Non-governmental organization

A **non-governmental organization** (**NGO**) is a legally constituted organization created by natural or legal persons that operates independently from any government and a term usually used by governments to refer to entities that have no government status. In the cases in which NGOs are funded totally or partially by governments, the NGO maintains its non-governmental status by excluding government representatives from membership in the organization. The term is usually applied only to organizations that pursue some wider social aim that has political aspects, but that are not overtly political organizations such as political parties. Unlike the term "intergovernmental organization", the term "non-governmental organization" has no generally agreed legal definition. In many jurisdictions, these types of organization are called "civil society organizations" or referred to by other names.

The number of internationally operating NGOs is estimated at 40,000.[1] National numbers are even higher: Russia has 277,000 NGOs;[2] India is estimated to have around 3.3 million NGOs.[3]

Terminology

NGOs are defined by the World Bank as "private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development".[4]

Common usage varies between countries - for example NGO is commonly used for domestic organizations in Australia that would be referred to as non-profit organizations in the United States. Such organizations that operate on the international level are fairly consistently referred to as "non-governmental organizations", in the United States and elsewhere.

There is a growing movement within the non-profit organization/non-government sector to define itself in a more constructive, accurate way. The "non-profit" designation is seen to be particularly dysfunctional because of at least three reasons: 1) It says nothing about the purpose of the organization, only what it is not; 2) It focuses the mind on "profit" as being the opposite of the organization's purpose; 3) It implies that the organization has few financial resources, which increases the likelihood that it will. Instead of being defined by "non-" words, organizations are suggesting new terminology to describe the sector. The term "social benefit organization" (SBO) is being adopted by some organizations. This defines them in terms of their positive mission. The term "civil society organization" (CSO) has also been used by a growing number of organizations, such as the Center for the Study of Global Governance.[5] The term "citizen sector organization" (CSO) has also been advocated to describe the sector — as one of citizens, for citizens.[6] These labels, SBO and CSO, position the sector as its own entity, without relying on language used for the government or business sectors. However, some have argued that *CSO* is not particularly helpful, given that most NGOs are in fact funded by governments and business and that some NGOs are clearly hostile to independently organized people's organizations.[7] [8] The term "social benefit organization" seems to avoid that problem, since it does not assume any particular structure, but rather focuses on the organization's mission.

History

International non-governmental organizations have a history dating back to at least 1839.[9] It has been estimated that by 1914 there were 1083 NGOs.[10] International NGOs were important in the anti-slavery movement and the movement for women's suffrage, and reached a peak at the time of the World Disarmament Conference.[11] However, the phrase "non-governmental organization" only came into popular use with the establishment of the United Nations Organization in 1945 with provisions in Article 71 of Chapter 10 of the United Nations Charter[12] for a consultative role for organizations which are neither governments nor member states—see Consultative Status. The definition of "international NGO" (INGO) is first given in resolution 288 (X) of ECOSOC on February 27, 1950: it is defined as "any international organization that is not founded by an international treaty". The vital role of

NGOs and other "major groups" in sustainable development was recognized in Chapter 27[13] of Agenda 21, leading to intense arrangements for a consultative relationship between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.[14]

Rapid development of the non-governmental sector occurred in western countries as a result of the processes of restructuring of the welfare state. Further globalization of that process occurred after the fall of the communist system and was an important part of the Washington consensus.[7]

Globalization during the 20th century gave rise to the importance of NGOs. Many problems could not be solved within a nation. International treaties and international organizations such as the World Trade Organization were perceived as being too centred on the interests of capitalist enterprises. Some argued that in an attempt to counterbalance this trend, NGOs have developed to emphasize humanitarian issues, developmental aid and sustainable development. A prominent example of this is the World Social Forum, which is a rival convention to the World Economic Forum held annually in January in Davos, Switzerland. The fifth World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2005 was attended by representatives from more than 1,000 NGOs. Some have argued that in forums like these, NGOs take the place of what should belong to popular movements of the poor. Others argue that NGOs are often imperialist[15] in nature, that they sometimes operate in a racialized manner in third world countries, and that they fulfill a similar function to that of the clergy during the high colonial era. The philosopher Peter Hallward argues that they are an aristocratic form of politics.[16] Whatever the case, NGO transnational networking is now extensive.[17]

Types of NGOs

NGO type can be understood by orientation and level of co-operation.

NGO type by orientation

- Charitable orientation;
- Service orientation;
- Participatory orientation;
- Empowering orientation;

NGO type by level of co-operation

- Community- Based Organization;
- City Wide Organization;
- National NGOs;
- International NGOs;

Apart from "NGO", often alternative terms are used as for example: independent sector, volunteer sector, civil society, grassroots organizations, transnational social movement organizations, private voluntary organizations, self-help organizations and non-state actors (NSA's).

