

PUBLIC WELFARE BY NGOS IN UNDERDEVELOPED AREAS: A GLIMPSE FROM BADIN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

NGOs have expanded their activities in developed and underdeveloped areas. They mobilize the community to be self-reliant, support people to discover their own potentials, and rely on their own resources. Badin District is one of least developed districts of Pakistan. In Badin 60 local, national and international NGOs are working. This study aims to explore NGOs' performance in public opinion. Data were collected through closed-ended questionnaire and sample consists of 270 respondents from general public selected randomly. Data were analyzed using percentage, bar charts and pie charts. The research concluded that most people have a positive and optimistic views about NGOs. However there are certain shortcomings in them like political interference and insignificant changes brought by NGOs, as public don't seem completely satisfied with them. There was no NGO found working for unemployment and senior citizens' welfare in Badin region. NGOs should comply with their manifestation, as an entity is recognized not only by what it asserts but what it performs.

Key words: *NGOs, welfare, work areas, political interference, beneficiaries*

Introduction

Role of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has been prominently ascribed to public well-being and economic development for past few decades. In 20th century the inadequacies of the state and the market stimulated citizens across the globe for the development of NGOs to help address a wide range of social needs (Banks & Hulme, 2012). An NGO is a non-profit, citizen based group

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that functions independently of government. NGOs, sometimes called civil societies, are organized on community, national and international levels to serve specific social purpose, and are cooperative rather than commercial in nature. There are many different types of NGO including development organizations, religious groups, charities, environmental agencies etc. Their functions are manifold, which include; empowering people, welfare services to people, emergency humanitarian aid, lobbying powerful decision-makers, the regulation of hazardous wastes, global ban on land mines and the elimination of slavery are few to mention.

In Pakistan, the origin of NGOs dates back to its independence in 1947 when they were about seven in number, their proliferation took place in late 70s and a rapid increase in 90s (Tufail, 2006). According to United Nations Development Program (UNDP), about 16,000 NGOs are working in Pakistan. There are approximately 35000 unregistered NGOs, whereas an Indian news agency Thaindian News stated 100000 functional NGOs in Pakistan (Gondal, 2012), while this number is 45,000 by Agha Khan Foundation. According to Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), there are less than 100 effective NGOs in Pakistan.

Badin district had 0.628 Human Development Index, the sixth lowest in the province (Jamal & Khan, 2007), reliable recent data could not be accessed. Despite having treasures of natural resources — fertile soil, minerals, coast, and most important humans — Badin is an underdeveloped district of Pakistan. Badin district is 50 meters above sea level so it usually receives heavy rainfall in summer that creates catastrophic situation in district Badin. Majority of people are severely affected by epidemic, die, or injured, houses are devastated, irrigation canals and crops are damaged. There are about 60 NGOs working in Badin district 46 on district, eight on national and six on international level. These NGOs try to rehabilitate the community, provide funds, and start small-level infrastructure schemes.

Literature bulks with research on the performance and development of NGOs. However, little pertains to public perspective regarding NGOs' performance. It is interesting to know that how much beneficiaries are satisfied and affirmed of it. Though NGOs are widely criticized by think tanks and ordinary analysts, this study sought to examine the NGOs' performance in terms of public opinion. Nevertheless public is naive about internal matters and management issues but a public trial is considered worthy and in this arena they are the prime stockholders. Unattractive underdeveloped areas are mostly deprived of amenities and other facilities provided by government or private sectors, therefore it is imperative to know what these non-profit organizations are rendering as philanthropy there.

Objectives of the Study

- To know public opinion about performance of NGOs; the issues/causes NGOs are working on, criteria for selecting regions, political interference, and public accessibility to NGOs.
- To provide some valuable recommendations for improvement and to identify interesting directions for future research.

Literature Review

The number of NGOs has been growing since the 1980s, mostly in response to the state's failure to provide social services and facilities to public (Krut, 1997). The highest percentage of NGOs involved in education that is 46 percent, only six percent are health sector NGOs in Pakistan (Naviwala, 2010). Tens of thousands of NGOs are working at local, national or international levels, though their distribution throughout the world is not equal (Tuijl, 1999).

