

Role of Faith based Organization in Achieving UNSDGs.

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Abstract

Sustainable Development is not possible with solitary effort, it needs strong support from the country, and its people. The government is shouldered by Corporates or private companies in fulfilling the SDG targets, in form of CSR actions. To achieve SDGs, work must be done on the approach of people, their perception needs to be positively influenced to bring real change. Here comes the role of FBOs or Faith Based Organizations. As stated by *Iyad Abumoghli*, director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Faith for Earth initiative, “The potential aggregate impact of faith-based organizations on sustainable development is immense,”

The central enquiry of the research is How faith-based organizations are contributing towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals? How do these organizations influence the members to voluntarily work on SDGs? What can be learned? The research paper aims to find a possible answer to this question by presenting the case of BSG (Bharat Soka Gakkai) and inferred learning from the successful efforts toward Sustainable Development.

Keywords: Faith Based Organizations (FBOs); Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Bharat Soka Gakkai (BSG)

Introduction

Faith based organization is an important part of society, faith is a common thread that binds people and society and not only aligns their spiritual but intellectual essence. The importance of FBOs in leading humanitarian actions for peace and social equality can't be denied. According to 2030 agenda of UNSDGs, *Humberto Shikiya, the Vice-president of CREAS-ACT Alliance* stated the convergence of Faith and Religious organization with Sustainable Development Goals as the value that contributes towards a better society, and mutual contribution, as faith is the foundation of human values.

That's' true indeed as it is the symphony of values that creates a better society. Hence, the contribution of faith can't be denied in actualization of SDGs. The prime factor underpinning the paper is the requirement of collaboration between Faith based entities and social development entities. A significant reflection made by (Tomalin et al, 2019) indicated that 8 out of 10 people identify themselves with a religion, adding to that a greater part of help and kind contributed towards the development are channelized through these religious or faith, and philosophy-based centers. Very appropriately said, “Religion is increasingly recognized as a human resource rather than an obstacle to development.” The 17 goals of sustainable development 169 targets were mutually signed in the year 2015, by 193 Member nations of the UN. The 15 years span till the year 2030 has been dedicated towards the fulfillment of crucial targets, and solve the prevalent problems, that require immediate addressal but consistent efforts too, so that *no-one-is-left-behind, i.e. the central theme of Agenda 2030.*

Objectives Of the Study

1. To understand the role of Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) in fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. To interpret the solutions devised by Bharat Soka Gakkai (BSG) for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. To map the goals developed by the United Nations with the sustainable development activities undertaken by BSG.

Research Questions

1. What is the role of FBOs in enhancing social development?
2. What is the significance of FBOs in creating a sustainable future for society?
3. What measures can be taken to strengthen the grassroots movement of sustainable revolution?

Significance Of Study

The study brings into light a new concept of sustainable revolution through FBOs that can bring about a positive impact in the society, along with learning the implementation strategies from **Bharat Soka Gakkai or BSG** (an extension of a popular global community-based, faith-based organization **Soka Gakkai International or SGI**) that introduced 'BSG for SDG' initiative, to encourage 'sustainable human behavior' at grassroots level.

Methodology

The methodology adopted to develop the study is based on secondary data, available through authentic sources, viz. the official websites of the organizations, reports from UN and SDG Dashboard.

ABOUT BSG

Bharat Soka Gakkai or BSG established itself in 1986 with headquarters in New Delhi as an Indian arm of Soka Gakkai International. The base of voluntary members is spread across India with around 300,000 people representing a wide range from a 5-year-old child to a 90-year-old adult, with a mission to create a better world, and contribute as a self-conscious member of society, this faith-based group is one-of-a-kind, spreading the power of positivity, and contributing to peace, culture, and education in its own unique way. The most beautiful value of the organization reflects in each aspect of the behavior of its members, wherein they receive intrinsic motivation to contribute their bit with an attitude of utmost respect towards nature, environment, and people.

