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# **Differences between National and International NGOs -**

A Case Study of the US, Bahrain and India

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## **References**

### 1 Introduction

Non-Governmental Organizations or NGOs have become influential actors of societal development and change on a national as well as international scale. Beginning as non-governmental consultants to the United Nations, the number of NGOs across the world has witnessed exponential growth since the 1980s. Although most people understand what an NGO is - the name itself makes it very clear that these are organizations that are not government run - there is little consensus on what may be described as key characteristics of an NGO. As a result of this vagueness surrounding on what constitutes an NGO, the scope, role, and jurisdiction of NGOs remain uncertain and debated.

In an increasingly globalized world, government often find it difficult to keep pace with the transforming nature of society and are unable to meet the rapidly evolving international standards of living. This is particularly applicable in the context of developing countries as well as those nations that are in the midst of political turmoil and democratization. In such a scenario, the role of NGOs in providing social care and welfare and being agents of social change and development becomes all the more prominent. As a result, NGOs have steadily gained power and influence in the

international sphere. However, at the grass root level in every nation, it is national NGOs that undertake critical social activities. In many cases, National and International NGOs work in cooperation with each other to increase their effectiveness. The impact of both kinds of NGOs would be enhanced greatly if their role, scope and jurisdiction in developing and developed countries were more clearly defined.

### 1. 1 Background of Study

NGOs are broadly classified under two categories, namely: a) National NGOs, and b) International NGOs. As the names suggest, National NGOs operate within a given nation and are localized, while International NGOs are operated in multiple countries, although they may be registered officially and headquartered in one. However, such a simple explanation of the two types of NGOs hardly addresses the broad spectrum of characteristics that are similar as well as disparate between the two. As the influence of NGOs in global affairs has grown, so has the interest amongst the academia in understanding and defining the different types of NGOs. However, the body of knowledge collected thus far is fairly scattered, with no uniformity in approaches or correlation of results. One of the clearest differentiators of NGOs is their geographical reach, jurisdiction and scope, thereby leading to the two categories that form the focus of this paper – National and International NGOs. NGOs operate at an international as well as grass root level to bring about a standardization of social and human rights and standards of living at a global level. As such, it becomes crucial to understand the differences in operations, challenges faced and effectiveness of the two types of NGOs in nations at different levels of economic, political

and social development.

### 1. 2 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the differences in the operation, management, scope and effectiveness of national and international NGOs operating in nations at different stages of development. The study will focus on three nations, namely: a) the US, b) Bahrain, and c) India. While the US is a developed, democratized country, India – although democratized, is still a developing country. On the other hand, Bahrain is neither democratized nor is it developed. By comparing the national and international NGOs in these three countries, the paper will also seek to highlight the different challenges faced by each, the level of interdependence, cooperation, and integration between the two types of NGOs in order to achieve broader societal development objectives.

### 1. 3 Implications of Study

This study will shed light on the unique challenges faced by NGOs in different nations. It will allow a better understanding of need for a change in operating and managing environment that these NGOs function in. It will enable NGOs to be more aware of the factors that hinder them from achieving their true potential. It will help governments to address the issues that national as well as international NGOs face within their nation and to better them assist them to become societal actors. Finally, it will facilitate enhanced coordination and integration of international and national NGOs to achieve a more standardized society.

## 2 Literature Review

This section of the paper aims to provide the reader with a holistic

understanding of NGOs, their definition, historic development, and the role they play at a local and international level. Further, the characteristics and nature of national and international NGOs is discussed. Finally, the chapter discussed the challenges that both, national and international NGOs, face today.

## 2. 1 Defining NGOs

Non-Governmental Organization or NGO as a term was first used post World War II by the UN. Article 71 of the UN Charter 1945 stated that an NGO could be affiliated with the UN for the purpose of consulting. Hence, the term NGO was initially used by scholars only to address those social organizations that met the context laid by the UN. However, during the 1980s, even those societal actors, national as well as international, that operated outside the purview of the UN began calling themselves NGOs. As a result, the scope of defining the term NGO and its academic usage became broader .

Martens (2002, Pp. 271) notes that, before the term NGO was coined by the UN, scholars used various other terms to describe these societal actors. These included expressions such as ‘ Voluntary Agencies’ or volas, ‘ International Pressure groups’, and simply ‘ Private Organizations’. In modern times, NGO has become a globally used terms across nations and languages. However, the applicability of the term differs from country to country, which further complicates the process of defining NGOs. The French use the term ONG for ‘ Organisations non gouvernementales’ which bears the same meaning as NGO. On the other hand, the Germans who had initially translated the term from the UN Charter as ‘ Nicht-staalicheOrganisationen’ later realized that the term would include even corporate multinational

companies and organizations for national liberation. Hence, they now use the term 'Nichtregierungsorganisationen', affixing the English 'NGO' to further clarify the applicability of the term.

In the past decades, as NGOs became increasingly involved in global affairs, academic research into the term has also seen a spike. Yet, despite a growing body of knowledge surrounding the term and its widespread use in scholarly works, the actual definition of an NGO remains elusive. While people, in general, understand what an NGO is, the characteristics of such organizations have not been clearly defined yet.

