

Collaboration and Peace: Cooperation Among Non-Governmental Organisations and Governments

Visualising Peace
Vertically Integrated Project – Dr. Alice König

Samuel Huff

Spring 2024 Project

April 22, 2024

Abstract and Rationale:

Acknowledging the role of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as peacebuilders, this research aims to increase literature and discussion of how NGO work occurs, specifically through mechanisms of NGO-government collaboration. Given the role that governments play in peacebuilding, the intersection of civil society and government work should illuminate opportunities for increased literacy on peacebuilding methods. This project aims to explore the concept of NGO-government collaboration through a broad analytical overview and a small case study of NGO work in Ethiopia between 1970 and the present.



Introduction

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have long existed as a means to provide aid and influence social change from local to international levels. While the impacts and activities of NGO activities are well documented, they have yet to be included in conversations on peacebuilding on a wide scale. The approaches and programs of NGOs reflect those of other humanitarian organisations and traditional ‘peacebuilders’ such as the United Nations. By working on grassroots levels, NGOs have the ability to impact personal peace and the peace of communities by addressing ‘everyday peace indicators’ that reflect local needs.¹ Larger organisations at the same time have the ability to impact structural peace by influencing governments and international institutions.

There are a multitude of factors that contribute to the work and success of NGOs in their peacebuilding efforts. NGOs require the trust of local communities to allow them to operate. The relationship between local trust and the work of NGOs is widely documented in psychology and international relations literature. More than this though, and less clearly demonstrated in many cases is the relationship that NGOs must maintain with governments in order to access and maintain a presence in areas where they wish to work. Because of the importance of NGO-government relationships and the relatively undeveloped literature surrounding them, this paper aims to further explore how NGOs and governments interact and how these interactions contribute to or subtract from peacebuilding efforts. Towards this goal, this paper will broadly discuss NGO-government collaboration in terms of its global significance and goals, analyse mechanisms of collaboration, and apply these insights to a case study of NGO work in Ethiopia.

¹ Roger Mac Ginty, “Indicators +: A Proposal for Everyday Peace Indicators,” *Evaluation and Program Planning*, Special Section: Rethinking Evaluation of Health Equity Initiatives, 36, no. 1 (February 1, 2013), 61.

The Importance of NGO-Government Collaboration

An understanding of how civil society organisations and governments interact is essential for furthering knowledge of how development occurs around the world. The work of NGOs is frequently intertwined and related to the work of governments, especially when both are oriented towards improvements of livelihoods for individuals and wider society. NGOs can build upon work that governments have started using their local knowledge or access places where government infrastructure is not flexible enough to reach. At the same time, governments can capitalise on cooperation and coordination with NGOs to achieve development goals through dialogue and NGO flexibility.²

Interactions between governments and NGOs are not always positive, especially in areas where governments can exert power over NGOs and other humanitarian organisations. NGO actions can run counter to government goals and ideals, leading to their restriction through policy or legislation.³ It is clear to see encounters where governments and NGOs have not been on the same page and cooperation has failed. In 2005 as Hurricane Katrina devastated the American South, NGOs were forced to take on much of the responsibility of the federal government's failure to implement an adequate disaster response and recovery plan. At the same time, a lack of institutional structure prevented foreign aid agencies from providing assistance or funding to support recovery efforts as there were no guidelines in place to allow for the inclusion of NGO assistance.⁴ Later analysis revealed the government's lack of attention to aid organisations and

² Chandra, Anita, and Joie Acosta. "The Role of Nongovernmental Organizations in Long-Term Human Recovery After Disaster: Reflections from Louisiana Four Years After Hurricane Katrina." In *The Role of Nongovernmental Organizations in Long-Term Human Recovery After Disaster: Reflections From Louisiana Four Years After Hurricane Katrina* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2009), 4.

