

**THE PARADOX OF GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY, INTERNATIONAL  
NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE EMERGING SYSTEM OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE**

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**Abstract**

*This paper dwells on the paradox of global civil society, is international nongovernmental organisations and their contribute to the emerging system of global governance. The study started by looking at the emerging system of Global governance. From there it moved on to discuss the six key actors involved in Global Governance as argued by Karns & Mingst 2004. After which it went into the meaning of INGOs as defined by different scholars. Further from the above, it went on to state how INGOs differ from states and later went ahead to discuss the different roles of INGOs in details. After that, it commenced discussing how INGOs differ from state and the problem INGOs are having with accountability, legitimacy and Democracy. It finally examined the Relationship between INGOs and IGOs and then to the point of UN accreditation of INGOs whether it is good or not after which it concluded by saying that Global civil society and INGOs are great role players and have contributed immensely to the emergency of global governance.*

**Keywords:** International, Non-Governmental, Organization, Globalization, Civil, Society.

**Introduction**

Given the necessity of curbing terrorism, blocking the international flow of disease, crime and drugs, controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, reducing barriers to trade, alleviating poverty, ensuring environmental protection, keeping peace after intrastate conflicts, promoting human rights and other issues of global (Karns & Mingst 2004 p.21), these and other factors have given rise to the emergence system of global governance. (Karns & Mingst 2004 p.4) sees global governance as "The cooperative problem-solving arrangements and activities that states and other actors have put in place to deal with various issues and problems". Global Governance is the collection of governance-related

activities, rules, and mechanisms, formal and informal, existing at a variety of levels in the world today (Karns & Mingst 2004 p.4). INGOs have proliferated spectacularly, from about 200 active organisations in 1900 to about 800 in 1930, to over 2,000 in 1960 and nearly 4,000 in 1980 (Boli & Thomas cited in Diehl 2001 p.63) which is as a result of the emergence of global governance. "The growth of NGOs and NGOs networks in the 1990s has been a major factor in their increasing involvement in governance at all level from global to local (Karns & Mingst 2004 p.17)." In addition to 6,500 or so internationally active NGOs, there are literally million of small grassroots NGOs in countries around the world (Karns & Mingst 2004 p.17)." According to (McLaverty 2008 in Lecture notes) "global governance has developed because many problems can not be solved according to traditional patterns of state action and many problems can not be solved unilaterally." Global governance also means that non-state actors are increasingly involved in regulating international affairs (Risse1999 p.5)."

Accelerated globalisation since the 1960s has encouraged substantially increased participation in governance by civic organisations and firms (Scholte 2000 p.151). "Such privatisation of governance has involved business associations, NGOs, foundations, think tanks, and even criminal syndicates (cf Culter et al., 1999; Ronit and Schneider, 1999, Higgott et al., 2000 cited in Scholte 2000 p.151)". "The complexity of global governance is a function not only of many pieces, but also of many actors that are frequently linked in transnational and trans-governmental networks (Karns & Mingst 2004 p. 15)". As such, Karns & Mingst (2004) identified six key actors in global governance.

First is the state. Karns & Mingst (2004) argued that states continue to be key actors in global governance, creating many of the pieces and carrying out many activities. Karns & Mingst (2004) also stated that states alone have sovereignty and creates IGOs and also determine what actions they can take or not take; they create international law and norms and determine their effectiveness through their compliance o failure to comply. Although states are key actors and have great role to play in global governance, It is important to note that no state even the World Power can shape global governance alone without the help others.

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The second actor in global governance as stated by Karns & Mingst (2004) is the IGOs. "In considering the significance of IGOs in shaping the global governance, we focus not on the structural attributes and programs but on the organisations as actors (Karns & Mingst 2004 p.17)." By the aforementioned statement, they mean that IGOs and its official have contributed immensely in getting the states to act accordingly, providing professional skills to secure agreement and masterminding success and effectiveness.

