

The Role of International NGOs in Global Governance

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Abstract

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in global settings or simply known as International NGOs are often called global civil society since they play an important role in human rights and the sociopolitical, economic and cultural development of the people in both domestic and international settings. International NGOs, which are also called transnational NGOs play more active role in developing countries than in developed countries in sociopolitical, economic and cultural development and in protecting human rights. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) both in domestic and international settings are working to the elimination of the structural causes of poverty, to the realization of human rights, to protect the environment and to achieve sustainable patterns of development. As one of the key international players, NGOs in international settings very much affect the shaping of global governance by influencing the making global standards. This paper provides an insight into understanding the roles of international NGOs in addressing the key issues of global governance, such as promoting political, economic, social or cultural development of the developing nations, dealing with environment and ecological issues, and promoting human rights.

Introduction

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in global settings or simply known as International NGOs are often called global civil society (Klingebiel, 1996) since they play an important role in human rights and the sociopolitical, economic and cultural development of the people in both domestic and international settings. International NGOs, which are also called transnational NGOs play more active role in developing countries than in developed countries in sociopolitical, economic and cultural development and in protecting human rights. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) both in domestic and international settings are working to the elimination of the structural causes of poverty, to the realization of human rights, to protect the environment and to achieve sustainable patterns of development (Jordan and Tuijl, 1998).

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NGOs are more and more actively involved in the processes and performances of international relations. While a very few NGOs operated their activities in international settings in the 1950s, the end of the Cold War bolstered NGOs activities on the global level (Martens, 2000). The Yearbook of International Organizations reported that there were more than 26,000 international NGOs by the beginning of the 21st century that were more than four times as many as existed just ten years ago, while the domestic ones had been counted in the millions (Knickerbocker, 2000). As one of the key international players, NGOs in international settings very much affect the shaping of global governance by influencing the making global standards.

The principal objective of this paper is to analyze the role of international NGOs in global governance. This paper first provides some general ideas about what international NGOs are, followed by a brief discussion on global governance. The final section of this paper makes an effort to explain the role of international nonprofit NGOs in global governance.

What are NGOs in International Arena?

As a type of organizational entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were created as the founding of the United Nations (Jordan and Tuijl, 1997). This category of organizational entities was made in view of discussing a specific relationship between civil organizations and the intergovernmental processes. However, since the invention of this distinctive category for explaining the particular relationship between civil organization and intergovernmental processes, the term “NGO” has also been loosely applied to any organization that is not public. Beyond the definitive scope of the term by United Nations, the NGOs in international settings are often called the “third sector” of global government or even some times global Civil Society Organizations, simply CSOs (Longworth, 1999).

According to Stephen Toulmin, the term NGO is a privative concept that defines groups by what they are not, rather than what they are (Toulmin, 1994). Michael Bratton, however, views NGOs or CSOs as a sphere of social interaction between the household and the state” characterized by “community cooperation, structures of voluntary association and networks of public communication” (Bratton, 1994). Thus, civil society is distinct from the household, state or political parties, although a strong civil society is dependent on the strong government despite its opposition in many reasons (Toulmin, 1994; Bratton, 1994).

Since the acceleration of globalization process, the civil societies or NGOs have been playing a crucial role in democratization of political and social lives of the people in many nations, specially in developing countries

through enabling and widening participation, protecting citizens against the arbitration and abuse of state power, and guaranteeing the political accountability of the states (Malhotra, 2000). NGOs are also playing a catalytic role in raising awareness regarding global policy issues and other contemporary issues, such as protection of women's rights or farmers' rights and so on.

Since the end of the Cold War, international development aid is increasingly bypassing national governments and going directly to the local, national and international NGOs. In 1992, however, the OECD estimated that 13% of all development assistance equivalent to US\$8.3 billion was channeled through the international nonprofits or NGOs, and this amount is increasing over time (Donini, 1995). Although the end of Cold War has significantly strengthened the NGOs monopoly of receiving international aid bypassing the national governments, NGOs' activities were widely prevalent until the end of World War II. NGOs have been important actors in the national and international community since the late 1940s (Tuijl, 2000).

