge of social services and thus introduced issue based and project oriented social work. During this period, more women were

---

<sup>123</sup> Roy, Arundhati, “‘NGOisation of Resistance’”.

entering the labour market and NGO work proved to be the best fit – since philanthropic care was seen as an extension of women’s care work within their families. Over the years, rather than challenging this gendered notion of care work and emotion management by acknowledging and compensating for this labour which commonly goes unnoticed and under-appreciated, NGOs sought to capitalise on it. NGOs assigned roles and responsibilities to women that required performance of emotion work and emotion management without providing adequate support – in terms of mental health care or increase in remuneration. Granted that, unlike physical labour which can be tangibly measured, it is difficult to evaluate how emotional labour is performed by one. This, in no way, justifies the lack of compensation. Rather, efforts should be made to provide organisational support for mental health care and to assist those who regularly exhaust themselves through emotion work.

From my study, I deduce that NGOs not only profit from the emotional labour performed by women, but also from the vulnerabilities inhabited by them. My respondents, who were former beneficiaries of the anti-trafficking organisations they are currently working for, could not visualise a professional life outside their current employers. As discussed in the chapter, Empowerment in ‘Doing Good’, NGOs create employment opportunities for women with no formal or prior trainings in social work – especially for their beneficiaries. However, these NGOs fail to inspire the women to be self-sustainable and step out of their comfort zone once they have acquired the requisite professional skills and work experience which would overshadow their past experiences in the sex trade – a factor which hindered their employment initially. A sort of dependency gets established on the parent organisation that invisibly binds the women from venturing further. NGOs recruit the labour of the women in return for a compensation below industry standards – because ‘favour of providing employment’ is performed for the women.

However, NGOs do provide the opportunity to women for building independent social identities which significantly matter to those who are living in a patriarchal, class and caste-based society like India. While beneficiary turned employees get to shed their sex worker or victim/survivor identity to don their new identities of dignified NGO workers, women from the middle-class experience a newfound respect from others too – which also enhances their social statuses.

The power balance between the NGOs and the women are not an equal one. It would be unfair to say that women do not stand to benefit from NGO work, but there is more truth in

the statement that NGOs profit more off women's existence, than women do from NGOs. Quoting Roy again,

“Real political resistance offers no such short cuts. The NGOisation of politics threatens to turn resistance into a well-mannered, reasonable, salaried, 9-to-5 job. With a few perks thrown in. Real resistance has real consequences. And no salary.”

Roy's quote along with the general debate around the de-politicising of women's activism in India due to professionalisation and restructuring of NGOs brings me to raise a question that could possibly fall under the scope of future research. While critics of NGOisation and development work suggest that this phenomenon has brought harm to social movements and grassroots activism, but professionalisation of NGOs has also created paid work opportunities for women who would not have otherwise entered the job market. Financial independence, as has been discussed before, forms a crucial parameter for a woman's empowerment in a patriarchy dominated society. That being said, I wonder where does the Woman with her agency stand in this debate – without being pulled into the two warring camps. Additionally, the debate between whether or not NGOisation empowers women or disrupts activism only serves to prove that women's body and agency even in development work convert into sites of occupation and resistance.

## References

---

- Abdoli, Samereh, Tahereh Ashktorab, Fazlollah Ahmadi, Soroor Parvizy, and Trisha Dunning. 'Seeking New Identity through the Empowerment Process'. *Iranian Journal of Nursing and Midwifery Research* 19, no. 2 (2014): 145–51.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4020023/>.
- Akintola, O. 'What Motivates People to Volunteer? The Case of Volunteer AIDS Caregivers in Faith-Based Organizations in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa'. *Health Policy and Planning* 26, no. 1 (1 January 2011): 53–62. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czq019>.
- Alvarez, Sonia E. 'Advocating Feminism: The Latin American Feminist NGO "Boom"'. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 1, no. 2 (January 1999): 181–209.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/146167499359880>.
- 'ARCWP06-Gangoli.Pdf'. Accessed 6 June 2019.  
[http://www.lse.ac.uk/asiaResearchCentre/\\_files/ARCWP06-Gangoli.pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/asiaResearchCentre/_files/ARCWP06-Gangoli.pdf).
- Bernal, V, and I Grewal. *Theorizing NGOs: States, Feminisms, and Neoliberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.
- Bubeck, D. E. *Care, Gender, and Justice*. Clarendon Press. Oxford university Press, 1995.
- C. Batti, Rehema. 'Challenges Facing Local NGOs in Resource Mobilization'. *Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 3 (2014): 57. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.hss.20140203.12>.
- Clark, Janine A., and Wacheke M. Michuki. 'Women and NGO Professionalisation: A Case Study of Jordan'. *Development in Practice* 19, no. 3 (2009): 329–39.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/27752061>.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 'Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought'. *Social Problems* 33, no. 6 (October 1986): S14–32.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/800672>.
- Cornwall, Andrea, and Deborah Eade, eds. *Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords*. Rugby, Warwickshire: Practical Action Publ. [u.a.], 2010.
- Dandona, Rakhi, Lalit Dandona, G Anil Kumar, Juan Pablo Gutierrez, Sam McPherson, Fiona Samuels, and Stefano M Bertozzi. 'Demography and Sex Work Characteristics of Female Sex Workers in India'. *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 6 (14 April 2006): 5. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-698X-6-5>.

