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## **Abstract**

### **Indigenous Peoples, NGOs and the Shifting Trajectory of Development Discourse: The Case of Bangladesh**

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Indigenous minority people are the most underprivileged, impoverished and vulnerable section in Bangladesh, who are often exploited, discriminated and dominated by the majority Bengali people. Extreme poverty and socioeconomic-political backwardness of these indigenous minority people create space for the majority people to exploit and discriminate them. However, in order to promote the socio-economic and political development of these indigenous peoples, a number of NGOs have been working among them for decades. Most of these NGOs are formed and run by the majority Bengali people who are mostly outsiders of the indigenous life and culture. Ironically, despite decades of intervention, these NGOs could not produce any substantial change in the fate of these indigenous people. Having not benefited from the majority Bengali-run NGOs, a new phenomenon has emerged in Bangladesh where indigenous people are resisting the majority Bengali-run NGOs. Instead, the indigenous people themselves organized and formed their own NGO to promote development within themselves. This paper analyzes this emerging development discourse by examining the role and effectiveness of such a minority-run NGO in Northwestern Bangladesh.

Taking the point of departure of the development discourses like “participatory development”, “bottom-up approach” “ethnodevelopment”, “grassroots voice” and the very recent one that stresses indigenous minority people should form their own organizations for negotiating and promoting their development, this study questions: can indigenous people, who are severely exploited and underprivileged both in political and socioeconomic arenas, help themselves? While examining the role of a minority-run NGO in promoting development, this study focuses on three aspects: economic livelihood, education and fighting against discrimination to see whether the indigenous minority people can help themselves. This study further explores the prospects and constraints that indigenous minority groups face while searching and negotiating their own development through their own organizations.