



NGO field workers in Pakistan

Lucrătorii în domeniul ONG în Pakistan

Ph.D. Student Muhammad Haroon SIDDIQUE
Asian Institute of Technology Thailand
e-mail: haroonplanner@hotmail.com

Abstract

NGOs came into the society in their present form after World War II and more precisely in 1960s. Before that also different forms of philanthropy existed. Like elsewhere in the world, in Pakistan also state and the market were the two sectors catering for different needs of the people. When foreign funding started coming into the poor countries, the channel of NGOs was considered more appropriate including the fact they had roots in the society and the benefit could reach the far flung areas. NGO field workers are the real actors in the NGOs' activities but sadly the NGOs those raise the slogans of working for the destitute do not bother to facilitate the NGO field workers. Eventually the NGO field workers are facing problems of job insecurity, poor salary structure, unhealthy working environment and even harassment especially in case of women NGO field workers in Pakistan.

Keywords: *Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), NGO field workers, wage level and structure, working conditions*

Rezumat

ONG-urile au apărut în societate, în forma lor actuală, după al doilea război mondial, mai precis în anii 1960. Înainte de acestea, au existat de asemenea diferite forme de filantropie. Ca și în alte locuri din lume, în Pakistan, de asemenea statul și piața erau cele două sectoare care se ocupau de diferitele nevoi ale oamenilor. Când a început finanțarea străină în țările sărace, canalele prin ONG-uri au fost considerate mai adecvate, inclusiv datorită faptului că au rădăcini în societate și beneficiile ar putea ajunge în zone îndepărtate marginalizate. Lucrătorii din domeniul ONG-urilor sunt adevărații actori ai activităților ONG-urilor, dar din păcate, ONG-urile care ridică sloganuri că lucrează pentru cei nevoiași nu se preocupă să faciliteze activitatea lucrătorilor în domeniul ONG-urilor. În cele din urmă, lucrătorii din domeniul ONG-urilor se confruntă cu probleme de nesiguranță a locului de muncă, salarii mici, mediu de lucru nesănătos și chiar hărțuire, în special în cazul femeilor care lucrează în domeniul ONG-urilor din Pakistan.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Organizații Non-Guvernamentale (ONG), lucrători în domeniul ONG, structura și nivelul salariilor; condiții de lucru*

JEL Classification: L31, J31, J81

Introduction

Am and scope of this section is to introduce this study. The study entitled 'NGO Field Workers in Pakistan' is mainly a secondary research with a slight blend of personal experiences of the author working with and for the NGOs as well as NGO field workers in Pakistan for almost a decade before pursuing doctoral degree presently at the Asian Institute of Technology in Thailand. The study is tried to be made a comprehensive piece of work on the topic which has never been taken before in the academia. This study starts with a global perspective on the NGOs as well as the NGO field workers in which specific examples of particular countries round the world are also cited wherever deemed appropriate. NGO field workers are actually the movers of the society (Ahmad: 2002) and especially in the case of unstable government structure and unpredictable corporate sector the importance of NGOs (and the NGO field workers who are actually the force behind the activities of the NGOs) is enormous who act as innovative agents of social change promoting political participation that is possible due to their ability to reach the marginalized (Ahmad: 2009). The study then flows in a manner that it focuses on the situation in Pakistan regarding the NGOs and the NGO field workers – that is the main concern here of this study. Ahmad's (2007) point is thought provoking where he mentions that the NGO field workers are undervalued resource; he mentions in his book (2002) that the poor NGO field workers are facing problems including job insecurity, lack of promotions, weak salary structure harassment and so on. It was really painful to find the NGO field workers facing problems of diversified nature when I worked with and for them in Pakistan. Certain case studies have been presented in the due course those elaborate the situation further. Main objectives of this study are as follows: (1) To study the work of NGO field workers in Pakistan; and (2) To highlight the problems faced by the NGO field workers in Pakistan. Whereas the probable outcomes of this study are as follows: (1) Nature and extent of the workload of the NGO field workers in Pakistan will come forward; (2) Problems faced by the NGO field workers in Pakistan will come into the scene; (3) Possible solutions for the problems faced by the NGO field workers in Pakistan will be brought forward; and (4) Potential of the NGO field workers will be better utilized through solving their problems. Rationale of this study is that since the NGO sector is becoming very important as far as the development in the developing countries is concerned where the government and the corporate sector are not strong enough to do well for the development. So, it is very important to see what the situation is for the main actors regarding NGO work- the NGO field workers. Moreover, since no work is seen in the academia regarding NGO field workers in Pakistan so it is worth to carry out this study. Conclusion part may be said the core and crust of the work where the analysis is made that enabled the author to suggest certain recommendations for better performance of the NGO field workers in Pakistan.

It seems quite sensible and appropriate to make a number of clarifications here regarding some aspects in this study; these clarifications are as follows: (1) Since no work is done so far in the academia regarding the NGO field workers in Pakistan so it is taken as the title of this study – taking up some more specific area as title would be a later stage when some other research will be conducted in this area; (2) The only most relevant works done so far on NGO field workers are those in Bangladesh – a country with many socio-economic similarities with Pakistan – so referring those works (those too by a single author – Dr. Mokbul Morshed Ahmad) a number of times in this study should not be embarrassing at all keeping in view the abovementioned reason; and (3) The author has mentioned his personal experiences of working with and for the NGO field workers in Pakistan only because in the absence of any work on the topic it was need of the hour to mention; the author apologizes if it appears to be a projection of himself, anyway.