NGOs' stated objective is community empowerment especially individual empowerment and improvement in the quality of their lives. It is achieved though capacity building such as skills, abilities,

knowledge, assets and by motivating the community to participate in their project (Nikkhah & Redzuan, 2010). Different sections of society accept NGOs as an effective machine for rural development. Ninety percent of the beneficiaries had considered the programs of NGOs as most beneficial for them (Bhaskar & Geethakutty, 2001).

NGOs also try fulfillment of basic needs of people to reduce poverty issues. NGOs need to develop mutually satisfactory relationships with the beneficiaries, the Donor Agencies/ Partners, and the other NGOs (Benett, et al., 2012). NGOs serve as narrators or ombudsmen for poor people and advocate to influence government policies and programs.

NGOs have high aims and attention grabbing agenda in Pakistan (Gondal, 2012). NGOs are widely criticized because of their inability to deliver what was expected from them, as NGOs drew an image of righteousness. They were thought to be participatory, community-oriented, neutral, cost effective, and rescuers for poor people (Zaidi, 1999).

In Pakistan NGOs' public legitimacy is seriously challenged because of their dependence on development aid, whereas the high monetary compensations made available to the leaders of the NGOs are interpreted as lack of commitment, which negatively impact organizational membership (Bano, 2008). Strategic to operational level management should be well educated, and improve their organizational behaviour. Fresh graduates and youngsters should be encouraged for breaking the status quo, because the presence of influential people in board of directors is a threat for transparency and accountability (Gondal, 2012).

Jafer (2007) collected ethnographic data in Pakistan in 2004 and concluded with a criticism on the strategies used by women NGOs, in response to the claim made by women NGOs that a unique challenge of Islamic fundamentalism is faced by them.

NGOs not only help people to move forward the development and fulfill their dreams but also assist them to improve their lives and society at large. The unrealistic expectations from NGO by funders pressurize the management of NGOs for contributing effectively to other people's efforts (Jacob, 2011). NGOs are in fact not panacea, so multi-dimensional aspects of NGOs need to be considered to assess their impact. As they sometimes have adverse impacts and need to be watched over by the public (Kim, 2009).

Limitations

- Villagers and uneducated people did not give adequate responses.
- Confidentiality of data in the NGOs offices delimited the findings
- Most of the work is based on public opinion and their perception

Research Methodology

The research was exploratory cum descriptive. Primary data were collected from general public through survey using closed-ended questionnaire. Random sampling technique was used and 300 questionnaires were distributed to general public of Badin district – both educated and uneducated. Out of 300 only 270 questionnaires were returned. Uneducated peoples' responses were recorded by the researcher. Twelve NGOs' offices were visited as convenient sampling and the information about their work areas and about criteria for selecting region was collected. NGOs annual reports, internship reports on NGOs and their websites were also viewed for data collection. Social welfare department was also visited.

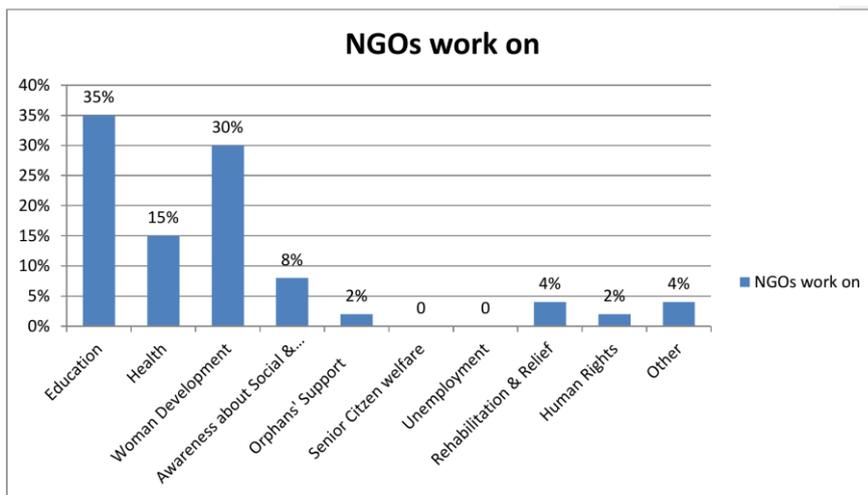
Findings and Discussion

Data were analyzed using percentage and the bar charts for presenting the findings.