However, in its truest sense of the term, an accurate and appropriate definition of NGO or nonprofits either in local, national or international arena bears some complications. NGO can be used quite loosely to describe any association of people, from youth group to the Mafia, from the Roman Catholic Church to Greenpeace, from the International Chamber of Commerce to an agricultural cooperative in rural India. It includes organizations that are operational, provides services, such as Oxfam, and those that are more advocacy-based, such as Third World Network" (Toulmin, 1994; Wiklund and Hontelez, 1996). Moreover, the term NGO delineates no line of demarcation between large-scale membership-based organization and small ones initiated by a few individuals. There are also no measures to determine whether NGOs differentiate between associations of citizens and organizations of capital, or between NGOs that work in cooperation with the state or those that try to overthrow it. NGOs also do not apply to distinguish between the "big eight" that control half the US\$8 billion market and many a thousands of NGOs that struggle for funding or survival (Toulmin, 1994).

The "big eight" that play a vital role in international area, however, are: CARE, World Vision International, Oxfam, MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières), Save the Children Federation, CIDSE (Cooperation Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité), the Coalition of Catholic NGOs, APDOVE (Association of Protestant Development Organizations in Europe), and Eurostep (Secular European NGOs) (Toulmin, 1994). While larger transnational NGOs like the "big eight" do not have to doddle too much for money and play more active role in international politics, the small or medium sized local NGOs are generally somewhat weak and dependent on one or several funders and activists (Wiklund and Hontelez, 1996; Toulmin, 1994).

Global Governance in a Nutshell

The word ‘governance’ is ubiquitous (Bevir, 2012), which purports different meanings to different people. According to Collins English Dictionary, “Governance refers to control or exercise of authority. Governance is also meant by the action, manner, or system of governing or government (Collins Dictionary, 2011). B. Guy Peters (2001) views governance as a system or way of governing or administration. In general, governance is very much equated with a system of administration or management.

Global governance as a movement toward political integration of global/transnational actors aims to negotiate responses to problems that affect more than one state or region. Global governance tends to involve institutionalization. These institutions of global governance—the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, the World Bank, etc., -- tend to have limited or demarcated powers to enforce compliance (Korten, 1990; WIKIPEDIA, 2014; Diehl and Frederking, 2010). Issues of global agenda to be addressed by global governance involve good governance, economic development, peace and security, human rights, the preservation of the environment, gender empowerment and so on (Sinclair, 2012; Korten, 1990).

According to Financial Times lexicon, “four categories of international players or actors very much affect the shaping of global governance by making global standards. These four categories of international players influencing the shaping and making of global governance comprise (i) the private sector (firms, professional associations, funds, banks), (ii) multilateral organizations, (iii) non-state organizations (NGOs, unions, private and professional standard producers, think-tanks), and (iv) states. This paper analyzes the role of international NGOs in the governance of global issues.

The Role of NGOs in the Governance of Global Issues

Global or international nonprofit organizations or simply international NGOs are playing a pivotal role in promoting socioeconomic, political, cultural development and bolstering the civil rights of the people around the world. Around the world, especially in many developing countries of Asia and Africa, private and nonprofit organizations are fighting and winning the social and political battles (Knickerbocker, 2000). NGOs are also playing a crucial role in protecting the women’s right and democratization of the political spheres around the world. Nonprofit NGOs in international perspectives can also be considered as social change agent and cultural ambassadors. NGOs in international settings work on the economic emancipation of many developing and least developed countries and fighting poverty and illiteracy. In fact, unlike nonprofit organizations in the United States, global NGOs are more political-oriented than economic and social services. The following sections, however, discusses the role of

nonprofits NGOs in international settings in promoting political, economic, social or cultural development of the developing nations.

International Nonprofit NGOs and Their Role in Global Politics

It goes without saying that international NGOs are playing a vital role in international politics. In fact, the political responsibility, which derives from the NGO position of intermediary, is controversial from all aspects. However, it is a irony of the fact that international and national forces, such as military based governments or the World Bank try to define NGOs as deliverers of social services instead of including the services of defining and providing political rights that reject or avoid the concept of political responsibility towards recipients of those services (Jordan and Tuijl, 1997; Fisher, 1998).

