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Managing organizational legitimacies in times of institutional change- a case of humanitarian development NGOs in Pakistan

by

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**Abstract**

The aim of this study is to generate an in-depth understanding for the existence and causes of legitimacy concerns of NGOs in the complex Humanitarian Development Field (HDF) in Pakistan. NGOs are found short on delivering both the agenda of humanitarian relief and mainstream development. Beyond failure of delivery the acceptance of these entities is otherwise also low in a Muslim Pakhtun backyard of the world. Yet the NGO sector has shown boom post 9/11 to ultimately find itself implicated by the State in Pakistan post 2013 on various pretexts. What necessitates the State to oppose NGOs in a region that needs multiple players to fight under-development and conflict? The leading question this research addresses is thus, why NGO legitimacies are declining in the region.

Empirically rooted in three cases (local NGOs), this qualitative research abducts causal mechanisms of the incidence of decreased NGOs’ legitimacy through examining reality at three levels under a Critical Realist methodology. Firstly, at the empirical level are increased events of coercion, regulative constraints, operational obstruction, and intimidation of NGOs. Secondly, at the actual level are the three identified mechanisms that explains why NGOs face marginalization including the ‘purported’ anti-state stance, commercialization of the institution of HDF and NGOs therein, and the opacity and corruption that NGOs structures increasingly embed. These mechanisms work in a complex context that has been explained as three discrete phases of humanitarian crisis in the study region post 9/11. Thirdly, at the real level, NGOs face legitimacy crisis in large part because of a shift in institutional norms of humanitarianism and developmentalism both globally and nationally.

Research outcomes reveal, foremost, that legitimacy crisis may be traced to the existence of multiple institutional logics (of humanitarianism and developmentalism) ingrained in HDF with both positive and detrimental consequences for NGOs. It is demonstrated that competing logics has been a source of under development of NGOs, and consequently that of the under-development of the institutional environments in which they operate. At the same time, a positive spinoff of competing logics has been recorded as NGOs are gradually turning into sustainable organizations to suggest that logics multiplicity force organizations to course correction and embeddedness in newer institutional orders.

However this course correction of NGOs as made manifest through their strategies is just a small fraction of NGOs response to their alienation. In line with Neo-institutional theory, NGOs adopt a variety of other responses to the sometimes contradictory logics of HDF. Evidence reveals that NGOs show agency, despite institutional disdain and coercive procedures, in gaining different forms of legitimacies at the meso level of organization-field interaction. Particularly important are the NGOs quest for attaining normative/regulative, cognitive, and output legitimacies. Faced with multiple normative, cultural, religious, and practical impediments, it is both intriguing and fascinating to see small relief NGOs survive and mold into ‘development’ organizations in an environment hostile to their existence.

The contributions of the study are three-fold: a) an analytical frame combining Institutional theory and critical realism to explain how field-level institutional changes affect organizations in both beneficial and detrimental ways, b) a theoretical contribution focusing on four insights on NGOs structures viz, temporality of legitimacy challenge, legitimacy fatigue, emergence of an entrepreneurial streak amongst NGOs, and a possible beginning of NGOs playing institutional entrepreneurs in HDF to give it newer institutional outlook.; and c) a practitioner focused emancipatory contribution where NGOs as social actors need to ensure a higher level of agency awareness to overcome the challenges of decreased legitimacies and play their due role in development of the region.

The research addresses a glaring research gap in humanitarian development chain by focusing on the lower most tiers of local NGOs who are a critical conduit between donors and beneficiaries in crisis environments.

**Key words**: Organizational Legitimacy, NGOs, Critical realism, Institutional logics, Humanitarian & Development environments, organizational strategies

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

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I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

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**Acronyms**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| CBOs | Community Based Organizations |
| CSO | Civil Society Organizations |
| EAD | Economic Affairs Division |
| ESED | Elementary & Secondary Education Department |
| FCR | Frontiers Crimes Regulations |
| FATA | Federally Administered Tribal Areas |
| FDMA | FATA Disaster Management Authority |
| FGD | Focused Group Discussion |
| GoP | Government of Pakistan |
| HRCP | Human Rights Commission of Pakistan |
| Hujra | Male sitting place for entertaining guests |
| IDPs | Internally Displaced Populations |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organizations |
| ISPR | The Inter-Services Public Relations |
| KP | (Province of) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa |
| KPPRA | Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Procurement Regulatory Authority |
| KSA | Kingdom of Saudi Arabia |
| LG | Local Government |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| MNCs | Multi National Corporations |
| NDMA | National Disaster Management Authority |
| NPOs | Non Profit Organizations |
| NFC | National Finance Commission (Award) |
| NGO | Non Governmental Organization |
| NHN | National Humanitarian Network |
| NoC | No objection Certificate |
| PCNA | Post-Crisis Needs Assessment (Secretariat) |
| PCP | Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy |
| PDMA | Provincial Disaster Management Authority (KP) |
| PHN | Pakistan humanitarian network |
| RSP | Rural Support Programs |
| RTI | Right to Information (Act) |
| SAFRON | Ministry of States & Frontier Regions |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SECP | Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan |
| SHG | Self Help Groups |
| SWD | Social Welfare Department (Govt of KP) |
| TTP | Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan |
| TVO | Trust for Voluntary Organizations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commission for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children Emergency Fund |
| USAID | United Stated Agency for International Development |

# Chapter 1- Introduction- An overview of the thesis

## 1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize the reader with main concern of this study- the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and associated challenges of accountability, legitimacy and lesser impacts in a crisis prone and relatively undeveloped region of Pakistan. The chapter first discusses rationale of the research and then moves on to identifying knowledge gaps and establishing significance of the study. Thereafter research methodology and approach employed are briefly outlined. Finally the structure of dissertation is laid out outlining the chapters and their content.

## 1.2 Scope and Rationale of the research

Owing to multiple natural and man-made crises post 9/11 and unrest in adjoining Afghanistan, Pakistan has been in dire circumstances through much of the past sixteen years. These crises are believed to have erupted from both global interests in the region and local incapacity to deal effectively with crisis situations. A microcosm of such crises and incapacitated response can be seen in the complex humanitarian environments resulting from the ‘war on terror’ in Afghanistan and its immediate repercussions in the adjoining areas of Pakistan. Humanitarian environments are believed to be largely complex engaging an array of actors and institutions including host governments, local and international relief organizations, private sector, military and other marginal groups, having varied interests, mandates, organizational capacities, and certainly limitations ([Balcik, Beamon, Krejci, Muramatsu, & Ramirez, 2010](#_ENREF_17)). Key actors in the study region’s Humanitarian Development Field (HDF) include, but not limited to, various tiers of Pakistani Government, military and security apparatus, militant outfits and their philanthropic setups, aid agencies (local, national, international), bilateral and multilateral bodies, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), and an increasing presence of local Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs). Together they form the institutional response structure to humanitarian crisis and addressing the entrenched challenge of under-development in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province and the adjoining Federally Administered tribal Areas (FATA), herein after referred to as the study region (see figure 3, P. 32 for map).

Of all the institutional actors in HDF, the role of both INGOs and local NGOs are increasingly being debated in Pakistan and that too for all the negative reasons ([Siddiqa, 2015](#_ENREF_186)). Both group of organizations are under critical government watch for the nature and consequences of their activities in many countries including India, Russia, Brazil, and Pakistan leading to a scenario where governments are gradually restricting their presence and movement within host countries ([Jarvik, 2007](#_ENREF_121)). Concerns are raised about their accountability, representations, missions, values, and supposedly lesser effectiveness ([Ahmad, 2014](#_ENREF_3); [HRW, 2015](#_ENREF_115); [Peruzzotti, 2006](#_ENREF_158); [Sadeque, 2014](#_ENREF_170); [Shah, 2014](#_ENREF_183); [Siddiqui, 2014](#_ENREF_187)). More worryingly, both NGOs and INGOs are being presented as anti-state elements and at least 18 big INGOs have been asked to wind operations in 2018 ([Sayeed, 2018](#_ENREF_174)) In an environment hostile to the existence of a set of organizations for varied reasons, there is an equally remarkable increase in the number of such local/national NGOs in the study region particularly since 9/11.

This study focuses on the particular kind of hundreds of NGOs that sprang up after 9/11 in the region. Invariably these small local organizations started off as relief entities with fluid organizational structures and within years have partnered on big projects mostly with renowned international humanitarian and development agencies in providing support to populations in crisis. The nature of their services ranges from provision of food and non-food items, camp management, make shift education programs, a range of emergency health services, support to livelihoods of both displaced and host populations, and also rehabilitation of small community infrastructure. These NGOs were initially applauded for their support in humanitarian response but gradually a decline began post 2011-12 owing to a variety of reasons, most importantly with their lesser effectiveness, personal and organizational gains, nepotism, and more worryingly a threatening narrative painting them as ‘anti-state’ in the scheme of unfolding macro events. This led to a complete crackdown and outright marginalization of local NGOs. Suddenly they found themselves persecuted and facing an existential threat in the real sense.

What necessitated this state of affairs, the first concern of this research, warrant a look back at events as well as evolving relationship of NGOs with field-wide entities. The focus is on unearthing the mechanisms that resulted in decreasing the institutional acceptance of NGOs. This lack of acceptance has been grounded in a rather sophisticated concept of organizational ‘legitimacy’ defined as “umbrella evaluation’ of an entity’s appropriateness in a socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions ([Suchman, 1995, p. 574](#_ENREF_195)).

The study makes use of the construct of ‘organizational legitimacy’, borrowed in large from neo-institutional theory, to address the tensions inherent in complex humanitarian environments and as proxy for contingent concepts of accountability, representations, and effectiveness that are at the heart of third sector literature. Legitimacy seeking is an innate organizational requirement ([Bitektine & Haack, 2014](#_ENREF_33); [Goldsmith & Pereira, 2014](#_ENREF_100)) particularly in emerging and contested fields ([Galvin, Ventresca, & Hudson, 2004](#_ENREF_93)). Under neoinstitutional approaches legitimacy acquisition is considered a sine-quo-non-for organization’s survival and growth. The study area has seen repeated humanitarian crisis like that of 2005 earthquake, 2010 floods, and an on-going militancy that has displaced millions of people still in need of support. This has resulted in institutionalization of support structures based in a set of institutional logics infused with militancy that increasingly allocate the country’s security forces a bigger influence in humanitarian and development affairs. At the root, all the logics point towards diminishing legitimacy and disapproval of humanitarian support structures generally and those of NGOs and INGOs in particular. Legitimacy crisis of NGOs is constructed as an event or outcome as evidenced from voices in public foras (e.g., standing committees of parliament), various perception surveys (NGOs project surveys, Gallup Pakistan), and actual occurrence of multiple systematic and coercive procedures to cut down NGO operations (new regulations)

Neo-Institutional theory has historically suggested that organizations become part of the institutional reality through undergoing change as required by the environmental conditioning. Institutional change is thus explained with reference of macro cultural trends which cause changes in the organizational fields ([Diaz-Bone, 2014](#_ENREF_69)). One of the broader streams in institutional analyses is the use of institutional logics to understand organizational change. Institutional logics are a set of organizing principles within a societal domain and the related beliefs, practices and arrangements (Greenwood, 2011). It is argued that organizations face institutional complexity emanating from multiple institutional logics (Shilde and Perman, 2016). The structure of HDF in the region is changing with more focus on long-term institution building, poverty alleviation, peace, and development than the mere provision of humanitarian services- a role these NGOs perfected post 9/11. There is a realization that these NGOs in their current organizational structures and roles are no more central to the development framework of the region, unless they proactively evolve, contest, and reclaim their status. This is the second research concern of this thesis. How do NGOs respond to multiple logics and to what effects on their structures and missions?

Within the HDF, the concept of legitimacy is at least applied in two ways; one is the institutional configuration of international aid system itself, where local NGOs are a small beneficiary, whose central objective is ensuring sustainability of aid system itself ([Brinkerhoff, 2005](#_ENREF_40)). Such a skewed system includes local NGOs in implementation of humanitarian plans not entirely for successful strategic reasons but as a feel good exercise and suggesting that the larger humanitarian system is indeed democratic with participation of local NGOs. This line of research focuses on the accountability of the whole international aid system but seldom goes down to the level of local NGOs. Partnerships between northern and southern NGOs and the associated paradoxes are part of accountability literature falls under the first category ([Elbers, 2012](#_ENREF_83)). The second emerging area of inquiry is legitimacy of NGOs in and of themselves. In recent years with increase in their number and critical roles such organizations assumed in third world countries, there is interest and intense scrutiny of how they are performing. There are questions about the nature and consequences of NGOs activities in that who they represent and how accountable these entities are ([Peruzzotti, 2006](#_ENREF_158)).

Although literature on NGOs differentiates between various forms and manifestations of NGOs [see for example, ([Atack, 1999](#_ENREF_14); [Bebbington, 1997](#_ENREF_26); [DuBois, 2015](#_ENREF_77); [Holloway, 1998](#_ENREF_112); [Salamon & Anheier, 1992a](#_ENREF_171); [Uphoff, 1993](#_ENREF_207))], this study uses both the humanitarian and development NGOs as one for practical purposes. This is because for large part NGOs in the study region are overwhelmingly representative of the ‘service delivery’ NGOs, with a couple of notable exceptions of established developmental and advocacy NGOs.

## 1.3 Research Methodology and methods

This study is influenced by critical realist philosophy, particularly that of [Sayer (2000)](#_ENREF_175) and relies on an objectivist ontology and subjectivist epistemology to examine the ‘outcome’ of NGOs legitimacy crisis. Critical realism makes use of ‘retroduction’, an analytical process that examines empirical events (legitimacy crisis of NGOs) through the ‘actual’ or potential that objects/entities have. At the heart of retroduction is manifesting the ‘real’ level through identification of causal mechanisms.

This study takes institutional logics on legitimacy from a critical realist perspective connoting logics reside at the ‘real’ level and make events happen. Under CR perspective then institutional logics must conditions organizational actions but are not entirely determined by them ([Delbridge & Edwards, 2013](#_ENREF_65)), thereby creating conditions for actor-oriented change in institutions. At the macro level, the analytical framework combines institutional logics and critical realism to examine the structure of legitimacy, its causal powers (& liabilities), and mechanisms that are capable of producing events (occurrence of legitimacy crisis) that signals a change in organizational legitimacies.

At the meso organizational levels, qualitative multiple case study design is employed to examine diverse range of NGOs legitimacy building strategies in in face of multiple institutional logics. These institutional logics are construed as the ‘real’ structures that NGOs experience during their work owing to unique sociopolitical, cultural, and field realities. The three selected cases generally represent the uni-dimensional nature of hundreds of NGOs working in the study region as service provision NGOs. For most part data comes from 31 semi-structured interviews conducted with a range of field level actors (17) and the sampled three NGOs (14).

Table - Summary of Research methodology

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Research Methodology | Choices |
| Methodology | Critical realism |
| Research Strategy | Multiple Case design (NGOs as cases) |
| Approach | Qualitative |
| Data Collection methods | Semi structured Interviews  Observations  Documents review |
| Analysis method | Abduction & Retroduction |

## 1.5 Knowledge gaps and significance of the research

By the end of 2017 a record number of people were displaced by conflict and disaster worldwide. According to UNDP (2018), 68.5 million people have been forced to leave their homes and 84% of such refugees live in developing countries like Pakistan, Turkey, Lebanon, Iran, Ethiopia, Jordan, DR Congo, and Kenya. Violence and environmental disasters forces 31 new displacements a minute ([Shumba, 2018](#_ENREF_185)) and this number is likely to increase as conflict find its ways in different parts of the world.

Managing such crisis within national boundaries and across international frontiers has become a priority as the World Humanitarian Conference (2016) in Istanbul proclaimed. Amongst other measures the Conference concluded that innovative local, inclusive and context specific responses are required to respond to protracted crisis and recurrent disasters to reduce vulnerabilities and bridging. One of the ways to do so is conceptualizing the humanitarian and development environments in radically different ways than the existing models. Such environments are complex and highly uncoordinated ([Balcik et al., 2010](#_ENREF_17)). There are knowledge gaps at various junctures in understanding of such environments and the actors’ orientations therein. At the conceptual level, there is a distinction between relief, rehabilitation and development environments that could not be practically bridged even though the realization has been there for decades ([Buchanan-Smith & Fabbri, 2008](#_ENREF_45)). Part of the reason is that such conceptual distinction requires a geo-historic context and institutional bearings in accordance with regional realities. This research provides such context in case of Pakistan and claims that the institutions involved in managing crisis environments matter. Such a treatment provides policy clarity on seamless linking of both humanitarian and development environments that can result in success on both fronts, particularly in fragile states.

Secondly this research tries to explore the local meaning structure of humanitarianism and development. In theory donors and host government together chalk out the development agenda with the auxiliary participation of civil society organization and sometimes private sector. In practice, however, donors have differing conceptions, abstract and contextual, about NGOs performance and capacities just as they have those about national governments in developing and crisis-affected countries. There is no involvement of local NGOs in setting up the development agenda. Participation of civil society, however decayed, is considered a ‘look good’, ‘feel good’, and safe bet among donor agencies yet the region has seen nothing beyond tokenistic participation of NGOs in agenda setting. This research tries to put stronger emphasis on centralizing NGO in both agenda setting and implementation of development priorities.

Thirdly, amid mounting concerns with aid ineffectiveness in humanitarian crisis globally, the academic communities in developing countries have left the field open for fly-in fly-out consultants, donors with little ground understanding, and host governments’ bureaucracies that have little institutional capacity to deal with complex emergencies. Building knowledge that is relevant for practitioners has always been a challenge for academic research. By focusing on NGOs at the lower rung of development ladder, this research tries to produce bottom up knowledge to show how complexities of HDF has induced legitimacy tensions into NGOs structures. [Helmut K Anheier and Kendall (2005)](#_ENREF_10) Suggests that the management of non-profit organizations remains ill understood because our understanding of these organizations has not gone deep enough. The research strives to show that capacities of NGO are limited but the potential to support local development and humanitarian response is huge. Their structures needs to be understood and by examining their management styles, desirable changes can be brought.

Fourthly, the value of the research lies in the growing discussions on marketization of humanitarian development that is getting traction globally where the role of larger civil society is questioned on corruption and malpractices of various sorts ([Redfield, 2008](#_ENREF_166)). This is clear from a set of studies on crisis environment in Africa ([Holmén, 2010](#_ENREF_113)), Afghanistan ([Barakat & Strand, 1995](#_ENREF_20)), Haiti ([Schuller, 2009](#_ENREF_178)), Bangladesh ([Makita, 2009](#_ENREF_136)), Indonesia ([Gatignon, Van Wassenhove, & Charles, 2010](#_ENREF_95)), and Pakistan ([Asgary, Anjum, & Azimi, 2012](#_ENREF_11); [Lehtonen, 2013](#_ENREF_132); [Nasir, Rehman, & Orakzai, 2012](#_ENREF_148)). These studies largely document the increasing complexity of humanitarian and development aid chains and traces illicit practices of corruption squarely national NGOs. However there is little available on how local NGOs are embedded in a structure of patronage that perpetuates the questioning of motives of these organizations. This study traces these influences back to the macro institutional field and tries to absolve NGOs of some of the harmful practices that don't really originate within their structures. NGOs are thus routes rather sites for industry-wide negative practices

Lastly the emancipatory bent of critical realism as methodology to examine the issues of organizational legitimacy brings value to this study. NGO as actor requires having aspirations and a sense of entitlement to social change that can be as much an indigenous process as possible. There is a need, foremost, for NGOs to emancipate themselves from the long held view as infirm, unsustainable, opportunist, and anti-state entities. Only then can they turn their focus towards strategic nature of influencing the destinies of those they represent. . NGOs still remains a foreign phenomenon in Pakistan ([Lehtonen, 2013](#_ENREF_132)). Extremists have accused NGOs of being anti-Islam and spreading liberal and secular values (Sattar & Baig 2001, 15; Pasha et al. 2002, 6-7). Associating with aid agencies and NGOs has become more dangerous, especially after the sham vaccination scheme by an INGO to track down Osama bin Laden in 2011 (HRCP 2012, 133). During all this, NGOs boards, executives, and management are struggling to initiate new program areas, branch out, innovate, diversify income sources, cross sectors, or face extinction.

Summarily, the research investigates a scheme of identifying mechanism that collectively puts NGOs legitimacy into question and to develop better understanding of how local NGOs experience these tensions and respond to complex institutional environments in a developing country context. Countries facing multiple facets of humanitarian crisis can further develop typologies of organizational legitimacy that are applicable to their larger sociocultural environments and field-wide practices. It is imperative that understanding of sense making be improved to take better stock of situations in various environments.

## 1.6 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 1 introduced the rationale and main idea of the research concerning legitimacy crisis for humanitarian development NGOs in the study region. A brief outline of the methodology is provided together with identification of knowledge gaps and value of the research.

Chapter 2 comprises the literature review as well as providing contextual background to the findings contained in chapter 4. The chapter opens with definitional and conceptual issues surrounding the constructs of civil society, nonprofit organizations, and NGOs and moves on to develop the argument that the global humanitarian architecture is full of contradictions and ad-hocism. Then common legitimacy fissures in NGOs literature are noted. A detailed discussion is presented on humanitarian development environments by way of describing key issues of complexity, accountability, participation, and sustainability. This debate sets the scene for the conceptual framework presented in chapter 3. Thereafter theoretical underpinnings of the research and the key construct of organizational legitimacy are operationalized in NGOs context. Institutional logics literature is then clubbed with legitimacy literature to theorize the structure of HDF in the study’s context. The chapter closes on three key questions and associated objectives that the research addresses.

Chapter 3 presents discussions on study’s methodology. Starting from critical realism as the philosophical paradigm of choice, the chapter presents a nuanced discussion on CR’s ontology and epistemology. Research concerns are translated into realist formulation followed by discussions on multiple case strategy, sampling, and data collection methods. The chapter also presents a step-wise analysis plan under critical realist influence. An important analytical contribution is presented in the form of combining both Neo-institutional theory and Critical Realism informing the analysis plan for the study. Towards the end of the chapter the study’s conceptual framework presented. .

Chapters 4 and 5 furnish analyses and discussion respectively by attempting to answer the three questions as shown in table 8. Chapter 4 provides evidence on Research Questions 1 (and related objectives 1.1 & 1.2) detailing entities and events at the field level. The chapter analyzes key *events* and identifies field level influences on the *outcome* of NGOs legitimacy crisis. It also describes the key mechanisms and attempts to unearth the structure of these mechanisms to show the real level of CR analysis. Context of the crisis surrounding the cases is made clear by means of developing three discrete phases. Cases are also collectively described in the chapter to set the stage for discussion on multiple logics in chapter 5.

Chapter 5 then answers the remaining two questions (Question 2 and 3). This chapter presents the crux of discussion where the structure of legitimacy is made manifest by going back to the theoretical underpinnings of NIT, most notably multiple institutional logics. It firstly attempts to answer how logics multiplicity impact NGOs structures and then presents a detailed discussion on legitimacy building strategies of NGOs. In the process, four theoretical insights are presented with regards to legitimacy of NGOs. The chapter closes strongly on the emerging nexus of HDF and the role of NGOs therein, posed as research question 3.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion chapter. Research questions are revisited and summary outcomes are presented. Key theoretical and practical contributions of the study are mentioned along with avenues for future research. A reflexive account on limitations of the study is also part of the conclusion chapter.

Figure - Structure of the dissertation

# Chapter 2: Literature Review- conceptual and theoretical debate

## 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to articulate and summarize various viewpoints on NGOs generally and their involvement in humanitarian development environments in particular. This review begins with conception of civil society and characteristics of nonprofit organizations, moves towards the key fissure points in NGOs literature. The construct of legitimacy is then discusses from organizational study perspective to anchor the key concerns of NGOs acceptability, impacts, and sustainability. Then detailed discussion is presented on humanitarian development environments and how NGOs operate in such conditions. This discussion provides a rich backdrop to the conceptual framework of the research. A review of extant theories on NGOs is given with a focus on Neo Institutional theory (and associated constructs of organizational field and institutional logics) The chapter closes with discussion on institutional logics and organizational field as key theoretical underpinnings of the study. Figure 2 illustrates the flow of this chapter.

Figure - Themes and flow of literature review

A literature review is an evaluative summary of studies relevant to a research area that describes, summarizes, clarifies and articulates relationships between key constructs of a topic ([Boote & Beile, 2005](#_ENREF_36)). This study is built around a topic and in a geographic area for which there is little credible academic literature available. The literature review aims to achieve the nuances of humanitarian aid in conflict-affected settings; that is identification of actors in crisis scenarios, the relationship and coordination mechanisms at various levels of governance. Identification of institutional challenges, and presenting the context in which Pakistani NGOs operate.. As can be seen from the aims of the review, references are scanned from two disparate social sciences disciplines of ‘Management’ and international ‘Development’

## 2.2 Non Governmental Organizations

In a three sectors model of society, NGOs are clubbed into the ‘civil society’ sphere in that they are neither governmental nor representatives of the market forces. The phrase civil society has proved to be a harder construct to define for a variety of reasons, both conceptually and analytically. Different labels are used to represent the civil society ranging from third sector, 'non-profit sector', 'charitable sector’, 'independent sector’, 'voluntary sector’, 'tax-exempt sector’, 'non-governmental, 'associational sector’, economie sociale, and many more in the literature ([Salamon & Anheier, 1992b, p. 128](#_ENREF_172)). In its current usage and conception, the term creates more confusion than a standardized understanding owing to variations in the histories and traditions of the sector globally. A small local lane committee, parent’s council to oversee schools management, and the World Social Forum are all examples that present the extremes of CS (ibid). [Howell and Lind (2009, p.5)](#_ENREF_114) loosely defines civil society as “an arena where people deliberate upon, organize and act around shared purposes and concerns”. They contend that the concept of civil society is essentially that of a settled form of associational life and takes different forms such as “trades unions, social movements, virtual networks, campaigns, coalitions, faith groups, direct action groups, peace groups, human rights organizations and so on” (ibid, p.6).

The idea of civil society though not new remained subservient to the two- sector (government and private) before the 20th century. Post World War II and the subsequent focus on ‘development’ of war torn regions in Europe and poverty in America, there came increased focus on civil society as a sphere to alter existing rules, norms and social structures. The project of Development began after the Second World War primarily around the notions of growth and economic development but was later transformed into larger goals of liberating and transforming communities. Development planners and policy makers realized that both markets and governments are unable to be harbingers of change and a third force is required to carry out the intended transformation in democratizing societies (more so in third world) and bringing emancipation to the underprivileged ([Watkins, Swidler, & Hannan, 2012](#_ENREF_213)).

The popular manifestation of civil society in the form of non-governmental organizations started taking the center stage in late 20th century. NGO literature, a handy subset of overall literature on civil society organizations, has been voluminous since the 1980s particularly with relevance to new insights coming from the continents of North America, Europe and Latin America, tempting some to term the 80s as the ‘NGO decade’ ([Bratton, 1989](#_ENREF_39)). NGOs were increasingly being seen as crucial counterweights and alternatives in ‘development’ doctrines. This shift was in part the result of change in fundamental thinking about international development, being a domain dominated by the traditional two sector model, to a specialized field of activity thus legitimating nonprofit sector to deliver the fruits of good governance([Frahm & Martin, 2009](#_ENREF_92)). These ‘‘new’’ or rather newly discovered actors in international development were soon lauded as the institutional ‘‘alternative’’ to existing development approaches ([Mitlin, Hickey, & Bebbington, 2007](#_ENREF_145)) bypassing businesses and increasingly the State. Governments were thought of as over-bureaucratic and less receptive of actual needs of citizenry. NGOs were presented as having human face and working with the poorest of the poor with low cost management style that brought them popular support ([Brodhead, 1987](#_ENREF_41)) towards the end of the 80s decade. In fact authors (Fisher 1993, Salamon 1993, Clarke 1996) have termed the emergence and scale of NGOs to a ‘quiet’ revolution akin to the emergence of nation-state in the 19th century ([W. F. Fisher, 1997](#_ENREF_87))

Others believe that larger notions of NGOs are not a novel phenomenon as they can be argued to be in existence much before the formal mechanisms of State-ness emerged ([Najam, 2000, p. 377](#_ENREF_147)). What is however considered new is the immense increase and relevance of NGOs in today’s complex globalized world. There is evidence that NGOs have been historically supported by both communist and capitalist blocks during 1950-1990 to extend their social, political, economic, and ideological bases. No wonder then, today NGOs working in the study region are frequently been referred to as an extension of neo-liberal world ideals ([Howell & Lind, 2009](#_ENREF_114)).

[Howell and Lind (2009)](#_ENREF_114) also believe that NGOs concerned with development and ‘Third World’ issues mushroomed from the late 1970s onwards. [Edwards (2011, p. 5)](#_ENREF_82) however asserts that's NGOs really arrived to the scene in modern sense after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. It is safe to assume that the 1990s saw the highpoint of the NGO population ‘explosion’ in face of complex humanitarian emergencies of unprecedented scale. Fast forward a decade, and NGOs are an established source of providing essential public services and increasingly providing humanitarian solutions in crisis environments, legal support to vulnerable population, livelihoods support to impoverished communities, and assistance to displaced populations.

The emergence of NGOs may also be considered as a force plugging the gaps in areas of services delivery where third world governments and private sector have little incentive to venture in. Government for want of implementation capacities to reach out to population in humanitarian crisis and private sector finds net returns insufficient to their bottom-line motive of profit seeking. [Najam (2000)](#_ENREF_147) suggest that a triadic paradigm emerged where state, market, and civil society had to join forces to serve the liberal and capitalist development.

The widespread interest in the phenomenon of NGOs have raised important questions in a variety of academic disciplines as NGOs touch upon issues formerly not considered by government or market ranging from grassroots development, social justice, environmental degradation, and human rights ([W. F. Fisher, 1997](#_ENREF_87)). Economists started looking at poverty alleviation programs of NGOs, political scientists reevaluating the state-society relationship in light of increased focus on civil society organizations, and international relations experts watching out the processes of global civil society networks and its impacts on nation states (ibid). Dependency theorists too felt aroused at idea of post-modern development doctrines and NGOs as instruments for indigenous change.

Scholars of international development and aid effectiveness have started to ponder in two critical debates on NGOs in the 21st century, particularly in the context of developing and fragile States. One is the ‘aid dependence’ path that considers the aid chain and ascendency of NGOisation as akin to diminishing State’s capacities and legitimacies thereby contributing to fragility of weak States. Second is the actual impact of aid practices and has NGOs as critical conduit of aid been able to deliver their developmental, empowerment and emancipation promises ([Watkins et al., 2012](#_ENREF_213)). This is further substantiated in the conceptual framework produced in section 3.10.

For now, lets turn to the definition of Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs), which presents more plurality of views. A common misjudgment in defining the term ‘nonprofit organization’ is to equate it with “*organizations which do not make a profit”* ([Ismail, 2002](#_ENREF_118))*.* This definition connotes the notion of nonprofit organizations as those that may incur losses, which is incorrect. It is critical to have some standard definition for the sake of comparability and [Salamon and Anheier (1992b)](#_ENREF_172) put forth four criteria for entities to be considered as NPOs. First is that of the legal definition which defines “a non-profit organization is what the law of a country says it is”. Unfortunately laws are not straightforward in defining non-profits and there are considerable spillovers in definitions. For example, in Pakistani context, there are more than six laws under which nonprofits may be registered, both nonprofits and for profits can be registered under the same income tax ordinance, and where nonprofits opts not to register, they are not required at all to do so. The second criteria that can be used to define NPOs is that of the sources of finances. The UN System, for example, of National Accounts breaks all economic activity into four major sectors, of which the non-profit sector is one, and enterprises (the business sector), government, and households are the others. A third type of definition emphasizes the functions or purposes that organizations in this sector carry out. According to [Salamon and Anheier (1992b)](#_ENREF_172) the definition put forth by O'Neill of NPOs as 'private organizations serving a public purpose', that is, some cause-related to 'the good of the society' is a good starting point. [Fowler (2011)](#_ENREF_91), in the same vein, sees ‘non-governmental development organizations’ (NGDOs), a term he uses to distinguish NGOs from other forms of CS on the basis of their functions as intermediaries between resource providers and those in populations whose ill-being justifies the organizations’ existence. A fourth kind of definition emphasizes the basic structure and operation as the determining factors for NPOs rather than its purpose or mode of financing. This is the most common yardstick that can be used in cross-country comparisons, as structures are fairly representative across available country-data.

The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project has studied nonprofit structures in a variety of countries, including Pakistan, and has come up with 5 structural characteristics that are common to identify nonprofit organizations. They include (a) *formal structures*, in that such organizations must be having regular meetings, officers or rules of procedure, or some degree of organizational permanence; (b) *Private*, that is, institutionally separate from government, not part of governmental apparatus nor governed by boards dominated by government officials, but eligible for government support; (c) *Non-profit-distributing*, that is not distributing profits amongst owners/directors but rather profits, if incurred, needs to be put back into organizational missions; (d) *Self-governing,* that is, equipped to control their own activities and not controlled by outside actors; and (e) Voluntary: that is, involving meaningful degree of voluntary participation in the actual conduct management of organizational affairs.

For the purpose of this study, the definition provided by [Jordan and van Tuijl (2006)](#_ENREF_125) is adopted which consider NGOs as intermediary organizations having a legal status to qualify to receive donors assistance. This definition is adopted because it summarily encompass the notion of NGOs in the study region. This definition has three components; a) NGOs as intermediary organizations, b) having a legal status, and c) qualifies to receive donors’ donations. As discussed in Section 2.8 this definition fits the contextual definition of NGOs in the study region.

## 2.3 Broader issues in NGOs literature

While there are greater ways to organize associational life, NGOs are increasingly the popular modes of associational life ([Edwards, 2011](#_ENREF_82)). This increased focus on NGO-ism in official thinking and public discourse has condensed the notions of civil society solely into NGOs across southern countries, much to the chagrin of other civil society entities including universities, media, and general public forums. Much of this discourse is pejorative in essence and these organizations are termed as ‘pretenders’ with self seeking agenda leading to range of acronyms to describe them such as “BRINGO (Brief Case NGO), MONGO (my own NGO), GONGO (government NGO), PONGO (Political NGO) and many more” ([Fowler, 2011, p. 44](#_ENREF_91)).

This is the reason that calls for accountability of NGOs have arisen from diverse sources mainly because of what these organizations do instead of what they are supposed to be doing. For example, nonprofits worldwide face a declining rate of acceptance in their societies mainly because of mission vagueness (Weisbrod, 1998, DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990). The missions are said to be broad and malleable. The growing resemblance of NGOs with for-profit ventures is transforming public and government’s opinion on whether they are truly committed to their social missions and developmental focus. Both economic and sociological literature on nonprofits points to the altruistic character of these organizations and any resemblance of these entities with commercial ambition casts them into negative aspersions, leading to calls for legitimation both within organizational bounds and outside ([C. Scott & Hopkins, 1999](#_ENREF_179)).

Part of the reason why people find it hard to strike a clear connection with nonprofits is the sheer diversity of forms and industry that pervade the sector that vary from small informal organization with little financial resources to huge multimillion dollar entitles with thousands of professional paid staff ([Dennis R Young, 2001](#_ENREF_221)). Non-profit sector also pervades social missions from helping homeless people to promoting human rights and empowerment. Public policy and market forces does have impacts on non-profit missions and mandates but it is their internal guidance capacity that lends them identity, internal acceptance, and legitimacy- the very ethos which defines nonprofits and give them a sense of identity.

Issues with legitimacy are particularly common in new industries and sectors as there is a lack of clearly defined modus of action. Because of the “liability of newness”, somebody has to act to legitimize the new activity and to establish patterns of behavior. In such conditions, those who institutionalize new modes of organizational behavior are invariably termed as ‘institutional entrepreneurs’ in emerging literature on institutional change. These actors help perpetuate newer technical ways to institutionalize newer ”cognitive norms, models, scripts and patterns of behavior consistent with their identity and interests, and establish them as standard and legitimate to others” ([Déjean, Gond, & Leca, 2004, p. 743](#_ENREF_64)). Along the same lines [Hervieux, Gedajlovic, and Turcotte (2010, p. 41)](#_ENREF_109) suggest that legitimacy concerns are critical aspect of disparate entrepreneurial activities. Taking new initiatives in social entrepreneurship as an example, the authors contend that innovative entrepreneurs lack cultural schemas and scripts to establish stakeholders’ trust. [Aldrich and Fiol (1994)](#_ENREF_6) also suggest similar issues with emerging fields where innovative entrepreneurs face a myriad of problems but their relative lack of legitimacy as especially critical. In such environment the entrepreneurs and critical stakeholders may not fully understand the nuances of their enterprises and their behavior will be questioned ([Aldrich & Fiol, 1994, p. 645](#_ENREF_6)).

A related concern has been lately added to the array of complaints against NGOs particularly in wake of 9/11. [Howell and Lind (2009)](#_ENREF_114) assert that government uses NGOs as local representatives to lend legitimacy to the counter terrorism activities and take care in assessing the civil society so that it is not used by terrorist networks. This is conscious move on the part of government has further alienated the NGO community whose primary strength emanates from its continuous unambiguous engagement most important constituency- citizens.

This negative categorization is visible in the HDF of Pakistan where evaluators generally see the NGOs as market entities with little social welfare aims The general discussion presented above on NGOs as organizations in need of approval is further elaborated with the help of a conceptual framework in the section 2.5.

### 2.3.1- Contextualizing legitimacy fissures in underdeveloped institutional environments

Today NGOs perform distinctive roles and are the key supply chain players in delivering international humanitarian and development assistance throughout the conflict hotspots in the world. The international development doctrines have increasingly assigned NGOs the role of delivering aid, operate in disaster relief, and a wholesale provision of key social services in areas under perpetual state of conflict, such as the study region. As such NGOs have assumed a more pronounced role of services delivery organizations than the historical promise of them being a force for democratization and political accountability. According to [Edwards (2004, p. 14)](#_ENREF_81) this enhanced role is not something new as NGOs, faith-based organizations and other civic groups have historically been significant sources of services provision. The only difference, he maintains, is now they are seen as the preferred channel for service provision in deliberate substitution for the state. While the liberal perspective is that of enhanced government responsiveness to services delivery, it's the neoliberal doctrines that make State’s wary of NGOs roles. The neoliberal perspective wants a reorganization of the political space to minimize the role of the state ([Glasius, Lewis, & Seckinelgin, 2004](#_ENREF_98)). This view is strengthened by insights from post crisis environments. As an example [Schuller (2009)](#_ENREF_178) summarizes the role of NGOs as intermediaries between larger global forces and local level impacts from ethnographic studies in the aftermath of Haitian earthquake. He argues that NGOs “glue” globalization and induces neoliberal doctrines in four ways; First, NGOs are increasingly been posed as alternative to the states; Second, NGOs continuously undermine developing countries’ capacity and legitimacy to provide sustainable solutions to services delivery and poverty alleviation; Third, NGOs increases inequalities as it provide high-paying jobs to usually westernized educated middle class; and Fourth, NGOs work as institutional buffers between policy makers and masses to block real grassroots participation.