Non-governmental organizations are a heterogeneous group. A long list of acronyms has developed around the term "NGO".

These include:

- BINGO, short for business-friendly international NGO or big international NGO;
- CSO, short for civil society organization;
- DONGO: Donor Organized NGO;
- ENGO: short for environmental NGO, such as Greenpeace and WWF
- GONGOs are government-operated NGOs, which may have been set up by governments to look like NGOs in order to qualify for outside aid or promote the interests of the government in question;
- INGO stands for international NGO; Oxfam ,INSPAD [18] is an international NGO;

- QUANGOs are quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations, such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). (The ISO is actually not purely an NGO, since its membership is by nation, and each nation is represented by what the ISO Council determines to be the 'most broadly representative' standardization body of a nation. That body might itself be a nongovernmental organization; for example, the United States is represented in ISO by the American National Standards Institute, which is independent of the federal government. However, other countries can be represented by national governmental agencies; this is the trend in Europe.)
- TANGO: short for technical assistance NGO;
- TNGO: short for transnational NGO;
- GSO: Grassroots Support Organization
- MANGO: short for market advocacy NGO

There are also numerous classifications of NGOs. The typology the World Bank uses divides them into Operational and Advocacy:[19]

The primary purpose of an operational NGO is the design and implementation of development-related projects. One frequently used categorization is the division into *relief-oriented* versus *development-oriented* organizations; they can also be classified according to whether they stress service delivery or participation; or whether they are religious or secular; and whether they are more public or private-oriented. Operational NGOs can be community-based, national or international.

The primary purpose of an Advocacy NGO is to defend or promote a specific cause. As opposed to operational project management, these organizations typically try to raise awareness, acceptance and knowledge by lobbying, press work and activist events.

USAID refers to NGOs as *private voluntary organisations*. However many scholars have argued that this definition is highly problematic as many NGOs are in fact state and corporate funded and managed projects with professional staff.

NGOs exist for a variety of reasons, usually to further the political or social goals of their members or funders. Examples include improving the state of the natural environment, encouraging the observance of human rights, improving the welfare of the disadvantaged, or representing a corporate agenda. However, there are a huge number of such organizations and their goals cover a broad range of political and philosophical positions. This can also easily be applied to private schools and athletic organizations.

Methods

NGOs vary in their methods. Some act primarily as lobbyists, while others primarily conduct programs and activities. For instance, an NGO such as Oxfam, concerned with poverty alleviation, might provide needy people with the equipment and skills to find food and clean drinking water, whereas an NGO like the FFDA helps through investigation and documentation of human rights violations and provides legal assistance to victims of human rights abuses. Others, such as Afghanistan Information Management Services, provide specialized technical products and services to support development activities implemented on the ground by other organizations.

Public relations

Non-governmental organisations need healthy relationships with the public to meet their goals. Foundations and charities use sophisticated public relations campaigns to raise funds and employ standard lobbying techniques with governments. Interest groups may be of political importance because of their ability to influence social and political outcomes. A code of ethics [20] was established in 2002 by The World Association of Non Governmental NGOs.

Project management

There is an increasing awareness that management techniques are crucial to project success in non-governmental organizations.[21] Generally, non-governmental organizations that are private have either a community or environmental focus. They address varieties of issues such as religion, emergency aid, or humanitarian affairs. They mobilize public support and voluntary contributions for aid; they often have strong links with community groups in developing countries, and they often work in areas where government-to-government aid is not possible. NGOs are accepted as a part of the international relations landscape, and while they influence national and multilateral policy-making, increasingly they are more directly involved in local action.

Staffing

Not all people working for non-governmental organizations are volunteers.

There is some dispute as to whether expatriates should be sent to developing countries. Frequently this type of personnel is employed to satisfy a donor who wants to see the supported project managed by someone from an industrialized country. However, the expertise these employees or volunteers may be counterbalanced by a number of factors: the cost of foreigners is typically higher, they have no grassroot connections in the country they are sent to, and local expertise is often undervalued.[19]

The NGO sector is an important employer in terms of numbers. For example, by the end of 1995, CONCERN worldwide, an international Northern NGO working against poverty, employed 174 expatriates and just over 5,000 national staff working in ten developing countries in Africa and Asia, and in Haiti.

Funding

Large NGOs may have annual budgets in the hundreds of millions or billions of dollars. For instance, the budget of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) was over US$540 million in 1999.[22] Funding such large budgets demands significant fundraising efforts on the part of most NGOs. Major sources of NGO funding are membership dues, the sale of goods and services, grants from international institutions or national governments, and private donations. Several EU-grants provide funds accessible to NGOs.