Methodology

The aim and scope of this section is to briefly give the sequence how this study was conducted. This study being a secondary research mainly, deserved to search, review and analyze as well as interpret the literature. So the literature available in the print media (books, journals, conference papers etc.) as well as the authentic electronic media was gone through to make the body of this study. Certain personal communication instances with appropriate personnel can also be seen in the work. Certain personal experiences of the author during the professional career for the past almost a decade are also made use of where deemed appropriate. All of this was then analyzed and concluded to arrive at certain results those enabled the author to suggest certain recommendations as well. *Note: All the names in this study are fictitious.*

NGOs and NGO field workers: global scenario

The aim and scope of this section is to develop a ground for the study. As mentioned in the title of the section that a global scenario is given here that starts with an open discussion on the emergence of the NGOs. What brought them in, what they are, what they aimed at and what they have done so far is the way how this section flows. Having given the operational definitions it is tried to develop an understanding of NGOs incorporating arguments and counterarguments as well as mentioning some successfully made efforts round the globe; further prospects are also mentioned along with giving some useful sources those may help NGOs perform better. The main emphasis is obviously on the NGO field workers. This aspect is dealt in the second part of the section. It should not be astonishing to see that the second part of the section that deals with NGO field workers runs in a flow without making subheadings those might disrupt the flow of reading. Servos and Marcuello (2007) have concluded their work (regarding an NGO and a business)

giving four scenarios for give and take between the NGOs and the corporations. They fear that the relationship between the two stakeholders 'may take the form of alliances or contests, whereby they may either cooperate or continue fighting: either they listen to each other and make concessions, or they carry on with their dialogue of the deaf'.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are not new; those seen today are the product of 20th century. However, philanthropy was there since the start of human history. The present form of NGOs has resulted due to creeping forces into the society including the aid. The present form of NGOs has come forward due to aid phenomenon after the World War II (especially in 1960s) when aid started flowing from rich to the poor countries – developed rich countries are working in the poor developing countries. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) uses the terms 'North' and 'South' – 'South' is used for medium and low-wealth countries whereas 'North' is used for the G-8 and other twenty-five countries in the developed world in addition to the North America. Some believe that NGO is nothing but interference in the market. NGOs are important due to two distinct reasons: (1) NGOs are growing: both in size and number; and (2) NGOs do the service delivery. Due to such factors NGOs are becoming career jobs now-a-days in many countries – especially those with little or lesser attractive job opportunities.

Public and private sectors were the two main sectors supposed to be taking care of the concerns of individuals as well as the society on the whole until need was felt that there ought to be a third sector; since: (i) Public sector or the state is inefficient, and (ii) Private sector or the business is monopolist. This third sector – the NGOs - may be characterized as having some similarities with both the public and private sectors with certain additional characteristics those were need of the hour. Due to this basic reason, sometimes NGOs are also considered and/or called the third sector. Counterarguments suggest that the new social movements are in many cases results from people's discontent with traditional political process. I would like to argue that since the individuals as well as the collective bodies of the individuals at different levels strive to develop themselves to live a better life so they keep on looking for better avenues. As a matter of fact, the political processes in many countries have been strongly influenced by certain limited groups of individuals or even merely individuals those could not bring prosperity for all. In some other countries even the prominent political parties could not satisfy the citizens. In such a situation where people's discontent with the traditional political process was envisaged, emergence of new social movements (NSMs) - those focused sometimes on certain issues, sometimes were struggles in themselves and in other cases were aimed at awareness creation – were warmly welcomed as those emerged targeting the burning issues and the felt needs of the people.

Hilhorst (2003) has very marvelously remarked, 'there is no single answer to the questions of what an NGO *is*, what it *wants* and what it *does*. NGOs are many things at the same time. An NGO may adopt a certain structure, but in practice where are its boundaries? NGOs present different faces to different stakeholders'. Ahmed and Potter (2006) state, 'NGOs and IGOs have grown over the last half century'. One question could be that when there were many models; why and/or how NGOs have come into the scene? The answer is that in the evolving society market came in when individuals started getting skilled so they exchanged goods and services initially through barter system until they started the present form of marketing - exchanging money to procure goods and services. Since state was an entity whereas market was a system; NGOs came to the scene and came in as an entity. Some spoke of an 'associational revolution' commenting on the enormous rise in number of NGOs when it became a major phenomenon in development during 1980s (Salamon: 1994). To Tvedt (1998) NGOs are formed in such a large number because they fill the gaps created by the withdrawal of government control under the pressure of neo-liberal reform policies. I consider both the points are well placed as different factors including these made room for the third sector to come in.

NGOs: Global Scenario

Private and voluntary organizations (PVOs) of the United States have played an important role in the international assistance (McCleary and Barro: 2008). Over the time different developments have been seen across the world where nations played their philanthropic role; for instance, 'In the post-World War II period, major revenue patterns are the rise of Evangelical PVOs, decline of Jewish PVOs, and rapid growth of secular PVOs from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s (McCleary and Barro: 2008). Let us have a look on the arguments and counterarguments regarding the NGOs that will facilitate us to see both the viewpoints of the academics:

Arguments. Charitable donations and voluntary services (wholly or partially) make up the foundations for the typically value-based organizations: the NGOs. Although the NGO sector has become increasingly professionalized over the last two decades, principles of altruism and voluntarism remain key defining characteristics (World Bank: 1995). In the light of Clark's (1998) work we may include philanthropic foundations, churches, development agencies, think-tanks, human rights organizations (and other organizations working for like gender, health, agriculture, social welfare, environment as well as the indigenous people) in the NGOs; however other non-profit organizations such as private hospitals, private schools, religious groups, sports clubs and QUANGOs (QUasi Autonomous Non-Governmental Organizations) may not be included in NGOs. Ahmad (2009) includes ability to reach poor or marginalized groups as one of the main strengths of the NGOs adding their acting as innovative agents of social change, promoting political participation as well as expressing popular concerns, acting as centers of

innovation, providing flexible responses to problems and running at low cost as some further strengths of NGOs.

