

GSP2206: PEACE STUDIES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION (PCR)

THE ROLE OF NON- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs) IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

By

Gambo Shehu Nababa, PhD

**Department of Mass Communication, Bayero
University, Kano**

Introduction:

- This unit is about the role of NGOs in conflict resolution as they play important roles in conflict management especially in the African continent.
- The position they occupy made them more acceptable among or between warring parties in conflict.
- Scholars believe that NGOs voice and influence has gained recognition in resolving human rights violations and post conflict reconstruction.

DEFINITIONS OF NGOs

- The term NGO carries different connotations in different circumstances and for that reason there is no generally accepted definition of the term.
- Willetts (2002, p. 3) sees them “an independent voluntary association of people acting together on a continuous basis, for some common purpose, other than achieving government office, making money or illegal activities”.

NGOs

- Umar, (2006, p. 87) defines NGOs as “one form of non-profit organizations that has been noted for providing much needed service among deprived and high need communities through the use of funds which have sourced for the sole purpose of supporting such and other needy communities, groups and individuals,”.
- According to Mawlawi (1993), NGOs are private, voluntary, non-profit organizations whose members combine their skills, means and energies in the service of shared ideals and objectives. NGOs vary in scope, resource base and influence as well as in functional ideological orientation.

NGOs

They may be local, national or international, and include service groups, prominent foundations professional or other membership organizations.

Mawlawi further posited that NGOs are generally dependent on private resources, but in several countries they receive government support as well.

Features set aside for bodies to be considered as NGOs by the United Nations.

- An NGO must be independent from the direct control of any government
- It will not be constituted as a political party
- It will be non-profit making
- It will not be a criminal group, in particular, it will be non-violent (Willetts 2002, p. 4).

Types of NGOs' Activities

- The most common distinction of NGOs' activities is between operational and campaigning or advocacy NGOs.
- This may be interpreted as the choice between small-scale change achieved directly through projects and large-scale change promoted indirectly through influence on the political system.

Operational NGOs

- Operational NGOs, mobilize resources, in the form of financial donations, materials or volunteer labor, in order to sustain their projects and programs.
- The operational NGOs need to possess an efficient headquarters bureaucracy, in addition to a staff in the field.

Advocacy or Campaigning NGOs

- Campaigning NGOs are expected to carry out much the same functions, but with a different balance between them. Fund-raising is still necessary, but on a smaller scale.
- Persuading people to donate their time is necessary, but, in addition to a small number of people giving a great deal of time.

Operational and Campaigning NGOs

- However, despite their differences, both operational and campaigning NGOs need to engage in fund-raising, mobilization of work by supporters, organizing special events, cultivating the media and administering a headquarters.
- Only the defining activities – implementing projects or holding demonstrations – serve to differentiate them.

Conflict

- Conflict is defined as a perceived condition that exists between parties in which one or more of the parties perceive goal incompatibility and some opportunity for interfering with goal accomplishment of others.
- The term conflict means contest or dispute involving two or more interests or parties.

Causes of Conflict

- Denial of identity
- Denial of human “other needs”
- Domination conflict
- Resource allocation conflict and
- Value differences conflict (Umar 2006).

Conditions for NGOs to Directly Engage in Conflict Resolution

- The NGO must be very familiar with the country, issues and participants in the conflict
- The NGO should have indigenous partners
- NGO staff must be well grounded in conflict resolution skills and knowledge, and
- NGO workers must understand and accept the risk of intervening directly in the conflict.

Role of the NGOs in Conflict Resolution

- NGOs cannot be expected to solve all the problems associated with humanitarian crises, the new environment in which these organizations operate suggests the following four fundamental roles:
- early warning functions
- human rights monitoring,
- relief and rehabilitation,
- and conflict resolution activities.

Role of the NGOs in Conflict Resolution

- The following were also identified as ways in which NGOs can adopt to address conflicts:
- Popular education
- Action in relation to authorities
- Legal assistance
- Choosing negotiation over violence (Niyonzima, 1999).

Challenges Facing NGOs in Conflict Resolution:

- Absence of government identity and support
- Lack diplomatic experience and skill
- Personal risk and aggravation
- Difficulty in relief programs operations
- Limitation of international law.

Conclusion

- The growing participation of NGOs in conflict management and humanitarian interventions have become part of their struggle for effective resolution of conflicts.
- Therefore, it is important to ensure the working relationship between NGOs and national governments is being strengthen as governments place increased emphasis on collective approaches towards addressing security challenges.

Conclusion

Thank you.

Good bye.