## 2. 2 History of NGOs

Traditionally, societal organizations were created for two key aims – Care and Welfare. However, as both these aspects are so closely interlinked and interdependent, it became a challenge to differentiate such organizations based on their activities. Often, one organization would be involved in both, care as well as welfare. These first began to mushroom in the Western world during the early 19th Century as the industrial revolution set in. However, as Bagci (2003, Pp. 230) notes, the care and welfare activities of these organizations were mainly conducted in fields and areas that were inaccessible to the government. As a result, these organizations got associated with economic, political, social and liberal development of the society. Some of the oldest, and still existing NGOs are the International Committee of the Red Cross or ICRC established in 1863, Save The Children Foundation established in 1917, and Oxford Committee for Famine Relief – more popularly known as Oxfam – established in 1942. As these societal actors began to make significant achievements in the development of the

society, they gained recognition at a national and international level, amongst developed as well as developing countries. They began to be viewed as partners with the government, assisting it in building and developing the nation. This led to the creation of a need to institutionalize these organizations that had, until then, no formal recognition – except in the UN context.

It was in the 1970s, after the first oil crisis of 1973 made governments realize the need to provide ‘universal, institutional public care and welfare’. This brought about a focus on national NGOs that could facilitate the accomplishment of this goal. The two decades between the 1980s and the 1990s saw rapid globalization further inhibited governments from focusing on providing care and welfare to their people. NGOs in developed, democratized countries, especially in the West, were appreciated for the tremendous work they did towards assisting societal development. However, in developing countries where democracies were fairly new, such organizations became a medium of social ‘change’. Democracy provides people with the freedom to associate with any organization they choose. This enables them to become a part of organizations related to religious, political, economic, artistic and social development.

In the modern context, in addition to the traditional care and welfare activities, NGOs are also considered agents of change and development. This would include areas such as rural development, women and child rights, human rights, anti-corruption agencies, environmental conservation and protection groups, labor organizations, income generation and employment projects and disabilities organizations. As it is difficult to clearly characterize

what constitutes an NGO, they are segregated on the basis of the geographic scope of their operations. Hence, they are today classified as National NGOs and International NGOs or INGOs .

## 2. 3 Role of NGOs

As discussed earlier, NGOs as well as INGOs today cover a host of areas that does not necessarily fall under the formal context dictated by the UN Charter. As a result, NGOs have vast differences in the role that they play at a national and international level. As discussed, these organizations were primarily involved in societal care and welfare activities. However, in the modern day context, they have also assumed the function of societal change and development actors. As Werker and Ahmed note (2008, Pp 74), NGOs are a critical part of the larger not-for -profit sector. However, even commercial organizations such as Wal-Mart are non-profit organizations, yet, they are not NGOs.

It is the humanitarian and philanthropic role of NGOs that defines them. These organizations are founded and operated by people who have altruistic interests, and not economic ones. These organizations are funded through donations from people expecting no profit returns, and not investment requiring the payment of dividends. A majority of NGOs are focused on developing countries where the need for social care and welfare as well as change and development is more when compared to developed countries. Some of the biggest international NGOs in the world, in terms of expenditure, are: World Vision, Food for the Poor, ICRC, Feed the Children, World Wildlife Fund or WWF, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch. Every country will have its own set of national NGOs of all sizes that are often



affiliated with an international NGO to try and achieve a common goal.

NGOs today are often used by the government as contractors for various activities including distribution of food, providing healthcare services, raising social awareness, and even education. However, not all NGOs are supported by the government. The private sector can also be a major source of funds for NGOs. Companies often partner with NGOs as part of the Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR initiatives. It should be noted, however, that most of these funds are channeled to large, prominent NGOs. There can be hundreds and thousands of much smaller NGOs operating within a nation that serve very specific localities and very specific purposes. These organizations rely on local donors, fund raising activities and other business revenues to keep their NGOs running .

As such, although international and national NGOs may share a common objective such as feeding the poor, human rights protection, eliminating child labor, education for children and women's rights, the environment in which they carry out these roles vary greatly based on their reach, size and the support they receive from government and private organizations.

## 2. 4 National NGOs

National NGOs are predominantly defined based on their geographic constrictions, i. e.: national NGOs have operations only within the country. For example, a national NGO established to raise awareness against female infanticide in India will carry out relevant activities within India alone and not in any other country. However, this is a fairly wide description of a category of NGOs that contains several sub-categories. National NGOs include local NGOs which are associated with and often funded by International NGOs.

There are also Community Based Organizations or CBOs, NGOs that are focused on a particular community within the society such as farmers and laborer groups, village or rural sector associations, resources distribution and management organizations, old age homes, and orphanages . There are also several much smaller organizations that are registered as non-profit, philanthropic set ups, often limited to a few volunteers.

National NGOs that are affiliated with INGOs are generally well funded and well organized. They have clear directives and schedule of activities through which to achieve predefined targets and objectives. Such organizations often borrow their methods of operation and management from the INGO partner. They incorporate sector best practices to streamline processes and make the most of the resources that they have at their disposal. They will have a well defined, standardized accounting, auditing and financial management system that leaves no scope for dubiousness.

However, smaller local NGOs that are not associated with or funded by INGOs can be comparative less efficient in their operations and management. To begin with, they do not have a steady, predefined source of funding. As such, there is no clarity of what resources they will have at their disposal even in the near future, which leaves little scope for budgeting and planning. Their main source of funding is through fund raising. Their financial systems are also often not well organized, creating several discrepancies in recording funding and expenditure. As a result, the scope for unscrupulous activities by smaller NGOs going undetected is much higher than with national NGOs associated with INGOs .

It is important to note that national NGOs are formed to address national

issues. Hence, national NGOs will have no global problem resolution on its agenda. In terms of jurisdiction, national NGOs are strictly governed only by the national laws and policies pertaining to NGOs. International laws are not applicable to these organizations. The structure of these organizations is often haphazard and informal. Another interesting aspect is the fact that national NGOs, although officially not associated with the government, can be influenced by the governments to carry out political propaganda. This can be applicable to small as well as large organizations, although the involvement of an INGO reduces the chances of national NGOs being used to further the interests of the local government .