Counterarguments. Interestingly 'NGOs define themselves as what they are *not*. It is only recently that they have attempted a more positive construction of what they are and want to be (Marcuello: 1996). To Cohen et al (2008) only a motley group of aid agencies, international charities as well as philanthropists stand between the world's most dysfunctional states and collapse – the efforts so made rather harm the capacity of the governments. I also agree to the result they conclude as 'a vicious cycle of dependence and too many voices calling the shots'. As a matter of fact, a major drawback in all such efforts made is that they cannot address the issues properly due to vested interests in many cases. Also the international/global policies are a reason for poor achievements of such efforts like Cohen et al (2008) point towards 'when aid reaches developing countries, it increasingly bypasses the host governments altogether - often going straight in to the coffers of the new colonialists on the ground'. Citing the situation in Afghanistan regarding which they argue that the extent of the new colonialists' influence is perhaps best illustrated there; Cohen et al (2008) state the incapacity of the government where the aid goes directly to the beneficiaries and incapacitates the government. I suggest that it is better that the governments be helped out to build their capacity so that a sustainable development may be seen through stable governments. Lack of accountability is one prominent weakness of the NGOs, similarly top-down decision-making, more using mainstream approaches than true innovation, rarely cost-effective (sometimes corrupt rather), lacking sustainability, working as resource brokers rather than 'change agents' and appearing to be neo-colonial agents of neo-liberalism are some other prominent weaknesses of the NGOs (Ahmad: 2009). Some academics argue that unguided efforts of most NGOs have rather worsened the situation regarding the particular aspect that they worked for; environmental NGOs have damaged the environment more than anybody else (Imran: 2009).

Operational Definitions of NGOs

Clark (1998) defined NGOs as private, non-profit professional organizations with a distinctive legal character concerned with public welfare goals. Although the term NGO can be applied to any non-profit organization (independent of the government) in a broader perspective, the World Bank (1989; 1995) has defined NGOs as private organizations pursuing activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services or undertake community development.

NGOs: An Understanding

NGOs are more popular and effective in performing those tasks which neither the state nor the business can perform well; sometimes they also perform public tasks delegated to them by the state; similarly influencing direction of policy

in the state or business or even some other NGOs is also a function that NGOs perform (Ahmad: 2009). Thomas (2008) articulates:

In practice the contribution of NGOs to development is enormously varied and multidimensional, reflecting their sheer numbers and diversity. There is a huge difference between international NGOs, mostly based in the developed world, and indigenous local or national NGOs in the developing world. Often started as charitable relief or missionary welfare organizations, the former generally work in developing countries through their own branches or with local partner organizations, often NGOs themselves. Majority of the latter are small, but they include organizations such as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), the largest national NGO in the developing world, with over 97,000 employees in 2005 (www.brac.net/about).

NGOs can broadly be distinguished from grass roots organizations (GROs: the membership organizations) that GROs are formally accountable to their members in contrast to NGOs those are not actually. However, more habitually used and understood, there are three levels of NGOs - Grass Roots Organizations, Intermediary NGOs and International or Donor NGOs. Amongst these, Grass Roots Organizations (GROs) are the largest in number but are very small in size as they are localized, have limited funds and outreach. The Donor NGOs are big in size, mostly foreign funded and do not work directly with beneficiaries. The intermediary NGOs work on a regional level, and are relatively bigger than GROs or CBOs (Community Based Organizations) and smaller than donor organizations in size and outreach. Intermediary NGOs exist in thousands, are formal in most cases, are managed by professional staff and work directly with the beneficiaries or in partnership with CBOs/GROs or Donor Organizations. Rehman (2003) declares, 'When people talk about NGOs they generally refer to the Intermediary NGOs, and the combined beneficiaries of Intermediary NGOs are more than the GROs and Donor Organizations'; that sounds sensible to me.

The World Bank, though works with both in field operations, research as well as analytical work, and policy dialogue (World Bank: 1996) also that it does not view this distinction as rigid recognizing that majority of NGOs operate along a continuum in which a great deal of overlap exists, has manifested a distinction amongst the NGOs as Operational NGOs (ONGOs) and Advocacy NGOs (ANGOs). ONGOs are further subdivided by the World Bank as Community Based Organizations, national organizations and international organizations. Community Based Organizations (CBOs) serve a specific population in a narrow geographic area; national organizations operate in individual 'developing' countries and international organizations are typically headquartered in 'developed' countries carrying operations in more than one 'developing' country (World Bank: 1995).

I agree to Rehman's (2003) point saying there is a general perception that the NGOs are not being managed properly – that he arrived at adopting descriptive-exploratory method of study involving extensive literature research, data collection in the field through questionnaire and interviews, case studies throughout the South

Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) region and data analysis under descriptive and inferential statistics (since there is a dearth of research on NGO management) – he confirmed that as a result the general perception that the NGOs are not being managed well in SAARC countries was found to be true. International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC) United Kingdom has developed good management indicators (Rehman: 2003); using which he further says that the findings of the literature search and data analysis established that the majority of the NGOs in the region did not have a proper management system as tested against the suggested Management Assessment Tools (MAT)/Management Indicators by INTRAC UK. He designed a management model, namely ‘Operational NGO Management Model’ and recommended principles of NGO management on the bases of the results of descriptive in addition to inferential statistical analysis.

Successfully Made Efforts by the NGOs

NGOs have asserted their commitment to (human) rights-based strategies and mandates; also they have explored the under-exploited links between development, environment and the protection of civil and political rights; and they successfully launched economic and social rights campaigns to mobilize international affirmations of universal rights to a range of social and economic goods (education, health care, water and food) and even the right to development to encourage concrete changes in policy and practice by the states. British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND) is the UK’s broadest network of voluntary organizations working in international development. Found in June 1993, BOND aims to improve the UK’s contribution to international development by promoting the exchange of experience, ideas and information (www.bond.org.uk: 2008). In Masood and Yontcheva’s (2005) study, the NGO aid appeared more effective in reaching more precisely to the poor and vulnerable populations due to which they stated that the donors who chose the aid to channel through NGOs made the right choice. Afghan example depicts that national NGOs can grow and flourish if they receive reliable funding, appropriate training, and good advice, and if their finances are subject to regular audit. Conversely, Malawian example shows the dangers inherent in the intermediary relationship and its vulnerability to unpredictable, inflexible, and inappropriate support from major donor – INGOs can do much less harm and much more good, if they train their donor to expect nothing less (Barber and Bowie: 2008). Siddique and Zaidi (2008) mention a success story in community oriented low income housing where they highlight that NGO gave a role model to the government establishing low-income housing for the poor in different cities of Pakistan. This is a good example that if a sincere leadership is there, the NGO sector can really do a lot – can set models for others, let alone set by itself.