³ Kendra E Dupuy, James Ron, and Aseem Prakash, "Who Survived? Ethiopia's Regulatory Crackdown on Foreign-Funded NGOs," *Review of International Political Economy* 22, no. 2 (March 4, 2015): 420

⁴ Angela M. Eikenberry, Verónica Arroyave, and Tracy Cooper, "Administrative Failure and the International NGO Response to Hurricane Katrina," *Public Administration Review* 67, no. 1 (2007): 165.

provided recommendations for NGOs to be included in future preparation and response strategies for disasters. The example of Hurricane Katrina points to the myriad of effects caused by a lack of collaboration between governments and NGOs such as slow disaster response times and inaccessibility of aid that are both exacerbated by a lack of local knowledge and flexibility.⁵

Despite the plethora of literature and examples detailing how NGOs and governments fail to cooperate, deeper study of how NGOs and governments cooperate is essential for a better understanding of development as a whole. There is a lack of understanding of how NGOs gain legitimacy in the eyes of governments, maintain trust, and engage to align their goals. Understanding these complex interactions in a more holistic sense would allow for the wider implementation of successful collaboration strategies between the NGO and government sectors. Understanding best practices for collaboration would in turn contribute to well-being, development, and peace around the world.

Goals of Collaboration

Literature exists on the importance and goals of collaboration, but less has been investigated about how this actually happens. Much literature also exists surrounding how NGOs collaborate with each other, but less so on how civil society organisations reach across sectoral divides to collaborate with public institutions.

The first step to NGO-government collaboration is the alignment of the goals of the two sectors. When NGOs and governments are working towards the same goals, governments can

⁵ White House, “The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned” (Washington, D.C: Office of the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, 2006), 63.

allow NGOs to relieve some of their workload or work more efficiently.⁶ NGOs have the freedom to support issue areas that do not align with government interests but should only expect to receive support and engage in government collaboration when their interests align with those of the federal government. It is for this reason that many organisations engage in advocacy and lobbying to try to win government support. Only in cases of ‘enlightened self-interest’ might a government choose to support an NGO that would challenge its authority.⁷ In these cases, popular support for NGO work can encourage a government to support NGOs even though they may challenge governmental authority. The government can use its support of civil society to increase popular support for itself and increase its own power. Therefore, it is only when the government shares the particular interests of NGOs that effective collaboration occurs.

Existing literature on NGO-government collaboration points to two interlinked goals and effects of collaboration outside of shared goals for development and promotion of rights. Cooperation between NGOs and governments can lead to increased perceptions of trust and legitimacy for organisations, which enable them to do their work. Establishing trust is an essential step in NGO operations. Without a ‘social license to operate,’ civil society organisations have no opportunities to set down roots in a community and are unable to situate themselves to contribute to long term development.⁸ Trust-building between NGOs and local populations happens in a variety of ways, usually through dialogue and education. In China, NGOs build trust with local populations by working closely with the state government. Because public trust of the state is high and trust in local institutions is low, NGOs must closely align

⁶ Radost Toftisova, “Implementation of NGO-Government Cooperation Policy Documents: Lessons Learned Special Section: Helping Civil Society Flourish,” *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law* 8, no. 1 (2006 2005): 18.

⁷ Yoshiko Tonegawa, “NGO Sector in Ethiopia: The Impact of the Civil Society Organization Law,” in *Complex Emergencies and Humanitarian Response*, ed. Mitsuru Yamada and Miki Honda (Osaka: Union Press, 2018), 211.

⁸ Charles MacCormack, “Coordination and Collaboration: an NGO View,” in *The Pulse of Humanitarian Assistance*, ed. Kevin M. Cahill (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 258

themselves with the state in order to achieve their goals.⁹ This alignment is also necessary for ease of access to populations. For NGOs, building relationships with the Chinese government increases access to the legal avenues organisations must work through according to Chinese law.¹⁰ This careful relationship building on multiple levels contributes significantly to NGO legitimacy, closely related to trust. For NGOs, legitimacy can come from any stakeholder that works closely with an organisation, such as communities, donors, and governments. Legitimacy in the NGO sector is quite flexible but represents a commitment by NGOs to abide by institutional, legal, and normative expectations in addition to possessing personal trust from stakeholders.¹¹ The maintenance of legitimacy is an essential part of NGO-government collaboration. NGOs must carefully balance the interests of their donors and conform to government regulations while continuing to serve their constituencies. Maintaining legitimacy from all stakeholders at once is incredibly difficult for organisations, which can threaten their presence in a place and their ability to continue to achieve their goals.

Collaboration Mechanisms

Broadly, NGO-Government collaboration occurs through dialogue and resource sharing. Dialogue involves inclusion of NGO voices in discussions to inform legislation that affects civil society and the creation of institutions that improve and facilitate collaboration. Resource sharing takes place primarily through funding of NGO activities by governments and the exchange of knowledge between public and civil society sectors.