Smaller national NGOs are particularly effective in extending the reach of social care and welfare activities to the distant corners of a developing country. For example, in regions such as the Indian sub-continent and African countries, there are thousands of remote villages that may go unaccounted for by INGOs. However, local NGOs are aware of the existence of such places, and even the specific needs that they have in terms of care and welfare. As such, they are better placed to deliver such services to inaccessible groups of the population that often need them the most .

## 2. 5 International NGOs

As NGOs from foreign countries operate in different countries, it often becomes difficult to segregate national organizations from international NGOs. Hence, it is generally accepted that, for an NGO to be considered international, it should have funding and active members from at least three different countries. It should also have operations in the same number of countries. Having said that, Skjelsbaek notes that INGOs are generally

unaffected by the nationality of its members as their operations are based on their objectives and not the territory that members belong to .

The very use of the term ‘ Non-Governmental’ in terms of international organization has been subject to debate. Considering the INGOs have global objectives, they are bound to be disassociated with any particular nation. At the same time, they need to be formally registered with a nation, with their branches in other nations being registered locally as well. Similarly, not all INGOs are non-profit organizations. The UN Charter, for instance, does not make it mandatory for NGOs to be non-profit. In fact, as Skjrslsbaek notes, several consulting NGOs with the UN actually have objectives clearly aimed at delivering profits to their members. Those NGOs that operate for a non-profit, philanthropic purpose as often considered the same as charitable organizations. Based on the country in which they are operating, this status places them differently in terms of financial management and tax law .

The legal status of INGOs in international law is virtually non-existence. They are recognized as NGOs governed by the laws of the country in which they are registered and viewed as foreign NGOs in the other countries in which they operate. When compared to national NGOs, INGOs often have greater international visibility due to the reach of their work. They may also intentionally publicize themselves in order to gain wider patronage as well as expend their reach. Another interesting point to note is that INGOs may not necessarily be created with a view at permanence. Some organizations may be created for a specific period, to address a particular event, and then cease to exist once these objectives have been accomplished .

INGOs can hold different levels of partnerships and coordination. While those

INGOs falling under the UN Charter are automatically associated with the UN, other may form groups with other INGOs, for example, the International Council of Scientific Research, and even form unions for INGOs. INGOs may also be multidisciplinary, addressing more than one core issue. These organizations are generally autonomous, although they do have a degree of interdependence that is not well defined. Considering that such a broad spectrum of conditions apply to the existence or recognition of INGOs, the Yearbook of International Organizations identifies INGOs as :

“(i) permanent bodies with offices, officers and a constitution, (ii) not created by intergovernmental agreement, (iii) members, officers, and funds from at least 3 countries, (iv) no redistribution of profits to members, (v) non secret, (vi) democratic officers election procedure, (vii) autonomous, excluding subgroups of organizations, (viii) currently active, (ix) excluding: (non-democratic) religious orders, educational or training institutions or social and entertainment clubs.”

INGOs have a formal structure, consisting of a board of directors, and a well defined hierarchy of management. Members of such an organization may consist of individuals, for profit organizations, corporations, educational institutions, and national branches . Although the reach of INGOs may be INGOs may be broader than national NGOs, this does not imply that they will always have large number of members. There is no minimum requirement to form an INGO. They can be as small as a few members and as large as hundreds of thousands of members.

### 3 Case Studies of NGOs in US, Bahrain and India

This section of the paper provides the reader with an in-depth analysis of

national and international NGOs in three countries, namely: the US, Bahrain, and India. Each country is at a different level of democratization and economic development. This evaluation will bring about a better understanding of the unique conditions faced by both kinds of NGOs under these differing circumstances.

### 3. 1 National NGOs in US

The United States has always been supportive of the efforts made by the non-governmental organizations. The nation has passed regulations that are designed to support and promote the development of NGOs while ensuring that no judgments are made regarding the work or value of a particular national non-governmental organization. National NGOs in the U. S. denote almost every conceivable political cause, ideology, social issue, religion and interest group. While some have deep connections in the process of politics, others tend to adopt a nonpartisan approach and operate far from the political arena, choosing to focus only on the social issues.

The majority of national non-governmental organizations in the United States possess the qualifications necessary to become exempt from federal and state taxes. Such a legal status makes it simpler for the national NGOs to operate as non-profit organizations since they are not required to pay taxes for the funding (income) they receive. In case an NGO wishes to get exempted from income taxation by the Federal Government in the United States, the organization must submit an application to the Internal Revenue Service. Various kinds of national NGOs in the United States can be eligible for the status of tax-exempt but the type of advantages available depends on the nature of the NGO and the activities conducted by the organization.

Usually, it is only the NGOs which are organized solely for the purpose of education, religion, charity, science, tests for public safety, literature and sports, without any interest in profits and role in partisan politics which are suitable for receiving exemption from federal income taxation on every income associated with these purposes.

On the other hand, national NGOs which are organized for political purposes are eligible to receive exemption only for income which is acquired through contributions solicited by the masses, fundraising/ charity events and membership dues. Non-government organizations which seek to gain exemption from state taxes need to file applications for the same with the proper state tax authorities. The law in the United States generally regulates NGOs by requiring public disclosure on a regular basis through the filing of information returns with the US Government pertaining to the funding of an organization, its activities as well as leadership.

Under normal circumstances, there is almost no restriction on the level of freedom of association and expression of non-government organizations under the law of the United States. Even though national NGOs which are involved in political activities are not allowed to qualify for the most preferential tax exempt status, the government has not prohibited them from criticizing the US government or undertaking advocacy for hot button political issues. The NGOs have issues with the many regulations and laws that the US has on issues extending from visas and immigration to lobbying and campaign finance, from money laundering to terrorism financing.