Room for Improvement

To Rao (2000) the methodologies may require the use of NGOs; whereas it is needed for NGOs also to be effective and to play a strategic role. He further adds that the national governments have a critical role to play in designing and implementing strategies; such strategies will pay-off over a reasonably long period, a high degree of commitment and consistency in policies over a similar period of time is a must. Inclusion of the poor in set-ups at different levels also helps them build networks and coalitions which will protect against positions gained through their proper participation and involvement (Shepherd: 1994). A very crucial point to consider in participation of the people in planning and development is that such participation should not only be in development projects but more importantly in development of organizations and the systems those govern their development. Similarly, levels of participation are also not lesser important where such participation is ensured at small groups level to medium and large sizes. Degree of participation may vary at such diversified levels depending upon the broadening of horizons of the participants.

The reasons for inefficiency of the efforts are so many and the major reason as diagnosed by most of the experts is that the individuals and small groups tried to pave the way but a collective effort on a country level as well as a strong push through the commons collectively as a nation could not be made that could bring about a major change - the NGOs are ranked as having a very important role to play in the development of areas and the people therein; another advantage with NGOs is that they have a widespread network in many cases and they have got links to the masses - since they understand the problem as well as have got moderate solutions so they can very effectively be in to the development practice and perform well (Siddique: 2008).

A further suggestion is that social capital should be used since social cohesion, creativity and resilience all can do a lot (Siddique: 2009) in enlarging the impact of NGO efforts. Sastry (2008) complains the current development approach as ignoring the 'transmission costs' in delivering public services claiming that these amount to be eighty per cent as a result of which only twenty per cent reaches the ultimate beneficiaries and suggests to try a different approach as giving only half a dollar per day to every citizen in the Third World countries - give lump sum to the lowest tiers of the elected body representatives asking them to spend only on these goals calling NGOs to monitor the expenditure.

Fragmentation of the local health system, undermining local control of health programs and contribution towards growing local social inequality are some of the results in the past decades of deluge of INGOs and their expatriate workers in Mozambique: a distortion occurring in many poor countries (Anderson: 1996). Ahmad and Kumar (2008) say while discussing Nagapattinam in India that the district administration representative complained because there was no direct NGO

involvement in disaster preparedness plan; however, the district administration invited NGOs in relief and rehabilitation process.

Stephen Carr has been involved in Malawi since 1989. He complained Barber and Bowie (2008) about foreign NGOs in Malawi as distorting labor market by paying huge salaries to their Malawian staff that eventually attracted the well-qualified Malawians away from government service as well as local civil society organizations. He also complained that many foreign NGOs brought confusion and even duplication to 'development' efforts as they can not coordinate their activities with the government and/or ignore government policies. Pfeiffer (2003) reports about British NGOs as paying their staff working in Kenya less than the government rates in 1960s – with only fraction of the INGOs remunerations paid by many locally owned NGOs in Kenya excellent results were reaped by many in Kenya.

Midgley (1995) discussed strategies for social development where he talked about the contribution by the individuals, by the communities and by the governments. Ahmad (2009) has very rightly suggested that in addition to do service delivery by themselves as well as motivating the governments on service delivery the NGOs should also highlight the failures so that lessons may be learned through such failures and further success may be sought. Efforts to make empirical assessments of other social phenomena including NGOs are related to civil society but do not capture well the notion of this important social space (Malena and Heinrich: 2007).

The following bodies may be quite helpful to those working for sustainable 'development' (some of them being declared by the UN as partners):

International Monetary Fund (IMF) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) monitors economic and financial developments, and provides policy advice, aimed especially at crisis-prevention. The fund lends to countries with balance of payment difficulties, to provide temporary financing and to support policies aimed at correcting the underlying problems; loans to low-income countries are also aimed especially at poverty reduction. Third, the IMF provides countries with technical assistance and training in its areas of expertise (www.imf.org/).

World Institute for Development Economics Research. United Nations University (UNU) – World Institute for Development Economics Research aims (www.wider.unu.edu/: 2008): (1) to undertake multi-disciplinary research and policy analysis on structural changes affecting the living conditions of the world's poorest people; (2) to provide a forum for professional interaction and advocacy of policies leading to robust, equitable and environmentally sustainable growth; (3) to promote capacity strengthening and training for scholars and government officials in the field of economic and social policy making.

The World Bank. The World Bank is a vital source of financial and technical assistance to developing countries around the world. Yet it is not a bank in the common sense. The World Bank comprises two unique development institutions owned by 185 member countries – the International Bank for

Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (www.worldbank.org/: 2008).

United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) is an autonomous UN agency engaging in multidisciplinary research on the social dimensions of contemporary problems affecting development. Through its research, UNRISD stimulates dialogue and contributes to policy debates on key issues of social development within and outside the United Nations system (www.unrisd.org/: 2008).

NGO Field Workers

NGO field workers are actually the front-line staff of the non-governmental organizations. Among the most prominent questions those arise in the minds of the development workers as well as NGO field workers are (i) how does change happen? and (ii) what can we do to make it happen in the way we would like it to? (Eyben et al: 2008).

The international agencies also recommend developing human resource, as they are well- aware of the fact that once human resources are channelized properly the other resources can be directed accordingly. Foley (2008) should not be ignored in this context who believes:

The quality of NGO work is hugely dependent on the quality of critical thinking and analysis of poverty among all levels of staff. In particular, the quality of the work in the field – at partner and community levels – depends on an understanding of development processes and on strong facilitation skills, both of which rely on strong levels of critical thinking. While these are innately present in almost everyone, rote learning in education systems and patriarchal and top-down power structures often impede their development.

