Summary and Keywords

The collaborative disaster risk governance framework promises better collaboration between governments, the private sector, civil society, academia, and communities at risks. In the context of modern disaster risk reduction systems, the key triadic institutions, namely government (state), the private sector (business/market), and NGOs (civil society), have been gradually transforming their ecosystem to utilize more proactive disaster response strategies, equipped with professional staff and technical experts and armed with social and humanitarian imperatives to reduce the risks of disasters. While the roles of governments and public actions have received greater attention in disaster and emergency management studies, recent shifts in attention to promote bolder engagements of both non-governmental organizations and business communities in risk reduction can be seen as a necessary condition for the future resilience of society.

Historically speaking, NGOs have exercised models of moral imperative whereby they build their relevancy and legitimacy to address gaps and problems at global and local levels. NGOs have been part of the global disaster risk reduction (DRR) ecosystem as they continue to shape both humanitarian emergencies action and the DRR agenda at different levels where their presence is needed and valued and their contribution is uniquely recognized. This article exemplifies the roles of NGOs at different levels and arenas ranging from local to international disaster risk reduction during the last 70 years, especially since World War II. It also provides examples of potential roles of NGOs under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2030.

Keywords: civil society, disaster risk reduction, DRR governance, NGOs, private sector, private voluntary organizations

Global disaster risk reduction initiatives have evolved as a system that has been continuously expanding and growing in terms of proliferation of actors including governments, Red Cross societies, the United Nations, the private sector, insurance
industries, academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society. This system has become a collective humanitarian imperative whereby every actor has a stake in disaster response and risk reduction. Year by year, humanitarian actors have been expanding their mandates from single reactive emergency response toward more diverse sets of mandates. One of the urgent mandates is to ensure that proactive disaster risk reduction materializes in all vulnerable localities.

International NGOs have proliferated from about 400 in the 20th century to 25,000 in recent years (Jocelyn, 2009). Some of these NGOs have been triggered by recent big and small disasters (Kent, Armstrong, & Obrecht, 2013). The proliferation of NGOs in both developed and developing countries has impacted disaster management arrangement at different scales and levels (Tierney, 2012). One might argue that this proliferation of NGOs has become a new norm—a kind of “natural response”—to complement the roles of governments, whose capacities are often compromised by disasters, events that could last for months if not years. Examples from recent disasters worldwide have shown the proliferation of NGOs in countries such as Indonesia during Indian Ocean tsunamis (Lassa, 2015), Haiti (Zanotti, 2010), Myanmar (White, 2015), Nepal (Jones, Oven, Manyena, & Aryal, 2014; Jones, Oven, & Wisner, 2016), the Philippines (Luna, 2001), Japan (Leng, 2015), and many more (Jocelyn, 2009). Such proliferation occurs beyond disaster emergency settings, as it also occurs partly as a response to increasing exposure and vulnerability worldwide.

Historically speaking, NGOs have exercised models of moral imperative (White, 2015) whereby they build their relevancy and legitimacy to address gaps and problems at global and local levels. NGOs have been part of the global disaster risk reduction (DRR) ecosystem as they continue to shape both humanitarian actions and DRR at different levels where their presence is needed and valued.

One of the NGOs’ comparative advantages is operability at grassroots level, where they work with the most at-risk and vulnerable communities. NGOs often take inclusive and consensual approaches to local disaster planning and resilience building (Maskrey, 1989; Lassa, 2018). Such operability often allows NGOs to understand and respond to the priorities and agendas of vulnerable communities. Their relatively small organizational size allows them to be prompt and efficient, as they operate in a more flexible and less bureaucratic environment (UNISDR, 2006). This is the reason NGOs are easily formed when needed and eliminated when no longer needed. This argument is in favor of the added value of NGOs and their complementarity to achieve shared objectives and goals of DRR through public, community, and private actions.

