

THE LEBANESE PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are independent, non-criminal, and non-profit, and are not seeking a challenge from governments. NGO's are functional and dynamic, and came into use because of the need for the UN to differentiate in its Charter between participation rights for intergovernmental specialized agencies, and those for international private organizations. However, NGOs are accused of being the extension of foreign intelligent services because of the diversion of their work in the late years. This paper presents different types of NGOs both worldwide and in Lebanon. It shows both the importance of NGOs in the society and their benefit to the economy as a whole, and the constraints they are facing. The objective is to discuss the significance of NGOs in the Lebanese community and identify the ways NGOs can pursue in order to become more convincing. This paper depends on both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, whereby, statistics are conducted to highlight the opinions of students and professors regarding the work of NGOs in the past few years. Moreover, analyses are made about the situation of NGOs and what can be done to improve their functionality. The outcome of this paper is expected to enhance the work of NGOs, stop the diversion of others and increase peoples' faith in them.

Keywords: Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Perception, Qualitative and quantitative methodologies, Lebanese community

INTRODUCTION

The term, "Non-Governmental Organization" (NGO), came into use in 1945 because of the need for the UN to differentiate in its Charter between participation rights for intergovernmental specialized agencies and those for international private organizations. At the UN, virtually all types of private bodies can be recognized as NGOs. They only have to be independent from government control, without seeking to challenge governments either as a political party or by narrowly focusing on human rights. They have to be non-profit-making and non-criminal organizations (peter, 2002).

NGOs work to stop violations of Covenant rights that are the violations of the promises and treaties, in many ways and places. The term "non-governmental organizations" (NGOs) includes community-based organizations, citizens' groups (but not political parties), trade unions, religious-based social justice organizations, and other voluntary organizations that may help to foster and implement economic, social and cultural rights. Other than their assistance in several fields, they are well known for their contributions in providing information and expert advice to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) (McChesnay, 2000).

The CESCR monitors the progress or the relapse of each State Party to the Covenant. It also produces general advice on how violations occur and on how progress can be made in fulfilling Covenant obligations. However, the situation in a State is normally reviewed by the CESCR once every five years, so obedience to the CESCR is small. Some international NGOs work full time on Covenant issues, with regard to any part of the world (McChesnay, 2000).

Human rights principles advocated and supported by NGOs may contrast with views held by the government, with respect to the meaning and applicability of existing human rights principles. NGOs are often thinking of creating rights that are "new" or they interpret them in a new way. This fact was documented by the UN in Article 7 of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted in the General Assembly by consensus of all nations, in December 1998. The Defenders' Declaration specifically declares the right of individuals and groups to develop and discuss new human rights ideas and accept them.

Need for the Research

Within countries, NGOs play an important role in promoting economic, social and cultural rights. These organizations can promote human rights by sharing information and opinions with members of legislatures (parliaments, legislative assemblies or congresses), support and cooperate with individual politicians who share their concern for human rights. NGOs can offer

advice to legislative committees that monitor human rights and social issues, and help politicians to see the need for improvements based on human rights (Sayeed, 1992).

NGOs can try to persuade politicians in both governing and opposition parties to:

- Teach the public about economic, social and cultural rights as well as states obligations.
- Pass laws to ensure that international human rights law is part of the national constitution.
- Provide sufficient public funding for programs that help to implement economic, social and cultural rights, including environmental protection schemes, such as the rights to health, education, housing and food.
- Pass laws that forbid violations of Covenant rights and promote fulfillment of Covenant obligations.
- Take Covenant obligations into account when setting annual budgets for public expenditure.
- Arrange for parliamentary or congressional committees to review relevant aspects of the country's human rights performance on a regular basis (A way to assure that attention is regularly focused on Covenant rights is to require a human rights commission or another public body to report annually to the national parliament on the status of economic, social and cultural rights in the country).