International nonprofits/NGOs' political activities become more responsive particularly in a situation where nation states recede or have disappeared, but where an effective system of global governance is still undesirably absent. Many scholars view that the role of NGOs in a vision of globalization is perceived through their political advocacy (Fisher, 1998; Jordan and Tuijl, 1997). NGOs are advocating for ensuring participation within the international globalization process through changing the global serf into a citizen with democratic rights of participation in decision making, representation in powerful political bodies and equal distribution of rewards or penalties, may it be arisen from changing economic or political conditions (Jordan and Tuijl, 1997; Fisher, 1998). NGOs encourage the global citizenry to participate in political decision-making for protection and exercise of civil and political rights, including efforts to institutionalize those rights where those rights have been infringed or do not exist in their worldly lives (Fisher, 1998; Jordan and Tuijl, 1997). NGOs' advocacy to empower weaker sections of the society is not limited to helping people to access information or giving them tools to reach out to decisions. The underlying function of NGO advocacy, however, aims at hastening the self-respect of weaker communities, improving their self confidence, constituting integrity and promoting mutual trust, all of which are important components to create a sound and healthy community (Keck and Sikkink, 1999; Jordan and Tuijl, 1997).

Moreover, NGO advocacy also embraces a fight against cynicism and despair to which powerless communities tend to fall victim due to huge political and real-life obstacles that are impairing them to improve their fortune (Jordan and Tuijl, 1997). It is important to mention that international NGOs also raise their voices on such political issues like voting rights and torture. In this respect, the political groups, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have become the biggest and best-known nonprofit NGOs in protecting the human rights and fostering democratic political environment in international arena (Longworth, 1999).

As mentioned earlier, lobbying is an important aspect on NGO advocacy that emphasizes on the formal political process, and connotes the theory and practice of persuading one or more legislators by approaching them in the “lobby” of a parliament (Keck and Sikkink, 1999; Jordan and Tuijl, 1997). NGOs’ lobbying, however, puts an emphasis on publicity and efforts to actively mobilize public opinion in order to build political pressure on certain issues. However, NGO advocacy for democratization of the power relations obviously throws a challenge to the status quo, especially of the developing nations (Fisher, 1998; Jordan and Tuijl, 1997; Keck and Sikkink, 1999).

International NGOs use advocacy strategy for global campaign in order to challenge projects, policies and political forces which thwart to further marginalize local communities or destroy their traditional ecosystems (Fisher, 1998). International nonprofit NGOs are also considered as information brokers or issue-oriented advocacy groups or sometime called issue makers. For instance, in advocacy, the local communities or NGOs are dependent upon the international or transnational NGOs elsewhere to articulate their voice and concerns in political arenas, which they do not know or cannot reach themselves. Since international/transnational nonprofit NGOs have wide communication network they can easily articulate the problem and propagate promptly internationally when necessary. However, Lisa Jordan and Peter van Tuijl (1997) have identified seven major areas of political responsibility in international NGO advocacy, which include (1) dividing political areas; (2) agenda setting and strategy building; (3) raising and allocating financial resources; (4) information flow; (5) articulating available information into useful forms; (6) frequency and format of information exchange; and (7) formalization of relationship.

One of the primary steps of advocacy activities of international NGOs is that they choose more than one arena and assign activities for propagating their political issues. The next step of the international NGOs is to set agendas and formulate strategies so that they can easily draw the attention to or get the support of the global community to materialize their political purposes. International NGOs develop different tactics and devices in the different political arenas and organize the local people against implementing any government programs that go against their interest. In this respect, international NGOs’ activity in organizing the local tribals of India against government’s project to build Sardar Sarovar dam over the river of Narmada in the early 1980s is worth mentionable. The project became controversial because in its original formulation it would have resulted in the flooding of the traditional lands of over 250,000 tribal people living on the banks of the Narmada river in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. About one million people were expected to be adversely affected. The NGOs stopped the World Bank to finance the construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam (Jorfan and Tuijl, 1997).

