

Strengths and Constraints of International NGO Involvement in Social Assistance

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Abstract: In recent years, as a result of frequent political unrest and catastrophic events caused by natural disasters, there has been a growing international demand for objects capable of participating in social relief. In addition to most sovereign states and intergovernmental international organizations, international non-governmental organizations are also active in social relief, and they have made outstanding contributions to the defense of human rights, refugee relief, the prevention of infectious diseases, and other related relief work. Therefore, this paper analyzes the advantages and limitations of the participation of international non-governmental organizations in social relief by means of literature review and theoretical analysis. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can provide targeted help to countries in trouble in different aspects. However, due to their own problems, including becoming a political tool for some countries, and a lack of funds, they have also caused some negative impacts on the relief activities of international NGOs. NGOs need to recognize these concerns and find a balanced solution.

Keywords: non-governmental organizations, social assistance, strengths, limitations

1. Introduction

As the economy and society continue to develop and globalization increases, there seems to be a new perspective in the study of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A series of problems brought about by globalization, such as economic crises, environmental pollution, transnational crimes, terrorist organizations, and so on, cannot be borne by one country alone. Therefore, it is only through extensive cooperation that global problems can be solved [1]. The solid theoretical foundation and outstanding practical achievements of international NGOs have made them indispensable members of the social and relief fields. Because of their voluntary, non-profit, grassroots, public welfare and flexibility, international NGOs play an important role in alleviating poverty, promoting economic and social development, and maintaining social justice and stability [2-3]. Only with a deep understanding of the social assistance behaviour of international NGOs can we better understand the problems faced by NGOs, make better use of them, and give better play to their functions. Therefore, this paper analyzes the advantages and limitations of the participation of international non-governmental organizations in social relief by means of literature review and theoretical analysis.

2. Advantages of NGO Participation in the Social Assistance Process

First of all, NGOs have built up a better image among the public and are more likely to gain the public's trust because they do not seek private gains but only work for the public good. In this respect, NGOs receive much more donations from society compared to government and business. Public welfare is a code of conduct. Unlike the government, INGOs do not have the motivation to gain power, and their participation in social assistance is, to a certain extent, driven by the need for their own development [4]. It can also be said that they have no other pursuits. The poor themselves are poor and have nothing to exchange, and the voluntary and public welfare nature of NGOs is exactly what is needed in the field of social assistance. The participation of NGOs in social assistance in a voluntary and dedicated way will be more costly and effective than the government-based social assistance model [5]. In addition, most of the temporary volunteers in NGOs do not need to pay salaries or only have a small amount of work or living allowance. Compared with the government, the expenses required are much lower, which on the one hand can alleviate the burden of the recipients, and on the other hand, the money saved can be used in more relief programs [6]. The counseling work of many NGOs involves the participation of appropriate professionals who are also members of the NGOs themselves. They have both professional knowledge and dedication. This is an ideal elite type of relief that reaches out to the grassroots in a professional manner and is more efficient and quality-oriented, so that resources can be used more effectively and better relief results can be obtained.

Secondly, the greatest advantage of NGOs is their close ties with the general public, both geographically and socially. International NGOs often go deep into the lowest stratum of society and remote areas to provide services for the most basic people and the most special people [7]. Therefore, they can grasp the needs of the most basic people in a timely and accurate manner, understand the sufferings and demands of the most basic people in the lowest stratum of society, and have a small psychological distance from them so that they can provide targeted products and services, make scientific decisions, improve work efficiency, and pay more attention to the poor people. In addition, NGOs still provide a place for the poor to participate in organized activities [8]. The rescued people belong to the lowest stratum of society. They can't participate in social competition well, and they are relatively disadvantaged psychologically. NGOs give them a chance to participate in political life, organize them, cultivate their self-esteem and the spirit of self-reliance, help them obtain rights and interests, strive for independence, give them an opportunity to change their disadvantages, explore their potential, strengthen their self-development, and give them the ability and opportunity to participate in decision-making [9-10].

NGOs are even more important than the government in providing relief to weak governments and strong local authorities in troubled areas. Bureaucratic systems that have been in place for years in weak regions make it difficult for people or those in need of assistance to speak to the government and may hinder the process of seeking help from the government, which is not conducive to the efficiency of social assistance [11]. For example, the fraud group in Myanmar, the northern part of the country, has long been shrouded in the clouds of war, with government forces and local armed forces often exchanging fire, which has shaped the lives of most of the local people, especially those in the rural areas, in two ways: preparing for the war and experiencing the war [12]. Under these circumstances, the local people are in dire need of funds and money, and the constant clashes between the armed forces have led to the emergence of many illegal industries. Because of the weakness of the government, the victims are not able to get help in a timely manner. But for the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), they can play a certain role. For example, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Chaoshan has assisted the Chinese police in rescuing a number of youths kidnapped by the fraud syndicates in the past, which has stirred up public opinion [13].

3. Limitations of NGO Participation in the Social Assistance Process

It is not yet possible to measure precisely how much influence international NGOs have or how much responsibility they can assume or be able to assume in the area of social relief. However, we can also clearly see that the role and functions of international NGOs are not yet perfect. We should not be blindly optimistic about their evaluation. There is still much to be done to improve and refine them.