As soon as a national NGO finishes the registration process in a successful manner, the government of the US does not interfere with the method

through which the NGO accomplishes its purposes. The national non-government organizations have complete freedom when it comes to selecting participants for recruitment to the organization. They are not required to provide notification to any government agency regarding its outreach and membership activities. The national NGOs must refrain at times from working in accordance with individuals or governments under the US sanctions along with other organizations designated as international terrorist foundations. However, they do possess the right to collaborate with foreign governments or international NGOs for achieving their purposes. There are no regulations that prevent the national NGOs from attending international conferences, locating donors overseas, or carrying out work on an international level.

National NGOs in the United States have to abide by the individual regulations of each state even though most necessitate that organization must fulfill various requisites. It is important for the national non-governmental organizations to establish and maintain a charter or mission, and articles of association and incorporation. There must be a definite board of trustees and directors who are capable of assuming responsibility for the financial, operational and general well-being of the organization as well as its legal status. The national non-profit foundations must establish their tax-exempt status both from the federal government Internal Revenue Service as well as the suitable state government entities in case the organization wishes to accept tax-deductible and remain free from state and federal taxes. It is necessary for every national non-governmental organization in the United States to maintain accredited and audited records and remain



legally, economically and organizationally sound, and abide by certain guidelines or rules set forth by state and federal law.

Though the national NGOs are technically free from the interference of the government, they remain alert and wary about the activities of the non-governmental organizations since the nation has already experienced the consequences that stem from NGO scandals in terms of loss of status, loss of contributions and organizational turmoil. The cases involving national NGOs in the US are notable due to the large amount of dollars involved, the duration of time over which the activities took place as well as the length of the entire legal process that ensued. Therefore, it is not unusual for the US government to keep an eye on the organization on a periodical basis and make sure that the foundation is acting within the law.

The national NGOs often play an important role in the development of international cooperation. The US government tends to enact a permissive style of national NGO regulation possessing lower barriers to entry, fewer restrictions on the ability to raise funds from non-conventional sources and increased flexibility and scope in activity. The regulations of national NGOs in the United States can be termed permissive since they not only impose a limited number of restraints but even enable economic and political activities within the framework of the organization. The prominence of national NGOs in the States is often attributed to the ideological commitment of the Americans to individualism and their resentment towards an arbitrary centralized form of authority. These together have led to the rise of voluntary organizations as an alternative type of organization for the fulfillment of the basic needs of individuals, without enhancing the control of

the state. In the United States, national non-governmental organizations offer useful functions. The US Government provides a considerable share of funding to the national NGOs but in return institutes means for public oversight of the public goods provision.

The economic regulations imposed on the NGOs in the US are extremely permissive. The national NGOs are permitted to conduct both business and economic activities. If these activities happen to be intricately associated with the main non-profit purpose of the organization, they become tax-exempt. Unrelated business income, however, remains subject to taxation by the United States. The efforts of the government to tighten the national NGO regulations have met with failure in most circumstances due to the strong advocacy of NGOs within the federal and state legislatures as well as legal challenges faced by national NGOs within the federal and state courts. The tax and accounting rules for national NGOs in America have been revised and clarified due to the outcome of scandals involving both for-profit and non-profit organizations. The challenges issued by the court in the United States have usually prevented national regulation on the NGOs from becoming a lot more restrictive. Keeping in mind the level of stability enjoyed by governing structures in the United States along with the recognition of the role played by national NGOs in interest representation and service provision, it is quite unlikely that the primary regulatory approach to the national NGOs of the US government will change significantly in the near future.

### 3. 2 International NGOs in US

The United States has no problem hosting different international NGOs that

carry out vital and essential work in the nation. International NGOs are eligible to register in the US simply by filing a basic form as a non-profit entity. While some tend to operate solely as non-partisan organizations, others become affiliated with foreign political parties and soon take on the role of liaisons and think tanks to foundations within the US which remain concerned with international policy. They are tasked with the organization of programs for their respective politicians when they visit the United States. The international NGOS even hold conferences, youth exchanges and scholarships/ fellowships, and offer funding to joint projects with the national NGOs present in the United States. The international NGOs are funded wholly by their respective foreign governments and they do not possess any kind of special restrictions regarding their activities in the United States. They are free to arrange meetings and even publish materials without any problem. Moreover, international NGOs present in the US are not required to provide reports to other federal government agencies in the United States but they do need to register with them beforehand and file tax returns as per the requirements. The US, in fact, welcomes international non-profit organizations since it believes that it enables the nation to become stronger and acts as a channel to foster deeper relationships between the two nations.

In the United States, it is completely acceptable and legal for non-profit private foundations to raise money abroad and get access to grants from international governments as long as they are not involved in any banned or unlawful activities. In general, the law in the United States imposes no restrictions or limits on the receipt of foreign funding by the international

NGOs that have established operations within the nation. However, there are other laws that the NGOs have to abide by along with the rest of America and these include limitations on direct economic support of political candidates by foreign citizens. However, before an international NGO can hope to conduct activities in any specific state within the US, the organization needs to apply for a license that will allow it to conduct business within the state. The international organizations must apply to the Internal Revenue Service in order to become recognized as a social welfare or charitable organization under the Internal Revenue Code. Even though these types of foundations are always exempt from paying taxes on their income, the contributions to international organizations are tax-deductible.