⁹ May Farid and Chengcheng Song, “Public Trust as a Driver of State-Grassroots NGO Collaboration in China,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 25, no. 4 (December 1, 2020): 592.

¹⁰ Farid and Song, “Public Trust as a Driver of State-Grassroots NGO Collaboration in China,” 601.

¹¹ Oliver Walton, “Conflict, Peacebuilding and NGO Legitimacy: National NGOs in Sri Lanka,” *Conflict, Security & Development* 8, no. 1 (April 1, 2008): 138-9.

Legislation, Policies, and Institutions

Dialogue between NGOs and government first occurs through the inclusion of NGOs in governments mechanisms to allow NGOs to advocate for themselves. One way this happens is through consultation and negotiation when developing legislation and policies that govern NGOs. Bullain and Toftisova (2005) note that even failed negotiations over legislation can improve NGO-government relations.¹² This dialogue happens on both national and local levels of governments. In order for NGOs to implement programming effectively at the grassroots level, discussions with local governments must take place. Dialogue is essential for increasing trust on local and national levels. Through dialogue, NGOs can communicate their goals, request government support, and lobby to influence long term political change. However, dialogue can often be difficult to establish at a national level because of the institutional challenges involved, which means that organisations must build on their grassroots work to establish networks of trust among local populations and in collaboration with other organisations.¹³ Using these networks and with backing from citizens, NGOs are better equipped to lobby governments to change legislation and institutional structures to improve NGO operating climates or advocate for humanitarian goals. Lobbying also can come through NGO coalitions, which clearly demonstrate public support for NGO activity, which in turn may be more likely to affect government policy.¹⁴

Dialogue between civil society and governments can also occur specifically through institutions. Governments with more developed institutions often have more clearly defined

¹² Nilda Bullain and Radost Toftisova, "A Comparative Analysis of European Policies and Practices of NGO-Government Cooperation," *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law* 7, no. 4 (2005): 69.

¹³ MacCormack, "Coordination and Collaboration," 258.

¹⁴ Jakomijn van Wijk et al., "Challenges in Building Robust Interventions in Contexts of Poverty: Insights from an NGO-Driven Multi-Stakeholder Network in Ethiopia," *Organization Studies* 41, no. 10 (October 1, 2020): 1401.

mechanisms for dealing with NGOs. Institutional dialogues vary by country but are more prevalent in Europe. Since the dramatic rise in the number of NGOs in the 1980s, some governments have created special agencies that interact with civil society organisations, while others have created structures in which NGOs must report to specific ministries. These institutions are exemplified in German and Hungarian parliamentary committees, the Hungarian Department for Civil Relations, and the Slovak Council for Non-Governmental and Non-Profit Organisations, among many others. Institutions for the management of NGOs have become the most common form of NGO-government collaboration in Europe and are equipped to facilitate dialogue between the government and civil society.¹⁵ Through these intuitions, representatives from civil society organisations can voice NGO concerns to the government and gain information about the government's goals for development. The close and consistent interactions that NGOs and governments have through these institutions increase both sides' commitments to collaboration and progress on projects.¹⁶

Collaboration with governments can, however, make the achievement of NGO goals more difficult. In cases where there is low trust in government, working with the government signals to populations that NGOs are also not to be trusted, making it hard for organisations to establish local trust. Without local trust, governments in turn may be even less likely to trust NGOs. This is especially the case in situations of peacebuilding and conflict resolution in which the military is involved. Military involvement can lead to hostile situations that can be dangerous for NGOs that are seen to oppose the government and lead to the rejection and distrust of NGOs that side with militaristic governments by local populations.¹⁷ Both of these effects have been

¹⁵ Bullain and Toftisova, "A Comparative Analysis of European Policies and Practices of NGO-Government Cooperation," 65, 76-77.

¹⁶ Toftisova, "Implementation of NGO-Government Cooperation Policy Documents," 29.