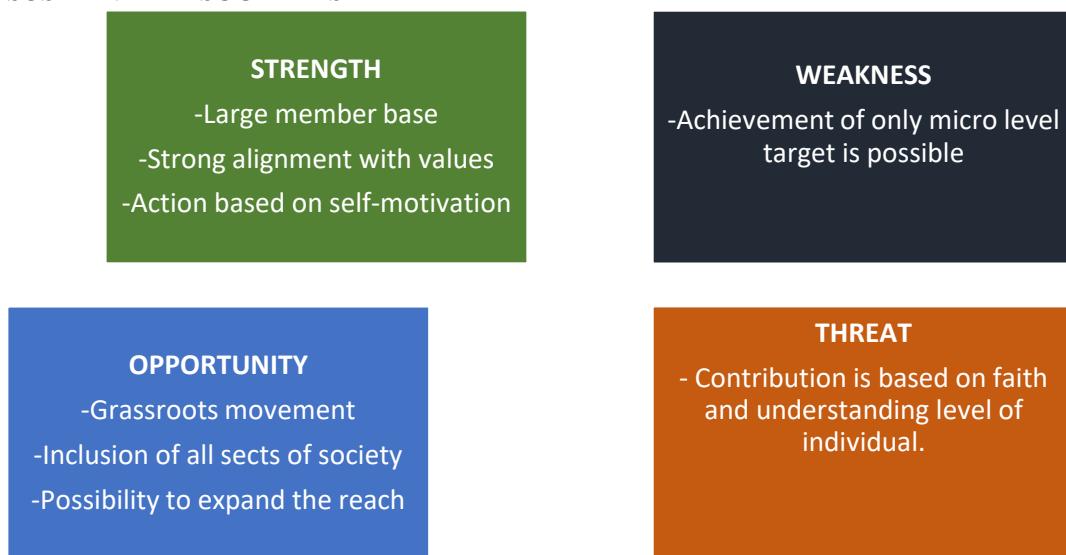
BSG FOR SDG

BSG emerged as a transformative force in bringing about the waves of revolutionary culture of sustainability, being a revered Buddhist organization, the organization has never confined itself to practicing religion detached from need of the real-world. The principles and practices of the organization align it with practice based on true cause, i.e. making a real difference for the betterment of the society and its people. The organization has its roots in the philosophy propounded by *Nichiren Daishonin*, but the branches of Peace, Culture and Education spread in all directions, according to that faith holds the power to creatively transform the lives of people, thereby transforming the whole world.

WORKING AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL

THEME	BSG ACTION FOR PEACE
Empowering Youth	BSG came up with series of virtual exhibition during Covid-19 phase, the exhibitions titled "Seeds of Hope & Action: Making the SDGs a Reality" have been conducted in various schools, colleges, and universities in India. BSG works on empowering young generation by giving them a platform to polish their values and exercise freedom of sharing their thoughts. The education rendered in the organization is not mere religious theories, the prime focus is on holistic development of people and society.
Promoting Discussion	"SDG Time" is when BSG members exchange ideas and anecdotes on promoting the SDGs. SDG Ambassadors encourage members to share their experiences advocating for the SDGs and raise awareness of the goals.
Publications and Social Media	To raise the awareness regarding SDGs, BSG issues a bimonthly newsletter with a special focus on "learn, reflect, empower" method.
Combating Plastic	27.726 kg of plastic garbage has been gathered from Delhi-NCR by BSG under BSG for SDG initiative for recycling purpose to combat the prevailing problem of plastic waste.

[Table 1- MAPPING THE SDGS with BSG action for peace]



[Chart 1- CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FBOS IN CREATING PEACEFUL AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES]

Discussion And Conclusion

- Nearly 85% of people worldwide affiliate with a religion. Their faith values, religious communities and spiritual leaders are important guides for forging the practices they embrace and enact.
- Initiatives like 'BSG for SDG' aid in fostering partnerships between FBOs and governments, as well as the academic and private sectors, to achieve the goals of reducing poverty, developing economies, and protecting natural resources.

Implications

BSGs efforts to align spiritual aspect with societal betterment is a testament of transformative power of Faith based organization. As spirituality is essence of human's existence, if right environment and intrinsic motivation prevails, attaining the SDG is possible, it calls for 'grassroots movement' and motivation at level of individual. The key implications of the study are-

There is a requirement of acknowledgement of the work done by Faith Based Organization by the government, by including the models developed by them in policy-making and other significant activities where the government cannot work alone for SDGs. As it is clear from the study that such results require collaborative efforts.

Also, supporting collaborative activities and development initiatives, across faith based organizations and religious groups, can help in inclusive development.

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