This article discusses the roles of non-governmental organization (hereinafter NGOs) in disaster risk reduction, highlighting that NGOs are unique players in global and local DRR, climate adaptation, and the international humanitarian system. Their roles might not be replaceable, as their strengths and advantages have given them reasons to grow, develop, and progress in society.
Definition and Concept

NGOs and Disaster Governance

The idea of NGOs has a range of contemporary meanings. It is a distinct category of civil society and a distinct group that is non-governmental in nature and founded with not-for-profit oriented objectives. Other civil society groups include actors from grassroots communities, religious institutions, think tanks, and broader civil society organizations such as university-based experts or academics and non-governmental individuals. They are not political parties. UNDP maintains the view of civil society organizations (CSOs) as the equals of NGOs. Civil society “constitutes a third sector, existing alongside and interacting with the state and profit-seeking firms” (UNDP, 2001). Such a view promotes the concept of NGOs/CSOs as entities that coexist “in between” state and market. Originated in Western civilization (Leng, 2015), civil society can be seen as a layered reality occupied by different societal actors at whose very core is the household or family as an arena where organic social life operates. Their relationship is marked by dynamic interaction between different roles of individual members marked by gender differences and the interaction of households in their local communities and in the various other forms of social organizations outside the formal political system and the corporate economy.

The concept of governance promotes the inclusion of many other actors, such as local communities, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations in managing public affairs beyond the traditional roles of governments (Lassa, 2013). The disaster risk governance (DRG) concept suggests that governments, the private sector, and NGOs have shared responsibilities to reduce disaster risk. Such responsibilities could be seen as either complement, displacement, or (re)distribution of responsibilities from governments, depending on the ideology of the viewer. Historically, especially after World War II, governments were the most dominant modern institutions that organized, managed, and governed public actions ranging from local economic development, employment creation, water supply, flood management, and emergency responses to disaster risk reduction (Lassa, 2011). NGOs have shared responsibilities in the aforementioned activities; their roles have been recognized since the 1960s, as deficits in public actions have been observed elsewhere, from developed to underdeveloped nations.

The UNDP Global Report “Reducing Disaster Risk: A Challenge for Development” views governance as “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. It brings together the actions of state, non-state and private sector actors” (UNDP, 2004). Economic governance “includes the decision-making process that affects a country’s economic activities” and
has “implications for equity, poverty and quality of life.” In this context, ensuring a resilient economy must be seen as an exercise of economic governance. Political governance is “the process of decision-making” to set legislative processes and formulate laws, regulation, and policies, referred to by the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015 as a “strong institutional basis for implementation.” Administrative governance means “the system of policy implementation [that] requires the existence of well-functioning organisations at the central and local levels” and which play roles as enforcers of regulations related to disaster mitigation, building code enforcement, “land-use planning, environmental risk and human vulnerability monitoring and safety standards” (UNDP, 2004, p. 75).

Instead of directly controlling the rest of stakeholders, a more inclusive framework suggests that governments as institutions must have the inclination to steer and facilitate relevant societal actors to contribute to disaster risk reduction (Lassa, 2011). The DRG framework promotes the idea that among other non-governmental institutions, the private sector’s role in DRR is a direct and indirect extension of the mandates of states and governments in ensuring safety to societal members. Furthermore, understanding the roles of private sectors and NGOs in DRR needs to be put in the larger context of triadic relationships between government, market, and civil society (Wright, 2011). There are at least four relationship models for CSOs/NGOs. First, each sector mediates the relation between the other two. Second, the state mediates the interactions of civil society and the market. Third, civil society mediates the interactions of the state and the market. Fourth, the market mediates the interactions of civil society and the state (Wright, 2011).

The phenomenon of public participation occurs when either governments invite NGOs or NGOs proactively provide their inputs to support both public policy and public actions (Figure 1). Another form of cooperation is public-private partnership, which has been gaining momentum at the global and national stages. Corporate-citizenship cooperation could also be promoted to address societal problems such as disaster risks.

