

Location of Facilities: Towards a New Approach for NGOs

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Abstract: This is a conceptual paper addressing the site selection criteria for the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations). A high-quality site for the NGOs helps in implementing their objectives and thus the beneficiaries are immensely benefitted. An ideal site also helps the NGOs from the curse of overlapping and thus it facilitates the NGOs from preventing the wastage of the resources. This is a very important strategic decision, which should not be made without careful considerations and analysis. In this regard the NGOs should take the political, economical, social factors of the locations into contingency. The resource strength of the particular NGO also demands the assessments. The socio-economic condition of the potential beneficiaries is a vital factor. The contributions of NGOs in various aspects of human lives such as poverty alleviation, education, family planning, employment, relief operations in natural calamities and health and infrastructure development for the poor, have made this sector an indispensable one in the modern society. Public goods theory, subsidy theory, contract failure theory etc are the corresponding models acknowledging the NGO/Non-profit sector-operations. The NGOs are self governing, private, not profit organizations that are geared to improving the quality of life of the disadvantaged people (Vakil, 1997). The socio-economic condition of the people of the locality, NGO-overlapping issues, political situation of the locality, government policy and patronization, law and order situation, operational costs, local supports, safety of the NGO-field workers, financing facilities, means of transportation, local and national culture, poverty level analysis etc are the factors which may be taken into consideration for the deployment of the NGOs in a location. The proposed site selection model and point rating method may be helpful in this regard. Future researchers may empirically examine the subject matter of this article]

Key Words: NGOs, Location, Site Selection Factors

Introduction

An ideal site not only ensures in the efficient operations of the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations), but also helps the beneficiaries in receiving the appropriate services to fulfil their needs. Selecting the appropriate location may help the NGOs from the overlapping in their operations in any area. One of the vital requirements for the NGOs is to select the appropriate locations for their operations. Improper site selection is costly, frustrating and causes of dissatisfaction for the NGOs and the beneficiaries as well. Usually an NGO has to make decision for site selection when it plans to commence its operations. At the beginning of the operations the NGOs try to evaluate alternative sites through proper reconnaissance and they also carry out the need analysis of the potential beneficiaries. The question of site selection needs to be settled again when an NGO intends to expand its functional coverage/operations by integrating new coverage with its existing one. The location decision has to be formulated carefully and without any prejudice. For an NGO deployment issue is an important strategic decision and as such, it should be made after careful consideration of political, economical and social factors of locations. In this regard, the socio-economic conditions of the potential beneficiaries demand careful and intelligent calculations. The decision for site selection bears strategic importance because of its long-term effect on the NGO-operations and the beneficiaries. Special attention must be paid when an NGO wishes to deploy into a foreign location. Many foreign NGOs are in operations in the hostile areas of Afghanistan. Fear of kidnapping by the rebels and the friendly fires of the coalition forces are striking as double-edged weapons to the NGO-employees there. Such adverse situation has significant depressing impacts on the NGO-employees' morale and their operational efficiencies. However, the adverse situations should not be the barriers to the NGO-services to the beneficiaries. In such circumstances, the NGOs should be tactful about their operational and deployment plans. It becomes easy for an NGO to render quality services if conducive economical, political, and infrastructural facilities are available in the selected site. At present, many foreign NGOs take expert advice on the deployment issues. Donors' unreasonable pressure and interruption on the deployment issues may not facilitate the NGOs in fulfilling their objectives towards the needs of the beneficiaries. Fruttero and Gauri's (2005) investigation on the NGOs' location decision in Bangladesh reveals "the analysis does not find strong support for the claim that NGOs were targeting poverty, at least at the level of the villages in which they chose to locate." (p. 784). Further, they (p. 761) continue by citing the example of Easterly (2002) "if locating an area in which other NGO are already present reduces the ability of the NGO's donor to determine whom to blame and whom to congratulate for development outcomes, and if as a result failure is not linked to a curtailment of funding from the donor, we might observe a tendency for several NGO programmes to concentrate in the same location". These statements show the NGOs' deployment trends and the donors' influence on the NGOs' deployment plan. There is limited number of literature addressing the issues of NGOs' site selection strategies. This article discusses the NGO deployment criteria in a location. Further, it also exhibits the site selection matrix and point rating tools of the site selection.