An emerging theoretical understanding is that humanitarian reconstruction efforts are hijacked and used to their advantage by international players with connivance of local elites, bureaucrats, and NGOs. This is clear from evidence on appropriation of the spoils of reconstruction in crisis-hit countries like Haiti, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. USAID for example appropriated 5.2 billion dollars between 2003-06 earmarked as reconstruction funds and almost 80% of these flew back to non-profits and for-profits based in the United States ([Gunewadena & Schuller, 2008](#_ENREF_107)). Naomi Klein’s conception of ‘disaster capitalism’ casts a macro perspective on entrenched international interests in post disaster economies and terms it ‘privatizing the government’ and ‘governance for private profit’. She suggests that wars and disaster responses are fully privatized in post September 11 scenario.

This preference has induced a semblance of a market-like approach to humanitarian work where contracts for aid delivery are fiercely fought. [Holmén (2010)](#_ENREF_113) work on NGOs and the aid industry in sub-Saharan Africa summarizes that development in Africa through NGOs has made local civil society totally dependent on international aid and has eroded the sense of building local capacity.

A good measure of understanding this trend is the founder’s motivation to start nonprofits in the first place. Measuring motivation to start a non-profit organization, [Bano (2008)](#_ENREF_19) traces origination of NGOs in Pakistan to various material reasons. According to her fieldwork findings of 40 nonprofits across Pakistan, it was mostly an existing donor project that necessitated formation of NGOs and not some ideological preference or real community/beneficiary need. Equally important are the qualifications of the individual or group that sets up NGOs, where most of owners/founders/CEOs have some exposure to western education and modern development discourses. She concludes that NGOs are qualified contractors who implement donor’s projects and programs without any role in agenda settings and have no constituencies but donors themselves.

This is clear from the dominant development discourses introduced by the donors and towed equally by host governments and non-profit organizations. Bano substantiates her claim with the nature of NGOs work according to the development agenda of different historical junctures. For example, the donor preference of working on women issues necessitated a large number of nonprofits openings flagging women empowerment and rights issues in the 1980s in Pakistan. The early 90s saw more focus on micro-finance and a subsequent abundance of CSOs formation resulted in a flooded market of organizations that launched microcredit schemes with little innovation than what everyone else were providing. In the mid nineties, the donors focus moved towards community mobilization and both new organizational forms and established NGOs started branding their work as contributing towards community empowerment. If one were to map just the names of NGOs formed during these times, the evidence that donors drive development agenda would be clearer.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the focus turned to governance and devolution and grand alliances were created amongst civil society players to sustain a barrage of ‘good governance’ ideals. Since 9/11 the focus has shifted towards security and development and in line with the requirements of the times, NGOs started shifting their missions or started new ventures. There is no dearth of serial nonprofit business ventures as will be discovered and substantiated during the fieldwork for this research.

[Bano (2008)](#_ENREF_19) concludes that international aid is indeed leading towards lowered organizational performances and is counter-productive to the ideals of empowerment, democracy, justice, and peace that NGOs holds on to.

Another important factor in a commercial approach towards nonprofit work in Pakistan is its level of development. In line with [Salamon and Anheier (1992b)](#_ENREF_172) distinction between for-profit and nonprofit sectors is vivid in societies where the general level of social and economic development is high. In case of Pakistan, where the level of socioeconomic development is low, nonprofits may not be easily distinguishable from for profit organizations. It has repercussions for how public perceives their existence.

The study region is socially deprived with literacy rates for girls as low as 17% in FATA (FDIHS, 2014). There are 1.5 million children out of school in the province of KP and a million dropout children which is roughly 10% of total children population (ESED, Govt of KP, 2017). There is a dearth of primary health facility and the infant and maternal mortality rates are highest in the region. On other key socioeconomic indicators too, the study region lag far behind the rest of the country as depicted in table 2.

Table - Selected development INDICATORS for study region

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | Pakistan (overall) | Study region | |
| Khyber Pakhtunkhwa | FATA |
| Literacy rate | 56.2% | 49.8% | 17.4% |
| Literacy rate (female) | 43.6% | 31.7% | 3% |
| Population to doctor ratio | 1226 | 4916 | 7650 |
| Population per health facility bed | 1341 | 1594 | 2179 |
| Access to clean drinking water | 86% | 58% | 43% |
| Roads (Per square km) | 0.26 | 0.13 | 0.17 |

Source: PCNA 2010, Pakistan Federal Bureau of Statistics, CSIS FATA report

Politically FATA is still governed under the draconian Frontier Crimes Regulations Ordinance of 1901 (Development advocate, UNDP). There have been many efforts to scrap FCR and introduce political reforms in the lawless lands of FATA but with little results. Politically people in the study area do have representation in the parliament but they cannot legislate for their constituencies owing to peculiar legal arrangement FATA with the Federation of Pakistan.

## 2.4 Extant theories on NGOs

### 2.4.1 Economic and market theories

Market theories on NGOs are grounded in a neo-liberal approach that locates NGOs as actors in a global context (Brown, 2008). Much of these insights come from the Harvard’s Hauser Center that builds on the market analyses of demand and supply ([Thrandardottir, 2012](#_ENREF_202)). From a demand side perspective, nonprofit organizations are created because of market failure, government failure, or contract failure ([Carman & Nesbit, 2013](#_ENREF_50)). Government failure simply means that government is unable to meet needs of the society (Hansmann, 1987). Market failure means services that cannot be met by private sector for lack of sufficient incentives. Contract failure suggests that consumers feel vulnerable for exchange of niche products in a profit driven scenario (Gronbjerg, 1998) and thus needs to be protected. It should be noted however that the market model doesn’t necessarily suggest that the normative criteria is ignored altogether and that NGOs are purely private entities (Ebrahim, 2006).

[Salamon and Anheier (1998)](#_ENREF_173) puts forth a set of 5 theories to help examine the existence, behavior, and scale of nonprofits and conclude that none of these theories comprehensively explains the basic question of why nonprofits exist. Instead they propose a social origin theory of nonprofits based on historical development of social classes and social institutions in different societies that may help explain why non-profits exist in different societies. An overview of pertinent theories is presented in table 3 followed by discussion on the social change theories.

Table -theories on nonprofits under key conditions

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Non profit theories | key contributors | | Major Conditions | Assumptions | Sources of financing |
| Public good theories (Government failure/market failure) | | Weisbrod 1977 | Government & private sector unable to supply sufficient quantities of public goods | The more heterogeneous the population, the bigger the nonprofits sector | Voluntary donations |
| Supply side theories (Entrepreneurship theories) | | James 1987, Rose-Ackerman (1996), Young (1983) | Social entrepreneurs, people with an incentive to create non-profit organizations to meet such demand, particularly under some sort of competitive environment | The greater the level of (e.g., for religious adherents) competition, the larger the nonprofits sector | Particular segments providing finances to win adherents |
| Trust theories | | Hansmann, 1980, 1987 | Arising from information asymmetries in cases where the purchaser is not the same person as the consumer and the services provided is difficult to assess | The scale of the nonprofits sector to vary inversely with the level of trust in the business sector in a society. | Fees and services charges |
| Welfare state theory | | Flora and Alber, (1981) | With traditional welfare state theory, extensive State provision of social welfare services results in non-visibility of the non-profit sector | The higher the level of income per capita, the smaller the non-profit sector in a country. | Fees & service charges |
| Interdependence theories | | Salamon, 1987 | The state-nonprofits relationship is not antagonistic but rather complementary owing to the latter’s expertise, structures, and experience that governments can draw on in their own activities. | The greater the government social welfare spending, the larger the non-profit sector. | Government |

Source: based on [Salamon and Anheier (1998)](#_ENREF_173)

Other economic theories on nonprofits involve some notion of utility maximization based on rational choices ([Helmut K. Anheier, 2005](#_ENREF_9)). Young (2013) contends that we may never have a simple economic model of a nonprofit organization. However it is now recognized that the interface of supply and demand is what ultimately determines the character of goods and services produced by the nonprofit sector, particularly in Euro-American systems. Beyond what is produced by NGOs, these organizations are important actors in social and political coordination. Consequently they do not float freely in social space but are institutionally embedded in social and economic structures (Seibel, 1990 in Salamon & Anheier, 1998b).

There is also a supply side ‘entrepreneurial’ focus on non-profits in literature. If entrepreneurship is considered as a societal phenomenon or process of change that identifies and captures opportunities for production, consumption, and exchange of goods to create value for everyone (Stokes et al. 2010), then NGOs qualifies to be seen as entrepreneurial. When the definition is broadened to consider entrepreneurs as individuals who have a specific attitude towards change (Young, 1980), we may term NGO as entrepreneurial in its own right. The supply side, of which Dennis Young (1983) is the primary influencer, directed the focus of theorizing on nonprofits based on the role of entrepreneur’s agency. James (1987) and Rose-Ackerman (1996) are the other contributors to explain nonprofits behaviour from an entrepreneurial perspective where individuals/organizations are construed as agents creating opportunities to advance social and economic good for public consumption.

[Dennis R. Young (2013)](#_ENREF_223) in his 1983 work broadened the entrepreneurial motivation base by suggesting that entrepreneurs are not economic utility maximisers alone but embody a wide variety of styles and motivations. Choosing a nonprofit organizational vehicle and choice of sectors is thus based on wider entrepreneurial motivation. Young’s theory of nonprofit behaviors succinctly outline that entrepreneurs have varying motivations that are reflected in their choice of industry to match their preference for wealth, power, or moral purposes. [Badelt (1997, p. 165)](#_ENREF_16) espouses on Young’s categorization to draw nonprofits entrepreneurs as 'professionals', "believers', 'searchers'; 'conservers', 'power seekers', 'controllers', 'players', and several others suggesting that certain personality typologies would be attracted to the nonprofit enterprises. He maintains that entrepreneurship theories and their application to nonprofits have an overall positive influence on nonprofits who are traditionally thought of as “unprofessional and ineffective especially when compared to for-profit enterprise” ([Badelt, 1997, p. 173](#_ENREF_16)). Similarly as a behavioral phenomenon, entrepreneurship can quickly become a highly creative and personal process and since nonprofit founders are ideologically motivated, their passion spills over into mission of organizations ([Carman & Nesbit, 2013](#_ENREF_50)). The entrepreneur has a very important role in shaping the new organization, which often reflects the founder’s priorities and vision (Peter Frumkin, 2013). This however also leads to the proverbial ‘founder syndrome’ ([Carman & Nesbit, 2013](#_ENREF_50)) that may eventually cause the organization to stall and perish.

([Dennis R Young, 2001](#_ENREF_221))suggests that entrepreneurship is a universal phenomenon pervading sectors, industries, and domains. This is why we hear about entrepreneurial public sector and the now established entrepreneurial nonprofit sector in developed countries. Looking at the phenomenon of NGOs from an entrepreneurial perspective has the potential to better unravel the underlying character of these organizations ([Helm & Andersson, 2010](#_ENREF_108)).

The economic theories thus identify why NGOs exist but fails to locate them in larger institutional orders that could tell more about their behaviors. There is a need to look at other theories that might explain the existence, structures, and effectiveness of such organizations.

### 2.4.2 Social change theories

Social change theories revolve around the issues of representation of NGOs rather than their effectiveness and emphasize community participation in a ‘bottom up’ development paradigm (Salmon and Anheier, 1996). NGOs are considered as complementary entities supporting nation states in democratization and pluralism ([Carman & Nesbit, 2013](#_ENREF_50)). Empowerment and participation are taken as ends in themselves rather than means to achieve ideals of development. NGOs legitimacy under the social change models are concerned with the degree to which NGOs claim legitimacy as democratic agents themselves ([Thrandardottir, 2012](#_ENREF_202)).

The social change theories often ignore external legitimacy of NGOs as the focus is more on how representation is espoused as an integral component internally. Salmon and Anheier (1997) through cross-country comparisons suggest that to qualify as nonprofits, organizations should be private, not distributing profits to its members, self governing and voluntary. The questions of accountability, i.e., how effectively NGOs represent the disenfranchised is altogether ignored ([Peruzzotti, 2006](#_ENREF_158)) in social change theories on NGOs.

Generally then theories on nonprofits attempt to answer three basic questions; why do nonprofits exist, how do they behave, and what are their impacts ([Helmut K. Anheier, 2005](#_ENREF_9)). These questions are usually investigated at three levels of analysis including; at organizational or organizational population levels, at field/industry level, or at economy/society levels. This research attempts to understand a set of humanitarian local NGOs at the organizational and field level and thus makes use of neo-institutional theory as discussed below.

### 2.4.3 Neo-Institutional theory as the overarching theoretical framework

The strength of NIT is that it offers an analytical view of NGOs similar to business organizations, the importance it accords to government in NGOs maintenance, and the resultant risks it identifies for NGOs to ignore communal aspects ([Thrandardottir, 2012](#_ENREF_202)). From a field perspective too, NGOs themselves are often considered as ‘legitimacy gap fillers’ providing political legitimacy to the global institution of humanitarian aid (Macdonald, 2008). Thus under NIT the question of NGOs legitimacy is tied to the universal values espoused by global institutions, and how they permeate local and national humanitarian structures.

For more than the past three decades, institutional theory has been the leading perspective in organizational analyses primarily addressing the key question of whether organizational behavior is the product of social structure or human agency ([Heugens & Lander, 2009](#_ENREF_110)). Institutionalists seem divided during this time with the structuralist camp assigning the totality of organizational behavior to macro forces ([Galvin et al., 2004](#_ENREF_93)) that lead organizations to act according to macro prescriptions to gain societal legitimacies (DiMaggio & Power, 1983). [North (1990)](#_ENREF_149) often-quoted description succinctly defines institutions as “the rules of the game of a society”. He maintains that Institutions are human devised mechanism to structure human interaction that operate at two levels; the formal constraints like law and judiciary, and the informal constraints like conventions and behavioural norms. Scott (1995) suggests institutions as cognitive, normative, and regulative structures that provide stability and meaning to social behavior. In classical institutional theory the direction of institutional change was always considered as look alikeness or isomorphism that is pushed by coercive, normative and mimetic forces (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Organizations were generally examined under the notion of ‘rationalized myth’, where organizations mould into entities that reinforce the bounded reality of institutional imperatives. ‘Bounded rationality’ is thus the starting point of how institutions affect organizational forms and structures.

Orthodox application of institutional theory thus attributes all organizational actions as reaction to exogenous forces thereby excluding actors’ agency altogether ([Wooten & Hoffman, 2008](#_ENREF_218)). Such exogenous forces include norms, regulations, and culture that binds organizational action more towards isomorphism and results in apparent high level homogeneity across organizations in a particular sector or field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The clearest insight that institutional theory hence offers is that isomorphism legitimates ([Glynn & Abzug, 2002](#_ENREF_99)) and this has been the given perspective in institutional literature. This orientation regarding institutions as all encompassing has changed recently in what is known is a Neo-institutional theory (NIT). The Neo-institutionalists consider the above position as over deterministic and allow organizational discretion to play a role in how institutions are changed. This is clear from the recent surge of literature in institutional entrepreneurship that considers organizational agency as equally important aspect of institutional order and change ([Battilana, Leca, & Boxenbaum, 2009](#_ENREF_22); [Déjean et al., 2004](#_ENREF_64); [Leca & Naccache, 2006](#_ENREF_131)). NIT differs from institutional theory in many ways.

First is the much-needed recapture of actors’ agency back into institutional analyses. Newer work in NIT takes institutions as liable to change rather than static entities that structure human-environment interaction. Such institutional work refers to the intentional agency of actors that create, maintain and disrupt institutions ([Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2009](#_ENREF_130)). Institutional change is now seen more actively that emerge as a consequence of actors practices with the passage of time ([Jarzabkowski & Paul Spee, 2009](#_ENREF_122)). The burgeoning literature in ‘strategy as practice’ stream, institutions are liable to change through the everyday activities of actors and understanding these behaviors bottoms up can shed new light on the micro foundations of institutional theory. This line of thinking converges on the understanding that organizations are not passive recipients of institutional prescriptions but rather able to produce desirable changes in the institutional environment over time. Recent literature in institutional theory challenges the blanket assumption of isomorphism and suggests that some aspects of organizations may indeed be informed and regulated by institutions while not others ([Battilana et al., 2009](#_ENREF_22); [Déjean et al., 2004](#_ENREF_64); [Leca & Naccache, 2006](#_ENREF_131); [Marcus & Anderson, 2008](#_ENREF_138); [Powell & Colyvas, 2008](#_ENREF_161)). The inclusion of agency in institutional analysis post 1990s has thus started challenging isomorphism as “the master hypothesis” (Hoffman and Ventresca, 2002). It was the beginning of realization that heterogeneity prevails amongst organizations in a field primarily in responding to legitimacy requirements at the field level. The significance of NIT is to reintroduce a broader vision of agency in relation to institutions in a way that agents are not painted as superheroes or ‘cultural dopes’ (Meyer & Rowan, 2008). This has led to the much-trumpeted arrival of institutional entrepreneurs who lead the way for incorporating newer practices in nascent and established organizational fields ([Garud, Hardy, & Maguire, 2007](#_ENREF_94)).

Secondly, NIT differs from the classic Institutional theory in the conceptualization of ‘environment’. The old school considers environment as local while NIT consider it as encompassing subtle influence enabling actors to view “categories of structure, action, and thought” ([Powell & DiMaggio, 1991, p. 13](#_ENREF_162)) at larger field/sector and societal levels. Under NIT, organizational acceptance flows from field level institutions more powerfully than from societal level. Issues related to conflict of interest and structures are relegated as peripheral issues. Examining the construct of ‘field’ from NIT has implications for better institutional analyses as it accommodate diversity of institutional logics in organizational strategies. The emerging view is that field are composed of multiple logics and that the application of these diverse logics enable actors to segregate themselves from others in a given organizational field. Further, actors resist institutionalization of certain practices in their institutional and technical environments ([Lounsbury, 2008](#_ENREF_135)) which is a key insight in development of the study’s theoretical framework that takes entrepreneurial logics at par with existing institutional logics on humanitarian development.

Thirdly and at organizational level, the NIT is built around the conception of organizational legitimacy rather than efficiency or effectiveness as primary organizational goals ([Dart, 2004](#_ENREF_63)). In highly elaborated institutional environments, organizations are relatively certain about the expectations of institutional actors ([J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1991, p. 53](#_ENREF_141)) as the organization-environment interaction are set on clear schemes of mutual exchange. On the other hand, organizations working in complex humanitarian environments experience all kinds of demands. The dynamics of complex environment means that production and distribution mechanisms are fundamentally in flux. Such complexities arise from the fundamental political, legal, economic, and social changes (Danis et al. 2010).

Challenges facing NGOs in HDF identified in section 2.3 together with a preliminary discussion on NIT as a theory of choice to drive forward this research, I ground the discussion in the key construct of organizational ‘legitimacy’ to strengthening the study’s theoretical framework in the follow up section.

## 2.5. Organizational Legitimacy- a multi-dimensional concept

Legitimacy derives from the Latin word “legis” simply suggesting something in accordance with a rule ([Zelditch Jr, 2001](#_ENREF_225)). The concept of legitimacy has been the subject of study in various disciplines including law (Fallon, 1989), social sciences (Zelditch, 2004), and Philosophy (Estlund, 2008) with each discipline offering a range of approaches to examine it. Presenting a chronology of theories dealing with the broader notions of legitimacy, [Zelditch Jr (2001)](#_ENREF_225) argues that the history of western civilization has engaged with the concept for, at least, the past 24 centuries as reflected in influential works such as ‘The Republic’ (Plato), Politics (Aristotle), The Prince (Machiavelli), The social contract (Rousseau), The German ideology (Marks and Engels), the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann), Legitimation crisis (Habermas) and so on. From the times of Aristotle’s ‘The Politics’, for example, legitimacy has been correlated with the stability of political regimes ([Zelditch Jr, 2001, p. 41](#_ENREF_225)).

This is to suggest that traditionally notions associated with legitimacy erupted from political contexts but progressively have been applied equally well to organizational fields and organizations ([Goldsmith & Pereira, 2014](#_ENREF_100)). Organizational legitimacy is broadly understood as a status achieved by confirming to conditions of cultural alignment, normative structure and relevant rules and laws (Scott, 1995) of a society. In other words conformance with structures and standards of the larger social order produces highest order of legitimation (Meyer and Rowan, 1977) and ensures resources necessary for organizational survival ([Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990](#_ENREF_12)).

The construct of legitimacy has been widely discussed and defined in multiple ways in organizational theory ([Bitektine & Haack, 2014](#_ENREF_33)). The most quoted statement is that of Suchman describing organizational legitimacy as the generalized ‘umbrella evaluation’ of an entity’s appropriateness in a socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions ([Suchman, 1995, p. 574](#_ENREF_195)). Organizational actions are thus driven by a higher-level cognitive justification that aligns with institutional requirements and can loosely be termed as ‘social justification’ ([DiMaggio & Powell, 1983](#_ENREF_74); [W. R. Scott, 1995](#_ENREF_180)), or ‘social judgment’ ([Bitektine, 2011](#_ENREF_32)). According to [Tolbert and Zucker (1999)](#_ENREF_204) the most important insights though were provided by Meyer and Rowan (1977) proposing that organizational structures have both symbolic and action-generating properties that communicate values of the organization and those of the society at large.

A look at the definitional landscape of legitimacy (table 4) over the past decades suggest that it has moved out of micro-level organizational boundaries and efficiency concerns to its resemblance with the wider social systems and field environment ([Bitektine & Haack, 2014](#_ENREF_33)). Looking at these definitions the bases of organizational legitimacy are invariably rooted in norms (rules, regulations), cognition (values, beliefs), and pragmatic assumptions about organizations.

Table - DEFINITIONS of legitimacy

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Legitimacy is…. | * Sources |
| * An entity’s actions are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions. | * ([Suchman, 1995](#_ENREF_195)) |
| * Conformity with both general social norms and formal laws | * Weber, 1978 in ([Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005](#_ENREF_197)) |
| * Congruence of an organization with social laws, norms, and values | * Parsons (1956,1960) (in Suddaby et al 2008) |
| * Congruence between the social values associated with or implied by [organizational] activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system | * Dowling and Pfeffer (1975) in (Suchman 1995) |
| * The process whereby an organization justifies to a peer or superordinate system its right to exist | * Maurer (1971:361) in (Suchman, 1995) |
| * The process through which individuals come to adhere to, defer to or support a socially defined set of rules (written or unwritten) | * Johnson and Sell, 2004 |
| * “The degree of cultural support for an organization” | * Meyer and Scott, 1983 |
| * Judgment formation based on non-verbal actions of evaluators | * [Bitektine and Haack (2014)](#_ENREF_33) |

* Source: Literature review

There has been a gradual evolution in concept formation around legitimacy, from gaining, maintaining, defending, & repairing legitimacy, to legitimacy not being treated as commodity to be possessed but rather an essential condition reflecting organizational consonance with societal rules and laws ([W. R. Scott, 1995](#_ENREF_180); [Walker, 2004](#_ENREF_212)). Legitimacy has also been dubbed as an ‘exchange’ resource and a higher order representation of interacting institutions (Hybels (1995). Conceptualized this way legitimacy is a meta representation, among exchange partners, and a by-product of organizational interaction. Research in organization legitimacy usually refers to establishing legitimacies through institutionalization of new practices as well as deinstitutionalization of redundant practices ([Bitektine & Haack, 2014](#_ENREF_33)).

The concept of legitimacy has been discussed in organizational contexts for long but the bases for legitimacy has been contested both within organizational boundaries and how it is being constructed external of organizations. The starting point in ascertaining legitimacy typologies is the question of who is evaluating what aspect of organizational legitimacy ([Drori & Honig, 2013](#_ENREF_76)). Similarly demands on organizational legitimacies may differ from one organizational field to the other ([Bitektine, 2011](#_ENREF_32)). Different audiences accord varying importance to the diverse legitimacy bases and organizations can prioritize using their response strategically to cover the legitimacy base most in question.

Despite the centrality accorded to ascertaining organizational legitimacy, very few studies have qualitatively dealt with the concept. Generally it has been treated as a quantitative construct with proxy representation in various settings and industries. For example Deephouse and Carter (2005) used government regulative ratings to examine regulative acceptance of an organization. Others have used media rankings (Shane and Foo 1999) to examine normative legitimacy. While still others have used proxies of organizational age and size to base legitimacy in cognitive domain ([Ivanova, 2010](#_ENREF_119)).

Both theoretical and empirical literature on legitimacy explains how organizations are being looked upon by the society ([Goldsmith & Pereira, 2014](#_ENREF_100)). However [Bitektine and Haack (2014)](#_ENREF_33) believes that legitimacy is both an individual level phenomenon termed as ‘propriety’ and a collective level ‘validity’ where propriety connotes evaluators judgment of practices that are acceptable and is a micro-level construct. On the other hand ‘validity’ represents collective judgment about a group, organization, field or society and thus is a macro level judgment of legitimacy. Validity is hence more powerful in that it is collective and individuals rely heavily on the collective validity opinion in making their own propriety assessments ([Bitektine & Haack, 2014, p. 7](#_ENREF_33)).

Literature on organizational legitimacy also warns that too much concern with legitimacy can lead to inefficiency and lack of innovation. In that sense too much focus on legitimacy may lead to organizational effectiveness but not organizational efficiency ([Sonpar, Pazzaglia, & Kornijenko, 2010](#_ENREF_191)). Likewise [Glynn and Abzug (2002, p. 278)](#_ENREF_99) suggest that legitimacy may turn out to be dual-edged sword as the sheer numbers of organizations adopting a practice creates "bandwagon pressure"- which arises from the threat of lost legitimacy. “Over-institutionalization” and efforts for enhanced legitimation may thus be a source of organizational stagnation.

### 2.5.1 Theories on organizational legitimacy

The construct of organizational legitimacy has been largely seen through three theories. These include the ecological theories (Hannan and Freeman, 1989), resource dependence (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978), and the already explained neo- institutional theory (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991).

Ecologists conceptualize legitimacy in cognitive terms, assessing it at the population level using organizational density as a proxy ([Carroll & Hannan, 1989](#_ENREF_51)). Under the density model, explains Hannan and Carroll (1992), an organizational form is legitimate cognitively when there is little doubt in the actor’s mind that it is serving some kind of collective good. The more the density of similar mandated organizations in a field, the more one can be sure of their legitimacies and the lesser their mortality rates ([Ruef & Scott, 1998](#_ENREF_168)). Organizational ecology has emerged as a powerful lens with growing empirical support to answer the central question of how populations of organizations change over certain period of time ([Tucker, Singh, & Meinhard, 1990](#_ENREF_206)). This measure has been put to good use, for example, in explaining motivations, growth, and existence of various populations in voluntary, for profit, and nonprofit sectors in developed world. The density model has been used in United States and Europe to understand the processes of legitimation and competition in a variety of industries including breweries, banks, newspapers, childcare etc. [Singh (1993)](#_ENREF_188), and [Baum and Powell (1995, p. 530)](#_ENREF_24) presents a complete inventory of studies that made effective use of density models across a range of industries. According to [Singh (1993, p. 466)](#_ENREF_188) the implications of density models were tested in seven organizational populations including “U.S. national labor unions, 1836-1985, newspaper publishing organizations in Argentina, 1800-1900, and in Ireland and San Francisco, 1800-1975, U.S. brewing firms, 1633-1988, U.S. life insurance companies, 1759-1937, and banks in Manhattan, 1791-1980”.

Similarly working on the historical data of newspapers agencies in United States, [Carroll and Hannan (1989, p. 545)](#_ENREF_51), argues that density drives both processes of competition and legitimation in different ways. They argue that more of similar mandated organizations increases legitimacy but at a decreasing rate. This is because legitimation of a particular form of organization in the long run lowers founding rates as competition intensifies amongst legitimated organizations. This may also lead to high mortality rates once a field reaches levels of maturity.

The theory is criticized for falling short of including other ‘non density’ measures and more importantly the socio-political factors that provide vital support for organizational development. The ecological theory focuses only on cognitive legitimacy and ignores other associated forms of organizational legitimacy such as the sociopolitical legitimacy that is a prime concern to organizational analyses.

Resource dependence theories, on the other hand, are primarily related to the social and political relationships between organizations and the entities that support them. This theory merits consideration for application to this research on HDF as nonprofits behavior echo ideals of external funders ([Chang & Tuckman, 1994](#_ENREF_53)). According to [Bielefeld (1992)](#_ENREF_31) resource dependence theory interprets environments in purely 'technical' terms and ignore the larger effectiveness criteria. Technical environments as defined by Scot (1987) are those competitive environments where products are exchanged in markets under the efficiency criteria. Under resource dependence theories, organizations are constantly uncertain and dependent upon resources flow.

Resource dependence theorists (such as Pfeffer, 1981; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) contextualized legitimacy by taking such dimensions as age, market niche, mission, and size of organizations. Resource theories have been criticized for being too rational and limited in terms of the organizational aspects it considers ([Bielefeld, 1992](#_ENREF_31)).

None of the above two theories thus deals with the construct of legitimacy in its entirety. For an enriched understanding, it is assumed that NIT provides a better lens to examine the multi-dimensional nature of legitimacy as a concept, process, and outcome.

### 2.5.2 Institutional approach to legitimacy

Institutional theory conceptualizes organizations as ‘open systems’ with porous and problematic boundaries ([Powell & DiMaggio, 1991](#_ENREF_162)) that are foremost informed by larger cultural norms, beliefs and rituals. It is thus right to assume that Institutional theory views legitimacy as “virtually synonymous with institutionalization” (Suchman, 1995, p. 576) and the two are same at macro level. [Tilling and Tilt (2010)](#_ENREF_203) suggest that institutional legitimacy theory is not a single theory but at least provide two perspectives on organizations. In one way it deals with organizational structures as a whole rendering legitimation and institutionalization as necessarily one. Government, capitalist structure, religion, and culture, for example, have been presented as macro institutions and organizational structures must conform to these institutional norms in a given society. But there is also another angle to look at legitimation and that is from the organizational perspective, which is oftentimes termed as strategic legitimacy theory ([Tilling & Tilt, 2010](#_ENREF_203)). This is a process where organizations seek approval of different stakeholders for it’s functioning.

The guiding questions in the institutional theory tradition mid 90 onwards has been on how legitimacy is acquired, managed and utilized by organizations ([R. Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin-Andersson, & Suddaby, 2008](#_ENREF_104)). [Suddaby and Greenwood (2005)](#_ENREF_197) argue that the Neo-Institutional Theory (NIT) helps explain new organizations forms from three angles. The first is a growing knowledge of legitimacy, which is a key component of institutional change. The use of legitimacy may confer recognition on newer forms of organizations even though superior forms already exist in the environment. Secondly the emerging utility of actors’ agency in institutional environments is getting more pronounced and the use of plural logic confers legitimacy on newer organizational forms. Society is constituted through multiple interdependent as well as contradictory institutional logics (Friedland and Alford 1991: 250). Institutional logics are the broader cultural templates that prescribes how to “interpret organizational reality” (Thornton, 2004; p-70) and provide guidelines on how to function in social situations ([Royston Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011](#_ENREF_105)). Organizations thus comply with institutional logics to gain endorsement from the environment they operates in. Finally, the use of rhetoric, that of persuasive language, shifts institutional rules in favour of new emerging structures.

Similarly the neo-institutionalists highlight several other factors that contribute to the legitimacy of an organizational form or practice. Zucker (1977) treats institutionalization as a process, emphasizing that legitimacy is a cognitive phenomenon reflected in taken-for-granted assumptions. Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983) stress that legitimacy is embedded in relational networks and normative codes of conduct” ([Baum & Powell, 1995](#_ENREF_24)). On the sources of legitimacy, Institutional theory informs us that it “comes from conforming to norms, rituals, and symbols” ([Hervieux et al., 2010](#_ENREF_109)). According to Berger and Luckman (1966) institutional theory examines the structure of organizations through the lens of “rationalized myths” which are simply the socially constructed reality.

Institutional processes similarly do not yield homogenous outcomes as these are a complex bundle and exert varying levels of influence on organizations. For example, organizations occupying central social statuses vis-à-vis those in periphery in mature fields feel less pressurized as logics are highly defined. On the other hand organizations in emerging fields often face incompatible institutional logics such as accommodating the opposite logics of social as well as commercial expectations ([Royston Greenwood et al., 2011](#_ENREF_105)) and have greater levy to strategize varied responses to meet environmental expectations.

There is thus a dynamic and evolving relationship between environment and organizations and institutional theory has a rich tradition of reflecting this relationship in the key concept of legitimacy. As a concept, legitimacy exists on the borderline between organization and its environment and making sense of legitimation unlocks many mysteries about organizational actions and behaviors. It is now forcefully argued that a large number of external influences led organizations to be more attentive and responsive to their external environments including factors such as legislations, public policy, professionalization of management, public opinion and social activism ([Bromley & Powell, 2012](#_ENREF_44)).

[Suddaby and Greenwood (2005)](#_ENREF_197) answer the key question of where do new organizations comes from and provides newer insights by way of using rhetoric into the use of institutional theory. From earlier times, the origins of new organizations were supposed to lie in social environments and new forms necessarily triggered social conflicts. Despite the early reliance of institutional theory on ‘isomorphism’, neo-institutional theory now accepts diversity in how legitimacy is conferred or denied in new organizational forms.” Legitimacy of new ventures is usually overlooked in literature on legitimacy as it is considered in retrospect once an organization has survived years and matures into the ‘profit stage’ ([Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002](#_ENREF_227))

The literature of legitimacy is diverse, dense and indecisive on what constitutes legitimacy, let alone legitimacies of NGOs ([Thrandardottir, 2012](#_ENREF_202)). One central issue is the definition of NGOs and a lack of standardized scheme of classification. The other is what aspect of the NGOs are being problematized as lacking legitimacies. Is it the representativeness, accountability, or impacts of such organizations or is it their degree of similarity with, for example, private firms. Perhaps the answer lies in establishing the contextual specifications to understand the sources of NGOs legitimacy.

General types of legitimacies in institutional literature are presented below to further the discussion on what are the critical markers to examine NGOs legitimacies.

### 2.5.3 Types of Legitimacies

The previous section discussed legitimation as a process, an outcome, a commodity for exchange, a resource, and an essential condition all at the same time. This presents formidable challenges to theorizing and articulating organizational legitimacies. Various institutional works accord primacy to different elements of institutions. For some regulative elements of institutions induce organizational change (Barnett & Carroll, 1993) while for others the norms (informal structures) carry the currents for organizational behavior. Still others believe that it is the wider cognitive aspects (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) that are primarily responsible for organizational change ([Palthe, 2014](#_ENREF_156)).

Legitimacy is a multidimensional perceptual construct ([Thomas & Lamm, 2012, p. 193](#_ENREF_199)) with three major typologies of sociopolitical regulative, sociopolitical normative and cognitive legitimacies ([Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002](#_ENREF_227)). They also add a fourth type specially called the ‘industry’ legitimacy. Where does legitimacy comes from especially in emerging fields is a key dimension that new institutionalists try to examine. As legitimacy is not directly observable there have been attempts with the help of proxy measures to understand it. Suffice to say that whether an organization is legitimate is determined by evaluators who assess organization in either of the normative, cognitive, or regulatory aspects ([Ruef & Scott, 1998](#_ENREF_168)).

Continuous legitimacy challenges force organizations to cover immediate bases on which their legitimacies are challenged. These bases have been described in variation but broadly cover the core three categories of norms/regulations, culture/cognition, and pragmatic under the institutional analyses as shown in table 5.

Table - Legitimacy typologies

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| * Major types | * Subtypes | * Evaluation interest | * Definition |
| * Normative (Moral) legitimacy | * Consequential (Outputs & consequences) | * Judgmental | * Judging by what has been accomplished by the organization |
| * (Procedural) Techniques & procedures | * Judgmental | * Embracing socially accepted techniques and procedures |
| * Structural (Categories and structures) | * Judgmental | * Structures and indicators of specific level of performance |
| * Personal | * Judgmental | * Charisma of organizational leaders as legitimizing source |
| * Cognitive | * Comprehensibility | * Knowledge-based | * Models of organization actions resonates with larger culture schemes |
|  | * Taken for grantedness | * Knowledge based | * Transformation of actions into ‘givens’ |
| * Pragmatic (immediate audiences) | * Influence legitimacy | * Interest-based | * Exchange of influence for larger interests |
| * Dispositional legitimacy | * Interest-based | * Use of organizational autonomy to show trustworthiness, moral responsibility, character |

* Source: Legitimacy typologies based on [Suchman (1995)](#_ENREF_195)

#### 2.5.3.1 Normative/ Regulative legitimacy

“Normative legitimacy criteria focuses on whether an institution effectively promotes what is right, acceptable, desired, or just” ([Brakman Reiser & Kelly, 2011, p. 1015](#_ENREF_38)). It changes with world events and as such there is no given baseline quantity of this kind of legitimacy. It keeps on changing temporally as well as spatially and is based on evaluators’ judgement. [Aldrich and Fiol (1994)](#_ENREF_6) terms the normative aspect of institutions as sociopolitical legitimacy and define it as a process where stakeholders, public, government, and opinion leaders endorse a venture as legitimate (ibid, p. 648). Hence normative legitimacies can be used interchangeably with sociopolitical legitimacies.

While there is no baseline value for normative legitimacies, some organizations by the very nature of the industry they operate in find it hard to gain favourable exchanges from stakeholders. An example is new organizations in oil or chemical industry where exchanges with the environmental groups are unfavourable ([Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002](#_ENREF_227)). Similarly organizations in emerging fields have the dual liability of proving their worth as well as to subscribe to larger industry norms that may be determinant to their normative legitimacies ([Déjean et al., 2004](#_ENREF_64)). NGOs in global South are normatively judged to be belonging to a sector that is believed to be rooted in western notions of development and at face value find unfavourable exchange with citizenry at large.

Building normative legitimacies in formalized field such as banking and academia requires adhering to industry standards. An immediate source of building normative legitimacy identified by [Zimmerman and Zeitz (2002)](#_ENREF_227) are endorsements from stakeholders populating a particular industry’s field. Some key sources for validation of organizational and field level practices include media, government, and judicial systems ([Bitektine & Haack, 2014](#_ENREF_33)). Others have identified that organizations, particularly nascent, can muster more normative legitimacy by becoming part of networks (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Oliver, 1990) inside an industry.

Predominantly though normative legitimacy has been dealt as an equivalent to regulative legitimacy signifying organizations’ rootedness foremost in the formal regulatory standards and laws (Scott, 2003) of a society. Institutional actors such as government, chambers, and professional organizations set up ‘explicit regulative processes’ that sets the rules for sanctions in case of non-conformity (Scott, 1995). Further more regulative processes are not only formal rules and laws but also informal such as shamming and naming practices (Scott, 2001). In this sense ‘moral legitimacy has also been shown to be equivalent to normative legitimacy ([Aldrich & Fiol, 1994](#_ENREF_6)). Summarily then normative legitimacy is largely based on collective judgment of audiences foremost rooted in industry prescriptions.

In simplest terms a normative lens is to suggest whether something done is “the right thing to do” ([Dart, 2004](#_ENREF_63)). If the organizational behavior is challenged normatively, it means institutions have the power to stop such behaviors. From organizational change perspective, normative legitimacy suggest adhering to the moral and ethical systems of the field and following the work roles. [Bitektine (2011)](#_ENREF_32) borrowing from Parsons (1951) suggest that granting or withholding normative legitimacy represents a mechanism of ‘social control’. The social actors confers or holds legitimacy on organizations, structures or practices to encourage and promote only those structures and practices that are perceived to be beneficial to themselves, their social groups, or the entire society.

