
CONCEPT OF EQUALITY AND WELFARE IN THE CONTEXT OF NGOS

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at study the extent to which the Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) has contributed equity and welfare of rural communities in Sindh, Pakistan. It is argued that in Pakistan, most of the NGOs are operational with major emphasis on poverty alleviation. This is on the pretext of reduced role of public sector in addressing issues of poverty in rural areas. Whereas, poverty could be an outcome of policies that largely ignores welfare and equitable distribution of resources in the society. The proposition for this research is to consider NGO as an alternative entity towards significantly tackling the rural poverty. The research carried out in the district Badin, Sindh Pakistan.

Key words: Welfare, Equity, Poverty, Sustainability, NGOs.

INTRODUCTION

The equality and equity are two concepts that correlate with the welfare of the society. Whereas, according to Reeves and Baden, 2000, the concept of welfare is to be linked with the philosophy of economic development. The emergence of NGOs basically came into being in the economic development sector focusing on equality and equity leading to welfare of society. This paper provides a historical background of emergence of NGOs in development sector; taking the lead to replace or else supplement the responsibilities of economic development previously only restricted to public sector. The paper is divided into three parts: Part one largely represents relevant literature to assess the effectiveness of NGOs in general and Badin Sindh in particular. Part two comprised of analysis of data focusing on the study area and part three highlights conclusions; recommendations and references.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Welfare, equality and equity are the basis of any civilized society on which people rely and spend their lives accordingly. Welfare means the wellbeing, happiness, health and prosperity of a person or community or maintenance of person by social effort. Equity is the application of general principles of justice whereas equality is the state of being equal (Oxford Dictionary, 2011).

Government programs that provide financial help to individuals or groups in need are defined as welfare programs. These programs are funded by the tax payers of the society. It is the service that provides people with a number of things they choose to have (www.investopedia.com). Welfare economics seeks to assess economic policies in terms of their effects on the lives of the community (Kaplow & Shavell, 2006). It examines the benefits that people receive from taking part in economic activity and how society can make these benefits as large as possible (Mankiw, 2007).

Welfare economics is primarily concerned with the promotion of the welfare of a community as measured in the satisfaction derived from the economic goods at the disposal of the community (Deardorff, 2014). Its function is to help in the formulation of economic policies for maximizing social welfare. It analyses the establishment of criteria that can provide a positive basis for adopting policies which are likely to maximizing social welfare. Italian Economist, Pareto lays down certain conditions to achieve maximum social welfare. In a situation, according to him, it is not possible to achieve betterment without making someone worse off. He is also in a favor of change that improves situation without harming anyone. It is through welfare economic policies, that market achievement and allocation of resources can be judged. Utility Possibility Frontier being its most powerful tool, it defines the allocation achievement, subject to constrain of tastes and technologies (Besley, 2002; Dewett, 1989; and Paul & Robert, 2008).

To sum up, the concept of equality and welfare is one of the fundamental philosophies in Islam. The charity in Islam is used for creating equality among resource rich and resource poor ultimately this concept is an important tool for the betterment of society and it is linked with economic development of societies leading to welfare. Similarly, Islam uses *Zakat* and *Sadqa* endowment as a mean for prosperity and equality. The literature in the light of Quranic verses

confirms that the concept discussed in the section is important and essential. The succeeding section reviews welfare and equality in the western world. The idea is to suggest no religion denies the importance of equality in the society and every religion/ideology links welfare with the equality of resource distribution among their people.

Emergence of NGOs for Equality and Welfare: Growth of NGO's in Europe started in the 1960s and 1970s, gained momentum in the late 1970s and peaked in the 1980s onwards (Pourchot, 2008). This growth correlates with many Western European governments co-financing development tasks through NGOs (Woods, 2000). Official recognition of the importance of NGOs in United States of America got accepted about a century later after its existence in the mid nineteenth century (Hemerijck & Eichhorst, 2009). Article 71 of the charter of United Nations Organization (UNO) at UN Congress in San Francisco made provision for the economic and social development through NGOs, giving them a qualified and consultative status (Wyatt, 2004). The existence of NGOs in one form or the other after the industrial revolution is quite noteworthy their existence grew more after the Second World War, resulting in number of private and non-profitable organizations (Liqing, 1977). About 90 international NGOs were founded each year as compared to 10 each year in late nineties. History also shows that NGOs that were founded after the World War, survived at a better rate (NGO Handbook, 2010).