In short, beyond the triadic framework (Figure 1) the core idea of disaster risk governance (DRG) involves different sets of societal actors and power holders that exist in a society ranging from individuals and households to communities, governments, private sectors, academia, civil society, military organizations, bilateral donors, multilateral organizations, the Red Cross, and so on. Civil society actors vary from NGOs, volunteers, and religious organizations to (organized or unorganized) non-governmental individuals, grassroots communities, and so on.
NGOs can also be defined as not-for-profit or private voluntary organizations that have an interest in solving societal problems ranging from poverty to disaster relief. Their interests are seen as independent from the interest of the states or of different players such as political parties. In the context of international disaster management, they are also seen as independent from bilateral and multilateral organizations. NGOs are also known as private voluntary organizations (PVOs). PVOs have been key stakeholders in the US government since the 1950s. In the early 1990s, the importance of NGOs became more recognized. During this period, NGOs were found to have closer ties to on-the-ground realities in developing countries and, perhaps more important, to be able to deliver development aid considerably more efficiently than states or intergovernmental organizations (Korten, 1987). US Public Law 480 Title II, Emergency and Private Assistance Programs is a perfect example of a government-NGO partnership whereby international aid response to droughts and food crisis often administered by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by private voluntary organizations (USAID’s registered PVOs). USAID often issues regulations and policy guidance that PVOs must follow when developing and implementing Title II programs. PVOs are also required to comply with US government audit requirements.¹

**Greater Importance of NGOs in Global Disaster Management System**

At an early stage of their evolution, NGOs emerged more as service providers to people in need. Their inclination to be altruistic and help the poor or disaster survivors led them to exercise some degree of state-like activity, where their role can be viewed as a substitute for government functions of providing basic entitlements and services to people in need,² especially in the context of disaster vulnerability and poverty.

The emergence of NGOs in both development and disaster management in the 1980s was associated with the complexity of declining financial resources and deepening poverty around the globe. “Donors and national governments were looking to NGOs as a means of getting benefits more directly and cheaply to the poor than governments have been able to accomplish on their own” (Korten, 1987) At this period, NGOs were seen as form of efficient governing whereby governments “exploited” NGOs to satisfy their operational...
objectives in development sectors as well as international emergency relief and disaster mitigation.

As the UN Secretary-General’s 1998 report stated, “In terms of net transfers, non-governmental organisations collectively constitute the second largest source of development assistance” (UNDP, 2014). NGOs also began to play a role in humanitarian assistance and disaster response in conjunction with peacekeeping operations. They began to be referred to increasingly in UN resolutions, and some even began to meet informally with members of the UN Security Council to coordinate actions in emergency situations. In the arena of vulnerability reduction via international development, NGOs have contributed over US$770m for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Goal 1 for 2011 alone. Recent experience from Asia suggests that NGOs have been supporting the capacity building of local governments (Khan & Ali, 2014).

The increasing roles of NGOs in humanitarian relief and DRR have been a good complement to the international humanitarian and disaster management systems in both the North and the South. NGOs emerge to use disasters as entry points for social and policy change where they first enter to quickly save lives while gradually advocating the need for the vulnerable beneficiary countries to invest more in proactive disaster risk reduction (Luna, 2001).
### Roles of Non-Government Organizations in Disaster Risk Reduction

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Source: Adapted from Korten (1987); Lewis and Kanji (2009); Ascher, Brewer, Cheema, and Heffron (2016).
Roles of Non-Government Organizations in Disaster Risk Reduction

Table 1 illustrates the evolution of NGOs’ approaches in the disaster management field. It is far from comprehensive, but it gives a brief overview of five generations or phases of NGO/PVO work in the disaster management field since World War II. The first generation of NGOs (1945–1970) was often driven by humanitarian and altruistic values. At this stage, they often focused on a specific affected location where their operation was mainly targeted on individual survivors affected by natural hazards and conflict. This was a long period in which for about almost three decades after World War II global communities remained reactive to disasters. At this stage, NGOs viewed themselves as a superman—the center of humanitarian interventions on the ground.