#### 2.5.3.2 Cultural (Cognitive) legitimacy

A cultural-cognitive system of institutional arrangements means a common framework of shared meaning around a particular phenomenon (Scott, 2008). Institutions are commonly alluded to as cognitive-cultural constructions, connoting taken for granted assumptions and actors (individuals, organizations, states) derive their agency substantially as a result of embeddedness in such culture ([Suddaby, Elsbach, Greenwood, Meyer, & Zilber, 2010](#_ENREF_196)). In a way this is equivalent to Bourdieu’s conception of ‘doxic’ or the cardinal truths that operate at macro institutions level ([Drori & Honig, 2013](#_ENREF_76)). The ‘taken for granted’ is knowledge-based and thus is the highest form of legitimation that can be assessed primarily about level of public knowledge about an entity ([Aldrich & Fiol, 1994, p. 648](#_ENREF_6)). Cognitive legitimacy resides in the knowledge that actors in a field indeed accord to acceptable and desirable practices ([Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002](#_ENREF_227)).

Cognitive theorists such as Meyer and Scott (1983a; Scott, 1991) and Powell and DiMaggio (1991) treats legitimacy as a cognitive function connoting congruence of organizations activities with social systems. From organizational legitimacy point of view, firstly, it suggests that organizations need to be comprehensible rather than desirable. Organizational change is also considered as change commensurate with changes in “conceptual beliefs, mental blocks and interpretation of shared meanings” ([Palthe, 2014](#_ENREF_156)). Organizations are social subsystems and require recognition at the cognitive level foremost to achieve organizational goals.

Secondly cognitive legitimacy is also taken as how people think collectively about the trustworthiness, professionalism, and skills to achieve what NGOs purport to be their goals. Organizational change in the context of humanitarian NGOs moving towards more developmental and advocacy roles requires examining the extent to which they are embedded in the cognitive institutional orders. As shown in the study’s conceptual framework, the institutional prescriptions have changed drastically and humanitarian NGOs embedded in the old institutional order require dramatic changes to be relevant in the emerging cognitive frames.

#### 2.5.3.3 Pragmatic legitimacy

[Suchman (1995)](#_ENREF_195) has also provided a third type of legitimacy that responds more to the immediate functional and technical aspect of organizations’ work termed as pragmatic legitimacy. Pragmatic legitimacy emerges from the interests of the organization’s surroundings ([Díez-Martín, Prado-Roman, & Blanco-González, 2013](#_ENREF_72)). It is the stakeholders’ perception of the organization being more responsive and supportive to achieving their interests rather than the organization achieving its own goals.

Pragmatic legitimacy is of particular importance as NGOs are not an end in themselves but rather a means to achieving humanitarian and development missions. Building and maintaining this kind of legitimacy is perhaps the biggest barrier into their entry in mainstream development services.

#### 2.5.3.4 other types of legitimacies

What produces and enhances organizational legitimacies is hard to pinpoint. Generally it is accepted that organizational legitimacies are enhanced when ‘internal’ and ‘external’ audiences support the aims and activities of an organization ([Vermeulen, Laméris, & Minkoff, 2015](#_ENREF_210))**.** External legitimacy refers to evaluation of organizational conformance with meta-environment (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999) while internal legitimacy is the validation of organizational practices by its members around a common ‘ethical, strategic of ideological vision’ ([Drori & Honig, 2013, p. 347](#_ENREF_76)). It is thus increasingly been established that internal legitimacies are oftentimes more critical for framing organizational identities and shaping strategic decision making (ibid) than treating legitimacy only as an outward phenomenon.

Another type of legitimacy particularly relevant to nonprofits is the output legitimacy. Output legitimacy is the organizational transparency in decision making and communicating positive accountably to stakeholders ([Scholte, 2004](#_ENREF_177)). More than anything else output legitimacies increases when NGOs incorporate quality technical and managerial expertise, communicating results and having strong monitoring and evaluation system ([Ossewaarde, Nijhof, & Heyse, 2008](#_ENREF_152)).

## 2.6 Strategic approach to legitimacy

Organizations everywhere are coming under increased scrutiny from multiple institutional quarters to the extent that “boundaries between firms, industries, public and private spheres” are increasingly blurring ([Zietsma, Greenwood, & Langley, 2014, p. 79](#_ENREF_226)). Institutional theorists generally perceived organizational responses towards ‘isomorphism’ alone (Oliver, 1991). Increasingly however the focus of researchers on organizational legitimacy shifted in the direction of how organizations grapple with environmental complexity under multiple institutional logics (Greenwood et al, 2011) and not solely on forces that fosters organizational isomorphism. These logics erupt from different environmental sources and add to the complexity of how organizations respond to them. While there has been recent progress as noted by ([Zietsma et al., 2014](#_ENREF_226)) in identifying and negotiating legitimacy tensions in face of multiple institutional demands much remains to be studied on how organizations deal with increasing environmental complexity that emanates from actors’ salience in a field (Mitchell et al, 1997). This line of thinking is influenced by stakeholders’ theory that accords saliency to various actors in a field through three attributes, namely power, urgency and legitimacy. Therefore theoretically organizations will respond foremost to the requirements of those actors who are powerful, have legitimate linkages and carry urgent claims on the organization.

The strategic approach to legitimacy looks at agents as having power to change institutions. Intercepting the strategic and institutional approaches provide richer rationale to how and why actors use their discretion to act in ways other than what the dominant institutions demand ([Sonpar et al., 2010](#_ENREF_191)). There are at least four areas identified by recent strategic organizational literature in how to capture the essence and response mechanisms towards multiple institutional demands ([Zietsma et al., 2014](#_ENREF_226)) as discussed below.

The first stream of literature in legitimacy building examines the conventional ways of organizational responses to multiple institutional logics by identifying which aspects of institutional complexity affects organization survival, its performance, and the necessary capabilities and knowledge set necessary to maintain legitimacies. This stream looks simply at organizational responsiveness to logics multiplicity arising out of institutional complexity. Works of Kraatz and Block, 2008 and Pache and Santos, 2010 are examples of this stream.

The second stream of literature in building organizational legitimacies looks at the interplay of multiple logics in hybrid organizations ([Battilana & Dorado, 2010](#_ENREF_21); [Battiliana, Lee, Walker, & Dorsey, 2012](#_ENREF_23)). Hybridization itself is proposed as legitimacy building to incorporate conflicting logics in organizational structures and strategies. This stream does not stop at the macro level of how logics are contested but actually examines how micro-practices of organizational actors create, resists, or sustain hybridization to accommodate multiple institutional demands.

The third line of research in institutional complexity deals with the cognitive aspect of how decision makers are implicated in the process of legitimation and how strategic decisions are conceptualized and enacted. This level of legitimation presents a managerial and executive decisions making perspective ([Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012](#_ENREF_201)).

The fourth stream of legitimacy building in face of institutional complexity is at the collective level where multiple interests intersect resulting in increased, diminished, or continued complexity of environmental demands. Such literature examines multiple demands at the field level, brings out conditions that could lead to either conflict or coexistence and how collective actors in a field shape and experience institutional complexity.

This section described in detail the various forms of legitimacies that organizations must exhibit to be institutionalized. In the next section three key constructs of NIT (institutional logics, organizational field and institutional decoupling) are operationalized to explain how the structure of HDF can be explained and agency of NGOs located to attempt an explanation of NGOs institutional marginalization.

## 2.7 Operationalizing NIT

The section provides the field level discussion for the conceptual framework presented in section 2.5.

### 2.7.1 Institutional logics

The emerging view is that field are composed of multiple logics and that the application of these diverse logics enable actors to segregate themselves from others in a given organizational field. Institutional logics provide the right lens for examining processes of institutional formation and change.

The phrase *institutional logics* was introduced by Alford and Friedland (1985) to describe the contradictory practices and beliefs inherent in the institutions of modern western societies ([Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 101](#_ENREF_200)) with a focus on interrelationships between individuals, organizations, and society (Alford and Friedland, 1991). Institutional Logics Approach (ILA) considers society as inter-institutional system where individuals, organizations, and institutions are seen as nested in a meaning system ([Westenholz, 2011](#_ENREF_216)). Institutions through their central logics provide meanings via immaterial symbols and material practices to guide actor’s behavior. They may be termed as the socially constructed assumptions and beliefs that regulate economic exchange and provide meaning to reality (Thornton 2004, p. 69). The larger social orders are thus meanings created through institutional logics ([Greckhamer, 2012](#_ENREF_103)) and links individual agency to the socially constructed functions of institutions ([Thornton & Ocasio, 2008](#_ENREF_200)).

Over the years research on institutional logics have almost overtaken any other form of research under institutional theory. Like institutions themselves, ILA operates at multiple levels. Friedland and Alford originally used institutional logics at societal levels but later on researchers have used the concept of institutional logics in organizational analyses, markets, networks, communities and at organizational field levels ([Westenholz, 2011](#_ENREF_216)). Other have similarly examined logics at country and industry levels ([Weber, Patel, & Heinze, 2013](#_ENREF_214)). As a field level construct, Institutional logics theorizes how institutional demands and organizations interaction create conditions for institutional change ([Pallas, Fredriksson, & Wedlin, 2016](#_ENREF_155)).

For the study of NGOs, it is useful to review where they are structured in the scheme of humanitarian field under logics at sectors, fields, and organization levels. First, for logics at the sector level, society is divided into conventional three sectors model ([Bromley & Meyer, 2014](#_ENREF_43)). The bases for multiple logics ostensibly flows from wider societal level and may include logics of family, community, religion, state, market, profession and corporation ([Besharov & Smith, 2014](#_ENREF_30)). This is the fundamental level where NGOs are cognitively judged as only existing for ‘public benefit’ and not serving any other interest. Any eventuality suggesting these organizations tilt away form benefiting public, institutional demands emerge from the other two sectors. The underlying logic of NGOs has to be ‘mutual’ with ‘clients’ or members as the main beneficiaries, as shown in Table 6. Similarly the strategic logic is based around the notion of social value creation rather than just delivery of public services or extracting financial benefits for executives or board of directors. The accountability logics on NGOs are based on its resourcing strategy as donations and grants are the main resource envelope for such organizations.

Table - Institutional logics in three sectors model

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Logics | Civil society | Private sector | Public sector |
| Institutional logic | Public benefit | Profit maximization | Collective democracy |
| Ownership | Mutual | Private | Collective |
| Key beneficiaries | Clients | Owners | General public |
| Strategic focus | Social value creation | Financial value creation | Public services |
| Accountability | Stakeholders voice | Published accounts, stock performance | Ballot box |
| Resource strategy | Donations, earned income, grants | Debt, equity, earned income | Taxes |
| Dominant organization structure | Charity, cooperatives | Private company | Departmentalized bureaucracy |

Source: Adapted form Nicholls & Murdock (2012), p. 10

It is thus argued that the power of the logic of public benefit lies at the normative level for public civil society organizations. NGOs legitimacy challenge erupts from the fact that they are embedding two fundamental logics of public benefit and private ownership is as clear from the emerging form of NGOs in the study’s context. The services delivered by NGOs, as judged by other institutional actors are geared towards their owners rather than mutually benefiting its membership body. Legitimacy crisis erupts when organizations rely on multiple value bases from for-profit and nonprofit models thus impacting identity markers and creating doubts amongst stakeholders ([Costanzo, Vurro, Foster, Servato, & Perrini, 2014](#_ENREF_59)).

At the field level, organizations are seldom influenced by a single logic and nonprofits particularly have to adapt ‘external’ institutional logics due to resource dependency ([Knutsen, 2012](#_ENREF_129)). The multiplicity of logics are visible through transformation of formal structures in all types of organizations be that government, for-profits, and non-profits ([Bromley & Meyer, 2014](#_ENREF_43)). The inevitability of change with evolving logics on what different kinds of organizations should produce, and how to produce, keeps on changing in nonprofits particularly as multiple institutional demands usually of conflicting nature keeps knocking at organizational doors.

Such multiplicity is distilled into the concept of multiple institutional logics to examine how organizations in the same field experience varied nature of environmental demands. Invariably referred to as institutional complexity (Greenwood et al, 2011), institutional pluralism (kraatz & Block, 2008), institutional hybridity (Battilana & Duorado, 2010; Pache & Santos, 2013), such multiplicity affect organizations in a variety of fields ([Besharov & Smith, 2014](#_ENREF_30)), more so in emerging, highly fragmented and loosely centralized institutional arenas (Pache and Santos, 2010). [Besharov and Smith (2014)](#_ENREF_30) provide examples of fields operating under multiplicity of logics drawing on the works of Dacin, Dacin & Tracey (2001) on social enterprises, Glynn & Lounsbury (2005) on cultural industries and Smets, Morris, & Greenwood (2012) in professional services organizations, and Thornton (2002) research in higher education publishing. These studies suggest that the use of multiple logics in different ways lead to institutionalization of practices that were previously thought of as inappropriate or illegitimate. They also show that adjustments made in logics paved wave for field-level changes and often result in institutionalization of new organizational forms.

At the organizational levels, the presence of multiple logics and organizational responses to them have been dealt in two ways. One angle discusses the ‘strategies’ employed by organizations embroiled in responding to multiple logics (Pache & Santos, 2010; Kraatz & Block, 2008). The other focuses on emergent structures and practices that provides leverage to emergence of ‘hybridity’ in organizations (Battilana & Dorado, 2010, Jarzabkowski et al., 2010; Pache & Santos, 2011).

So what happens when the organization grapples with more than one core logic at the field level and in conditions where field logics are also influenced by the macro sociopolitical and cognitive structures? Research suggest that logic multiplicity have different implications for different organizations including organizational demise, contestations and conflict, logic blending, and coexistence ([Besharov & Smith, 2014](#_ENREF_30)). Others suggest that organizational responses vary from resistance to newer logics, replacement of old logics, coexistence of old and new logics, competition between old and new logics, or hybridization of old and new logics ([Westenholz, 2011](#_ENREF_216)).

In line with the above discussion, this study draws on the presence of multiple logics ingrained in the HDF. The initial explosion of relief NGOs post 9/11 were seen as intermediary organizations that tended to the traditional logic of humanitarian service provision. Once the relief phase was over and these relief organizations were considered as a surplus with little or now work available, some of such NGOs turned towards a long-term developmental approach for which they were either incapable or deemed incapable by key institutional actors. As the institutional environment changed from relief towards rehabilitation and long-term institutional development, many NGOs closed down while the few remaining tried to move on towards other arenas in development and peace building. As such much of these newly formed NGOs are seen as hybrids embedded in conflicting institutional logics.

Literature also suggest that logics multiplicity usually leads to organizational hybridity ([Minkoff, 2002](#_ENREF_144); [Westenholz, 2011](#_ENREF_216)). Hybrid organizations theoretically have overlapping boundaries and hence pressures from conflicting logics affect their legitimacies foremost. Such organizations respond to multiple institutional pressures locally, creatively, incrementally, and oftentimes reflexively (Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca, 2011). On the one hand, multiple logics provide latitude to the field level structures to exercise power and authority (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008) in institutionalizing or deinstitutionalizing certain aspects of the institutional orders. While on the other, there is a corresponding organizational strategic angle that constrain one logic and adapt another for organizations to gain a specific goal. In between the multiple logics, NGOs as hybrids employ various strategies to balance out competing institutional demands and remain a key player in regions humanitarian framework (discussed in section 2.5).

It is understood that organizations across industries are rooted in larger institutional orders comprising norms, practices and principals of a field that can be commonly referred to as institutional logics that shape organizational activity, development and change ([Pallas et al., 2016](#_ENREF_155)). However when new ventures are rooted in multiple logics, their existence is challenged on regulative, normative, and cognitive accounts. As an example, the worldwide plight of microfinance organizations combining the rival logics of banking and the logic of development together suggest ‘hybridity’ and hence observers point to transgressions of organizational missions ([Battilana & Dorado, 2010](#_ENREF_21)).

This research contributes to the institutional logics literature from the point of view of local humanitarian NGOs who are transitioning from relief to development and advocacy genres. It documents how the practices of organizational transition are informed by logics contestation between humanitarianism and developmentalism, and to what effects on their missions and organizational transformation.

Legitimacy crisis of NGOs has been examined at macro and meso levels. The macro level is explained as the changing governance structure of the international humanitarian development framework and the security induced institutional mechanisms in the region. Organizational field (HDF, in this case) is a tested level of analysis in various industries and more so in those whose existence is contested like tobacco and gambling ([Galvin et al., 2004](#_ENREF_93)), commercial microfinance organizations ([Battilana & Dorado, 2010](#_ENREF_21)), mutual guarantee schemes ([Díez-Martín et al., 2013](#_ENREF_72)), MNCs & NGO relationships ([Marano & Tashman, 2012](#_ENREF_137)) and social entrepreneurship ([Ruebottom, 2013](#_ENREF_167)). It is an equally effective level for explaining institutional dynamics in emerging fields ([Katz & Gartner, 1988](#_ENREF_127); [Purdy & Gray, 2009](#_ENREF_164)). NGOs are construed along the same lines as entities embedded in multiple institutional logics. The recent curbs on NGOs operations ([Ahmed, 2014](#_ENREF_4); [Memon, 2015](#_ENREF_139); [Siddiqui, 2014](#_ENREF_187); [Zaidi, 2015](#_ENREF_224)) has been distilled to the prevalence of logics plurality arising out of the complexity of HDF itself and the peculiar institutional change dynamics prevalent in the study area.

Facing institutional complexity in the form of multiple logics, the meso level analyses legitimacy-building strategies of NGOs in the form of organizational actions and strategies that are put into practice when key aspects of organizational operations are ‘deemed’ jeopardized by organizational actors ([Diez-Martin, Prado-Roman, & Blanco-Gonzalez, 2013](#_ENREF_71)) at both means and ends levels. The process of legitimacy building is neither construed as totally a product of institutional structures or a total expression of actors’ agency, which is the strength of using Neo institutional theory. It is rather made manifest through the use of institutional logics that are adapted or challenged in emerging institutional expectations in the field of humanitarianism that concerns basic issues of accountability, efficient service delivery, and professionalism. The thesis brings out two rival logics that drive organizational action in the HDF; the traditional logic of public ‘service provision’ (invariably termed as ‘humanitarianism’, social welfare, non-profitness, volunteerism, participation) and the emerging logic of developmentalism (entrepreneurial, commercial, market, managerial logic,). Through the construction and use of these opposing logics, an institutional explanation is built through the mechanisms (legitimacies) that accounts for the current crisis of NGOs in the region.

The second part of the conceptual framework is the conception of an organizational field and how the field of humanitarian development in the study region is structured and organized. NIT through its conception of ‘field’ provides frame to structure the macro level of the study.

### 2.7.2 Organizational field

In earlier institutional theory organizational action had been attributed purely as a reaction to the exogenous institutional stressors and organizational institutionalization has been portrayed both as a process and an outcome ([Wooten & Hoffman, 2008](#_ENREF_218)). These exogenous institutions were thought of as political, social and cultural forces that required alignment of organizations to the macro institutional reality. NIT suggests that examining organizational legitimacies may best be posed at level above organizations, and below the larger institutional forces. This level essentially presents the macro and fundamental level of an industry’s norms more often than the larger societal beliefs about a field of human activity. Under NIT, such sectors are termed as ‘organizational sectors’ or ‘organizational fields’ ([van Wijk, Stam, Elfring, Zietsma, & den Hond, 2013](#_ENREF_209)).

The term ‘organization field’ is widely associated with Scott (1991) and has gained currency to represent a constellation of actors in a recognized arena of institutional life. Scott (2011) defines an organization field as a community of organizations that interacts meaningfully and frequently around common meaning structures that actors accord to a particular domain of activity. The construct of organizational field appeals to organizational theorists as it provides a distinct advantage over other environment-level concepts such as that of organizational population. The strength of the organizational field concept is the inclusion of different types of organizations that play differing roles rather than focusing on just one kind of organization ([Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008](#_ENREF_84)) to study the phenomenon of interest. By and large, organizations fields are the spaces of interaction of all the constitutive elements in the environment including government, exchange partners, associations, funding sources, interest groups and the general public ([Wooten & Hoffman, 2008, p. 131](#_ENREF_218)).

Every field has its own fundamental logics that accords the taken for granted-ness for organizational actions. Some fields are fundamentally profit oriented (banking sector) while others strive towards social welfare (social work) with lesser or no profit motives. Like any organizational fields, the humanitarian support field has its own distinctive cardinal beliefs much akin to Bourdieu’s (1998) conception of ‘doxic’. The humanitarian field’s fundamental tenants are in flux in the study region post 9/11 as it is transitioning from a relief environment to one of long-term development. The field is complex and is structured through the relationships of entities within as well as informed by global events.

There is rich theoretical description of organizational fields in institutional literature. For Scot (1991), [J. W. Meyer and Rowan (1991)](#_ENREF_141), organizational field is suggestive of social function. The social function is established based on working in similar arenas and having clear association with exchange partners, sources of funding, and regulatory bodies. Others have utilized the conception of field to mean the relationships structure between relevant actors in an area of institutional life through relational network driving the code of actor’s conduct ([Owen-Smith & Powell, 2008](#_ENREF_153)) . For still others, fields are arena for debate on institutional practices and arrangements ([van Wijk et al., 2013](#_ENREF_209); [Wooten & Hoffman, 2008](#_ENREF_218); [Zietsma et al., 2014](#_ENREF_226)), and disputed interests ([Jepperson, 1991](#_ENREF_123)).

The importance of field level rules to direct organizational action in a given field cannot be over emphasized. While the filed does provide templates for appropriate organizational behavior, there is also uncertainty and thus some standards remain contestable as well as field level preference keeps on changing. This is more pronounced if the field is largely not immune to external influences. Some fields are dominant where external influence seldom permeates set rules while others like banking, and tobacco or alcohol having higher public consequences invite more social scrutiny. This view is grounded by [Clercq and Voronov (2011)](#_ENREF_56) into the construct of ‘focal field dominance’ rather neatly suggesting that dominant actors can accord or withhold legitimacy in fields that are easily impregnable. This is an important consideration in the study’s humanitarian field which is being charged of ‘foreign’ influences and abetting the prolonged crisis.

In the 21st century civil society generally and NGOs in particular grew exponentially in face of newer challenges that the world faces([Ferris, 2005](#_ENREF_85)). This era also witnessed the so-called ‘crisis in humanitarianism’, as critics charged that aid, instead of assisting civilians, was in fact prolonging their suffering by helping to fuel conflict ([Chandler, 2001](#_ENREF_52)). The subsequent soul-searching that humanitarian and development agencies underwent ignited debates and put in motion trends and policies that still very much pertain in the post-11 September world as manifested in the widening rift between host governments and NGOs on the one hand as well as between donors, military, government, citizenry and NGOs on the other. All this has repercussions for the historic promise of NGOs as force of democratization, advocacy, and service delivery as well as structures of NGOs in themselves.

Understanding the processes and mechanisms of field-level change is a central theme in current institutional scholarship ([Smets, Morris, & Greenwood, 2012](#_ENREF_189)) and key to examining legitimacy challenge of NGOs. Institutional forces operate at different levels, and the strength of organizational level analyses is examining inter-organizational linkages that are important for distinguishing between technical/competitive and institutional sources of organizational legitimacies. The essence of a field perspective is to generate depth in understanding how organizations interact with their environment and simultaneously enacted upon by the same environment ([Wooten & Hoffman, 2008](#_ENREF_218)). [Suddaby and Greenwood (2005)](#_ENREF_197) for example, worked within a newly established organizational field comprising of firms that had both specialized lawyers and accountants. For inducing institutional change, the new firms resorted to rhetorical strategies and built institutional vocabularies to legitimize their existence and continuity. This suggests that field level analyses of processes and outcomes of institutional change bring more nuanced understandings of how organizations deal with field level institutional demands. Another example is the now established stream of research in institutional entrepreneurship that suggest institutional entrepreneurs operate on a field level and seldom at organizational levels to induce institution building, deinstitutionalization and re-institutionalization (Rao et al, 2003 in Wotten & Hoffman, 2008) of industry’s norms and cultures.

A related concept of ‘field maturity’ also has impacts on the contestation of institutional logics on organizational legitimacy ([Clercq & Voronov, 2011](#_ENREF_56)). In more mature fields with established norms, organizations find it hard to introduce newer logics and extract legitimacy for certain practices. On the other hand in transitional fields such as the HDF under study, there is more levy for ‘market’ logic to co-exist with the ‘humanitarian’ logic.

The field of humanitarian support has been cautiously treated as a contested field of activity for its role in activities beyond humanitarian support ([Redfield, 2008](#_ENREF_166)). For a place like Pakistan where State and government hold contradictory ideas about national security, oftentimes it is easy to evoke feeling of public distrust in institutions of humanitarianism. The field is has also been presented as an ‘emerging’ field infusing it with the literature on legitimacy of ‘newness’ ([Royston Greenwood et al., 2011](#_ENREF_105)). While humanitarianism is not a new phenomenon yet in its current appearance and manifestation, it is vastly driven by western ideas. This is one vintage point where NGOs legitimacies are challenged by general citizenry

### 2.7.3 Institutional decoupling

The increasing prevalence of rationalizing organizational actions and its subsequent emphasis on enhanced transparency and accountability have induced changes in organizations’ view of environment ([Bromley, Hwang, & Powell, 2013](#_ENREF_42)) as something more consequential for organizational success. These external influences come from legislations, specialization of fields, public opinion, and social activism and have made organizations more responsive to their external environment foremost ([Bromley & Powell, 2012](#_ENREF_44)) than mending to the technical efficiencies alone. The result is a somewhat decoupled organizational structure that prioritizes responses to outside demand vis a vis those made on its efficiency. The divide is nowhere larger than in the nonprofit sector broadly. Country strategy policies of donors in the humanitarian and development field of host country and the actual implementation of those policies require all partners to share and exhibit norms that are set without little consultation. These consultations when done are mostly driven by government agencies without any involvement from local NGOs. No doubt then the policies prescribed by donors to NGOs become inapplicable at the organization level.

One leading view of decoupling is the superficial organizational implementation structures of all or most institutional demands with little attention to actually implementing the required set of practices ([Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008, p. 81](#_ENREF_37)). This leads to practice policy disconnect and causes both intra-organizational and field level challenges. Others believe that external environment does impact organizations but perceive the relationship is loosely coupled with institutional demands. This view endorses organizations as made up of elements that are in constant flux of connectedness, responsiveness and interdependence (Orton and Weick, 1990). The major cause of why organizations are loosely coupled with their institutional environment is that formal policies often require “ideal organizational action” (ibid) while actual decisions on ground is taken based on context and resources. This has intra-organizational implications for nonprofit sector organizations in particular as any kind of deviation from the institutional norms create mission inconsistency in the minds of incumbents as well as constituents. It becomes of a question of identity, the fundamental legitimacy marker that professionals use in the organizational field.

Similarly [Bromley and Powell (2012)](#_ENREF_44) define decoupling as a gap between policy and practice and more critically as a gap between means and ends. Faced with field level institutional demands arising out of regulations, logics of professionalism, accountability together with cultural and cognitive demands, NGOs feel strangled to make ideal type implementation of humanitarian projects & programmes. Such prescriptions are essential to comply with if they originate from dominant actors in the field such as regulators, donors, and in this research’s perspective the military and banned militant outfits. Power dynamics is also at play where dominant party (donors) uses episodic powers to deliberate actors’ action (Lawrence et al., 2001).

There is also a semblance of casual distinction between ‘loose coupling’ from ‘decoupling’ in institutional literature. Oftentimes the two are used interchangeably to suggest organizational responses to external calls for legitimacy and those used internally by organizations in the functional environment ([Cruz, Major, & Scapens, 2009, p. 96](#_ENREF_61)). The former thus concerns with efficiency and the later focuses on institutional pressure for effectiveness and conformity. This reflects the classic application of institutional theory that places criteria for organizational effectiveness (what the organization produces) at the top above the efficiency concerns (how are services produced). Loose coupling often results in environments having multiple and conflicting logics as experienced in the HDF.

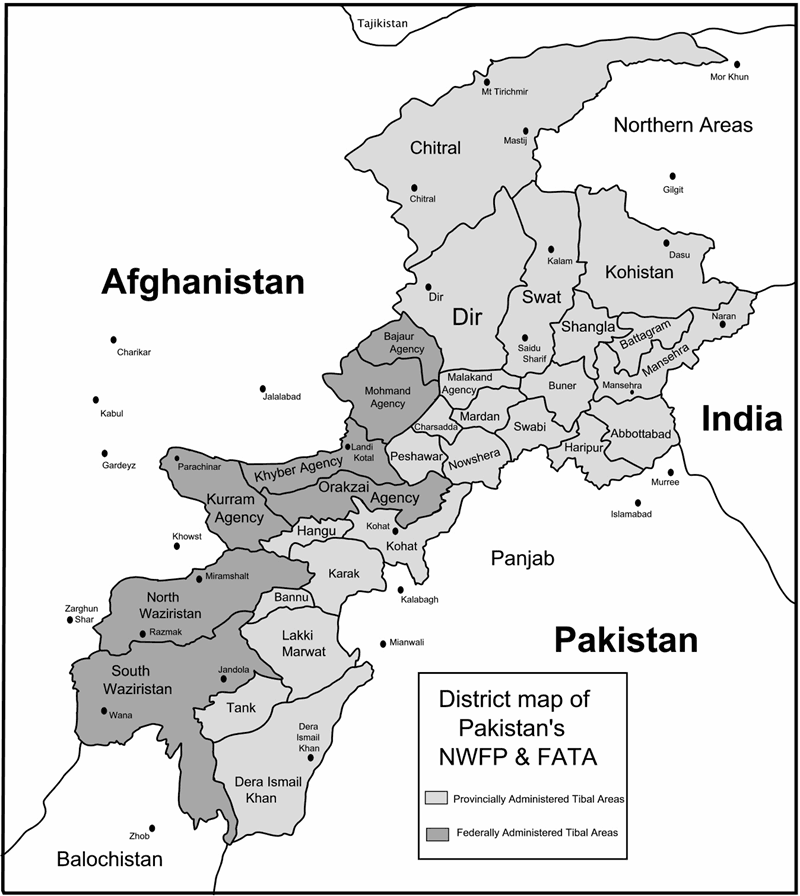
Organizational researchers believe that organizations experience and respond to multiple logics in distinguishable ways ([Cruz et al., 2009](#_ENREF_61); [Fiss & Zajac, 2006](#_ENREF_88)). The idea behind using decoupling to explain NGOs legitimacy concerns is to acknowledge practice variation against similar form of institutional demands amongst a variety of NGOs. This contributes to institutional analysis in a rich way by exposing practices that defy institutional demands. This suggest that decoupling is a form of calculated detachment where organizational owners and top management plan to deceive its stakeholders ([Crilly, Zollo, & Hansen, 2012](#_ENREF_60))

Institutional decoupling can be deliberate but also may occur due to a lack of willingness and competence on the part of organizations (Cole, 2005). This view is further explored in the final analysis on case NGOs where decoupling is construed as convenient arrangement between organizations and its stakeholders (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) and as an outcome of organizational learning as well as complex institutional environment ([Cruz et al., 2009](#_ENREF_61); [Fiss & Zajac, 2006](#_ENREF_88)).

## 2.8 A portrait of NGOs in Pakistan

Pakistan, together with Afghanistan, is portrayed as international ‘bad lands’ since 9/11. In particular the study region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province and adjoining Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), with miles of shared boundaries (Durand line), languages, histories, and heroes are in the throes of conflicts involving global super-powers for more than the past four decades.

Figure - map of the study region



Source: Government archives online

With the onslaught of ‘war on terror’ the region has seen unprecedented devastation making poverty more pronounced and peace elusive. The global community has vowed to rebuild the region and bring strong democratic cultures to this part of the world. One of the critical aspects of this development doctrine is emergence of new forms of NGOs that have appeared throughout the region post 9/11. There are usually four main actors in humanitarian actions including host governments, Intergovernmental organizations/NGOs, countries offering assistance, and increasingly the military apparatus ([Belloni, 2007](#_ENREF_28)). With no centralized coordinating body till 2005, Pakistan’s humanitarian response strategy was well left to local self-help groups and small-time registered NGOs. Such organizations also include faith-based and sectarian outfits whose agility to arrive at humanitarian scenes still enamors large swaths of populations. This is both a cause and consequence of events related directly to 9/11, that these groups hold a central place in the region’s humanitarian & development framework.

The governance crippled in face of challenges posed by the war on terror, its immediate aftermath, and the continued sense of hopelessness of a peaceful transformation in the troubled region. Public sector has been the lone service provider and manages key services of health, education, sanitation, water supply, infrastructure, energy, and related service delivery. Governments acknowledge that they alone cannot deliver services to ever expanding population as the cost of providing services for the public sector has increased tremendously and civil society are the logical support structures ([Ghaus-Pasha & Iqbal, 2003](#_ENREF_96)).

With the forceful advent of NGOs post 2000 as partners in disaster mitigation and response, the government found a partner willing to take risks in delivering services that were primarily government’s responsibility. However, NGOs still lack legitimacy and public buy-in to a larger extent and their overwhelming reliance on international aid- channeled directly to them or through government- has made them vulnerable in the long run.

In the wake of rebuilding the region under international monetary and technical cooperation, the civil society sector in the region has been ‘allegedly’ created, shaped and transformed into an organ for extending the neo-liberal agenda much akin to what [Howell and Lind (2009)](#_ENREF_114) terms the “encapsulation of civil society into neo-liberal governance approaches”. Such an approach has power implications for governance at the local levels, affecting traditional social groups, power bases, and above all legitimacy concerns for emerging organizational structures in HDF. As elsewhere in the world, such an approach towards non-profits has pushed them more towards resembling the private sector. This has also led to countrywide changes in the behaviors and roles of non-profit first towards a more ready resemblance with the private sector and has set in motion a process of commercialization of nonprofit entities.

NGOs here are conceived of as full-fledge enterprises delivering services at a premium in hard to reach communities for donors, government, and traditional private sector and are increasingly providing for growing populations in complex social and economic environments. Majority of NGOs in Pakistan and in the region are contributing to the so-called traditional social sectors, including health, education, family planning and sanitation. The ‘product lines’, in USAID’s parlance, are thin across a landscape of NGOs in Pakistan. Synergies of NGOs with the private sector and government are rare. Very few nonprofits organizations strive towards capturing emerging areas of promoting indigenous entrepreneurship, climate and environment related work, local governance, and meaningful engagement of citizenry to promote empowerment.

The legitimacy of newer form of evolving NGOs is primarily challenged on its increasing role in public advocacy, its financial dependence on entities that the state and society considers non-kosher, and issuance of regulations and informal coercive mechanisms suggesting significant challenges for the sector on the horizon.

### 2.8.1 Historical evolution of humanitarian development field

The region constituting present day Pakistan has a rich history of philanthropic initiatives. Religious doctrines have been considered as the foremost driving force behind this phenomenon. Historically different religions including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism provided strong bases for humanitarianism to its followers ([Ghaus-Pasha & Iqbal, 2003](#_ENREF_96)). Examples of early philanthropic organizations having roots in the multi-religious institutions include Buddhist *Stupas,* Hindustemples, monasteries, and *Asharam*, Sufi’s *Khanqahs*, and Sikh’s *Gurdwaras.* The institutions of mosque and *madrasah* in the early 700 AD with the advent of Islam continued the tradition to this day.

Thereafter around the 15th century Christian missionaries came to the subcontinent and brought a different system of education and healthcare facilities. According to [Ghaus-Pasha and Iqbal (2003)](#_ENREF_96), the formal institutionalization of voluntary organizations however got started with the start of British rule in 1850s in the form of Societies registration act of 1860 and Trust Act of 1882. Most of the colonial era voluntary organizations were focused on supporting the marginalized and destitute segments of the society. Examples of such organizations include Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam, National Muhammadan Association, and Dayal Singh Trust ([Ghaus-Pasha & Iqbal, 2003](#_ENREF_96)).

Similarly one of the biggest reasons for nonprofits to be considered as a recognized means of support in times of disaster is rooted in the history of Pakistan. At the time of partition in 1947, Pakistan inherited huge challenges of people displacement in large numbers. The government was ill equipped to deal with the enormous challenge of governance that required elaborate humanitarian mechanisms. Voluntary groups of people started supporting the inflow of huge populations in various parts of the country. According to [Ghaus-Pasha and Iqbal (2003)](#_ENREF_96) voluntary outfits supported population in distress after independence and provided ample social services to lay foundation for a strong voluntary sector. Examples from that era include the All Pakistan Women Association (APWA) and the successful Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP).

In the late 1950s under the first dictatorial regime came the system of ‘basic democracy’ and a policy level shift was placed on the role of voluntary organization so much so that a need was felt to regulate their activities under a new legislation. The Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies Registration and Control Ordinance was thus promulgated in 1961. Interestingly majority of voluntary organizations during the first 20 years of Pakistan’s independence were formed by ‘begums’ of important military, bureaucrats, and businessmen thereby sowing the seed of nonprofits association with elites of the society, a perception still held by many in the country. The return of democracy in the 1970s saw a decline of the civil society in general as the nationalization policies pursued by the government at that time took everything in the fold of the State. According to NGO Resource Center (NGORC, 1999 & Qadeer, 1997) the era however saw a mushrooming of trade unions and unionization inside the nationalized industries. The second marshal law in late 1970s was coincided with the advent of Russians in Afghanistan and its lasting repercussions for Pakistani nonprofit sector. The 10 years war for Afghanistan (1979-89) saw generous aid flows to the region and Pakistan by virtue of hosting a large segment of Afghans became the hot destination of western aid, particularly big dollars flowing in from the United States of America that fancied a Russian defeat to culminate the cold war era as a victor and sole super power of the world.

This was a time when voluntary organizations gave way to what we now call NGOs. According to [Ghaus-Pasha and Iqbal (2003)](#_ENREF_96) this was a time when secular NGOs (such as Human Rights Commission of Pakistan) came to the scene as a form of resistance to the all-assuming dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq and pitted them against organizations promoting a Jihadi culture supported by the State. NGOs were blamed for anti-Islam activities in the form of their campaigns against the repressive blasphemy laws, women rights and honour killings. The NGOs focus on women empowerment and services rendered in reproductive health were considered as a conspiracy against Islam and the state of Pakistan. With large inflows of Afghan refugees to the border cities of Peshawar and Quetta, the State found itself unable to deliver social services. It is without doubt that the Afghan War to a larger extent shaped the nonprofit sector in Pakistan. The large refugee influx from Afghanistan necessitated the existence of emergency NGOs that continue until today in one form or another.

During the 1990s democratic rule came back to the country and the non-profit sector continued to develop under a favorable policy shift that considered NPOs as a viable mechanism to deliver social services. Under the ‘Social Action Program’ village level development schemes were encouraged, the Trust for Voluntary Organizations (TVO) was established, and a large Poverty Alleviation Fund was established to work with non-profit organizations for rural development and fighting poverty.

Post 2000, the referent study period, saw proliferation of NGOs in unimaginable numbers primarily owing to the disasters that were in store for the country at the turn of the millennium.