¹⁷ Ethiopian Humanitarian Country Team, *Ethiopian Civil-Military Coordination Guidance*, 2019, 4.

demonstrated through the treatment of NGOs in Sri Lanka as ties of some organisations to militant groups led to attacks on NGO offices as well as action by the central bank of Sri Lanka to freeze one organisation's assets.¹⁸

Resource Sharing

Collaboration between governments and civil society also occurs through resource sharing. This happens primarily through government funding of NGOs. Government funding varies across European NGO sectors. Official funds can make up as much as 70% of an NGO's budget, as is the case for some Belgian and Irish organisations, or as little as 20% for Slovak organisations.¹⁹ More funding is often available for organisations from Western governments which have interests in funding NGO work for the promotion of human rights and development domestically and abroad. How governments finance NGOs still varies by country but generally take the form of either subsidies or grants. Governments can provide subsidies for organisations to support their general work, though these may only be available to a few select organisations privileged by the government. Grants are more widely available to NGOs and are awarded after applications from organisations by the government for particular projects.²⁰ These often are representative of area of work that benefit the government, such as projects that address hard to reach communities or pervasive needs that are particular to one community. Funding is facilitated by institutions to ensure that the awarding of grants is fair and transparent and that the objectives of the government and expectations of how organisations will use the funds are clear.

¹⁸ Walton, "Conflict, Peacebuilding and NGO Legitimacy: National NGOs in Sri Lanka," 154.

¹⁹ Bullain and Toftisova, "A Comparative Analysis of European Policies and Practices of NGO-Government Cooperation," 87.

²⁰ Bullain and Toftisova, "A Comparative Analysis of European Policies and Practices of NGO-Government Cooperation," 92-93.

Governments also financially support NGOs through indirect means, which include use of public property and various tax exemptions, to allow them to repurpose money they would have paid to the government for other projects that will align with government goals.²¹

Resource sharing between NGOs and governments also happens through information sharing, during which civil society organisations engage in dialogue with governments in order to develop best practices and make future collaborations more effective. This took place in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina when the United States Federal Government took into account the voices of NGOs which were involved in recovery efforts to inform how the government might react to similar disasters in the future.²² NGOs had more on the ground experience with disaster relief and could inform the government on issues that arose during the disaster response such as a lack of government flexibility, ways to improve resource mobilisation, and how to deal with individuals experiencing trauma.

NGO-government collaboration through resource-sharing, particularly through funding, can be problematic, however, when NGOs are receiving funding from foreign governments. This is a particularly pertinent issue for countries in the Global South, where many NGOs from both the Global North and South operate. When NGOs receive funding, they are accountable to their donors to carry out specific outcomes with the money they are given. When these donors are foreign governments, NGOs are thus responsible for carrying out the goals of foreign governments in the country where they are operating. This can alienate organisations from the countries where they are working and alienate them in particular from governments.²³ Foreign

²¹ Bullain and Toftisova, "A Comparative Analysis of European Policies and Practices of NGO-Government Cooperation," 93.

²² White House, "The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina," 63.

²³ Michael Edwards and David Hulme, "Too Close for Comfort? The Impact of Official Aid on Nongovernmental Organizations," *World Development* 24, no. 6 (June 1, 1996): 963

funded organisations can be easily seen as agents of foreign governments seeking to gain influence or make political changes, which can lead to their restriction by the governments where they are operating.²⁴ This creates somewhat of a paradox in which funding for the activities that NGOs want to carry out is more widely available from foreign sources, but those sources are restricted by the areas in which NGOs operate.

The Ethiopian Case

The constraints placed on NGOs by governments as well as the potential for collaboration between the NGO and government spheres are both exemplified through the history of NGO work in Ethiopia. The country has experienced varying levels of humanitarian involvement since the 1970s when NGOs in their modern form first began to emerge around the world.²⁵ Ethiopia provides a case that demonstrates the complexities of NGO work as well as the conditions that can promote optimal and efficient collaboration between groups.

NGO involvement began in Ethiopia in the 1970s and groups quickly established a presence in the country as famines persisted from the 1970s to the 1980s. The crisis was too large for the government to handle on its own and it was forced to accept help from foreign governments, institutions, and organisations.²⁶ Foreign aid, in addition to non-profit work, also played a significant role in the establishment of humanitarian organisations in the country. NGO and international presence expanded as foreign media coverage of the famines increased, which contributed to increased awareness and funding for groups operating especially in Ethiopia, but also around the world. It is important to acknowledge that throughout this crisis, NGOs

²⁴ Tonegawa, "NGO Sector in Ethiopia," 206.

²⁵ Tonegawa, "Ngo Sector in Ethiopia," 208.