To maintain public awareness of Covenant rights, NGOs could produce annual report cards on the performance of their country with respect to one or more rights. To have a greater impact, these reports should be shared with other NGOs, politicians and the media. On the other hand, NGOs can help in educating legal professionals. They try to ensure that the training of lawyers and judges includes education about Covenant rights. This education can take place in law school, at lawyers' and judges' conferences, and in special "continuing education" sessions for those working as lawyers or judges (Banks, Hulme, Edwards, 2015).

The top ten NGOs in the world

The top ten NGOs that are among the thousands of NGOs working effectively in the world will be discussed. Firstly, "Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee" (BRAC) is located in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and has almost 110,000 employees. In 2007, its budget was \$480 million. It was founded in 1972 to assist refugees after Bangladesh's war of liberation. Its major operations are microcredit and poverty alleviation. Today it is known to be one of the largest non-governmental organizations. It boasts a \$4.6 billion portfolio in microloans, an army of healthcare volunteers providing care to 80 million Bangladeshis, and a network of 52,000 schools serving 1.5 million

students. Because of its great work, BRAC is called a mini-government. Its huge efforts helped cut child mortality for children under 5 from 25% to 7% over the past three decades. It also lowered fertility rate and reduced poverty because of its contraception drives and pioneering micro lending. BRAC recently extended its programs to Sub-Saharan Africa and Afghanistan.

Secondly, "World Vision" is located in Federal Way, Wash. And its 2007 revenues are \$977 millions. It has 31,000 employees and its major operations are food aid and emergency assistance. It is one of the world's largest Christian Charities and it is the primary distributor for the UN World Food Program. Last year it delivered 147,000 metric tons of food and distributed it for nearly three dozen countries. It is also one of the first organizations on the ground in humanitarian emergencies, assisting millions of survivors in more than 80 disasters around the world in 2007. World Vision has recently been at the forefront of efforts to reach victims of Cyclone Nargis in Burma and the devastating earthquake in China's Sichuan province. It also works in creating emergency plans for AIDS Relief. The charity has received tens of millions of dollars since 2003 to promote abstinence and other HIV prevention methods in countries such as Haiti, South Africa, and Zambia.

Thirdly, "Oxfam International" is located in Oxford, England and has 6,200 field workers. Its 2006-2007 expenditures are \$704 millions. Its major operations include poverty alleviation and debt relief. It was founded in 1942, and today it is considered an association of 13 major organizations working in more than 100 countries. It works on fighting hunger, promoting fair trade, relieving developing country debt, and providing emergency services during disasters. Oxfam is also known for its highly effective public relations and campaigns. One of its most important campaigns was the 2005 campaign "Make Poverty History". It protested against unfair agricultural subsidies. Moreover, Oxfam's influence can be felt not only on the ground in poor countries where people depend on its charity to survive, but also in rich countries where it encourages the public perception of development.

Fourthly, "Medicines' sans Frontiers/ Doctors without Borders" is located in Geneva, Switzerland and has 27,000 employees. Its 2006-2007 budgets were approximately \$770 millions. Its major operations include establishing healthcare services in poor countries and providing emergency medical care. Its volunteer health and aid workers bring attention to some of the poorest, roughest neighborhoods on earth. They provide lifesaving care when other agencies refuse to get involved in messy political environments. They also serve the sick, the wounded, and the malnourished in more than 90 countries since 1971. This group is known for its independent aspect, speaking out against injustice, government –sponsored violence, and development waste. Most people worldwide say that "Doctors without Borders" act like a

developments canary in the coal mine; they try to whiten up a very dark place and do their best to pave the road for the hopeless and the helpless.