### 2.8.2 Classification of NGOs in Pakistan

The Pakistani civil society sector is made up of a variety of organizations ranging from small voluntary organizations with miniscule budgets to those run by full time professionals and having budgets surpassing government line departments ([Jafar, 2011](#_ENREF_120)). The sources of financing vary from complete self-reliance and members’ contributions to government and international donors as the primary sources. The majority of NGOs lie somewhere in the middle in terms of size, scale, and modes of financing. The NGO sector has increasingly became institutionalized in response to societal needs, particularly in disaster environments, but it is their role beyond humanitarian crisis that their existence is challenged.

Classification of NGOs according to the criteria mentioned in the earlier sections depicts a mix picture for NGOs in the study region. An increased focus on NGO-ism in official thinking and public discourse has resulted in the condensation of the idea of civil society to mere humanitarian NGOs. NGOs in Pakistan can be divided into various broad groups depending on whose lens you are borrowing to define a nonprofit organization. The [Asian Development Bank (1999)](#_ENREF_13) broadly categorizes civil society organizations in Pakistan into four categories. They include charitable CSOs, Services CSOs, Participatory CSOs, and Rights based CSOs. These categories are presented with examples accumulated by the researcher from a spectrum of known NPOs as follows;

*Charitable CSOs* address the very basic human needs of shelter, food, and medicines. These would normally include organizations such as Edhi foundation, Shaukat Khanum memorial hospital, various outfits of political and religious parties such as the Minhajul-Quran, Quran Academy, Al-Khidmat Foundation, and Bacha Khan welfare trust. Majority of such organizations are active in peace times, but their contributions to disaster responses are tremendous as witnessed in the aftermath of earthquake of 2005, internal displacement crisis in KP and FATA between 2007 and 2010, and the disastrous floods of 2010.

*Services provision CSOs* usually provide health, housing, and family planning and education services. The role of these organizations in emergency, relief and rehabilitation efforts is by far the most critical. Such a CSO resemble closely with a private sector firm that is contracted for services that, in most cases would include the profit motive. These type of CSOs are the focus of this study.

*Participatory CSOs* work hand in hand with the local communities and driven by the so-called philosophy of ‘social mobilization’ where all development work in the locality is managed by groups of local volunteers. Locals reportedly make their demands known and such CSOs support in technical issues and management of small-scale projects. Most of such projects are in the infrastructure sector like paving of village ways, communal lighting, building of public spaces, schools, mosques and graveyards. Pioneered by the Agha Khan Development Network in Pakistan, every province has Rural Support Programs (RSPs) and is preferred by both government and donors to support various interventions in rural areas across the country. The Orangi pilot project (OPP) in Karachi is the most prominent example of a participatory CSO.

*Advocacy, rights, and empowerment CSO* are the ones in the smallest numbers owing to perhaps a paucity of funds for such ventures, capacity required to run such organizations in a country where around half of the population is illiterate, and more importantly because the impact of such work is not immediate and imminent to populations in need of basic social services. This group of organizations include Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Aurat Foundation, and Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

Another useful categorization has been drawn by [Holloway (1998)](#_ENREF_112) who emphasizes on clubbing NGOs on the basis of *who benefits* from their operations into three categories. The first kinds are the *mutual benefit organizations* where members are primarily the beneficiaries themselves. Under this category a range of NGOs can be placed including mosque and *hujra* committees, street level committees (for sanitation, for example), Community Based Organizations (CBOs, mainly working for infrastructure improvements), ethnic and tribal organizations (e.g., the tribal development network), Umbrella networks of CBOs where each CBO stands to get some benefit from the membership, even if the benefit is only voting rights, occupation-related organizations such as farmers associations, chambers, trade unions etc, and political organizations.

The second types are the *public benefit organizations* whose purported mission is to provide service the masses irrespective of the membership. These include private philanthropic organizations (e.g., Edhi trust), public philanthropic organizations (Zakat and usher under the ministry of religious affairs), location-specific philanthropic organizations, clan/ethnic based organizations (Muslim Rajput Welfare Association, Sadat-e-Amroha Welfare Society, and Katchhi Memon Welfare Society) religious organizations (al-khidmat), non-profit companies, and most importantly those labeled conventionally as development NGOs. These organizations provide a variety based of services like implementing development projects, civic education, peace building, research and advocacy.

The third types are what Holloway terms as *private benefit organizations*that pretend to be doing development in the guise of an NGO. These include Nongovernmental individuals and even sometimes those in government dolling out development funds to their pseudo NGOs. These type of organizations are on the rise owing to projectized and contract-based nature of humanitarian development post 9/11 in the region. Some of these NGOs are organized by elected representatives, public officials, private business (such as those organized by oil and gas industry), and Donors (for particular grants, for example).

### 2.8.3 Scale of Non-profit sector in Pakistan

In a cross national study on 8 countries to understand the scale and structure of nonprofits, [Salamon and Anheier (1998)](#_ENREF_173) reports that the nonprofit sector varies in composition from place to place, though the extent of this variation is somewhat "constrained." Specifically, four components- education and research, health, social service, and culture and recreation- seem to dominate the sector almost everywhere, accounting together for at least 75% of sector expenditures. The same study also found out that NPOs employed 11.9 million (4.5% of labour force) employees in the eight countries under study translating into close to 1 out of every 20 jobs.

As estimated in 2002 by the John Hopkins comparative nonprofit sector project, the total number of NGOs in Pakistan were approximately 45,000 ([Ghaus-Pasha, Jamal, & Iqbal, 2002](#_ENREF_97)). According to their categorization 46% were engaged in education and research, 18% in civic rights and advocacy, 8% is social services delivery, 7% in development and housing, 6% each in health and recreation activities, 5% in religious activities, and 4% in business and professional associations. Education sector presents the dominant mode of NGOs work area retaining 71% of the total nonprofit employment.

Compared to the 2002 baseline, there hasn’t been any attempt by either NGO watchdogs, regulators or academic community to find out the exact number of such organizations recently. Even this number has issues as according to the law, nonprofits can exist without registration and there are thousands grassroots organizations locally termed as Community Based Organizations (CBOs). These CBOs are seldom organic and spurn out of NGO projects that require community to be socially organized into groups. In fact most current day regular NGOs in the study region had their origins in these CBOs. CBO members usually had a few people who were literate and started off their own organizations. There are various online databases that have developed post 2001 to document NGOs thematically and geographically but none of these are considered authentic or exhaustive. It is thus hard to infer the exact number of NGOs currently operating in the country and study area.

Literature too suggest that the size of nonprofit sector may look small if formal organizing is the yard stick. That is if we were to restrict the identification of nonprofits to only those entities which are legally and formally registered, the scale of the sector may seem smaller than actual ([Salamon and Anheier (1992b)](#_ENREF_172).

### 2.8.4 Regulatory framework for NGOs

The constitution of Pakistan guarantees freedom of association to all citizens. There is though no single or legally binding definition of ‘NGO’ in Pakistani law. An NGO is usually referred to as an organization working for the welfare and benefit of society with no affiliation with government and constituted by a body of volunteers ([Asian Development Bank, 1999](#_ENREF_13)). Interestingly an NGO doesn’t have to register itself to perform humanitarian activities but recent motivation by the donors and enforcement by the government, an NGO has to be registered to avail institutional funding. There are a number of laws available for NGOs registration as follows;

* Societies Registration Act, 1860 (for professional, cultural and educational bodies)
* The Trusts Act 1882, (for private acts of charity)
* Cooperative Societies Act, 1952
* The Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance, 1961 (to regulate and assist the development of NGOs undertaking welfare activities)
* The Companies Ordinance, 1984 (it allows NGOs to set up as non-profit companies)
* Income Tax Ordinance, 2001 (this Act sets out the tax exemptions which NGOs are eligible for)

As a matter of practice, the majority of NGOs are registered under four laws: the Societies Registration Act, 1860; the Trust Act, 1882; the companies Ordinance, 1984; and the Voluntary Social Welfare Agencies (Registration and Control) Ordinance, 1961 ([Ghaus-Pasha & Iqbal, 2003](#_ENREF_96)).

Various deliberations including the recent “policy for regulation of organizations receiving foreign contributions” and registration of NGOs with the “Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan” (SECP) has created a environment tantamount to regulatory institutional change ([Sadeque, 2014](#_ENREF_170)). These moves have been described by NGOs as curtailment of their rights as SECP conventionally only registers for profit organizations. This shift has caused regulatory legitimacy tensions and discontentment for NGOs in the study region.

### 2.8.5 Governance and accountability of NGOs sector

Accountability of nonprofits is hard to measure owing to the array of goals that they setfor themselves. According to [Weisbrod (1998)](#_ENREF_215) this challenge is hard to bridge because nonprofits usually have numerous and typically vague goals. Globally participation of NGOs can be attributed to the democratic deficit that global regulators want to fill with presence of NGOs in international development work ([Brakman Reiser & Kelly, 2011](#_ENREF_38)). There is a strong sense that legitimacy deficit of NGOs start from the confluence of international regulations for nonprofits and domestic regulations, which are often times not in congruence. It puts NGOs into the box of thinking globally but acting locally, not an easy task to achieve.

This leads to the question of *transparency* where local NGOs are stuck perpetually between what is desired by the global development paradigms and what is actually possible on ground. This leads to dubious standards for accountability of NGOs both within the sector and vis-à-vis the State. The Pakistani NGOs sector nearly lack standardized and sufficient accountability protocols with minor exceptions (ADB, 1999). This might be because of the variety of the funding channels and their subsequent demands on various protocols to be in place as some rely on support from government institutions while a majority depends on projectized funds from international funding agencies.

At a field level, this translates into almost non-existent self-governance and accountability mechanism leading the public sector and other constituents to cry foul at difference times since 9/11. NGOs in the study region thus need to ensure mechanisms ([Dennis R. Young, 2003](#_ENREF_222)) of self-regulation in addition to sufficient government oversight if they are desirous about their existence as a sector and want meaningful contribution towards the development of the society.

According to [AKDN (2006)](#_ENREF_5) the failure to NGOs to proactively take the State on board has created many misconceptions about the sector. These misperceptions rests on a range of NGOs legitimacy concerns including their integrity, governance structures, patriotism, and abundant personal benefits that some NGOs unfortunately extract a lack of proper governance framework. However such misgivings are not always correct as some NGOs contribute valuable services to the communities they work with.

[Ghaus-Pasha and Iqbal (2003)](#_ENREF_96) puts forth a range of reasons for government aptitude towards non-profits. On policy level, successive governments post 9/11 have mostly been supportive of NGOs’ and other CSOs’ existence and their roles. However on operational levels, the government has been reportedly accused of obstructing CSOs who are considered as competitors for funds and influence in local constituencies. Another ambivalence of government approach towards CSOs is abundantly evident from the domains for CSOs working. For example, the government is readily supportive of organizational forms that provide welfare services to population but is hostile towards NGOs who indulge in advocacy work or pressurize the government on issues related to empowerment, rights, and meaningful engagement with citizenry.

## 2.9 NGOs in Humanitarian development

The field of Humanitarian development is a growing research area owing to conflict and disaster hotspots globally. Humanitarian environments are characterized by forced population movements that dislocate individuals, households and oftentimes whole communities (Moore and Shellman 2004). Such environments are also complex engaging an array of actors and institutions including host governments, local and international relief organizations, private sector, military and other marginal groups, having varied interests, mandates, organizational capacities, and certainly limitations ([Balcik et al., 2010](#_ENREF_17)).

Humanitarianism is a worldview that affirms dignity of all humankind regardless of race, religion, gender and other worldly circumstances ([Belloni, 2007](#_ENREF_28)). Rooted in primacy of human rights, humanitarianism entails professional vocabulary and actions that has radically changed nation-states relations into something of a ‘trans-national morality’ (ibid) where powerful countries and groups intervene (sometimes without invitation) in managing crisis in different parts of the world.

Humanitarian environments are referred to as ‘crisis’, ‘emergency’, or ‘disaster’ and can be manmade like armed conflicts and militancy, or natural occurrences like earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods ([Clark, 2006](#_ENREF_55)). At least 80% of the impacts of disasters occur in developing world and may amount to 2% of yearly GNP of such countries vis-à-vis 0.5% of yearly GNP loses in developed countries suggesting a disproportionate impacts of disasters on poor nations ([Clark, 2006](#_ENREF_55)).

International development assistance has been piece and parcel of developed world’s foreign policy to maintain world order since at least World War II. The foundation of United Nations and its associated agencies are primary evidence of the focus of world powers to deliver humanitarian support to regions in crisis. Channeling development assistance has been primarily state-to-state particularly during the cold war era until the late 80s. With the emergence of United States as the sole super power and ascendency of neo-liberal ideals of markets supremacy under the so called ‘Washington consensus’ (Williamson, 1989), the objectives of international aid started diverting from strengthening governments to fighting poverty, and to opening economies from State’s strangleholds. Under this paradigm the State was relegated to the background and termed highly bureaucratized and inefficient while non-state actors like NGOs were consciously promoted as innovative, localized and practical (Edward and Hulme, 1995). According to Howell and Pearce (2001) aid flows to NGOs were justified by linking their presence to democratic dispensation in southern countries where NGOs were not seen as a means to an end but rather an end in themselves. NGOs are thus rightly thought of as conscious creation of international humanitarian systems to enhance their own legitimacies in a complex global aid system.

The 1980s then saw the religious following of structural adjustment programs that tried to limit government’s role and giving market the free hand it was vouching for. Poverty rates soured throughout the developing world. The posts 1990s global focus on promotion of democracy and poverty alleviation called for more participation and strengthening of diverse civil society forces across the world ([Banks, Hulme, & Edwards, 2015](#_ENREF_18)).

The 90s witnessed security challenges creeping into the ideals of developmentism/humanitarianism. The focus was humanitarian recovery, development and peace building. [Howell and Lind (2009)](#_ENREF_114) traces this global convergence of development and security sectors to the ‘new wars’ of the 1990s in settings like Kosovo, Sierra Leone, East Timor and Zaire.

The most instrumental display of the humanitarian aid came in the form of US led interventions in Afghanistan and its direct and indirect impacts on the study region in Pakistan post 9/11, 2001. Post 9/11, there has been ample evidence that humanitarianism has actually increased the likelihood of war and prolonged conflicts in this part of the world. This has been achieved through short sighted ad-hoc solutions by institutional actors that has perpetuated the social, political, religious and ethnic divisions rather than abating wars ([Belloni, 2007](#_ENREF_28)). One manifestation of this environment has been the increasing role allocated to non-state actors in the form of direct and indirect support to NGOs to participate in humanitarian crisis and reconstruction thereafter.

The post Second World War humanitarian aid framework respected the sanctity of nation states and believed in neutrality as corner stone where need based emergency relief was the major objective. However with the ascendency of rights based approaches as ‘new humanitarianism” post cold war, various jargons entered the lexicon of humanitarian action that looked at crisis not from a relief perspective alone but a longer term deeper engagement with addressing the causes of crisis ([Chandler, 2001](#_ENREF_52)). Transnational non-governmental organization took it upon themselves to disregard national governments and arrive at the crisis to uphold human rights, thereby undermining States’ sovereignties, as some radical development theorists of the South argue

According to [Watkins et al. (2012)](#_ENREF_213) the field of development aid have been engaged in two debates since then; are NGOs diminishing State’s legitimacies by providing State’s mandated services and making poor countries subservient to international aid. The second line of debate is about the effectiveness of humanitarianism and developmentism through NGOs and other non-state actors. Are NGOs effectively representing citizens’ aspirations and empowering them or they too are an extension of the same imperial design ([Tembo, 2003](#_ENREF_198)). Are these organizations effective in empowering those they claim to represent? And the answer more often is not. While the first question is more global and political in nature, it is the second question at the national and sub-national level that needs further academic and practical consideration. Can NGOs replace a substantial part of the State mandate, are they complementary entities, or obstructing the whole enterprise of rehabilitation and development in conflict-affected disaster settings?

Although humanitarian and development assistance often overlap, a distinction between the two exists both theoretically and practically. Humanitarian assistance refers to provision of basic survival necessities to populations in distress including water supplies, sanitation, food, shelter and primary health care with the objective of containing crisis. Development assistance on the other hand is for reconstruction of infrastructure, economic revival and long term rehabilitation of economic opportunities post disasters. The distinction distills down to humanitarianism as a piecemeal, one-time (though may be longer term), and ephemeral phenomenon while developmentalism as something permanent, long-term, embedded into State’s systems, and more political in nature. Developmentalists argue that humanitarian relief create dependency and reduces capacity of host governments and local institutions (Macrae, 1998) in the long run. Developmentalists look at humanitarian crisis from crisis prevention and sustainability perspective that humanitarianists believe are not the principles in relief operations. The emergency relief is need based rather than looking at the long-term aim of sustainable development. This tension between humanitarian field attending to a pure humanitarian need based approach and developmental ‘build back better’ approach remain at the heart of international humanitarian efforts ([Chandler, 2001](#_ENREF_52)).

In the following, four key dimensions of NGOs embroiled in both humanitarian and development domains are presented from the literature. These concerns address the second question posed above as to how NGOs are structured at the national and sub-national levels, their accountability mechanisms, and impacts.

### 2.9.1. Complexity

The first ever humanitarian conference in Istanbul (2016) voiced concerns and criticism of the humanitarian sector in face of growing conflicts and mass human displacements particularly from Syria. The sector’s ineptitude and complexity has resulted in population misgivings on many counts; humanitarian supplies either do not reach the most vulnerable populations or do not match their actual needs. The system needs more money as well as greater local control wrested from the existing over reliance on UN role or the few global country-based donations ([Dickinson, 2016](#_ENREF_70)).

Similarly the Overseas Development Institute terms the current humanitarian system as crippling from structural impediments where uneven power relations, with dominant roles of the UN and INGOs, have plunged the sector into an abrasive state of competition and providing perverse incentives ([Dickinson, 2016](#_ENREF_70)). The donor-driven system running the affairs of humanitarian sector has actually compromised meeting the actual needs in a humanitarian crisis across disaster hotspots globally.

Humanitarian environments are typically characterized by social and economic meltdown, political instability, and administrative breakdown. Such environments require coordination at various levels of governance and can really become complicated with diversity of actors and uniqueness of responses required by different disasters ([Balcik et al., 2010](#_ENREF_17)). Figure 4 shows a generic scheme of multiple actors and their interactions in delivery of humanitarian relief.

Figure - The international relief humanitarian architecture

|  |
| --- |
| Affected population  INGOs  Red cross- Red Crescent  National societies- Donor countries  National Societies- Recipient countries  Recipient Country Govt agencies (NDMA/PDMAs, EAD)  Recipient Country donors (Eidhi)  Donor country Govt Agencies (USAID, DFID)  Rapid Response teams  Public & Corporate donors  Local NGOs  UN agencies (UNOCHA, UNHCR, WFP, other UN agencies |

Source: Based on [Clark (2006)](#_ENREF_55)

As can be seen from the figure there are two institutional lines of action in humanitarian support. One is the bilateral route assigning key roles to INGOs and bilateral agencies while the other is a multilateral route including UN agencies and cross-country charities/societies. The linkages these two routes forge horizontally and vertically infuse logics of humanitarianism from different vintage points. The local NGOs fall at the lower rung and most eventful juncture as interface mechanism between institutional donors and recipients (affected populations). As such these NGOs experience institutional complexity to the fullest. Inadequately equipped as these small organizations are, they exhibit complex internal structures because of all the vertical and horizontal pressures they experience. These organizations are thus the embodiment of complexity inherent in the field, which provides a starting point to legitimacy concerns in national and sub-national NGOs.

This is more elaborately explained by [Bebbington (2005)](#_ENREF_27) by making use of the phrase ‘aid chain’ where donors pump billion of dollars into the coffers of international NGOs usually housed in capital cities of the North. These INGOs refine the donors’ requirements and passes on work packages to select NGOs from southern countries, working in capital cities more often. Both the INGOs and bigger national NGOs retain hefty overheads on donor’s funds and by the time the local NGOs enter the fray, there is less of the dollar value left to be actually spend on beneficiaries and making theses local NGOs sustainable.

NGOs can thus be understood better as critical intermediaries in the aid chain amenable to a variety of upward and downward pressures (dominant institutional constituents and final beneficiaries). The former (e.g., government and donors) demand administrative accountability and effectiveness while the latter (e.g., communities and professional associations) demand timely and improved quality of services. The institutional prescriptions are thus at odds with one another adding to the complexity of response from NGOs. These pressures are construed as demands on institutional legitimacy of intermediaries or ‘middle-status players’ as suggested by Phillips and Zukerman (2001) who believe that high status players owing to their reputation capital indulge in practices that may not be institutionally prescribed, while low level players have little to lose if they deviate from institutional prescriptions ([Sonpar et al., 2010](#_ENREF_191)).

[Watkins et al. (2012)](#_ENREF_213) looks at the complexity of NGOs organizational field, more as something of uncertainty, from a principal-agent perspective. The uncertainty, they believe, flows from the altruistic, ambitious and unrealistic goals set by the principals (northern donors) that flow through the ‘aid chain’ creating uncertainties for subcontractors (local NGOs) who struggle to rationalize the given policy directives.

### 2.9.2 Accountability

The presence of non-profit and voluntary organizations in modern nation states goes back a long time in history. Roles and behaviour of the established two formal sectors- government and private enterprises are clearly delineated as the former seeks constituency validation and votes and the later interests itself with profit making. It is the third sector whose behaviour, existence, and role presents a mystery to wider populations. If not for profit, for what, asked Dennis Young (1983) in his seminal work on theory building in non-profit sector. There is evidence that the rival metaphor of mission and business lead to this mystery outside and internal strife within non-profit organizations ([Powell & Colyvas, 2008](#_ENREF_161)).

Nonprofits almost universally attract an ambivalent attitude from a wide range of evaluating audiences. They are seen as protectors of pluralism and privilege, sources of innovation and paralysis, and instruments of and competitors to states ([DiMaggio & Anheier, 1990, p. 153](#_ENREF_73)). This attitude gives rise to accountability challenges for both INGOs and NGOs in national contexts.

Conventionally accountability in organizational literature refers to both formal and informal mechanisms that hold organizational responsible for their actions in moral connotation. In the conventional use of the word, as manifests from Max Weber’ characterization of bureaucracies, accountability suggested a formal means where actors were accountable to authorities for their actions. Similarly Durkheim suggested that for the division of labor to work, individuals are forced by society through a ‘moral contract’ that manifests through everyday activities of actors ([Hilhorst, 2003](#_ENREF_111)).

Accountability is a slippery concept more so when applied to the nonprofit organizations where it connotes conformity not only to formal order but also a moral order (Dixon et al. 2006). Literature usually deals with NGO accountability along the two lines of internal governance structure and financial management ([Lehtonen, 2013](#_ENREF_132)) and hold NGOs responsible ‘upward’ to their donors and ‘downwards’ to the beneficiaries. But the fault lines are far deeper than this simplistic ascertainment

NGOs accountability is the biggest challenge that has come to fore globally with the rise of the third sector. On the one hand this suggests that NGOs are now an accepted form of civic engagement while on the other as entities that compete with the established two sectors in complex ways. Many social services that were responsibility of the State are now being delivered through private sources and nonprofits. This has led to the perception in emerging democratic countries that NGOs are undermining State by demanding democratic dispensation, something they rarely exhibit themselves.

The range of humanitarian organizations including NGOs is increasingly required to show total commitment toward transparency and accountability, the very principles that form the bedrock of their constitution. As a concept, accountability narrowly means being responsible for individual or organizational actions (Edward & Hulme, 1995). However it is not confined to being ‘held responsible’ to the formal order but rather include the notion of ‘moral order’ (Dixon et al. 2006), where organizations ‘take responsibility’ for their actions (Cornwall, Lucas, and Pasteur, 2000).

If the notions of moral orders are not addressed, the institutional field will not allow NGOs to become what they hope to be. This is why concerns with accountability of NGOs have magnified in the past three decades as shown by highly publicized scandals eroding public confidence in non-state entities as well as the unprecedented proliferation of NGOs as a form of organization that can both claim to be nonprofit yet generates more resources than a business ([Ebrahim, 2003](#_ENREF_80)). At the same time, regulatory accountability have also increased in response to the donors’ belief post 90s that NGOs are a substitute to the bureaucratic state in humanitarian development in that they are cost-effective, nimble footed, and easy to monitor and control.

There is a greater agreement on the fact that disaster events can trigger profound social changes and creates a vacuum with regards to services delivery in particular. An emerging theoretical understanding is that humanitarian and reconstruction efforts are hijacked by international players with connivance of local elites, bureaucrats, and NGOs ([Makita, 2009](#_ENREF_136)). Evidence has recently been collected on appropriation of the spoils of reconstruction in various places particularly in Haiti, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan([Ibrahim, 2009](#_ENREF_117)). The extent of malpractices in humanitarian aid is huge to the extent that it has been dubbed as ‘disaster capitalism’ ([Klein, 2007](#_ENREF_128)). Lack of government absorptive capacity, paucity of skills, and ad-hoc humanitarian support structures are often cited to be the main hindrance in humanitarian efforts. This is partly the pretext for international donors to have more leverage to award contracts within their boundaries to firms that would bring most of the assistance money back. A case in point is the example of $5.2 billion that USAID categorized as ‘reconstruction’ support budget from fiscal years 2003-06. The United States managed to receive back more than 80 percent of these construction funds in different ways ([Gunewadena & Schuller, 2008](#_ENREF_107)). The funds when channeled to private agencies and nonprofits have the seeds of undermining governing capacity of nation states and adds to fragility of so called failed states ([Schuller, 2009](#_ENREF_178)) and repugnant relations between NGOs and public sector.

Similarly the discourse on accountability in humanitarian and development field centers around the broader missions and operational transparency of NGOs ([Brakman Reiser & Kelly, 2011](#_ENREF_38)). The traditional institutional logic for NGOs to exist is ‘public benefit’ that has social value creation as a strategic focus. Institutional demands in the form of stakeholders incessant questioning of organizational missions and operations are paramount as NGOs’ reliance on grants and donations (Nicholls A & Murdock, A; 2012) in producing public goods ([Dennis R Young, 2001](#_ENREF_221)). This is because organizational behavior literature looks at accountability from resource dependence and stakeholders’ theory generally ([Ebrahim, 2003](#_ENREF_80)).

The enhanced scrutiny of NGOs, foremost, owes its existence to the changing governance reality that the world faces in the form of extra-national challenges such as refugee crisis, climate change, water availability, and extremist ideologies. NGOs in such situations are partnering with private sector and governments to address these challenges and such partnerships provide the first entry point into the accountability debates ([Bäckstrand, 2006](#_ENREF_15); [Baur & Palazzo, 2011](#_ENREF_25); [Marano & Tashman, 2012](#_ENREF_137); [Pickard, 2007](#_ENREF_159)). An immediate factor that puts Nonprofits accountability on spot is the growing social relevance of what nonprofits do. These organizations compete with government and corporate organizations for the tasks that are gaining social relevance ([Valentinov, 2010](#_ENREF_208)). This relevance is more pronounced in regions that face armed conflicts, including the region under study.

More importantly accountably challenge increased as NGOs started providing services that were the under the State’s purview resulting in the NGO sector tremendous growth in size and scale across the globe. Some INGOs have budgets bigger than most corporations and UN bodies. As such the sector has globally become a power broker in both humanitarian and political contexts. The worldwide adoption of the new management paradigms by governments to deliver services and creating more space for private sector is another area that has made NGOs prominent actors. According to [Smith (2011, p. 33)](#_ENREF_190) countries are adopting new public management approaches to improve effectiveness and responsiveness of services provision. In words of [Fowler (2000, p. 637)](#_ENREF_90), development NGOs will have to relinquish their role as “subsidy-providing intermediaries in a declining aid system” as the required institutional structures are missing in most developing countries. Fowler insists a rethinking of the whole nature of development NGOs and development itself, not premised on aid, may be required if we were to mellow down the accountability challenges for NGOs.

What is missing from accountability debates of NGOs is how multiple institutional constituents (clients, patrons) have often times numerous and conflicting accountably demands. Some have disentangled the set of institutional demands that NGOs face into upward accountability towards donors, government and downward accountability towards beneficiaries/clients (Najam, 1996). Others have made use of ‘strategic accountability’ referring to the wider effectiveness criteria for NGOs and ‘functional accountability’ referring to the accounting procedures and impacts of NGOs. Still others have divided such accountability demands into external and internal constituents ([Drori & Honig, 2013](#_ENREF_76)).

Similarly in recent times the nature of nonprofit organizations and their boundaries are blurring cognitively, normatively and more so in regulative aspects. According to [Sabeti (2011)](#_ENREF_169) along with the private, nonprofits, and government there is fourth sector emerging which needs to be taken seriously. These are called the for-benefit enterprises. In an era where for-profit businesses are investing in environmental and social causes, nonprofits are developing sustainable business models, and governments are forging market based solutions to services delivery, it’s time for a change in thinking of all organizational structures and instead focus only on enterprises that benefits owners, stakeholders, governments and society at large.

Then there is the assertion that NGOs accountability has surfaced because of high salaries of executives, financial misreporting and anti-state activities. A case in point on anti-state activities is the INGO and its local partners in sham polio campaign to trace down Osama Bin Laden in 2011 in Abottabad Pakistan that resulted in government of Pakistan’s strong backlash against the NGO sector.

Lastly there are implications of multiple accountability demands on NGOs themselves particularly when these organizations are contracted by foreign donors and multinational corporations ([Najam, 2000](#_ENREF_147)). It has been observed that fulfilling the functional responsibility of NGOs has been higher on the NGOs agenda than the long-term strategic accountability of these organizations (Najam 1996a).

Table - Types of accountability

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Types of accountability in NGO literature | Description | Authors |
| Functional accountability | Accounting for resources, use of resources, and impacts | Avina, 1993;  Najam, 1996a) |
| Strategic accountability | Impacts of NGO activities on institutions & wider environment | Avina, 1993 |
| Upward accountability | Accountability towards patrons, donors, governments | Edwards & Hulme, 1996b) |
| Downward accountability | Accountability towards clients and beneficiaries | Edwards & Hulme, 1996b |

Source: Based on literature review

### 2.9.3 Participation & empowerment

Historically, indigenous participation of civil society actors in setting of development agendas has been curtailed and mode of associational life is dictated by donors ([Edwards, 2011](#_ENREF_82)). In theory donors and host government together chalk out the development agenda with the auxiliary participation of civil society organization and sometimes private sector. In practice, however, donors have differing conceptions, abstract and contextual, about NGOs performance and capacities just as they have those about public sector. Involvement with civil society, however decayed, is considered a ‘look good’, ‘feel good’, and safe bet among donor agencies. Donors also see providing assistance in face of disasters as reaping political dividends at home and abroad. Donor’s policies, by and large, are prescriptive in humanitarian reconstruction promoting a range of western ideals. Local organizations are usually given two options: accept the aid conditionalities in totality or else get nothing and be responsible for peoples’ sufferings ([Gunewadena & Schuller, 2008](#_ENREF_107)).

There is an increasing mention of the alleged *hegemonic discourses* on the aims, structures, programs and aspiration of the globalized civil society and its manifestations at local levels (Grillo, 1997; 12). The idea of NGOs fits comfortably with donor’s tendency to see measurable results in the short term. This donor’s disposition to have control over small entities than to deal with government bureaucracy has constrained the evolution of civil society on indigenous lines across developing countries. The imposition of predetermined norms - 'civil society determinism', has been a prime target of anti-NGOs debate ([Edwards, 2004, p. 105](#_ENREF_81)).

[Schuller (2009)](#_ENREF_178) summarizes the role NGOs play as intermediaries between larger global forces and local level impacts from the ethnographic studies in aftermath of Haitian earthquake. He argues that NGOs “glue” globalization or structural adjustment programs into humanitarian development in four ways. First NGOs are posed as alternative to Southern governments in times of disaster management. Second, as a preferred medium of services delivery, NGOs eats up the State’s governance capacity. Third, NGOs enhances inequalities by providing highly paid jobs to an educated transition middle class. Lastly and more importantly the NGOs, claiming to represent beneficiaries, create insurmountable buffer between donors and impoverished recipients thereby creating institutional barriers to local participation in development priority settings.

In the context of disaster environments, participation of local humanitarian NGOs in agenda setting is very low which reflects on the overall legitimacy of the humanitarian field. On the other hand, there is a total lack of participation of affected populations in needs’ identification, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian assistance.. This lack of participation of NGOs in international governance system (upward participation) and a total lack of beneficiary participation (downward) has profound impacts on defending local NGOs legitimacies. This has led NGOs to be seen as shady organizations that implement humanitarian ‘projects’ at the behest of donors more akin to private ‘contractors’ than social welfare organizations. These NGOs are only members serving organizations (like private entities) rather than promoting wider participation and empowering disenfranchised populations ([Bano, 2008](#_ENREF_19)). Similarly aid has been recorded as widening the population-NGO relationship rather than filling it up. Only those NGOs that are indigenized to some extent can claim to be genuine representative of people’s demands (ibid).

### 2.9.4 Impacts

The international aid system has produced uneven development and has oftentimes proved counterproductive ([Fowler, 2000, p. 639](#_ENREF_90)). Humanitarian reconstruction efforts around the globe have produced unequal societies both as a result of the processes involved and the very conception of a contextualized understanding of the notion of reconstruction itself. This view is supported by [Nasir et al. (2012)](#_ENREF_148) on their quantitative study for assessing the impact of international aid on terrorism in Pakistan between 1972 and 2010 concludes that the impact of foreign aid on terrorism is positive in the long run and particularly during the war on terror period (2001 onwards).

Studying the impacts of international aid to NGOs in Pakistan, [Bano (2008)](#_ENREF_19) concludes that aid is counterproductive as it diminishes the traditional strong social capital that had been a hallmark of established NGOs in yesteryears. It raises material aspirations amongst NGO leaders, and lowers organizational performance leading to modern managerial practices and leaving out the essential component of volunteerism.

Increasingly public sector presents NGOs’ under achievement as the major reason for withholding support to them (e.g., Fowler, 1993). At the other end of the spectrum, NGOisation is seen as externally driven phenomenon that threatened the development of ‘‘indigenous civil society’’ ([Mitlin et al., 2007](#_ENREF_145)).

In the next section, extant theories on nonprofit organizations are discussed at length.

These concerns are translated into Critical Realist language in the form of three research questions that this work tries to address as presented in the next section.

## 2.10 Research aims and questions

The aim of this research is to examine the structure HDF and bring to light mechanisms responsible for decreasing NGOs legitimacies in a changing institutional environment in Pakistan. More critical than the aim is a problem statement that is being explored; why do local NGOs face institutional alienation in the HDF, to what effects on their structures and how are NGOs responding to the challenge? This problem is structured through three questions and four corresponding objectives as shown in table 8.

Table - Research questions and objectives

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Research Questions** | **Research** **Objectives** |
| 1. Why do NGOs face legitimacy crisis in the humanitarian development field in Pakistan (regions of KP and FATA)? | RO-1.1: To empirically assess *events* and *entities* that explains the *outcome* of decreased NGOs’ legitimacies |
| RO- 1.2: To retroduce the incidence of decreased NGOs legitimacies by identifying plausible *mechanisms* and their *structures* |
| 2- How do NGOs experience and respond to multiple institutional logics? | RO 2.1- To examine the *context* of legitimacy crisis and how case NGOs experience institutional multiplicity as reflected in their strategies |
| 3- What does decreasing NGOs’ legitimacies mean for humanitarian-development framework in the region? | RO 3.1- To examine ‘emergence’ of the newer humanitarian development framework and NGOs roles therein. |

## 2.11 Conclusion

This chapter began with conceptualizing NGOs as organizations and moved to explain legitimacy tensions both within NGOs and the wider organizational field of humanitarian development. Thereafter extant theories on NGOs are discussed with NIT as the theoretical underpinning for research concerns. In order to deal with the institutional complexity in the HDF key strategies of decoupling, isomorphism, and logics blending are discussed. Towards the end, a contextual model is laid out in the study’s context and then key questions that this research addresses are laid out. The next chapter then is about the study’s methodological choices to address the research questions.

# Chapter 3- Research Methodology & Design

## 3.1 Introduction

Research methodology broadly concerns with the paradigmatic assumptions, research strategy and subsequent research methods specifying how data units are chosen and analysed. The purpose of this chapter is two fold. First the philosophical assumptions (paradigmatic choice) underpinning this research are explained along with why critical realism is the best choice for this study. Key concepts of Critical Realism (CR) are operationalized including discussion on objects/entities, events, mechanism, causal power, and structure of the causal explanation. Second, this chapter discusses case study design as appropriate to answer the questions of this research. As a rejoinder, the chapter begins with reviewing the research objectives and questions and moves on to methodological concerns and choices. Figure 5 below suggests the flow of this chapter.

Figure - flow of the CHAPTER

## 3.2 Revisiting research aims and objectives

The overall aim of this research is to understand the mechanisms responsible for NGOs marginalization in humanitarian development field of the study region. This aim is incorporated into three research questions and related objectives.

Question 1 deal with why NGOs face marginalization in the humanitarian development field. Objective 1.1 is to empirically assess events that explain the outcome of NGOs marginalization. Objective 1.2 is to examine the underlying mechanisms and their structure to explain legitimacy crisis of NGOs.

The second questions deals with how NGOs experience and respond to this marginalization. This is attempted though objective 2.1 that set out to examine how causal mechanisms affect behaviours and strategies of case NGOs.

The last question is about the decreasing NGOs legitimacies and its repercussions for the humanitarian development framework of the region. Objective 3.1 examines the emerging humanitarian-development nexus. This is a broader question that puts the potential of social change that NGOs may bring to humanitarian and development environments had they been allowed to operate in an enabling environment.

This focus and associated research questions require taking a critical approach to research and to operate in a non-positivistic paradigm. The following section covers debates on philosophical underpinnings to address the above research questions.

## 3.3 Philosophical underpinnings

### 

### 3.3.1 Paradigms

[Guba and Lincoln (1994)](#_ENREF_106) describe paradigms as ‘belief systems or world view’ comprising a set of ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. Discussions on paradigms usually begins with Thomas Kuhn’s seminal work entitled ‘the structure of scientific revolutions’ (1962) where he laid bare the bones of scientific progress by rejecting the principles of induction (verification) and deduction (falsification). Relegating scientific work to an entirely social construction, instead of positivism, Kuhn’s incommensurability thesis ruled out any rational dialogue amongst scientists across two or more paradigms. This suggests a paradigm cannot be compared from the standpoint of another paradigm generally referred to as the principle of incommensurability. Kuhn (1962) thus puts an end to subjecting any paradigms as inferior or superior in the ‘paradigm wars’.

Research in social sciences and organizational management has largely been influenced by the four key approaches identified by Burrell and Morgan (1979) as the functionalist, interpretivist, radical humanist and radical structuralists. Other, like Hardy and Clegg (1997) have innovated the classic categorization of Burrell and Morgan by identifying four approaches as normative, interpretive, critical and post modern. Although overlapping in certain areas, by adopting a paradigm the social inquiry has to follow the dictates of that particular approach. For example, for functionalist and normative approaches, organizations are foremost considered as entities that are judged based on their effectiveness and functionality. On the other hand an interpretivist approach connotes particular focus on organizations as social sites rather than focusing on issues of efficiency and economic rationality (Karataş-Özkan & Murphy, 2010). This study considers NGOs as social organizations and addresses the legitimacy issue from effectiveness criteria foremost and efficiency concerns later.

