THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOs) FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: WAY FORWARD

Norhasni Zainal Abiddin, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia
Irmohizam Ibrahim, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia
Shahrul Azuwar Abdul Aziz, Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are progressively recognized or promoted as alternative health care, community development, social justice, education, and several other goals but are hampered by government inefficiency and resource constraints. However, the statement of NGOs is more complex, not only the differences between government, NGOs may also suffer from lack of resources and management inefficiency, like those provided by the government. The objective of this paper is to find out the role and the impact made by NGOs in community development and to identify challenges faced by NGOs in community development. In this study, a large amount of literature from journal articles, reports and even organisational websites were studied to gather the data. To get an overview of NGOs in more detail, data on the number of NGOs in Malaysia is also presented in this article. It aims to see how vigorously these NGOs are growing, but its direction is still unclear. Thus, this article suggests some recommendations for the purpose of developing existing NGOs in a more beneficial direction to the community.

Keywords: Non-governmental organisations; NGOs; Community development; Programme development; Training.

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades of the 20th century, NGOs were found to begin to play a role in the political arena in most countries, although in the early stages of its existence, these bodies functioned more in the social welfare arena. Almost simultaneously, the interest of academics in NGOs is increasing as well. Between 1987 to 1997, there were various empirical studies on NGOs with government, democratization, the formation of civil society and NGOs in the global system being the main focus of the study. At the same time, various complex societal issues such as consumerism, women, the environment and human rights have started to be revealed and highlighted by governments and communities in most countries (Abdul Rahman, 2000).

There are generally four main features of NGOs which are voluntary, non-partisan, non-profit and non-criminal. According to Salamon and Anheier (1996), seven main features were used to describe NGOs and differentiate them from others. The seven features are: (1) formal (officially registered and having organisational rules); (2) private (having separate organisation from the government); (3) non-profit distributing (different from the objectives of establishing a business organisation); (4) self-governing (privately managed); (5) voluntary (worked voluntarily); (6) non-religious (not motivated by preaching); and (7) non-political (not involved in promoting candidates in elections). These features are very useful to identify and differentiate between NGOs and other organisations.

According to Willets (2002), NGOs are divided into two general categories, namely operational and campaigning. Operational NGOs refer to organisations whose main activity is to carry out development projects for target groups such as the poor, the disabled, the elderly and the oppressed. Meanwhile, campaigning NGOs refer to organisations whose main activities are to influence the policy-making process in a country. It can be understood that to move its activities, operational NGOs need resources in the form of financial funding, equipment or volunteer workers to carry out projects and programmes organized by them. Compared to operational NGOs, campaigning NGOs require more intangible resources to mobilize the activities they manage, such as the contribution of ideas, experience, expertise and time from other members and individuals. Thus, NGOs define as development performers that can contribute to the enhancement of social relations and cross-networks that can be the basis for collective action and increase democratic participation levels.

Community development can provide opportunities for local communities to enhance the socio-economic situation and use available resources in a better way (Akinyemi & Abiddin, 2013a;b). In pre-industrial time, community development shifted to resource mobilization. Workforce expansion and self-defense became community development focus during this time, and this was achieved with the mobilization of resources. The social well-being of the people is the main agenda of the development of society as community development has observed an extreme change of focus in this modern age. Moreover, community development is the voluntary participation of people in an organized process to bring about desired improvement, especially on education, health, recreation and housing for community. Additionally, community development is an activity at the community level which is an organized movement to improve the living standards of society as a social, economic and with minimum external assistance (Pawar, 2014).

Khalid (2013) mentioned that NGOs have high honors in organizing local communities at the ordinary level so that they can be seen as reinforcement social capital, a role that can counterpart service delivery. However, local communities should be involved in all development plans. Observations have shown how NGOs are very effective in developing communities and people are willing to join these organisations because of its benefits. NGOs have a few projects, programmes and roles that help people carry development to the community. Therefore, this article examines the role and impact made by NGOs in community development, the challenges faced by NGOs in community development and the direction for improvement by NGOs in community development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

The term NGOs states to approximately all organisations created outside governmental bodies, except for political parties and private organisations. The organisation must be voluntary and carry out activities legally following the laws in force in a country. NGOs are competently run organisations that aim to contribute to the human suffering reduction and poor countries development (Streeten, 1997) through variety techniques including funding projects, helping provide services and building capacity (Baccaro, 2001).