The second generation of disaster management NGOs (1971–1989) marked the beginning of a new era in which global communities, including NGOs and more specifically the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, committed more coordinated interventions in international disaster relief. The birth of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) marked the beginning of this call for a more systematic response to disasters. Within international development communities, there were also calls for departing from reactive charities toward a more community-development approach to address long-term issues faced by poor communities at risk. At this stage, their project-based interventions often focused on community neighborhoods affected by calamities. There was awareness of the limit of relief and the need to shift toward local development. UNDRO became a global regime for 20 years that in many ways influenced disaster management actors, including NGOs, in the way they dealt with disasters.

The new movement of NGOs in the 1990s (Phase 3) was characterized by a focus on providing correction to governments using public advocacy as a key strategy and adopting longer-term approaches. This period was marked by a more inclusive targeting of the people at risk. Their role was mainly to catalyze local change and public policy reform. On the global stage, disaster management communities were tasked with the agenda of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) under the United Nations. The IDNDR regime was marked by the frustration of recurrent hazards that often transformed into disasters during UNDRO periods that were in principle preventable. IDNDR had driven global and local actors to improve the capacity to mitigate effects of “natural disasters.” NGOs groups were among the participants in this initiative (Lechat, 1990). This was a crucial time, as progressive NGOs were needed to monitor local actions toward disaster mitigation. The outcomes of the Yokohama Plan of Action for a Safer World in 1994 also indicated a new era of NGOs recognition and their role to play in DRR (see Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction).

Phase 4 is associated with the endorsement of the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) for Disaster Risk Reduction 2005–2015. The HFA promoted the establishment of DRR platforms at local, national, and global levels, where NGOs have been instrumental in many DRR platforms. This period also allowed a more creative networking of NGOs such as the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR), which was formed and launched in 2007. HFA promoted self-reporting mechanisms from
countries on progress of implementation. GNDR has been instrumental in providing civil society reports called Views from the Frontline (VFL) since 2009. GNDR is a network of CSOs/NGOs that exists in more than 129 countries worldwide, with more than 800 organizations. The vision is of “a world of resilient communities where vulnerable people are able to prepare for, mitigate against, recover from and adapt to hazards and a changing climate.” GNDR aims at enabling “civil society to connect local to global and speak with a collective voice that drives action which reduces risk and increases the resilience of the most vulnerable” (GNDR, 2015). At the global level, NGOs have come to take some important roles in the United Nations system, including UNISDR. At least 30% of the WCDRR participants in 2015 were from civil society/NGOs sector (around 2,000 out of 6,500).

The post-2015 period has been an era of new awareness of converging DRR agendas beyond traditional disaster management communities. The Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) also “actively promotes a whole-of-society approach to reducing disaster risk and supports.” The period is also marked by greater awareness of complexity. Large-scale disasters with cascading effects, such as the Bangkok floods of 2011 and the Tohoku earthquakes of 2011, have provided some remarkable examples of how one disaster can trigger cascading effects globally. Intervention needs to be mindful of the need to see the ecosystem. Bolder promotion of the inclusion of climate change adaptation into NGO works in the developing world has helped the actors to think about the wider ecosystem in which they operate.

National and local NGOs often operate in disaster-affected regions of aid recipient countries. In general, in times of large crises and disasters, there could be mushrooming of NGOs due to the lack of governing capability from government or state institutions to deal with existing risks. Recent large-scale disasters, such as Indian Ocean tsunamis in 2004, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in 2008, and devastating earthquakes in Haiti in 2010, have been examples of sites where NGOs were formed, mushroomed, and came to an end (Zanotti, 2010). This suggests that more “NGOing” (Hilhorst, 2007) is necessary at times of crisis and emergencies where empty spaces are left by formally mandated institutions such as local and national governments. “NGOing” means the creation and formation of new NGOs stimulated by humanitarian needs and imperatives justified by the local context and international cooperation. However, in the context of proactive DRR, there are also empty spaces left unmarked by governments. This justifies the call from societal actors such as NGOs to fill the gaps as necessary. In times of both emergencies and non-emergencies, NGO have been increasingly aware of their potential to attract national attention and international funding.