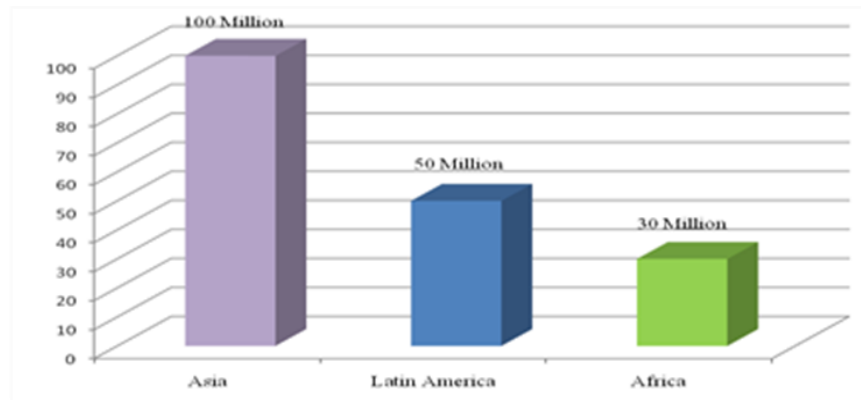
The scope of NGOs is not limited; their activities do not only include the establishment of hospitals, schools, social clubs, day care centers, they also form self-help groups, human rights groups and associations that work for the shelter progress, health and sanitation of the poor and homeless. As the name itself suggests, these organizations do not work under governments. They work independently, voluntarily on their own or on behalf of the others for the interest of the poor, relieving their sufferings and extending other social services to them (Haq, 2003).

Number of NGOs using various terms independently with or on behalf of others through activities that focus mainly on issues related to the development of the people who need technical advice or financial support, forming community groups with the participation of the people themselves to redress their problems (Alagappa, 2004). NGOs have been a powerful means to reach the channels where markets and governments have failed. The failure of government to

provide infrastructure, social service, human rights, environment, women, poverty alleviation, these are areas where NGOs have emerged as powerful and effective means to change the outlook of national and international policy makers (Rietbergen, 2008). Shortage and unequal distribution of resources is the main cause of poverty in developing countries. NGOs have enabled people to resist inequality and claim their rights. It is that about a hundred million people had the benefits of the welfare organizations in developing countries in early 1980s (UNDP, 2006).

It is at times difficult for government to reach the 20 percent of the poorest population living in rural areas of the country. The government services are very few or non-existent there. NGOs with a vast network of contact managed to reach emergencies quickly at advance warnings of danger and disaster and respond more effectively as compared to government means (UNDP 1993).

FIGURE-1

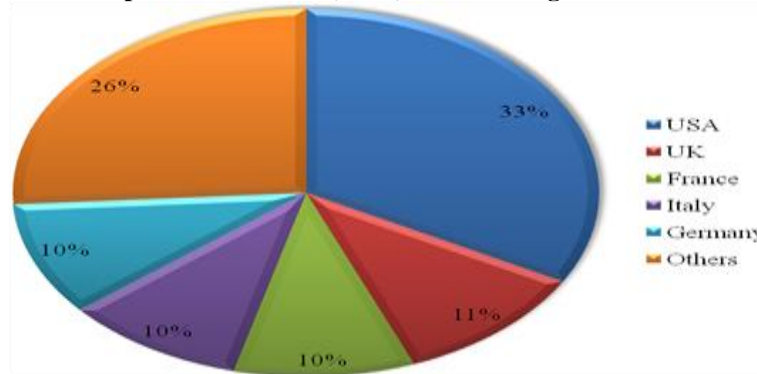


Source: UNDP 2010

Figure-1 shows that NGOs interact with people in different regions of developing countries in millions. It shows 100 million in Asia, 50 million in Latin America and 30 million in Africa (UNDP, 2010). The figure of absolute poverty rising in developing countries discourages participations with NGOs. The governments provide food and services to the poor people rather than finding permanent solutions and enabling them to rise on their own. The NGOs with the

help of community groups pursued government to play their role. Donations reach people through nongovernmental channels in developing countries with participatory involvement of the community groups. There is massive explosion of such participatory involvement in most of the developing countries, demonstrating creative solutions to the problems of poor and needy and also at the time of natural calamities (UNDP, 1993).

