

Taxonomies of NGOs Revisited: A Bangladesh Perspective

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Abstract

This conceptual paper is based on the NGO-classifications in the context of Bangladesh. “NGOs”, engaged in socio-economic development of the people, are the self-governing, non-profit and donor-dependent organisations. Donors, NGO themselves and the beneficiaries are the main stakeholders in the NGO-sector. NGOs mainly operate on the public goods theory, contract failure theory and tax subsidy theory. Numerous authors and researchers have classified NGOs in various ways. The categorizations are mostly based on size, scope, recipient of donation, locations etc. NGOs, located in South-Asia, are classified as Grass Roots, Intermediary and International/donor NGOs. Bangladeshi NGOs may be divided as the General Voluntary Social Welfare Organisations (GVSWO), National Social Welfare Organisations, Operating with foreign donations and Foreign NGOs. NGOs may be classified as the basis of objectives and functioning (e.g. Single purpose advocacy and multi-purpose development). Welfare provision, campaigning, advocacy, and hybrid NGOs-is one of the taxonomies, while NGOs are also put under the headings of southern, intermediary and membership organisations.

This paper classifies Bangladeshi NGOs into microcredit NGOs, mixed NGOs and non-microcredit NGOs. Further, this paper, on the basis of origin and operations, divides Bangladeshi NGOs into local and International. Future researchers may empirically examine the taxonomies in the context of any other country.

Key Words: NGOs, Classifications, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

The contribution of the NGOs to the socio-economic development of the people is paramount. The NGOs, sort of independent bodies like vehicles loaded with goods and services of the donors intending to deliver the same to the beneficiaries. They are engaged in filling up the gaps between the government’s forgotten actions and the people’s needs. The UN Economic and social Council through UN Resolution 288 B (X), dated 27 February 1950, approved the term ‘NGO’ as the official name for Non-Governmental Organisations. They are self governing, private, not for profit organisations that are geared to improving the quality of life of disadvantaged people. Hasnain (2015) finds, NGO-Operations are based on certain theories, such as the public goods theory, where the government or state satisfies the demand of the median voters, and is unable or fails to satisfy where demand is higher than the median voters’ desire, or where heterogeneous demands exist. The government’s failures create the NGO’s innovation to handle the heterogeneous problems of the society. Contract failure theory is that NGOs are the responses to the opportunistic behaviour by both public and private service providers. Subsidy theory has described the different forms of tax subsidies of the state to the NGOs which encourages the expansion of this industry. Donors, NGO themselves and the beneficiaries are the main stakeholders in the NGO-sector (Najam, 1996). There are numerous definitions of NGOs. Vakil (1997) sees them as, “self governing, private, not profit organizations that are geared to improving the quality of life of disadvantaged people” (p. 2060). Begum (2008) shows and lists different definitions of NGOs in a comprehensive way:

Definitions of NGO (Begum, 2008, p. 25)

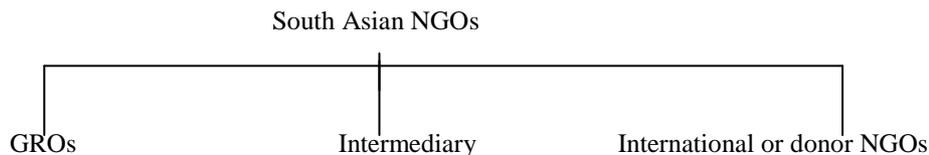
- It is an organization of private individuals who believe in certain basic social principles, and structure their activities to bring about development to the communities that they are serving.
- An organization or group of people working independent of any external control with specific objectives and aims to fulfill any tasks that are oriented to bring about desirable change in a community, area or situation.
- An independent, democratic organisation working for the empowerment of economically and/or socially marginalized groups.
- An organisation not affiliated to political parties, generally engaged in working for the development and welfare of the community.
- An organisation committed to address the root causes of the problems and trying to improve the quality of the lives of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized in the urban and rural areas.
- Organizations established by and for the community without or with little intervention from the government; they are not only a charity but work for socio-economic and cultural development.
- A non-profit, voluntary, service-orientated organisation for the benefit of the poor.
- An organisation that is flexible and democratic in its organisation and attempts to serve the people without profit for itself.