NGOs -An Overview

The contributions of NGOs in various aspects of human lives such as poverty alleviation, education, family planning, employment, relief operations in natural calamities, health and infrastructure development for the poor have made this sector almost indispensable in modern society. In many areas, the NGO sector could supersede the public and private sectors. Najam (1996) identifies beneficiaries/clients, donors/patrons and the NGO itself/employees as the most important stakeholders in the NGO sector. There should be a strong bond among these vital stakeholders. They (the NGOs) interact with many stakeholders such as government, political parties, other NGOs and social organisations, religious institutions, banks, human rights organisations, clients/beneficial, donors and the NGO itself. NGOs mainly transfer knowledge and resources to the beneficiaries and remain accountable to the beneficiaries, the donors and themselves. NGOs' contribution to the socio-economic development of developing countries has been widely acknowledged. Stiles (2002) finds "NGOs, by virtue of their relatively independent character, their non-profit making status, and their link to the poor communities that they have generally served well, offers donors a relatively safe and convenient means of avoiding both public and private sector and all their dangers" (p.836). So this sector is termed as the third sector, while public and private are named as first and second sectors respectively (Panda, 2007; Lewis, 2005; Hudock, 1999), and it works as supplementary to the other two sectors in any country. NGO activities may be broadly categorized as, income generation programmes, provision of social services and social organizing (Buckland, 1998). The United Nations officially terms "NGO" as the 'Non-Governmental Organisations' (UN Resolution 288 B-X dated 27th February 1950). Before that the term was commonly used for voluntary associations, non-profit associations, and diverse organisations including international non-government development, new social movement, people's and membership, and grassroots support. The term was applied to identify various organisations and not befitting with the missions, ideology and objectives of the organisations (Fernando and Heston, 1997). Vakil (1997) defines NGOs as, "self governing, private, not profit organizations that are geared to improving the quality of life of disadvantaged people" (p. 2060). There are many more definitions of NGOs. Some of these are cited below:

Table- 1: Definitions of NGOs

- It is an organization of private individuals who believe in certain basic social principles, and structure their activities to bring about development to the communities that they are serving.
- An organization or group of people working independent of any external control with specific objectives and aims to fulfill any tasks that are oriented to bring about desirable change in a community, area or situation.
- An independent, democratic organisation working for the empowerment of economically and/or socially marginalized groups.
- An organisation not affiliated to political parties, generally engaged in working for the development and welfare of the community.
- An organisation committed to address the root causes of the problems and trying to improve the quality of the lives of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized in the urban and rural areas.
- Organizations established by and for the community without or with little intervention from the government; they are not only a charity but work for socio-economic and cultural development.
- A non-profit, voluntary, service-orientated organisation for the benefit of the poor.
- An organisation that is flexible and democratic in its organisation and attempts to serve the people without profit for itself.

Source: Begum (2008, p. 25)

Many researchers (Lee, 2010; Weisbrod, 1975; Weisbrod, 1988; Kingma, 1997; Hansmann, 1980) have developed theories and models in order to explain the reasons of appearance and emergence of NGOs in society. These

