

# The Role of NGOs in the Social Welfare

## ROLE DES ONG DANS L'ASSISTANCE SOCIALE

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**Abstract:** Since 1978, the Reform has brought great change in almost every aspect of China, such as economy, politics, social life, and culture awareness, which also can be reflected by development of China's social organizations, especially Non-governmental organization(NGOs). Social welfare effort to meet societal needs through the provision of concrete resources and services. As NGOs have become increasingly involved in providing health care, education and services to people, they have also become critical in ensuring social welfare. This paper will provide an analysis of the roles that NGOs can play within the realm of social welfare, particularly in the field of alleviating poverty. The paper is organized into three sections. In the first section will provide a brief overview of NGOs development and the roles of NGOs in China. In section two will highlight currently NGOs playing important role in alleviating poverty in China, and in section three will identify the reasons why NGOs play roles in social welfare.

**Key words:** NGOs, Social Welfare, Poverty

**Résumé:** Depuis 1978, la Réforme a changé considérablement tous les aspects de la Chine, tels que l'économie, la politique, la vie sociale et la conscience culturelle. Le changement se reflète aussi dans le développement des organisation sociales de Chine, surtout les organisations non gouvernementales(ONG). L'assistance sociale s'efforce de satisfaire les besoins des gens par l'offre des ressources et services concrètes. Comme les ONG s'impliquent de plus en plus dans l'assistance sociale en offrant des soins médicaux, l'aide éducative et des services, elles s'avèrent très importantes dans l'assistance sociale. Cet article analyse les rôles des ONG dans le domaine de l'assistance sociale, notamment dans la diminution de la pauvreté. L'article présent est composé de trois parties. La première partie présente un panorama du développement des ONG et leurs rôles en Chine. La deuxième partie met l'accent sur leurs rôles dans la diminution de la pauvreté en Chine et la dernière partie procède à éclaircir pourquoi les ONG peuvent jouer un rôle dans l'assistance sociale.

**Mots-Clés:** ONG, assistance sociale, pauvreté

### INTRODUCTION

The term, "non-governmental organization" or NGO is any non-profit, emphasis on voluntarism, self-governing and pursuing a mandate of providing development services, undertaking communal development work or advocating on development issues. New terms like "civil society" and "third sector" also appeared, and they signified a trend to extend the scope of social welfare. The reforms of economy after the early 1980s have created an increased demand for public services. This demand has led to the opening of Chinese society, a privatization of efforts to deliver public services, and the development of Chinese non-governmental organization. The number of Chinese

NGOs has grown significantly over the last 20 years, and Chinese citizens have also formed advocacy groups to influence policies and push for social change. Today, Chinese NGOs address issues such as poverty alleviation, environment protection, women and children's welfare, and elderly care.

Since 1990 in China, the government policy is "minimal government, large society." The NGOs could not be lacking in social welfare, it provided direct social services under the government's support. The NGOs are important intermediary agency what the government implement welfare policy. They can reduce the government control color and avoid directly intervening civil life. NGOs in China serve citizen needs and provide services that the government often cannot or does not provide.

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Due to the limited political accountability, inefficient allocation of resources, and urban and rural syndrome development practices, public-sector organization often become ineffective, over-politicization of bureaucracy, lack of proper skills, and massive corruption reinforce dysfunction in administration, which led the emergence of NGOs. Due to comparative advantages such as capacity to reach rural poor and outreach to remote areas, promotion of local participation, cost effectiveness. In general, the NGOs can able to fill the gap between the governments and the population. NGOs can facilitate communication upward from people to the government and downward from the government to the people. Communication upward involves informing government about what local people are thinking, doing and feeling while communication downward involves informing local people about what the government is planning and doing. NGOs are also in a unique position to share information horizontally, networking between other organizations doing similar work. NGOs can overcome some of the shortcomings that governments face in this respect and can also be pilots for larger government projects by virtue of their ability to act more quickly than the government bureaucracy. In addition, NGOs can develop a technical assistance and training capacity and use this to assist governments. They have been able to transfer knowledge and power to sectors with greatest needs of improving people quality of life.

However, the roles of NGOs can be viewed both from macro and micro perspectives. In a macro role, NGOs can influence the policy making about social welfare, resource transfers, and further democratic process. According to the micro perspective, their role should be viewed on operation roles of grassroots level programs and activities and delivery services for the poor and under-privileges.

### **ROLE OF NGOS IN THE SOCIAL WELFARE PROJECT --ALLEVIATING POVERTY**

China is a developing country with a large population, a meager heritage and an underdeveloped economy, especially in the rural areas. In terms of the poverty-stricken areas in China, the underdevelopment is mainly reflected in the following: First, weak infrastructure. In the western region in China, where most of these areas are located, although the territory is over two-thirds of the nation's total, the proportions of railways, highways and civil aviation facilities are relatively low. Second, a rapidly growing population, and the low level of education, public health and other basic social services in the rural areas. Due to the backward economy and the poor conditions for running schools and backward education facilities, a great number of school-age children are unable to go to

school or obliged to discontinue their studies, and the illiteracy rate of the young and middle-aged is high. These areas are also characterized by very low level of health care work. Third, poor agricultural production conditions, low revenue, and seriously inadequate public input. In 1986, the per-capita motive power of agricultural machinery in the counties on the state's priority poverty relief list accounted for only 50 percent of the national average. In 1993, the per-capita revenue in these counties was 60 Yuan, only about 30 percent of the national average (White Paper on Rural China's Poverty Reduction, 2001).