Fifthly, "Worlds Organization against Torture" (OMCT), created in 1985. It is considered today as the main union of international non-governmental organization fighting against torture, summary executions, enforced disappearances, and all other inhuman treatment. It is located primarily in Geneva. The OMCTs International Secretariat provides modified medical, legal and social assistance to hundreds of tortured victims, support to specific categories of vulnerable people, such as, women, children, and human rights defenders, actively collaborate in the development of international norms for the protection of human rights, and it submits alternative reports to the special mechanisms of the United Nations. The sharing of wisdom between the NGOs is shown mostly with this NGO, since it works with the following; ECOSOC (United Nations), the International Labor Organization, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the Organization Internationale de la Francophonie, and the Council of Europe. As for the OMCT Network which is the SOS-Torture Network, it is known to be the most important global network of organizations fighting against torture. In 1986, it was composed of 48 NGOs, and now it counts to 311 organizations spread around the world.

Sixthly, "Partners in Health" is located in Haiti and Boston. Over the last 25 years, it has provided health care to the world's poor. Its slogan is:"Whatever it takes"; they treat the patients as if they were one of their family members. Plus, patients can be airlifted from Haiti to Boston for a life-saving emergency treatment. It was co-founded by Paul Farmer and Ophelia Dahl. Farmer was studying at Duke University with a full scholarship but when he went for Haiti for one year before attending Harvard Medical School, his want to fight infectious disease started. They started their "Partners in Health" in Boston three years after their initial visit to Haiti, operating one clinic on its Central Plateau. Things started out as a small community clinic for the village of Cange and then it grew to a vast medical center offering full service, 104-bed hospital, an infectious disease center, a women's health clinic, a laboratory, a pharmaceutical warehouse, a Red Cross blood bank and about a dozen schools. Things have expanded into the Dominican Republic and the model is further being replicated in 12 countries. In this organization, not only offer free medical services are offered, but also local workers are hired and trained to assist patients through treatment, monitor their needs for food, water and housing, provide health education and deliver care and medicine to their homes.

Patients who have AIDS/HIV and Tuberculosis, while getting treated, they are paired with a worker to help them all the way. And it has shown that this way of treatment has lengthened the lifespan of patients. For over two decades, this organization has helped the poor and fought infectious disease worldwide; this gives it its significance.

Seventhly, "International Rescue Committee" started in 1933 when Albert Einstein called for the founding of an American branch of the European International Relief Association in order to assist German refugees under Hitler's regime in 1933. Then it joined forces with the Emergency Rescue Committee based in Vichy, France before it evolved into the International Rescue Committee in 1942. Up until today, the IRC mission is still the same: to respond to the world's worst humanitarian crisis in order to help them survive and rebuild their lives. The IRC is characterized by being the most reliable, fast-acting, and transparent relief agencies in the world. If a certain crisis occurred, their Emergency Response Team will be on the ground within 72 hours. This organization has developed emergency inventory equipment enabling them to set up services at very short notice. Plus its team is equipped with both logistical and health experts as well as human rights specialists. No matter when the crisis happened, the IRC directly offers help, especially at the beginning of the crisis because the lives of the people are mostly endangered at that time. IRC remains in the damaged country after the conflict in order to keep on helping the people, especially because it is known for being true humanitarian. For example, it opened a second hospital in the heart of Mogadishu; it is more like a series of seven tents, because the main clinic was bombed-out. Although the Somali-health ministry plans to re-open the clinic soon but the IRC decided to start medical care on the spot. This hospital will serve some 22,000 displaced people in the immediate area. This organization is known to be extremely important and data have shown that just last year it helped re-settle some 9,600 newly-arrived refugees, and provided services to over 24,500 refugees within the United States. They counseled nearly 12,000 survivors of sexual violence and provided 14.5 million people with primary and reproductive health care, vaccinated 210,000 children against childhood diseases, and helped deliver 152,000 healthy babies in their clinics.