NGOs have transformed themselves as part of global DRR and humanitarian ecosystems, where they have been playing intermediary roles in terms of financial and non-financial brokerage. They have emerged as key actors in international development as well as the world humanitarian industry. This sector received the second largest amount and proportion of direct international humanitarian assistance in 2014, a total of US$8.0 billion, up 7% from the US$7.4 billion they had received the year before. Private donors
Roles of Non-Government Organizations in Disaster Risk Reduction

showed a strong preference for channeling their money via NGOs—giving 86% of their funding this way in 2014 (US$4.7 billion). In contrast, government donors only channeled 17% (US$3.2 billion) of their humanitarian assistance directly through NGOs (GHA-Development Initiatives, 2016).

NGOs Accountability and Accreditation

In many countries, there is no clear regulation of NGOs and their accountability. Therefore, in many cases NGOs are accountable only to their donors and beneficiaries. However, since NGOs can have access to taxpayer money, in some countries, like Australia, NGOs must be accredited to be able to access government money. Under the Australian NGO Cooperation Program, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) often release the list of fully accredited NGOs.5

Roles of Non-governmental Organization in Disaster Reduction

NGOs as First Responders

Thousands of NGOs quickly respond to disasters. Disaster-focused NGOs often provide an assessment report—a situational report that explains what is going on, how many people are affected, what food and non-food items are needed by the survivors, and what actions need to be taken by whom and where. Such activities are often crucial. However, being on the ground rapidly after a disaster strikes is what NGOs are best at for a very long time. The recent push for international NGOs to focus the capacity building of local NGOs and grassroots communities is fundamentally necessary. Training first responders and local grassroots organizations for local disaster preparedness should be a long-term focus of NGOs.

NGOs as DRR Policy Drafters and Queasy Parliamentarians

Both the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Sendai Framework for Action consider country- and local-level disaster legislation as a foundation that provides a strong basis for disaster planning and directing of the whole spectrum of disaster risk reduction at different levels. Politicians should also play roles not only for DRR policy drafting and budgeting but also for monitoring the implementation of DRR. In the developing world, the capacity of local politicians is often limited. Policy drafting often relies on expert knowledge. However, expert knowledge is often top-down and distanced from a rights-
based paradigm. Therefore, NGOs clearly have a vested interest in ensuring more inclusive policy documents.

**Examples From Asia**

NGOs have been involved in national and local DRR policymaking in Asia, including Indonesia and the Philippines. Their involvement has included facilitation of competing bill drafts in addition to the government’s version. The national legislative body has used initiative rights for DRR legislation, especially the drafting of Indonesian Public Law (PL) 24/2007. It was “merely” a response to the call from non-state actors to create a DRR law in 2005, and, as many commentators believe, such initiative rights have seldom been used by Indonesian legislators (Hening, 2014). The legislative agency responded to the call for reform justified by large-scale disasters, which affected the national government budget over the years. It may sound like an exaggeration to expect Indonesian legislators to play a critical role in the ruling government, because the practice of political opposition is not yet fully developed; even though it is possible by law or in the words of experts, opposition practice in Indonesia “remains structurally weak and divided” (Aspinall, 2000).

DRR policy reform is often a joint effort from all parties, including NGOs/INGOs, bilateral donors, university/research institutes, multilateral institutions, and media. UN agencies and INGOs supported civil society advocacy under the auspices of the Indonesian Disaster Management Society (MPBI) to carry out exhaustive consultation processes with politicians, executive government, national legislators, civil society, and international partners (Lassa, 2013). Consultation processes with international actors were known as the Convergence Group, which was later supported by UNDP to form a working group for a background academic paper for law drafting. Some positive outcomes of the international and non-state actors’ involvement in the drafting of the law lie in the details of DM Law 2007, which outlines government’s responsibilities, such as: (a) to reduce disaster risks and integrate risk reduction in development programs; (b) to protect people from disasters; (c) to guarantee provision of rights of people affected and displaced by disasters according to minimum standards; (d) recovery from the impact of disasters; (e) allocating budget for disaster management in the country’s annual development budget; (f) allocating contingency budget for disaster response; and (g) authentic and credible documentation of hazards and impact of disasters.

