

Impact of International NGO'S in Managing Natural Disaster in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Afghanistan's interior environment, with scorching summers and harsh winters, is prone to intense and recurring natural disasters. The country's dry and rainy season cycle is a serious issue that regularly leads to disasters owing to a lack of planning, high susceptibility, and weak adaptation and coping skills. Afghanistan has relied on international donations to control disaster and pests, with the support of non-governmental organizations (NGO'S), because it is unable to handle them independently.

In this environment, international non-governmental organizations (NGO'S) have played an important role in disaster response, relief distribution, rehabilitation, and capacity development efforts. Their engagement not only offers urgent humanitarian assistance, but also helps to build long-term resilience through community training, infrastructure support, and disaster preparedness initiatives. However, problems like as political instability, poor governance, insufficient cooperation with local institutions, and security limitations frequently undermine the effectiveness of their operations. The purpose of this study is to assess the overall impact of international non-governmental organizations (NGO'S) in managing natural disasters in Afghanistan, evaluating both their accomplishments and limits, as well as to explore strategies to increase collaboration between foreign actors and national systems for long-term disaster management. ¹

Keywords: International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO'S), Disaster Management, Humanitarian Assistance, Disaster, Capacity Building, Emergency Response, Political Instability, Security Challenges, Donor Funding, Community Development.

Introduction

Concept and Meaning

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO'S) are independent and voluntary groups formed by individuals or communities with the aim of addressing social, economic, cultural, environmental, or humanitarian concerns. Unlike state institutions, they operate outside the official structures of government and are not driven by profit motives. The primary role of NGO'S is to fill the gaps where government systems or the private sector may be inadequate, ensuring that social needs, rights, and development goals are considered. Their existence reflects the importance of collective action and civic participation in modern societies. ²

What is NGO'S?

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO'S) are organization independent of government influence, established to advance humanitarian, social, or developmental objectives.

Why do NGO'S Exist?

They exist to address needs and issues that governments and markets often neglect, such as poverty reduction, the protection of human rights, and disaster relief.

How do NGO'S Operate?

NGO'S operate through community mobilization, advocacy, project implementation, service delivery, and collaboration with other stakeholders. Their activities are often funded through donations, grants, and international aid, ensuring that resources are directed toward social change rather than profit.

In addition, NGOs may be divided into two types: operational NGO'S, which provide services and implement initiatives such as disaster relief, education, or healthcare, and advocacy NGO'S, which seek to influence policy and raise awareness on certain topics. Medecins Sans Frontieres, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and CARE International are globally recognized examples, while the Afghan Red Crescent Society, Action Against Hunger, and Save the Children are well-known in Afghanistan. NGO'S must register with the Ministry of Economy and follow government standards, NGO'S confront a number of problems, including a reliance on donor finance, political and bureaucratic constraints, security threats in war zones, and cultural barriers, all of which can limit their operational reach and viability.

Research Methodology

Research approach:

This study takes a qualitative and descriptive research approach. It seeks to investigate the scope and effectiveness of international non-governmental organizations (NGO'S) in managing natural disaster in Afghanistan, with a particular emphasis on their responsibilities, problems, and contributions. The emphasis is on descriptive and explanatory analysis, not statistical modeling.

Research Design

The research used a desk-based (library) study design, relying solely on secondary data from publicly available sources. This includes:

- Official data and reports from the Taliban Ministry of Economy, the United Nations, and international non-governmental organizations (NGO'S).
- Publications and reports from respected humanitarian organizations (e.g., UNDP, World Bank, and IFRC).
- Summarized and synthesized content gathered using AI tools as a research tool to assist subject investigation, with information cross-checked against reputable sources.

Data Analysis

A thematic content analysis technique was used. The study includes finding and categorizing data into major themes:

- Number and kind of non-governmental organizations (NGO'S) functioning in Afghanistan.
- The effectiveness of non-governmental organizations in increasing Afghanistan's disaster response capabilities.
- Major obstacles for NGO'S in Afghanistan.

The patterns and interactions between these topics were then analyzed in order to gain a thorough knowledge of the influence of INGO'S.

Data Sources

Data for this study was drawn from:

- Academic journal articles about NGO involvement and disaster management.
- INGO yearly reports and project assessments.
- news reports and updates on humanitarian issues.
- AI-assisted summaries, whose factual correctness was confirmed by cross-referencing them with government and academic sources.

Hypothesis

This research hypotheses could focus on the roles, effectiveness, and challenges of international NGO'S in Afghanistan's disaster management.

