

6. Recommendations to Enable Global Health NGOs to Realize Their Potential

The previous sections discussed the current status of NGOs, areas that can be improved in the short term, the environment surrounding NGOs, and case studies. This final section looks to the future and considers recommendations and prospects for global health NGOs.

According to the global health governance debate that has been going on since the 1990s, “The increase in power, resources, and influence of NGOs has fundamentally altered the diplomatic processes within governance structures. Nonstate actors are now deemed legitimate actors within decision-making processes” (Zacher & Keefe 2008). In the future, as globalization continues to progress, we can expect phenomena related to human health to transcend national borders even more, implying that the responses to those phenomena will be even more complex. In that context, the role of advocacy by NGOs, as nonstate actors, will probably become greater and more diverse.

As this study has analyzed, this type of trend in global health governance can be seen in Japan as well in the form of the new political space that has emerged as advocacy by NGO alliances. In particular, advocacy efforts since 2000 have uncovered the possibility of having a direct impact on the policies of the Japanese government, and the work of NGO alliances since 2008 has moved toward opening up the possibility for building a dialogue with the government. That can be interpreted as the future potential role of Japanese NGOs in the global health field.

In addition, what is unique in terms of the political and social context in Japan as compared with Europe and the United States is that, in some sense, there is a broad political space in Japanese society that global health NGOs could carve out for themselves. That is also the latent environment in which NGO advocacy can have an impact.

For example, because Americans regard global health policy as national strategy, it is inevitably strongly influenced by the administration in charge. Within USAID, the amount of funding available to fight AIDS is enormous, so as a result it is given priority within the many areas of “health” cooperation, and policies are tightly controlled by the administration. The Bush administration’s President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) exemplifies this. The amount of funding is very large—US\$15 billion for assistance to 15 countries—but the law mandates that one-third of that funding be spent for policies that advocate abstinence outside of marriage. Subsequently, PEPFAR received an enormous amount of criticism as a policy that too directly reflected the administration’s will, so there has been some movement toward a softening of the stance on abstinence promotion, for example. In any case, in America these types of complex political issues in the global health field, including AIDS and abortion, are strongly influenced by the administration and are characterized by policymaking through power struggles.

By contrast, in Japan, as can be seen in the process through which the IDI was created at the time of the 2000 Kyushu-Okinawa G8 Summit, one can conclude that recommendations from broad NGO coalitions are gradually accepted because global health policy has not been used as a national strategic measure by the administration. In the future as well, the uniqueness of the political dynamics of Japan’s global health field offers the potential for NGOs to create a political space.

In that context, we offer the following practical recommendations for strengthening Japan’s NGOs.

6-1. PROMOTE THE EXISTING NGO ALLIANCE ON GLOBAL HEALTH AND CREATE A “GLOBAL HEALTH NGO CONSORTIUM” WITH A SECRETARIAT

Since 2000, the advocacy being carried out by the alliance of global health NGOs in Japan has shown steady results, and its increasing influence has been attested to in this report. In particular, the advocacy work conducted by the alliance in the lead-up to the 2008 Hokkaido-Toyako G8 Summit represented a new development for Japanese health NGOs as they could have a direct impact on policy. In order to take advantage of the experiences to date of these NGOs, as well as to provide a liaison

for dialogue with the government, it is important to make use of the existing networks to establish a Global Health NGO Consortium and to establish a secretariat system. To strengthen advocacy efforts by this type of consortium, we would suggest a secretariat system that would take a neutral stance, distancing itself from the interests of individual NGOs. For that reason, it might make sense to house the Global Health NGO Consortium within a university or some other institution that could work cooperatively with the NGOs to put together joint recommendations on behalf of the consortium.

Having this type of secretariat system would provide a space and opportunity to create organic connections between the evaluation of NGO project activities in the field and the formation of policy recommendations, and it would thereby encourage interaction between project implementation and advocacy. NGO operations and advocacy should not be separate entities; what is strongly needed is interaction and a cycle in which operating NGOs use advocacy to shape policy, gain funding from that, and then tie that to further concrete programs. That could also be an important step in securing a new funding route.