NGOs working on Issues/Causes:

The first question about the issues/causes on which NGOs are working was explored through visits of NGOs' offices, websites and reviewing internship reports. The Bar Chart 1 indicates results. A large number of NGOs that is 35 percent is working on education that is in response to Badin's literacy rate which is 39 percent — the finding is consistent to Naviwala's (2010) report. Women constitute 47 percent of total population of Badin and NGOs working on women development is 30 percent, 15 percent NGOs are working on health as there is only one district headquarter hospital in district Badin, while 17 dispensaries 11 RHCs and 37 BHUs (Ahmed, 2012). Eight percent of NGOs are working on providing awareness about social and environmental issues, two percent for orphans' support. Because of its vulnerability to natural disasters and other calamities, four percent of NGOs are working on rehabilitation and relief. Two percent of NGOs work on human rights, whereas four percent work on other issues/causes. Neither any NGO is working for unemployment nor for senior citizen in Badin, though 3.10 percent of the total population is 65 years and above in the district.

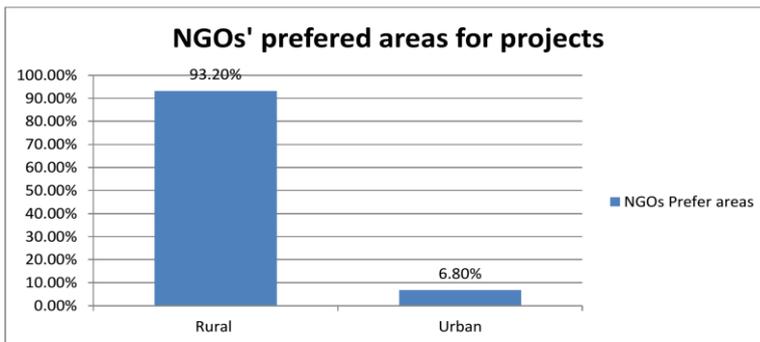
Chart 1



Preferred Area for their Projects

Total population of Badin district is 1420719 out of which 84 percent lives in Rural areas (Ahmed, 2012), in response to that, this study has found that 93.2 percent of NGOs work or prefer rural areas for their projects, whereas only 6.8 percent of the work is done for urban areas. Chart 2 indicates the results.

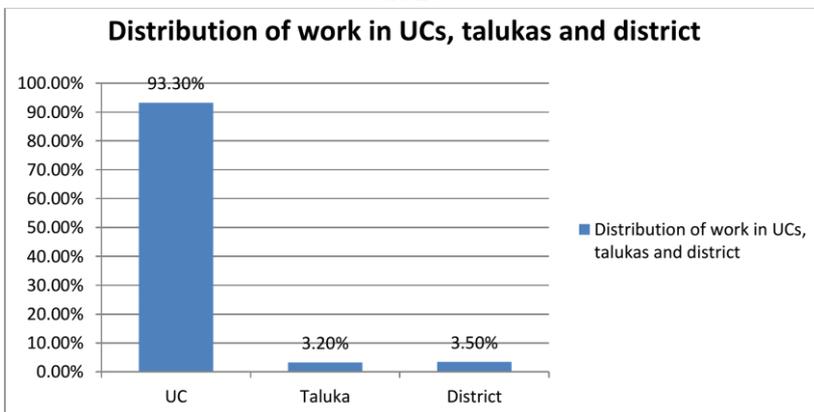
Chart 2



Distribution of Work in UCs, Talukas and District

There are five talukas and 46 union councils (UCs) in Badin. Most of NGOs' projects are based on UC wise which is 93.3 percent, only 3.2 percent and 3.5 percent of their work is based on taluka wise and district wise respectively, as indicated by Chart 3