Every scientific inquiry carries two major concerns; what is the nature of reality and how this reality can be assessed in a valid way. According to [Johnson and Duberley (2000)](#_ENREF_124) concepts, interpretations and the epistemological standards deployed by scientists depend upon the paradigmatic context in which they occur. [Corbetta (2003)](#_ENREF_58) asserts that competing approaches in the social and management sciences are contrasted on three bases; (a) the ontological base (existence of a real and objective world), (b) the epistemological base (possibility of knowing this world), and (c) the methodological base (instruments used to acquire that knowledge).

The first sets of assumptions, the ontological ones, are framed about the nature of reality. One primary ontological dimension is to divide the reality either into a subjective perspective (Subjectivism) and an objective perspective where reality resides external of social actors (Saunders et al., 2006). This requires researcher to take a position whether there is a reality ‘out there’ or its a product of human imagination and is socially constructed ([Burrell & Morgan, 1979](#_ENREF_47)). Similarly ontological assumptions are also about the structure of reality (Crotty, 1998) such as it being concrete, structured, subjective or multiple.

While ontology debates the nature of reality and existence, epistemology, the second set of assumptions are about the choice of ways for enquiring into the nature of reality ([Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012](#_ENREF_78)). These assumptions deal with the questions of forms of knowledge that are accessible and valid ([Burrell & Morgan, 1979](#_ENREF_47)). Two dominant stances are usually considered under epistemological choices- Positivism (and post positivism) and constructivism (interpretivism, phenomenology etc). This lead to different methodological choices that are discussed after taking, first, the fourth set of (value) assumptions concerning human nature and its relation with environment (axiology). Assumption about the human-environment Interaction may fall on either extreme- in a mechanistic or even deterministic fashion in which humans are conditioned by their external circumstances. The other extreme considers humans as creative and creator of their environments- “the master rather than the marionette”. Social theories however are pitched somewhere in between these two extreme positions.

Lastly then, the above 3 concerns have critical consequences for methodological choices. Different ontological, epistemological and reflexivity assumptions about human nature reflects in myriad of methodologies available to social scientists. There is a near consensus that methodological concerns flow from epistemological and ontological stances and not the other way round. Under positivistic epistemology, reality is considered as objective where research remains independent of the phenomenon being studied and usually researchers claim biased free inquiry. Research strategies under positivistic perspective include surveys, experiments and longitudinal studies etc. On the other hand under a phenomenological perspective researchers usually use case study, action research, or ethnographies as research strategy.

In the following the paradigmatic influences are applied in case of this research.

### 3.3.2 Philosophy of the Research

The whole edifice of a research is rooted in the paradigmatic choice. [Guba and Lincoln (1994)](#_ENREF_106) cautions against taking paradigms as merely philosophical postures as taking a position has critical effects on the inquiry. This research is suited to a post-positivistic perspective (Realist). A realist view suggests that humans can make sense of reality although it exists regardless of human’s knowledge of it (Saunders et al. 2006).

Saunders et al. (2006) makes a useful distinction between two major forms of realism namely ‘direct realism’ and ‘critical realism’. As the name implies, direct realism naively means researchers can produce meaning of a reality by producing thick narrative to identify ‘surface’ mechanisms at play. Critical realism, on the other hand, makes distinction between natural and social worlds and insists that meanings are created by human interaction and studying ‘real’ mechanism for social structures. Critical realists are particularly attentive to avoid ‘epistemic fallacy’ (Bhaskar, 1991) by clearly distinguishing between ontology and epistemology. This means that the nature of reality and our knowledge of reality should not be conflated as one. This suggest that realist philosophy approaches ‘reality’ in a better way than positivists or interpretivists, that it can be reasonably known, if not accurately.

Critical realism relies on a stratified ontology which suggests that reality is nothing more than identifying the causal mechanisms that produce events (Bhaskar 1998). However not all events can be accessed through human sensory motors. Therefore CR employs ‘retroduction’ to describe the structure and mechanisms that results in a phenomenon. Retroduction then is a making inference of events by identifying the “mechanism, which are capable of producing them” (Sayer, 1992, pp 107).

Retroduction for this research means identifying the mechanisms that have been at the roots of increased accountability and legitimacy concerns for local humanitarian and development NGOs. The key question of the study concerns itself with the weaker position of NGOs in the organizational field of humanitarian development and how and why NGOs build essential form of legitimacy to extract resources and remain relevant to the local humanitarian and development settings. It is understood that NGOs have to actively devise strategies to operate in a socially, culturally and politically challenging environment to their existence. This viewpoint necessitates taking a critical view. The choice of critical realism to guide major study concerns is its strength in explaining (social) change by unearthing the casual mechanisms at the roots of organizational actions. [Easton (2010, p. 119)](#_ENREF_79) rightly focuses on critical realist’s notions of transcendental ontology, an eclectic realist/interpretivist epistemology and a generally emancipatory axiology. The transcendental argument unmasks the mechanisms that makes some activity possible by connecting events to objects ([Easton, 2010](#_ENREF_79)). The interpretivist epistemology suggests that CR considers reality to be partially socially constructed.

Before further operationalizing the research concerns, the following text elucidates more on various notions of CR.

### 3.3.3 Critical Realism

Realism was a counter position to relativism in the philosophy of natural sciences emphasising that the world is concrete and external ([Easterby-Smith et al., 2012](#_ENREF_78)). There are various shades of realism with its own ontologies but this research is grounded in Bashkar’s transcendental Realism that assumes that objects exist irrespective of researchers’ activity ([Easterby-Smith et al., 2012](#_ENREF_78)). Realism in its purest form subscribes to a ‘single truth’ and believes that facts exist and can be revealed. The foundation of critical realist epistemology primarily lies in understanding human driven reality at multiple levels of causations and manifestations. Social structures by their very nature possess causal powers. These causal powers generate mechanisms that work to reinforce a semblance of stability and continuity in human interactions. Realist ontology views social structures as real and stratified and organized into lower and higher stratus that are co-dependent and in a way that the higher strata is dependent upon lower strata for their existence whilst being causally independent of each other” (in Cruickshank, 2003, p.100)

As a philosophical position, Critical Realism rests on an ontology of the social world that “regards ‘real’ as embracing more than just the ‘surface’ features of everyday human existence” ([Pratt, 1995](#_ENREF_163)). A simple explanation of a realist world view according to [Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2000)](#_ENREF_1) is to minimally assert that many entities exist independently of us and our investigation of them. A realists’ philosophical stance begins with accepting or rejecting the fundamental point of “either there is, or there is not, ‘more’ to that which we ‘see’ ([Pratt, 1995](#_ENREF_163)).

The core constructs of Critical Realism (CR) in social sciences emanates from the classic conception of realist philosophy ([Blundel, 2007](#_ENREF_35)). The brand of realism that was popularized by influential works done by Rom Harre and Roy Bhaskar are at the roots of CR’s current usage in social sciences. This philosophical worldview works around the notions of structures, mechanisms and causal powers in a world where reality is both stratified and emerging. The critical realist methodology on the other hand revolves around Bhasker’s ‘critical naturalism’ primarily based in the notion of ‘retroduction’. Retroduction means “moving backwards” or abuductive reasoning and that is what the process involves. It asks “What must be true in order to make this event possible?” ([Easton, 2010, p. 123](#_ENREF_79)). Retroduction is thus construed as a meta-process that identifies mechanisms to explain what caused particular events to occur. For Sayer (1992) retroduction involves explanation of events in the social world by examining the structures and mechanisms that are able to produce such events.

According to [Pratt (1995)](#_ENREF_163) Critical realism is a post-positivistic paradigm suggesting departure from positivistic tradition of research and focusing on stratified version of reality. Critical realists concerns with regards to causality are modest as they instead use generative causality, the power of objects to make events happen. Another important point of departure from positivism is the use of abstraction. For Pratt (2009) abduction identifies the appropriate mechanisms and the conditions under which a cause may produce an effect. This would involve the iterative process of retroduction.

What makes critical realism distinct from the otherwise dominant philosophies of pragmatism, postmodernism, critical theory and hermeneutics in social sciences is its focus on explanation of reality and not presenting grand general laws. [Danermark, Ekstrom, and Karlsson Ch (2002)](#_ENREF_62) present three basic philosophical dichotomies that set critical realism apart from competing worldviews in social sciences. The first and foremost distinction is that critical realism approaches follow idiographic frame and not a nomothetic one. The purpose of social sciences is not definitive in that it cannot generate laws rather its purpose is to describe reality in all its complexity (idiographic). Secondly there is a clear dichotomy of theory and methods. Ontological stances have precedence over theoretical and practical research contexts. Lastly critical realists, though not indifferent to the fruitfulness of methodological pluralism, do not readily endorse a mindless combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Unless these are firmly rooted in a systematic meta-theory, the risk of mixed methods far outweighs their merits in terms of determining causalities under a realist paradigm.

### 3.3.4 Critical Realist ontology

It is important here to discuss CR paradigms both as philosophical underpinnings guiding the research and application of key paradigmatic assumptions to the research questions. For this research, the methodological implications (generalization, inference, explanations, role of theory) when CR is used as a guiding vehicle brings to fore the causal links in a more meaningful way. As a philosophy CR initiates from ontology which simply states that the world is structured, differentiated, stratified and changing. For Bhaskar CR examines society and people and how they can be made into links for obtaining knowledge ([Danermark et al., 2002](#_ENREF_62)).

The soul of realist’s worldview is thus rooted in its ontology. The subsequent choices of methods and analytical frames depend on problematizing the nature of being. This is clear in realist’s social ontology which mainly consists of the claim that social phenomenon exists without the human actor’s conception, construction or discourses of them. This is in direct contrast to post-modern approaches which claim that the world is entirely socially constructed and concept-dependent. Actors can know as much of a situation as they can make sense of and thus social phenomenon are ‘concept-dependent’ but not ‘concept determined’. It is the very basic premise of the nature of social world that realism breaks away from the postmodern approaches.

Critical realism almost entirely relies on explanation of phenomenon in terms of causal effects that makes a system operate. The strength of critical realism is not thus in producing something new, but to come up with strong explanations of differentiating and sometimes irreconcilable perspectives ([Danermark et al., 2002, pp. 9-10](#_ENREF_62)).

Bhaskar (1978) has suggested that critical realism has a stratified rather than flat ontology and this has major epistemological implications. The strata are the empirical, the actual and the real as shown in table 9.

Table - Ontological assumptions of Critical realist view of science

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Domain of real | Domain of actual | Domain of empirical |
| Mechanisms/Structures | √ |  |  |
| Events | √ | √ |  |
| Experiences | √ | √ | √ |

Source: [Tsoukas (2000, p. 29)](#_ENREF_205), ([Leca & Naccache, 2006](#_ENREF_131)) based on Bhaskar 1978

This is the start of critical relists’ project of unearthing stratified model of reality having the domain of real, actual and empirical. In order to know the domain of real, CR analysis identify structures and causal powers and the manner they act together (Sayer, 1992). CR is not satisfied with the domain of empirical where perceptions of reality exists or the domain of actual where practices manifest as CR acknowledges the primacy of practice over language (Archer, 2002). The domain of real is the level of causal structures or mechanisms. Further discussion on the three levels is contained in section 3.7.

## 3.4 Qualitative methodology

This case study is based in qualitative methodology. Qualitative studies tend to be in the interpretivist camp where explanation is the purpose, context is critical, and subject is part of the research scene ([Della Porta & Keating, 2008](#_ENREF_66)). Most qualitative research may thus be termed as interpretive research as meanings are accorded to human behaviour ([Stake, 2010](#_ENREF_192)). The interpretivists immerse themselves in the situation under study, to empathize with the population and to see things from their perspective ([Della Porta & Keating, 2008](#_ENREF_66)). Such research examines social settings and the people therein to make sense of their surroundings, symbols, rituals and social structures ([Berg, 2001](#_ENREF_29)). On the other side from positivist perspective the major challenge of social research is to describe causality with the help of variables and using a set of regressions. Such researches rely mostly on deductive methods, are context-free, and claim bias-free object-subject relationship.

There are turf wars between the quantitative and qualitative approaches across disciplines continue to consume most of the research community focus. To the extent that for ardent quantitative researchers, qualitative reach does not pass to be scientific, can bring little value and should not be funded ([Lincoln & Cannella, 2004](#_ENREF_133)). On the other hand qualitative camp suggest that all data are qualitative as they refer to our underdressing of people, situations, and objects (Berg, 1989). Other critiques challenge the quantitative approaches on more foundation stances of metaphysics, social action, and facts. Proponents of quantitative approaches acknowledge that relevance and context are lost when a wide-ranging phenomenon is conflated into a few variables in search of objectivity and generalizability that usually results in loss of the human element in research. They also acknowledge that an insider’s view (emic) is lost and in the process the resultant abstraction of reality is curtailed ([Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107](#_ENREF_106)).

Like quantitative studies, a qualitative inquiry in amenable to a range of design, data collection strategies and analysis schemes. In terms of design, qualitative inquiry happens in the real world where researchers study phenomenon in their natural settings and attempts to make sense of happenings in terms of meanings people bring to them ([Norman K Denzin, 2000](#_ENREF_67)). The designs are flexible and emergent in that researcher does not consider design closure over the research period, while the sampling is oftentimes purposeful than random ([Patton, 2002, p. 39](#_ENREF_157)). Samples can be cases of people, organizations, events, or industries and reflects useful manifestation of the phenomenon.

Data collection strategies under qualitative inquiry favour methods that produce detailed and thick descriptions of phenomenon at hand. Observation is the most fundamental of data collection methods that requires mindfulness and empathetic neutrality, to the extent possible ([Patton, 2002](#_ENREF_157)).

Similarly there is a range of strategies available for analyses. [Patton (2002)](#_ENREF_157) describes qualitative analyses as mostly inductive where data is deciphered in patterns, themes and interrelationships. The analysis is also holistic as the focus is on complex interdependencies of dynamics where meaning cannot be reduced to linear cause-effect relationships based on a few variables. The context is also important in informing patterns for possible transferability but findings remain specific to a particular social, historical or temporal settings. Lastly [Patton (2002, p. 41)](#_ENREF_157) adds the researcher’s reflexivity an essential part of qualitative analyses and advises balancing subjectivity by considering political self awareness creeping into interpretation.

Quantitative and qualitative approaches are sometimes mistaken for ‘paradigms’ ([Guba & Lincoln, 1994](#_ENREF_106)). The use of loose terms such as extensive and intensive research methods (Sayer, 2000) is also not uncommon. Extensive methods rely on large-scale surveys and associated statistical analysis to bring out regularities, patterns, categorizations etc. Such methods have limited explanatory powers. On the other hand, intensive methods generate deeper meanings of what produces change. A case research can be an excellent example of intensive research ([Easton, 2010](#_ENREF_79)).

Qualitative research however is not beyond it critics. [Norman K. Denzin (2009)](#_ENREF_68) claims that critique on qualitative research is more pervasive from within the qualitative community where some regard such researches as excessive ‘anti-methodological’ or ‘anything goes’. The assertion is that too often qualitative researches are low quality with stereotypical and common sense conclusions ([Norman K. Denzin, 2009, p. 19](#_ENREF_68)). This study has deployed various protocols and tactics to ensure trustworthiness of the whole research process as spelled out in section 3.10.

## 3.5 CR organizational case studies

Organizational case studies in the critical realist tradition watch out for causal mechanisms or the pathways that created an outcome. Discovering causal mechanisms and causal powers are fundamental outcomes of a CR organizational case study (O’Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). Developing explanations and to abduct novel theories, it is useful to start the realist project with the ontological assertions about what organizations are and how they are formed particularly looking at ‘relational emergence’ as organizations change with respect to institutions over time ([Vincent & Wapshott, 2013](#_ENREF_211)).

This is done through the evolution of NGOs in face of three crisis episodes since 2001 in Pakistan. The first key event is 9/11 that triggered the maximum number of NGOs operations. Second are the earthquake of 2005 and the 2010 floods. Perhaps the most important event is the decade old (between 2007 and 2017) challenge that requires services delivery to the internally displaced populations (IDPs) who got dislodged due to internal militancy. That the structure of the region’s HDF being informed by these crisis is beyond doubt, there are other global events happening that has created complexity for NGOs in the field.

Organizational case studies under Critical Realism are concerned with institutional explanation that comes from thick descriptions of events and structure of entities as well as studying field level influences (O’Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). In an open social world, the domain of real consists of structures capable of producing events under specific contexts. That the causal power of structures are intrinsic that can create events under specific conditions is to suggest that structures have powers- exhibited or not ([Tsoukas, 2000](#_ENREF_205)). Just like neo-institutional theory, critical realist gives primacy to society as preexisting to actor’s agency (Selboe, 2002).

To introduce institutional change, actors have to use the causal powers of the structure in the domain of real to create new schemes in the institutional arrangements. Since institutions as structures are emergent, it requires considerable agency to cognitively diffuse new schemes as logics are oftentimes contradictory and multiple (Friedland and Aflord, 1991).

For critical realists, the world consists of objects and the reality of those objects, their structures and powers (Sayer, 2010). But objects and their structure are not amenable to direct observation and realists must reveal causal powers to establish patterns of events in the domain of real and empirical. Realist researchers have to establish the plausibility of the hypothesized structures and causal powers. This is done through abduction and retroduction in realist analysis. Abducting the apparent mechanisms and retroducing antecedents simultaneously however is a difficult path in critical realists case studies (O’Mahoney & Vincent, 2014).

At the field level, the analytical framework combines institutional logics and critical realism to understand structure of legitimacy, its causal powers (& liabilities), and mechanisms that are capable of producing events (occurrence of legitimacy crisis) that signals appreciation or depreciation in organizational illegitimacies in HDF.

Realist case studies primarily strive towards clear sequencing of causal mechanisms to show the formative process of particular outcomes. In this case the research is about the decreasing acceptability of NGOs in HDF. Realist case studies also enable the researcher to isolate the ‘mechanisms’ to apply abduction and enable researchers to ask the “retroductive research questions: what must the context have been like to have allowed the emergence of a given generative mechanisms” ([Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000, p. 26](#_ENREF_1)).

### 3.5.1 Research strategy- Qualitative multiple case study

Research strategy is about selection of suitable research procedures for examining the issue at hand ([Blaikie, 2007, p. 107](#_ENREF_34)). More so a research strategy or design is the logic that links data to the initial research questions of the study ([Yin, 2003, p. 19](#_ENREF_220)). Design strategies ideally emanates from a clear aim as subsequent choice of data collection methods and analyses all flow in the direction of fulfilling the study’s purpose. There are five purposes identified by [Patton (2002, p. 213)](#_ENREF_157) in qualitative research; i) basic research, ii) applied research, iii) summative evaluation, iv) formative evaluation, and v) action research. As can be inferred form the sequencing, basic research contributes to theory while action research, at the other end of the spectrum, strives to solve specific problems.

Seen against the above categories, the primary objectives (RO 1.1) of this study are to examine mechanisms responsible for decreased NGOs’ legitimacy and how NGOs experience a crisis of legitimacy (RO 2.1). It is thus a kind of applied research striving to better understanding of NGOs as organizations and how best can they contribute towards the larger mission of humanitarian development in the region. This is done qualitatively through examining the structure of HDF and agency of NGOs.

The other objective (RO 2.1) is to examine organizational strategies to mend off institutional pressures and regaining their institutional space. This is made manifest through different logics that organizations in the field employ under diverse circumstances and according to the need of actors they are interacting with. In order to examine logics multiplicity and what it means to be a local NGO, multiple organizational cases are chosen to examine how legitimacy events affect a set of humanitarian and development NGOs.

Applied qualitative research also demands that a researcher bring personal insights and experiences into recommending remedies for a problem. In this context, this researcher has closely interacted with humanitarian relief and development environment for over a decade in the study region and has witnessed multiple events where citizens, media, state officials, and INGOs all demand demonstration of NGOs’ legitimacy on a variety of logics. It should be noted that accounts of such cases are limited to a specific timeframe (post 9/11), events, and pertains to a specific place (humanitarian development organizational field in KP & FATA). Further description of the study region and repeated nature of human and nature-based disasters have been discussed in chapter 3.

The case study method has been chosen for three primary reasons. Foremost, case study enables deeper and holistic understanding (Cepada & Martin 2005) of a social phenomenon under study. This research searches for the causal mechanism that recursively produces negative institutional influences towards the role of NGOs at the wider HDF level.

Second, the importance of case strategy to this work is answering the how and why questions. Why are institutional spaces for contracting? Why has the concern with legitimacy building the primary issue for NGOs and how it is affecting the structures of these organizations.

Lastly, the question of how marginalization of NGOs in the existing structure of HDF influences the overall mandate of humanitarian development and to what effects on the development and peace building requires a holistic understanding of the tensions both at the field and organizational levels.

The reason for choosing more than one organization is to achieve the purpose of replication and to generate reliability of findings. All three cases chosen may have minor differences that will come to fore in case analysis but overall most NGOs in the region resemble one another to a larger extent.

### 3.5.2 Defining ‘case’

A case can simply be considered as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (Punch, 1998, p. 152). A case study generally has three characteristics; first, it is an empirical inquiry and not just collection of stories. Second a case study investigates a contemporary and real life phenomenon. Lastly, there needs to be a context where the phenomenon is being investigated in a way where boundaries between the context and phenomenon are not self-evident ([Yin, 2003](#_ENREF_220)).

Generally case study designs have a relatively long history within the sciences, social sciences, and humanities ([Mills, Eurepos, & Wiebe, 2009](#_ENREF_143))**.** [Stake, Denzin, and Lincoln (1998)](#_ENREF_193) identifies three types of case strategies namely intrinsic, instrumental and collective case study designs. Both the intrinsic and instrumental strategies require a single case. The interest is on the particular case itself in case of intrinsic, and on theory building about a phenomenon in case of instrumental designs. The collective design, as the name implies, consists of multiple cases taken together to study a phenomenon. This study is a collective case study of three NGOs chosen subjectively on a set of purposive criteria to examine how organizations are embedded in larger structures and their responses to institutional logics.

### 3.5.3 Study’s questions & role of theory in CR

The starting point for a Critical Realist case study is a problem or question usually guided by theory ([Fletcher, 2017](#_ENREF_89)). Both positivists and constructionists prioritize epistemology over ontology and generate theory through empirical data without asking why a relationship exists (O’Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). Realists through the use of abduction and retroduction explains the world in much better detail.

The focus on how and why legitimacy building becomes an overriding organizational activity in humanitarian support field provides the rights basis for choosing case strategy, as case design better answers the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions. The focus is on bringing to fore the underlying causal mechanisms that force the humanitarian field and NGOs therein to contribute a significant amount of effort towards building legitimacies rather than focusing on improving services delivery for its clientele.

### 3.5.5 Unit of Analysis

The choice of units of analysis is always critical for drawing valid inferences. Asking questions at the right level, like what to analyse, may make the challenge of selecting unit of analysis easier. Research questions may strive to analyse an individual, a program, a process, or difference between organizations to some change in a particular context (Baxter and Jack, 2008). It can also be conceptualized as an individual, firm, organizational population, process, or a project (Yin, 2003). Or simply put, the unit of analysis is the entity so chosen that needs to be analysed (Babbie, 2009).

This research is an embedded case study design where multiple levels are examined using different unit of analyses (type 4). Embedded case studies have more than one sub-unit of analysis (Yin, 2003). This kind of case study conduct is appropriate in situation where boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not self-evident (ibid).

Table -basic case study designs and unit of analysis

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Levels/Unit of analysis | Single case study designs | Multiple case study designs |
| Holistic (single level & single unit of analysis | Type 1 | Type 3 |
| Embedded (multiple levels/unit of analysis | Type 2 | Type 4 |

Source: Yin, 2003

In all eventualities the unit of analysis is influenced by the study questions. The foremost question this research poses is on the nature of institutional demands that emanate from larger field environment. It is thus critical to analyse the structure of the HDF itself first and then move on to analyse the entities of NGO and its internal structures and sub-structure. The centrality of accountability concerns of the global humanitarian and development field is reflective in recent public policy priorities ([Ibrahim, 2009](#_ENREF_117); [Lehtonen, 2013](#_ENREF_132)) as there is a clear struggle between competing logics experienced as objects, their structures, and events. In recent years, there has been an international shift in closure of non-governmental organizations in both advanced and developing countries. Russia, China, Brazil, and increasingly a tolerant India have clamped down on international NGOs and their local partners ([Siddiqa, 2015](#_ENREF_186)). Pakistan is following suit with the current government introducing a myriad of registration and watchdog procedures for both national and international NGOs in the name of ‘national interest’ particularly after the sham polio campaign by an INGO in 2011 that lead to the killing of Osama Bin Laden. There are events of closure of INGOs and more pressure on local NGOs as they are now increasingly being scrutinized by the government rather than the mere reporting international donors required previously ([Zaidi, 2015](#_ENREF_224)).

At the macro level, the (humanitarian) organizational field is analysed on the pertinent logics and events that give rise to NGOs legitimacies are established (Chapter 6). Organizational field is a tested level of analysis in various industries and more so in those whose existence is contested like microfinance, tobacco and gambling. The choice of ‘industry’ or ‘field’ as a case is supported by available literature particularly in emerging fields where new practices are institutionalized by institutional entrepreneurs across an emerging field ([Déjean et al., 2004](#_ENREF_64); [Marcus & Anderson, 2008](#_ENREF_138)). It is an equally effective level for explaining institutional dynamics in emerging fields ([Katz & Gartner, 1988](#_ENREF_127); [Purdy & Gray, 2009](#_ENREF_164)) such as that of various forms and manifestations of NGOs in the region. The field level provides sufficient latitude in examining strategic action at inter-organizational level on strategies to enhance NGOs legitimacy. The field level answers the key question of why do legitimacy challenges emerge in the structure of HDF and guides the subsequent questions of how NGOs respond as meso level analysis.

The second and third questions are posed at the meso level where a subsection of NGOs are examined on how they experience and react to changing institutional norms at the macro level. At this level three NGOs are comparatively analysed on the bases of legitimacy demands and how they respond to similar or different institutional logics as explained in ‘selection of cases’ in next section. Further discussion on the analysis plan is presented in section 3.10.

## 3.6 Selection of cases

[Miles and Huberman (1994)](#_ENREF_142) characterizes qualitative sampling as built around purpose rather than targeting randomness to facilitate generalizations. In puritan qualitative designs, the sample is not even a concern before starting fieldwork. For the purpose of this study the sample decision was held till the completion of the first round of data collection that comprised of mapping organization field of humanitarian development (see 3.9.1, data collection).

The organizational field for NGOs create peculiar problems for defining a sample set for systematic analyses ([Watkins et al., 2012](#_ENREF_213)). The challenge for a systematic sample for NGOs depend on the how one defines ‘development’ and subsequently ‘NGOs’. The category of NGO “may include or exclude universities, hospitals, social clubs, professional associations, social welfare agenises, religious groups and cultural institutions” as per the definition adopted (Anheier & Salmon (1998, pp2-3). There never is a complete inventory of NGOs with government agencies as the criteria applied in various cases depends on the purpose of registrations. [Watkins et al. (2012)](#_ENREF_213) believe that compiling a list of NGOs is like aiming at a moving target, as NGOs are born in response to a particular crisis and oftentimes die when the purpose is over.

The primary objective of a realist case study is to identify sequences of causal mechanism to show formative processes of particular outcomes. In case of this study the outcome is decreasing acceptability of NGOs work. Cases do not have to be drawn narrowly rather they can be broadly conceived such as investigating generic type of organizations, management systems or type of economy such as informal economy (Karlson and Ackyord). As an example realist case study of management styles of owners in informal economy can generate valuable insights around mechanisms that create conditions for institutionalization of informal firms to be more successful. Case studies are important in CR as they enable researchers to isolate the ‘mechanism’ and apply abductive reasoning. This enables researcher to ask the “retroductive research question: what must the context have ben like to have allowed the emergence of a given generative mechanism (Karlson and Ackyord).

In case of this study, various sampling parameters were discussed with field level actors during the first phase of data collection to decide about the number and nature of organizations to be studied for a holistic examination of an array of institutional tensions at the field level. Since NGOs as a population are not homogenous, it made sense to consider a diversity of organizational forms from the field and examining diversity of legitimacy demands and associated legitimacy building strategies. The inquiry, hence, lends itself well to purposive sample. Called sometimes as judgmental samples, such samples are established after initial field investigations and aimed at certain type of people or organizations with certain attributes be included in the study ([Berg, 2001](#_ENREF_29)).

During the mapping stage, which was the first phase of data collection, a number of organizations and individuals were interviewed to ascertain the totality of NGOs universe in the study region. These interviews were held based on the understanding that such organizations/individuals have key roles in defining the humanitarian response and driving the development agenda in the region. This practically meant reaching out to registration and accreditation bodies, media outlets, concerned Army departments, government-run post crisis initiatives and others, as shown in table 14. There emerged views from field actors that apart from two or three established NGOs, all other registered NGOs invariably could be generically clubbed together as similar, albeit smaller differences in terms of size, missions, inception year, and donor’s base. Initially a list of 109 humanitarian and development NGOs was obtained from the social welfare department in 2013 concerned with certification of NGOs. This list was matched with Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and FATA Disaster Management Authority (FDMA) who are primarily responsible for issuance of the mandatory NoCs (Non-objection certificates) for operations in the study region. A cursory analysis through phone calls and visits to more than two dozen NGOs confirmed this. All of them lacked volunteers, worked across the region, had similar arrangements of board of directors, owners as managing directors/executive directors, minimal female full time staff, offices in posh areas, similar (dual) accounting systems and virtually following similar trajectories. Even the sizes matched in terms of full employment (between 8-15 members). The missions too were found to be similar including relief and emergency services, child protection, women empowerment, legislative strengthening, environmental protection, and advocacy.

The homogeneity was striking even in the names of these NGOs and most had empowerment, development, sustainably, welfare, capacity, skills, education, and governance included in their acronyms. This meant that choosing even one of these NGOs would be representative of the whole population but instead three cases were chosen to empirically ascertain regularities at organizational levels.

It became a straight forward choice then to chose the case NGOs and as a matter of convenience and easy exposure, three cases were chosen from the following categories keeping in view the purported missions of these NGOs along the emergency/relief services, development, and advocacy continuum.

Table - number of eligible cases to be included in the sample

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cases | Thematic areas | Size | Size of NGO (full time Employees) | No. of NGOs |
| Case A | Relief & emergency | Micro | Less than 10 | 8 |
| Case B | Relief & development | Small | Between 10-30 | 10 |
| Case C | Relief, Development & advocacy | Medium & large | Above 30 | 4 |

I chose one case each from the above three categories to examine how institutional mechanisms affect orientation of each case with the hope that the three cases will yield novel insights that can be reflect replication and stronger inference. Case A is a micro-organization, case B may be termed as a small organization, while case C may be considered a model organization representative of most NGOs in the study region. Case C was chosen for a variety of reasons, foremost being easy access to their operations and being an indirect part of its growth since its inception. Selection scheme is shown in figure 6.

Figure - selection of cases

|  |
| --- |
| Institutional environment (low level of human development, militancy, recurring natural & human disasters, normative & cultural dissonance)  **Case A**  Relief & Emergency  **Case B**  Relief & Development  Institutional environment  **Case C**  Development & advocacy  Humanitarian Organizational field as a case |

The last important issue is within-case sampling. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) this kind of sampling has to be attentive to three criteria. One is the decision on the kind of activities, processes, events and locations that need to be examined. Secondly within case sample shall be theoretically driven and lastly there is the element of iterativeness in choosing within-case samples based on how the fieldwork progresses. With regard to the first criteria, the structures of case organizations were analysed through the board of directors, executive authority, internal processes, infrastructure, donor base, and the type of projects that the three case organizations were delivering. Mostly the case A type were dealing with relief & rehabilitation activities around refugees camps including providing rations, education & recreation to kids in the camps, and in parts providing skills to women. The case B type NGOs were providing rehabilitation services at the refugee camps and were mostly involved in WASH (Water, sanitation, and hygiene) projects as well as providing longer term community projects in education and health sectors. They also provide monitoring support to government. As for the case C, the organization has long withdrawn from managing camps and were rather working on bigger scale with ‘host’ communities (those who have in initial phases of the crisis hosted refugees) by providing livelihoods support and rehabilitation of local schools (that hosted refugees). There seemed a larger inclination on the part of such large NGOs to move to another level of advocacy projects. It must be noted that these organizational categories are not mutually exclusive as NGOs are flexible enough to adopt structures to meet evolving institutional requirements.

## 3.7 Applying CR to qualitative research

Critical Realists considers both actor’s actions and structures as ontologically separate entities which are in constant interaction and have causal powers of their own ([Leca & Naccache, 2006](#_ENREF_131)). Thus realists assumes an objective world of perceptions on the one hand and a subjective interpretation of how perceptions are experienced on the other (O’Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). CR research looks for causation to explain events and come up with practical policy recommendations for social problems (Fletcher, 2017).

The strength of CR is its compatibility with a range of qualitative research methods unlike positivism and interpretivism (Sayer, 2000). The choice depends on the nature of the object of the study and researchers’ learning objectives. It goes without saying that research strategies under CR necessarily have to respect the imperatives associated with critical naturalism and retroduction ([Blundel, 2007](#_ENREF_35); [Easton, 2010](#_ENREF_79)). Critical naturalism is the application of same methods as used in natural sciences to social world as far as explaining causality is concerned. Retroduction is the primary analytical method for this research and can be conceptually depicted in the figure 7.

Figure - retroduction from domain of actual to real

|  |
| --- |
| Retroduction |

Source: A simplified view of retroduction based on [Downward and Mearman (2007)](#_ENREF_75)

All social structures have ‘potentialities’ (Psillos, 2007) which when interact with social world causes or stops the actualization of a structure’s causal powers. Retroduction is the investigation under which a causal mechanism takes effect in the world. This discussion on retroduction, the primary inference method under critical realism, is further elaborated in the study’s analytical framework presented in chapter 5.

To further this understanding, table 12 treads through the paradigmatic assumptions, research themes and corresponding methods for data collection.

Table - CR Paradigm leading to methods

| Paradigmatic assumptions | Research Concerns | Research Objectives (ROs) | Themes/concepts | Research methods |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ontology  Objectivist; structured & stratified | NGOs declining legitimacy in HDF;  Existence of legitimacy crisis for NGOs | RO 1.1- To empirically assess events that explains the outcome of local NGOs lesser legitimacies | Macro: changing realities at the HDF;  Meso: NGOs structures reflecting crisis of legitimation | Semi-structured Interviews (individual and groups) at HDF and NGOs levels |
| Epistemology  Subjectivist;  Actions/institutions are concept dependent;  Epistemic relativism, i.e., knowledge production as a social process;  Transitive construction of reality | Processes of institutional changes; complex organizational structures | RO 2.1- To examine how causal mechanisms affect NGOs behaviours and strategies;  RO 3.1- to examine the emergence of less stable humanitarian-development framework & unrealized promise of NGOs | *Macro*: nature of institutional demands, Evolution of humanitarian norms; changing nature of partnership between NGOs-Donors; meta narratives on humanitarian-development nexus  *Meso*: Diversity of legitimacy-building strategies; causal explanations of how legitimacy crisis reflected from NGOs strategies, partnership dynamics as co-creation; symbolic adaptation, symbolic implementation, policy-practices decoupling | FGDs; semi-structured interviews with case NGOs;  Review of Donor country strategies |
| Retroduction  Events can be explained through causal mechanisms | Changes in the structure of NGOs;  Explanation of missions and style of governance;  Hybridization as legitimacy building strategy of NGOs; | RO 1.1- To empirically assess events that explains the outcome of local NGOs marginalization | Macro- Meso level (inter-organizational):  Explanation of process in strategic donor management; donors’ base, status expectations of workforce in the sector; | Semi-structured interviews with higher management of case NGOs |
| Research strategy  Multiple case study (Critical Realist) | Focus on capturing diverse legitimacy building strategies;  Which legitimacy bases are prioritized due to multiple logics? | RO 2.1- To examine how causal mechanisms affect NGOs behaviours and strategies;  RO 3.1- to examine the emergence of less stable humanitarian-development framework & the unrealized promise of NGOs | Macro:  HDF and NGOs  Meso: NGOs interaction with government, donors, members, constituencies, competitors, and new regulators;  Intra-organizational impacts and organizational complexity | Semi-structured Interviews |

## 3.8 Applying CR to study context

The Humanitarian Development Field (HDF) in Pakistan has seen periods of esteem post 9/11 but is widely perceived as having failed on its twin promises to rehabilitate populations in distress and denting poverty to real effect. The HDF is a complex institutional set up having entrenched interests of international, national, regional, and local entities.

The **objects/entities** in the HDF have causal powers- actual and potential. These entities include government (various tiers), unilateral and bilateral donor countries, multilateral bodies, media, INGOs, faith-based NGOs, military, market and local NGOs. How and why do these entities interact in the way they do and under what conditions these entities exercise their powers produces the structure of HDF and the perception of local NGOs within that social structure. This perception of NGOs has a structure and like all social structures posses causal powers and liabilities which may be thought of as potentialities that may or may not be actualized ([Fletcher, 2017](#_ENREF_89)). If the powers remain un-actualized the empirical level analysis do not factor their impacts. For example, the potential of faith-based NGOs to coerce rather ‘secular’ NGOs operations is a possibility, that if it has not happened does not mean the former do not hold this power. This manner of retroduction is at the heart of identifying the real mechanism of CR inquiry.

The **event/outcome** of decreasing spaces of local NGOs to participate in HDF are discernable only when the objects and their structures are carefully unfolded. These objects have causal powers, exercised or not, such as perpetuation of negative discourse on NGOs role, introduction of new regulations, withdrawing societal support, media trials, withholding of necessary certifications from government & security agencies, use of religious sites (such as mosques and madrasahs to vent out against NGOs), and all other kinds of inconsistent demands from donors and constituencies. Of importance to CR are examining causal powers of different entities that puts NGOs legitimacy on spot. These entities work as social controls as referred to by [Bitektine and Haack (2014)](#_ENREF_33) and include media, local groupings, and increasingly online reputational risks.

Realist ontology assumes that the **structure** of reality exist at three levels. At the empirical level common sense explanation of reality mediated though human interpretation is considered reality. The second is the ‘actual’ level where occurrences seem to be different than the empirical level as the reality is not mediated through human interpretation (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 20). ‘Real’ is the third level where ‘causal mechanisms’ reside, manifestations of which appear at the empirical level. CR is thus concerned with identification of the causal mechanism of objects to explain the social event, in this case decreased legitimacies of local NGOs in the region’s HDF. Only causal powers in the domain of ‘real’ are the main concerns of CR ([Leca & Naccache, 2006](#_ENREF_131)).

The concept of **emergence**, that is of analysing causal powers of objects at different levels of aggregation, is of importance for realist analyses (Sayer, 2004). Faced with crisis of legitimacy, this research supposes legitimacy acquisition as an essential resource by NGOs as meso level activity that is at the border of internal organizational operations and macro external realities at the field level. The concern is not only with how efficient, representative and effective NGOs are considered in HDF but also the broader disillusionment of entities detesting continued participation of NGOs in the region’s HDF. Emergence is thus explaining how organizations at meso level interact with macro field (HDF) to shape the structure of HDF. This is where realist approach is ideally suited as it recognizes both organizational agency and institutional structures as real objects.