Stromquist (2002) identifies three main functions for NGOs, such as providing services, providing educational services and defending public policy. Baccaro (2001) shows how certain NGOs can promote the organisation and empowerment of the poor, especially women, through training for group members and awareness raising and other social services. According to Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988), empowerment is the ability of an individual to gain control socially, politically, economically and psychologically through access to

information, knowledge and skills, making decisions and individual self-efficacy, community participation, and perceived control.

Over the long period, NGOs seek to promote sustainable community development through activities that promote capacity building and empowerment. Langran (2002) described capacity building as enabling NGOs to support community development. NGOs are often created to increase people's capabilities. NGOs are also commended for promoting community autonomy and empowerment through support to community groups and through participatory processes (Korten, 1990).

The Concept of Community Development

A community is a known social unit, such as a group or association of people who have similar needs, interests, functions and values. Whereas community development is a process where community members are supported by agencies to identify and take collective action on issues which are important to them. Community development empowers community members and creates stronger and more connected communities (Kenny, 2007). Community development has become one of the most important social forces in the planned and effective change process (Abiddin et al., 2021).

United Nation (1956) explains that community development is a process in which the people effort themselves unite with government authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of the whole society, to enable them to contribute fully to national progress and to integrate these communities into national life. Jones (1982) proposed the concept of community development which include community participation, community empowerment and community capacity. Hence, there are two main aspects of community development process. First, participation by the people themselves in the effort to improve their average of living as much as possible with reliance on their own initiative. Secondly, providing technical and social services in a way that promotes initiative, self-help and mutual understanding (Kenny, 1946).

According to Pearce (2000), a community development method should include three critical components which are united empowerment, united leadership and driving revolution through discourse. Community development model in rural and urban regions should be involved in all process stages, including need assessment, planning, and implementation. In this context, the community development process can be used for a variety of reasons such as (1) to improve health; (2) to improve education; (3) to improve recreation and housing; (4) to grow community leaders; (5) to motivate community to organize community-based plans to unravel their problems; (6) to strengthen local communities' capacities to spot their incomes and interests; (7) to figure a clear support among community; and (8) to enhance operative community groups and organisations.

The Relationship between NGOs and Community Development

It can be concluded that NGOs play an important role in encouraging sustainable community development which emphasizes a balance between environmental problems and development purposes, and at the same time enhances local social relations. Sustainable communities meet the economic needs of their people, enhance and protect the environment, and encourage more humanitarian communities.

According to William (1991), the following six can be identified as important roles of NGOs towards community development: (1) development and operation of infrastructure; (2) supporting innovation, demonstration and pilot projects; (3) facilitating communication (NGOs can facilitate communication upward from people to the government and downward

from the government to the people); (4) technical assistance and training; (5) research, monitoring and evaluation; and (6) advocacy for and with the poor (NGOs play roles from advocates for the poor to implementers of government programmes).

The functions of NGOs in community development are helping communities develop social, capital and human resources, improving knowledge and skills, encouraging people to participate in activities, and acting as a link between communities and systems. These activities participation will cause them to become stronger, which is the result of community development (Abiddin, 2013). In long term, the result is sustainable community development (Nikkah & Redzuan, 2017).

NGOs in Malaysia

Tumin & Norhadi (2017) mentioned that the activities of NGOs in Malaysia before and after the declaration of independence can be understood according to certain themes. These themes include communalism, welfarism, and non T communalism/universalism, cooperative and confrontational.

During the colonial period, for example, the establishment of NGOs is heavily influenced by racism or communalism to represent the interests of the major races, namely Malay, Chinese and Indian. In addition, typical of the immigrant community at that time, welfare NGOs were set up to accommodate the problems partly due to the impact of migration from the country of origin (China and India) to Malaya.