²⁶ Kendra E Dupuy, James Ron, and Aseem Prakash, "Who Survived?" 424.

contributed and directed advertisements to shape public perception by sensationalising those in poverty and portraying them as victims needing to be saved.²⁷ This outside involvement and influence on NGOs is an early example of the sensitivity required in NGO work, which many early groups documented did not achieve, leading to further questions about non-profit best practices in foreign countries and whether this type of humanitarian work should be undertaken at all.

Development continued in Ethiopia under a communist military government from the 1980s until the 2000s, though the work of NGOs remained legislatively restricted. The foreign origins and funding of many humanitarian organisations meant that they were distrusted by the government.²⁸ This changed, however, in the early 2000s as the government began to transition to a more democratic structure and sought different means to reduce poverty and improve development. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a political coalition that consolidated power in 1991 after the Eritrean War of Independence, sought development assistance from foreign donors, which came with the condition that the Ethiopian government would increase its support of NGOs working in the country.²⁹ The rebuilding process and the democratic transition that ensued made for an environment that encouraged collaboration between NGOs and governments through the alignment of their goals.

This change in policy by the government coincided with a wider trend among NGOs to transition away from simple basic needs approaches, in which the organisation facilitates the provision of goods and services that the government does not or cannot provide, towards a more human rights approach, in which organisations engage in advocacy and lobbying to change

²⁷ Nikki van der Gaag and Cathy Nash, "Imaging Famine," November 1987.

²⁸ Tonegawa, "NGO Sector in Ethiopia," 211.

²⁹ Tonegawa, "NGO Sector in Ethiopia," 212.

government structures and policy to support human rights.³⁰ This shift towards a more human rights approach contributed to the view of governments, like the Ethiopian government, viewing NGOs as a threat to government power. Sentiments and policies that worked against NGOs began to be implemented in 2005 when opposition parties began to challenge the EPRDF in elections. The EPRDF, in a bid to reclaim its political dominance, took a stance that development would occur through the actions of the state and that the state was the only trustworthy actor not abusing its power. NGOs were seen by the government as politically threatening due to the presence foreign influence and funding they maintained in the country. Many Ethiopians also perceived organisations as lacking popular support, inflating the salaries of their workers rather than providing benefits to society, and promoting foreign agendas.³¹

Distrust and perceptions of the politically threatening nature of NGOs in Ethiopia culminated in the 2009 Civil Societies and Organizations Proclamation, which severely limited the capacity of NGOs in the country to do their work. The Proclamation is a clear case in which the limits that governments can place on NGOs are seen. Ethiopia's 2009 CSO law categorised NGOs into three groups based on their demographic and funding makeups. Only groups with Ethiopian staff members and foreign funding consisting of less than 10% of their annual budget were permitted to engage in human rights and advocacy work under the new law. This prevented over 95% of NGOs working in Ethiopia, close to 3,000 organisations, from continuing to work as they did before the law.³² New financial regulations on NGOs further restricted their capacities. The Proclamation mandated that 30% of NGO budgets must be used for administration costs, including staff salaries, while the other 70% could be used for operating

³⁰ Tonegawa, "NGO Sector in Ethiopia," 212.

³¹ Dupuy, Ron, and Prakash, "Who Survived?" 425.

³² Tonegawa, "NGO Sector in Ethiopia," 215.

costs. This regulation was intended to prevent the misappropriation of funds by NGOs, a previous concern of the government, but in reality decreased the quality of NGO programming. Decreased administrative costs forced NGOs to lay off employees and reduce transportation costs, meaning that visits to sites were less frequent and the capacity of organisations to implement projects was decreased.³³

The capacity of NGOs to carry out their work was also limited by restrictions on foreign funding. In many cases, groups that carried out human rights work were funded in large part by foreign sources as international stakeholders had both the desire and the means to carry out human rights advocacy. Tonegawa (2018) mentions specifically that foreign funding is widely available to reduce the prevalence of Harmful Traditional Practices such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, and abduction of girls. However, organisations in Ethiopia could not take advantage of this funding and instead had to rely on smaller sources of local funding, which decreased their capacity to carry out their normal operations. The CSO law, because of the ways in which it restricted the capacities of NGOs, forced NGOs to shift the spheres in which they operated. Foreign-funded organisations which had previously worked in human rights were forced to transition back to delivery of relief goods and services and community development through the provision of resources.³⁴

In 2018, however, Abiy Ahmed was elected President and ushered in an era of reform for the country. Ahmed's election brought hope for many in the international community, who had long been pressuring the Ethiopian government to alter repressive policies, including the 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation.³⁵ After mounting international and internal pressure, the

³³ Tonegawa, "NGO Sector in Ethiopia," 218.