- Dijk, Pieter Van, Liam Smith, and Brian Cooper. 'Are You for Real? An Evaluation of the Relationship between Emotional Labour and Visitor Outcomes'. *Tourism Management* 32, no. 1 (2011): 39–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.11.001>.
- Dreze, Jean, and Amartya Sen. *India, Economic Development and Social Opportunity*. Oxford university Press, 1995.
- Drury, John, Atalanti Evripidou, and Martijn Van Zomeren. 'Empowerment: The Intersection of Identity and Power in Collective Action'. In *Power and Identity*. Psychology Press, n.d.
- Dwyer, Sonya Corbin, and Jennifer L. Buckle. 'The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research'. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8, no. 1 (March 2009): 54–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105>.
- Edwards, Michael. 'Have NGOs "Made a Difference?"', n.d., 17.
- Edwards, Michael, and David Hulme. *Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World*. West Hartford, Conn. : Kumarian Press, 1996.
- Eikenberry, Angela M., and Jodie Drapal Kluver. 'The Marketization of the Nonprofit Sector: Civil Society at Risk?' *Public Administration Review* 64, no. 2 (March 2004): 132–40. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2004.00355.x>.
- 'Elite Women's Role in Empowering Oppressed Women : Volunteer Work in NGOs in Kolkata.' In *Recent Studies on Indian Women*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2007.
- Erickson, Rebecca J. 'Why Emotion Work Matters: Sex, Gender, and the Division of Household Labor'. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67, no. 2 (May 2005): 337–51. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-2445.2005.00120.x>.
- F. Murdock, Donna. 'That Stubborn "Doing Good?" Question: Ethical/Epistemological Concerns in the Study of NGOs'. *Ethnos* 68, no. 4 (December 2003): 507–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0014184032000160541>.
- Feldman, Ilana. 'The Quaker Way: Ethical Labor and Humanitarian Relief'. *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 4 (November 2007): 689–705. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2007.34.4.689>.
- Fisher, William F. 'DOING GOOD? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26, no. 1 (21 October 1997): 439–64. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.26.1.439>.
- Forenza, Brad, and Caitlin Eckert. 'Social Worker Identity: A Profession in Context'. *Social Work* 63, no. 1 (1 January 2018): 17–26. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swx052>.

- Fox, Jonathan. 'The Uncertain Relationship between Transparency and Accountability'. *Development in Practice* 17, no. 4/5 (2007): 663–71. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25548267>.
- Gupta, Saurabh. 'From Demanding to Delivering Development: Challenges of NGO-Led Development in Rural Rajasthan, India'. *Journal of South Asian Development* 9, no. 2 (August 2014): 121–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973174114536099>.
- Guy, Mary Ellen, and Meredith A. Newman. 'Women's Jobs, Men's Jobs: Sex Segregation and Emotional Labor'. *Public Administration Review* 64, no. 3 (May 2004): 289–98. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2004.00373.x>.
- Hamdan, Amani K. 'Reflexivity of Discomfort in Insider-Outsider Educational Research'. *McGill Journal of Education* 44, no. 3 (2009): 377. <https://doi.org/10.7202/039946ar>.
- Handya, Femida, and Meenaz Kassamb. 'Women's Empowerment in Rural India', 2005.
- Harvey, David. *Spaces of Global Capitalism*. Verso Books, 2006.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 'Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure'. *The American Journal of Sociology* 85, no. 3, (1979): 551–75. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2778583>.
- . *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. 20. anniversary ed., [Nachdr.], with A new afterword. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2007.
- 'India - Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (No. 104 of 1956).', 2013. [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p\\_lang=en&p\\_isn=93633&p\\_country=IND&p\\_count=507](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=93633&p_country=IND&p_count=507).
- 'India - Structural Adjustment Credit Project (English) | The World Bank'. Accessed 6 June 2019. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/999451468260069468/India-Structural-Adjustment-Credit-Project>.
- 'Intimate Labour and Social Justice: Engaging with the Work of Rhacel Salazar Parreñas', n.d.
- 'Introduction: Special Issue on Technologies of Intimate Labour', n.d.
- Johnson, Eleanor K. 'The Business of Care: The Moral Labour of Care Workers'. *Sociology of Health & Illness* 37, no. 1 (2015): 112–26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12184>.
- Kabeer, Naila. 'Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment', n.d., 30.