Even though the term "non-governmental organization" implies independence from governments, most NGOs depend heavily on governments for their funding.[7] A quarter of the US$162 million income in 1998 of the famine-relief organization Oxfam was donated by the British government and the EU. The Christian relief and development organization World Vision collected US$55 million worth of goods in 1998 from the American government. Nobel Prize winner Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) (known in the USA as Doctors Without Borders) gets 46% of its income from government sources.[23]

Government funding of NGOs is controversial, since, according to David Rieff, writing in *The New Republic*, "the whole point of humanitarian intervention was precisely that NGOs and civil society had both a right and an obligation to respond with acts of aid and solidarity to people in need or being subjected to repression or want by the forces that controlled them, whatever the governments concerned might think about the matter."[24] Some NGOs, such as Greenpeace do not accept funding from governments or intergovernmental organizations.[25] [26]

Monitoring and control

In a March 2000 report on United Nations Reform priorities, former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan wrote in favor of international humanitarian intervention, arguing that the international community has a "right to protect" [27] citizens of the world against ethnic cleansing, genocide, and crimes against humanity. On the heels of the report, the Canadian government launched the Responsibility to Protect R2P [28]PDF (434 KiB) project, outlining the issue of humanitarian intervention. While the R2P doctrine has wide applications, among the more controversial has been the Canadian government's use of R2P to justify its intervention and support of the coup [29] in Haiti.

Years after R2P, the World Federalist Movement, an organization which supports "the creation of democratic global structures accountable to the citizens of the world and call for the division of international authority among separate agencies", has launched Responsibility to Protect - Engaging Civil Society (R2PCS). A collaboration between the WFM and the Canadian government, this project aims to bring NGOs into lockstep with the principles outlined under the original R2P project.

The governments of the countries an NGO works or is registered in may require reporting or other monitoring and oversight. Funders generally require reporting and assessment, such information is not necessarily publicly available. There may also be associations and watchdog organizations that research and publish details on the actions of NGOs working in particular geographic or program areas.

In recent years, many large corporations have increased their corporate social responsibility departments in an attempt to preempt NGO campaigns against certain corporate practices. As the logic goes, if corporations work *with* NGOs, NGOs will not work *against* corporations.

In December 2007, The United States Department of Defense Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health Affairs) S. Ward Casscells established an International Health Division under Force Health Protection & Readiness.[30] Part of International Health's mission is to communicate with NGOs in areas of mutual interest. Department of Defense Directive 3000.05,[31] in 2005, requires DoD to regard stability-enhancing activities as a mission of importance equal to warfighting. In compliance with international law, DoD has necessarily built a capacity to improve essential services in areas of conflict such as Iraq, where the customary lead agencies (State Department and USAID) find it difficult to operate. Unlike the "co-option" strategy described for corporations, the OASD(HA) recognizes the neutrality of health as an essential service. International Health cultivates collaborative relationships with NGOs, albeit at arms-length, recognizing their traditional independence, expertise and honest broker status. While the goals of DoD and NGOs may seem incongruent, the DoD's emphasis on stability and security to reduce and prevent conflict suggests, on careful analysis, important mutual interests.

Legal status

The legal form of NGOs is diverse and depends upon homegrown variations in each country's laws and practices. However, four main family groups of NGOs can be found worldwide:[32]

- Unincorporated and voluntary association
- Trusts, charities and foundations
- Companies not just for profit
- Entities formed or registered under special NGO or nonprofit laws

NGOs are not subjects of international law, as states are. An exception is the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is subject to certain specific matters, mainly relating to the Geneva Convention.

The Council of Europe in Strasbourg drafted the European Convention on the Recognition of the Legal Personality of International Non-Governmental Organizations in 1986, which sets a common legal basis for the existence and work of NGOs in Europe. Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights protects the right to freedom of association, which is also a fundamental norm for NGOs.

Steps in establishing NGOs

The first step in the establishment of the NGO is to identify the area of peculiar needs of the society, such as health, HIV/AIDS, Maternal Mortality, Polio, food, shelter,education, civil liberty and poverty alleviation among others.

The second step is to identify people of similar minds; there must be a unity of purpose. The third step is to engage the services of a qualified legal practitioner for guidance for the Registration process. Some NGOs can be registered with the regional or central government and that depends on the scope of the operations of the proposed NGO. The next important step also is to identify the internal or external partners with a clearly stated objectives and plan of actions.

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External links

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- IndianNGOs.org (http://www.indianngos.org/) Directory of NGOs in India
- SevaInfo.org (http://www.sevainfo.org/) Grants, resources, volunteers, funds and sustainability for NGOs
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