For realist analyses, entities have two types of relations; **necessary and contingent**. The former suggest entities are dependent on one another for resources to function while the later hints at the degree of influence entities have over one another (O’Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). In the study’s context, relations between NGOs and government/donors may be construed as necessary while those between NGOs and military may be considered as both necessary and contingent. Similarly relations between NGOs and media/faith-based organizations are construed as contingent only.

For mechanisms to be granted as ‘real’, the causal powers of objects and their contingent relationships are analysed in the specific **context.** That the outcome of a mechanism is contextual suggest identification of other mechanism in relation to key mechanisms at work in the particular case ([Bygstad & Munkvold, 2011](#_ENREF_48)). The mechanisms explaining lowered legitimacies of NGOs differs when analysed in the context of different events such as 9/11, 2005 earthquake, 2007-10 crisis of IDPs, 2010 floods, and the existing challenge of repeated civilian displacements. The macro institutional explanation of how culture, legislations, evolving nature of humanitarianism & development, and looking at primary data trends combines to give credence to the identified mechanisms responsible for lowered NGOs legitimacies in one context than others.

Causal mechanisms or simply ‘**mechanisms’** are the way in which objects cause events to occur (Sayer, 2004). The study examines key ‘exclusion’ mechanism at normative, cognitive and regulative schemes that may explain the structure of legitimacy crisis experiences of NGOs. While it is easy to observe curtailed roles of NGOs in the region’s HDF, the underlying mechanism of cultural preferences (cognitive beliefs), field norms (accountability, professionalism) and regulative environment (antagonistic polices towards NGOs), are not obvious. To substantiate these mechanisms as real, the structure of emerging form of case NGOs are dissected to explain regularities at the level of events.

Finally the **structure of causal explanation** identifies what mechanisms best fit the event of ‘marginalization of NGOs’ and the extent to which these mechanisms could be generalized to substantiate theoretical insights. The ‘depth’ ontology of CR shows which empirical tendencies corresponds to which causal mechanisms ([O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014](#_ENREF_150)).

To put the above discussion in perspective, the table 13 translates key tenets of critical realism as gleaned from Sayer (2000, 2004) to the research context**.**

Table - application of CR to research settings

| Tenets of critical realism;  Sayer (2000, 2004) | Application to the research context |
| --- | --- |
| **Object/entities**  Empirical building blocks such as organizations, people, resources, and behaviours that are used for explanations | ‘Legitimacy crisis’ of local NGOs, causal actors (evaluators) in the HDF (government, donors, military) whose evaluation create events of NGOs ‘legitimacy crisis’ |
| **Events/outcomes**  Investigation of external outcomes perceived through the behaviour of people, organizations, & society | Objective existence of contracting institutional space for local NGOs as evidenced from key events- media reports, curbs and closer scrutiny of NGOs operations, stricter regulations, coercive systemic procedures, kidnapping & killing of NGOs staff |
| **Causal powers**  Objects carry causal powers & liabilities within them to make events happen | NGOs and institutional actors interact to cause events in a changing context of field logics. Within HDF, such causal powers confer or withhold support to NGOs underlying a variety of logics |
| **Structure of entities**  Entities are structured around their components | NGOs comprise of individuals (Owners, boards, managers, field workers, sections). Other objects such as government, media, Networks have their own components. |
| **Emergence**  Particular ways in which objects at different aggregation level are analysed | Causal powers of entities at macro (HDF) and meso (NGOs) levels reinforce crisis of NGOs legitimacy. |
| **Necessary & Contingent relations**  Entities have two types of relationships. ‘Necessary’ when one entity is dependent on another and ‘contingent’ when entity is influenced by another. | Relationship between NGOs and Govt/donors are necessary;  Relationship between NGOs and military may be contingent and ‘necessary’ |
| **Context**  Generalized perspective of contingent relations, includes all ‘relevant circumstances’ | Ways in which entities (government/NGOs) act in the context of security infused HDF resulting in demi-regularities of lower legitimacies for humanitarian NGOs. |
| **Mechanisms**  The way in which objects cause events to occur. | Legitimacy mechanisms are constructed by empirical conditions. Organizations engage in legitimacy-seeking activities drawing on how HDF reflect their social structures. |
| **Structure of causal explanation**  Explaining mechanism that produce events through retroduction | Legitimacy crisis with a structure and causal powers will result in event 1 and under other conditions result in event 2. NGOs may enjoy institutional support under certain conditions and experience lower legitimacies under other conditions where key institutional support is missing. |

With regards to other philosophies critical realism lends itself well to the aim of this research. Critical realist ontology is about discovery and starts with hypothesis ([Easterby-Smith et al., 2012](#_ENREF_78)). This study hypothesizes the real existence of increased legitimacy crisis of non-governmental organizations. The discovery aspect relates to uncovering structures that show a macro-meso ‘emergence’ of legitimacy demands in a crisis setting.

In summary Legitimacy crisis of NGOs is being considered as an event or outcome that exists independent of knower’s knowledge of it. In order to fully implicate the role of legitimacy in organization’s survival, a critical realist approach suggests that it is ‘possessed objectively, yet created subjectively’ (Suchman, 1995: 574). As a realist, only believing in a ‘world out there’ is not enough rather specific constructions are critical and need to be considered.

### 3.8.1: Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is a written or graphical presentation of key concepts and factors that needs to be studied with the caveat that it shows the presumed relationship amongst the factors (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This research utilizes a conceptual framework that is more rooted in the context of event itself. Different parts of this framework have already been discussed in chapter 2 and 3. Before the onset of data collection, figure 8 emerged as neatly conceptualizing the state of NGOs legitimacy crisis in the context of the study region.

Figure - conceptual framework



.

## 3.9 Data Collection

Data collection under critical realist methodology starts with observation of extensive events (widespread trends) and subsequent interpretive data (intensive data) obtained through interviews/FGDs. Combining both help researcher identify the demi-regularities or trends of events that provide a start to critical realist analysis ([Fletcher, 2017](#_ENREF_89)).

### 3.9.1 Data collection phases

Data collection has been carried out in two phases. In the first phase, seventeen key institutional actors/organizations in the HDF were identified and interviewed on a semi- structured questionnaire (attached as annex-1). These interviews broadly started with having an institutional look at the HDF and narrowed down specifically to the role and behaviour of local NGOs. Two Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) preceded the conduct of phase one interviews (attached as annex-2) to cover broad spectrum of blind spots on NGOs role and contribution to humanitarian and development of the region. These FGDs were conducted serendipitously with a cross section of humanitarian NGOs, media, regulators and members of Pakistan humanitarian network around two training events in Peshawar in October 2013.

Figure - Phases of interviews conduct at multiple research sites

Phase one of data collection examined key institutions in the region’s humanitarian field and to collate/examine newer dimensions of NGOs debate. These include registration and accreditation bodies, networks and associations, government officials in different departments, INGOs and aid agencies, community based organizations and private sector as shown in table 14 below.

Table - Interviews at the macro level of HDF

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Field placement | Actors | Organizations/Interviewee | No. of interviews |
| Government and private groups | Private firms | RSDO | 1 |
| Informal groups (SHGs) | Aman committee, Matta | 1 |
| Government departments (Education & Health) | Secretary, ESED, KP  Coordinator, LHWP, KP & FATA | 2 |
| Registration, regulation & accreditation bodies | Social Welfare Department & District welfare | Assistant Director, SWD | 1 |
| Provincial disaster management authority | Assistant Director, PDMA | 1 |
| Legal & legislative | Minister/ Advisor Social welfare | Minister, Social welfare department | 1 |
| Institutional donors | UNICEF  USAID | Program specialist  Contracting officer | 1  1 |
| INGOs | Action against Hunger | Director | 1 |
| IRC | Program officer | 1 |
| Associations & Networks | NGOs thematic Clusters forums | Member, emergency cluster | 1 |
| Networks | Coordinator, PHN | 1 |
| General secretary NHN | 1 |
| Govt-supported crisis initiatives | PCNA secretariat | Coordinator, PCNA  Social Sector specialist, PCNA FATA (combined interview) | 1 |
| Army |  | Colonel, Military Intelligence | 1 |
| Media |  | Correspondent “Express tribune” | 1 |
| Total |  |  | 17 |

The second phase comprised of interviews conducted with three NGOs selected for participation in this research based on criteria outlined in case study section (Section 3.6). A total of 14 interviews were conducted with founders, board members, executive directors, program staff and field staff as shown in the table15.

Table - Interviews in selected case organizations

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cases | Organization | Interviewees designation | No. of interviews |
| Relief & rehabilitation | Case A | Board member | 1 |
| Chief executive | 1 |
| Program managers | 2 |
| Field coordinator | 1 |
| Relief & development | Case B | Executive director | 1 |
| Board member | 1 |
| Programmes manager | 1 |
| Project coordinator | 1 |
| Director Finance | 1 |
| Development & Advocacy | Case C | Executive Director | 1 |
| Board member | 1 |
| Field officer | 1 |
| Program manager | 1 |
| Total | | | 14 |

Lastly three interviews were re-conducted in 2016 with each case to share researcher’s understanding and verifying validity of the preliminary findings. These are not counted towards the total interviews as they were re-conducted with the same respondents.

### 3.9.2 Data collection methods

A range of data collection methods are available under the rubric of qualitative research that this study utilises. During the initial phase of this inquiry, continuous observations and (oftentimes passive) involvement with humanitarian actors and networks were the key method used. Interviews (semi-structured) have been used as the primary instrument for data collection together with a continuous stream of review of documents produced by government, INGOs, web data, and selected organizational histories.

Semi-structured interviews bring out qualitative detail on list of questions with particular order (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). These questions are mostly open-ended for broader understanding of the phenomenon being researched (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Themes discussed during the first round of interviews were centred on the effectiveness, representation, accountability, legitimacy and relevance of NGOs to the region’s HDF (see annexure 1, Interview schedule for phase 1). Invariably the discussion was around the governance challenges in HDF, key actors and their mandate, dominant discourse on humanitarianism and development, policies and programs in HDF. The second round of interviews discussed particular stances of NGOs towards a range of institutional actors and their institutional demands and how they deal with the shrinking institutional space to their existence (see annexure 2, Interview schedule for phase 2).

Critical Realist methodology assigns a critical stance to the researchers as actors practices needs to be observed beyond the discourses about a certain phenomenon ([Leca & Naccache, 2006](#_ENREF_131)). Interviews were conducted with the understanding that the researcher’s task is to find meaning behind actions and utterances of respondents ([Danermark et al., 2002, p. 159](#_ENREF_62)). To this effect, I took notes, often accompanied by another researcher doing the same, and transcribed the interview immediately. The level of unnecessary details reduced in the second stage of interviews.

In addition to primary interviews, secondary data was also utilised in the form of organization’s websites, newspaper reports, organizational annual reports and auditor’s reports, donors’ reports, country strategy reports, and statistics produced by the United Nations Office for Coordination of humanitarian assistance (UNOCHA) in particular.

It should be noted that the data collection methods used have limitations as research participants might have exaggerated on their organizational performances or may have engaged in impression management (Alvesson and Ashcraft, 2012). Similarly since NGOs are being targeted by various segments, it was almost unanimously conveyed to the researcher by the research participants that their identities as well as those of the organizations they represent, be kept confidential. This will be done in the final draft after proper permissions are sought from the supervisory team and university research office.

## 3.10 Analytical plan

### 3.10.1 step-wise analytical framework

I follow a variant of analysis pattern adopted from [Vincent and Wapshott (2013, p. 159)](#_ENREF_211) who provide four separate but interdependent schemes for analyzing data in a critical realist organizational case study. These include; i) a *configurational analysis* as to how actors and group articulate and position themselves ii) a *normative analysis* of how people tend to respond to their situations, iii) a *field analysis* of how broader contextual conditions manifest themselves within the cases and finally iv) an *institutional explanation* of how i,ii, & iii may be combined to explain the genesis of causal powers and potential attribution to institutional mechanism/s at play.

This resulting analytical frame is a three stages scheme as shown in figure 10. The first and second stages are a configurational analysis and context specification that involves a thick description ‘to account for the articulation of the particular institutional mechanisms that interests us’ ([Vincent & Wapshott, 2013, p. 160](#_ENREF_211)). This is outlined in chapter 4. Entities inside the organizational field such as competitors, government, military, and media etc have causal powers that challenge institutionalization of NGOs in the changing HDF. This stage also touches upon the nature of the field and the inherent legitimacy tensions arising out of the humanitarian field’s complexity, accountability, efficiency, and impacts. Neo-institutional theory bases these legitimacy themes into three (sometimes four) institutional orders viz regulative, normative, cognitive and pragmatic. It is a thick description of events that moves on to identify the mechanisms for lowered legitimacy of NGOs in the next stage through retroduction.

The third stage is the application of abduction and retroduction to interview data that has been done in combination with the theoretical support and presented in chapter 5. Abduction involves reexamining the empirical data in an abstract and general sense to describe the “sequence of causation” while retroduction unmasks hidden causal mechanism based on the “patterns over period of time and in different contexts” (O’Mahoney & Vincent, 2014, p. 17). The process of abduction is simply travelling through the levels of reality- from empirical to real, about the existence of a certain phenomenon. The whole focus of abduction is making the nature mechanism evident to allow for clear relationships to exist. This also means going back to data sources when required as qualitative data analyses requires iteration between data collection, coding, categorization, discovery of patterns and accommodating emerging themes back into data collection instruments (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The iterative nature of data collection and analysis has enabled the research to take into account the newly identified themes. Multiple logics are explained by examining mechanisms and generative causation that produces (il) legitimacy events.

The use of retroduction, on the hand, means a broader explanation of the context to show that the mechanisms observed are indeed causing the events. Retroduction starts with a factual event. In case of this study the events of increasing imposition of curbs on humanitarian organizations through regulative, procedural and coercive measures gradually since 9/11 provide the starting point. Critical Realist social ontology in organizational research believes in organizations to be resource dependent entities ([Ackroyd & Fleetwood, 2000](#_ENREF_1)) which interact with the structure in meaningful ways. The process of retroduction is theory dependent in guiding researcher to identify the influences affecting a certain relationship. Thus the relationship between mechanism of NGOs legitimacy and their correspondent lack of participation in the HDF may be theoretically explained through the use of institutional logics at societal, field, and organizational levels.

The third stage also comprises of interpreting the impacts of NGOs legitimacy crisis on overall environment of HDF as well as of NGOs therein. Faced with little institutional space to navigate, NGOs interact with the field environment in diverse ways to maintain, repair, and perpetuate their credibility. This poses particular repercussions to the way NGOs go about (under) achieving their missions as well as having negative consequences for humanitarianism development in the region. The later part of chapter 5 and the conclusion chapter (6) builds on these insights.

Figure - A step-wise analytical framework



Source: Analytical framework for institutional (legitimacy) demands on NGOs’ legitimacy, based on [Vincent and Wapshott (2013)](#_ENREF_211)

### 3.10.2 Methods for analysis

This study utilizes various analysis techniques for treating qualitative data. I have generally divided the discussion on the use of these methods into two stages; the early stage analysis and then the in-depth closing stage analysis. This is in line with the guidance provided by Miles and Hubermann (1994) and includes classic techniques of coding, memoing, contact sheet summaries, patterns, and case summaries.

Broadly three steps are adapted for analysis as suggested in Miles and Hubermann, (1994); data reduction, data display and drawing inference. Data reduction is the extraction of simplified and meaningful details from the data. This technique is used throughout the research process to maintain focus on phenomenon at hand. In the second step of data display, I used different charts, graphs, networks, and matrices (Saunders et al., 2007). Lastly data verification/inference is used to convert the data display into coherent conclusions.

Key instruments used for data analysis are described in detail below.

#### 3.10.2.1 Contact Summary Sheet

These are simple one-page sheets that summarize main points from research contacts. A total of 31 contact sheets were produced based on the written interview notes. This step reduced the data to major themes identified by research participants.

Table - Contact summary sheet specimen

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Contact summary form | |
| Contact type: in person/email/phone (in-person)  Contact Name: Shah Jehan | Contact date: 02 Sept 2013  Today Date: 4 Sept 2013 |
| 1. What are the main themes emerging from the interview about this particular contact?  Legitimacy crisis is not a perceptual issue but rather an issue of life and death for his organization. The recent killings of a colleague in cold blood provided a gloomy background to the discussion. The issue of societal intolerance towards NGOs is more pronounced in urban areas than in rural areas. The sense of high handedness of security forces that is unbelievingly disturbing for NGOs.  2. A quick overview of answers to key questions  Value sets & Norms that distinguish work of local humanitarian organizations from that carried out by public or private sector?  Answer: To start with working in humanitarian field has its own guidelines irrespective of the geographic entities you are operating in. There are value sets of transparency, cooperation, and putting people’s life above organizational goals. Work of NGOs can be recognized by people’s participation in our activities. For example, there are hundreds of volunteers amongst the displaced population who support NGOs work in providing education in crisis.  Public sector management of humanitarian crisis  Answer: Absolutely pathetic, unprepared, un-accountable. Complete lack of coordination, district disaster management authorities non-in place, lack of participation and ownership of local populations. Military as a major part of humanitarian effort, secrecy with regards to humanitarian spending, transparency, competition for resources between NGOs & government machinery (security agencies).  3. What is the nature of institutional demands on NGOs? Are they changing too soon for you or do you feel its smooth flow?  Answer: Government as institution (has grown more domineering), (citizen’s) calls for demand-driven humanitarian initiatives rather than for services where supplies are abundantly available or pledged, the new law of “right to information has particularly changed the way we look at NGO work” | |

Source: Adopted from Miles & Hubermann, 1994

#### 3.10.2.2 Document Summary form

Legitimacy is a perceptual construct based largely on materials produced by respective organizations that participated in this research. These materials range from organizational profiles, to annual reports, and project details on websites. A total of 28 document summaries were produced during the second phase of data collection mostly pertaining to strategies, annual plans, and programmatic description of case organizations. These summaries were useful in concluding how organizations made use of documents to portray their effectiveness and legitimacies. One document summary form for case C is reproduced below.

Table - specimen document summary form

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Document Title: Accountability in capacity building projects | | |
| Type of document: capacity building strategy on Right to Information | | |
| Date received: 7 Nov, 2014 | | |
| Date of document: 2 Feb, 2014 | | |
| Page number  2, 4, 7 | Key words  Transparency, public sector low capacity, broad-based participation | Comments: relationship to ROs 1 & 2  RQ 2.1, 3.1 & 1.2 |
| **Brief summary of content**: Although geared towards capacity building of local government representatives, the document has a pro-government stance albeit criticizing lower levels of government capacity and corruption in public sector governance reform projects.  The channels to capacitate the local government converges along government directives. There is scant mention of poor capacity of media and elected representatives themselves. | | |
| Salient issues:  How do NGOs differ in their reflection of government capacities in comparison to INGOs? | | |
| Additional comments:  Check against the governance reform agenda of the NGO;  See donor strategy for capacity building of elected local government representatives | | |

#### 3.10.2.3 Creating codes- Step 1

Codes are the researcher’s assigned tags to selected ‘chunks’ of intelligible data that can be connected in some settings (Miles & Hubermann, 1994) and the starting point for making inferences in qualitative studies. From the initial phases of planning for the study, there were events that helped shaped the researcher’s understanding of the varied nature of legitimacy questions for NGOs. This helped me begin with a mental ‘start list’ of codes prior to the fieldwork as suggested in Miles & Hubermann (1994). These codes were not random phrases but gleanings from the broad literature on legitimacy debates in the humanitarian sector as well as personal interaction with field players.

Data analysis in CR begins with searching for ‘demi regularities’ or tendencies at the empirical level of reality ([Fletcher, 2017](#_ENREF_89)). These regularities do not need to be recursive where event A necessities the presence of event B. The first stage of interviews together with a starting master list of codes resulted in the following coding pattern.

Table - start list of codes

| Code description | Code | Reference to ROs |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Existing scenario- HDF level | HDF | RO 1.1 & 1.2 |
| Existing humanitarian complexity | HDF-com | RO 1.1 |
| INGOs and NGOs | HDF-INGO |  |
| Government and NGOs | HDF-Pub |  |
| Local government and NGOs | HDF-loc |  |
| Bilateral and NGOs | HDF-Bil |  |
| Multilaterals and NGOs | HDF- Mul |  |
| Faith-based outfits and NGOs | HDF-rel |  |
| Media and NGOs | HDF-Med |  |
| Citizenry & NGOs | HDF-Cit |  |
| Military & NGOs | HDF-Sec |  |
| UN and NGOs | HDF-UN |  |
|  |  |  |
| Manifestation of legitimacy events | Evn | 2.1 |
| Enhanced regulations | Evn-reg |  |
| Unified policy direction | Evn-pol |  |
| Closure of INGOs | Evn-clo |  |
|  |  |  |
| Nature of NGOs legitimacy crisis |  | RO 2.1 |
| Sociopolitical Legitimacy | LG-Soc |  |
| Cognitive legitimacies | LG-Cog |  |
| Normative legitimacies | LG- Norm |  |
| Pragmatic legitimacies | LG-Prag |  |
| Cultural dissonance | LG-Cul |  |
| Anti-state elements within NGOs | LG-ASE |  |
| Religious sentiment | LG-Rel |  |
|  |  |  |
| NGOs as entities | NGO | RO 1.1, 3.1 |
| Structure of NGOs | NGO-Str |  |
| BoD | NGO-BoD |  |
| CEOs/MDs & top management | NGO-Upp |  |
| Middle management & Sections | NGO-Sec |  |
| Field operations | NGO-Fld |  |
| Capacity of NGOs | NGO-Cap |  |
| Communication strategies | NGO-comm |  |
| NGOs impacts | NGO-Imp |  |
| Context | CXT | 1.1, 3.1 |
| Humanitarian contexts | CXT-Hum |  |
| Developmental Context | CXT-Dev |  |
| Interaction b/w NGOs & hum context | CXT-NGO-Hum |  |
| Interaction b/w NGOs & Dev context | CXT-NGO-Dev |  |

These codes from the first phase of interviews at the field level partially answered the two objectives under research questions 1 as well as providing inputs to the second stage of semi-structured interviews at NGOs level. While there were many factors identified (a total of 56), they were clubbed together into four main categories for the second stage interviews. Respondents were asked to comment on the legitimacy factors, sometimes with reference to the particular actors in HDF and context, to narrow down the possible mechanism and their relationship influence on lowered NGOs legitimacy.

### 3.10.3 Data analysis at field closure- Descriptive and pattern coding

The coding process from the start list of codes was refined at the field closure together with re-examination of memos, marginal notes, and contact summary sheets. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), advance level of data analysis may begin with descriptive codes that are assigned to a class of phenomenon. This is followed by pattern codes that hold a whole lot of information pulled together as meaningful units of analysis (Miles & Hubermann, 1994). These are similar in conception to the idea of ‘meta codes’. Simply stated a pattern is any arrangement of objects or entities. Ideally pattern matching involves working on two patterns where one pattern is provided by the theory and the other is an observed pattern.

Table - Second level coding

| Description of codes | Code | Research Objectives |
| --- | --- | --- |
| HDF level events (category 1) | HDF-ObJ | 1.1, 1.2 |
| New regulations | HDF-reg |  |
| Decline in relief aid | HDF-rel |  |
| Closure of NGOs | HDF-clos |  |
| NOCs requirements | HDF-NoC |  |
| Threats to life and property | HDF-van |  |
| Mechanisms (Category 2) | Mcm | 1.2 |
| Securitization of HDF | Mcm-Sec |  |
| NGOs as enterprise / Commercial ambition of NGOs | Mcm-ent | 1.2, 2.1, 3.1 |
| Corruption in NGOs | Mcm-corr |  |
| NGOs substitute of State | Mcm-state |  |
| NGOs serving elites only | Mcm-elit |  |
| NGOs low impacts | Mcm-imp |  |
| Logics multiplicity- From relief to development | Mcm-str-RtD |  |
| Normative values of humanitarianism | Mcm-str-hum |  |
| Normative values of developmentalism | Mcm-str-Dev |  |
| Behavior & strategies of NGOs (category 3) | NGO-str | 2.1 |
| Strategies to enhance accountability | NGO-str-acc |  |
| Capacity of NGOs | LG-Cap |  |
| Effectiveness of NGOs | LG-Eff |  |
| Representation of NGOs | LG-Rep |  |
| Sustainability of NGOs | LG- Sust |  |
| Structure of the legitimacy entity & impacts of humanitarian-development nexus (category 4) | HDN | 3.1 |
| NGOs Identity in emerging nexus | HDN-Idn |  |
| NGOs value orientation | HDN-val |  |
| Spaces for uncivil actors | HDN- |  |
| Emerging complexity of humanitarian development nexus | HDN-comp |  |

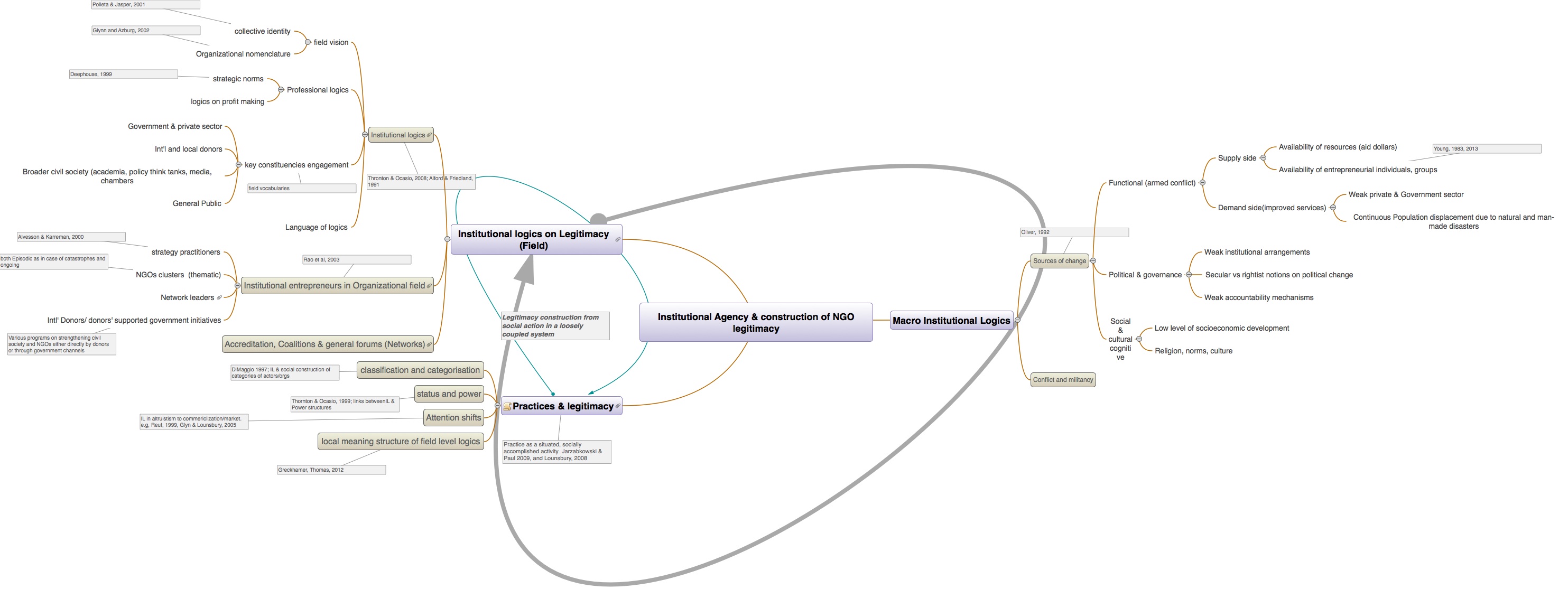
In essence, the research questions readily represent cumulative higher order ‘meta codes’ (ibid) that this study attempts to answer. In an example question across the three case studies, the respondents were asked why is the legitimacy crisis deepening recently for humanitarian local NGOs, if at all.

### 3.10.4 Beginning the analysis- preliminary insights from coding and literature

While all codes were considered important for analyses, only dominant ones were preferred to find demi-regularities, the visible empirical sphere of reality ([Fletcher, 2017](#_ENREF_89)). These are not the general laws observed in empirical world but the tendencies that CR analysis can effectively identify in qualitative data coding (ibid). This is the starting point for subsequent processes of abduction and retroduction.

Similarly CR aims to find explanation of reality through existing (fallible) theories rather than attempting a grounded theory method. I used deductive codes from theory (Institutional logics, organizational field), literature review of humanitarian support field (effectiveness, representation, identity etc) and the conceptual framework (social, political and functional environment). Connections between these codes are presented in a rough sketch produced at the beginning of final analysis as shown in the figure below.

Figure - preliminary coding and resulting themes



## 3.11 Reliability and validity of the research

Reliability and validity is not a one-time exercise but must reflect in the overall design, analyses protocols, and quality of a qualitative research (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research puts trustworthiness at the core of an inquiry and usually follows four criteria considered as the gold standards for assessing quality of such work (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton 2002). They include credibility (how congruent are findings to the reality), transferability (how generalizable are the findings), dependability (consistent measurements even when repeated), and conformability (minimizing researchers’ own biases and opinion as data). Although all these standards were followed throughout the research process, key stages at which this research ensured quality are outlined in the table 20.

Table - Protocols/tactics to ensure research trustworthiness

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Tests | Definitions | Protocols/tactics | Research phases |
| Credibility | Congruence between findings and reality | Use of multiple sources of evidence; wide range of respondents | Literature review;  Data collection |
| Strong paradigmatic assumptions | Research Design |
| Iterative questioning to ensure respondents honesty | Interviewing |
| Respondent’s overview of the draft | Composition & validation interviews |
| Transferability | Generalization of findings | Theoretical/analytical generalization | Analysis |
| Replication logic | Research design: multiple case studies |
| Direct quotes | Data analyses & Composition |
| Dependability | Consistent measurement | Phases of data collection | Data collection |
| Data collection protocols | Data collection |
| Making explicit connection between RQs and conceptual framework | Research Design |
| Conformability | Minimizing researchers biases | Triangulation of data collection methods and respondents | Data collection |
| Audit trial | Reflexivity acknowledged and biases identified | Composition and data analyses |

Source: adapted from ([Shenton, 2004](#_ENREF_184))

## 3.12 Conclusion

This chapter presented discussion on philosophical underpinnings of the study by way of detailing the critical realist philosophy and translated research concerns into CR language. It was followed by the analytical framework by combining the explanatory powers of institutional theory and critical realism together.

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# Chapter 4- Organizational field & NGOs legitimacy: Events, Entities and causal mechanisms

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## 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to make a case that NGOs legitimacies are in decline and their alienation visible in the organizational field of humanitarian development. The chapter thus answers Research Question 1 (and related objective 1.1 and 1.2). Objective 1.1 aims at empirically assessing events that could explain the outcome decreased NGO legitimacies. Objective 1.2 aims at retroducing the incidence of decreased NGOs legitimacies through identification of plausible *mechanisms* and their *structures*. The chapter thus first describes events that deter NGOs from continuous involvement within the organizational field. Secondly it works around the NGO interaction with field entities (NGO-HDF) and presents evidence on the basis of legitimacy evaluation at meso-macro levels. Thereafter a collective description of case NGOs are presented. The closing section details the specific context of ‘crisis’ in three discrete phases.

## 4.2 Description of events

Entities or objects are the basic building blocks of critical realist analysis (Easton, 2010). Such analysis begins with looking at events and entities to identify mechanisms involved in making an outcome possible. For the institutional mechanism to be identified (for lowered NGOs legitimacies), a realist analysis should begin with ‘thick description’ of objects as observed by the researcher and/or those put forth by informants (Sayer, 1992). These observations need not to be entirely meaningful but able enough to show the “structure of activities that inhere within the case”([Vincent & Wapshott, 2013](#_ENREF_211)). This study examines the complex interactions that led to marginalization of NGOs through the interplay of human, social, and technical entities of the HDF.

Case NGOs, as entities, experience events through interaction within the HDF at macro and meso levels. These events include tightening of the regulatory noose around NGOs, closure of INGOs and NGOs, negative media projection, display of vigilantism and force, and a general ‘dried up’ aid environment for relief and development activities. Key events are described below in no particular order of priority.

### 4.2.1 New policy orientation on NGOs (E-1)

The US influenced ‘development and security nexus’ post 9/11 has largely informed government’s and international agencies’ agenda towards humanitarianism and development in the study area. Given the status of a non-NATO ally in the aftermath of 9/11, the Government of Pakistan’s (GoP) adoption of the so called ‘carrot and stick’ policy, reflects the security-development nexus where drone strikes and Pakistan military offensive rendered thousands of families stranded in the past fifteen years. Drone strikes and ground combat displaced millions of people to relocate and left them in need for continued humanitarian support.

“There are numerous tales of GoP’s and armed forced highhandedness in harming citizens physically and psychologically to the extent of mass exodus (more than 3 million people) from conflict affected areas, some leaving behind all their valuables and other enduring death and separation from families (Sher Abid, PCNA).

This stick doctrine was offset by large and small development initiatives including construction of dams, urban centers, roads, energy infrastructure and other social sector improvement programs in education and health sectors according to Muhammad Zahoor, coordinator at the government run Post Crisis Needs Assessment (PCNA). One of the key spinoffs of the ‘carrot’ policy was encouragement given to local populations to form small organizations that could work for the citizenry in crisis periods. While there was a total travel ban on journalists and development workers to enter major parts of the study region, many educated and semi-educated locals started forming small humanitarian organizations terming them NGOs. Hence started the NGO movement post 9/11 fervently supported by international agencies as replacement of dysfunctional state. This impetus towards NGOs as a preferred form of organizational set ups cognitively made populations interested in their roles, as well as causing regulatory machine of the State to take notice.

While NGOs were present well before 9/11 in different forms, the idea brought in by the war on terror specially favored the humanitarian NGOs model that purportedly dislodged government machinery and bypassed policy doctrines of the security agencies, opines Siddique Mehsud of Zwanan Welfare Organization, one such organization that was created under the USAID civil society strengthening initiative. Several dozens of such NGOs were formed across the region and were trained through various pre-screened consulting outfits by international aid partners. Alongside skills training in accountancy, grant writing, basic research and needs analysis, these newly formed NGOs were also given computers and financial support for routine office operations.

“A lot of battle hardened professionals left international agencies and government jobs and joined or opened NGOs in face of increasing interest of international donors in humanitarian relief and development work during this time” (MD, case 2).

The study region has seen NGOs providing relief and development activities much before 9/11 but on a smaller scale and lower visibility. There are two differences between the NGOs work before and after 9/11.

“Pre 9/11 (relief) work was done directly by international agencies and INGOs with government’s line departments such that people knew only about IRC, UNICEF, and Oxfam etc. There was little in way of local NGOs making the headlines. Secondly the scale of such operations was limited and usually happened under close government watch or led by the government.” (Board member, Case 3).

What also changed afterwards was the increasing reliance of international agencies directly on local NGOs, therefore, bypassing government channels much to the State’s chagrin.

“A lot of new partnerships started taking place directly between local NGOs and INGOs particularly citing local organizations as easily mobilized in times of disasters, transparent and less bureaucratic- a pre-requisite of humanitarian support programs. The government channels soon were bypassed beginning a sustained process of government’s discontent with NGOs. While there were no proper governmental mechanisms to track such partnerships, a need was felt to start regularizing from the top. That's the reason the powerful interior ministry first clamped down INGOs (Save the children, for example) who initially defied government’s highhandedness but finally gave in” (Program office, PCP).

Analysis of interview data clearly suggest a pattern for a newer stricter policy on NGOs/INGOs post 2013. Interviews conducted at the field level suggest that key causes for such a policy include;

1. Lesser incidence of (local) government direct involvement in relief and humanitarian services
2. Dubious involvement of NGOs in activities beyond relief and rehabilitation, as government claims to have proofs of such involvement
3. Repeated occurrences of scandals of corruption sometimes suggesting explicit collusion between NGOs and international donors
4. Establishing writ of the State was another driver to clamp down on NGOs. The need for government to show intent nationally and internationally that it has the capacity to drive out miscreants from the troubled areas

#### 4.2.1.1 Multiple regulations post 2013

The harsher policy doctrines are visible in the newer regulations imposed on NGOs. Case NGOs experience a sort of ‘willful’ discrimination against them imminent from the regulatory protocols being put in place. The most forceful display of repulsion with the role of NGOs have come to fore in the form of multiple legal and quasi-legal legislations put in place post 2013.

“(Although) Article 17 of Pakistan’s constitution grants the right to all citizens to form associations or unions. Traditionally, laws dealing with such associations are a complex of archaic and bureaucratic processes that had little relevance to accountability or efficiency of NGOs. The newer regulations on NGOs/INGOs (having a component of foreign funding) were required to get lengthy approvals from the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan’ (SECP), Economic Affairs Division (EAD), provincial/regional authorities, and a security clearance from armed forces” (Mr. Subhan, Professor)

Under the new regulations, NGOs could still register under any of the five available nonprofit laws in Pakistan. Post 2013, however, the NGOs were required to maintain multiple compliances meeting the requirements of the SECP, EAD, Interior ministry, Provincial Disasters Management Authorities (PDMAs), and district authorities. Note that only private business entities were supposed to be registered with SECP. Now the government has made it mandatory NGOs to have SECP’s registration which primarily is a body to regulate private businesses. Muhammad Amad from the National Humanitarian Network comments on this duality as follows;

“It is a matter of grave concern for NGOs to have their systems under two entirely different sets of law. Amongst the NGOs there is some anger towards this government directive but more than that it shows an utter lack of understanding and faith that governments should have on NGOs. How can NGOs meet the requirements of both nonprofit status and for-profit status (SECP) at the same time”.

This means NGOs have to create accounting systems that cater to fulfilling demands of both the non-profit and business laws.

“Unless the anomalies of the laws are ironed out, it will be foolish to expect NGOs to be able to satisfy the statutory requirements. These are nothing more than ploys to oust NGOs away from contributing to the region’s development” (Muhammad Amad, NHN)

Similarly any NGO having a portion of their funding coming from abroad needs to keep the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) at the Ministry of Finance in picture. This becomes tiresome when humanitarian organizations require import of various supplies that needs to be procured quickly and require tax exemptions.

“Instead of facilitation, we faced an uphill task for importing mosquito bed nets from Korea in the aftermath of floods. We needed thousands of nets on emergency basis but by the time we could deal with all the protocols, there emerged an option of informal import of the nets costing less and delivered speedily” (Program officer, case B)

Meeting such disparate requirements of the law were shown to be affecting case NGOs and their work structures. It is estimated that about one third of the project time is spent on meeting these protocols.. No trainings were offered by the government and no facilitation forwarded to NGOs to meet the requirements of the new regulatory regimes. This has disheartened a number of NGOs and their demise seemed quite evident at the time of data collection.

#### 4.2.1.2 The chronic challenge of obtaining No-objection certificates

In addition to multiple regulations on banking transactions, partnership mechanisms, board of directors, and overall transparency, one of the most critical issue for NGOs is acquire multiple and periodic acquisitions of No Objection certificates (NoCs). The challenge is so pervasive that it has become a specialized job inside case NGOs. The NoC application passes certain departments and stages but the final verdict is given out by military and security agencies. NGOs believe NoCs are an instrument of redundancy and outright discrimination against them.

