The NGO Forum

Nurun Nahar
JAIST, Japan

Tunç D. Medeni
JAIST, Japan

Tolga Medeni
Çankaya University, Turkey

INTRODUCTION

This article examines the unique characteristics of the NGO forum as a networked organization, that is, an organization structure that relies on multiparty cooperative relationships between people across structural, temporal and geographic boundaries. It studies the working methodology of the forum to discover the knowledge creation process and how such an organization utilizes its experience and knowledge work to be a successful development partner with all concerned stakeholders. Moreover, communication among forum stakeholders is not the result of random, but deliberate interactions done in the manner of a community of practice (CoP), which in turn is a part of the epistemic community that is influencing the national, global policies on water and sanitation. The study also brings out that an "environmental information system" is very important for it to function as a networked organization.

BACKGROUND

What is a Networked Organization?

As organizations restructure to respond to their environment, there has been a growing recognition of the need for new kinds of organizational structure. The networked organization is one such response. Basically it is a working arrangement where members are distributed but work together to achieve common goals. Lipnack (1994) has defined network organizations as *"where independent people and groups act as independent nodes, link across boundaries, to work together for a common purpose; it has multiple leaders, lots of voluntary links and interacting levels."* Such

an organization gains authority not from a hierarchy but from an individual's *recognized* knowledge and skill and link people and teams across conventional boundaries. A networked organization, because of its inherent features, exhibits characteristics of innovation, resilience, and self-management. The notion of a network implies *nodes* and *links*. The nodes can be people, teams or even organizations. Common examples are distributed geographic teams in large organizations, or small organizations operating as networks. The links are the various coordination and "agreement" mechanisms. In a network, high degrees of informal communications (both face-to-face and over electronic networks) achieve success where formal authority and communications in hierarchical organizations often fail. Two-way links and reciprocity across the links are what makes networks work.

What is an NGO?

The term "non-governmental organization" or NGO got official recognition in 1945 first by the United Nations when it found a need to differentiate in its Charter between participation rights for intergovernmental specialized agencies and those for international private organizations. The campaign and lobbying of a variety of groups succeeded in 1945 in introducing a provision for strengthening and formalizing the relations with private organizations previously maintained by the League; they also greatly enhanced the UN's role in economic and social issues and upgraded the status of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to a "principal organ" of the UN. To clarify matters, new terminology was introduced to cover ECOSOC's relationship with two types of international organizations: "specialized agencies" and "non-governmental

organizations" (Willet, 2002). Unlike much UN jargon, the term NGO passed into popular usage, particularly from the early 1970s onwards.

There are several interpretations of the term Non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In simplest term, NGOs are non-profit organizations that are neither governmental nor intergovernmental, generally established to bring together like-minded individuals committed to achieving particular objectives. NGOs vary considerably in the size of their constituencies, in their organizational structures and in their effectiveness. They range from organizations of small producers and rural people to development and environment NGOs, traditional trade unions and professional, academic and industry associations. At a national level NGOs often have links to international NGOs either formally as member organizations or through informal networking.

In another definition, NGOs are "Groups of individuals organized for the myriad of reasons that engage human imagination and aspiration. They can be set up to advocate a particular cause, such as human rights, or to carry out programs on the ground, such as disaster relief. They can have memberships ranging from local to global "(Charnovitz, 1997)**.**

The institutional ambiguity of NGO has been talked about a lot (Fruttero & Gauri, 2005; Jepson, 2005; Lane et al., 2006). However, NGOs share the flexibility and bottom-line orientation ascribed to private firms and not to governments, but they also share a public mission usually associated with governments and charities but not private firms. This means, they are supposed to combine the best characteristics of business, governments and charities (Gauri & Galef, 2005).

The role of NGOs is seen to be generally constructive and sometimes indispensable for achieving effective solutions. In co-management or community-based management schemes, NGOs are able to offer a detailed knowledge of local culture, practices and political structures to fisheries management and often have highly motivated staff **(**Charnovitz, 1997). NGOs are often connected with one another as well as linked to the government and business, where an organization of a network can usually be seen.

NGOs as a networked organization can give them additional strength and success in management and delivery of goods and services. This is because by being a networked organization, it has the advantages of being closer to the customer/client, can maximize the knowl-edge potential of an enterprise, minimize disruption, be responsive and adaptive. Like an amoeba, a network is sensitive to stimuli and adjusts accordingly.

NGOs in Bangladesh

Vulnerability to natural hazards poses a serious challenge to development initiatives, and particularly affects the poorest and socially disadvantaged groups. In Bangladesh, the frequency of natural hazards is such that efforts to mitigate one disaster are often followed by another event, thus entailing the need for all-year-round preparedness. Traditionally, people have adapted their means of livelihood with recurring hazards and have developed coping options based on local level knowledge systems. More recently, these local level efforts have been dwarfed by the formation of an analytically distinct category of organizations known as NGOs. In Bangladesh, the NGO is seen as an association of people formed through the committed initiatives of a few people dedicated to the design, study and implementation of development projects at the grass-root level (Huda, 1984). In the aftermath of the liberation war in 1971, it was found that donor- supported NGOs substantially contributed to the relief and rehabilitation needs of war-affected communities. As conditions became more stable, many of these NGOs expanded their activities to include not only disaster relief but poverty alleviation and conscious raising (Hashemi, 1996). The institutional contour of Bangladesh society opened up a new avenue of external resource delivery into areas where old institutions were becoming inadequate (Hill, 2005). Given the "extremely complicated, sensitive and highly politicized" realities of community-based organizations in Bangladesh, NGO contributions have often been found commendable in coping with recurring natural disasters alongside creating a base for community participation in addition to positive impact to society in the fields of family planning, micro-credit, water supply and sanitation and environment (Hashemi & Hasan, 2000). [1]

Bangladesh has one of the largest and most sophisticated NGO sectors in the developing world. Over 90% of villages in the country had at least one NGO in 2000 (Fruttero & Gauri, 2005), and foreign assistance to the country channeled through NGOs has been above 10% since 1993 (Ahmad, 2002). In Bangladesh most NGOs are partnered with the government and have formal associations with each other, which is increas-

Related Content

Gamification: To Engage Is to Learn

Biancamaria Mori (2020). *Virtual and Augmented Reality in Education, Art, and Museums (pp. 81-92).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/gamification/241595

The Effect of Augmented and Virtual Reality Interfaces in the Creative Design Process

Tilanka Chandrasekeraand So-Yeon Yoon (2018). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality (pp. 1-13).*

www.irma-international.org/article/the-effect-of-augmented-and-virtual-reality-interfaces-in-the-creative-design-process/203064

The Effect of Experience-Based Tangible User Interface on Cognitive Load in Design Education

Zahid Islam (2020). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality (pp. 1-13).*

www.irma-international.org/article/the-effect-of-experience-based-tangible-user-interface-on-cognitive-load-in-design-education/283062

Can You Feel It?: Effectiveness of Anxiety Cues for the Design of Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy

Jessica Morton, Jolien De Letter, Anissa All, Tine Daeseleire, Barbara Depreeuw, Kim Haesen, Lieven De Marezand Klaas Bombeke (2021). *International Journal of Virtual and Augmented Reality (pp. 1-17).*

www.irma-international.org/article/can-you-feel-it/298983

Conclusion

Sylvie Albert, Don Flournoyand Rolland LeBrasseur (2009). *Networked Communities: Strategies for Digital Collaboration (pp. 303-311).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/conclusion/27241