theories are corresponding with the NGO operations. Weisbrod (1975) was the proponent of public goods theory. Weisbrod's (1975) theory has had a wide acceptance and recognition in the literature (Kingma, 1997). According to this theory, NGOs provide and satisfy the demand for public goods¹ of the people which are unfilled or under filled by the government and the market. The government or state satisfies the demand of the median voters and is unable or fails to satisfy where demand is higher than the median voters' desire, or where heterogeneous demands exist. The government's failures push the NGOs to become more innovative in handling problems of society (Brown and Kortan, 1991). Thus NGOs come forward to fill those gaps. Providing efficient services to the beneficiaries is one of the responsibilities of the NGOs. The donors inject more donations in order to increase the supply of public goods in society. Contract Failure theory is the brainchild of Hansmann (1980). This theory is also called trust theory (Kingma, 1997; Lee, 2010). Hansmann (1980) argues, "in situations in which consumers is in a position to judge the services they are receiving, any approach to organizing production is likely to be a question of 'second best'. Moreover, possibly in many cases it is sufficiently weak so that efficiency losses to be expected from an industry of for-profit producers are considerably greater than those to be expected from non-profit producers. In summary, I am suggesting that a non-profit enterprise is a reasonable response to a particular kind of 'market failure', especially the inability to police producers by ordinary contractual devices, which I shall call 'contract failure' " (p. 844-845). Begum (2008) exemplified this by stating, "[this] theory views the NGOs as a response to the possible opportunistic behaviour by both private and public service providers. The main argument of this theory is that, when contract is difficult to define, people are likely to trust the NGOs more than commercial firms. When the public fails to monitor or evaluate certain outputs and services, they are likely to turn to organizations with no profit motive for producing and delivering the outputs and services"(p. 4). Subsidy theory is related to taxes. Non-profit organisations and non-profit sector are exempted from taxation (Walker and Sipult, 2010) as they are not allowed to distribute any net earnings to any individual or shareholder (Rushton, 2007), which is termed as, 'distribution constraints' (Hansmann, 1980). Weisbrod's (1988) tax subsidy theory describes different forms of tax subsidies of the state to the NGOs to encourage the expansion of this industry, especially in the areas of education, health, and poverty. Weisbrod (1988) argued that NGO donors can enjoy the tax benefits out of their donations and NGOs can provide more output to society as they are also exempted from state taxes, and thus their expansion is encouraged.

Factors May be Considered in Site Selection

Socio-economic condition of the people is one of the vital factors for NGO-deployment. In view of strategic importance of selecting proper site for an NGO, the location decision must be made properly through careful consideration of relevant factors. An NGO needs to analyse different relevant factors. Many authors and researchers (Hasnain, 20013a, Todaro, 1990; Begum, 2008; Stringhini et al., 2011; Ullah and Routray, 2007; Haque, 2002) have given attention to the socio-economic conditions of the NGO-beneficiaries. It is essential for the NGOs to analyse the needs of the beneficiaries before the deployment. The entire NGO mission goes in vain, if they fail to identify the needs of the people. The main objective of the NGOs is to redress the gaps between the people and the government. The needs and unfulfilled needs of the people should be supplied by the government. Shortage to such supports is attempted by the NGOs. Bridging this shortage should be the objective of the NGOs. It is the obligations for the NGOs to deploy in a location where poor socio-economic situation, social deprivation, hunger, poverty, lack of education, social injustice, violation of human rights, human trafficking, natural calamities, war and other social issues seriously injuring human lives and their well beings.

Overlapping is an important factor. Before the deployment at a location, it is essential for any NGO to know about the other NGOs and their functional coverage in that particular locality. Duplication/overlapping of the NGO activities have serious consequences for the NGOs themselves and the beneficiaries as well. This is wastage of resources for the NGOs and duplication of services for the beneficiaries. Hasnain and Jasimuddin (2012) find that huge number of NGOs with similar functional coverage is serving the people in the same locations in Bangladesh. Sarkar and Ahmed (2000) have also could identify and acknowledge this problem. Ahmad's (1999) empirical study on the NGOs exhibits the adverse impacts of the NGO-overlapping problems. They could further reveal that NGOs love microcredit activities in Bangladesh and the beneficiaries are enjoying the credit facilities from couple of NGOs in the same locality simultaneously and fail to repay the same. Thus a bitter relationship grows between the NGOs and the beneficiaries.

¹ "Public goods, in the language of economics, are goods or services that exhibit two particular attributes: first, it costs no more to provide the good to many persons than it does to provide it to one person, because one person's enjoyment of goods does not interfere with the ability of others to enjoy it at the same time; and second, once the good has been provided to one person there is no way to prevent others from consuming it as well....Air pollution control is commonly cited as an example of public good; it costs as much to clean the air for one citizen of Los Angeles as it does to clean it up for the whole city, and once the air has been cleaned up it is hard to prevent any individual from enjoying it." (Hansmann, 1980, p. 848)

Stable and peaceful political situation allows smooth NGO-operations. The smooth conduct of NGO functions warrants the existence of stable and peaceful political situation in a country. When an NGO tries to select a foreign site to start its operations, it may try to be convinced about the presence of the conducive political climate involving political peace and harmony, effective law and order situation and stable government. The NGO-employees need to perform multi-dimensional tasks and responsibilities (Hasnain and Jasimuddin, 2013). So a politically peaceful location also allows the employees (specially the fieldworkers) to carry out their responsibilities smoothly.