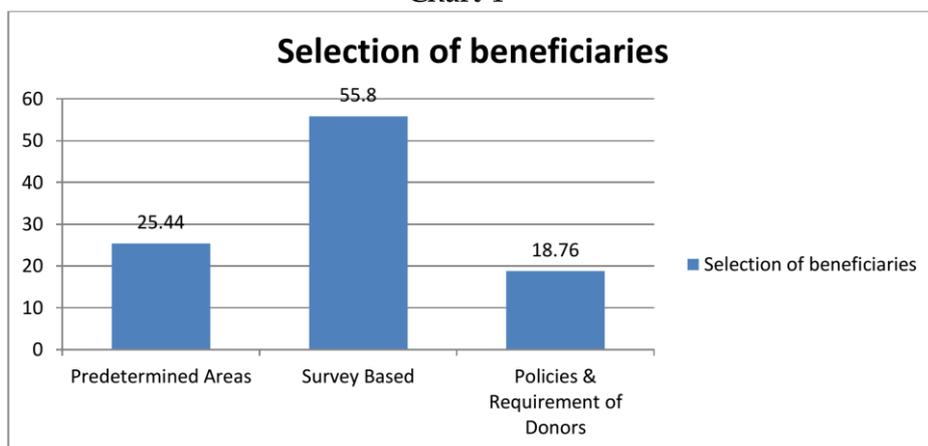
Chart 3



Selection of Beneficiaries

For deciding about where to start a project NGOs have three options; NGOs mostly conduct survey before selecting the area, as 55.8 percent responded that. On the other hand, 25.44 percent go for predetermined areas — the geographical areas or section of population which are known to be needy and severely require improvements, 18.76 percent of the NGOs depend on policies and requirement of donors. Chart 4 indicates the results. General public knows only about survey-based method.

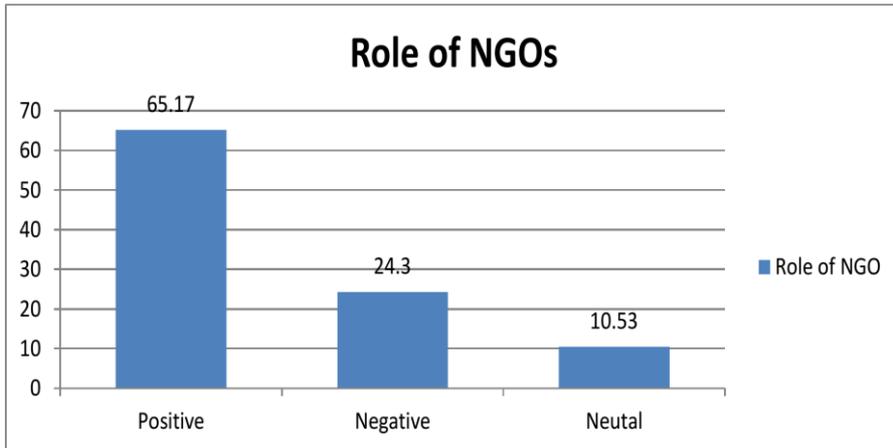
Chart 4



Public opinion about role of NGOs

The role of NGOs in achieving what they assert has always been criticized by analysts, think tanks and general public as well. This study has given a result contrary to general perception. People who think that NGOs' role is positive are 65.17 percent, whereas 24.30 percent opined it negative, and 10.53 percent consider it neither positive nor negative, as indicated by Chart 5.