Here is a design of hypothesis:

H1: International non-governmental organizations (NGO'S) play an important and positive role in strengthening Afghanistan's capacity to manage natural disaster.

H2: Political, security, and regulatory obstacles hinder international non-governmental organizations' efficacy in disaster management in Afghanistan.

H3: Restrictions on female NGO personnel in Afghanistan considerably limit the scope and impact of humanitarian and disaster relief initiatives.

H4: Funding limitations and coordination challenges prevent a significant number of registered NGOs in Afghanistan from being active or successful in enhancing disaster resilience.

Scholars on NGO'S

Scholars regard Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO'S) as key actors in global governance and development.

- According to Korten (1990), NGO'S are "third-sector organizations" that act as catalysts for people-centered development.
- Edwards and Hulme (1996) argue that NGO'S are essential for connecting grassroots communities with national and international policy frameworks.
- Lewis and Kanji (2009) emphasize that NGO'S function as "intermediary organizations," bridging the gap between citizens and the state by promoting accountability, participation, and empowerment.

Characteristics of NGO'S

1. Voluntary Nature – NGO'S are created by citizens who voluntarily come together to pursue a common purpose.

2. Independence from Government – Although they may cooperate with governments, they remain autonomous in their decision-making.

3. Non-profit Orientation – Their goal is not financial gain but the improvement and well-being of communities and societies.

4. Value-based – NGO'S often uphold principles such as human rights, equality, social justice, and sustainability.

5. Diversity in Scope – They operate in multiple fields, including disaster management, education, healthcare, environment, poverty reduction, and advocacy.

6. Flexible and People-centered – Being close to local communities allows them to respond quickly and adapt to emerging needs.³

Role of none governmental organizations NGO'S

NGO'S play a very important role in the field of international relations. The field of international relations has been mainly concerned with wars, struggles for power, and the efforts of countries to achieve best national interest. In the decisive issues of global politics, non-state actors such as NGO'S are increasingly becoming involved. Over the past four decades more scholars are suggesting the significance roles of NGO'S in promoting international understanding and cooperation. Countries are not only losing sovereignty in a globalized economy, but they are also sharing powers including security, political, and social roles at the core of sovereignty with international, business organizations and NGO'S.

This results from the increased emphasis on private sector initiatives, declining role of states and the emergence of civil society. This shift among private sectors, states and civil society has brought a lot of challenges, opportunities, and issues for many NGO'S. In almost every corner of the world, NGO'S have risen to bigger prominence. Many NGO'S that consist of nonofficial groups in difference nations have come together with the objective of promoting common interests through global actions. This paper will attempt to comprehend the roles of NGO'S in international roles.

Generally speaking, there is no internationally fitting definition of NGO'S yet, therefore, it is important to analyze its functions. Due to information revolution and globalization that has made individuals live in the global village, human activity is less restrained by national borders.

For example, the internet has made people communicate, trade, and travel in ever growing numbers. However, this has led to more problems in the global society. Such a phenomenon gives NGOs many chances to exhibit their functions in international relations.

The range of the work of NGO'S is nearly as broad as their interests. Because they provide services; implement, shape, enforce, and monitor national and global commitments; do scientific, legal, and political analysis; and change institutions, norms have been raised. Some NGO'S are organized in a bid to promote the interests of a particular group. Some of them are also established to perform a particular task and advance a movement. They normally function as agents of global understanding, as pressure groups, and as shapers of public opinion. NGO'S differ in various dimensions, which are highlighted in literature. Such dimensions might be used generally to classify them. And such classifications can deem NGO'S as global actors.

NGO'S as a group are multi-faceted and diverse. The scope of their work is nearly as broad as their interests. Their operations and perspectives might be local, regional, national or global. Some are task oriented or issue oriented; others are driven by ideology. Some NGO'S have a broad public interest viewpoint while others have a more narrow and private focus. They range from poorly funded, small, grassroots entities to well supported, large, professionally staffed organizations. Some operate individually and others have formed networks to share tasks and information to enhance their impact. NGO'S breed new ideas; protest, advocate and mobilize public support; do scientific, legal, policy and technical analysis; change institutions and norms; and implement, monitor, shape and enforce national and global commitments.