Conducive government policy is beneficial for the NGO-operations. In the modern days, many countries have their own government policy on the NGO affairs. These NGO policies may differ from location to location. An NGO deciding about the location needs to consider the policy and provisions for judging the worthiness of a particular location.

For the NGO operations and the site selection issues government patronisation is required. The NGOs interact with a number of stakeholders in the environment (Khan, 2000; Karim, 2008; Lewis & Madon, 2004; Lewis, 2005; Devine, 2003; Krishnan, 2007). Like for-profit organisations, NGOs constantly face social, political, economical, technological, legal and ecological challenges from the environment (Rahman, 2007). The NGO location decision is very much influenced by the nature of government patronisation available to a site. If government patronises a particular site by instructing the local government and open branches on the NGO-affairs to cooperate the local NGOs, that site may be more attractive for the NGOs.

The smooth performance of the NGO operations calls for peaceful law and order situation in a country. This factor needs careful consideration by an NGO seeking to identify a proper location in a foreign country. A strong political government, which is committed to establish the rule of law can ensure proper law and order situation in a country.

The NGOs need to consider their deployment and other expenditures. These costs vary according to the sites due to life styles and pattern of living. The NGOs prefer a site where the cost of living is reasonable, crime rate is low and living environment is friendly. Further, since labour cost represents a major segment of operating costs, NGOs try to find out a location where cheap labour will be available even if their head office location is far away from the places of operations. Hence an NGO site may be preferred over the other sites because of low operating costs.

Local supports play a significant role in the NGO-operations. It is an obligation for the NGOs to win the hearts and minds of the local people with a view to achieving the objectives of the NGOs. Before deployment a study on the issue may help the NGOs for a smooth operation. Further, Ahmad's (2002, 2003) empirical investigation on the NGO-field works in Bangladesh could reveal that they (NGO-field workers) face various social and physical security problems. Ahmad (2002) also finds that the security problem for the female field-workers is severe in nature. Hasnain (2013) and Hasnain & Jasimuddin (2012) have the similar opinions. So it is imperative for the NGOs to analyse such factors before the deployment in any location. It would not be wise to refrain themselves (NGOs) from deploying in those places if their deployment is essential for the interest of beneficiaries of the area.

There are three vital stakeholders in any NGO setting: The donors, the NGOs and the beneficiaries (Najam, 1995). The NGOs survive on the funds of the donors. It is also imperative for the NGOs to gain supports of the donors in favour of any location. However, the location decision should not be compromised for the interest of any stakeholder except the beneficiaries.

It is true that easy means of transportation should be available for the smooth and effective NGO-operations. A site, which is linked by road, rail and water transportation, is suitable for NGO location because it may assist in making a smooth transfer of logistics to the beneficiaries. However, this also should not be a bar to the NGO-operations as the NGOs should be capable of operating in adverse situations.

Local culture and practices are crucial factor for the deployment of the NGOs in any location. Conducive cultural factors help in smooth operations of the NGOs. Hasnain and Jasimuddin (2012) could identify that cultural factors may encourage or create barriers to NGO operations in a location.

The NGOs are the bodies filling the needs of the people where governments fail. The governments fail to eradicate poverty in many developing countries. It is also noticed that in many countries, some regions are free from poverty while the rest of the part is not. So the NGOs must carryout a need and poverty level analysis of the people of a region so that their deployment is legitimatised.

Site Selection Techniques- The Site Selection Matrix and Point Rating

This model (site selection matrix) is derived from Hunger and Wheelen (2001, p. 46-47). This model is having multifarious use. For example, this model is used by Hasnain (2012) for quantitative measurement of knowledge. Hunger and Wheelen used this model for industry analysis. In this article, instead of a company of an industry, a location is considered.