**Promotion of Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction**

Communities are often excluded from decision-making for disaster risk reduction. As a result, their views and needs are often excluded in top-down disaster management settings. CBDRR is seen as the best solution whereby communities can have their voices heard and their needs recognized, so it has become a common approach to build resilient communities via participatory DRR.⁶
NGOs have been promoting stronger participation by local communities. NGOs’ proximity to vulnerable communities has inspired them to appreciate and promote community participation in reducing disaster risk where local communities can be in charge of community disaster preparedness and mitigation. Historically, the earliest publication of community-based DRR came mainly from NGO in the 1980s and 1990s (Lassa 2018). It is therefore safe to say that non-governmental organizations such as Oxfam have been pioneers and trend-setters in the earlier formation of CBDRR frameworks (Maskrey, 1989; Von Kotze & Holloway, 1996).

Promotion of Participation by Children

Promotion of community participation by putting the most vulnerable groups first in building community resilience has been the key strength of NGOs over the last decades. NGOs such as Plan International, Save the Children, World Vision, and Child Fund, among others, have been promoting the need to include children and youth in disaster risk assessment and disaster management planning.

Several studies have shown that the potential roles of participation by children in DRR can have an impact on the long-term resilience of society, because the children of today will be adults tomorrow. Therefore investing in children has a high payoff in the future. The Children in Changing Climate Change portal (http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org/) recently documented experiments and studies on how children can make a positive contribution to future disaster risk. The portal is the result of a rich collaboration among child-focused organizations, including Save the Children, UNICEF, WVI, Plan International, and Child Fund Alliance. Save the Children Japan recently launch a web portal Center for Children and Disaster Risk Reduction to “help teenagers have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.”

Linking Modern Knowledge With Indigenous Knowledge

Not all the knowledge required to execute local DRR intervention is available or accessible to local actors on the ground. Therefore, NGOs often generate necessary knowledge by translating expert knowledge from different languages and transferring it to local communities. However, traditional indigenous knowledge (TIK) has the potential for disaster risk reduction. TIK is often developed based on lessons learned over a long period of time when communities improve their quality of response to their local environment, including natural hazards. This can be a specific measure or mechanism to cope with droughts or to escape from tsunami risks.

There has been solid research work to show that indigenous communities can deal with disaster risk. Some in-depth studies suggest that TIK can produce effective tsunami risk
management measures when there is the right combination of disaster education and scientific knowledge (McAdoo, Moore, & Baumwoll, 2007).

Positive behavioral change toward risk disaster resilience at the grassroots level has become a core business for NGOs. Their inclination to use participatory approaches often enables them to explore communities’ tacit knowledge of historical disaster events and indigenous knowledge. Such exploration often leads to the expression of TIK to inform local DRR planning agendas. Furthermore, NGOs have a strategic position to facilitate the use of scientific knowledge in the field (Macherera & Chimbari, 2016).

A recent example from Mercy Corps and Care International shows how this facilitation can be productive. Care International published a guideline on “indigenous knowledge identification and use in community based adaptation practices” aimed at stakeholders, including NGOs, in Vietnam to promote better adaptation to climate risk (Nguyen, 2014). Mercy Corps used different means of risk communication via street drama to increase disaster awareness, as the NGO believed that “making local culture, including traditional folklore as well as local languages and dialects, an integral part of the awareness and empowerment process was very effective in making people recognize the true nature of their situation and thus in effecting behavioral changes” (Gautam, 2009).

**Agenda for Gender Justice in DRR**

Gender discrimination shapes the resilience level of men and women, girls and boys. Women and girls in many parts of the world can be included among marginalized groups. Discrimination blocks access to basic rights to be resilient, including rights to disaster risk information, education, and health equity. Therefore, ensuring gender justice should be part of disaster risk reduction, as men and women often face different risks. NGOs are often in the frontline for gender equality and equity. Their consistent work on gender justice is often not replaceable by other societal groups.

