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NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOs): THEIR CREATION, PURPOSES AND RAISON D'ETRE

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

The combined activities of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) at local and international levels, have over the past years gained prominence and popularity as the third pillar as well as the prominent engine of growth and development through the provision of social, economic and environmental enhanced services to the marginalised areas of the world.

The capacity of NGOs to perform successfully in most of the backward, fragile or unstable socio-political terrains and climes have gotten the attention, recognition and applause of many countries that include those that are apprehensive of their operations. There are currently 3000+ NGOs with consultative status to the UN Economic and Social Council. There are an estimated 10 million (non-governmental organizations) NGOs worldwide, (The Global Journal 2015).

In the bid to satisfying the interests of those that are keen at knowing and understanding fundamental issues about NGOs, this paper shall be addressing the key issues of the creation of NGOs, including their general and overriding purposes. This write-up shall achieve its key purpose by relying on extant literature on all issues covered by it.

This paper has been divided into four sections. The first section provides justification for the study and explains the concept of NGO. Section 2 discusses the preliminary issues involved in the creation of an NGO. Section 3 discusses practical guidelines for creating NGO, while section 4 concludes the paper with discussion and explanations on the roles and purposes that NGOs are created to serve.

1.2 CONCEPT OF NGO

The term “non-governmental organization” was created in Article 71 of the Charter of the newly formed United Nations in 1945. An NGO can be any kind of organization provided that it is independent from government influence and is not-for-profit (Grant Space n.d). While NGOs have no fixed or formal definition, they are generally defined as non-profit entities that are independent of governmental influence (although they may receive government funding).

World Bank (1990) composite definition of NGO adopted by this paper, stated as:

“Including many groups and institutions that are entirely or largely independent of government and that have primarily humanitarian or cooperative rather than commercial objectives. They are private agencies in industrial countries that support international development; indigenous groups organized regionally or nationally; and member-groups in villages. NGOs include charitable and religious associations that mobilize private funds for development, distribute food and family planning services and promote community organization. They also include independent cooperatives, community associations, water-user societies, women's groups and pastoral associations. Citizen Groups that raise awareness and influence policy are also NGOs”-

2.1 CREATING AN NGO: PRELIMINARY ISSUES.

Creating an NGO is generally considered as a time consuming process requiring quite a lot of expert advice, research, documentations strong vision and dedication from person or persons desiring to create it. The initial spade work entails wide consultation from persons or groups engaged in NGOs, particularly the time intended to create and operate.

If there is any cause that requires counting the cost, creating an NGO is in the fore. Basically, physical resources that include funding, materials, logistics and manpower will be as important as non-physical resources that include enduring interest and love for humanity with vision and healthy selfless motive.

Preliminary estimation of the non-financial costs of creating an NGO could entail asking the following fundamental questions and proffering very sincere answers to them. The questions to be answered are :

- i. Are there enough good reasons for starting an NGO?
- ii. What activities the NGO will be involved in?
- iii. Are there enough passion, commitment, interest and devotion to running the NGO?
- iv. Whether there exist any NGO with similar activities as the one or type envisaged to be created.
- v. Are people available to assist in the running of the NGO.

The creation of an NGO should be backed up by research or preliminary investigations that cover the following broad areas:

- i. NGO Problems or felt-need of concerns

NGOs are generally created to solve identified set of problems that have not been solved but that requires solution. It becomes necessary to gather sufficient information to be able to fully understand every aspect of the problem of concern before any practical solution can be found to solve the problems. Information about the problems can be gotten from secondary sources like published books and literature, government reports etc, or from primary sources that includes surveys and interviews of expected target communities, and discussions with officials of the government

- ii. Practicality of the objectives behind the intervention

Getting to be sure that the ideas anticipated to tackling the identified problems will be effective is very crucial before venturing into creating an NGO. An intervention in a similar problem in a different clime may necessary not work in the area being planned to create an NGO. So, replicating an- intervention in a chosen locality because it worked elsewhere might not be advisable because of differences in socio-economic, ecological and cultural makeup of the area which have to be considered before finalising the choice of intervention approach.