- Kamat, Sangeeta. 'The Privatization of Public Interest: Theorizing NGO Discourse in a Neoliberal Era'. *Review of International Political Economy* 11, no. 1 (February 2004): 155–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969229042000179794>.
- . 'The Privatization of Public Interest: Theorizing NGO Discourse in a Neoliberal Era'. *Review of International Political Economy* 11, no. 1 (February 2004): 155–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969229042000179794>.
- Kennedy, Charles H., Ijaz Hussain, and S. Akbar Zaidi. 'Reconsidering the Relationship between the State, Donors, and NGOs in Bangladesh [with Comments]'. *The Pakistan Development Review* 38, no. 4 (1999): 489–510. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41260187>.
- 'Kilby, Patrick. 2011. NGOs in India: The Challenges of Women's Empowerment and Accountability. <https://Core.Ac.Uk/Download/Pdf/42086484.Pdf>.' , n.d.
- Klees, S, J. "“NGOs: Progressive Force or Neoliberal Tool?”.", 1998. [https://www.tc.columbia.edu/cice/pdf/25634\\_1\\_1\\_Klees.pdf](https://www.tc.columbia.edu/cice/pdf/25634_1_1_Klees.pdf).
- Lakshmi, Rama. 'India Cracks down on Foreign Funding of NGOs'. *The Guardian*, 11 June 2013, sec. World news. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/11/india-crackdown-foreign-funded-ngos>.
- 'Latha and Prabhakar - 2011 - Non-Government Organizations Problems & Remedies .Pdf', n.d.
- Latha, Lavanya, and Kotte Prabhakar. 'Non-Government Organizations: Problems & Remedies in India'. *Serbian Journal of Management* 6, no. 1 (2011): 109–21. <https://doi.org/10.5937/sjm1101109L>.
- Maes, Kenneth. 'Volunteerism or Labor Exploitation? Harnessing the Volunteer Spirit to Sustain AIDS Treatment Programs in Urban Ethiopia'. *Human Organization* 71, no. 1 (January 2012): 54–64. <https://doi.org/10.17730/humo.71.1.axm39467485m22w4>.
- Mandal, K.S. 'American Influence on Social Work Education in India and Its Impact'. *International Social Work* 32, no. 4 (October 1989): 303–9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002087288903200407>.
- Manzo, Peter. 'The Real Salary Scandal (SSIR)'. Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2004. [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the\\_real\\_salary\\_scandal](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_real_salary_scandal).
- Mitra, Aditi. *Challenges Of Women Volunteers And Activists In Women's NGOs In India: A Feminist Standpoint Analysis*, 2005.