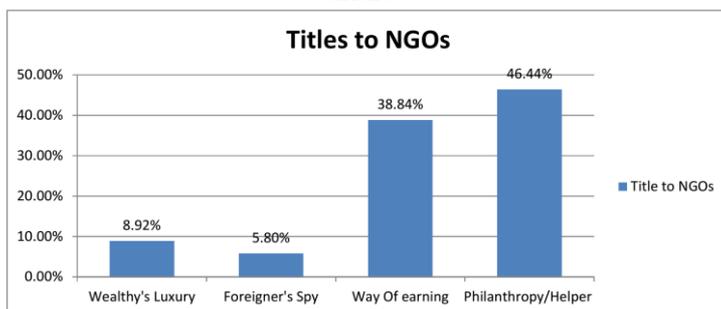
Chart 5



Titles Given to NGOs

NGOs are termed philanthropy and saviors as compliment, but when it comes to criticism they are given various names like a way of earning, foreigners' spy, extravaganza of rich people, etc. In Badin majority of 46.44 percent public termed NGOs "philanthropy or helper", it denotes a significant number of people think that NGOs are really working for the betterment of public. NGOs are "way of earning" was said by 38.84 percent, which means a substantial number of people deem NGOs profit-making entities rather welfare organizations. NGOs sound leisure and lavish activity of affluent society to some people, as 5.80 percent called them "wealthy's luxury". NGOs were termed as "foreigners' spy" by 8.92 percent, thus there is also concept of other countries' spying through indulgence of NGOs because they penetrate in society and collect data in bulk that can be used by other countries against the host country. Chart 6 indicates the results.

Chart 6

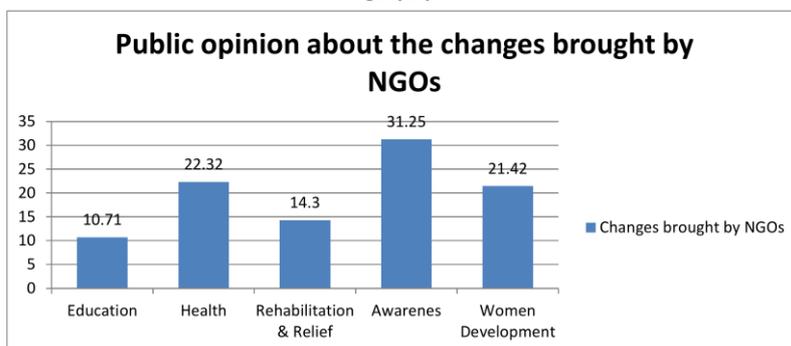


Public opinion about the changes brought by NGOs:

NGOs are working on various issues/causes as was found after visiting their offices and websites. This study investigated from public what change they observe as result of NGOs efforts in their areas — change means any positive, qualitative and subjective improvement as perceived by public. The results are indicated in Chart 7.

Major change was observed in spreading awareness about various social and environmental issues by NGOs that is 31.25 percent, and least change is seen in education that is by 10.71 percent — the change in literacy rate in 13 years from 1998 to 2011 is 14.40 percent (Ahmed, 2012). Substantial changes has been observed in health and women development that 22.32 percent and 21.42 percent respectively. Rehabilitation and relief has change of 14.30 percent.

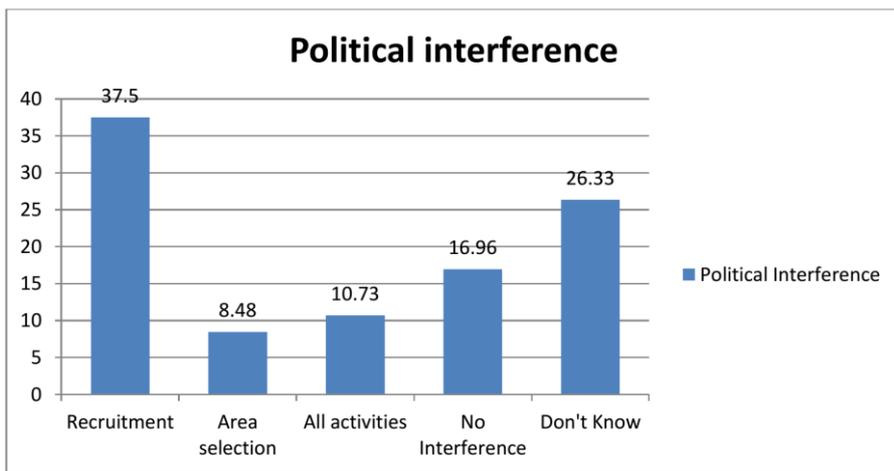
Chart 7



Political interference in NGOs

NGOs are also accused of influenced by political elites. As the literature linked their failure to management's inefficiency and incompetency. According to public NGOs are influenced politically in recruitment, 37.5 percent say that 8.48 percent find politics in area selection. Another 26.33 percent have no idea about that, and 16.96 percent found no political interference in NGOs, as indicated by Chart 8.