- iii. Knowledge about the target community

To avoid starting an NGO based on unverified assumptions, enough time has to be devoted to understanding fully the target community in which the NGO is to be situated. Their needs and priority have to be understood.

- iv. Knowledge about organisations

Diligent search should be made for other NGOs, Government agencies, Research Institutions that are working in the area to be situated the NGO is to be situated. The problems or causes these institutions are pursuing should be understudied with a view to knowing areas the activities of the envisaged NGO can complement existing ones. Knowledge obtained from this study may suggest the need to modify the intended purposes of the new NGO, and also assist in establishing need gaps in existing NGOs and institutions that the NGO is created to fill.

3.1 PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR SETTING UP AN NGO

The broad guidelines prescribed in this paper for forming an NGO is not rigid as they will depend on the type of the NGO and the country where they are established. The procedure and legal framework for setting up an NGO are bound to vary from country to country, as each country has its own specific requirements and legal frameworks. The assistance of professionals in the registration of NGOs therefore becomes imperative. The following guidelines can be considered in creating an NGO:

3.2. Establish an Initial Board of Directors

When setting up an NGO, the founder(s) must as a matter of priority recruit the initial board of directors. The board should comprise of a small group of committed and trusted individuals with requisite and diverse technical skills, professional backgrounds and work experiences. The members sufficient passion for selfless community service and be people who willingly buy into the mission and goals of the organization and have new and progressive ideas to contribute to the NGO. Most importantly, the initial board should be able to work as a team to develop a realistic vision and mission for the NGO.

Board recruitment plan that reflects the peculiarities and type of NGO to be established should include the following:

- a. Required numbers of board members
- b. Key qualities of board members
- c. Tenure of board members
- d. Terms of reference/Schedule of duties of board members

3.3. Establish Purpose/Vision/Goals

Once the initial board members have been constituted and properly briefed about the preliminary ideas about the proposed NGO, the first vital activities of the board is to fine tune the founder(s) ideas into the NGO's values, vision and mission statements. The vision statement should describe the goals and aspirations of the NGO in the long run, while the mission statement articulates the processes and activities necessary to fulfil the vision.

3.4 Seek Legal Expertise

Because there are many legal matters that an NGO must deal with the beginning, it is helpful to seek for a lawyer that can help with

- a. Registering the NGO
- b. Filing articles of incorporation
- c. Filing reports
- d. Tax issues
- e. Securing licenses.

3.5. Chose a Name

Before registering an NGO, it is important to choose a name. It is essential to conduct a search at the appropriate NGO registration Office to ensure that the proposed name is not already being used. The same applies to the logo should the NGO need one.

3.6 Write Articles of Incorporation

The articles of incorporation should provide a legal description of the NGO's assigned power to her board and officers before registration.

The information to be included in the articles varies between local state governments and also from country to country. Depending on what country the NGO is being formed in, it is important to check with local and federal governments to see what kind of forms need to be filled out and what should be included. The following are general examples of what is often expected:

- I. Name of the NGO
- ii. Purpose/Mission
- iii. A statement declaring the NGO is non-profit

- iv. Location of the NGO
- v. Number and names of the board members
- vi. Extent of personal liability
- vii. Whether or not the NGO has capital stock (usually it will not)
- viii. How long the NGO is expected to exist (this may be declared as everlasting).

3.7 Set up an Accounting System

All NGOs need a system for recording cash receipts and payments. For the fact that the finances of NGOs are always under by the state and donor agencies it is important to set up an effective accounting system that ensures accountability, transparency and probity.

Accountant will be needed to set up a good accounting system. This becomes easier when an Accountant is in the Board or where a member in the board can easily recommend an accountant with sufficient knowledge about non-profit accounting. It is better if the proprietor(s) of the NGO can seek assistance from existing NGOs in getting an accountant.