The role of NGOs in international arena can also be explained in terms of the Arun case, an anti-dam campaign initiated in 1995 in Nepal. At the international level, the Arun case was also an anti-dam campaign mainly because of its environmental impact. Although the World Bank agreed to finance the Arun Dam in the initial stage, the nonprofit NGOs were able to convince the World Bank not to finance the Arun Dam that eventually stopped the Arun Dam project (Jordan and Tuij, 1997).

One significant political as well as humanitarian performance of the nonprofit NGOs in the global arena has been the success of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). This success of NGO campaign to ban landmines took place in 1992 when six NGOs formed a coalition seeking an international ban of landmines that helped to put forth the landmine issue on the international agenda, and consequently witnessed the creation of a Mine Ban Treaty that came into being in March 1999. However, it is important to note that the ICBL received the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for its significant role in establishing peace worldwide (Garred, 2001).

International NGOs and Their Impact on Socio-Economic Development in Global Setting

International nonprofit NGO's role in economic development of international arena cannot be denied. Nonprofit NGOs are institutions that offer help or improve existing social conditions for disadvantaged social groups, and create a tense of relationship between them and governments (Puplampu and Tetey, 2000). Again, through their advocacy and as receiver of foreign aid international nonprofit NGOs play a decisive role in promoting economic conditions of the people in many developing nations. In the 1990s, NGOs working together have played strong roles in writing the international treaty banning land mines, in turning global warming and Third World debt into major issues, in establishing an international criminal court, and in defeating attempts by twenty-nine leading industrial nations to set up common rules for global investment (Longworth, 1999).

While some international NGOs, such as Doctors Without Borders, deal with health issues, or like Human Rights Watch, fight political and legal battles, an increasing number of international NGOs focus on economic causes, such as labor, poverty and the environment. In this respect, the WTO, the international organization overseeing world trade, is playing a major role in global economy (Longworth, 1999).

As mentioned earlier, upon the end of the Cold War, a lion's share of the international development aid is received by international nonprofit organizations/NGOs bypassing national government that has augmented NGOs' role in both economic and political development of the developing nations. In fact, the rise in nonprofit NGO participation in international arena cannot be segregated from the policy climate, championed by the IFIs,

which projects them as the most effective means of addressing the problems of developing societies, and the needs of their poorest members in a manner not matched by government officials (Puplampu and Tettey, 2000). Nonprofit NGOs have learnt how to work with grass-root organizations and how to put together projects with financial and external technical assistance, thus helping poor people to help themselves (World Bank, 1996; Puplampu and Tettey, 2000, p.253).

Global Nonprofit NGOs and Their Role in Environment and Ecological Issues

While many international nonprofit NGOs are working on improving political and economic conditions of the people around the world, especially in developing countries, some nonprofits are also playing effective role in environmental and ecological issues. However, the environmental issues many nonprofit international organizations deal with include the sustainability movement encompassing economic development, environmental protection, social justice and quality of life (Knickerbocker, 2000). The environmental movement of nonprofit NGOs, however, has been successful in influencing state behavior, including intergovernmental contexts. For instance, pressure from environmental NGOs, especially in the United States Congress, ensured that trade and environmental issues were linked for the first time in NAFTA (Fox, 1995). Similarly, the environmental NGOs in Europe also played particularly effective role in hardening the EU's position on genetically modified food (Bayne, 2000, p.138).

Some other successes of environmental movement of nonprofits/NGOs in international arena include both the existence and the accomplishments of the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992 and the Kyoto Conference on Climate Change in 1997, and more generally, the environmental issues on the global political agenda. International nonprofits/NGOs have also been successful in formulating issues in environmental terms, such as forestry that, for instance, focuses on environmental conservation rather than economic production (Bernstein and Cashore, 2000, p.82).

International Nonprofit/NGO Influence in Human Rights

Along with local NGOs nonprofit international NGOs make significant contributions to the growing global culture of human rights. The activities of international NGOs/nonprofits in monitoring human rights violations are widely acclaimed. Human rights, however, comprise political, economic, social and cultural standards of good development that are universally applicable and constitute corresponding obligations for all governments (Tuijl, 2000). The humanitarian nonprofits play appreciating roles by providing various forms of aid and relief to the people around the World who are affected by severe problems of disasters, wars and poverty. These humanitarian nonprofits have, particularly in dealing with the humanitarian issues in Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda, received a great deal of prominence in the media (Judge, 1994).