NGOs are the third actors of global governance as claimed by Karns & Mingst. "Like IGOs, NGOs are both pieces of governance and key actors (Karns & Mingst 2004 p.17)." For governance purposes, these INGOs play key roles in activities such as promoting population control, empowerment of women, health care, and environmental protection. Ranging from international standard-setting to telecommunications to world trade in general to human rights to non-proliferation to the preservation of wildlife – it is very hard to find an issue-area in international affairs which is currently not covered by international or at least regional agreements as a result of the striving force of INGOs.

The Fourth actors are Experts. "In a world whose problems seem to grow steadily more complex, knowledge and expertise are critical to governance efforts (Karns & Mingst 2004 p.18)". In the world today there is a great quest to understand the reason behind global warming, climatic change ozone layers problems etc in a bid to bring into play better policies to fight these problems." Thus, experts from different countries' governmental agencies, research institutes, private industry, or universities have increasingly been drawn into international efforts to deal with different issues (Karns & Mingst 2004 p.18)."

Karns & Mingst 2004 argues that Global Policy Networks is the fifth key actor in global governance. Experts may also be among the actors in global policy networks that link key individuals in government agencies, IGOs, corporations, professional associations, and NGOs (karns & Mingst 2004 p.19). Karns & Mingst say that NGOs seldom work alone for very long. The communications revolution of fax, Internet, and the Web, have linked NGOs together with each other, sometimes formally, more often informally and with states to block or promote shared goals; thus, transnational networks and coalitions create multilevel linkages between different organizations

that each retain their separate organizational character and memberships, but through their linkages enhance power, information sharing, and reach. Finally the last actor in global governance as proposed by Karns and Mingst is the Multi National Corporations (MNCs). The MNCs is a different kind of NGO as well as actor in global governance. It is shaped for profit making and business transactions all over the world. "They have the ability to invest capital and thus to create jobs, influence political actors, offer incentives to host governments, lobby for changes in state laws, and threaten to move jobs and investment elsewhere should the conditions not be conducive to profitable business (karns & Mingst 2004 p.19)."Karns & Mingst states that The world's largest MNCs account for four-fifths of world industrial output and that MNCs have been increasingly recognized as significant international actors sine 1970s controlling resources far greater than those of many states.

Having had a brief look at the six different actors of global governance, It is apparent to mention at this point that, "The various actors of global governance cannot be analysed without each other because each of them play a key role in various global issues and problem and sometimes compete for legitimacy, supremacy and scarce resources (karns & Mingst 2004 p.20)."

### **Meaning Of INGOs**

Many scholars have argued about the suitable definition of INGOs. But there is a general agreement about the meaning of its name which is International Non Governmental Organisations. INGOs can be seen as NGOs operating at an international level. NGOs as defined by Karns & Mingst 2004 are private voluntary organisations whose members are individuals or associations that come together to achieve a common purpose". INGOs can be viewed as organisations that constitute global movements; deliberately seeking to create international networks and derive enhanced legitimacy from them, promoting an ethos of internationalism, and favour simultaneous action at the local, national and international levels (Van Rooy 2004, p.11 cited in Clark 2001). Willets, P. (2002) defined NGO as an independent voluntary association of people acting together on a continuous basis, for some common purpose, other than achieving government office, making money or illegal activities. INGOs might also been seen as those International Non-Governmental Organisations who play an increasing important role in global governance.

Examples of INGOs include Friends of the Earth International, Oxfam, Red Cross International, World Wildlife Fund, Human Rights Watch, Greenpeace etc. However it is worth to be noted that some authors use the word INGOs and Global civil society interchangeably.

However, "INGOs differ from states in a number of important ways, however. Unlike governments, they are not representative of the body politic as a whole, but of particular groups' interests and values. While in theory at least, governments have to weigh up the competing interests of all of their citizens, the driving purpose of many INGOs is to push their particular causes and values as far as possible (Collingwood & Logister 2005)."

Collingwood & Logister 2005 argues that despite the fact that they can exercise power, they are neither formally accountable to the public nor elected by them and INGOs are not subject to the same procedural checks and balances as democratic governments. The fact that traditional democratic values do not checkmate INGOs behaviour does not automatically mean that these values are unimportant for their organisational structure and decision-making procedures (Collingwood & Logister 2005). "Rules concerning good governance, transparency and democratic culture can apply to NGOs as well as to states (van Bijsterveld, 2002, p. 91 cited in Collingwood & Logister 2005)."