NGOs such as Oxfam, Care International, Action Aid, World Vision, Mercy Corps, and hundreds more have been on the front lines to ensure equality and equity for all genders, so that being different in gender should not make one less resilient. These NGOs have been key actors to ensure “an inclusive and all-of-society disaster risk management that strengthen synergies across groups,” including women, children, people with disability, older persons, indigenous peoples, and migrants, as outlined in Box 1.

**Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction: Aging Population**

NGOs have been specialized into issues. For example, in dealing with aging populations worldwide that have led to an increase in vulnerable aging populations, NGOs such as HelpAge have come to the fore to help address issues often overlooked by traditional NGOs as well as governments. A recent success in this advocacy agenda is the launch of
Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction: LGBT

Socially excluded groups such as indigenous people and minority groups are often distanced from all sources for disaster protection, including health services, education services, and other basic rights. This marginalization is often exacerbated during disasters. Hurricane Katrina provided a vivid example of how certain marginalized groups were out of reach of evacuation services (Gaillard, Gorman-Murray, & Fordham, 2017). In emergency settings, gender and sexual minorities experience service gaps. In non-emergency settings, such groups’ vulnerabilities are not visible to most policymakers, which means mainstream vulnerability reduction services are often out of reach (Knight, 2016). For example, after Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013, some LGBT persons experienced discrimination in evacuation service, as they were the last group to be rescued and were often ignored during recovery stages. Very often, governments ignore this group for religious or political reasons. Therefore, NGO groups, especially humanitarian groups such as Human Rights Watch, exercise their mandates with the intention of protecting such excluded groups.

Box 1. SFDRR Call for CSO Promotion of Inclusion of Marginal Stakeholders

(i) Women and their participation are critical to effectively managing disaster risk and designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes; and adequate capacity building measures need to be taken to empower women for preparedness as well as to build their capacity to secure alternate means of livelihood in post-disaster situations;

(ii) Children and youth are agents of change and should be given the space and modalities to contribute to disaster risk reduction, in accordance with legislation, national practice and educational curricula;

(iii) Persons with disabilities and their organizations are critical in the assessment of disaster risk and in designing and implementing plans tailored to specific requirements, taking into consideration, inter alia, the principles of universal design;

(iv) Older persons have years of knowledge, skills and wisdom, which are invaluable assets to reduce disaster risk, and they should be included in the design of policies, plans and mechanisms, including for early warning;

(v) Indigenous peoples, through their experience and traditional knowledge, provide an important contribution to the development and implementation of plans and mechanisms, including for early warning;

(vi) Migrants contribute to the resilience of communities and societies, and their knowledge, skills and capacities can be useful in the design and implementation of disaster risk reduction;
Final Remarks: NGOs and Sendai Framework Implementation

Governments face mounting tasks to achieve the seven global targets of the Sendai Framework. The first two targets are: (a) substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower the average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015; (b) substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower the average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015 (UNISDR, 2015). In order to achieve these targets, it is inadequate for the governments and donors to operate on their own. Apart from the fact that governments remain status quo in their top-down approaches and inflexible in their business model, changes in governments often take more time than these targets.

Therefore, there are many roles for NGOs to play under the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction. Some NGOs have been reluctant to promote private sector investment, especially disaster insurance and other financial means to achieve resilience. However, some have been trying to innovate in the DRR sector by directly creating community awareness about the potential role of insurance in disaster reduction, as seen in Table 2 (Toth & Hoy, 2017).