The practice of international non-governmental organizations in the United States are connected intricately with the manner in which these groups organize themselves, deliver services and engage in advocacy. It is not surprising that the US serves as one of the most popular bases for non-governmental organizations from other nations and the environment is distinct due to the variations in legal regulations, resources, political opportunities and patterns of social networks. In fact, strong national patterns emerge in the practice of the international NGOs in the US, including professionalization, advocacy and fund-raising. These differences can be extremely pronounced in the NGOs involved in the humanitarian relief sector but are less highlighted among the international non-governmental organizations dealing with human rights. It is these differences which often lead to the failure of international NGOs in the United States; they are not inherently dysfunctional but tend to remain disconnected due to

their strong roots in radically different national surroundings.

International NGOs in the United States have increased the level of their contributions to transnational social policy under the processes of technological, financial and cultural change in the past decade. The international non-governmental organizations have a broad area of focus ranging from religiously motivated groups to secular agencies. Their activities usually depend on the funding from the local projects, NGOs and institutions.

The international NGOs in the United States tend to vary considerably in terms of activity, size, expertise and appearance. Most of them possess headquarters in the major cities in the United States. However, there are many which have offices both in Europe and in the United States in order to take advantage of funding from the various sources, donors and governments. Most if the international NGOs in the United States happen to be incorporated organizations which have a unique structure that has been carefully devised to protect the employees, founders and board members from personal liability. The process of incorporation seeks to establish bank contracts and accounts, accept donations, buy abilities and purchase insurance, and foster good relationships with other governments and organizations or other entities. From the perspective of an organization, the NGO happens to be the embodiment of its mission as well as the articles of association and incorporation.

The boards in international non-governmental organizations tend to vary a lot in terms of style. While some remain active and work hard to establish close relationships with the staff and NGO officers for involving them in

fundraising and programmatic planning methods, other boards assume the form of primarily fundraising entities, lending their names to offer credibility to the fundraising practices of the organization. In some instances, the boards of the international NGO happen to be mainly symbolic while the strong leadership fulfils the requisite tasks. In this case, only the legal requirements of meeting a particular number of times in a year are fulfilled and financial obligations are certified .

The board of an international NGO can be legally held liable for the entire foundation. In some states in the United States, this liability is prone to differ. However, in general, the board happens to be the pinnacle of oversight for the mission, programs and direction of the organization. The board is involved mainly in the larger thematic decision-making process of the organization and provides guidance; it does not concern itself with the intricacies of the NGO unless there are certain issues that need to be resolved. In most cases, it is seen that NGOs possess board members who were once either military or government officials since they generally hold a great level of involvement or influence. The international NGO in the United States needs to work out what sort of approach or tact will be suitable when trying to work with, guide, coordinate or even understand a specific organization.

A big section of the international NGO community in the United States facilitates standardization and protocols since it ensures that a wide-ranging body of organizations operating in such vital settings have some sort of accountability. All of the referenced standards, guidelines, and codes of conduct happen to be common knowledge among the international NGOs.

The international non-governmental organizations in the States have uniform codes of conduct regarding what aid must be given impartially and without any restriction or stipulation.

The international NGOs in the United States are not bound by any specific international law and they are completely free to take part in international operations as an independent and unique actor, and even though neutrality or other specific guidelines safeguard their activities, they are mainly unaccountable for any entity that the NGO does not have any contract with. However, the entire international NGO community is administered by different externally imposed or self-initiated legal as well as ethical guidelines. They restrict themselves within the legal structure of the country of origin of the NGO and must abide by the stipulations and rules of the donor source or agency. Moreover, they also need to consider the restrictions present within the legal structure of the United States. The common trend for international NGOs in the United States is to propose or join coordination mechanism and as the donor pressure mounts slowly on the NGOs to retain credible, transparent and accountable programming while offering effective services, international NGOs in the US have formed a series of best practices and standards that enable them to improve the overall consistency, fluidity and quality of NGO programming. This proves to be beneficial for outside agencies that are required to deal with the NGOS and for the recipients of international NGO programming in the US.

### 3. 3 National NGOs in Bahrain

National NGOs in Bahrain have always been systematically targeted following the outcome of the political uprising in the nation. Every national

NGO has to register with the Ministry of Social Development in accordance with a decree issued in the year 1989. Therefore, political activities in the nation are connected closely to development efforts in the society and this condition permits the state to withhold the legal statuses of non-governmental organizations which are critical of the government of Bahrain, facilitating their persecution. This is same approach that was used when the most influential and active NGOs in Bahrain shut down their operations after they did not receive permission to resume activities in the nation and the members of the foundation were arrested due to their involved in the illegal organization. While the BCHR or the Bahrain Center for Human Rights dissolved in 2004 after its founder took a stance against the prime minister of the kingdom in public, the Bahrain Youth Human Rights Society did not receive any sort of response to repeated requests for registration from the government since 2005 and ultimately had to fold. Other national non-governmental organizations had to face mounting harassment from the government of Bahrain on a regular basis.

Bahrain seems to be adopted an atmosphere of popular suspicion and antagonism towards the national NGOs. In Bahrain, the national NGOs have to defend themselves against routine accusations by pro-government MPs, high ranking officials, and state-sponsored media who are all involved in a conspiracy to destabilize the country with the aid of international backers. In order to ensure that the outside world does not come to know about these shady politics in Bahrain, local activists working closely with the national NGOs do not have the necessary permission to travel abroad. The few individuals who are able to leave successfully to participate in external



events and conferences relating to Bahrain are branded as traitors and face the threat of prosecution if they ever try to return to the kingdom of Bahrain.