### **Roles Of Ingos In Global Governance**

The roles and responsibilities of INGOs in global governance cannot be over emphasized. As we all know, INGOs have contributed immensely to the growth and emergence of global governance by bringing solution to problems of education, health, agriculture, and microcredit, all of which originally were government functions. Owing to the fact that there is a growing global civil society populated by an increasing number of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), among others. INGOs not only lobby national governments and international organizations on almost every aspect of international life. They are also actively involved in governing world politics in a variety of ways.

Global civil society often sets the international agenda to which governments and international organizations have to react. Global warming

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was brought to the attention of the international community by a variety of INGOs in cooperation with networks of scientific experts. A transnational global campaign in Asia, North America, Africa and Europe re-defined landmines from a national security question to a humanitarian issue forcing states to enter international negotiations to ban their production and deployment. A tiny INGO like Transparency International managed to bring the issue of corruption on the global agenda during the 1990s.

In the world of today, Global civil society is actively engaged in international treaty-making. The treaty banning landmines was negotiated involving a partnership among INGOs and some liberal states including Canada and Skandinavian governments. More so, "Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch actively contributed to negotiating and drafting almost every single human rights treaty in recent years - on the global arena as well as on regional levels. INGO involvement in this area goes back to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Thomas Risse 1999 p.5)". Thomas Risse 1999 stated that the successful conclusion of the 1995 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which resulted in its unlimited extension would not have been possible without the networking efforts of INGO members participating in various national delegations.

Further on my argument, Thomas Risse 1999 argues that Global civil society is actively involved in international law enforcement, through ensuring compliance with international treaties; States often lack the monitoring capacities to and/or are constrained by sovereignty concerns to gather information about treaty compliance in third countries. "The human rights area serves once again as a significant example. INGOs such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch provide crucial information about human rights violations to national governments as well as international organizations such as the UN Human Rights Commission; in this area, INGOs have acquired an authoritative claim to knowledge of what constitutes a norm violation which states have to take into account (Thomas Risse 1999 p.6)."

McLaverty P., 2008 in his lecture slides states about five different positive impacts of INGOs in global governance like giving voice to stakeholders, Inform and educate the public, Fuel the debate, Increase public transparency, Increase the accountability of agencies. Karns and Mingst

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2004 summarised the different roles of INGOs global governance stating that INGOs lobby governments, IGOs, and corporations through targeted campaigns and other tactics; these activities also involve mobilizing public opinion and political support within countries, using the media to publicize information, some of which may be embarrassing to the targeted government, Perform functions of governance in absence of state authority, Gather and publicize information, Create and mobilize networks, Frame issues for public consumption, Promote new norms, Advocate changes in policies and governance, Monitor human rights and environmental norms, Participate in global conferences, Raise issues, Submit position papers, Lobby for viewpoint, Bring parties together, Enhance public participation, Distribute humanitarian aid, Implement development projects.

Today, a large numbers of NGOs are involved in humanitarian relief and development assistance. The Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, the International Rescue Committee, and Oxfam are among the forty or so humanitarian relief organizations involved in complex emergencies such as the conflicts in Somalia, Kosovo, Bosnia, Congo, and Liberia, the genocide in Rwanda (karns & Mingst 2004 p. 216)". A clear example of that is discussed by Karns & Mingst (2004 p.211) where they stated that "In the space of three months in 1998 and 1999, an international treaty to ban landmines entered into effect and negotiations on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) were permanently halted; both events underscored the emergence of transnational political processes in which the activities of international NGOs played key roles." "NGOs opposed to the MAI were able to appeal to concerns over globalization, loss of democratic control over political processes, environmental degradation, and mistreatment of the poor (Kobrin 1998 cited in karns & Mingst 2004 p.211)." Karns & Mingst 2004 states that NGOs engaged in advocacy are often more visible and vocal than the humanitarian relief and development providers but whether focused on human rights, peace, disarmament, indigenous peoples' rights, women's rights, labour rights, infant formula, a multilateral agreement on investment, landmines, acid rain, climate change, whales, elephants, the Amazon rain forest, globalization, sweatshops, the World Trade Organization, World Bank, or IMF, advocacy groups have become an important part of world politics. (Keck and Sikkink 1998 cited in Karns & Mingst 2004) point out those INGOs and other transnational networks multiply the voices that are heard in international and domestic politics and