“You cannot operate a project unless there is a dedicated bank account per project. A bank account can only be opened if you posses certain NoCs from concerned departments. The NoCs are issued by government and military separately and it's the latter that has recently been problematic” (Manager administration, case A)

Another important challenge is the time factor these NoCs take. Usually relief projects do not last longer than a year and between approval of a project and its actual implementation, months are lost to getting NoCs.

“Putting up an application for NoC is only possible when projects are awarded by the donors and contracts are in place. We apply to NoCs and start procurement of goods and services only to know four months down the line that the concerned department have issues with the donors, project outcomes, or some personnel and that the NoCs could not be granted. This puts us into a situation where donors think our capacity with the government is weak and next time we do not hear back from those donors. More than seven of our ‘approved’ projects in the past three years have gone down this way” (Program manager, case A)

Mr Aman of Case B, who is often involved with clearance of NoCs for each and every project the organization undertakes summaries such demands as follows;

“Previously an NoC was sufficient for the whole year of organizational work regardless of the donors or geographic places of implementation. Now there needs to be NoC for every project from the concerned government departments (PDMA/FDMA) but everyone knows who is the ultimate authority in issuance of NoCs (referring to the military’s all powerful 11th Corps unit). While working with the government has not be easy, working with the military is oftentimes beyond our organizational capability”.

So much so that evaluations and baselines carried out for population needs are closely monitored by security agencies. Questionnaires and interview guides are all securitized to the extent that organizations working in research face problems.

“In a longitudinal study for understanding citizens perceptions with regards to humanitarian support, we were stopped to ask certain questions in 2nd iteration of the study. We argued that same questions needs to be included in the survey for meaningful comparisons but a whole section on the survey was cut out citing security reasons (field mobilizer, case C)

The frustrating aspect for NGOs is not knowing the criteria which are applied for granting an NoC. Case NGOs reportedly are in favor of scrutiny to weed out ill-intentioned organizations but at the same time expect a clearer modus operendi.

“For getting an NoC the channels of approach are clear but on what basis the authorities award or withhold NoCs is beyond anyone’s knowledge”(Program officer- case B)

What has ensued due to the NoC issue is near closure of about a dozen NGOs that were relatively more established in the study region. The NHN members term this as a conscious effort on the part of civil-military bureaucracy that is afraid of growing relevance of NGOs.

“On the face of it, it looks like a case of outright discrimination based on ‘faulty’ facts that some established NGOs are working against the state or getting more resourceful that they can actually challenge the government. This is all ill-founded suspicion and we will do whatever it takes to clear this mentality and put NGOs back into the fold of fighting injustice prevalent in our society” (member, NHN)

Terming the incessant demands of showing transparency and fair play in times of turmoil usually leads to delays or altogether closure of necessary projects.

“Look we have two of our key projects approved and ready for implementation but we can’t seem to get NOCs for them. The process is too opaque and no one knows what are the channels to use to get one’s organization cleared. While the onus of transparency is wholly placed on NGOs, no one knows why are some organizations stopped from work and on whose orders” (Program manager, case B).

Various proposal have been put forth from the NGO forums to streamline the issue of certificates but none could find its way to fruitful conclusion. Thus the NGOs rightly assume that NoCs are instruments of disenfranchisement used consciously by the State to keep them at bay, which they term as both unconstitutional and counter-productive.

#### 4.2.1.3 Barriers to Entry for NGOs

Another policy impediment that came to fore during data collection is an announced yet obvious indirect ban on registration of new NGOs. It is near impossible to get a bank account opened in the name of an NGO after the government directives to the central Bank of Pakistan to refrain government and private banks for providing services to NGOs. Banks have been directed by the interior ministry to discourage or minimize opening new accounts for NGOs and if they do so, they run the risk of violating State Bank of Pakistan’s directives on extreme due diligence when opening an account for NGO.

A young nonprofit professional when declined by the bank to open an account for his new NGO has this experience to share.

“Opening an NGO has become akin to an illegal business” (Milad khattak, Peshawar)

Others however laud this effort and suggest that the existing crop of NGOs have nothing to show for success, so why allow similar organizations to mushroom.

“This is a welcome step from the government to stop money-minting NGOs. It will go a long way in stopping corruption in the humanitarian work” (colonel, Pakistan Army)

### 4.2.2 Dislocation of NGOs (E-2)

Another visible event of decreased NGO’ legitimacies is the forced closure of NGOs and manufactured efforts to decrease their participation in the HDF. Looking at the vast scale of population displacements post 2010, local NGOs started preparing their plans to be part of the humanitarian support but many were denied working contracts as the military took it upon itself to do majority of the rehabilitation work. This served as disincentive for NGOs to continue molding into self-sustaining entities. This was coupled with stronger signals from the central government that extreme vetting on the role of NGOs be ensured. Decrees came in one after the other and state media was mobilized to coerce and malign NGOs ([Ahmad, 2014](#_ENREF_3); [Ahmed, 2014](#_ENREF_4); [Memon, 2015](#_ENREF_139); [Sadeque, 2014](#_ENREF_170); [Siddiqui, 2014](#_ENREF_187)).

Case NGOs report incidence of highhandedness of both government and military officials raiding their offices and taking away ‘records’. NGOs were asked to come clean on their alliances with INGOs, make their boards transparent, and proactively provide their financial positions. Processes for NoCs from the military were made part of program delivery on each and every project that the NGO undertook during this while. Public sentiment also rose against NGOs and it became a challenge for survival for NGOs.

Such developments led local NGOs to relocate to relatively safer places in provincial capital Peshawar and federal capital Islamabad. But this also meant that these organization could not longer freely work for the areas they were supposed to help. In the localities vacated by NGOs, other faith-based, clan-based, bureaucracy and military supported outfits opened office and offered real time support to humanitarian community mostly under the cover of military patronage. It soon became evident that nothing can go in and out of the region without approval from the powerful security apparatus that include three to four big security agencies. In the period leading to de-escalation and return of American troops from Afghanistan in 2014-15, the International donors turned towards supporting the traditional way of working with government directly and leaving the NGOs at their own in the study region.

Having thrived in unwavering attention and financial support, this new scenario meant death to tens of NGOs said Ishtiaq Ahmad, program manager at an NGO (Women Concern).

### 4.2.3 Closer scrutiny and forced closures of INGOs/NGOs (E-3)

In wake of Osama bin Laden killing in the Garrison town of Abottabad in the study region, the Pakistani government started clamping down on “Save the Children’ and its staff. It soon became evident that many INGOs were working in Pakistan without proper governmental protocols.

“the watershed moment in NGOs involvement with the outcomes of war on terror came to fore with the OBL operation in 2011. Even before that there were locally reported issues on the involvement of various NGOs in anti-state activities but this was a global news instantly and put all NGOs at the barrel of the gun” (Azmat Khan, NGO worker).

The scrutiny is not limited to checking banking transactions, project documents, or personnel. One of the case NGOs (not wanted to be named on this) actually has a designated intelligence operative working on their premises and meddles into most of the organizations work to the extent that he wants the case NGO to develop proposals for his hometown. He also exerts pressure on what the NGO can bid for and where it should not be working.

“Our natural partners used to be INGOs since ideologically and operationally it is easy to work with similarly mandated organizations, than say, working with government or bilateral agencies directly. Now there is a particular scrutiny of partnerships if it is with INGO” (Program officer, case C)

The new policy measures rely on regulative and coercive instruments that INGOs find repugnant to the values of civil society that can contribute to peace-building and poverty alleviation. Some of the key policy measures put in place and siphoned from interviews are described as follows;

* In the first stage INGOs receiving foreign contributions are required prior registration with the Ministry of Interior;
* INGOs can not raise funds locally unless prior permission has been granted at the highest levels of Ministry of interior;
* A committee on INGOs has been made the sole authority to decide which INGOs may work and under what terms and conditions;
* All INGOs are required to apply for fresh registrations on newly electronic system;
* INGOs are limited to specific fields of work as well as designated territories and are not allowed to work in other thematic/geographic areas;
* A three year MoU has to be signed with the government; and
* All INGOs are required to submit an annual plan of action detailing budgets and program areas. Moreover the Provincial Planning and Development Departments (P&D) are asked to pursue INGOs on specific works.

More than seven INGOs have reportedly ceased operations and others have since then limited their operations in face of coercive oversight. The incidence has negative impacts on INGO-NGO partnerships in the region as reported by case NGOs in section 4.3.3. The new set of policies stipulates that an INGO can only partner with a local NGO after specific approval from the concerned ministry of the government. These cumbersome procedures have already deterred INGOs to partner with local NGOs.

“National NGOs have been traditional partners with INGOs but given the evolving nature of rehabilitation, it is not easy for us to continue with the same model. This means two things; one is curtailment of our operations to almost half the size compared to 2010, and second we are more willing to partner with government who do not require any NoC at least” (Program Manager, Concern Pakistan)

### 4.2.4 Target killing, kidnapping and vandalism (E-4)

A more alarming event is the relentless cognitive bias against NGOs of the larger segment of local society. The culture and religious milieu existing in the region is a stark reminder that NGOs are considered an extension of repressive global capitalist system that is in direct clash with Islamic and local value set. This is manifested in repeated examples.

“The frequent killings of polio workers and brazened attacks on local and international humanitarian community testifies to the presence of large segments of population believing NGOs involvement in humanitarian response and development as unwarranted” (MD, case A).

Previously this hate was only directed at secular development NGOs but now the lines between humanitarian and other NGOs appear blurred.

“Although there is a distinction between service provision NGOs in humanitarian crisis and regular development NGOs, a large segment of the population consider us as one. We are termed as infidels, promoters of western values, and shameless people who want women to get out of their homes in the farce of ‘women empowerment’ ” (Program officer, case C).

The security risk is real. Associating with aid agencies and NGOs has become more dangerous. NGOs feel part of a threatening humanitarian environment infused with real life security challenges for its personnel.

This has implications for case NGOs structures as they are more vulnerable to outside threats. People working in NGOs aired concerns for their lives seeing their colleagues killed, kidnapped, and ridiculed. While there is increasing insurance and protection support available to humanitarian organizations upstream (UN system, INGOs), the grass root NGOs are unable to defend themselves. Project staff and key organizational staff in case NGOs demand that NGOs must provide insurance covers to keep them on job.

“the challenge of keeping our employees safe in threatening environments takes a huge toll on our resources and impacts our program delivery” (MD, case A).

Following INGOs and international aid agencies, the local NGOs have started looking into life insurances and ransom policies for its staff. The UN for example has mandatory interagency training for its staff to tackle hostage taking or ransom situations.

“while the international organizations have all the safeguard measures in place riding armored cars, local NGOs want similar arrangements as our threat is bigger than theirs” (MD, case A).

Kidnapping and killing of humanitarian workers became a norm post 2010. A director from case A was stopped in the evening as he was approaching his home while talking on his cell phone with his wife. When I interviewed her, she narrated the following story.

“Waheed Baz (director) was in 500 meters of the home when he was stopped by insurgents and was asked on gunpoint to disembark his car. I heard him arguing and begging the kidnappers to let him go. He was asked again but instead he tried to escape and then there were gunshots that I could hear live and over the phone. He was the sole breadwinner of the family leaving behind three kids and an ailing mother” (Mrs. Waheed Baz, Jamrud)

A more harrowing story comes from case B which was implementing an emergency education program for girls in district Dir. Three teachers hired for the project along with six girls students (all below age 12) were traveling in the morning of October 13, 2012 in a mini van towards the school. A suicide bomber blew himself up near the van killing all but one teacher.

Such incidents according to the program manager at case B shows that there is wider sentiment amongst population that NGOs work is non-kosher and those associated with NGOs are infidels.

Case C reported that on their project on ‘hygiene promotion for adolescent girls’, their premises in district Kohistan was run over by Madrasah students (religious seminary) and drove away the project staff and beneficiaries. Later in the evening, the imam (head preacher) of Jamia masjid (central mosque) declared that jeans-wearing women working with NGOs are ‘mal-e-ghanimat’ (spoils of war) that ‘good’ Muslims might consider as their own. This stopped about twelve women employees and hundreds of project beneficiaries to participate further in the program.

The nature of these events suggests that NGOs are culturally vulnerable in parts of the study region and their mere mention creates unease amongst its well wishers. This section broadly described events proving that NGOs as organizations have continuously endured lowered acceptance on normative, cognitive, and regulative basis. In the next section, entities/objects within the HDF are presented along with their causal powers. NGOs relationships with key entities within the HDF post 9/11 are also the subject of next section.

## 4.3 Entities in the organizational field and their nature

Mapping the organizational field within which NGOs operate is hard to attempt and there are few instances in NGO literature doing the same judiciously ([Watkins et al., 2012](#_ENREF_213)). This is because the hierarchical aid chain (figure 4) makes the organizational field complex and ever evolving, led by international aid agencies interacting with a plethora of public, private and nonprofit entities in developing countries. This section attempts to map the field in the context of humanitarian and development imperatives existing in a specific region of Pakistan.

In the conception of a critical realist, the field comprises of objects/entities that have structures (Sayer, 2010) that can be understood through the interaction of entities in a certain contexts. This section details NGOs relationship with key entities including government, bilateral/multilateral aid agencies, INGOs, military services of Pakistan, and local faith-based non-profit organizations to create a scheme of organizational field.

### 4.3.1 NGOs and the government

Admitting its own frailties, the government is highly critical of different entities and their role in lesser effectiveness of humanitarian response. The government believes that humanitarian field in the region is “over-crowded” (Special secretary, Education) and more so towards the end of the funnel suggesting the dismal role of lower level local civil society organizations. These organizations lack representation and accountability in the eyes of government.

“NGOs provide services that are not demand-driven but are prioritized by the donors themselves. You see examples of informal literacy programs in places where government schools are at a mere 400 meters” (Additional secretary, ESED)

[Ghaus-Pasha and Iqbal (2003)](#_ENREF_96) puts forth a range of reasons for government’s ambivalent attitude towards non-profits historically. On policy level, successive governments in Pakistan have been supportive of NGOs existence and their roles. However on operational levels, the government has been reportedly accused of obstructing CSOs who are considered as competitors for funds and influence in local constituencies.

“During these years while government support to such NGOs fluctuated between deep intimacy and outright antagonism, overall the policy on NGOs remained slack. Cases were reported where government line departments or State military would stop NGO workers on one pretext or another, yet the overall environment remained workable at least till 2011-12” (deputy director, FDMA).

More punitive regulations were to follow for both INGOs and local NGOs. In 2015, the government through its powerful economic coordination committee approved the new “policy for Regulation of Organizations Receiving Foreign Contributions” which puts NGOs working with international partners under unprecedented scrutiny. The Bill demands prior permission from the federal government for accepting foreign contributions; the government could, if it wants, prohibit them ([Sadeque, 2014](#_ENREF_170)).

NGOs interact with government at multiple levels. The critical juncture where this interaction takes place is at the districts and local levels where actual implementation of programs is carried out. The local governments consider the existence of NGOs as predatory (Nazim, UC 6 Peshawar). They compete for funds, demands transparency and carry a huge nuisance value in reconstruction phases of crisis. These misperceptions rests on a range of NGOs accountability concerns including their integrity, governance structures, patriotism, and abundant personal benefits that some NGOs unfortunately extract from such relationships. However such misgivings are not always correct as some NGOs contribute valuable services to the communities they work with, concedes local government officials. Some rightly believe that it's the government’s own ineffectiveness that has led few NGOs to misappropriate funds supposedly released for local development.

“The failure of government to mainstream NGOs and the collective failure of NGOs to work together to form a meaningful partnership are perhaps the two biggest issues that if worked out properly can pay dividends in effective humanitarian response. (Mr. Manzoor Orakzai, Nazim).

Government view of NGOs is also contextual and temporal. In ‘rescue’ phases of a crisis, the government and military take lead in identifying the extent of damage as shown in figure 12. In relief phases, strategies are chalked out with the help of aid partners with little local civil society participation. As the crisis move into the third phase of rehabilitation, NGOs come into picture. The duration of these phases depends on the nature of the crisis. For example humanitarian NGOs were involved for about two years with rehabilitation of 2010 flood victims. However with the chronic problem of Internally Displaced Populations (IDPs), the rehabilitation phase is still going on. When the crisis reached its last phase of sustainability and development, most NGOs found themselves at the fringes. NGOs claim that the government suddenly starts looking at us as burden than an asset. The assertion is that NGOs are best suited for longer-term sustainable interventions but the contracts are too lucrative that the government either takes them itself or pass it on to its surrogate NGOs (such as Sarhad Rural Support Program, a covert government run NGO).

Figure - Phases of humanitarian crisis

Rescue

Recovery

Rehabilitation

Sustainable development

Crisis

Roles: Govt & military takes lead with Int’l agencies in support

Roles: Govt & humanitarian clusters coordinate post crisis, UN

Roles: Local NGOs, Govt coordination bodies, Int’l agencies

Roles: Long-term NGOs involvement in disaster prevention, & sustainable livelihoods

It has been gathered from data that during crisis environments there is a complete communication breakdown of government and local NGOs. This was primarily due to the dismal government coordination capacity even in stable situations, opines Abubakar, an NGO fieldworker. Now that there is more focus on developmental programs than relief and rehabilitation, and NGO-Government relations are taking a turn for the worse.

The government claims that during normal times, the programs of NGOs are usually not in line with the government planning in districts. While providing training to vulnerable populations in managing a flood calamity successfully is required, there are other priorities and that we as government would have liked these NGOs help us with (Deputy secretary, health).

The issue of how to regulate NGOs has been a problem in the past fifteen years as governments keep on changing having different stances towards these organizations, explains Mr. Zareef at ZTO.

“With the ouster of the coalition of relatively secular Awami National party and Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) from power, the Pakistan justice party (PTI) and ring winged Jumat-i-Islami (JI) came to power in May 2013. Among other implications, this changed political landscape affected how government dealt with the secular and modernizing voices in civil society. Similarly the relation between the Center and the province remain uncomfortable as rival parties push back each other on major reform issues. Similarly the relation between local (District) governments and provincial government are also on all time low”.

Another ambivalence of government approach towards NGOs is abundantly evident from the domains for NGOs working. For example, the government is readily supportive of organizational forms that provide welfare services to population but is hostile towards NGOs who indulge in long-term development and advocacy work that amounts to pressurizing the government on issues related to empowerment, democratization, rights, and meaningful engagement with citizenry

In conclusion while the role of government too is often lamented in humanitarian emergencies but the outburst is usually contained and occasional. That the legitimacy of government is not fundamentally challenged in HDF is partially because of controlling media. With the advent of Facebook and Twitter to the stage, this is no more the case and citizen openly flaunts government roles as well. The preferred strategy of government in crisis situations has been to leave it to armed forces, more importantly Pakistan Army, which is discussed in section 4.3.4.

### 4.3.2 NGOs and International donors

#### 4.3.2.1 NGOs and bilateral donors

Amongst bilateral donors, the United States has been the largest donor to Pakistan for both military and economic aid. Pakistan has received a total of $67 billion (in constant 2011 dollars) between 1951 and 2011 (Centre for Global Development, 2013). The country remained the fourth largest recipient of US assistance trailing Israel, Afghanistan and Egypt as of 2011 (ibid).

Both the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Kingdoms Department for International Development (DFID), now UKaid, have been at the forefront of donors supporting Pakistan in times of calamities. In addition to working with the government of Pakistan, these agencies also had direct engagement with civil society organizations for a variety of causes including rule of law, improving education and health outcomes, energy, women empowerment and grant programs of different natures. According to Mir Abid, the engagement of international development agencies with national NGOs was not something new but the impetus provided by 9/11 is visibly evident as hundreds of new NGOs were formed in the study region. It seems as though NGOs were harnessed at the expanse of limiting State’s role deliberately that may not have gone well with those in government.

Both the government and NGOs hold the rightful assumption that unilateral aid is ineffective and breeding corruption all across the society. The existing US$4.5 billion projects of USAID across Pakistan are an example. Most of the leading implementation partners are US INGOs, consulting firms, and universities leaving little participation space of national NGOs.

“Look at how the implementation arrangements work in the aid industry. USAID has brought MSI (Management System International), a US based private firm, as its monitoring agency dolling them more than US$ 100 million for works that can be locally procured. Similarly UKaid has brought ASI (Adam Smith International) citing capacity issues locally. I can bet these fly-in fly-out consultants know nothing about humanitarian and development context of Pakistan” (Board member, case C)

Another point of societal disdain towards the role of NGOs in humanitarian crisis comes from branding strategy of bilateral donors. USAID, in particular, made it mandatory for its partner organizations to display its logo on every piece of equipment, food and sanitary items, vehicles, and stationary items that raised people’s suspicion that in the garb of aid, these NGOs are accomplices in harming Islam and local institutions. Local suspicion of a double game by the US enhanced as on the one hand there were drone attacks and on the other hand, aid was distributed through multiple channels in the region. Amidst all this ‘carrot and stick’ policy, NGOs were seen as furthering the aims of US policy rather than seen as sincere to local developmental causes (assistant program officer, IRC).

NGOs lament that support from bilateral donors have ‘policy strings’ attached to them. It is they who prioritize what areas of humanitarian support need to be addressed and as such this poses challenges to what they believe is actually required in the field. Case NGOs consider this detrimental to their own organizational missions.

“We cannot decide what cause to stand for in times of humanitarian disaster. If its for Oxfam, we provide livelihoods support programs, if its Asia Foundation we run for women empowerment, and if UNICEF the mission is to rescue children…” (ED, Case A).

NGOs also complain of micro-management and unnecessary paper trail limiting their work’s impacts. USAID in particular is guilty of introducing hierarchies in partner NGOs to the extent that it has produced more complexity for concerned NGOs working with them.

#### 4.3.2.2 NGOs and multilateral donors

Amongst multilateral donors the United Nations system has been active in supporting governments and civil society organizations alike both in times of complex emergencies and peace time development efforts. Amongst UN agencies, UNHCR, UNICEF, and UNDP have strong partnerships with NGOs in delivery of humanitarian services. These agencies historically have been active with serving refugees in the aftermath of USSR’s invasion of Afghanistan and pouring in of more than three million Afghan refugees into the study area. [Barakat and Strand (1995)](#_ENREF_20) reported about two decades back that the way UN managed the Afghan refugee crisis will have repercussions for the development of civil society on both sides of the divide (Afghanistan & Pakistan). Terming NGOs work as NGOs ‘business’, [Barakat and Strand (1995)](#_ENREF_20) estimated that around 22,000 people worked in the humanitarian sector in Peshawar alone including locals, Afghans, European and North American expats.

There have been high profiled cases of misuse of funds provided by UNHCR and UNICEF to local NGOs. According to Sajid Gul at the PCNA secretariat, this has been done with the connivance of the Afghan commissionrate, Ministry of States & Frontier Regions (Safron), powerful politicians from KP and FATA, and leaders within the UN system. With little in way for lawful litigations against these elements, the NGOs were handed huge contracts for managing various aspects of refugees’ camp management. The Pakistan Humanitarian Network’s president laments that while various NGOs have recently been blacklisted, the real dealmakers are above the law.

Most of the multilateral donors support programs for NGOs had an integral part of capacity building for government officers, usually to appease them and implement projects with litter governmental resistance. According to social sector specialist at the World Bank supported Post Crisis Needs Assessment (PCNA) Secretariat;

“Common to all the support were some binding conditions, none more important than, building institutional capacity of various tiers of government and civil society to respond efficiently to humanitarian crisis”

NGOs are not a monolith, opines Dr. Aman (not real name) at UNICEF as there are a variety of NGOs in the region. Some are purely working in the spirit of delivery and takes partnerships with UN bodies very seriously. But most are opportunistic and have contacts within government and unfortunately within the UN system that they use to gain work contracts.

Amongst multilateral partners are the World Bank and Asian Development Bank who have a larger stake in engaging civil society organizations. The Asian development Bank (ADB) has provided generous grants and concessional loans since 9/11 ($4.4 billion), the World Bank ($4 billion) and IMF loans ($5.2 billion). The ADB’s civil society and NGOs Center (NGOC), for example, started an ambitious program in 2001 to integrate CSOs knowledge into ADB’s groundwork and considers NGOs support as complimenting its development agenda. However, ADB only targets operational level NGOs who have the ability to form close linkages with local comminutes and could respond quickly to new circumstances. The World Bank too has made significant effort to partner local NGOs as they are knowledgeable about local level needs and priorities.

However both ADB and World Bank believes that local NGOs have limited capacities and they are complimentary organizations in humanitarian crisis. The multilaterals’ focus has thus gone back to putting government at the center of humanitarian and development efforts. Thus it is safe to assume that NGOs relations with multilaterals has cooled off gradually post 9/11 to the extent that currently there is no direct partnership between multilaterals and local NGOs.

### 4.3.3 NGOs and INGOs

At the other end are powerful INGOs having a range of networks and arrangements with governments, corporations, and strong coalitions with international donors. INGOs such as Oxfam, IUCN, WWF, care international, save the children, Church World Services, NRC, ICRC, IRC etc boasts of thousands of staff and diverse expertise in the study region.

These INGOs in particular have stronger relations with Transnational financial institutions not only to avert possible negative consequences of the policies of these institutions but to garner resources considered critical to INGOs own operations around the globe ([Murphy, 2005](#_ENREF_146)). INGOs in Pakistan have a history of supporting disasters situations in the country. These organizations have the organizational skillset and knowhow of the humanitarian ‘industry’ and can procure funding at will.

These skills set and in-depth knowledge of INGOs serve their upward accountability well as they are capable of reflecting success stories knowing the donors’ needs. Mostly donors are not interested or do not have sufficient leverage in knowing the downward accountabilities of INGOs. This means that there are seldom mechanisms available for donors to gauge the working relationship between INGOs and NGOs. When it comes to INGO-NGO relations, there are ups and downs in case of the study region.

“Usually our experience with INGOs has been better than working with government, corporations, or bilateral donors directly. We understand their peculiar requirements and in a sense imitate their way of working. The only thing I as someone who understand program level well is that INGOs focus too much on ‘showing impacts’ than concerned with ‘actual impacts’ of their programs” (Program manager, case B).

It is in the interest and mission of INGOs to have strong and long-lasting partnerships with grassroots organizations. However INGOs and International Foundations who work with local NGOs have certain ‘predispositions’ that immediately puts them as the evaluating audience. There are seldom spaces for mutual learning and INGOs have loaded programs tied to their own funding that NGOs have to follow. During humanitarian crisis INGOs look for sustainable solutions while NGOs are hard pressed to cater for the crisis needs which in a sense shows unawareness on the part of INGOs as suggested by case B.

“The maximum limit of INGOs interaction with field realities is through us or government. They seldom go the field and rely on secondary knowledge for their programmatic priorities in crisis situation. This results in a dissonance where our priorities do not match with their priorities” (Program manager, case B)

In an ideal world, INGOs could build capacities of local NGOs on a sustainable basis but the continuous hounding of INGOs themselves by the Government of Pakistan made them vulnerable to vouch for long term engagement with local NGOs. In summary then, INGOs-NGO working relationship too has deteriorated post 9/11.

### 4.3.4 NGOs and the Military

The country’s strong military apparatus has historically been in the business of setting State priorities, both domestic and foreign. It comes as no surprise that directly or indirectly military has been close to the center of humanitarian action and coordination. At 600,000 active personnel and another 600,000 on reserves according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), it is the most organized machines in a country having weaker judiciary, executive, parliament, and other state institutions.

Additionally an equal number of paramilitary forces are supporting country’s security. These are constitutional local forces institutionalized into the larger security and development paradigm, a remnant of the British rule over the study region. They are the guardians of the much detested Frontiers Crime Regulations rules of 1901, a draconian rule punishing the whole village for the crime of one person and curtailing civil liberties in the 21st century. [For more on FCR, please refer to [Callen, Gulzar, Rezaee, and Shapiro (2015)](#_ENREF_49)]

Armed forces control media on issues ranging from security and reconstruction to political and economic aspects of the country. Through their own print and online publications, the security forces guard anything they consider is against ‘national interest’, the interpretation of which they are the sole arbitrators. Recently NGOs have come under severe scrutiny from the notorious ‘security agencies’ including ISI (inter-services intelligence), IB (Intelligence Bureau), and MI (Military intelligence) for their alleged role in harming “national interest”. Case NGOs reported of being hounded through various mediums, more importantly through virtual bullying.

“Through hundreds of fake online accounts on social media, there is perpetual spewing of negative propaganda against NGOs. Reporters in various newspapers also are on their payroll and they create a negative working environment for us: (field coordinator, case B)

According to a program manager in one of the case NGOs the armed forces control most realities and almost the entire perception of Pakistani society. When asked about overbearing role of military in humanitarian and development sphere in the region, head of one case organization said;

“In all crisis since 2001, the role of armed forces has been institutionalized deliberately in the field of humanitarian development. Take the example the apex disaster management authority of Pakistan (NDMA) and you will know that since its inception in 2006, only one civilian has headed it. The other four including the sitting chairpersons are all Army Generals”.

The Army’s purported point of view is that one cannot disentangle security imperatives from humanitarian action in the study region when you have a burning Afghanistan in the neighborhood and homegrown insurgencies from jihadist groups.

“We cannot leave the ground open to dozens of international agencies disguised as NGOs. Our territory is being droned on a regular basis and we cannot leave it to anyone else. Who goes in and out of FATA has to go through us” (Colonel, Pak Army).

What is conveniently ignored are the ‘deep State’s’ faulty security doctrines of ‘strategic depth’ that consider the study region as a buffer zone saving mainland Pakistan from effects of insurgencies in neighboring Afghanistan. This strategic depth policy, experts believe, has effectively alienated millions of Pashtuns and is considered a cause of unrest in the study region. Securitization of developmental aid has given more control to armed forces to scrutinize who should participate in the humanitarian space and to what extent. This aspect of humanitarian support needs further research as the world today is engulfed in protracted crisis and the role of military needs closer academic and practitioner attention.

Although the military’s primary role is to combat militants and provide safer passage to aid workers and government to support population in distress, they have assumed far more responsibilities in managing day-to-day operations of humanitarian work from distribution to food and non food items to reconstructions of roads, bridges, energy infrastructure and dams under its engineering wing.

“There is an all encompassing presence in the last 4-6 years and there is hardly any facet of humanitarian support that this institution (military) doesn’t touch upon” (field manager, Case 2).

Case NGOs point out that part of the reason that military apparatus is against NGOs is because of the resources that are redirected to them rather than to government.

“Seldom has there been distrust to the level of almost scoffing off of NGOs mention in government circles and security apparatus. This is not only because of (NGOs) inefficiency or accountability challenges, but because these organizations have increasingly drawn on resources that traditionally were distributed to government line agencies or security apparatus” (MD, Case C).

Parts of the study region are still reeking with the conflict that started after the US-led war on terror in Afghanistan to the extent that the region can still not be termed as ‘post-crisis. The Pakistan security agencies are still in charge of securing pockets of regions to disband and discourage anti-state groups. This means the security forces are channeling not only military operations but also oversee political, development and humanitarian assistance in the crisis-hit regions. This merger of military and humanitarian assistance has recently been institutionalized particularly in large swaths of lands in the study area.

“Much of the humanitarian support services are either handled directly by the military or contracted out. The reason cited is wining hearts and minds of the locals to stand against militancy and easing intelligence gathering” (Program manager, Case 1).

Literature on humanitarian services in armed conflicts suggest that there are three possible roles for the military in aid operations; providing cover to humanitarian service providers, support with logistical services, and directly providing assistance to population in distress ([Stoddard, 2009](#_ENREF_194)). Predominantly the military initially provided the first two roles in both the military conflict and floods response, but the incidence of directly supporting affected population created misgivings among the INGOs/NGOs and increasingly amongst citizenry.

Also, involving military in humanitarian aid is a double edge sword. The introduction of military forces into humanitarian relief has added to the confusion of NGOs who theoretically stand opposite to the principles enshrined in military action and use of force ([Seybolt, 2007](#_ENREF_182)). Getting direct supplies, information, and boundary settings from military is something new for local NGOs who see this as interference in the work mandates of civil society. While it is clear that military provide needed cover to aid workers to reach places of crisis, their involvement also politicize the humanitarian relief activities.

“ Working with military has done a whole lot of damage to NGOs image as they are seen as accomplices for resources rather than leaders in reconstruction process” (Government officer, PCNA).

Similarly the increased incidence of NGOs working with the military in implementation of aid activities have definite impacts on NGOs identities. The blurring of lines between working with the military and being coordinated by the military (Slim, 2001) have deeper impacts on NGOs freedom.

“The counter insurgency agenda set forth by the government have made NGOs uncomfortable not only in having various approvals, but also in defining what aspects of aid operations are to be taken up by the NGOs. There are clear lines that NGOs can not afford to cross” (program manager, Case 1).

In summary the military never had respect for grassroots organizations but post 9/11 there has been open antagonism against NGOs.

### 4.3.5 NGOs and the local faith-based/politically affiliated organizations

Another constant in recent humanitarian operations is the role played by faith based non-governmental organizations including Falah-e-Insaniyat, Al-Khidmat, and other easily identifiable smaller groups. These organizations boasts of low cost operations, generating own funding, democratic leadership, ready acceptability in the people, and more effectiveness as their strengths vis-à-vis ‘secular’ developmental and humanitarian NGOs. For example the Al-Khidmat foundation provided services in health, education, orphanages and water supply are hugely subsidized. These organizations differ from mainstream NGOs in many ways and particularly with regards to raising funds that comes primarily from Islamic philanthropic principles of ‘zakat’ and ‘khairat’. They also receive resources from Islamic governments (KSA, Kuwait, Brunei, UAE etc) on humanitarian pleas.

Interestingly accountability and representation challenges were reported to be low for NGOs that are overtly or covertly supported by political/religious/ethnic parties with indigenous sources of funding. A case in point is the Al-Khidmat foundation- the philanthropic arm of right wing Jamaat-e-Islami, shaukat khanum foundation by Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf, and Bacha Khan foundation run by ethnic Awami National Party.

Just like the Pakistan Army, these groups have documented and visible history in supporting distressed populations and as such exert substantial power over traditional NGOs. This power is more visible when it comes to garnering volunteers or raising finances locally. Their view on traditional NGOs has remained consistently hostile and a small instigation can a go a long way in hurting NGOs causes. That the case NGOs take their threat seriously is visible in some of the organizational strategies that are discussed in section 5.4.2.

## 4.4 NGO as an entity- Case accounts

A wide range of NGOs populates the study region. During the first phase of data collection (organizational field mapping), two clear distinctions became evident with regards to institutional categorization of NGOs. One is the obvious distinction between services delivery NGOs (of which there is absolute majority) and advocacy NGOs (which are rather few). Amongst the service delivery NGOs an overwhelmingly majority either came in existence post 9/11 to serve the humanitarian needs or those in prior existence jumped into the field of humanitarian services. Services provided by these NGOs range from health, water supply and sanitation, education, food security, livelihoods, and capacity building of government and citizenry. With a few exceptions of NGOs that work as advocacy and political campaigning, the landscape of NGOs is largely isomorphic in that all may be termed as ‘services delivery’ NGOs. The selected cases are representative of these services delivery NGOs as discussed in the research strategy section in chapter 3. A summary of the structure of these NGOs is presented in table 21.

The other categorization is between national and local NGOs. National NGOs usually provided services to provincial government and mostly in urban areas while the local/provincial NGOs worked with INGOs, government, and self-help groups primarily in rural areas and those engulfed in militancy. Since local NGOs were found close to the center of action, the following discussion is with regards to the case NGOs. Although it will be safe to assume that, by and large, most national level NGOs will reflect these characteristics.

### 4.4.1 Governance structures

Invariably the executive directors/managing directors (MD) exert complete and authoritarian control over ‘their’ NGOs. The conception of NGO as representative of the local beneficiaries/members is blurred to the extent that it looks like a private company with lesser or no participation of organizational workers in key decisions or those who the NGOs purportedly represent.

In all three case accounts, the executive directors/chief executives happen to be founders of the NGOs. Interestingly case A, introduced a position of MD for his brother two years ago when he received threats from Taliban and himself moved out to the capital city of Islamabad. Now his brother (MD) runs day-to-day operations while the Executive Director creates business opportunities for the organization sitting in the capital city. While this has upset many of the higher-level program staff, the executive director feels that serendipitously this arrangement has helped him garner more work for his NGO. This kind of NGOs lack of transparency stalls organizational growth as higher-level program staff gets thwarted by having a lack of opportunities to mover up the ladder inside organization.

“There is no career growth in NGO sector, unless you are in an INGO. Its like our political dynasties where sons and brothers take on the businesses of their fathers” (Program manager, case A).

A look at the Board of Directors (BoD) of case NGOs is sufficient to recognize the spirit of how these organizations are created and managed. Until recently BoD members would all be family, friends or even servants whose National Identity Cards (primary mode of verification) would be used even without their knowledge. These members would have no say or participation in the organization’s agenda setting and their signatures would be affixed in absentia on the mandatory yearly or biyearly meetings. With the advent of growing regulations on NGOs, all board members are required to file income returns and verify that they are indeed on the boards of such organizations. This has upset many NGOs who have now shuffled their BoDs to incorporate professionals, former government officials, teachers, and other white-collar professionals. However again, it is the MDs prerogative to approve or disapprove the appointment of any member to the board.

“Being the executive director, I know what is the right kind of mix for the BoDs of my organization. I choose people who could really support in identifying work areas, innovate, and are as ambitious as I am to serve the community” (ED, case C)

There is no need to look further for evidence that NGOs are *decoupled* from the institutional orders at the highest level of their governance structures. This is shown in figure 13 through dotted lines between CEOs/MDs and BoD relationship. The law has specific requirements for BoDs and general body members of NGOs as well as minutely describing the process of organizational priorities. All this is done by NGO owners with the help of consultants whose skills co-evolve with the regulatory requirements from time to time.

Figure - levels of NGOs management

As per the NGOs regulations, all the NGOs must have a constitution, minutes of the first meeting (instituting an NGO), last meeting, and a general body of at least 100 members to start operations. Post 9/11 it was relatively easy to start an NGO with the help of a variety of consultants who specialized in opening up of NGOs with a cut-paste job of the constitutions of previously constituted NGOs. A look at the original constitution of case B is sufficient to substantiate this claim that wrongly states the name of the NGO on page 3. Similarly minutes of the meetings are available and a mere change of font, location, participants, and date would give one a newer NGO. No surprises then that all three cases studied have almost similar organizational structures, with very little variance as shown in the figure above.

### 4.4.2 Program structures

The program structure also shows striking similarities across the three cases with executive directors influencing the preferences for the kind of projects, donors, and locales. With the changing institutional requirements, both case A and B have introduced professionals on full time, part time, and more critically on need basis keeping in view cycles of different grant agencies. This is for a reason opines a program manager of case B.

“Most of the middle tier program managers have ample experience in humanitarian support services like camp management, rations distribution, and emergency education services. They have excellent coordination capacities between the field and head office. However they are not well-versed in getting proposals approved for developmental and advocacy works and then actually implementing them” (program manager, case B).