Eighthly, "CARE International" started in 1945 as an emergency relief body, especially after World War Two. This organization sent boxes filled with food, toys and messages of hope to the population of Europe. After 67 years, this organization had a specific mission; fighting global poverty. Their program includes health, education, economic empowerment, and adaptation to climate change, food security, water and women's empowerment. Today, "CARE International" employs over 12,000 people across 87 countries and its mission is both relief-based and development-oriented. This organization does not only eradicate global poverty, but also maintains its presence long after the immediate needs fade. "CARE International" has 905 poverty-fighting projects reaching more than 82 million people around the world, over half of which are women. And now it focuses mostly on women, since through them prosperity and development are initiated. For example, when women and girls earn income, they reinvest 90% of it into their families. Each year a girl spends in school, her income is expected to increase by

10-20%. Besides that, an educated woman is more likely to marry later and have fewer children. Finally, this organization has concluded that staying for long in a vulnerable country is more beneficial in fighting poverty on the long run. Plus, 97% of their international staff is local nationals enabling the organization to convey persistent impact. And because of its trusted and committed staff, it is able to strike community potential and make effective use of local expertise to create long-term sustainable progress.

Ninthly, "PATH" was founded in the mid-1970s. It started as a family planning organization bringing together public health agencies and private industry to make sure that couples all around the world had access to condoms, pills and other types of modern forms of pregnancy prevention. However, later on it has expanded its work to include an array of health technologies and a global reach touching 70 countries. Moreover, the organization's main goals are to continuously seek out new, creative and affordable technologies, collaborate with dynamic public and private sector partners, and deliver culturally-relevant solutions for global poor health. In practice, it deals with epidemic diseases like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. "PATH" has developed new health technologies designed for low-resource setting, worked on improving child and maternal health and pursued health equity for women. "PATH" has developed or co-developed or even adapted more than 85 technologies used to improve the health of people living in developing countries, such as: single use, disposable syringes that prevent needle reuse, vaccine vial monitors that detect when temperature-sensitive vaccines have been exposed to heat and so on. Most recently, it has introduced the "MenAfrivac" vaccine in partnership with the World Health Organization, which has helped more than 20 million people in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. They were vaccinated against meningitis A, which has spread through sub-Saharan Africa for more than a century. Finally, "PATH" is well-positioned to remain an important driving force for innovation in global health for years to come, especially because it has successfully launched "The Catalyst Fund" in 2005.

Finally, the tenth organization is "The Danish Refugee Council". It has started working since 1956. The organization secures durable solutions for refugees and stays with them until they are able to live in a stable and permanent environment. The "Danish Refugee Council" is responsible for humanitarian work; it was first founded to help the European refugees following the World War Two and during the 1990s it has delivered over half of the international aid in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, this organization assists over 1 million people, helping 30 countries and even the most conflicted countries such as; Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Chechnya (Briner, 2015).

The Lebanese NGOs

In addition to international NGOs, there are a number of national NGOs working in Lebanon. The first NGO is the "Farah Social Foundation". It started in 1988 by a group of experienced and specialized volunteers and is located in "Wata Al Museittbh" Beirut. This organization is a national organization without any external affiliation. Its purpose is mainly to study the social conditions and propose ways to improve them. Research and community development, rebuilding and rehabilitation of displaced people, poverty and illiteracy eradication, and provision of immediate relief to those affected and injured by wars and natural disasters are also very important goals of this organization.

The second NGO is the "Caritas" which was founded in 1972, by the Jesuit brothers in collaboration with the regions bishops, in South of Lebanon. It spread all over Lebanon on September 9th, 1976. In 1981, "Caritas" was approved to be the official socio-pastoral arm of the church to assist both individuals and communities and to support charitable and social activities. Plus, "Caritas Lebanon" is part of "Caritas Internationals", which is one of the largest humanitarian networks in the world, working in 200 different countries. The purpose of the organization is mainly to attain a wider social justice, promote a national network of solidarity with the objective of reducing poverty, and improve the development of individuals and communities.

The third NGO is the, "Makassed Philanthropic Islamic Association" is a nonprofit organization, devoted to promote the development of Makassed society members based on high morals. It works within the concept of the Islam region in order to spread education, capacity building, and social development among people. It also aims to build the country, and cope with modernization through knowledge and faith.

