

Civil Society Spectrum In Nepal: can NGOs provide leadership?

Since times immemorial, people have associated among themselves and worked together to achieve common goals. As it is difficult to achieve goals on individual basis, people with common aim come together and form organizations. Organization helps people in their self-development and also to defend their freedom and liberty. The freedom to come together on voluntary basis and form associations to defend their rights is now taken as the fundamental rights of people. There are at least two benefits of association:

- To realize the dream, hope and expectations of people, which cannot be achieved individually
- To increase the capability and develop potential of each person.

The word civil society is widely used in Nepal but with different meaning. NGDOs claim to be the sole representative of civil Society. On the other side, media organizations have also created a prominent position civil society especially after the political change of 1990. Traditionally religious, cultural and ethnic groups have dominant position in Nepal's civil society. People generously donate money to build temples and pagodas, but the donation to NGDOs is very low. This is an indication that NGDOs have yet to prove that they are representatives of civil society. Therefore, there is challenge for NGDOs to build their image and credibility within civil society and not an appendage of donors.

Civil society is defined as the individual and collective efforts for the common public good. Therefore, it could be said that civil society is not just association of the people, but the action of the people to promote the rights of the common men and women. The structure of civil society in is given in the table below:

Civil Society Spectrum in Nepal:

Type of association	Nature of associations	Examples
Traditional Institutions		Guthi, Panchayat, Dhikur, Parma
Religious organizations		Temples, Madarsha, Gumba, Satsang, Church, Gurudwara
Social movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movements against discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti Trafficking movements • Child right movements • Dalit right movements
	Movements against social evils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement against witch-craft • movement against Child marriage • Anti-dowry movements
	Movements for rights of ethnic minorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic rights organizations • Ethnic rights networks

Social movements (cont'd)	Human rights movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights NGOs • Human rights networks and alliances
	Environmental movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental NGOs and Networks
Membership organizations	Representative organizations	Trade Unions and their networks CBOs and their federations
	Professional associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associations of Medics, engineers, accountants, consultants, teachers
	Social/cultural organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural groups, and their networks
	Self-Help Groups	Community based self-help organizations - CBOs
Intermediary organizations	Service delivery organizations	Service delivery NGOs Philanthropic organizations and foundations Humanitarian & Relief organizations
	Awareness Building organizations	Advocacy organizations and their networks
	Support organizations	NGO support organizations NGO resource centers Business incubators Training Institutes
	Advocacy organizations	Advocacy organizations against corruptions, dalit rights, land rights, women rights
	Networks	Networks of forest user groups Networks of NGOs Networks of businesses

What is the position of NGDOs in this structure of civil society of Nepal? Have the NGDOs in Nepal made a vision how to mobilize this institutional resource for the common public good? Are NGDOs committed to improve their behavior, performance & image to represent civil society effectively? What is the role of donors and government to strengthen civil society in this country? It is clear that NGDOs need to strengthen their organizational and institutional capacity before they could embark on a strategic role to mobilize civil society in Nepal for the common public good.