FIGURE-2
Official Development Assistance (ODA) Flow Through NGOs US \$ Billion



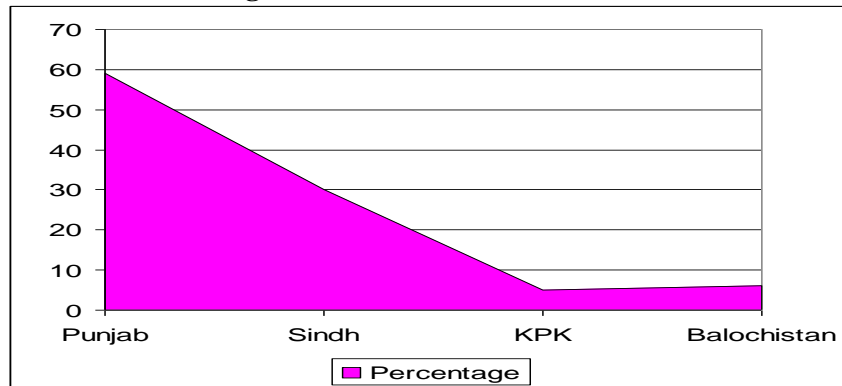
Source: OECD 2011

Figure 1.2 shows that the contribution of top donor countries which indicates that USA is the largest donor country which funded more to NGOs as compare to her countries. Over the last two decades the tightening financial constraints on the government and the growing awareness of the limitations of top down development program to alleviate poverty had created the space for Non-Government Organizations and alternate approaches to development actions. During that period a variety of NGOs vary from one country to another. Bangladesh has a strong tradition of NGO movements. NGOs cover 78 percent of villages in Bangladesh. In Srilanka, NGOs engaged in religious or social welfare activities (UNDP, 2003).

NGOs in Pakistan: NGOs in Pakistan came into existence at the time of partition when British India got divided into two independent states of Pakistan and India (Yousuf, 2010). People who have suffered as the result of communal riots, at the time of division; were in dire the need of help and welfare. As such many voluntary

agencies were setup by the Begums (wives) of politicians, bureaucrats, Businessmen and the prosperous.

FIGURE-3
Number of Registered NGOs in the Provinces of Pakistan



Source: Malik, 2014.

The first few years of the new country was the time when the most important and the active part of the work of NGOs was the rehabilitation of the refugees and the welfare. 1970's saw a sudden large increase in the number of NGO's during Martial Law³ in the country (Werker & Ahmed, 2007). However, NGO's could not produce ample movement for about 30 years because of the prevailing policies of welfare in the country (ADB, 1999).

STUDY RESULTS

In order to achieve study results, three NGOs working in the district Badin i.e. Badin Rural Development Society (BRDS); National Rural Support Programme (NRSP); and Laar Humanitarian Development Programme (LHDP) were selected, parameters such as demographic details; income patterns; lending procedures; perceptions and opinions and socio-economic impact on target population were analyzed. It is mentioned that study area i.e., district Badin is rich in minerals and natural resources.

³ The imposition of military rule [military authorities] over designated in regions on an emergency. Martial Law was imposed on 25 March 1969 by General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, and then imposed by General Zia on July 5, 1977.

TABLE-1
ASSESSING ROLE OF NGOS IN DEVELOPMENT

S.No.	Role of NGOs in Combating Poverty	Rank Present Ranking	Past Five Years
1	Health	4	4
2	Irrigation and Agriculture	7	5
3	Communication	3	6
4	Governance	11	11
5	Education	5	2
6	Electricity	11	12
7	Employment	10	10
8	Roads (link)	6	2
9	Shelter	8	7
10	Community Formation	1	1
11	Sea intrusion	9	8
12	Mother and Child Care	2	3
13	Income	12	9

Source: Survey Data, 2012-2013

Despite of all this, the poverty is widespread particularly in the rural and coastal areas. The district is vulnerable to disasters owing to low level of resilience of people and livelihoods. The people from these areas are more susceptible to multitude of hazards natural as well as manmade; this has ultimately deteriorated the socio-economic status people in Badin.

Table-1 shows the present and past ranking and assessing of NGOs in the social sectors, basic utilities and other different sectors.

TABLE-2
EXTENT OF USEFULNESS OF TRAINING BY NGOS

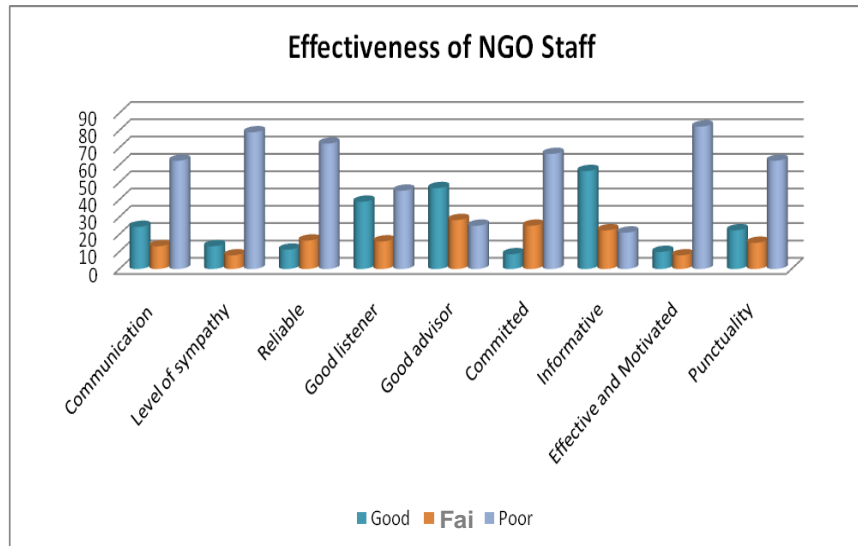
N=152

Description	Cases	Percent
Very Effective	31	20
Effective	31	20
Less Effective	85	56
None	5	4
All	152	100