- . ‘Feminist Organizing in India: A Study of Women in NGOs’. *Women’s Studies International Forum* 34, no. 1 (January 2011): 66–75.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2010.10.003>.
- Mitra, Aditi, and J. David Knottnerus. ‘Sacrificing Women: A Study of Ritualized Practices among Women Volunteers in India’. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 19, no. 3 (September 2008): 242–67.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-008-9063-y>.
- Morris, J. Andrew, and Daniel C. Feldman. ‘Managing Emotions In The Workplace’. *Journal of Managerial Issues* 9, no. 3 (1997): 257–74. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40604147>.
- Mullings, Beverley. ‘Insider or Outsider, Both or Neither: Some Dilemmas of Interviewing in a Cross-Cultural Setting’. *Geoforum* 30, no. 4 (November 1999): 337–50.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185\(99\)00025-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185(99)00025-1).
- . ‘Insider or Outsider, Both or Neither: Some Dilemmas of Interviewing in a Cross-Cultural Setting’. *Geoforum* 30, no. 4 (November 1999): 337–50.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185\(99\)00025-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185(99)00025-1).
- Naik, Mr. Madanant, and Dr. Anthony Rodrigues. ‘Women Empowerment Through Self Help Groups: Realities And Challenges’. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 22, no. 06 (July 2017): 01–09. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2206120109>.
- Naples, Nancy A. ‘A Feminist Revisiting of the Insider/Outsider Debate: The “Outsider Phenomenon” in Rural Iowa’. *Qualitative Sociology* 19, no. 1 (March 1996): 83–106.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02393249>.
- O’Reilly, Kathleen. ‘Resolving a Gendered Paradox: Women’s Participation and the NGO Boom in North India’. In *Theorizing NGOs*, edited by Victoria Bernal and Inderpal Grewal, 143–65. Duke University Press, 2014.  
<https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822377191-008>.
- ‘Overview of Civil Society Organisations: India’. Accessed 5 June 2019.  
<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/28966/csb-ind.pdf>.
- Panda, Smita Mishra. ‘Women’s Empowerment through NGO Interventions: A Framework for Assessment’. *Social Change* 30, no. 3–4 (September 2000): 44–63.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/004908570003000405>.
- Rafaelli, Anat, and Robert I. Sutton. ‘Busy Stores and Demanding Customers: How Do They Affect the Display of Positive Emotion?’ *The Academy of Management Journal* 33, no. 3 (1990): 623–37. <https://doi.org/10.2307/256584>.

- ‘Richardson, Laurel “Writing as A Method of Inquiry” In. Handbook of Qualitative Research (2000)’, n.d.
- Roy, Arundhati. “NGOisation of Resistance”. *Frontlines of Revolutionary Struggle* (blog), 26 September 2014.  
<https://revolutionaryfrontlines.wordpress.com/2014/09/25/ngoisation-of-resistance-arundhati-roy/>.
- Roy, Srila. ‘Politics, Passion and Professionalization in Contemporary Indian Feminism’. *Sociology* 45, no. 4 (August 2011): 587–602.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511406584>.
- . ‘The Indian Women’s Movement: Within and Beyond NGOization’. *Journal of South Asian Development* 10, no. 1 (April 2015): 96–117.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0973174114567368>.
- Saggurti, Niranjana, Ravi K. Verma, Shiva S. Halli, Suvakanta N. Swain, Rajendra Singh, Hanimi Reddy Modugu, Saumya Ramarao, Bidhubhusan Mahapatra, and Anrudh K. Jain. ‘Motivations For Entry Into Sex Work And Hiv Risk Among Mobile Female Sex Workers In India’. *Journal of Biosocial Science* 43, no. 5 (September 2011): 535–54. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021932011000277>.
- Sahoo, Sarbeswar. ‘Doing Development or Creating Dependency? NGOs and Civil Society in India’. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 36, no. 2 (June 2013): 258–72.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2012.743500>.
- Sinha, Sunny. ‘Reasons for Women’s Entry into Sex Work: A Case Study of Kolkata, India’. *Sexuality & Culture* 19, no. 1 (March 2015): 216–35. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-014-9256-z>.
- ‘Talking of Gender: Words and Meanings in Development Organisations: Development in Practice: Vol 17, No 4-5’. Accessed 6 June 2019.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09614520701469591>.
- ‘The Reproductive Labour of Migrant Workers’, n.d.
- Vasan, Sudha. ‘NGOs as Employers: Need for Accountability’. *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no. 22 (2004): 2197–98. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4415081>.
- Vijayanthi, K.N. ‘Women’s Empowerment through Self-Help Groups: A Participatory Approach’. *Bulletin (Centre for Women’s Development Studies)* 9, no. 2 (September 2002): 263–74. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097152150200900209>.
- ‘Wendy Kaminer - Women Volunteering\_ The Pleasure, Pain, and Politics of Unpaid Work from 1830 to the Present (1984, Anchor Press).Pdf’, n.d.

Zapf, Dieter, and Melanie Holz. 'On the Positive and Negative Effects of Emotion Work in Organizations'. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 15, no. 1 (March 2006): 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13594320500412199>.