Registration has been made a mandatory process in the kingdom of Bahrain for national NGOs. The registration process for national non-governmental organizations in Bahrain is difficult since there are several major limitations to successful registration, including a high minimum number of members or discretions in the process of registration by the foundations. However, if a non-profit organization does not register, it becomes the target of political and legal action by the government. For example, the founder of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights, Mohammed al-Maskati, was imprisoned in the September of 2009 when he commenced operations of the national NGO in Bahrain without first getting a proper license from the government of Bahrain. The case has yet to be resolved and if found guilty al-Maskati may be looking at up to six years of jail time. Not only this, the government tends to meddle in the affairs of the internal operations and management. There are also different kinds of blanket restrictions in place on certain activities and their capacity to raise funds. Registered national NGOs may even encounter the chance of dissolution if they commit minor violations of the law or, in case of lack of violations, simply at the personal discretion of a high ranking official of the Bahraini government. It is also seen that the national NGO members need to contend with potentially severe criminal punishments such as long jail sentences for comparatively minor law violations.

In case, a non-profit organization gains success in their applications for

registration in the kingdom of Bahrain, they may have to deal with a severe amount of supervision by the government. The governments tend to maintain control by attending the meetings hosted by the associations on a regular basis and they intrude in the discussion of issues and opinions, keeping an eye out for thoughts that may be inconsistent with the position of the government. The government can even retain authority over the choice of board members of the national organizations. Since it is able to partly control the board of a national NGO, which serves as the decision-making organ of the group, the government possesses the power to ensure that it will have some sort of say in every major decision that affects the national organization in the long run. In some instances, non-governmental organizations in the kingdom of Bahrain need associations to get approval from the government before entering into any kind of foreign affiliation. However, it is not necessary for the approval to be in the form of a license. Even though the requirement to gain a license may not pose much of a problem on its own, the time constraints connected with obtaining a license may create certain difficulties for the national NGOs. Smaller NGOs might feel burdened if they have to spend a lot on administrative processes just to get multiple applications for fundraising licenses from the government on an annual basis. Moreover, if a national association is allowed to raise funds only once a year it may face severe crisis due to the lack of sufficient amount of funds.

In Bahrain, to get a license to raise funds, a national NGO needs to disclose just how the money is going to be collected, how much of it will be spent as well as the name of bank and the account where the money is going to be

deposited by the organization. As soon as the licenses are obtained, it remains good only for a period of two months. The number of national non-governmental organizations meant for women is limited in the kingdom of Bahrain, numbering only 11 out of approximately 300 total NGOs. They help to play an important role in lending support to the women as well as the acknowledgement of their rights. Still, the national non-profit foundations in Bahrain remain under the influence of the Decree 21 of 1989 which was amended in the year 2002.

The law clearly states in this case that various government agencies take care of the registration of the NGOs based on the planned activities of the organization. The law permits the government to reject an application, among other causes, just because it considers the association to be redundant or unnecessary. It is then that the national non-governmental organizations gain the option to appeal the rejection, but considering the lack of criteria for the authority of the government to reject the applications, it is unclear on what basis a court in Bahrain could strike down a rejection. In addition to the limitations placed on the political activities of the organization, national NGOs in Bahrain do not have the requisite amount of permission to enter into any kind of speculative activities. They are even unable to obtain real estate without receiving permission beforehand from a competent authority in the government of Bahrain.

The lack of proper technological and financial resources has been identified as one of the major problems facing the national non-governmental organizations in the kingdom of Bahrain. The constraints in the field of technological resources happen to be the lack of IT capacity both in terms of

infrastructure and human labor. Hence, it is important for the national NGOs to enhance their IT capacity first, especially related to the training, staffing and budgeting, and senior management involvement in order to boost the strategic utilization of IT. The national NGOS in Bahrain need to realize that using online technology will result in new forms of information collection, broadcasting and processing that were never possible by the groups before. Through this technology, NGOs can build a form for obtaining feedback from their donors, announcing their activities and events, and offering up-to-date report on their services.

### 3. 4 International NGOs in Bahrain

Bahrain is the first country in the Gulf region to grant licenses to international non-governmental organizations that have been established with the primary purpose of protecting the rights of foreign workers. However, there is deep sense of antagonism underlying the relationship between the government of Bahrain and the international non-governmental organizations. The government has attempted to create an air of popular suspicion against these organizations. In fact, the government of Bahrain often seeks help from international non-governmental organizations, promising them privileges and permits, in exchange for their support in falsely accusing the national NGOs.

In order to prevent the truth from getting out, the government continues to deny entry to representatives of human rights groups as well as other international organizations to Bahrain. Moreover, there are several rules and regulations in place in the kingdom of Bahrain that make it hard for international non-governmental organizations to carry out operations in the

region. They need to first obtain a permit following the 1989 Societies Law which prevents any sort of non-governmental organization from carrying on activities without first notifying the proper authorities in Bahrain and seeking their permission. This can cause severe hurdles for any development and liberation to society that the NGOs seek to introduce in Bahrain. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights, for example, was shut due to the interference of the government in the year 2004 though its members still continue to operate but they need to exercise proper caution and be very discreet about their activities if they want to carry welfare activities. Another instance can be found as early as in 2010 when in September, the government of Bahrain forcibly dissolved the board of directors for the Bahrain Human Rights Society which was an independent NGO. The allegations made against the foundation by the government in this specific context were that the group was involved in highly illegal administrative and political work. They stripped the non-profit organization of its present board members and instead assigned a new director who was handpicked by the government officials to run the organization and ensure that the tasks of the group did not interfere with the work of the government.