³⁴ Tonegawa, "NGO Sector in Ethiopia," 219.

³⁵ Harry Verhoeven and Michael Woldemariam, "Who Lost Ethiopia? The Unmaking of an African Anchor State and U.S. Foreign Policy," *Contemporary Security Policy* 43, no. 4 (October 2, 2022): 623.

government passed legislation which repealed the 2009 Proclamation and replaced it with a new policy that revised concerns about the previous law. To develop the new CSO policy, Abiy notably created an expert working group which developed the new law through dialogue between academics, civil society organisations, and activists among others.³⁶ This dialogue produced a new law, known as Proclamation No. 1113/2019 or the 2019 Proclamation. The new policy gave much more space to NGOs to operate by changing the categorisation of NGOs, funding regulations, and the institutional governance of the civil society sector. Under the 2019 Proclamation, restrictions on humanitarian work and governance are lifted, allowing any organisation, no matter their national affiliation or funding sources, to engage in work that advocates for structural societal changes like the promotion of human rights, anti-corruption campaigns, and rule of law and good governance advocacy. The 2019 Proclamation also removes funding sourcing restrictions, which allows any organisation to receive any amount of funding from foreign sources.³⁷ These new allowances allow organisations the ability to completely reshape how they function through increased funding and having the opportunity to expand their human rights work. Importantly, the 2019 Proclamation also gave new responsibilities to the Authority for Civil Society Organisation (ACSO), originally established by the 2009 proclamation. The new ACSO still provides governance and policy for NGOs but is much more interested in fostering collaboration through dialogue between the government and civil society. The ACSO is now responsible for organising consultations between governments and NGOs and creating a space to coordinate government support of NGO activities.³⁸

³⁶ Brook Kebede Abebe, “The Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Law and Its Role for Social Movement in Ethiopia,” *Journal of Contemporary Sociological Issues* 2, no. 1 (February 2022): 7.

³⁷ Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, “Proclamation No. 1113/2019 - Organizations of Civil Societies Proclamation,” *Federal Negarit Gazette* (2019), 37.

³⁸ Authority for Civil Society Organizations. “About Us.”

Concerns about NGO-government relations are being voiced again in the aftermath of the Tigray War, which saw violence in the northern Ethiopian region of Tigray from 2020 until a peace deal was reached in 2022. The conflict resulted in an extreme humanitarian crisis. 600,000 people died and even more have been subjected to famine and human rights violations.³⁹ The military conflict saw the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENFD), with aid from the Eritrean Military, in armed conflict with the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF). The two sides fought for control over the Tigray region after escalating political tensions between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the dominant political organisation in Tigray, and the Ethiopian central government. The conflict itself made access to Tigray by aid organisations incredibly difficult, but access was further restricted by an aid blockade of the region instituted by authorities.⁴⁰ Even after the conflict ended, aid was still inaccessible for many owing to diversion of international food donations to local markets. Some news reports have implicated the Ethiopian military in the scandal, but an ongoing investigation (as of April 2024) has yet to reveal who was responsible. The mismanagement of food aid led to decisions by groups like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Food Program to suspend their aid to Tigray for seven months in 2023.⁴¹ These recent actions by the Ethiopian government have made NGOs again distrustful of the government. Reports and recommendations from NGO networks have advised groups to avoid engaging in dialogue and collaborating with government and especially military forces on the ground because of the negative sentiment and public distrust of the

³⁹ BBC News, "Ethiopia's Tigray Crisis: Deaths from starvation after aid halted – official."

⁴⁰ Abbink, Jon. "The Politics of Conflict in Northern Ethiopia, 2020-2021: a study of war-making, media bias and policy struggle." Working Paper, African Studies Center Leiden. 2021: 11-12; Philippe Pellet, *Understanding the 2020-2021 Tigray Conflict in Ethiopia: Background, Root Causes, and Consequences*. (Budapest Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2021), 14.