The existence of the consortium could potentially lead to the creation of more opportunities for formal dialogue with MOFA or could be tied to the formation of a Diet coalition in the global health field. For example, there is already a Diet Task Force within the Friends of the Global Fund, Japan, and in 2007 a Diet coalition on tuberculosis was formed at the initiative of RESULTS Japan. These types of potential funding recipients are able not only to create a space for regular dialogue between NGOs and the Japanese government, but they could also function as a space for conveying information to the public and to the media.

6-2. CREATE LINKAGES BETWEEN THE “GLOBAL HEALTH NGO CONSORTIUM” AND UNIVERSITY RESEARCH INSTITUTES THROUGH DIALOGUE BETWEEN PRACTITIONERS AND RESEARCHERS

The next recommendation is to strengthen linkages with academic institutions. This study found that there was a common awareness among NGO representatives of the power of academia to support NGO advocacy, so it considered “what kind of cooperation is possible.”

What will be particularly important for the future is to take the experience and knowledge gained by Japanese NGOs to date, conceptualize that from an academic perspective, and then write about it. By having universities hold joint study groups and ongoing seminars, they can provide a place for NGO practitioners to actively share their own experiences and convene a dialogue about that experience among the NGOs, researchers, and representatives of international organizations. The ultimate goal would be for the discussions that are carried out through that type of process to result in a working paper that is written by the NGOs and published by the university.

University working papers can generally be written by any authors including researchers, policymakers, UN agency personnel, and NGO personnel, so this could be an opportunity to summarize the results of global health NGOs in a working paper based on knowledge that comes from the NGOs' experience. When NGO personnel write a paper, it is beneficial for them to have access to a university or research institute's scholarly resources. In those situations, it is also important to translate papers into English in order to convey information from Japan to the rest of the world on global health. If the university research institutes are able to publish the experiences gained by NGOs as research results in the form of working papers or other publications, it can have a meaningful academic impact as well, and this would take the form of practical cooperation between the NGO and the academic institution.

6-3. FORM NGO-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

NGOs should form linkages and build partnerships not only with universities and other academic institutions but also with private corporations as a way of constructing a new funding route that can sustain their activities. Within the discourse on global governance, Akira Iriye (2002, 208) points out the following about such nonstate actors as NGOs and corporations:

The situation [surrounding business-NGO relations], however, may be changing, just like the relationship between state and nonstate actors. The line between business enterprises and nongovernmental organizations is becoming blurred as some business organizations sponsor humanitarian work abroad while individuals with extensive experiences with relief, aid,

or environmental activities are hired by manufacturing or marketing firms. Moreover, some multinational corporations have begun soliciting the views of nongovernmental organizations on the impact of their business activities on local environmental and labor conditions. These instances suggest that some sort of collaborative relationship may develop between profit-seeking and nonprofit organizations.

That is a shift away from the image of private businesses simply providing money for NGO activities and toward a position of searching for practical approaches that NGOs can take to address issues through cooperation with other sectors. In America and elsewhere, there are already many cases of business-NGO partnership. While Japan can learn from those examples, given that the position, role, and history of NGOs and business is different in Japan, we need to search for our own appropriate relationships.