Table-1: Site Selection Matrix for NGOs

Strategic Factors	Weight (a)	Site-A Rating (b)	Site-A Weighted Score (a)x(b)	Site-B Rating (c)	Site-B Weighted Score (a)x(c)
1.Socio-economic condition of the people	.10	2	.20	4	.40
2.Overlapping	.05	1	.05	2	.10
3. Stable and peaceful political situation	.15	3	.45	3	.45
4. Conducive government policy	.10	4	.40	3	.30
5. Government patronisation	.10	4	.40	4	.40
6. Peaceful law and order situation	.10	2	.20	2	.20
7. Operation Cost	.05	2	.10	1	.05
8. Financing Facilities	.05	1	.05	2	.10
9. Easy means of transportation	.10	5	.50	1	.10
10. Culture	.20	4	.80	4	.80
Total:	<u>1.00</u>		<u>3.15</u>		<u>2.9</u>

The site selection matrix (Table-1) shows a method of calculation for selecting a site for the deployment of an NGO. It may also exhibit the weighted scores for number of locations. In the first column of the matrix the strategic factors are presented. These are the factors influencing the selection of a particular site. In the 2nd column a weight is assigned to every factor from 1.0 (most important) to 0.0 (not important) based on the factor's importance on the over all consideration of the location (site) in that particular country/region/area. In the 3rd column, Site-A is examined with the country/region/area. Using the best information and judgement assign a rating to each factor from 5 (outstanding) to 1 (poor) based on the local situation within that country/region/area. The 4th column indicates the weighted score for the Site-A. This is obtained by multiplying the weight in column 2 for each factor times its rating in column 3. Similarly, column 5 examines a second site-B. Column 6 finds the weighted score for Site-B. Total higher weighted scores in column 4 and 6 indicate the suitability for a Site-A and Site-B respectively over one another. In the similar way, number of sites may be examined with a view to selecting locations/sites for the NGOs.

Point rating may be used for site selection. This tool may be applied in NGO site selection analysis. Here vital location factors are determined and points are allocated against each factor. Similarly the points are also given to the factors of the alternative sites. The site which scores highest number may be selected for the NGO location.

Conclusion

The NGOs are created for the beneficiaries. So it should be the ethical obligation for the NGOs to fulfil the needs of the beneficiaries. Identifying and operating in an appropriate location is imperative for the NGOs towards the fulfilment of the beneficiaries' needs. On the other hand, inappropriate site selection is costly, expensive and wastage of resources. It is essential for the NGOs to assess the needs of the beneficiaries before any deployment. The NGO-sector has three vital stakeholders. These are: the donors, the NGOs (NGO-employees) and the beneficiaries. They work in a close cooperation. This sector is termed as the third sector. This sector works as the supplementary sector to other two sectors (public and private sectors). The NGOs may have different functional coverage, like microcredit, empowerment/income generation, education, health and nutrition, environment, natural calamities/disaster management, human rights and legal aids, water and sanitation, poultry and livestock, agriculture, relief and rehabilitation and advocacy. There are many definitions of the NGOs. Vakil (1997)

defines the NGOs as, “self governing, private, not profit organizations that are geared to improving the quality of life of disadvantaged people” (p. 2060), while Begum (2008, p. 25) finds NGOs as “an organization or group of people working independent of any external control with specific objectives and aims to fulfill any tasks that are oriented to bring about desirable change in a community, area or situation”. Public goods theory, contract failure theory and subsidy theories are corresponding with the activities of the NGOs. The socio-economic condition of the people, overlapping, stable and peaceful political situation, conducive government policy, government patronisation, peaceful law and order situation, operations cost, local supports and the safety of the NGO-field workers, financing facilities, easy means of transportation, local/national culture, poverty level analysis etc. are identified as the factors which may be taken into contingency before the location decisions of the NGOs have been made. The site selection matrix and point rating techniques may be used for the site selection. A change in location or redeployment of any NGO may occur due to the fall of the poverty levels, or due to the accomplishment of the NGO’s objectives. An NGO may extend its time of stay in a particular location as a result of its unfinished objectives. Natural calamities, war or any impromptu situation may compel an NGO to extend its stay (or redeployments) . Needless to mention- the site selection factors/lists is non-exhaustive. The site selection is very much contextual in nature and impartial managerial judgement is necessary here. The NGOs should not forget the ethical aspects while they are selecting a site for the deployment. Future researchers may empirically examine the factors and the techniques of site selection techniques describe in this article.

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