The truth, however, that the presence of international NGOs in Bahrain is necessary to ensure that the rights of the citizens of the kingdom of Bahrain are being respected by the government and they are not being exploited through the excuse of political turmoil and civil warfare. They need to find a way to resolve the lack of access to closed societies, preventing effective monitoring by the NGOs which deal with the human rights aspect. The discrepancy in the Bahraini system runs deep and the international NGOs in

the region must work together if they hope to achieve any progress. Bahrain has always been a hotbed of political activity but the recent violent tussles between warring groups has led to dramatic changes in the social landscape. As a result, the human rights condition in these countries has suffered due to conflict or an immediate end to the closed structure of the regimes. The prominent international NGOs have made strong efforts to increase their area of focus despite the limited amount of access.

There are some international NGOs who have refused to be caught up in the politics of the kingdom of Bahrain and they actively assigned a low priority and devoted a limited amount of resources to document the social condition of the citizens and publicize the abuse that is being faced by them on a regular basis. The international NGOs allocate their resources in the Bahraini kingdom by considering the number of people whose lives have been affected due to abuse as well as the severity of the abuse that is inflicted upon them. The level of accessibility to the country as well as the availability of information regarding it has also been a major criteria for choosing how much resources will be spent by the international NGO in helping the citizens of the nation. In Bahrain, the abusive forces of the government are not susceptible to influence but the presence of major players and the attention of the international NGO community will go a long way in ensuring that the rights of the people are respected. They have laid stress on the importance of addressing specific thematic concerns and reinforcing the work that has been done by the local rights organizations and the national NGOs in Bahrain.

However, they seem to be quite reluctant when it comes to the development

of an infrastructure that will lend proper support to the human rights in Bahrain and there appears to be a direct correlation between the international media coverage of the different regions of Bahrain and the communities that have been affected and the allocation of the resources of the international NGOs. Since Bahrain already remains covered by consistent media coverage, it tends to receive a great deal more attention from the international NGOs but only in certain aspects. On the other hand, conflicts and areas characterized by a great deal of human rights violations in particular areas of Bahrain but receiving little or no attention from the media tends to be ignored completely by the international NGOs.

The members of the international community fear physical or other risks in the kingdom of Bahrain since they are not permitted to travel freely and widely and do not have the capacity to publish allegations involving abuses since they suffer penalties for errors, the more egregious the harder is the punishment. The volunteers at the international NGOs in Bahrain require proper field experience since it is technically a war zone but otherwise, it is moderately safe and has all the comforts that the internationals could wish for. The quality of life in the kingdom of Bahrain is actually much higher than other Middle Eastern countries.

There is no evidence to support that this sort of proliferation of international NGOs in relatively accessible and moderately safe regions of Bahrain experiences a sort of spill-over effect in the sense of using the impact in the simple cases as a springboard for reforms in the more difficult and closed off sections of the kingdom. The implementation of new legal methods for terror suspects in Bahrain does not seem to have any visible influence on the

absence of due process in the dictatorship and closed societies of the region.

The centrality of the interest of the media in explaining the agenda and the priorities of international non-governmental organizations in Bahrain has been criticized as some kind of business strategy in the sense that every single one of the international NGOs in the region uses the publicity and the press coverage to leverage increased funding from the donors. The international NGOs in Bahrain have actively competed for funding by showing the primary cause that they were carrying out the tasks that had been allocated to them concerning the issues at the centre of media interest. Moreover, there are plenty of examples to suggest that international NGO activities which are highlighted in public and focus on uplifting the society in Bahrain are designed specifically to attract new donors to the cause. Therefore, the main aim of the international NGOs in Bahrain is to achieve visibility and this visibility usually assumed the form of a great deal of photo opportunities which tends to please the donors and patrons associated with the particular non-governmental organization.

The international NGOs in Bahrain even set their agendas and priorities in such a manner as to obtain coverage from the media which they eventually use to improve their own credibility in the global arena. Media coverage, therefore, acts as an informal stamp of approval for the majority of the international advocacy groups in Bahrain. The media exposure indicates that the NGO is seen to bear a lot more weight with the policymakers. Hence, most of the international NGOs tend to cover stories in Bahrain that are in the spotlight of the media in order to enhance their credibility as well as their



political capital. The international NGO community in Bahrain receives the best returns on their investments since they are carrying out activities in a country with a high media interest.

### 3. 5 National NGOs in India

The major national non-governmental organizations in India are facing various issues at the moment. The most significant issue faced by different NGOs is the lack of funds. The Government of India is not known for its generosity in granting aid and there are constant delays in the sanctions of grants for a variety of programs. NGOs in India have to make matching contributions but they are often not capable of managing and are denied access to the grants. Another pressing problem facing the national NGOs in India is the absence of a dedicated system of leadership. The leaders of the NGOs and their skills determine the quality as well as the condition of the services offered by any organization. However, there is a clear lack of dedicated leadership in India since most of the individuals who pioneered voluntary action and worked for it with true devotion entered the world of politics to find berths in parliaments and legislatures and hence, formed a vacuum in terms of dedicated leadership for the national NGOs in India. Most of the national NGO leaders are senior citizens and their style of functioning exhibits authoritarianism and frustrates the younger generation of people who are brimming with new ideas and innovations which could be practiced and expressed for the benefit of the national NGOs in India.

There is a marked absence of trained personnel working in the national NGOs in India. They do not possess the right amount of training needed to keep things in order and sustain the non-governmental organization. It is

extremely difficult to get trained personnel who are willing to carry out service in rural society where the majority of the national NGOs are concentrated. On the off chance, some person does express interest, he/ she usually has high expectations in terms of status, salaries, opportunities for growth in the profession. The national NGOs are unable to spare some funds to impart the right training to the volunteers working at the non-profit foundation. The national NGOs are constantly fearful of the idea that the personnel may shift to a different NGO after they receive training from them.