In the context of international policy and law, NGO'S perform various activities and functions. International policy making is normally characterized by numerous uncertainties. These might include scientific uncertainties about the causes and effects of a problem and potential reactions tactics as well as political and legal uncertainties about the available means and ways to accomplish desired policy goals and their implications. Uncertainty also often exists about the behavioral effects for example, on sub-national actors like consumers and industry, and so forth, as well as the efficiency of implementation of international rules when these rules have been adopted. Even though the precautionary principle might provide an adequate basis to take measures even if full scientific certainty lacks uncertainty is still in numerous cases a significant element that hinders the adoption of effective measures and policies.

NGO'S play an imperative role in tackling these uncertainties, thus enhancing the knowledge base for global governance. NGO'S compile, gather, and disseminate significant information to the broader public and policy makers. In addition to this, independent research institutes and expert NGO'S like the World Watch Institute, World Resources Institute, and International Institute for Sustainable Development, Tata Energy Research Institute, World Conservation Monitoring Centre, and others are especially active in this respect. In the area of implementation review, a well-known example is the TRAFFIC international that has

frequently provided information to Parties in countries where illegal trade in endangered species occurs, and it has been officially recognized as a source of relevant information.

Also, some NGO'S have played critical roles in providing order in conflict driven nations such as Afghanistan. They have forced governments to accept strict rules against the export of banned goods such as ivory and so on. Greenpeace, as mentioned earlier and other NGO'S have proved to be more willing than governments to speak out against the violations of the rights of people in critical situations. Such NGO'S are a testament that they significantly matter in the global society.

In general, NGO'S involved in the issues of human rights have more achievements and influence in their practice. For instance, the International Commission of Jurists, Amnesty International, the Human Rights Watch, and the International Committee of the Red Cross have tried to influence states by applying human rights principles in particular environments. Likewise, other NGO'S such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace work hold states responsible of global environmental standards. There is significant evidence which reveals that the functions of NGO'S specifically in the practice of international relations have considerably contributed a lot to the global society; they have devoted themselves to benefit mankind. Some of them have even received the notable Nobel Peace Prize such as Amnesty International, Institute of International Law, among others.

Of the many approaches to evaluating the roles of NGO'S in the field of international law, some dominant approach can be observed. For instance, the top-down approach highlights conventional diplomacy where multilateral and bilateral bargaining is the main instrument. What is more, the distribution of power and national interests are the main determinants of outcomes. Therefore, how NGO'S influence governments behavior is critical to such an approach. Another approach is bottom up that focuses on grassroots movements, community organizing, local decision making and local participation. The strength of such an approach lies in its capacity to encourage locally designed responses to meet local needs. NGO'S normally perform very well in such an approach.

Over the last decades, the magnitude of NGO'S in international relations has tremendously increased. NGO'S fulfill various functions by employing various channels of influence and activities in promoting international understanding and cooperation. Specified functions ascertain NGO'S as significant international elements, which have an influence in all stages of the political process though not all activities and functions may be of equal relevance for every political stages. For instance, whilst improving the knowledge base and guaranteeing that transparency appears to be relevant to all policy states. Likewise, lobbying and advocacy in delegations mainly relate to the process of policy making while support for international organizations and secretariats is not entirely limited to any policy stage.⁴

Natural Disaster in Afghanistan

Afghanistan's rugged geography, severe climate, and sociopolitical instability make it one of the world's most disaster-prone nations. The nation often encounters avalanches, landslides, floods, earthquakes, and droughts, all of which have severely damaged agriculture

infrastructure, and human lives. Deforestation, environmental degradation, and climate change have all contributed to the escalation of catastrophic calamities in recent decades.

Decades of violence, shoddy administration, and a lack of planning and response capabilities for disasters all contribute to Afghanistan's vulnerability. Millions are at danger due to weak disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans, limited early warning systems, and poor infrastructure. Communities in rural and isolated areas are particularly vulnerable because they frequently do not have access to emergency services or humanitarian help.

In light of these difficulties, international non-governmental organizations' (INGO'S) contribution to disaster management initiatives has grown in importance. Emergency assistance, community resilience development, DRR program implementation, and collaboration with national and local institutions to improve response systems have all benefited greatly from IN INGO'S. However, security threats, financial limits, and intricate political dynamics frequently hinder the efficacy and coordination of such initiatives.⁵

Why is this topic important?

This topic is important because millions of lives in Afghanistan depend on timely and affective disaster response. International NGO'S are only bridge between crisis and survival and this non governmental organization have played a critical role in disaster response, preparedness, and recovery in Afghanistan. Studying their impact helps improve global humanitarian work and supports more ethical and effective response to disaster and conflict.