Ahmad (2002) reported NGO managers as saying that they used to do such and such extraordinary activities while they were NGO field workers (expecting their NGO field workers to do those activities); to me it was not a logical expectation of the managers from NGO field workers. I perceive that they were the exceptional cases who urged to get to managerial ranks so they managed to do what they reported; but as a matter of fact all field workers can not do those extraordinary activities those their managers were expecting from the poor fellows (unless these NGO field workers were also ambitious enough to go higher managerial ranks - that every NGO field worker can not). 'Everybody can do something but everybody cannot do every thing', they say. The managers set their priority to become managers so they did accordingly, normally NGO field workers don't. Why those managers did not understand that most of their ex-field worker colleagues were not managers like themselves. I can cite here my personal experience of opening and successfully running more than fifty adult literacy

centers while I was working at the position of a literacy coordinator (where a literacy coordinator was supposed to open and run fifty adult literacy centers at a time); when one of my seniors inquired as to how I could do that and my position that not everyone can do so but as I was expecting higher position soon (that I really rose to) so I managed it with unusual special skills and techniques.

Parks (2008) informs us about the funding for NGOs that the constantly shifting priorities of the international donors are the reason of often experienced fluctuations for NGOs in Asian countries. I agree with Devereux (2008) who concludes in his work that through their individual action – though in a small way – volunteers are able to challenge the causes of under-development. I strongly support Ahmad (2002) saying, ‘--- the field workers of NGOs, the people working directly with the clients, are an undervalued and underused resource’. However, I would like to add that in the exceptional cases where the top management is sincere and wants to ‘develop’ the country, NGO field workers are valued and well-used resource; I’ll refer the case of UPAP here regarding which a comprehensive account is given in the 4th section of this study.

NGOs and NGO field workers: Pakistani scenario

Ki-Zerbo (2003) says, ‘I consider progress – that which is called ‘development’ – to be about fulfilling one’s potential as a human being in order to be a broadcaster and receiver of values’.

NGOs in Pakistani Scenario

There can be seen four different types of NGOs in Pakistan as follows: (1) International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs): Like Oxfam; (2) National Non-governmental Organizations (NNGOs): Like National Rural Support Program (NRSP); (3) Regional Non-governmental Organizations: Like Punjab Rural Support Program (PRSP), Balochistan Rural Support Program (BRSP) and Sarhad Rural Support Program (SRSP) – each of the three for one particular province - Punjab, Balochistan and North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) respectively; and (4) Local Non-governmental Organizations: working in one district or even only at a village level.

NGOs have got a very important role to play in the overall development planning. As far as the situation in Pakistan is concerned, there are over seventy thousand NGOs registered (Jang: 2006) for helping the people in different capacities and in different aspects. Situation can definitely improve through conducting their designed role. To Sahibzada (1997) apart from emergency relief operations, there are several other approaches - helping those who can not help themselves, distribution of alms, food, clothing, dowry, healthcare (that is traditional welfare approach e. g; Edhi Welfare Trust, Fatmid Foundation and

thousands of smaller welfare organizations support for self-help mobilization through government policies of providing productive assets including livestock, agricultural land and tools). The NGOs on one hand create awareness amongst the poor about different aspects of 'development' and on the other hand they organize the masses to think about solutions. Similarly, the NGOs help the poor people to get to appropriate means, people and places who can help them out in meeting their demands.

NGOs can also sensitize the policy-makers through making people get together and raise their voices so that the decision-makers may be informed that the masses are demanding such and such needs of theirs. In Pakistan especially, the sensitization of the policy-makers is really important as in many cases the elected people as well as the ones rising high in particular fields are not or at least less aware of the sensitivity of the problem related to the issues of that particular field. I agree with Foley (2008) who suggests critical or analytical thinking as lying at the heart of any transformative process; and I appreciate him as he further adds that it needs to be allied to something more fundamental an intuitive.

Cat and mouse game between the government and the NGOs that is quite prominent in many African countries is also prevalent in Pakistan although the two are not as non-friendly here in Pakistan as in African countries. NGOs do not treat the disease; they rather cure the symptoms – as the international donors want. NGOs do not make structural changes either - they are non-state; and NGOs are not well-recognized - a big area where NGOs are weak.

Historically Pakistan has witnessed a combination of military rule and that of the few feudal families for the past over six decades since its inception in 1947. The present situation shows a scenario where one group seems to be strengthening the military hands whereas another seems to be rebellious to it. NGOs have been very active in Pakistan especially the 1980s onwards. Today the civil society is active in diversified ways where the religious group has also got prominence along with the secular one. Although it is not possible to see NGOs as autonomous still we may go for some indicators those help us understand the autonomy of the NGOs in certain aspects being the third sector. Negative connotations are also there in Pakistan regarding the work of NGOs but it is quite evident that on the whole the NGOs have also played their role in the 'development' of Pakistan. A very important question raised about the NGOs is that 'who will bear the torch tomorrow?' It is really worth since in most cases, especially in the CBOs/GROs and similar small scale NGOs, a single motivated person founded and ran the NGO activities; but once s/he is off the scene (passes away or so) the fate of the NGO is at stake. Foley's (2008) concern here is guiding where he recommends on creating critical thinking amongst the NGO field workers who may keep on the mission. The motives, derivatives and the agenda are really important to be envisaged as to whether those are by the founders or community themselves or are from outside like from donors and so – since these are the driving force that not only determines the direction of work rather keeps the mission going on.

Successfully Made Efforts by NGOs in Pakistan

Provision of affordable facilities of microcredit has been experienced as a vital element and an effective tool for the eradication of poverty and hunger - the Urban Poverty Alleviation Program (UPAP) of the National Rural Support Program (NRSP) has done remarkable work to alleviate poverty in different areas of some nine districts of Pakistan. Here in the case of UPAP the credit facility had been extended to the poor families through their women family members that on one hand empowered women and on the other hand enabled recovery mechanism to be efficient due to number of reasons including cultural aspects. This microcredit facility helped the poor to get out of the clutches of local money-lenders and enabled them to stand on their own means (Urban Poverty Alleviation Program: 2007).