⁴¹ Samantha Power, "Pause of U.S. Food Aid in Tigray, Ethiopia," May 3, 2023; Daphne Psaedakis, "US to Resume Food Aid across Ethiopia next Month," *Reuters*, November 14, 2023, sec. Africa.

government. For CSOs, collaborating with the government for the delivery of food and services would alienate them from their constituencies even if the services were beneficial.⁴² Recent events and the current situation have made the future of NGO-government collaboration uncertain.

Conclusion

The actions of the Ethiopian government and the ways that it has dealt with NGOs throughout the history of their involvement in the country reveals the challenges associated with NGO work as well as areas for NGO-government collaboration. The Ethiopian case demonstrates the importance of strong institutions and legal avenues to support NGO-government collaboration and demonstrates how institutions and laws can enable and restrict NGOs.

The implications of collaboration explored in this paper can also be applied to peacebuilding more broadly. NGOs and governments both make significant and intertwined contributions to peacebuilding around the world, making the intersection of their actions of prime importance for peace studies. This analysis of NGO-government collaboration underscores the importance of trust and dialogue in peacebuilding. From individual to international levels, trust must exist between parties to ensure projects are carried out in good faith. This dialogue can help parties to manage their expectations, align their interests, and innovate. Consistent dialogue also makes peacebuilding efforts more adaptable and resilient in the face of inevitable challenges. NGO-government collaboration also relies heavily on the strength of the institutions that govern and manage their interactions. For peacebuilding efforts more broadly, this reveals the importance of making expectations clear and ensuring commitment through accountability

⁴² Ethiopian Humanitarian Country Team. *Ethiopian Civil-Military Coordination Guidance*. (Ethiopia: EHCT and OHCR, 2019), 4.

mechanisms. NGO-government collaboration is representative of the difficulty of peace, and the importance of commitment over time to work through issues and create sustainable systems for peace.

Studying NGO-government collaboration also raises questions about NGO work more generally. For NGO work to be effective, must organisations collaborate with governments? Or, is it beneficial for groups to remain independent from governments? The contexts of collaboration, whether groups are working in areas of crisis or not, may also affect best practices for collaboration. As shown in the Ethiopian case, it may be beneficial at times for NGOs to distance themselves from the government. This can be either to maintain public trust, or to prevent NGOs from becoming like contractors for the government, lacking the flexibility and freedom to adapt to local needs and pursue their particular goals.⁴³

This study of NGO-government collaboration can and should be built upon by future research. How the government interacts with civil society has far reaching implications for the field of international relations and peace studies. Research on NGO-government collaboration would engage with existing literature on international law, norms, conflict resolution, and institutions. Future studies could involve a holistic examination of the laws governing NGOs around the world, the effectiveness of NGO-government collaboration, or theories on the conditions that allow for collaboration. As NGO work grows around the world, so too does the necessity of a greater understanding of how NGO work happens. Expanding the literature around NGOs and connecting civil society work to other fields is essential for making sure that NGOs are engaged in responsible, beneficial work that can create sustainable peace.

⁴³ Michael Edwards and David Hulme, "Too Close for Comfort? The Impact of Official Aid on Nongovernmental Organizations," *World Development* 24, no. 6 (June 1, 1996): 967.