2. Taxonomies of NGOs

NGOs may be classified in different ways. Size, scope (Lewis, 1997), recipient of donation, location and so on, may be criteria. The NGOs connection with (i) the state and (ii) civil society is the main criteria of their classifications (Vakil, 1997).

2.1 Classification of South Asian NGOs (Rahman, 2007)

Rahman (2007) divides the level of the South-Asian NGOs into three- distinct classes; grassroots organisations (GROs), intermediary, and international or donor NGOs. GROs are small in size, huge in number, operate locally, and have limited funds and outreach. Donor NGOs are mainly foreign funded, large in size, and do not work directly with the beneficiaries. Intermediary NGOs are regional in nature, and are bigger than GROs and smaller than donor NGOs in size and outreach.



2.2 Ahmad's (1999) Classification

Ahmad (1999) identifies the NGOs in the Bangladesh context and classified them in a comprehensive way:

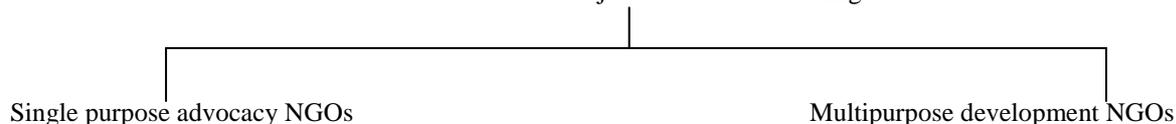
- (i) General Voluntary Social Welfare Organisations (GVSWO): These are small in size and operate locally. They are dependent on local funds and government grants. Here the workers are mainly volunteers.
- (ii) National Social Welfare Organisations; similar to the above, but they operate nationwide. They utilize local resources for their operations.
- (iii) Bangladeshi NGOs operating with foreign donations; these work as developing NGOs with paid employees. They must be registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau, a regulatory body of the Bangladesh Government. They are funded by foreign NGOs, bilateral donors and multilateral agencies.
- (iv) Foreign NGOs which may be divided into the following sub-categories.
 - (a) Completely operated by the foreign donation and foreign members. Usually they implement different social welfare and developing programmes in Bangladesh.
 - (b) Foreign NGOs only supplying volunteers from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries of Europe and North America to the other development NGOs in Bangladesh.
 - (c) Those only providing funds to the Bangladeshi NGOs. They do not participate in the execution of the development programmes except monitoring the activities.



2.3 Haque's (2002) Classification

Haque (2002) divides the NGOs into various categories based on their objectives and functioning, for example to do with welfare, human rights, women and religion.

Classifications based on Objectives and Functioning

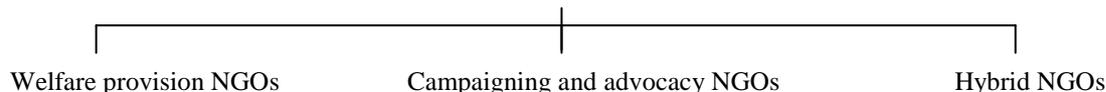


Haque (2002), more specifically, puts the Bangladeshi NGOs into two broad categories, namely, *single purpose advocacy NGOs*, dealing with issues of gender, human rights and the environment, for example, the Bangladesh Human Rights Associations, Friends of the Earth Bangladesh, and *multipurpose development NGOs* who operate in socio-economic development activities such as microcredit, skills development, poverty alleviation, health care, and education in rural Bangladesh. For example, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Proshika Manobik Unnayan Kendra (human development centre), and the Association for Social Advancement (ASA).

2.4 Unerman and O’Dwyer’s (2006) Classification

Based on activities Unerman and O’Dwyer (2006) classify the NGOs into three broad categories, namely, welfare provision, campaigning and advocacy and hybrid NGOs. Welfare provision NGOs are engaged in providing welfare to people in development projects in developing countries. Their works mainly include construction of infrastructures for irrigation, agriculture, and education, and providing emergency services during various catastrophic situations, such as famine, earthquakes, and floods. They also provide shelters, food and employment for disadvantaged people. Campaigning and advocacy NGOs are engaged to promote certain interests such as environmental protections, and human rights. Hybrid NGOs are those who combine welfare and advocacy roles together in their charter of duties. For example Oxfam is a hybrid NGO, as it performs developing activities as well as advocacy campaigns. In Bangladesh all of these categories of NGOs perform activities.

