

NGOs History in Pakistan

The history of Pakistani NGOs goes back in 1947 at the time of independence, when British India was divided into the two sovereign states. Many voluntary organizations were set up to provide humanitarian aid to the refugees arriving in Pakistan and to help victims of the riots. Many among these organizations were set up and run by women and those played an active role in the Pakistan movement also. During the first few years of Pakistan, many of these NGOs focused on rehabilitation and basic services such as health and education. Some of these voluntary organizations remain active today, although their roles may have changed somewhat. Many were set up and led by *begums*, the wives of influential bureaucrats, politicians and businessmen. For example All Pakistan Women Association was run by Begum Rana Liaquat Ali Khan.

The next rise in the formation of NGOs took place in the late 1970s, when the Martial Law Government worked its philosophy of social work and welfare. During the 1980s, many new NGOs emerged to avail the funding provided for development through local bodies. A number of women organizations were also set up during that period to highlight women rights. A large number of these NGOs got registration under Social Welfare Ordinance, 1961. In the early 1990s, there was another rapid increase in NGOs when new organizations were formed to take advantage of new available funding under the People's Works Programme, particularly in rural Sindh and Punjab.

It is difficult to estimate the number of NGOs working in Pakistan because NGOs are registered under five different laws with registration offices in different provinces and with a general lack of systematic updating. Only rough estimates are made to count number of registered and nonregistered NGOs.

Databases on NGOs

The number of voluntary social welfare agencies in Pakistan was 200 in 1955 and reached 4000 in 1965. The creation of the National Council of Social Welfare in 1956 was largely responsible for the rapid increase in the number of NGOs during late 1950s and afterwards. The National Council of Social Welfare launched a Grants-in-Aid programme to provide financial support for voluntary welfare organizations. Grants-in-Aid programme initiation during the Second Five-Year Plan (1960–1965) and its expansion during the Fifth Five-Year Plan (1978–1983) boosted the establishment of NGOs. The Promulgation of Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance of 1961 also proved to motivate the registration of NGOs during the 1960s and afterwards. Although the government cut Grants-in-Aid budgets after 1983, foreign aid continued to promote NGO formation and registration in Pakistan. During the 1990s, the rebirth of democracy, privatization and deregulation, the globalization process, the international interaction of civil society and lack of government funds for social services increased the growth rate of NGOs. Baig (2001) estimates that there were 10,000–12,000 registered and working voluntary organizations in Pakistan and that 59% of them were in Punjab Province.

Types of NGOs and Encouraging Factors to NGOs Growth During Different Periods

| Period | Type of NGOs | Factors behind origin/growth of NGOs |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| 1947-1958 | A small number of voluntary organizations engaged in refugee settlement, poverty alleviation, healthcare, education, services for workers and peasants, women's issues and family planning etc. | Problems of refugees, unemployment, poverty, illiteracy |
| | | Establishment of National Council of Social Welfare in 1956 for financial aid of organizations |
| 1958-1971 (Martial Law Period) | Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies | Promulgation of Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance, 1961, |
| | | Grants-in-aid program for NGOs through the provincial Councils of Social Welfare |
| | Non-profit religious organizations | The government took over Shrines and <i>Auqaf</i> |
| 1971-1977 | Trade unions | The government nationalized educational institutions and promoted trade unions |
| | Student Organizations | Educational reforms of 1972, encouraged student organizations in colleges/universities |
| | Women Organizations | The formation of The constitution of 1973 and UN declaration of Women year 1975 |
| | Service delivery organizations | Continued to grow and work |
| 1977-1999s | Religious organizations | Afghan war and the Islamization |
| | Human Rights and Advocacy Organizations | Afghan War, International funding for both war relief and human rights organizations |
| | Service Delivery organizations | State's failure in social welfare during mid 1980s, availability of public and international aid, liberalization in government policies after 1988, Government initiatives and support |
| 1999-onwards | Religious organizations | Continue with same pattern with addition to war against NATO and Internal tension between religious and secular forces |
| | Human Rights and Advocacy Organizations | International funding , government liberal policies and emergence of liberal forces in country |
| | Service Delivery organizations | International funding and aid, liberalization in government policies after 1988 and Government initiatives and support |

There are various, different estimates and figures for the total number of registered and unregistered NGOs in Pakistan. Table 2 shows the different estimates of registered and unregistered organizations operating in Pakistan. These estimates have been given along with the year of their publication.

Estimated Number of NGOs during different times in Pakistan

| Source | Estimated NGOs Number | Registration |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| Rehmatullah (2002) | 55789 | (Registered/unregistered) |
| Rafiq (2003) | 14000 | (Registered) |
| Rabbani (2004) | 44000 | (Registered/unregistered) |
| (Asian Development Bank, 2009; Ismail, 2002; Ismail & Baig, 2004; Khan & Khan, 2004) | 45000 | (Registered/unregistered) |
| Akbar (2010) | 45000 | (Registered/unregistered) |
| Naviwala (2010) | 60000 to 70000 in 2001 and 100000 in 2009 | (Registered/unregistered) |
| Khalid (2006) | 5003 (Dictionary of Social Welfare Agencies, 1987) | Registered with CDPs |