Bibliography

- Abbink, Jon. "The Politics of Conflict in Northern Ethiopia, 2020-2021: a study of war-making, media bias and policy struggle." Working Paper, African Studies Center Leiden. 2021: 1-24
- Abebe, Brook Kebede. "The Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Law and Its Role for Social Movement in Ethiopia." *Journal of Contemporary Sociological Issues* 2, no. 1 (February 2022): 1–17. <https://doi.org/doi:10.19184/csi.v2i1.24935>.
- Authority for Civil Society Organizations. "About Us." Accessed April 22, 2024. <https://acso.gov.et/en/about-us>.
- Bullain, Nilda and Radost Toftisova. "A Comparative Analysis of European Policies and Practices of NGO-Government Cooperation." *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law* 7, no. 4 (September 2005): 64-112.
- Chandra, Anita, and Joie Acosta. "The Role of Nongovernmental Organizations in Long-Term Human Recovery After Disaster" In *The Role of Nongovernmental Organizations in Long-Term Human Recovery After Disaster*. 1–14. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2009. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/op277rc.8>.
- Dupuy, Kendra E, James Ron, and Aseem Prakash. "Who Survived? Ethiopia's Regulatory Crackdown on Foreign-Funded NGOs." *Review of International Political Economy* 22, no. 2 (March 4, 2015): 419–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2014.903854>.
- Edwards, Michael, and David Hulme. "Too Close for Comfort? The Impact of Official Aid on Nongovernmental Organizations." *World Development* 24, no. 6 (June 1, 1996): 961–73. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X\(96\)00019-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(96)00019-8).
- Eikenberry, Angela M., Verónica Arroyave, and Tracy Cooper. "Administrative Failure and the International NGO Response to Hurricane Katrina." *Public Administration Review* 67, no. 1 (2007): 160–70. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2007.00825.x>.
- Ethiopian Humanitarian Country Team. *Ethiopian Civil-Military Coordination Guidance*. (Ethiopia: EHCT and OHCR, 2019). <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/humanitarian-civil-military-coordination-guidance-ethiopia-march-2019>
- "Ethiopia's Tigray Crisis: Deaths from Starvation after Aid Halted - Official." *BBC News*, August 18, 2023, sec. Africa. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-66540039>.
- Farid, May, and Chengcheng Song. "Public Trust as a Driver of State-Grassroots NGO Collaboration in China." *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 25, no. 4 (December 1, 2020): 591–613. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-020-09691-7>.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. "Proclamation No. 1113/2019 Organizations of Civil Societies Proclamation." Federal Negarit Gazette 2019.
- Gaag, Nikki van der, and Cathy Nash. "Imaging Famine," November 1987. http://www.imaging-famine.org/images_africa.htm.

- MacCormack, Charles F. "Coordination and Collaboration: an NGO View." In *The Pulse of Humanitarian Assistance*, edited by Kevin M. Cahill. 2013. (New York: Fordham University Press): 243-262
- MacGinty, Roger. "Indicators +: A Proposal for Everyday Peace Indicators." *Evaluation and Program Planning*, Special Section: Rethinking Evaluation of Health Equity Initiatives, 36, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 56–63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2012.07.001>.
- Pellet, Philippe. *Understanding the 2020-2021 Tigray Conflict in Ethiopia: Background, Root Causes, and Consequences*. (Budapest: Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2021).
- Power, Samantha. "Pause of U.S. Food Aid in Tigray, Ethiopia." United States Agency for International Development. Press Release. May 3, 2023. <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/may-03-2023-pause-us-food-aid-tigray-ethiopia>.
- Psaledakis, Daphne. "US to Resume Food Aid across Ethiopia next Month." *Reuters*, November 14, 2023, sec. Africa. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/usaid-resumes-food-assistance-across-ethiopia-2023-11-14/>.
- Toftisova, Radost. "Implementation of NGO-Government Cooperation Policy Documents: Lessons Learned." *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law* 8, no. 1 (November 2005): 11-4.
- Tonegawa, Yoshiko. "NGO Sector in Ethiopia: The Impact of the Civil Society Organization Law." In *Complex Emergencies and Humanitarian Response*, edited by Mitsuru Yamada and Miki Honda, 205–28. Osaka: Union Press, 2018.
- Tyler, Dan. *Reflections from the Experiences of the Humanitarian Reform Officer*. (Geneva: ICVA, 2012). <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08b2a40f0b652dd000b34/ethiopia-lessons.pdf>
- Verhoeven, Harry, and Michael Woldemariam. "Who Lost Ethiopia? The Unmaking of an African Anchor State and U.S. Foreign Policy." *Contemporary Security Policy* 43, no. 4 (2022): 622–50. doi:10.1080/13523260.2022.2091580.
- Walton, Oliver. "Conflict, Peacebuilding and NGO Legitimacy: National NGOs in Sri Lanka." *Conflict, Security & Development* 8, no. 1 (April 1, 2008): 133–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800801977146>.
- White House. "The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned." Washington, D.C.: Office of the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, 2006. https://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/public/hasl_get_blob.cfm?ID=4628.
- Wijk, Jakomijn van, Jeroen van Wijk, Sarah Drost, and Wouter Stam. "Challenges in Building Robust Interventions in Contexts of Poverty: Insights from an NGO-Driven Multi-Stakeholder Network in Ethiopia." *Organization Studies* 41, no. 10 (October 1, 2020): 1391–1415. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840619878468>.