

# Commentary

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## The Humanitarian Missions of NGOs and QUANGOs

Representatives of independent citizen organizations are increasingly active in policy-making at the United Nations. These organizations are referred to as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). NGOs are becoming increasingly involved in the international arena and represent an effective platform for ordinary citizens for advocacy and implementation of humanitarian policies and programs. NGOs are particularly active and increasingly successful in areas involving human rights, the environment, social programs, women's issues, poverty, hunger, disease management and control, education, social development, empowerment, and social and economic justice. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan described NGOs as the conscience of humanity. Operational NGOs such as CARE work directly in the field by providing local humanitarian assistance and development. NGOs pursue their advocacy goals through diverse means including networking, lobbying, holding conferences, using mass media, campaigning and participating in peaceful protest actions. NGOs finance their work through a variety of sources including membership dues, foundation and government grants, as well as sales of services and merchandise. QUANGOs are quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations; QUANGOs are typically semi-public government-financed entities whose members are appointed by government, but act independently of government.

William Drayton coined the term "social entrepreneur" to describe individuals who have the energy, determination and innovation of entrepreneurs, but focus on changing the way society works rather than setting up businesses. In 1980, he created ASHOKA, a global association of the world's leading social entrepreneurs, comprising individuals with system-changing solutions for the world's most urgent social problems. ASHOKA's global community develops models for collaboration and design infrastructure needed to advance the field of social entrepre-

neurship and the citizen sector. ASHOKA inspires others to adopt and spread ideas and change-making innovations to demonstrate that all citizens have the potential to be powerful and influential change-makers. The citizen sector is actually the world's fastest-growing sector; the citizen sector now creates three times as many jobs as any other sector in OECD countries. Since 1700, there has been a remarkable surge in economic development and productivity gains, with average per capita income increases of around 20% in the 1700s, 200% in the 1800s and 740% in the 1900s. However, this economic and business transformation and development has bypassed a great part of the social development of the world's population. In recent years, political change has created an environment and opportunity for social change and development; the post-colonial age in Africa and Asia, and particularly in India, has created a new environment for social and economic development. Changes in the political situations in the former Soviet Union, Latin America, China, South Africa and Central Europe have all provided new opportunities for a realignment of the roles of the government sector, the business sector, and the citizen sector in planning and implementing the social and economic development policies for the world's population.

CARE epitomizes the nature and mission of the NGO. CARE envisions a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security. CARE is a global force, and a partner within a worldwide movement, dedicated to ending poverty and maintaining a commitment to the dignity of people. CARE's humanitarian mission complements the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). All members of the United Nations have signed on to the MDGs, representing a pledge to make measurable progress by 2015 in reducing hunger and poverty, expanding education, promoting equality and protecting the environment. CARE supports these goals, and is commit-

ted to helping humanity keep the promise to the current and future generations around the world. CARE's strategic plan involves three pivotal "signature programs" that are designed to provide "a pathway to empowerment" with a particular emphasis on the social development of women and girls. These three signature programs are: Economic Opportunity; Education and Leadership; and Maternal Health. The Economic Opportunity program will help provide access to basic financial services for 30 million households in sub-Saharan Africa over the next decade; CARE will scale up its successful village savings and loan program with an emphasis on teaching financial literacy and money management; the program will strengthen and expand existing microfinance institutions, encourage an environment conducive to economic development and promote investment in the microfinance sector. In the Education and Leadership program CARE will help 10 million girls complete quality basic education, and exercise new skills and leadership in their communities and homes; the program includes innovative strategies, such as fast-track learning programs and bilingual education for ethnic minorities. CARE's Maternal Health program will help reduce maternal morbidity and mortality and infant malnutrition for 30 million women and their children; essential services will include access to family planning resources; prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections; access to proper care during pregnancy and childbirth through strengthening health delivery systems; and addressing poverty and discrimination.

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