Major disaster in recent history

Earthquakes

On October 7, 2023, an earthquake of a magnitude of 6.3 occurred in western Afghanistan, close to Herat. Over 2,100 people were injured, and the death toll varied between about 1,000 (Taliban estimate) to 1,482 (WHO estimate). Since most males were outside, 90% of the victims were women and children. Over 43,000 individuals were impacted by the earthquake, which left tens of thousands homeless. Homes and vital infrastructure were leveled in the provinces of Herat, Badghis, and Farah. Paktika–Khost Earthquake, June 2022 The regions of Paktika and Khost were affected by a shallow earthquake that struck in mid-June 2022.

Between 1,600 and over 3,000 people were injured, and between 1,039 and 1,150 people were killed. More than 10,000 houses suffered partial or total destruction. Hundreds of clinics and schools fell. Many other villages suffered greatly, and the village of Gayan was all but destroyed.⁶

Floods

April–May 2024 Floods Heavy seasonal rains caused extensive flooding in 23 Afghan regions during April to May 2024. More than 540 people died, 1,651 were injured, 2,000 dwellings were destroyed, and agricultural land and infrastructure were severely damaged. UNICEF and other organizations reported 240-315 deaths, over 60,000 displaced persons, and significant infrastructure damage in provinces including as Baghlan, Badakhshan, and Takhar.⁷

Landslide

February 2024 Nuristan Landslide on February 19, 2024, Nakre village in Nuristan Province saw a major avalanche caused by heavy snow and rain. At least 25 people died, 8 were wounded, and around 20 dwellings were demolished or seriously damaged. ⁷

Summary table

Event	When	Estimated Deaths	Comments
Herat earthquake (2023)	Oct,7,2023	1000-1482	Massive impact: most of them are women and children's victims
Paktika and Khost Quake (2022)	Jun 2022	1000+	A lot of houses are collapsed
Floods	April- May (2024)	540+	Agriculture and infrastructure loss
Nuristan Landslide	Feb 2024	25	Localized but significant destruction

Role of international NGOs (INGO'S) in disaster response

Afghanistan is frequently hit by natural disaster such as earthquakes, floods, droughts, and avalanches, as well as man-made crises caused by decades of conflict. Infrastructure is weak, Government capability is limited, Difficult access due to the rural and steep environment. Then NGOs and INGO'S are crucial in disaster response due to the obstacles they face.

International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO'S) play an important and complex role in disaster response, serving as major actors in providing both urgent humanitarian help and long-term recovery assistance. When catastrophes occur, whether natural (earthquakes, floods, and droughts) or man-made (conflicts), INGO'S are frequently among the first to respond, mobilizing their worldwide networks, financial resources, and experienced staff to reach impacted communities swiftly. They provide crucial life-saving support, such as emergency shelter and food delivery, clean water, sanitary facilities, and medical services can assist minimize additional loss of life and suffering in the early phases of a disaster. Many INGO'S have specific experience in areas such as disaster risk assessment, emergency health care, search and rescue operations, logistics management, and psychosocial support, allowing them to work effectively even in remote, conflict-affected, or resource-constrained environments.

To provide emergency assistance, INGO'S work with local NGO'S, community-based groups, government agencies, and international organizations to provide a coordinated response that eliminates duplication and increases effectiveness. They also focus on building local capacity

by educating community members, assisting with disaster preparedness planning, and implementing resilient infrastructure and livelihood initiatives to decrease susceptibility to future catastrophes. Many INGO'S participate in advocacy work, leveraging their global presence to highlight disaster-affected people's needs, influence donor priorities, and develop policies that support sustainable, equitable, and inclusive disaster management practices. Furthermore, their capacity to connect local realities with worldwide assistance enables them to ease the cross-border movement of resources, expertise, and technology. INGO'S improve the efficacy, reach, and sustainability of disaster response activities throughout the world by combining fast response, technical knowledge, collaborative partnerships, and long-term resilience development. ⁸

How many non governmental organization are involved in?

The actual number of non-governmental organizations (NGO'S) functioning in Afghanistan is difficult to estimate since different sources give varying counts, and there is no single, globally verifiable database. According to latest numbers from the Taliban's Ministry of Economy (2024), the country has roughly 2,199 legally registered NGO'S, with approximately 278 being foreign NGOs (INGO'S) and the remainder being local. However, other official declarations indicate that, while over 2,600 groups are officially registered, only roughly 820 are regularly engaged in providing services and programs.