Table 2. NGOs’ Implementation of Sendai Framework for DRR

<table>
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<th>Examples of What NGOs can do</th>
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<td>• Promotion of inclusive baseline risk assessment that ensures inclusion of marginal groups such disability groups in risk assessment and planning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Disaster education via CBDRR</td>
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<td>• Risk awareness raising through social media and other cultural media</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Promotion of participation of children in risk assessment and risk management planning</td>
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<td>• Inclusion of gender-segregated data in risk assessment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Roles of Non-Government Organizations in Disaster Risk Reduction

| Priority 2. Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk | • Incentivize local government officials to allocate resources in DRR  
• Building local capacities to monitor disaster risk and help local governments to be accountable to disaster risk budgeting  
• Help strengthen coordination forums composed of relevant stakeholders at the national and local levels  
• Foster collaboration across global and regional mechanisms and institutions for the implementation and coherence of instruments and tools relevant to disaster risk reduction |
|---|---|
| Priority 3. Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience | • Promotion of private sectors’ responsibility in disaster reduction; Mercy Corps has been working on this issue and recently published a tool kit on how to engage with private sector to address local disaster risk (Mercy Corps, 2014)  
• Working with local governments and insurance to promote disaster insurance in developing countries |
| Priority 4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction | • Capacity building of local NGOs to play effective roles in local DRR platforms  
• Promotion of sustainable disaster recovery and rehabilitation  
• Help local government train existing workforce and voluntary workers in disaster response and strengthen technical and logistical capacities to ensure better response in emergencies |

Source: Adapted from UNISDR (2015).

Community safety can be improved when institutions and organizations as well as individuals collaborate. In the spirit of collaborative disaster governance, all actors must be able to act collectively in order to achieve a resilient society. In contrast to governments and business, NGOs have unique vision and flexibility that often open new frontiers for DRR actions such as intervening vulnerability reduction for different
vulnerable and marginalized groups—gender groups, LGBT groups, children, and the aging population—as well as inclusion of minority groups in DRR decision-making and so on.

Further contributions from NGOs to community resilience building and emergency planning worldwide have been adequately recognized, ranging from local to international disaster risk reduction, creating a more effective disaster response and risk reduction, providing input to agenda-setting and policy development processes, corrective risk assessment, corrective disaster risk management and inclusive early warning systems, provision of services such as disaster risk education and disaster preparedness, etc.

In regard to the roles of NGOs in DRR, more “NGOing” is necessary in both emergency and non-emergency contexts, where empty spaces are left by formally mandated institutions such as local and national governments. SFDRR also calls for CSOs and NGOs to ensure an inclusive and all-of-society DRR that will strengthen synergies across vulnerable groups, including women, children, persons with disability, older persons, indigenous peoples, and migrants. NGOs can help build the legitimacy of DRR policy drafting and quality processes by ensuring a deliberative process where different needs and voices/views can be considered. NGOs can help academics share technical knowledge on specific disaster mitigation technology. NGOs can be a partner to both governments and the private sector. The roles of NGOs in the DRR policy arena have been exemplified in the cases above. Productive collaborations of international and local NGOs have confirmed the use of the DRR governance concept in the local sphere.

It is clear that NGO sectors can only grow to their greatest potential if there are conducive policies. National and local authorities need to ensure that there are effective policy frameworks and incentives for both sectors to play bigger roles in disaster risk reduction. The NGOs’ strength is in their approaches that are not replaceable by other actors. As facilitators, NGOs can work together with donors, academia, the private sector, and governments to empower local governments in ensuring that DRR agendas become local priorities. This can be seen in the recent global climate actions led by entities such as the Rockefeller Foundation, with its vision of empowering cities across the globe via 100 Resilient Cities (100resilientcities.org) and Asian Cities Climate Change Network (www.acccrn.net).

Further Reading


Roles of Non-Government Organizations in Disaster Risk Reduction


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**Notes:**

(1.) See How Title II Food Aid Works.

(2.) See UN Definition of CSOs.

(3.) See the UNDP Report.


(5.) See List of Australian accredited non-government organizations (NGOs).


(7.) See Disaster Risk and Age Index.

(8.) See Life as a gay man in a resettlement site.
**Roles of Non-Government Organizations in Disaster Risk Reduction**

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<tr>
<th>Jonatan A. Lassa</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University</td>
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