Human resource development is considered to be the most important aspect and tool for enabling people to adjust to the newly developed system and become an effective tool in the machinery of society. There has been an emphasis on the same that has always been made at different levels so that a proper system may evolve that best suits the needs and helps shape the society/community accordingly. Human resource development and management as well as gainful employment lead to economic growth. This is so evident in a fast moving scientific and systematic life of today that nobody can deny it, disagree to it or have confusion about it. Evidences show that the economies with good human resources are flourishing at a pace faster than the ones those lack it. Malaysia is an example of neither far away as far as distance is concerned, nor this is a past history. They developed only when they developed their human resource through educating their nation and creating awareness amongst them that if they address laziness and corruption; and start working properly, not only the national scene will change rather they will prosper individually as well. Korea is another living example of the similar background as that of Pakistan. The independence brought a message to them that they learned well and practiced accordingly. Japan suffered a lot in consequences of the World War II but they did not lose heart; they developed their human resource and emerged again as a nation challenging the large economies of the time even. China started developing their human resources that as the result - that is subsequential and natural - paved way for developing the existing systems and starting up newer ones.

NGO field workers in Pakistani scenario

A self-sufficient, village-based agriculture carried on with a 'primitive plough' and bullock power, and handicrafts made by means of simple instruments, was a basic feature of pre-British colonial south Asian society. A village was almost self-sufficient regarding the raw materials needed for its artisan industry. Another characteristic of the village community was that a rigid caste-structure

determined the occupation of its members. Since castes were based on the principle of heredity, occupations also became hereditary (Desai: 1948).

In the newly developing society of Pakistan NGO fieldworkers may do a lot and especially the women field worker have got their special place since they can help the development efforts to reach the women-folk who make-up more than half of the society (including children under their custody and training/supervision). Opoku-Mensah et al (2007) remark about the well-financed NGO Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) as that its technical expertise in addition to method paved way for its integration with the World Bank over years. They further appreciate the strength of AKF in rural development methodology perhaps due to which it could enter in to a long-term relationship with the World Bank in 1980s demonstrating the value of its rural development approach to the government of Pakistan.

Another prominent name is UPAP. 'UPAP commenced operations in June 1996 in the urban areas of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Since then it has been testing various strategies and adopting the best ones to cope with the field realities' (UPAP: 2007). With UPAP establishing its field offices in settlements comprising 4,000 to 6,000 households (those are responsible for the disbursement, monitoring and recovery of the disbursed loans) there is found a beauty in the staffing: it is tried that the settlement-office should include a local woman field worker with around ten years of schooling, one non-local man field worker and one non-local intermediate twelve years education (or preferably a graduate with fourteen years education) branch manager. This combination of local and non-local staffing at these most prone front-line offices helps UPAP perform well since the local woman field worker has got knowledge about the locals to identify real clientele, non-local man field worker handles assignments those may include going outside the settlement or dealing with men in the settlement whereas the non-local branch manager selects good borrowers through the solidarity group strategy resisting local pressures those might harm the work. Due to such system (and further honest professional practices) there have been very few incidences where UPAP staff was involved in financial corruption.

Amongst the other aspects those made UPAP a success case include that a very dedicated management initiated and ran the (project once; that is now) program. Those who themselves worked at the grassroots are today handling the top management: they have been through the ground realities by themselves that helps them understand their workers' situation. A congenial environment in UPAP that keeps an equation amongst the various levels of the staff ensures better communication and smooth functioning of the system eventually. Here the feedback from the workers is warmly welcomed that gives confidence to the workers that they are heard well. The enthusiasm that was one strong reason for the program to be on the stronger footings is further transmitted into the newly recruiting staff to keep the success extending. I strongly agree with the pioneer of

'development' work in Pakistan Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan commenting after visiting UPAP in December 1998 that (UPAP: 2007):

UPAP is a model, which is likely to establish. It is viable and sustainable. This is a creative work and not replication of the Grameen Bank. You are rather close to OPP. UPAP will grow as it is addressing the dire need of the poor. No business will be run without credit. People are being crushed by the capital and they will be redeemed only if they acquire it. You are the only hope to provide this facility to the poor. There are three key points that ensured the success of this model:

1. low-cost 'mohalla' (settlement) offices
2. low-cost local female staff
3. expansion within the supervisory capacity

The management inculcated a sense of ownership in their field workers that is beneficial for both the program and the NGO field workers – since the two are correlated. Amongst the interesting aspects, another is how logically UPAP deals with its limitations:

- UPAP does not have enough sources to send their field workers for extensive trainings so:

- Although they can send only top management abroad for trainings/visits so far; but they make arrangements to benefit their field workers to get out of what the management learned abroad.

- Also they make arrangements to send the field workers in trainings/visits within Pakistan.

- The least is that trainings/visits element is kept on through sending the field workers in different settlements (other than their respective work-places) as well as indoor trainings and purposeful meetings.

- Quarterly bonuses and annual prizes for those offices who secure top position in recovery or disbursement is a wonderful tool to help the field workers keep up.

- A special recovery bonus started in 2002 for the field workers of the office that completed its recovery by or before 20th of the month is widely accepted by the field workers where they get Rs.500 (US\$8.50) per head.

Ahmad (2007 and 2002) has done remarkable works on NGO field workers regarding Bangladesh. His works in Bangladesh show almost similar results as I have previously found in Pakistan working for almost a decade with and for NGOs in different capacities with only exceptions those might include the following:

- Women NGO field workers using bicycles or even motorcycles, is totally out of question in Pakistan.

- There are a substantial number of jobs in the corporate sector in Pakistan due to which youth has not as high tendency to get a government job as might be in the case of Bangladesh.