Nonprofit international NGOs and the women's group also have been playing successful roles in lobbying for the inclusion of special references to the rights of the women. The principal objective of these women's rights groups is to claim different rights for women but to make clear that the discrimination and violation of women's rights is not different or less severe than any other human rights violation (Connors, 1996, p. 170; Martens, 2000, pp. 115-127). The success of women's group has been due to their joint and well organized lobby work in the pre-conference period and during the conference itself. However, internationally some nonprofits, such as women's group have been involved with the UN system for decades. Since the first UN Global Conference in Mexico City in 1975 the nonprofit women's groups' participation in UN conferences have been increasingly growing.

NGO Delegates at International Women's Conferences

Conference Venue (Year)	Number of NGOs Attended
Mexico City (1975)	6,000
Copenhagen (1980)	8,000
Nairobi (1990)	11,000
Beijing (1995)	40,000

Source: Knut, 1997



While 6,000 NGO delegates along with 2,000 government delegates attended the UN Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, in the 1980 Women's Conference in Copenhagen the number of NGO delegates increased to 8,000. However, in Nairobi in 1990 11,000 NGOs participated the Third UN World Conference on Women, while in 1995 40,000 NGO delegates participated in the Fourth UN World Conference held in Beijing (Knut, 1997).

Weaknesses of Nonprofit NGOs in International Arena

Nonprofit NGOs in international arena also suffer from setback. In some cases, international NGOs either nonprofit or for profit, fail to cohort the

local shared values, norms of the area they work. They sometimes exchange faulty information in their political advocacies (Jordan and Tuijl, 1997). Moreover, international NGOs/nonprofits are not free from class, race and gender problems, nor from the oppression and sexual exploitation they germinate (Edwards, 2000).

Some critics argue that international NGOs'/nonprofits' role that often echoes the popular slogan "think globally, act locally" is highly confusing, because it suggests an inherent link between local actions and an aggregate global political clout of local actions which is far from evident. Because connecting activities from global to a local level and vice versa is a long road full of pitfalls (Jordan and Tuijl, 1997).

One limitation of nonprofit NGOs in global setting is the decreasing tendency of international aid received by the nonprofit NGOs during the past few years since the end of the Cold War. Therefore, a future without significant aid implies that NGOs will not be engaged in large-scale social programs that reveal their primary value of serving the society (Malhotra, 2000). Another setback suffered by the international NGOs is the lack of accountability.

Conclusions

In short, nonprofit NGOs in international arena are significantly distinct from nonprofits operating in the United States in terms of both nature of functions, goals and objectives and degree of freedom, although they share some commonality in providing services to the people. Nonprofit NGOs in international arena are more actively involved in the processes and performances of international relations, while nonprofit organizations in the United States are more actively involved in promoting socioeconomic and cultural development of the people in the United States. However, the most significant difference between the nonprofits in international arena and the nonprofits in the United States is that nonprofit international NGOs are politically more active, while nonprofit organizations in the United States are prohibited to involve in any political activities (Bryce, 2000).

Although NGOs in international arena are not free from criticism, it is no denying the fact that nonprofit NGOs are playing a significant role in international arena, especially in promoting socioeconomic and political development in many developing countries. International NGOs' role in protecting human rights, especially their feminist role in protecting rights of women in international setting is highly commendable. The increasing number of nonprofit NGOs' participation in the UN World Conference on women's rights reveals this fact. Some nonprofits in international arena also play an important role in alleviating illiteracy and fighting poverty in the developing nations (Kabir, 2000).

International NGOs also play an important role in maintaining global peace through reducing political tensions around the world. Nonprofit

NGOs' successful international campaign to ban landmine in 1997 is worth mentioning in this respect (Garred, 2001). International NGOs also use their political advocacy for establishing voting rights of the people and against torture for political reasons. The Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are examples of international nonprofit NGOs that play a significant role in protecting human rights and promoting democratic values around the world, especially in third world countries.

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The Role of International NGOs in Global Governance

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