The number of non-governmental organizations (NGO'S) operating in Afghanistan is difficult to quantify since different sources provide varied estimates and there is no single, internationally recognized database. According to the latest figures from the Taliban's Ministry of Economy (2024), the nation has around 2,199 legally registered NGO'S, with approximately 278 being foreign NGOs (INGO'S) and the rest being local. However, additional official statements show that, while over 2,600 groups are formally registered, only about 820 are consistently involved in providing services and programs.

Historically, estimates have been substantially higher, in some cases exceeding 6,000 registered NGO'S but these statistics sometimes included defunct, duplicate, or project-specific groups that were no longer functioning. Analysts and humanitarian networks estimate that the current active number of NGO'S is closer to 800-2,200, depending on how "active" is defined. These organizations work in a variety of fields, including disaster response, health care, education, agriculture, infrastructure rehabilitation, and women's empowerment, though the scope and reach of their efforts are frequently limited by Afghanistan's complex political, economic, and security conditions. ⁹

Effectiveness of NGOs in Improving Afghanistan's Capacity

There is no publicly published statistic that indicates how many NGO'S in Afghanistan are "effective" in enhancing the country's capacity, owing to the difficulty of quantifying efficiency, which varies by sector, location, and political situation.

However, statistics from focused capacity-building projects provide some insight. For example, the World Bank and UNDP's "Afghanistan NGO/CSO Capacity Support Project" identified 400 NGO'S/CSOS for structured training and organizational development. One of the project's

major performance metrics was for at least 60% of participating organizations to report enhanced capacity to offer services and contribute to Afghanistan's development and resilience. This figure only relates to NGO'S participating in the program, not all registered organizations in Afghanistan, but it is one of the few recorded quantitative measures of NGO capacity increase in Afghanistan. ¹⁰

Some challenges here

There are many issues that impact the effectiveness of NGO'S in enhancing Afghanistan's capabilities:

Restrictions on female personnel - Since December 2022, the Taliban's ban on women working in non-governmental organizations has severely hampered activity in sectors including as health, education, and community development, where female participation is critical for reaching women and children.

Financing shortages and donor weariness - Since 2021, several international donors have curtailed or halted financing, resulting in budget cuts, program closures, and decreased humanitarian assistance.

Bureaucratic and regulatory impediments- New registration requirements, project approval processes, and government supervision measures have slowed down implementation while increasing administrative burdens.

Access and security constraints - Some locations remain difficult to reach owing to instability, geographical remoteness, or movement restrictions, preventing NGO'S from performing needs assessments or providing relief on a systematic basis.

Coordination and capacity concerns - Weak coordination between NGO'S, local governments, and foreign organizations can lead to overlapping services in some places and a complete absence of support in others.

Unreliable data and transparency limitations - Official numbers on the number of active NGO'S are conflicting, and reporting openness is restricted, make it difficult to plan and allocate resources efficiently.

Because of these constraints, even skilled NGO'S sometimes function below their full potential, limiting overall improvements in Afghanistan's institutional and community capacities. ¹¹

Limitations

- ❖ The study is based primarily on secondary data, with no primary field research (such as surveys or interviews).
- ❖ Statistics from Afghanistan are sometimes unreliable or partial, therefore the statistics mentioned may change between sources.
- ❖ AI-generated text was utilized as advice, which necessitated thorough verification to eliminate inaccuracies or obsolete information.

- ❖ Afghanistan's political and security environment is quickly changing; therefore, conclusions may not reflect the most current developments.

Conclusion

Afghanistan is one of the world's most disaster-prone and vulnerable countries, owing to its harsh topography, frail infrastructure, political instability, and limited government capability. In this context, international non-governmental organizations (NGO'S) have played a significant role in disaster response, relief distribution, rehabilitation, and capacity building. Their actions have saved lives, improved community resilience, and implemented long-term catastrophe risk reduction methods.

However, despite their significant contributions, INGO'S effectiveness in Afghanistan is frequently hampered by a variety of challenges, including security threats, political and bureaucratic constraints, funding shortages, a lack of coordination with local institutions, and restrictions on female participation in humanitarian activities. These limitations typically limit the breadth and sustainability of activities, preventing many organizations from reaching their full potential.

Overall, the study concludes that international non-governmental organizations (NGO'S) continue to play an important role in disaster management in Afghanistan. While they have made significant progress in supporting communities and building resilience, their success is heavily reliant on stronger collaboration with national systems, increased transparency, sustained donor support, and an enabling environment that allows both male and female staff to function effectively. Addressing these problems is critical to ensure that disaster response in Afghanistan transitions from a reactive to a more sustainable and locally integrated system capable of preserving lives and livelihoods in the long run.

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