- Bribing to acquire government jobs is there in Pakistan but not as acute as reported about Bangladesh.

- Sisters contributing monetarily for sending their brothers abroad is not popular in Pakistan in contrast to what is reported about Bangladesh in these works.
- NGOs mushrooming in to Pakistani culture/society is, to me, not as dominant as reported about Bangladesh.

Case Studies

An important question could be that *what is the position of NGO field workers in Pakistan?* Answer to which is neither simple nor encouraging- millions of NGO workers (including the volunteers) are mostly an undervalued asset. They include medium and low education profile belonging to both men and women of different ages (pre-dominantly young ones). Another important question is as to *what do NGO Field Workers do in Pakistan?* Answer to this is that in the absence of an efficient and smooth government and a caring market, the NGO field workers are the only hope for the poor of Pakistan to get onto the road of development. Microcredit is a popular field of interest where most of the NGO field workers are engaged. Regarding the incentives offered to the NGO field workers to join there is found a mix of the feelings that they are going to do something for their country-fellows (especially in the events of disasters) and the salaries (those are low, yet attract the un-employed youth). There is experienced a blend of different views about the NGO field workers in different parts of Pakistan depending upon the nature of the activity they carry out and perception of the people about that particular activity they are doing – broadly speaking, the NGO field workers who work for sensitive issues like family health are not seen positively almost throughout the country whereas the women NGO field workers are not encouraged in northern Pakistan.

Most of the available literature (that is so scarce) complains that the potential of the NGO field workers is under-valued. Here arises the question as to *what are the problems associated with their work in the NGOs?* We can not rank the problems in a single hierarchy as their acuteness varies in areas and situations. At places non-availability of efficient transport is one of the main reasons those hinder the progress of the NGO field workers. In other areas language becomes a barrier – especially where local NGO field workers are not available or are not competent enough to take up a task satisfactorily. Poor education of the available staff in some remote areas is a major problem. An important issue is the unavailability of women NGO field workers in the far-flung areas of Pakistan where on the one hand the task demands the services of the women NGO field workers whereas the local traditions do not allow the women to go out of home and work.

NGO field workers are not happy with their salary structure; non-healthy environment at work is another major problem for most of NGO field workers (especially the women NGO field workers).

Let us see the following case studies those may help us to get an insight to what is actually happening with the NGO field workers in Pakistan. In case studies we have taken both positive and negative experience cases (one each at both

national and district levels); but we have to keep in mind that in actual practice negative experiences outweigh the positive ones (NGO names are not mentioned in negative experiences due to research ethics).

a. Positive Experiences

(i) National level NGO: Urban Poverty Alleviation Program (UPAP)/National Rural Support Program (NRSP)

Sobia, twenty-five, had fourteen years education and was an area manager (lower level management position) in the microcredit program of UPAP/NRSP. She earned Rs. 3,500 (US\$70 in 2000) per month as her salary. She reported about a congenial environment in the NGO where she was well-heard and it encouraged her to work better. Despite her official working hours of 8:30 A. M. to 4:30 P. M. she always started at least an hour earlier and worked till two hours later than the timings. When the work demanded she would work even longer than that, including sometimes working on the weekends. She reported only the element of low salary as a negative aspect for which she said that her seniors listened well to it but clarified that they wanted to keep overheads low in contrast to typical notorious NGOs (the seniors also got lower salaries, she admitted). Rest of the things were just positive those included strong encouragement both from the NGO and the community, regard from the community (beneficiaries), transparent system, caring environment, good atmosphere at work, provision of relaxing and enjoyment and an overall congenial environment due to which she wanted to continue with this NGO.

(ii) District Level NGO: Social Evolution Organization Muzaffargarh

Nazia, thirty, had fourteen years education and was a coordinator with the Social Evolution Organization (SEO) that worked on adult literacy in the district Muzaffargarh. She earned Rs. 5,500 (US\$95 in 2004) as her monthly salary and was supposed to start and look after adult literacy centers in the periurban areas. She enjoyed the supportive attitude from her seniors and even the employer. She mentioned secure and healthy environment in the NGO both at the office and the field. She was happy with the provision of all necessities for the field work those were possible within the limited resources of the district level NGO. She was worried only about the lower salary structure of the NGO that was not enough to meet her family needs nor were any promotions prospects due to which she suspected she might have to quit; still she admitted that such environment she might not find elsewhere. Despite a congenial environment, involvement of the NGO field workers in planning was nil.

b. Negative Experiences

(i) National Level NGO

Tahir, thirty-four, had twelve years education and worked for microcredit provision in the rural area. He had previously been working in different capacities both in corporate and NGO sectors. He complained about humiliating attitude of his seniors who preferred women staff and over-burdened the men field workers. He also complained that the donors gave huge funds to the NGO but most of it was wasted one way or the other; and there were no promotion prospects even if one

worked hard. He earned Rs. 7,000 (US\$110 in 2005) per month as his salary. The corrupt ownership/management never asked the NGO field workers to suggest something how to plan for their activities.

(ii) District Level NGO

Noreen, twenty-nine, had fourteen years education and worked as social mobilizer in Rawalpindi where she was supposed to carry out reproductive health services in the rural areas. She was earning Rs. 9,000 (US\$150 in 2005) per month but complained of problems including harassment both from the NGO staff and the community. Since she had to run her family expenditure (she was a divorcee with two girls, five and three) so she had to bear with it otherwise she did not like the experience – to her, the job provided her just enough money to meet her family needs otherwise she was tense throughout her work. The NGO never offered the field workers to participate in the planning process.

Having gone through these case studies one can easily see the key features that the NGO field workers are not happy with the salary structure in almost all case studies; promotions and working environment is also seen a common problem in many cases – women NGO field workers have complained about harassment cases as well. The message conveyed through these case studies is that how resource-less the NGO field workers are who are actually the actors going through the hardships of working in the field (although in some cases their sensible superiors listen to them, still they are resource-less in those cases too). NGO field workers feel insecure about their job; instances show that they can be kicked out any time without reason. NGO field workers are rarely involved in planning for what to do and even how to execute an operation that is already decided by the high-ups.