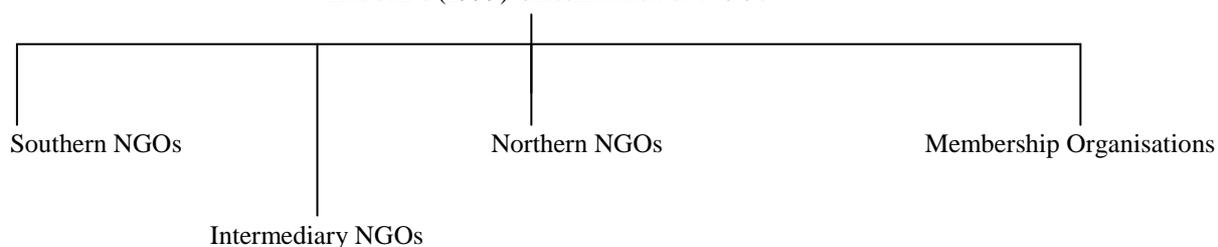
Classification on Activities



2.5 Hudock’s (1999) Classifications

Hudock (1999) classifies NGOs as northern, southern, intermediary, and membership organisations. *Northern NGOs* were established after the First World War, and their responsibilities were extended in manifold after the Second World War. They were primarily engaged in rebuilding war-torn Europe, but later many shifted their activities towards the developing world, for example, Oxfam, or the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE). *Southern NGOs* receive funds, technical support and co-operation from northern NGOs. With this help, many of the former could gradually operate by themselves. Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) is one of the largest southern NGOs in the world. *Intermediary NGOs* are the media through which funds and other assets are mobilised by another NGO or donor for the developments of the beneficiaries. Intermediary NGOs may be southern or northern. *Membership organisations* are formed to solve a particular development problem, are established locally and are usually dissolved once the problem or development work is completed.

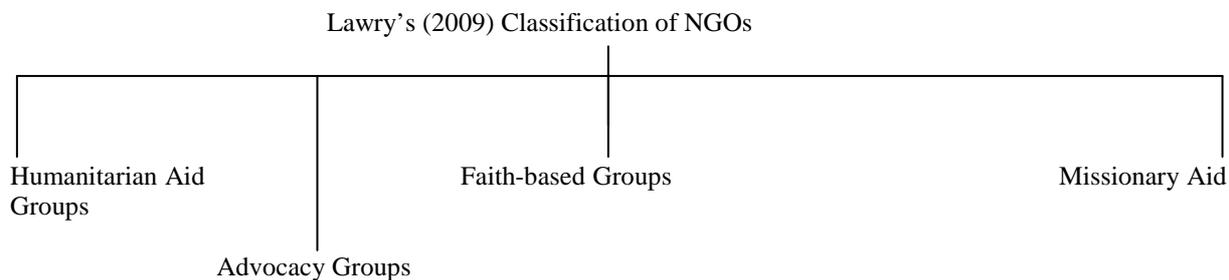
Hudock’s (1999) Classification of NGOs



2.6 Lawry’s (2009) Classification of NGOs

Lawry (2009) divides NGOs into four types: (i) humanitarian aid (emergency aid operations and developmental) (ii) advocacy groups (issues like human rights) (iii) faith- based groups (these are humanitarian aid groups

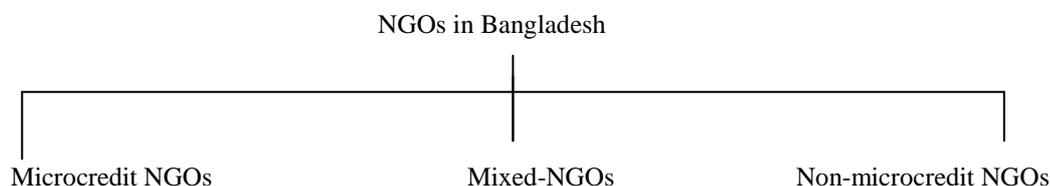
originally founded on the faith principles, but they use religion as a part of aid given) (iv) missionary aid groups (they “spread the word” using humanitarian aid e.g. one kind of conditional help).