Chinese NGOs to work with government for poverty reduction. Now, poverty alleviation efforts target not only the basic living requirements of the poor, but also their education, employment and medical needs. China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation (CFPA) attributed China's remarkable achievements in poverty relief in the past 20 years to the joint efforts by the Chinese government and the whole of society, including NGOs. About 50 billion Yuan (six billion U.S. dollars) in funds has been financed by domestic and overseas NGOs for poverty reduction in China since mid-1980s (Yang, Rudai, 2001). Though the government has the capacity to mobilize resources and implement new systems while carrying out poverty-relief programs, but the government is relatively weak in improving efficiency and targeting the specific needs of certain poor groups. NGOs happen to have some characteristics that the government does not have. A good cooperation between the government and NGOs will have a better result in poverty reduction.

China has several NGOs that play a positive role in the social welfare, especially in helping the poor. For example, China's Project Hope is a civil undertaking of social welfare program, sponsored and carried out by China Youth Development Foundation (CYDF). The welfare project aims at aiding those children who are unable to go to school because their families are poor. Project Hope has been a most important civil undertaking of public welfare, the CYDF, which sponsors the activity, has become the largest civil public welfare organization in China.

In line with government policy of raising educational funds from a variety of sources, the Project Hope mobilizes Chinese and foreign materials, financial resources to help bring dropouts back to school, improves educational facilities, promotes primary education in China's poor areas and to promote youth development in China. This Project has been well received at home and at abroad--donations have been received from both institutions and tens of millions of individuals from all walks of life. The Hope Project has fund the establishment of 9000 Hope schools and help nearly 2.5 million children to go to school (CYDF, 2003).

## REASONS WHY NGOS PLAY ROLES IN SOCIAL WELFARE

China now has 230,000 registered non-governmental organizations, covering economic, social, cultural, educational, scientific and legal areas. NGOs in China are ready to play a bigger role in social welfare work and are looking forward to having more opportunities. NGOs can make a significant contribution to social welfare in the future development in China.

1. Because people are different, they have different needs. These needs are satisfied as far as possible by providing the quality services. Guaranteed individual choice of preferred institutions, lead to quality assurance of social services through competition among different organizations. The NGOs in the social and health care sectors offer their services in different ways and thus compete with each other, an effect which helps to improve the standard of support services (Thomas, 2003).

2. The social welfare is often concerned with issues that NGOs already hold dearest: health, education, and economic development, etc. Many NGOs have a lot of experiences in these fields. NGOs will seize upon opportunities to enact these solutions and to address a wider range of the concerns that are most important to the people they work with. Participating in social welfare initiatives is one means for NGOs to make this contribution.

3. There are gradually development of social services privatization in China and help for creating more and more NGOs in the country. The non-governmental social welfare agencies also play an important role when it comes to appealing to the people, to shaping social awareness and motivation the population to commit themselves to voluntary social work.

4. The changed international political arena and global environment and the development co-operation funding strategy of international donor agencies helped for opportunity to play the increased role in the socio-economic activities. NGOs use of various resource, include donation, voluntary workers, services for the needy without remuneration, no interest payments on financing through their own resources, no-expense provision of land, free tax, etc, and to provide of many social services.

5. The government has changed national development strategy and considered NGOs as development partners, which also encourage people for their participation in the national development activities through NGOs. The government supporting can improve the legal situation and good development of NGOs in China. The government social welfare organizations initiative will help NGOs to get the ties that are critical in building their reputation and gaining additional support. At national level, these initiatives

increase the interaction between government agencies and NGOs in a mediated situation where the relative expertise of both organizations is recognized and respected. At international level, the academic institutions help NGOs to develop their research capacity, and further train and educate their employee. International organizations provide NGOs with projects funds and equipment, professional and technical expertise and international support for local development.

6. The social welfare may offer NGOs the opportunities to change the way they do business. Address social welfare issues, however, will require NGOs to increase their focus on preventive measures and develop longer-term plan. In this case, NGOs will begin to benefit from multi-year, multi-sector, funding contracts for full programs and not just for isolated projects. NGOs concerned human development and social welfare and helps to strengthen them as organizations and to reinforce and extend the contribution that they make to the people with whom they are already work.

However it should be noted that NGOs programs can considerably more flexible than public programs. Without the need for public ratification of private social welfare policy, NGOs are better able to change their policy more rapidly, to focus on specialized problem groups and problem areas, and supplement public program. These are important advantages, and they help NGOs to remain important parts of the total social welfare system in China. Increasingly, however, many NGOs are obtaining public funds through contracts with public agencies, and it appears that NGOs giving to social welfare is stabilizing or even declining.

## CONCLUSION

As modern NGOs are considered one of the major collective actors in the socio-economic process, their roles as development partners particularly in the developing countries are increasingly considered as an effective vehicle for bring social transformation, economic advancement and for furthering democratic governance. Thus, the significant emergence of the NGOs during recent years in development activities and on public agenda in developing countries can be identified as a significant political, social and economic trend. Their roles can be found differently according to the nature of problem to be addressed.

China has improved laws and regulations regarding NGOs, defining their status and role, and has helped set up a number of professional associations, commerce chambers and other NGOs. The NGOs in China would play a bigger role as the government is making continued efforts to transform its functions, especially

after the country's entry into the World Trade Organization. China has set the basic principles for NGOs to participate in the government's programs against poverty, but practical policies have yet to be made.

NGOs need to improve themselves to earn the trust of society, though the whole environment in China is not so perfect now. NGOs also need supervision from the government, especially in the publicity of financial information and management of the funds.

This paper would suggest that a competitive public welfare resources market be fully developed and the government loosens the control on NGOs' participation in social welfare programs.

In summary, in China, NGOs are significant social capital providing a mix of relief and development activities that provide for immediate basic needs while creating the physical, human or social that will raise the likelihood of economic and social development in the future.

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