Source: Survey data, 2012-13

Table 2 reveals the usefulness of trainings given by the NGOs which shows that very effective and effective comprise 20 percent each whereas large number of respondents (56 percent) found the training less effective. The Table indicates that there is a need of conducting more effective trainings by the NGOs in the study area.

FIGURE-4
EFFECTIVENESS OF NGO STAFF



Source: Survey Data 2012-2013.

It is mentioned that the concept of VDO (Village Development Organizations) formation in the sample areas was initiated in 2003. NRSP being the oldest organization in the area initiated some four to five VDOs to highlight the importance of social issues. NRSP started social sector development program that encourage villagers at CBO/VDO level to participate physically and financially for health, illiteracy and transport programs. Local NGOs which are operational

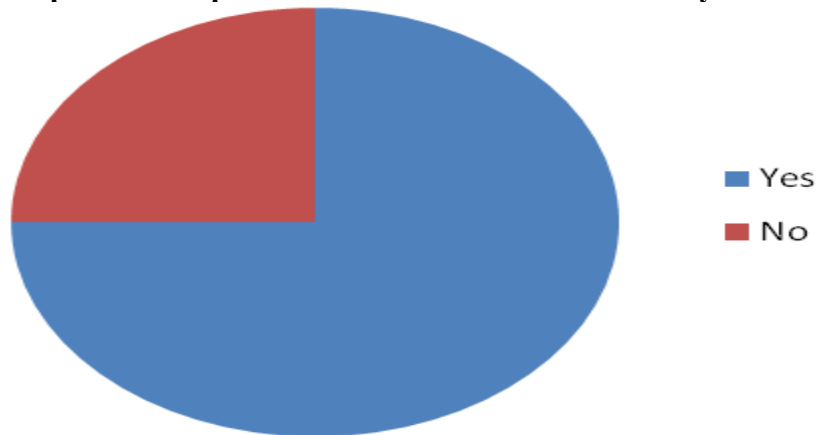
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physically and financially for health, illiteracy and transport programs. Local NGOs which are operational in the area they have broaden the arisen of their scope of operations which includes a right based approach. The BRDS is largely based on issues relating to and healthcare and providing electricity in the area. However, they are also advocating the principles of right based approach through involvement of committees at CBO/VDO levels. One of the main objectives of right based approach has been its emphasis upon advocacy problems, and its nature, remedial steps. The right based approach is largely derived from the human rights philosophy and being advocated by BRDS. The operations of LHDP are relatively new in the area. It started its functions in 2006 with focus on advocating environmental issues and disaster management in coastal areas. The CBOs largely are based upon advocacy.

Data suggest that almost every day contact with communities is a regular feature which is reflected by the success rate of NGO in terms of sustainability and saving. It is mentioned that NRSP which has roots in establishing the concept of community participation, hire and mobilize other field staff from the communities. Large proportion of CBOs that were established by the NRSP presented people working in NRSP on full time basis, similar to that of LHDP and BRDS.

Survey data reveals that (Figure-4) micro credit recipients of the sample NGOs were helpful in creating communication levels among the villages. 10 percent of total explained that NGO has been able to create sympathy. Overall between 72 percent to 80 percent sample respondents ranked poor in terms of NGOs effectiveness in contributing above factors as highlighted on X- axis.

FIGURE-5
Respondent's Opinion about Overall Contributions by the NGO



Source: Survey Data 2012-2013.

Figure 5 reveals the contribution made by the sample NGOs. The contribution is estimated by NGOs involvement in bringing awareness, financial stability, viability at CBOs, VDOs and household levels. Around 30 percent respondents replied no in other words they were of the opinion that NGOs did not contribute at all whereas 70 percent explained that there are quantifiable contributions by the NGO.

CONCLUSION

The article reviewed equity and welfare concepts in relation to NGOs. Overall, the paper suggested that there is a substantial contribution of NGOs especially at local VDO levels. The performance, efficiency and interaction of sample NGOs with communities showed mixed results in terms of their efficiency but at the same time it should be mentioned that NGOs are working in study area for a long time and its impact is positive on the lives of the poor people as mentioned by the people themselves.

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