that these voices argue, persuade, strategize, document, lobby, pressure, and complain. NGOs can opt for the best venues to argue their points and they can bring in current ideas and draft texts for multilateral treaties; helping the government negotiators understand the science behind environmental issues they are trying to address (Karns & Mingst 2004). NGOs performing important economic functions that the government is not handling and also take the place of states, either performing services that an inept or corrupt government is not doing, or stepping in for a failed state.

Having witnessed a growth of Global Civil Society in the late twentieth century and the roles it has played in recasting the world politics, we must not exaggerate this expansion (Scholte 2002 p.173).

### **INGOs, State, Legitimacy, Accountability And Democracy**

Further to the above discussed roles of INGOs in global governance, According to Karns & Mingst 2004, NGOs' lack of transparency is a further problem and very few NGOs provide information about their personnel, operations, funding sources, and expenditures, and even their sources. Thomas Risse 1999 asked the question "Does this mean that states have become obsolete in world affairs and that global civil society has seized the roles traditionally occupied by national governments? Of course not. In a few unusual cases, NGOs take the place of states, either performing services that an inept or corrupt government is not doing, or stepping in for a failed state (Karns & Mingst 2004 p.215). There are significant limits on NGOs' influence. In the words of (Ghai 2001 cited in Karns & Mingst 2004 p.243) "No matter how idealistic or committed, INGOs simply cannot replace the work of governments and UN agencies in the business of poverty eradication. . . they cannot cover all areas relevant to an integrated approach to poverty eradication, nor are they organized to attain universality in their coverage of countries." "The emerging picture of global governance is not one that pitches the state system against the global civil society rather, we can observe emerging partnerships among public, private, and civil society actors whereby states and national governments form an intrinsic part. In this sense, "governance by networks" increasingly characterizes world politics; all These networks involve national governments, international organizations, as well as INGOs and private firms and they increasingly replace the image of international relations as populated exclusively by states (Thomas Risse 1999 p.6)." ... civil society needs the state for protection



and advancement, even though supporters of civil society want to limit the role and activities of the state (McLaverty 2005 p.311).

Secondly, INGOs have won prestige and credibility revealing injustice and corruption in business and government. But who oversees the watchdogs? Who holds them accountable for how they use their funds, how they operate, and the results achieved through their work? However, beyond accountability to donors, the mechanisms holding INGOs to account are extremely limited.

As stated by Thomas Risee (1999), Amnesty International and Greenpeace might be moral authorities in world affairs, but their officials are not democratically elected. As a result, "governance without government" can easily lead to a similar accountability deficit as in the case INGOs. However, beyond accountability to donors, the mechanisms holding INGOs to account are extremely limited. INGOs are unelected and, given that services provided by this sector are aimed at the most vulnerable in society, 'consumer power' is not an option for communities who are unhappy with a particular organisation (<http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/credib/2003/0401ingos.htm>- Accessed on 27/04/2008).

GAP recently published the first Global Accountability Report which assesses IGOs, TNCs and INGOs for their accountability to their members and on access to information online. Whilst the INGO sector's governance structures are much more representative of their membership (national offices, affiliates, sections) than the IGO or TNC groups, overall, the group was much less transparent. This is particularly striking considering that many organisations in this group persistently demand greater openness (<http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/credib/2003/0401ingos.htm> Accessed on 27/04/2008).

