

Summary of Abstract

Title of PhD: NGOs in a Conflict Zone: Aspects of Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict Resolution (A Case Study of Kashmir)

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This study attempts to map the landscape of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Kashmir, situating their role and effectiveness in the larger conflict-NGO dynamic as it manifests in the region. With conflict as the main variable of assessing their work, the study looks into three major aspects of their intervention – humanitarian assistance, human rights, and conflict resolution. It draws out the context of the NGO movement in Kashmir's modern history to visualize and frame their role in the present moment and to understand the ways in which the conflict has shaped their interventions. While the current conflict traces its history to the decolonization of the subcontinent, this study focuses on the working of NGOs in the armed conflict that Kashmir descended into since 1989, a period when a full blown insurgency erupted. In mapping the conflict-NGO interplay, this dissertation touches upon important aspects like emergence, motivations, philosophies, activities, and interventions of NGOs at local, national as well international levels of operation.

The evidence from the findings illustrates how the conflict turned out to be a factor in expanding the NGO footprint and has subsequently come to shape their projects and programmes as well. It brings forth the hypervisibility of NGOs engaged in human rights monitoring and documentation, as is evident from their contestations with the state and other non-state actors. On the other hand, NGOs that provide humanitarian assistance and relief – as they base their operations on the *classist* notions of neutrality of aid – tend to have minimal contestations with the state. The major areas of intervention that the study brings up include those in the domain of child rights, child protection and education, mental health, women empowerment, and disaster response. This research establishes that local NGOs relying on the vantage point of proximity are better placed at navigating the varied conflict vulnerabilities and disruptions.

Keywords: NGO, Kashmir, human rights, humanitarian assistance, conflict resolution