Firstly, some countries want to interfere in the politics and economies of other countries, on the one hand, to make them do their bidding, and on the other hand, to change their political and economic systems. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are characterized by their non-profit-making nature, and they need to receive financial assistance in order to be able to operate [14]. Some NGOs receive covert funding from certain multinational corporations or governments, often with certain conditions attached, and try to make NGOs the main implementers of government projects, thus transforming NGOs into "supernumerary departments" of the government and forming a special interest group. Certain NGOs will also give full play to their independence and confusion and carry out their activities around certain countries, thus becoming the political tools of these countries, causing troubles and difficulties to other countries, affecting their stability and security, and even triggering international conflicts. For example, during the Cold War, many NGOs became political tools between the United States and the Soviet Union. To a certain extent, since NGOs are non-profit organizations that need to receive donations from the community, they can easily be exploited. Some organizations would make use of their resources and power to threaten the government regime [15]. There are even some organizations that are far removed from the original principle of public interest. They will use various means to influence government decisions, pursue their own organizational and personal interests under the banner of the public interest, and even engage in illegal activities.

Apart from that, a shortage of funds is another significant problem for international NGOs. Ban Ki Moon mentioned in his speech in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on January 17, 2016, that as of January 2016, there was a global shortage of \$15 billion in social assistance funds, and we should work together to solve this problem. On the same day, the United Nations High Level Working Group on Humanitarian Financing released a report in Dubai, stating that war and frequent natural disasters are the main causes of the continuous increase in refugee numbers. In 2016, nearly 125 million people still did not receive enough basic necessities to survive and needed international assistance to barely make ends meet. The United Nations requires the international community to work together to clear obstacles, raise sufficient humanitarian aid funds, and save the affected populations. Due to various disasters happening around the world, many social assistance projects have encountered the problem of insufficient funding. For international NGOs, the lack of funding is not only the main obstacle to their continued assistance activities but also an important factor in determining whether they can independently carry out their work. In order to obtain more funding, international NGOs will also subconsciously make some changes, turning to developed country governments with large amounts of funds to exercise some power on their behalf in a secretive and recognized way in order to obtain government funding. The independence of international NGOs derives from their value of neutrality [16]. However, in some cases, the source of funding can also become an obstacle to the independence of NGOs. NGOs are based on the principle of non-profit making, and their source of funding mainly relies on donations from all sectors of the community, so NGOs are inevitably subject to the constraints and influences of a variety of factors, which can result in the overall quality of the project operation failing to live up to expectations. Unstable funding. Due to the lack of stability, the operation of projects is likely to be halted and abandoned halfway, which is a result of the lack of continuity and consistency of policies. The non-profit-making nature of NGOs only means that the proceeds obtained by NGOs cannot be used as dividends for their members, rather than placing restrictions on their operation. Many enterprises, when faced with financial pressure, will also engage

in business activities to obtain operating capital for their businesses [13]. This makes NGOs appear to be violating the non-profit-making principle of NGOs on the surface and taking on a certain commercial nature. Once there is a commercial element, it is very difficult to get rid of the profit-making purpose, and it will also be subject to the constraints of everyone in the market. There are also some social donors who will make donations because of various factors of personal interest, and in this case, there are often conditions attached. If NGOs do not have a good sense of proportion, they are likely to become the representatives of certain special interest groups, which will have a serious impact on the independence of the organization and, consequently, on the operation of the organization's projects.

In recent years, there has been an increasing involvement of international NGOs in the world, whereas the behaviour of NGOs in the world of aid is largely subject to the access policies of the recipient countries. After all, NGOs also have negative effects on the countries receiving aid. Many recipient countries are extremely sceptical about the aid activities of international NGOs, fearing that certain developed countries will use the name of international NGOs to exert economic control or political invasion on them. Many aid-receiving countries believe that if NGOs are funded by the government, then the actions of NGOs represent the government [5]. For countries receiving assistance, whether they can accept international NGOs, how to identify those NGOs that represent democracy, and how to regulate their behaviour are all problems that need to be solved urgently. If some countries, because of their own security interests, turn away a large number of international NGOs that are genuinely engaged in humanitarian relief, then, to a certain extent, they will lose the rare opportunity of obtaining international assistance, thus restricting their economic recovery and development. Some international NGOs, even if they have entered the recipient countries legally, are still rejected by the governments of the recipient countries in the course of carrying out humanitarian assistance. Sometimes, the aid projects of international NGOs will be inconsistent with the official policies of the recipient government, which considers this a challenge to and a blasphemy against its official authority. In addition, some international NGOs, in the name of "democracy" and "human rights", deviate from their original humanitarian orientation, which is detested by the recipient countries and further hampers the implementation of relief work.

4. Conclusion

International NGOs have made their relief operations faster and more efficient thanks to their excellent skills in disaster relief, their good communication skills, and their continuous innovations and breakthroughs in disaster relief methods. With great concern and respect for the interests of the people at the bottom of society, they have spread their humanitarian spirit, played an important, unique, and irreplaceable role for other international actors in global relief work, and become a role model for NGOs engaged in relief work all over the world. However, in practice, international NGOs are not immune to the negative impact of external factors and their own shortcomings on the conduct of their relief activities. Therefore, international NGOs must pay sufficient attention to this issue and find appropriate solutions so that they can develop on a healthier track.

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