During this study, NGO representatives who handle advocacy work repeatedly indicated the importance of not just receiving Japanese corporate funding but also of creating cooperative activities with businesses through awareness-raising campaigns and other means. They are asking how they can get past the differences in concepts and awareness to find forms of partnership that will be beneficial to both parties, and how to set the objectives. While the scale is still small, there have already been some cases of cooperation. For example, the joint development of products that generate donations is one possible future avenue for development. There are already experiments underway that entail businesses donating proceeds from existing products so that every time consumers buy that product, a portion of the proceeds go to support an NGO's activities. We propose that businesses and NGOs should try to create a product and sales route together in the future, deciding through mutual discussions how the income will be used, as a way of achieving education and advocacy. This type of effort can be effective advocacy in the sense that it not only produces financial support for NGO activities but also, through the purchase of the products, involves the general public, who might not have a specific interest in the field of global health. However, in carrying out this type of effort, it is important to mediate between each party's interests, and a major concern is whether NGOs can carry out the necessary business negotiations regarding the funds. Under the current circumstances, priority should be on creating more opportunities for cooperation that build on past experiences, sharing those experiences, and developing those into methodologies for the future.

Another recommendation is to take advantage of the recent trend to establish “incubation centers” in universities as a venue for cooperation between business and academia. That concept could be expanded to create a focal point for cooperation among businesses, universities, and NGOs in the global health field. Regular workshops could be held there, the different actors could work together on planning projects such as campaigns, and they could deepen their mutual understanding by offering a venue for each group to make presentations.

6-4. NGO EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN THE ABILITY OF MASS MEDIA TO INFORM THE PUBLIC

Advocacy requires more than just direct dialogue with policymakers; supporting the recommended activities requires educating the public and mobilizing the media. Appealing to the public through the media entails educational work. It raises awareness of an NGO’s existence and can become a force to support a policy. In the course of this study we found that many NGO representatives were particularly concerned about the need to strengthen their media strategy and skills. To date, NGOs’ media strategies have been primarily a function of each NGO’s self-help efforts, and there was a strong nuance of advertising each NGO’s individual activities.

In the future, it is important that NGOs focus on strengthening the capacity of the media to address the theme of global health. In the past, NGOs have invited journalists to visit their project sites and take tours to observe their work. While taking advantage of these experiences, what is needed first at the NGO staff level is a skill-development session to improve outreach to the media, and it is important for the NGO alliance to strengthen each member’s advocacy abilities. Another possible approach is that when NGOs work with UN agencies, academic institutions, and think tanks, they could hold joint sessions that focus on journalists. That type of media strategy to support policy advocacy should produce good results.

Having offered these recommendations, we would like to mention some of the issues facing the future development of this type of trend in NGO advocacy. For NGOs—as part of civil society—to proactively participate in policymaking, there is a need for improved quality, and for that reason, there is a question of how NGOs can be held accountable. David Brown

et al. (2000, 288) discuss this point in their study of governance in the context of globalization.

Networks, organized around shared values and largely focused on information sharing, create fewer focuses for accountability than coalitions, which share strategies and action plans. Social movement organizations are yet more explicit about goals, tactics, and mutual expectations in the face of contention with powerful opponents. As transnational alliances become more focused on shared strategies and tactics, we might expect their investments in mutual influence and accountability to rise. Whether the engagement of international NGOs and NGO alliances promotes democratic accountability of international multisectoral problem solving turns in part on the extent to which they develop their own capacities for institutional accountability to their members and stakeholders.

This concern will require attention if NGOs are to further develop within Japan. If the significance of citizen groups and NGOs is understood to be their autonomy and independence, then from a cost perspective, trying to collaborate with NGOs entails a great deal of risk for the government and private businesses. In that context, “accountability” is a critical factor. Japan must take a look at the global trends and engage in an ongoing debate on how NGOs and Japanese society can create a system to ensure accountability.

Global health governance is a new conceptual framework within the context of globalization. It also presents a dualistic challenge of strengthening government efforts to improve health measures and involving NGOs in policy formation. It is still unclear how best to proceed, and we will undoubtedly need to continue that search from the direction of both theory and practice. However, it is clear that globalization will continue in the future and that many infectious diseases and other illnesses will be transcending national borders at an even greater rate. Protecting human health is a priority issue that must be addressed by the international community in the 21st century. If Japan is going to play a role in that fight, then we must confirm here again that strengthening Japanese NGOs is a task of great urgency.