The accounting system should full proof controls for all financial transactions. These procedures are to be documented in a Financial Instructional Manual. Donors of funds attach strong importance on structures for accountability to build and base their trust on, hence the of the documentation of financial procedures must be taken seriously.

3.8 Fundraising Plan

Funding forms part of the life wire of an NGO. Money is required to finance all the activities of the Members of the board and the executive director are therefore expected to be active participants in fundraising activities that includes writing for grants, seeking for contributions, donations and endowments and other fundraising endeavours.

The best fundraising strategy starts from the identification of what the needs of the NGO are and knowing the appropriate sources to get the needs met.

The following presents some examples of ways in which an NGO may choose to pursue funding:

- i. **Foundations.** Generally, there are readily available guidelines that can be found through research that explains what type of NGOs a particular foundation funds and how to apply for their grants. Three different types of foundations appear dominant and most of them fall under the category of independent foundations where most of the funding comes from individual, family, or group endowments:
 - a. Community Foundations receive money from local sources and distribute the funds so collected to local NGOs.
 - b. Corporate Foundations are set up legally through business corporations that are governed by trustees. These foundations tend to support communities in which the corporation operates.

Corporations and businesses that have departments for community relations or public relations fund many charities in communities where the company operates and usually provides grants to NGOs regardless of their locations.

- ii. **Religious Groups.** These groups tend to fund organizations regardless of their location.
- iii. **Individuals:** Can provide or short-term funding to an NGO of their choice irrespective of the location

3.9 Additional Steps

A few general tasks that should be completed before the NGO can fully operate include:

- i. Hiring of permanent staff and engagement of volunteer
- ii. Reaching out and becoming known in the community through direct contacts and publicity-driven programs
- iii. Seeking for take- off office supplies (office furniture, equipment and machinery)
- iv. Insuring the NGO
- v. Holding orientation programs

After about one year of operation, it is important to review the mission, goals, and vision to ensure that the NGO has stayed on track. Reviews include critiquing the NGO programs and activities to determine programs and activities to be modified or put off.

4.1 PURPOSES AND ROLES OF NGOS.

The purposes of NGOs with respect to their set goals and objectives as encapsulated in their vision and mission statements and actualised as practical roles are numerous and as multifaceted as the varieties or types of NGOs that exist. The roles and purposes broadly manifest in the social development of state, the community and the individual. Tersely put, NGOs exist with the collaboration of government(s) for the development of human existence in the setting of a state, community or separately as an individual. NGOs, therefore, play very important role in the wellbeing of humanity, as they complement government's efforts in addressing societal problems through the provision of relevant and effective solution. It must be emphasised that the primary role of NGOs, whether at community/ local, national, or international level are never in competition with the local or state authorities, but rather as complimentary to state efforts. As no government can completely satisfy the socio-economic needs of all strata of her citizens, NGOs attempts to fill the gaps and reach out to citizens outside the reach of governments.

In carrying out an in-depth review of the specific roles of NGOs, this paper shall be collating the various original answers to Quora (2020) question: "What is the work of NGO"?

The respondent's answers are:

- i. NGO's Work for welfare of the Society through engaging various sort of activities such as providing food, clothes, Medicine's, Knowledge through education
- ii. NGO's create opportunities for the unemployed people.
- iii. They spread Awareness In society
- iv. Encouraging the observance of human rights etc.
- v. To provide Social, Educational and Economic Empowerment to Women and Children.
- vi. To safeguard the rights of the Child and provide for the wellbeing of Children in need, more particularly, to identify the homeless and the destitute and facilitate their relocation in appropriate institutions.
- vii. To provide medical and legal aid and assistance to the old aged and to take such other measures to ensure their social wellbeing.
- viii. To empower the differently abled by providing, medical aid and appliances; vocational training and employment opportunities; legal aid; and other rehabilitation measures that are necessary.

The above answers could well represent the pieces of the puzzles that provide sufficient picture of the roles of NGOs that invariably satisfy the purpose of their creation.

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