The fourth NGO is the, "Imam Sadr Foundation" was founded in 1985; the Imam Sadr Foundation prepared to set the basis of the cultural compound in Tyre by leasing a 30,000 square meter plot of land on the southern coastal shore. And from 1985 to 2005 it has expanded rapidly. "Imam Sadr Foundation" aims to improve the lives of tens of thousands of men and women throughout Lebanon, provide accessible health services for families affected by the fallout of the war, empower women and orphans through educational and occupational training programs, and create strategic partnerships with political and social development organizations.

The fifth NGO is the "Maarouf Saad Social and Cultural Foundation". This organization was founded in 1980 in Sidon in order to provide educational, health, and social services to the underprivileged people. Moreover, it spreads human and citizenship awareness programs within the communities it works in, plus.

The sixth NGO is the "National Rehabilitation and Development Centre". It was established in 1986 .It has 45 employees and its target is children between 0 and 18. Moreover, it provides training and education on child rights; it works directly with children and in partnership with organizations.

All these organizations found worldwide and in Lebanon have been working efficiently in making the world we live in a better place. Of course, some of them have limited work but that's because they need support from governments and the public. No organization can work fully and efficiently in a society if people do not support it. Those organizations are non-governmental, but they can get moral support from governments (UNDP, 2004).

Scope of the Paper

This paper utilizes qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. A questionnaire distributed to students and university professors in Lebanon to assess the impact of NGOs on the society. Moreover, statistical techniques are utilized to show the significance of NGOs on the economy as a whole.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to show the importance of capacity development in the educational sector Inger Ulleberg highlighted "The Role and Impact of NGOs in Capacity Development from replacing the State to reinvigorating Education". Furthermore, it was pointed out that NGOs adapt their activities to the capacity development concept, and their strategies do have an impact directly or indirectly on the governmental capacities (Ulleberg, 2009).

As was mentioned earlier, some say that NGOs were always known for their traditional role, however, nowadays their role have completely changed. Ulleberg clarifies that NGOs are of different types; advocacy and rights-based NGOs, relief welfare and charity NGOs, network NGOs, and professional support NGOs. Potentially, NGOs can participate in all phases of the policy cycle and on all levels of the public sector; as contributors to policy discussion and formulation, advocates, service deliverers (operators), monitors of rights and of particular interests, and as innovators introducing new concepts and initiatives. Thus, if NGOs do interfere in order to fill the gap that the government isn't capable of filling, then NGOS do not contradict the role of the governments, but on the contrary their role is a catalyst (Ulleberg, 2009).

More specifically, within the educational sector, it shows that even if NGOs interfere, their intervention is quite expected and very much needed. For example, NGOs take on activities of basic education provision where the government lacks the capacity to do so, or does not consider it a priority. In most African countries, there is disengagement of the

governments from their role as providers of social services, such as education and health, and thus those sectors have ended up as "non-productive sectors". This is why NGOs interfere, mainly in the rural areas, to help those marginal children. For example, in Uganda education provision is primarily the task of the Ministry of Education and Sports, the lack of capacity and the weak nature of the state, have opened the door for NGOs intervention. Nowadays, NGOs provide a large part of educational services and help reinforce government efforts in achieving universal primary education (UPE) objectives (Murthy, 1995).

NGOs work is known to be small scaled, flexible, dynamic, adaptive, local, efficient and innovative. That's why they tend to complement the work of the government, since the governments' capacity and structure do not allow the flexibility required to experiment with new education approaches. Also, NGOs tend to be more flexible than donor agencies and international organizations, because they can adapt easily to the specific political, economic, and social context in a given country (Rauh, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

This paper utilizes qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. A questionnaire was distributed to students and university professors in Lebanon to assess the impact of NGOs on the society.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is an exploratory research, generally conducted in order to understand the motive behind certain problems, behavior, and opinions. This type of research doesn't use algebras and graphs in its analysis; instead it is based on open ended questions and interviews. For this paper 100 questionnaires were distributed and filled out by respondents to solicit information regarding the perception of the Lebanese people vis-à-vis NGOs.