This does not mean that after the declaration of independence, the two themes of understanding the NGOs are no longer prominent. Even before 1969, the issue of racism was frequent and loud, both by leaders of political parties and NGO leaders. However, after the declaration of independence, it was found that in addition to the formation of organisations to protect NGOs fighting for the same issue, beginning in the 1970s, non-communalistic and universalistic problems such as consumerism, environmentalism and feminism became the NGO activities focus (Tumin & Norhadi, 2017).

The process of strong community development among Malaysian is generally touchdown, for which these energies are spearheaded by the government to guarantee the political stability and justice and socio-economic peace. Malaysia often becomes the best example to other countries in terms of community relationships because Malaysia succeeds in generating harmony between various ethnic groups. Most of these successes are the result of efforts made by various parties including NGOs.

Until September 2021, the number of active organisations by state and the number of active organisations by category according to the Registrar of Societies of Malaysia (ROS) data are as in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively.

TABLE 1 THE NUMBER OF ACTIVE NGOS BY STATE	
State	Number of NGOs
Selangor	19863
WP Kuala Lumpur	10391
Johor	10143
Perak	7095
Sabah	5692
Pulau Pinang	5410
Sarawak	4677
Pahang	3753
Negeri Sembilan	3723
Kedah	3476

Melaka	2699
Kelantan	2216
Terengganu	1986
WP Putrajaya	711
Perlis	570
WP Labuan	270

Source: Registrar of Societies of Malaysia (2021)

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF ACTIVE NGOS BY CATEGORY

Category	Number of NGOs
Welfare	27109
Social	20274
Recreation	8654
Mutual Benefit (Death Benefit)	1896
Culture and Art	3936
Trade	5715
Profession	1120
Human Right	850
Safety	658
Religious	12675

Source: Registrar of Societies of Malaysia (2021)

Due to NGOs are involved in influencing the policy-making process as well as political parties, government bodies, the media and certain figures, sometimes some NGOs have different or conflicting goals of struggle and values. Confrontational relations often occur between NGOs and the government when there are differences or conflicts of opinion on an issue that NGOs are fighting for, for example in some of the human rights and environmental issues.

Even so, many NGOs have established cooperative and collaborative relationships with the government in highlighting an issue. Usually, representatives of such NGOs will be invited to sit on certain advisory councils along with representatives of other parties such as institutions of higher education, the media and the private sector. The above discussion shows that in the future, NGOs in Malaysia will continue to have a place in the government and society.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a large amount of literature from journal articles, reports and even organisational websites were studied to determine the possible impact made by NGOs on community development. Subsequently, in conducting this document analysis and literature reviews, several electronic databases have been used such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Wiley. A few keywords such as "role of non-governmental organisations" and "community development" were used. Based on the findings, after studying the challenges faced by NGOs in community development, several recommendations for improving NGOs towards community development were made.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 shows the selected literature search from 2000-2020 on the role of NGOs in community development in various countries. The challenges faced by NGOs' in community