If the national NGOs continue to remain undeveloped, it could lead to several major challenges such as the stoppage of funds, the shortage of funds and ultimately it would become impossible for the NGO to sustain in India. The rural parts of the nation still suffer from the lack of employment and opportunities of self-employment due to its narrow economic base. The primary hurdle faced in the advancement of national NGOs happens to be the non-availability of the necessary and timely economic support to trained and experienced entrepreneurs. Recently, the Indian government has experienced a great deal of success in achieving the development of the rural poor via the method of entrepreneurship development which focuses on utilizing local talent in a selective manner, suitably developing them via training interventions and linking them with the appropriate opportunities for business. National NGOs in India have learnt to collaborate with other organizations for the training of development workers.

Despite these drawbacks, the national NGOs have clearly been participating actively in the development of rural areas in India. The operations of the

national NGOs are important to maintain the lives of the rural poor as well as the socially depressed classes and there is a great deal of competition between the national non-governmental organizations to extend the services to help the poor and the needy. However, at the same time, it is important that the NGOs continue to function for the welfare of these groups in Indian society.

The development of the poor in India can be facilitated through national NGOs who are capable of arranging agricultural related programs. The agricultural sector in India offers a variety of employment options to the inhabitants of rural India and the NGOs can utilize the fact in their favor. Health programs are an important step forward for the national NGOs if they actually want to enable the wellbeing of the citizens. Different activities like periodical health check-up camps, good drinking water for humans and animals etc. will enhance the health conditions of the non-human as well as the human beings. The national NGOs could set up human resource development programs along with community development projects in order to make the Indian society both self sustainable and enable them to gain proper employment opportunities. Trade and industrial promotion is one of the main features of the national NGOs and this could lead to increased support from the government of India. The NGOs remain accountable for the funds and it moves directly to the beneficiaries.

In order to uplift the situation for the national NGOs, the government of India must liberalize the regulations and rules of grants-in-aid and sanction a greater number of grants to the non-governmental organizations. At the same time, it is necessary for the government to appoint commissions of

enquiry in order to cross check the misuse of funds by the national NGOs throughout India. The committee members must monitor and supervise the activities of the national NGOs on a periodical basis. Young graduates in different subjects may be invited to conduct public seminars and meetings and use the local media to advertise the significance of volunteerism which could encourage more people to join non-governmental organizations in India as volunteers. The national NGOs need to be staffed with the proper technology like internet and websites if they wish to spread their awareness in India and earn more funds, foster mutual associations and promote their products.

The Indian government while sanctioning the grants for a particular national NGO program needs to be aware of the interest of the specific NGO. The government of India should also concern the non-governmental organization while providing target oriented or time bound projects. This facilitates the maintenance of service quality. The national NGOs must always try to refrain from monopolizing the leadership and the non-governmental foundations should recruit young and efficient people as the current leaders of the organizations and retire the person who had been nominated leaders for extended periods of time. The national organizations will be benefitted to a great extent if the government revises the pay-scales and allowances that is offered to the personnel of national NGOs.

Coordinating organizations must be present to solve the issues faced by the national NGOs in India. These associations are necessary for the exchange of data between the non-governmental organizations and the government of India. The majority of the population in India resides in the village regions

and so, the national NGOs must operate in rural regions on a greater scale in order to enlist full cooperation from the village people if they wish to make their lives better. These NGOs must even encourage the educated sections of the Indian population, like young graduates, to actively take part in voluntary non-profit tasks. The Government of India has provided special provisions for national NGOs who are actively working in rural sections in gaining eligibility conditions for the grants.

The government of India must make it a point to induct the stories of success of great leaders as well as their leadership qualities, dedication, voluntarism and commitment towards social development in the curriculum to foster the seeds of leadership in the coming generations. The new ideas, innovation and initiatives present in the minds of the youth enable them to turn into fascinating leaders which could prove great for the national NGOs since most of them in India are being affected by the crisis of proper leadership. Being a welfare organization, non-governmental groups in India always attempt to maintain a standard quality of service. It is important for the government to recognize the national NGOs in India doing exemplary work by providing rewards or awards along with additional grants. This might improve the workings of the national NGOs and make them more effective.

### 3. 6 International NGOs in India

International NGOs in India tend to vary a lot in terms of their focus, approach and even size. The majority of these non-governmental organizations are based in the North and they undertake fundraising activities within their own nations and carry out advocacy work not only on the national level but even internationally. In most instances, India is still

seen as a priority area for their activities, where they are capable of using different combinations of working strategies. While some tend to their work in India from a headquarters located outside the nation, others are in charge of non-operational local field offices through which they are capable of monitoring every program of the international NGO. There are a bunch of international groups which also choose to run independent programs, free from the influence of the bigger organizations and they happen to be involved directly in advocacy work. International non-governmental organizations tend to have a degree of specialization in a single area. There are many organizations which choose to fund projects in a direct manner while others work via the funding organizations in India. Instead of financial support, there are several international NGOs in India which offer institutional and technical expertise. These types of development initiatives in India have their fair share of regular supporters in the form of international trust funds which grant funds from the profits earned by the parent company.

In case of the maximum number of international non-governmental organization donors in India, the nation provides impetus for their long-term development programs owing to sufficient amount of evidence which indicates that the funds happen to be used in a wise and productive manner most of the time. International NGOs in India are actively involved in the process of development of the nation and in recent times, they are playing a highly prominent role in development thinking. Over the course of a few years, they have made a sufficient number of contributions to the efforts to eradicate poverty from India and uplift the condition of the people, especially

in the areas of advocacy, capacity building, gender sensitization, new methods and concepts of development, exchange programs and networking. They tend to have a massive influence on the international NGOs in Indi