Quantitative research

Researchers look for relationships between variables in the form of statistical models that allow the researchers to generalize the results on a population. Results are either answers to hypotheses or prediction of future behaviour and events in a more accurate way. In this research paper a questionnaire was distributed as mentioned earlier and the outcomes were generated via percentages reflecting the Lebanese people perception of the NGOs.

Data collection

Primary data is needed in this research in order to determine the number of people who are familiar with NGOs and to gather information about their perception and to reflect on the way Lebanese view the role and importance of NGOs.

Sample Selection

As mentioned above a sample of 100 students and professors of Lebanon were surveyed to draw their perception towards NGOs.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The questionnaire on NGOs consisted of 100 students and professors that were chosen randomly; 65 of them knew the exact interpretation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), while the other 35 did not. This shows that the highest percentage of the sample know about the discussed topic. Moreover, 80 out of 100 believed that NGOs are of benefit to the society while the other 20 disagreed. This shows that the highest percentage of the sample accepts the message which NGOs are sending. To clarify better, those who answered by no explained their answer by stating that NGOs are powerless and underfunded. Others said that behind NGOs is the political aim of powerful countries and that they are working in a way to increase their own profits and reserves. Finally, some assured that NGOs work on serious issues but their work is done in a superficial way; that's why they are not beneficial. As for the ones who answered by yes, they stated that NGOs improve the efficiency and productivity of a society and play an important role in developing the governmental organizations. On the other hand, some stated that since governments are not working efficiently, it would be better if NGOs replaced them in some domains. Furthermore, NGOs can shed light on important issues that are the concern of the public (for example, fighting for women's rights, child labor, and poor people). Moreover, some said that through NGOs investment will increase and thus the GDP of the country will increase too.

Results also show that 31 out of 100 are in favor of the NGOs to engage in politics and work in parallel with the government, while the other 69 rejected this new trend. This findings shows that the majority of the sample are against NGOs engaging in an effort to replace governments. Moreover, 49 out of 100 are in favor of giving the NGOs the right to replace the government, 1 is indifferent, and the other 50 are against this. The percentage here is somehow equal. Approximately half is with this new trend and the other half is against accepting the idea of NGOs replacing local governments.

Results also indicate that 72 out of 100 surveyed consider NGOs to be the extensions of intelligence services of powerful countries, 1 prefers not to state opinion, and 27 are against this. This finding shows that the highest percentage of the sample believes that the NGOs work isn't as translucent as it should be. Lately, NGOs are diverting from their main mission and engaging themselves in unaccepted work.

Finally, the students and professors' final comment on NGOs is summarized by the fact that NGOs have a positive impact on the society and can help individuals, specifically those in need of help and assistance, but they need to limit their work to their human message, not engage in politics, and stop their diversion from their main role.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this paper indicate that most of the students support the role of the NGOs and they do believe that their existence is a necessity to the society and to the economy as a whole. However, the majority of them also believe that during the last few years, many NGOs have been influenced negatively by the powerful countries which led to them to deviate from their main duties. Some NGOs attempted to take the place of governments, others wanted to work in parallel with governments and this is not accepted by the general public. The fact that NGOs are called NGOs is because they have nothing to do with governments. They are independent and their work is solely for the people and for the rise of the society. They shouldn't interfere in anything related to politics. As for the fact that certain NGOs are the subsidiaries of intelligence services, this is still a controversial issue and is not well proven. Finally, NGOs are vital to the society, to the economy, and to the people, but they need to limit themselves to their well-known tasks; helping people in need, supporting certain countries which have been engaged in wars and so on, and fulfilling their entire social, economic, and humanitarian role.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The NGOs need to define where they really stand, what's the true nature of their work, and where do they wish to reach. By stating their exact role, people are going to believe in them more and so would governments. Thus, they won't feel scared of having lots of NGOs in their country. On the contrary, they would be glad, because at some point the entire world would consider them as a civilized country. This points out to the same direction i.e., NGOs are to stick to their worldwide task.

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