development are also discussed in this section. Besides, this section also provides the way forward of the NGO with several recommendations are proposed.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="6" align="center">TABLE 3
LITERATURE SEARCH RESULTS</td></tr>
<tr><td>Author, Year</td><td>Objectives</td><td>Country</td><td>Method</td><td>Sample</td><td>Main Findings</td></tr>
<tr>
<td>Osiobe, E. U., Osiobe, S. A. & Olushola, P. A. (2019)</td>
<td>To explore, illustrate and analyze dilemmas regarding the availability of per capita income of NGOs in Nigeria, return on foreign capital and local capital.</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>NGO-Donation-system dynamics model ($NGO_D - DEM$)</td>
<td>Lugbe, Nigeria's community</td>
<td>The results illustrate how the activities of NGOs promote economic growth and development in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hashim A., Sidi S. H., Abubakar B. Z., Umar B. F., Aliero H. M. & Yelwa F. J. (2020)</td>
<td>To identify the roles of NGOs in community development.</td>
<td>Zamfara State, Nigeria</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>58 registered local NGOs</td>
<td>The study shows that local NGOs make significant contributions to community development through community self-help efforts, training and retraining, and the formation of sensitization and awareness of community members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngonidzashe, M. F. (2017)</td>
<td>To identify the role played by Caritas Zimbabwe in community development in Murewa.</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Qualitative research methodology and case study research design</td>
<td>Residents of ward 30 of Murewa Rural District</td>
<td>The research has shown that Caritas has embarked in a few community development activities that include infrastructure development, income generating projects, environmental management as well as assisting council in enhancing service delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bashir, S. (2016)</td>
<td>To relate NGOs roles and contributions to community development.</td>
<td>Balochistan, Pakistan</td>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative method using questionnaire</td>
<td>International and national NGOs</td>
<td>The main finding of this study is that NGOs play very important role towards community development and appreciated by the community. However more effort needs to be done by many NGOs for the well-being of the whole community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enyioko, N. C. (2012)</td>
<td>To analyze the NGOs role in promoting sustainable agriculture such as promoting awareness programmes and upgrading development facilities.</td>
<td>River State, Nigeria</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>6 NGOs in River State, Nigeria</td>
<td>The analysis of the study shows that NGOs are very prominent in the implementation of effective government programmes towards sustainable rural development through NGO activities that have been carried out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosweunyane, D. (2010)</td>
<td>To demonstrate that NGOs are useful in</td>
<td>Botswana, Africa</td>
<td>Qualitative research</td>
<td>NGOs in Botswana</td>
<td>This study demonstrates adequately that NGOs in Botswana did not have any</td>
</tr>
</table>

	development.				impact on sustainable development.
Bhaker, S.K. (2014)	To examine the process of people's participation and level of satisfaction of rural people.	India	Case study	8 NGOs in India	This study highlights the role of NGOs and the casual relationship between NGOs and rural development.
Ismail, M. & Shaharudin, W. A. (2014)	To focus on social entrepreneurship orientation practices in community development programmes in Malaysia.	Malaysia	Qualitative approach by interviewing informants	13 NGOs in Malaysia	The findings show that the social entrepreneurship approach through business strategy is still less practiced by NGOs in Malaysia. The finding also shows that most NGOs that implement community development programmes are aimed at providing social value in order to improve the quality of life of the community in various aspects such as economic, education, health and so on.

Challenges Faced by NGOs in Community Development

NGOs as an inseparable part of civil society are importance to the management of a wide range of complex and diverse activities. They face internal and external management problems in carrying out their trusts (Nikkhah & Redzuan, 2010). Various literatures and practices have examined that the NGOs faced challenges such as political interference, lack of funds, poor networking and poor governance. Below are important findings on the challenges faced by NGOs in community development.

Firstly, a major challenge NGOs faced is networking. It has been documented as the cause of duplication of efforts, contradicting policies at community level, a lack of learning from experience and the inability of NGOs to address local structural causes of under development. It has been also noted that destructive competition for resources also undermines the reputation of the sector and the effectiveness of NGO activities at community level. As a result, there is a great deal of suspicion among NGOs, clandestineness and lack of transparency. Various NGOs, large and small interfere at community level without any community mapping and implement projects without due consideration to ongoing community initiatives. NGOs politics has been predominant in many communities characterised by tensions, one fighting another and one with resources but no community presence, another with community presence but no resources (Yu, 2019).

Secondly, another major problem encountered by NGOs is poor governance. The understanding of good governance varied widely, with some regions showing very little understanding of why NGOs are required to have boards or what their roles, responsibilities and functions should be. Mawere (2013) explained many NGOs mismanage their resources, quite often with the involvement and encouragement of their boards that squander their NGOs' resources. Therefore, this has led to the poor functioning of many NGOs. This problem has been well documented in most developing states where individuals have become more involved in forming NGOs as a form of business to enrich themselves.