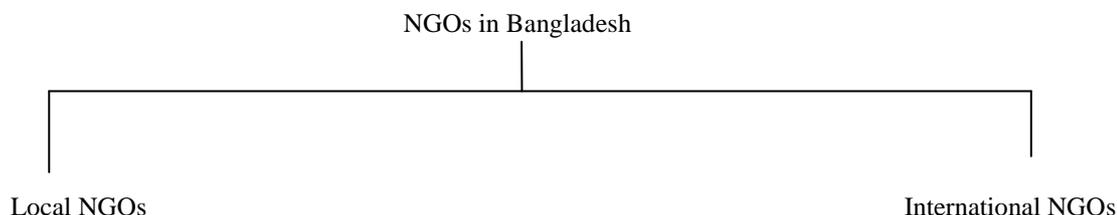
3. Taxonomies of NGOs in Bangladesh: Towards a New Approach

Bangladeshi NGOs have various functional coverage, notably, microcredit (ADB, 1999; Mahmud, 1998; Rahman 2000; Haque, 2000; Sarkar and Ahmed, 2000; Buckland, 1998; Gauri and Galef, 2005; Lovell, 2005), empowerment/income generation (Buckland, 1998; Haque, 2002; Begum, 2008), education, (Ahmad, 1999; Begum, 2008), health and nutrition (Mahmud, 1998; Gauri and Galef, 2005), environment (Haque, 2000; Begum 2008), natural calamities/disaster management (Rahman, 2000), human rights and legal aids (Zaman, 2003; Begum, 2008), water and sanitation (ADB, 1999; Rammelt and Boes 2004), poultry and livestock (ADB, 1999), agriculture (Ahmad, 1999; Lewis, 1997; Haque, 2002), relief and rehabilitation (Rahman, 2000) etc. (Hasnain, 2013, p. 11).

Maximum NGOs, in Bangladesh, have microcredit in their functional coverage. So broadly, on the basis of microcredit operations, NGOs in Bangladesh may be divided into Microcredit NGOs, Mixed-NGOs and Non-microcredit NGOs. NGOs which are operating only microcredit functions in their functional coverage may be termed as Microcredit NGOs, like ASA (Association of Social Advancement), mixed NGOs operate with microcredit and other functional areas (e.g. BRAC) and the NGOs which do not have microcredit in their functional coverage, but having other functional areas are Non-microcredit NGOs (e.g. TMSS).



On the basis of origin and operations Bangladeshi NGOs may be divided into local and international. In Bangladesh, numerous local and international NGOs are in operation. BRAC, ASA etc are the local NGOs, while CARE, World Vision are the international NGOs. Local NGOs need to take registration from the NGOAB (NGO Affairs Bureau) if they receive foreign funds.



4. Conclusion and Future Research

The NGOs, the non-profit attitude holders, are trying to put their best for the well-being of the people in the world. “NGOs” are the self-governing, non-profit and donor-dependent bodies approved by the UN Economic and Social Council vide Resolution 288 B (X)/27 February 1950. Mainly these organisations are working for the socio-economic development of the disadvantaged people-which otherwise, should have been done by the state. NGOs operate on the public goods theory, contract failure theory and tax subsidy theory.

Classifying NGOs -is a challenging job. Many authors and researchers have classified NGOs in various ways. These taxonomies are mainly based on size, scope, recipient of donation, locations etc. NGOs, located in South-Asia, are classified as Grass Roots, Intermediary and International/donor NGOs (Rahman, 2007), while Ahmed

(1999) comprehensively divides Bangladeshi NGOs as the General Voluntary Social Welfare Organisations (GVSWO), National Social Welfare Organisations, Bangladeshi NGOs operating with foreign donations and foreign NGOs. Haque (2002) divides the NGOs on the basis of objectives and functioning (e.g. Single purpose advocacy and multi-purpose development). Based on NGO activities, the classification of welfare provision, campaigning, advocacy, and hybrid, is the brain child of Unerman and O'Dwyer (2000). Hudock (1999) identifies NGOs as Southern, Intermediary and membership organisations.

As the NGOs' extensively use of microcredit as a poverty reduction tool in Bangladesh, this paper classifies Bangladeshi NGOs into microcredit NGOs (only operates with microcredit), mixed NGOs (operating microcredit along with other functional coverage) and non-microcredit NGOs (except microcredit other functional coverage). Further, this paper, on the basis of origin and operations, divides Bangladeshi NGOs into local and International. A close analysis of the classifications reveals, the classifications are mostly based on the functional coverage of the NGOs.

Future researchers may empirically examine the aforementioned taxonomies in the context of any other country.

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