The donors/INGOs have got a very substantial influence on the activities of the NGOs and in the absence of an understanding as to how to cope with undue influences the ultimate sufferers are the NGO field workers. Barber and Bowie (2008) believed that due to identified reasons aid effectiveness is impeded by the behavior of international NGOs (INGOs); so they have offered six prescriptions those would reduce the harm INGOs cause:

1. Good donorship: educate donors about good NGO practice.
2. Working together: form an Association of NGOs.
3. Being predictable: prioritize consistency and reliability.
4. Paying national staff: adopt the salary scales set by the NGO Association
5. Building national capacity: set up a commission to recommend ways of empowering local civil-society organizations’.
6. Donor visits and reports: ration and educate the visitor.

Conclusion

Having gone through this challenging topic of exploring about the NGO field workers in Pakistan, the results of this research strongly agree to Wallace et al (2006) who say, ‘researching NGOs is difficult’ that they further elaborate

referring Wallace et al (1997) as ‘they are not transparent organizations, and almost always request that discussions on tensions and issues concerning their funding and relationships with donors, partners and states are held behind closed doors’. I would rather say that this approach of the NGOs is due to the vested interests at different levels that not only hinders the way for actual scene to come forward rather restricts the experts to suggest something for the better working of the NGOs. Talking directly about my topic specifically I may say here that this secretive approach of the NGOs has kept the problems of the NGO field workers unrevealed in most parts of the world and these poor fellows are thus forced to keep working with their miseries unintervened or quit the NGOs in the worst situations.

Through this study we arrive at the conclusion that the efforts of the NGO field workers are not really successful and the main reasons for this poor success may include insecure jobs, poor salaries, non-friendly environment at work and so on. On the contrary the workers in industry are seen more successful (although this is not a natural comparison). However, the point to consider in the situation of Pakistan is that how much role they have played in creating awareness (that is the main concern of NGO field workers in most cases). We also need to envisage the deficiencies enroute.

In many countries government is the largest employer; in others corporate sector is the largest employer – in such countries very few people are there in the government and most of the works are done by the private sector. What is left for NGOs of tomorrow? Interestingly, the work of NGOs (and so the NGO field workers) still appears to be very much related to what the state and the business behave – not surprising that changing role of the state as well as the economy at both the state and the local levels are quite important. NGO management is quite different from management of anything else; Rehman (2003) rather stated that the NGOs are not being managed properly. Perhaps we can say that NGO management is something like a combination of management and altruism.

I wondered whether the recent fashion to make NGOs/civil society a solution to development problems really did well or it rather weakened the state (I thought it weakened); thanks to Ahmad (2002) whose view supported that of mine that it further weakened the state in countries like Bangladesh - and I add Pakistan since both Pakistan and Bangladesh have got many social, economic and other similarities (Desai: 1948). However, I would say that NGOs in Pakistan are still not as businesslike as may be the situation in Bangladesh as he stated.

Since this study is based on secondary sources and being the field almost untouched so far regarding Pakistan; dearth of literature did not let the author to present any statistics. However, subjectively addressing specifically the main objectives of this study those were mentioned in the introduction, I would like to say that studying the work of NGO field workers in Pakistan we arrive at the conclusion that as far as the problems faced by the NGO field workers in Pakistan are concerned we see that insecurity of the job is the most prominent problem for

all the NGO field workers on the whole whereas harassment is another major problem faced by the women NGO field workers. Inconvenient working environment is also seen as a problem faced by NGO fieldworkers in many cases.

We may try to suggest something to improve the situation; hereafter are the submissions:

* Consortium is a new popular fashion; reasons for its popularity include those in the interest of both the stake-holders:

– In the interest of NGOs: the consortium can not monopolize the NGOs in contrast to one donor NGO.

– In the interest of the donor NGOs: funding being the larger and not piecemeal controls unnecessary overheads.

Being capable of caring for the proper utilization of the potential of the NGO field workers, it may go a long way.

* Similarly, if you have to reach wider audience, be careful about culture – international NGOs better ought to value this in order to avoid ambiguities and confusions those they complain in a culture like that of Pakistan.

* Advocacy is content specific. Oxfam is a leading international NGO and is quite popular in advertising but is not so prominent in Pakistan – I myself working in NGOs for a couple of years till 1999 could know about activities of Oxfam only when I visited UK. Such INGOs need to come up with strategy suited to Pakistani society.

* Ahmad (2002) has aptly said that NGO field workers should be the movers and shakers of the NGOs since they actually implement the policies; he complained that contrary to the advice of Suzuki (1998) and Fowler (1997) the field workers are rarely consulted during the policy-making. I strongly agree with him saying that the field workers should be the best people to contribute towards realistic solutions since they are the implementers so they know the problems in the best manner. He further says that after seeing the NGOs from the bottom up, his ‘realization is still that the field workers need to be empowered to make NGOs more effective, more useful to the poor and the disadvantaged’; I also have the same viewpoint.

* Corporate Social Responsibility has become a buzzword in the NGO literature now-a-days; but it needs to be defined well and the NGO field workers’ potential may be utilized to make it a success in the event when ‘Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is failing at the very time it is emerging as a new discipline’ (Blowfield: 2005); and ‘The current concern with corporate social responsibility must be seen in the context of major shifts in the functioning of the market, the state and civil society, and of the boundaries between them, and in the ways that we envision them’ (O’Laughlin: 2008).

* I strongly agree with Ahmad (2009) who says that NGOs are the right bodies to address development goals all over the world for which they do not need any further training rather they need only to focus their activities; and that they

should go for the right-based approach. It is not as important that how much you have done as to how much goal you have achieved.

* Recommendations of Barber and Bowie (2008) seem to be worth to the author those will hopefully lessen the undue burden on the NGO field workers that will improve their efficiency eventually.

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