Chart 8



Beneficiaries of NGOs:

Out of 270 respondents 60.71 percent has been benefited directly or indirectly from NGOs that is denoting NGOs wide expansion. On the other hand, 47.76 percent people say that NGOs are currently working in their areas and the remaining 52.24 percent say there is no NGO currently working in their area. The data is presented in Chart 9 and Chart 10.

Chart 9

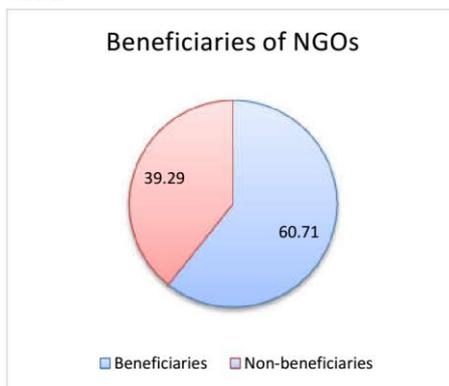
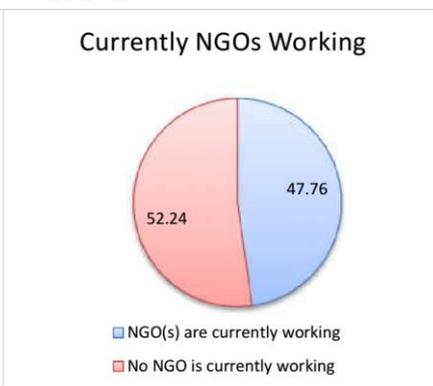


Chart 10



Conclusion

NGOs are widely criticized but this study gives contrary results, which shows that general public somehow trust on what is objectified by NGOs. Education is a main concern by NGOs because most of the NGOs work on education as found in the study and education is followed by women development. These two main issues of country are emphasized by NGOs with other issues like health and awareness regarding social and environmental issues. No NGO is working on unemployment and senior citizens welfare in Badin district. Rural areas are given priority, most of the NGOs' work is distributed on the basis of union councils, and regions are mostly selected after conducting surveys. General public perceive a positive role of NGOs and majority gave them title of "helper or philanthropy". "Way of earning" title was also given by many. People observe substantial change in spreading awareness and trivial change in education because of the advent of NGOs. Majority of public found NGOs being influenced by politics in recruitment, and a big number of people doesn't know about political interference. Most of the respondents have been beneficiaries of NGOs but majority said that there is no NGO working in their areas. Furthermore in-depth analysis of NGOs performance is required as to compare that with the public perspective in this study, which will help in formulating strategies for

improving the sector.

Recommendations

- NGOs should work on unemployment and for senior citizens in Badin. As no NGO was found working on these significant issues. Dependent population in Badin District is 48.10 percent of the total population which comprises of the people that are less than 15 years and more than 65 years of age.
- NGOs should refute the opinion of public that 'NGOs are ways of earning' as 38.84 percent people think that. It signals mistrust and skepticism of public about NGOs.
- NGOs should put more efforts in education, as the change in this is perceived only 10.71 percent which do not comply with the number of NGOs working on it in Badin, which is 35 percent. As majority is working on education so the trivial improvement in it is not justified.
- NGOs should also put more efforts in orphans support and human rights, as general public don't see improvements in that areas.
- NGOs should refute the majority's opinion about the political interference in NGOs especially in recruitment, because political interference can deviate the organizations from their primary goal and cast suspicion upon their creditability.
- NGOs should live up to the expectation of general public, as people are looking forward to changes brought by NGOs, so NGOs should adhere to what they purport.
- State should emphasize and reform all the areas because it is actually state's responsibility.

- A comprehensive study should be conducted with a bigger sample size on NGOs performance in Badin and other underdeveloped areas as well.

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