For one to say that an organisation is living up to its expectation in terms of accountability, access to information is considered to be fundamental to organisational accountability; Without relevant and timely information about what an organisation is doing, neither internal nor external stakeholders can hold it to account. Global Accountability Project Investigation and report states that INGOs often fail to provide information

that is likely to be of significant use to stakeholders, like, how they spend donors' money and how well they have been achieving their aims. All INGOs provide some information on their activities, however evaluation material is rarely provided on a systematic basis, if at all. In terms of the publication of annual reports, the INGO group stands out for its lack of consistency in producing this document. Moreover, the quality of financial information provided by those that do produce an annual report varies substantially. Some INGOs fail to provide any financial information at all, a serious failing given the criticism levelled at this sector for some years now regarding how they spend supporters' and government money and all the organisations in this study have well-developed websites that are used effectively to communicate their message to many stakeholders and supporters and this makes the absence of some key documents listed above even more surprising. If the INGO sector is to continue lobbying corporations and international institutions for more transparent and accountable processes, it is vital that they lead the way on issues of accountability; Failure to do so will risk losing their hard earned trust and legitimacy

(<http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/credib/2003/0401ingos.htm>  
[Accessed on 27/04/2008](#)).

The Relationship between INGOs and IGOs is absolutely conspicuous and cannot be over emphasised. INGOs and IGOs are like parts of the body that cannot do without each other. "In order for nonstate actors to play roles in global governance, they need access to the places where states endeavour to achieve consensus on norms and principles, hammer out the texts of treaties and conventions codifying rules, coordinate their policies, resolve their disputes, and allocate resources to implement programs and activities (Karns & Mingst 2004 p.230)." Karns & Mingst 2004 argues that for NGOs to exercise influence over governments' positions and IGO policies and programs, they need access and recognition of their right to be consulted. They want the right to lobby governmental delegates, to participate in sessions, to obtain documents, to speak, to distribute issue papers, provide data and analysis, and even to vote. Karns & Mingst 2004 argue that some IGOs have provisions in their charters for participation of nonstate actors and highlighted some of the activities of NGO in IGOs: (1) consultation in regime creation and implementation, (2) lobbying, (3) surveillance of

governmental activities, (4) involvement in international program implementation (5) participation in decision-making.

Further to this argument, "although the UN's members are states, the organization has long recognized the importance of nongovernmental organizations; Article 71 of the charter authorized ECOSOC (but not the General Assembly) to grant consultative status to NGOs (Karns & Mingst 2004 p.231)." Article 71 of the UN Charter opened the door providing for suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations. The consultative relationship with ECOSOC is governed today by ECOSOC resolution 1996/31, which outlines the eligibility requirements for consultative status, rights and obligations of NGOs in consultative status, procedures for the withdrawal or suspension of consultative status, the role and functions of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs, and the responsibilities of the UN Secretariat in supporting the consultative relationship; Consultative status is granted by ECOSOC upon recommendation of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs, which is comprised of 19 Member States. (<http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ngo/>- Accessed on 27/04/2022).

The study is of the opinion that it is justifiable and necessary to accredit these INGOs since they help the UN and states in exercising some of its functions that it could not attend to as a result of sovereignty or territorial boundaries.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, having witnessed the different contributions of INGO and global civil society in global governance, there are good reasons for assuming that INGOs have a legitimate role in global governance. They have become essential players in many policy areas because other actors, namely states, have conspicuously failed to regulate those areas or, where regulation exists, states have routinely ignored it. Given the past failures of states to act decisively on issues such as the protection of human rights or the environment, how can one question the right of INGOs to step into such loop-holes?

Having heard the good side of the story about Global civil society and INGOs, "we must not unanimously assume that these developments are wholly positive (Scholte 2000 p.173)." Global Civil Society certainly offers

much potential for enhancing security, equity and democracy in the world political economy; however, a long haul of committed endeavour is still required in order to fully realise those benefits (Scholte 2000 p.173)." There are other issues that make global civil society and INGOs look as if it has an element of doggedness in its activities. Deficit issues like legitimacy, democracy, accountability etc are still to be address by these global civil society and INGOs in a bid to clear its name from the mud that is about to overshadow it.

Be it as it may, one cannot help to accept the fact that Global civil society and INGOs has, is and will still contribute broadly to the growth and development of global governance. At that I wish to conclude that Global civil society and INGOs are great role players and have contributed immensely to the emergency of global governance.

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