The third challenge faced by NGOs is accessing adequate, appropriate and sustainable funds for their work. Lack of fund and funding support are a major challenge to achieve the

desired goals. Funds play an important role in any NGOs to implement their projects, programmes or activities, which are development-oriented to their communities (Keck & Kathryn, 1998). They find it difficult to get donors out of dealing with their funding situation (Moyo, 2011). They feel there is an alliance of certain people and NGOs that control access to donor funds. They have the skills to mobilize insufficient resources and often do not seek to find funds available locally and prefer to attend so that international donors approach them. There is a great dependency on donors and a tendency to change interventions to suit donor preferences. There is also lack of financial, project and organisational sustainability. Most NGOs are now failing to conduct their duties and some of them are even failing to pay their employees. There are many registered NGOs to be operating in the district but on the ground these organisations are not producing anything due to lack of funding. Hence funding agencies, donors, sponsors, are very important to all NGOs.

Finally, many NGOs work in unbalanced dangerous and conflict prone communities or operate together with predatory conditions as the political interference which may view their presence with a lot of distrust and misgivings. In some constituencies, NGOs activists acknowledged the interfering of local politicians and civic leaders as a major difficulty to their work (Tamas et al., 2000). In most cases, NGOs are unaware that the constitution and the laws are there to protect them from such intimidation.

Direction for Improvement

After reviewing the literature on the role and challenges faced by local NGOs in community development, several recommendations are proposed to ensure NGOs are becoming more effective in providing community development services and will also drive economic growth and stability in the area.

The government, other organisations and individuals should enhance their support for NGOs including a supportive work environment, financial resources, equipment and technical reporting. Governments should provide a supportive environment to promote community development programmes. Government funding is provided to NGOs to carry out community-based programmes.

Beneficiaries of community development programmes and activities should continue to support NGOs activities in their areas and ensure the maintenance and continuity of community development projects that have been implemented. NGOs should always gather beneficiaries to plan, implement and evaluate every community development activity in their domain. This will increase sustainability and project ownership. The existence of NGOs is not just to help the government, but more importantly to be the backbone of the needy and support them especially during the difficult period such as COVID-19 pandemic. The community sees the efforts of NGOs as proof of their total compassion when the country faces disaster.

Local NGOs should be trained to complement government efforts regarding community development. The establishment of NGOs can be generated from the ideas, experiences, interests and great spirit of certain individuals or groups to act on phenomena that occur or desires in society. The ideas and strengths behind the NGOs establishment focus on achieving its objectives such as providing educational opportunities and skills, controlling and managing disease, helping victims of natural disasters, empowering women's economy and fighting for human, social, economic, political and cultural rights.

NGOs have to be more committed in implementing community development activities, especially through self-help promotion. There is a need for a monitoring and evaluation mechanism of NGOs to make sure that community development programmes and

services reach the needy people in the area. The monitoring and evaluation should be conducted by an independent organization.

NGOs should develop a specific database to assist government and all parties in need. This database can be used by all parties in need to develop programme based on the need for people to improve their standard of living.

Working women NGOs are becoming stronger; they should be involved in various programmes and training. Women who are part of the country's important assets need to be optimally developed to enable them to contribute actively to the community development.

Community development should not only be related to the government. It is necessary that individuals, communities and NGOs and other agencies must be involved in the efforts to serve needy people. The community should be fully aware of the purposes of the community development programmes.

CONCLUSION

This study shows the role and importance of NGOs in achieving sustainable community development. NGOs have played their role proactively in community development as well as leaving a lasting impact in national politics. The role of NGOs is very important and would be a bonus if the NGOs work effectively with the government in addressing the challenges faced by NGOs in community development. These challenges should focus on enhancing the effectiveness of NGOs in the delivery of community development services and will also support economic growth, development and stability in the region. Altogether, it is hoped that NGOs will be more creative in the future in choosing the appropriate, interesting and effective medium to implement their programmes in order to help address the challenges faced more effectively. With a strong understanding of the objective of this study, a major improvement in NGOs contribution toward community development can be achieved.

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