For this purpose, there is a high premium on finding consultants who can write winning proposals. On the fringes of an interesting meeting at Case C, the researcher interacted with one such consultant who preferred to leave his Job in a UN agency and started freelance proposal writing and project implementation support. When inquired about how the job is paid, he smiled and suggested that it depends on the nature of donor, size of the proposal, and the concerned NGO’s connections in actually getting the contract.

“ I can produce proposals for grants programs, relief activities, and political advocacy programs. However as we all know how projects work (referring to the complex and dubious process of how projects are vetted and awarded) and it all depends on the connectivity of executive directors and higher ups with the concerned donor agency” (Mr. Noorani, consultant. Not the real name)

These individuals and increasingly institutional consultants (there are plenty of them like ‘Drive consultants’, ‘Q&A’ consultants, ‘RSDO’ consultants etc) are ever ready to present their services in return for either a fixed amount of money irrespective of the proposal being a winner or not, or a certain percentage (1-3% usually) only in case the proposal is accepted and project awarded.

This kind of arrangement has lessened the powers of program staff within the case NGOs. Once the project is won, it is hard for them to implement it.

“If I am sidelined at the time of writing the proposal, I remain unaware of the assumptions made at the time of the proposal and find it hard to implement what others have drafted. Sometimes the proposals have lofty objectives that are unattainable in the actual field (Program manager, case C)

This also becomes a point of contention between field staff and program staff based in head offices. The field staff, typically through a field coordinator, receives implementation information. With little training in service delivery, these field staffers are usually locals and know their way to meet project objectives through unorthodox methods. Much of the program objectives are given out in informal orientation sessions and it was observed during the fieldwork that understanding of a particular objective is not uniform across the top tier, middle management and field staff. Attending a training on first aid in case of floods, the concerned field staff was worried about the following issues in the following order of preference:

1) Panaflex depicting the right place for donors logo and that it be placed right at the center of the training hall; 2) 16 people to be present of a certain age and their signatures on travel allowance forms; 3) savings on food, multimedia and hall charges; 4) making participation of a well-known local government official or local leader; 5) quality of the trainer; 6) quality of the participants.

In the above process, the field personnel were busy mostly in capturing images so that they can be presented to the head office so that an acceptable report can be drafted for the donor.

In another case, a field staff has deputed most of his responsibilities in managing distribution of food rations to his nephew, an 18-year-old student. Similarly during needs evaluation surveys, it is a common sight for field staff to fill proformas and questionnaires according to their own understanding without bothering to actually ensure participation of the intended populations. There is little mechanisms or motivation in place for NGO head office to monitor the actual delivery on the field. With donors usually unable to travel to field sites owing to security reasons, anything reported by the NGOs is further polished for onward submission to stakeholders. Little value is actually laid on the fact that project activities indeed resulted in some positive outcomes.

In a nutshell the program structures of case NGOs from top to field staffers has huge gaps with regards to coordination, capacity, clarity, and unity that leads to suboptimal project outcomes.

### 4.4.3 Physical and technological resources

If one has to have a sense of privileges that NGOs garnered post 9/11, it is evident from the network and locations of offices that case NGOs have established in the past fifteen years. The number and variety of vehicles easily match those of a well-run government department. Case A and C have fully-furnished and sprawling head offices in Peshawar and both started having offices in the capital city of Islamabad post 2013 in face of threats in Peshawar. This has served them well that a strategic placement in Islamabad out of coercion is reaping dividends.

“Islamabad is a happening place and the hub for humanitarian networking. There are embassies, consulates, development agencies, and ministries where a little connection can go a long way in getting work” (Program manager, case C).

The physical layouts of the head offices are also full of meaning with the best room occupied by the ED, and the next best is reserved for entertaining donors and their monitoring teams. Program heads are cramped into small cubicles along with their teams and there is little in way of physical spaces leading to an environment of learning together. Training halls and conference rooms are usually two-in-one and the technology therein give a feeling as if one has entered an established INGO. This impression management seems important to NGOs.

Computing, printing, and digitizing facilities vary across the three cases. While provision of laptops and printing are a constant in every proposal of these NGOs, the actual inventory seems old and roughly used. Case B suggested that there is no need for in-house excellence in these technologies as we are not a tech-firm but an NGO.

“Why would we use too much resources on such things when we can procure them cheaply and professionally from outside?” (Finance officer, case B)

There is however a trend evident that NGOs are bracing up for technology as case C recently hired a GIS professional and were procuring licensed software as part of a project with EU.

### 4.4.4 Processes and documentation

The recent changes in institutional environment have forced NGOs to be transparent in their organizational processes. While much of the hiring practices, contracts, accounting procedures, and logistics were done verbally, there is now a greater focus on written codes. At the time of interview with case B, the MD proudly shared binded copies of rules of business. When asked if these are implemented to the extent possible he suggested that like everything else in Pakistan, these are for guidance, as implementing them requires substantial resources that his organization could ill-afford.

“Look around you, does the housing development authority implements building codes, has environmental agency evaluated industrial projects in letter and spirit etc? Honestly the point is that we have these written rules and we are following them to the extent possible for a small organization like ours. We are striving to improve constantly so that no one can raise a finger against our code of conduct”

These freshly minted human resource manuals, financial codes, and communication manuals are prepared to satisfy registration and accreditation bodies and to be appended to proposals particularly for clients who are document hungry like the USAID.

Since the humanitarian field is militarized, the employees of NGOs also want these organizations to acknowledge the security hazards that they face on daily basis. Dozens of NGO workers have been killed, abducted for ransom, and harassed. Employees want organizational resources be used to cover insurance premiums for their lives.

“As everyone else in sector, we too want to be covered for loss of life, property, and abduction. Its not easy being recognized as someone working for an NGO but the management keeps declining our due right” (program officer, Case B)

NGO owners scoff off the idea and suggest that they are already in hard times and closing down projects in areas marked only for security forces to operate. Their own sustainability is in question.

“We have closed down six satellite offices post 2012 because of the security situation and not getting NoCs from concerned government departments. The talk of insurance is utter nonsense” (Board member, case B).

Table - Summary structures of case organizations

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Structure | Sub-structure | Case A | Case B | Case C |
| Governance | Executive Director | Founder | Founder | Founder |
| BoD | Mostly relatives & Friends | Mostly relatives and former Govt officers | Mostly relatives, Friends and former colleagues |
| General Body | Yes, with no actual participation | Yes, with no actual participation | Yes, with no actual participation |
| Constitution | In written form, available | In written form, available | In written form, available |
| Programs | Program (Section) heads | One relative, four professionals | Two friends, two professionals | One professional, four former colleagues |
| Field | One coordinator, three deputies | Four regional coordinators | One coordinator, others rotated on need basis |
| Physical infrastructure | Offices | Seven rented buildings in the region, one in the capital | Head office own, four regional offices on rent | Three rented premises, one in the capital |
| Computers and related technologies | lowly equipped | Modestly equipped | Modestly equipped |
| Processes and documentation systems | Human resource management without any manual | 18 full time, 56 part time staff | 12 full time, 22 part time staff | 7 full time, 69 part time staff |
|  | Financial management | 1 chief accountant, 2 support staff | 1 chief accountant, 1 support staff | 1 chief accountant, 2 support staff |
|  | Communication | No dedicated human resource | Consultant on need-basis | One full time female staffer |
|  | Logistics & transportation | One officer for both | One for logistics, none for transportation | One for logistics, transportation with finance section |

Source: Primary and secondary data analysis

The above discussion thus provides evidence that NGOs are arbitrarily run with little scrutiny of their effectiveness and efficiency. Human resource and financial practices are not standardized and focus in on getting as much work as possible with little regard for documentation. Communication strategies are non-existent and what little valuable work these NGOs produce doesn’t get due attention.

## 4.5 Outcome- Decreased acceptance of NGOs in HDF

For explanation and identifying the key institutional mechanisms, the concept of relational emergence is important. As discussed in this chapter, NGO evolve with respect to its own components as well as in relation to other entities in the HDF. It has been shown that the structure of NGOs are opaque and normatively taken as personal fiefdoms serving the owners rather than general membership. Entities within the HDF have been shown to have increasingly averse ideas about partnerships with NGOs on one pretext or another.

The outcome of complexities in the HDF and inconsistent demands at different levels has forced the NGOs to the fringes in the existing configuration of humanitarian development space. This is depicted as a free hand drawing in figure 14 with the key institutional actors and their positioning. The nearer organizations are to the center (solid green circles), the higher are their institutionalized roles in HDF (e.g., Government and the military are centrally institutionalized, while UN/multilaterals and self help groups are relatively weakly centralized as shown from light green circles). The dotted blue circles showing three categories (private sector, philanthropic arms of banned militant outfits and mainstream political parities), are shown to be either neutrally affected by changes in institutional environment or feel less pressed for proving their legitimates than NGOs, Particularly after 9/11, the role of INGOs and NGOs have seen a decline and their legitimacies are contested more than those of private sector, local trusts, and other Self Help Groups (SHGs) as shown by their existence at the fringes (dotted purple circles). Local NGOs, along with INGOs and a section of bilateral/multilateral organizations are being pushed away from the humanitarian development action, unless a policy environment is revamped and these actors show persistence in face of constant pressures.

Figure - Centrality of institutional actors in hdf



Source: free-hand drawing based on syntheses of interviews and secondary data

## 4.6 Description of mechanisms- Abduction

The most critical outcome of CR analyses are theoretical generalizations that “whenever this structure can be found it posses this/these mechanism/s and this/these tendencies” (O’Mahoney & Vincent, 2014, p. 37). Theoretical re-description or abduction happens when events are analysed over time and the case is abstracted so that it can be generalized ([Bygstad & Munkvold, 2011](#_ENREF_48)). All the events described above fits well in explaining the outcome of declining state of NGOs legitimacy in the HDF. It should be noted that the pattern of events are not critical to the process of abduction rather an ontological depth is necessary which derives the structure of objects within a geo-historic context ([Sayer, 2000](#_ENREF_175)). Critical realist inferences are thus not at the level of events, but explaining what mechanisms (having a structure) make events discernable ([Bygstad & Munkvold, 2011](#_ENREF_48)), and hence abduction of plausible mechanisms become critical.

Organizational legitimacy has been described as the ‘umbrella evaluation’ of an entity’s appropriateness in a socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions (Suchman, 1995). The analysis that follows abducts three key mechanisms that explain the collective antagonistic behavior within the HDF towards the NGOs. These mechanisms include a) the anti-state labeling of NGOs, b) commercialization of relief environments, and c) corruption within the HDF structures and of NGOs therein. These are shown in figure 15. After discussing these mechanisms at length, the geo-historic context is thickly described to suggest that the mechanisms of interest indeed reveal the structure of legitimacy crisis for NGOs.

Figure - Underlying legitimacy mechanisms and THEIR structure



Source: Based on the layered ontology of critical realism (Sayer, 1992)

### 4.6.1 NGOs work against National Interest (M1)

#### 4.6.1.1 NGOs as entities within a contested industry

The field of humanitarian support exhibits characteristics of a contested field of activity ([Redfield, 2008](#_ENREF_166)) as is evident from the role of NGOs in activities beyond humanitarian support. For a place like Pakistan where the constant ‘deep’ State and changing government hold contradictory ideas about national security, oftentimes it is easy to evoke feeling of public mistrust in institutions of humanitarianism and of the entities therein. The ‘anti-state’ label is an easy targeting ploy that can be placed on any individual and entity in Pakistan on the pretext of harming ‘national interest’, as evidenced from interview transcripts.

This label was invoked in both implicit and explicit manner on the role of NGOs during discussions within government departments with phrases like ‘mulk-dushman’ (state enemies), ‘magribzada’ (under western influence) ‘nazriati dushman’ (against ideology of Pakistan), and “paisa chor’ (doing anything for money/projects). That there is a strong anti-NGO narrative prevalent has less to do with their inefficiencies than what these organizations represents in the cognitive frames of evaluators at large both within and outside HDF. For a government official dealing with NGOs registrations, they represent western conceptions of development that are in direct clash with Islamic injunctions and local societal values. Such affirmations are visible throughout the field where NGOs are termed western ‘touts’, ‘stooges’, and ‘toothless’ entities that implement what western donors asks them to do.

NGOs are also (oftentimes wrongly) considered secular organizations having political alikeness with the western way of life, according to local relief workers. There is a wide held belief that international humanitarian organization and local NGOs are targeted alike because people find it hard to differentiate between both groups.

“Both groups of professionals (INGOs and local counterparts) use same jargons, share same vehicles while roaming around in the field, have security convoys and cover, and dress the same. This makes it harder for locals to tell who belong to which group and compromises local NGOs public perception”. (Program officer, UNICEF)

Similarly NGOs conception of humanitarian action is based in rights-based approaches that many believe is repugnant to the Islamic way of life. If these organizations really want change, they have to alter their discourses and outlook that fit local reality well.

“International rights based system can never be as just or efficient as the Islamic system is and for NGOs to approach development and change through western conceptions will never be accepted locally” (PCNA coordinator).

#### 4.6.1.2 NGOs as security risk

In an environment of chaos and suspicion, many hold that NGOs knowingly or unknowingly work on foreign funded agendas to harm Pakistan’s national interest. This is discussed openly in Friday sermons in mosques and perpetuated by a section of media. The intelligence forces are particularly weary of NGOs capacity to permeate the fragile peace-building dynamics in the region. For them, this is not a local crisis but a global event where the Country’s interest is paramount and any entity would be proactively dealt with that the security forces suspects of being used for malicious purposes. A serving Colonel, at the powerful Military intelligence (MI) agency insinuated at this equation as follows;

“We (security forces) can fight Taliban and local miscreants as they are openly against the State, but we are not sure of other actors such as media and foreign funded organizations as has been seen in multiple incidents. There are more than two dozen international spy agencies in the region and most rely on local proxies” (alluding to NGOs as proxies for furthering political interests of donor countries; rephrased)

In a way nothing is new in presenting NGOs in bad light as previously they would be painted as anti-Islamic in ways of propagating family planning, abortions, and women rights, issues that are at the core of local reductionist Islamic ideology. Now NGOs are cast in double jeopardy of both negating Islamic teachings as well as a threat to the Country’s national interests. The latter issue of working against national interest came to fore in light of OBL killing in the US raid with the operational help of an INGO and indirect involvement of local organizations. Consequently local NGOs are as despised as INGOs for maligning Pakistan internationally.

The mechanism of NGOs as ‘anti-state’ works powerfully through the structure of religious sentiment against such organizations. Population of the study region are Muslims and predominantly from Sunni sect of Islam. For a majority, any perception of individuals/organizations’ associating with western values connote harming the Islamic way for life. When sharia law was officially introduced in Swat valley in 2007, anything that remotely seemed un-Islamic was banned and targeted. Singers, performers, cultural artisans, poets, and humanitarian workers alike were killed or driven out. Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai and her father were targeted as well. Even remnants of Bhudda artifacts were not spared. Social fragmentation and an environment of fear replaced social solidarity as dictated by the meta narrative of Sufi Muhammad’s (leader of TTP) ‘with Islam or against it’. The message stayed with locals even after the sharia law was abolished following a military operation in the region that saw hundreds dead and millions homeless.

“In the aftermath of military operation, NGOs supported state machinery in rehabilitation of the area but could not find much support locally. One reason was that some people actually felt that benefiting from NGOs programs was against the spirit of Islam. But others didn’t participate because of a fear of backlash from Taliban who are in hideouts and keep springing back till date” (member aman committee, Matta,Swat).

The anti state blame is felt more by case NGOs depending usually on both the nature of the projects and donors as explained by program manager, case C.

“Usually we do not hear this explicitly but if any of our projects has a political advocacy component, the pressure is there. As an example, our emergency education project in FATA included a small advocacy campaign comprising of banners and small seminars with communities on the state’s right to provide free and compulsory elementary education. Mid way through the campaigns we were approached by education department on various pretexts unless someone published a small newspaper story that the project is funded by a UK based INGO and its objective was creating tolerance towards LGBT rights, which was preposterous. The project was closed down immediately. If this project, say, was funded by government or a friendly Islamic country like Qatar or KSA, this might not have been the outcome.”

Later a bigger controversy surfaced with regards to the monogram of Elementary and Secondary Education Department (ESED) itself that resembled the colour scheme of LGBT community. It took months for education department to assert that bright colors were chosen because of their creative impact on young minds.

### 4.6.2 Commercialization of HDF and NGOs as enterprises (M2)

Data analysis shows that the sense of commercialization of the humanitarian field is visible from three key empirical trends. That the HDF has turned into a kind of ‘commodity market’ and entities within the HDF from top to bottom are all involved in a market like approach to appropriate relief resources for personal gains. This is a deadly perception for all entities including the government who are taking advantage of the humanitarian situation in a less than ideal manner. But for NGOs whose existence are supposedly rooted in the logic of non-profitness, welfare, and creating positive value for the society, this is normatively and cognitively unacceptable.

#### 4.6.2.1 NGOs as supply side phenomenon

There is a greater agreement on the fact that disaster events trigger profound social changes and creates a vacuum with regards to human services delivery in particular. Much of the humanitarian work since 9/11 has increasingly been implemented directly or indirectly by NGOs through services contracts in a projectized environment. A place where few people a decade or two ago ever heard the cliché ‘NGO’, the phenomenon spread through nook and corner of the region post 9/11. This partly reflects the changed governance patterns of global humanitarian practices where delivering aid and development used to be government centric. This meant that donors would not be able to intervene in areas that the government would not allow. With the security infused aid environment post Iraq and Afghanistan Wars in the 90s and 2000s respectively, international humanitarian system started bypassing governments to reach to humanitarian action directly with the help of non-state channels. With the realization that government channels are bureaucratic, opaque, and rigid, international development agencies started bypassing government channels and began dealing directly with NGOs. While engagement of donor-governments is re-emerging post 2013, there has been a deliberate effort between 2001-2012 on the part of international donors and INGOs to promote local engagement through NGOs for explicit purpose of peace building, security, and as part of wider and unhindered development intervention agenda in the region.

The first cause of NGOs being considered as less legitimate comes directly from the sheer number of these organizations. This is counter-intuitive to the formulations of ecological theory that considers population density in an industry to be a predictor of increased legitimacies. The increasing number of eligible entrepreneurs who opted to open an NGO spiked as noted from government records (PDMA and FDMA).

“if one follows the standard nongovernment-ness of organizations as NGOs then the numbers will be in thousands. As far as registered entities are concerned we are still compiling different lists and the numbers are estimated to be several hundred” (Assistant director, PDMA)

That NGOs came into existence because there was a need is plausible but the exponential growth can only be explained as a pure supply side phenomenon. The growing resemblance of NGOs with for-profit businesses has transformed public and government’s opinion on whether they are truly committed to humanitarian welfare with social developmental focus. There are ample cases in researchers’ knowledge as well as those reported during interactions with field level actors where for-profit businesses, politicians, academics, researchers and students have started NGOs to take opportunity of the resources availability post 9/11. Both economic and sociological literature on nonprofits points to the altruistic character of these organizations and any resemblance of these entities with a commercial ambition casts them into negative light, leading to calls for legitimation both within the organizations and outside ([C. A. Meyer, 1995](#_ENREF_140); [Pierre-Emmanuel, 2006](#_ENREF_160); [Stoddard, 2009](#_ENREF_194)). In the process the general conception of NGOs as a force for social good degenerated into a ‘for profit’ label and questions were raised about their motives and raison d'être.

To legitimacy evaluators, the HDF has thus emerged as a growing market place where every cog in the ‘aid industry’ want to have bigger role and share of the resources made available post 9/11. Different actors in the organizational field interviewed were asked why the number of NGOs were on the rise post 9/11 and very few actually answered that there was a definite need. While some did mention that government machinery and capacity to support population in distress as limited, most respondents saw NGOs as opportunists who make use of the aid money available with little strings attached.

Post 2014 though, the increased regulatory measures have made it harder for people to open new NGOs as the existing ones too face alienation. Case NGOs however have a different point of view on the subject, as evident from case B and C.

‘(For me) the primary reason for starting an NGO was to have a sustainable model where we could experiment with bottom up approaches to development. Being part of the development industry for the past 12 years, my initial inclinations were towards creating an organization that could be self-reliant in the long run. Although that hasn’t happened yet, but I am hopeful to be in a position a few years down the line (MD, case B)

On the other hand MD case C had different ideas.

“If we look at the NGOs landscape in KP, these are run of the mill organizations who would do every kind of service delivery. But there are no organizations (with emphasis) that can truly claim to be strong advocates and challenge government polices. Internationally NGOs are considered strong if they can muster political clout and in real sense challenge unjust policies. My organization, though still infant, is going in that direction”. (MD, case C)

The problem is compounded when one analyzes the type of work these NGOs deliver. It is argued by field actors that local NGOs role should be much deeper and broader than providing brick and mortar at the behest of powerful civil and military bureaucracy. Ms. Meraj bibi, a sitting member of legislative assembly and former chief executive of a local NGO echoes these sentiments;

“The decreasing acceptability of local NGOs has a lot to do with the contract type work with the establishment (Government & security apparatus). They are supposed to be harbinger for democratization and a force for poverty alleviation rather than working in business like fashion to rebuilding physical infrastructure and restocking health facilities. Despite their limited capacities the sector still has people who can build government capacity to mitigate civil strife and respond effectively to humanitarian disasters in future. It looks like they (NGOs) are deviating from their established roles into something of private short-term enterprises. There is a particular need for immediate introspection inside the sector”.

In essence, case NGOs feel that there are larger number of NGOs as compared to fifteen years ago, but the real deal is not in the numbers but what NGOs could become. They see greater potential of such organizations in a settled environment and emphasize that more of ‘serious’ NGOs are needed. They also believe that in testing times, such as now, most of dysfunctional and predatory NGOs would automatically weed out and only those will remain that mean ‘real’ business.

#### 4.6.2.2 NGO in declining aid environment & rush towards resource capture

In contrast to the first argument is the shrinking resource scenario for existing NGOs post 2013. The increasingly commercial approach of NGOs towards humanitarian services delivery or including revenue generating business streams into their humanitarian mandates has been on the rise. In face of uncertainties with regards to continued future funding, two case NGOs (Case A and B) have resorted to opening subsidiary outlets where both the developmental and business propositions support each other’s attainment.

On the one hand, this strategy represents the notion of ‘hybridity’ for case NGOs with both entrepreneurial and social services delivery together. When probed, owners presented the uncertainties of HDF as primary reasons, though at the same time insisting that there is no law barring them to having two or more entities. Owner of Case A suggested that the transport business has little to do with his NGO work apart from using some of the vehicles on rent for the organization’s projects which he termed totally legit. The transport business is in the name of his first cousin and the owner suggested he has minority shares in the business. In a sense he justified having a for-profit stream of business in slack times where donors money, owing to multiple restrictions and clearance processes, reach when projects are practically over. With no banking credit options and little reserves within the NGO accounts, borrowing from the ‘associate’ business is lifeline for survival of his NGO.

On the other hand, the resource contraction scenario has resulted in an incessant competition between government departments, security agencies, NGOs, and private sector to capture the fledging resources. This seemingly has shifted the institutional logic away from social work and humanitarianism more towards capturing greater share of aid resources, not necessarily referring to profitability logics, but not excluding them either. Such shift is visible in the desire of NGOs to engage with humanitarian development beyond the immediate relief. The longer term plans for engagement with the mainstream development has created identity confusions for evaluators as case NGOs have started to resemble developmental organizations than their foundational premises of being relief providers. The organizational field has thus become a market place referred to more commonly as ‘development industry’ where unusual alliances of government-military, NGO-military, NGO-donor, government- donors have sowed the seed of institutional complexity and logics multiplicity that some argue runs against the moral order of both humanitarianism and developmentalism. This second shift has created normative and regulative sanctions as evidcend from the event of enhanced legislations and monitoring channels (E2)

Lastly, beyond the HDF, at the general cognitive level of citizenry too, this complexity of mixing humanitarian development and commercialization is vividly observable.

“Growing up in 80s Peshawar has certain taken-for-grantedness as we grew up alongside Afghan refugees. Perhaps we can never figure out the difference between commercial and humanitarian work. Our markets were full of cheap American goods that were delivered for refugees and we as consumers never challenged why they were sold in the markets in the first place” (Field officer, case B).

That the local understanding of humanitarian work as way of regular business work is visible in the behavior of NGOs. The understanding of ‘humanitarian crisis’ as the given setting has been the norm for a generation. All three case NGOs are run by people who grew up in a historical context of living alongside Afghan refugees. This is how humanitarian NGOs also approaches the crisis framework in the region and fight fiercely amongst one another for contracts.

#### 4.6.2.3- NGOs as elite entities and representatives of societal elites

Thirdly the commercial nature of NGO ‘business’ is clear from the elitist tendencies of case NGOs. General citizenry had their doubts when NGO bigwigs started to roam around in bigger vehicles, furnished offices in posh areas, and employing relatives and friends on bigger salaries. With increasing elites starting or joining NGOs, the general perception of NGOs as elite structures got traction.

“People started to look at NGOs not as support mechanism in humanitarian crisis but as self-serving selfish entitles who got their social and economic status elevated at the expense of supporting distressed populations” (assistant director, PDMA).

Another entrenched perspective is that of NGOs as quasi-enterprises and symbols of status quo that have supported the local political and business elite than the poor segments of the society. This is clear from implementation of different program that are initiated from a Khan’s hujra (village headmen’s guest rooms). Locals see these programs as brought in by the village headmen rather than supported by government/donors which further increases the state-citizen divide and enhances locals’ faith in traditional khanism (feudalism). Distribution of relief items too are oftentimes carried out from Khan’s hujras. With a lack of government health facilities, many NGOs resort to announcing from mosque loudspeakers for people to assemble in Khan’s hujras for vaccination of children, hepatitis, TB control programs, and adult literacy initiatives. NGOs are thus unconsciously furthering feudalism and power of local oligarchs than these organizations representing local disenfranchised populations.

### 4.6.3 Corruption in NGOs work (M3)

Lastly and more importantly, field actors interviewed openly mentioned massive ‘corruption’- both moral and financial, as a reason why NGOs are detested locally. This gives credence to the theoretical understanding that humanitarian reconstruction efforts are hijacked and used to their advantage by international players with connivance of local elites, bureaucrats, and NGOs.

NGOs are not the sole players in corruption as the whole ‘development industry’ is involved in malpractices at all levels, opines PHN coordinator. This is clear from looking at contract prices of service delivery projects that are oftentimes in dollars while the expenses incurred are in Pakistani Rupees. By virtue of being local, the transaction costs are supposed to be lower but that is not the case when one looks at the budgetary sheets of various projects.

“The central premise that NGOs due to their local-ness could easily access beneficiaries is challenged by looking at exorbitant prices these NGOs charge for services delivery contracts” (coordinator, PHN)

Part of this over-prizing is fueling rampant corruption both horizontally and vertically as the HDF has lesser accountability mechanisms in place. It is not uncommon to hear the term ‘percentage’ between publicizing of a project contract and its eventual award to an NGO.

“Usually it is understood that 5-10% of the contract award should be decided at source between an NGO and a donor body,” (Program manager, case B).

Importantly this is not ‘called’ corruption as synthesized from field data but a kind of facilitation for acknowledgement of contract award. Once the contract is awarded, there are little accountability mechanisms amongst donors and NGOs to actually check on the deliverables. Monitoring staff of donors also thinks it as their right to ask favors, albeit small, but unethical. .

Government officers in position of influencing project implementation too have to be properly looked after. Higher level public officials assume to be accommodated for an air-trip or at least a laptop, depending on the size and nature of the project”

Downwards, this theme of corruption then travels through the entire chain of NGO structure where usually an executive authority makes financial decisions almost solely on the basis of his own and organizational interests, ignoring what the project actually requires. For example, there are practices of ‘piggy backing’ where resources for a particular project are shown to have spent when instead different projects feed into a particular area of NGOs operations, such as transportation costs are built into three or four projects. The finance section of NGOs then do innovations with financial statements to show the balance sheets with no or limited profits, to maintain their non-profit status.

At the level of actual beneficiaries, they are rightly unsatisfied and to a greater degree aware of the resources dedicated for them and what they eventually get.

“This project had a provision of two water coolers per family and we were given one and that too of a very inferior quality. These men (NGO workers) are definitely going to hell for such acts (Muhammad Atta, IDPs camp 2).

Together these three mechanisms explain the generalized legitimacy crisis for NGOs in the study region. The next section tries to build on this discussion to identify the structure of causal mechanisms through a process of backward chaining by identifying conditions responsible for the causal mechanisms to work.

## 4.7 Context of the causal explanation

NGOs legitimacy crisis has a structure that results in their marginalisation under certain conditions but not under others. Mechanisms described in the previous section provide causal explanations of decreased NGOs legitimacies but not necessarily resulting in it. For example, corruption, one of the key mechanisms described above is rampant at all levels and the society has generally developed benign tolerance towards this phenomenon. To equate lowered NGOs legitimacies just with corruption will be missing forest for the tree and the same goes for the other two mechanism, unless a clear structure of causal mechanism is visible. How are these mechanisms structured is the deepest level as shown in figure 15.

To examine these structures, there is a need to look at the crisis environment itself in a longer term perspective, backwards. The shift in context of crisis warrants a deeper look to retroduce the structure of mechanisms at play. Contexts under critical realist analysis refer to the generalized perspectives of contingent relations, including all ‘relevant circumstances’ (Sayer, 2000).

The context has been shaped by disasters and key events including Pakistan’s siding with the US in war on terror post 9/11, a political tug of war between dictatorial and democratic regimes (between 2001-16), the 2005 earthquake and subsequent institutionalization of humanitarian response through the initiation of NDMA (in 2005), the 2007 Nifaze Shariat in Swat valley and consequent military operations, the 2007-10 incidence of IDPs, the 2010 foods, the 2011 killing of OBL in study region, the 2013 ascendency of rightists political power to government, the 2013 regulations on NGOs, more regulations in 2014 and afterwards, and other related events. These events have differing impacts on NGOisation as discussed under three discrete but generally overlapping block periods- 2001-2006, 2007-11, 2012-16. These three peak crisis periods post 9/11 informs the rush towards NGOisation, their flourishing, and subsequent decline respectively as discussed below.

### 4.7.1 Period 1- 2001-2006 (Rush towards NGOisation)

Perhaps the watershed moment in the current structure of HDF and number of local humanitarian and development organizations came in the wake of 9/11. Just like the 1980s, mass exodus of Afghan refuges to Pakistan shaped the humanitarian configuration in the study area.

“Pakistan’s humanitarian strategy is historically tied to the happenings in Afghanistan as we are located in a geo-strategic zone that has been of interest to global powers for ages” (Program officer, IRC)

This brought UN agencies and international support with the United States and United Kingdom leading from the front. A strong rhetoric equating vibrant civil society with peace and development was matched with large monetary transfers for local reconstruction and supporting refugee-hosting areas in the region. For the United States leading the coalition against Taliban and insurgents posing threat to Kabul, the US policy has been that of focusing on Islamabad equally. Only a stable Pakistan could ensure peace in Kabul was the official US line.

The so called policy of winning ‘hearts and minds’ of Muslims across the world and more importantly in both Kabul and Islamabad was seen as a unified American Policy for the region ([Andrabi & Das, 2010](#_ENREF_8)). This is clear from the fact that when the 2005 earthquake[[1]](#footnote-1) struck, there was more American Aid than at any other time in history of the country purportedly bridging the anti-American sentiment and trust deficit between US and Pakistani government over the way the conflict was flowing over from Afghanistan to Pakistan. There is little evidence though that the trust deficit between Pakistan and the US subsided to any considerable degree. But it indeed enlisted hundreds of NGOs on USAID’s payroll.

Being a frontline player in the war against terror, Pakistan pocketed substantial returns from the international alliances in bilateral and multilateral agreements. In the first six years (2002 to 2008), the United States gave Pakistan nearly twelve billion dollars in both covert and official manner ([Ibrahim, 2009](#_ENREF_117)). The bulk of such aid went into defense spending and beefing up security along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. A substantial amount was entrusted to the public sector for improving living conditions of poor people. In addition to the bilateral support from US, UK and other countries, and the involvement of UN system in humanitarian response, the Human Rights Watch reports that INGOs contribute to humanitarian development to the tune of millions of dollars, employing thousands of Pakistani nationals and reached out to an estimated 20 million Pakistanis each year ([HRW, 2015](#_ENREF_115)).

The State-NGO relations took a turn in the wake of destruction brought by the historic 2005 earthquake prompting Pakistan to initiate its first institutional body to deal with disasters, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). With its four affiliate offices across the four provinces, the Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMA) were given wider mandates to deal with emergencies and were made responsible to localize humanitarian responses to the lowest tier of governance i.e., the district levels. This arrangement represented an institutional change in NGO-State relations later on bringing local NGOs in direct contact with the state for registrations, verifications, coordinating humanitarian responses, and repulsive process of getting Non-objection Certificates (NoCs) for every project of NGOs.

These events and associated cash inflows earmarked as humanitarian aid propelled the first wave of service delivery NGOs in the study region, including the three case NGOs chosen for this study.

### 4.7.2 Period II- 2007-11 (consolidation of NGOs)

Between 2007 and 2011, Pakistan was hit by several humanitarian crisis including earthquake, floods, a huge crisis of Internally Displaced Populations (IDPs) and political instability ([Lehtonen, 2013](#_ENREF_132)). This was the most turbulent period in terms of humanitarian crisis as American drones hovered over the tribal areas leading to concerns over Pakistan’s national sovereignty. This period saw law and order deteriorating as Pakistan’s Taliban after talks with the then government introduced “Sharia” system in large swaths of study region.

The enforcement of “Sharia” in Malakand division reintroduced archaic Islamic punishments of public flogging of women on pretexts of extra-marital affairs, ‘disobeying men’, thieves, and artists. This was the time when public freedom was obsessively at stake. This period also saw a disdain for anything foreign and NGOs soon found out they had to flee the region or face prosecution as witnessed by many NGOs.

Hence started a massive humanitarian support effort with the help of UN and bilateral donors. In addition to humanitarian support programs, various grant programs for affected enterprises, access to justice, women empowerment, economic growth, and livelihoods were launched that constituted a second wave of NGOs proliferation. The biggest roles were assigned to local NGOs in wake of military operations inside the Malakand Division and FATA.

The 2010 floods was another event that put NGOs in the limelight as deliverer of humanitarian support. While there are no credible statistics available, it is believed that the twin incidents of internally displaced populations (IDPs) and the disastrous floods of 2010[[2]](#footnote-2) increased the numbers, size, and scope of NGOs activities in the study region ([Asgary et al., 2012](#_ENREF_11)).

This period was one of consolidation for humanitarian NGOs as they found ready support in populations and government alike for their visible role in extending services to earthquake victims, floods affected populations, and rehabilitating IDPs.

Both peak periods enhanced the number of NGOs but at the same time the general perception was that of indifference or passive satisfaction over their roles. Another critical inference is that the humanitarian frameworks during both periods were apolitical to a larger extent as the source of crisis were natural disasters or external chaos in Afghanistan that started spilling over to Pakistan. Problems began though in the third period which was a direct outcome of internal insurgency in the study region propelled by war in Afghanistan as discussed below.

### 4.7.3 Period III- 2012-16 (Period of turmoil)

The third period initially saw continued spike in NGOs numbers with the government seriousness to address crisis-affected regions through multiple and inclusive channels. This is reflected in the consensus exercise in the form of a Post Crisis Needs Assessment (PCNA) that was jointly taken by government, bilateral and multilateral partners, academia, civil society, and UN partners. The document laid out four strategic objectives; building responsiveness of the State, stimulating employment opportunities, ensuring delivery of basic services, and measures for counter radicalization (PCNA 2011). Nine sectoral areas were identified (e.g., education, health, justice) and the government with the help of ADB, WB, and EU chalked out implementation arrangements to restore citizen’s trust in State institutions.

This broad exercise had a central tenet of decreasing the state-citizen divide in making state more responsive to citizens needs and asked partner institutions to coordinate aid and development efforts. Local NGOs who were largely excluded from the process apart from token participation in some deliberations and soon they found themselves on the fence owing to their own lesser effectiveness and not institutionalizing their roles through self-regulation. Much of it was because of democratic governments continuation post 2008 and the sense of American leaving Afghanistan. Still between 2011-14, NGOs found partnerships through various grant programs for affected enterprises, access to justice, women empowerment, economic growth, and livelihoods that were launched during this period.

On the political front, the rather secular Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) came to power in a democratic election held under the dictator’s watch. Just like the previous eight years under President Musharraf (2000-2008), Pakistan remained a top destination for international humanitarian and development support during the PPP era between 2008-13. This was also the period that led to US Navy operations inside Pakistan to capture Osama bin Laden from Abottabad in the study area in May 2011 ([CNN, 2011](#_ENREF_57)). The involvement of an INGO with alleged support from a local team lead to widespread belief amongst government and citizenry that majority of NGOs are working against Pakistan. This lead to numerous targeting of INGOs offices across the region as mobs vent out their frustration, fueled by media reports with tacit State support to save face as a result of Americans’ violating Pakistan’s airspace in what were termed as unilateral strikes in 2011.

In the 2013 general elections, Pakistan Muslim League (PML) won landslide victory in the Center and Punjab province. However the study region of KP came under the rather rightist Pakistan Justice party (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) and the battle hardened Jumate-Islami. The collation partners soon went to work and made clear their soft sentiments towards religious elements as well as starting dialogue with Pakistan Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP). The dividends were immediate and conflict started to abate with relatively little incidences of militant attacks in 2013-14. However the Taliban strike at a military run ‘Army Public School ‘in 2014, the Pakistan military finally started operations in the study region to weed out foreign and local militants once and for all.

A country strategy against terrorism, spearheaded by civil and military establishment, was formulated and agreed by all political factions and armed forces ([GoP, 2015](#_ENREF_102)). In what is known as the “National Action Plan” it was agreed, among other things, that religious seminaries would be regulated, special military courts constituted for instant prosecution, and financial aid to terrorist organizations be choked. It also included an agreement on administrative and developmental reforms in the study region with an immediate focus on repatriation of ‘internally displaced populations’ (IDPs) to their homes at the end of military operations.

Local NGOs sensed a big opportunity to engage with the political issue of IDPs return but they were largely ignored in the new humanitarian framework. Around the same time there were scandals, small and big, for media to report as well as a general public complaint against substandard work, nepotism in NGO jobs, and serving the elites from across the region. At the same time the introduction of the local Government (LG) system also has made huge normative demands on the NGOs.

The LG system has been historically weak in Pakistan but during Musharraf era (2002-08), LG were politically promoted and no other local entity was allowed to share the glory in delivering local development works. NGOs came for a flake during the later years of his rule and continued to do so in the two democratic set ups thereafter.

This was the beginning for the decline in the tide of NGOisation. This period also saw the security priorities of the State creep into the humanitarian frameworks. The previous two periods in large part dealt with natural disasters but this third period had a different crisis to deal with. The focus shifted to curtailing insurgencies within the study region from spilling over the rest of the country and thus the government ordered huge deployment of forces. The security considerations necessitated military to intervene into private lives, meddling into affairs of public administration, and practically controlling the humanitarian and development space in the study region. The military started its own specialized departments to rehabilitate the conflict afectees and got resources diverted from public, private and nonprofit sector into their own rehabilitation unit. It soon became evident that the humanitarian development framework has another locus- the military. NGOs would soon find out that they are no more free to touch grounds without fulfilling the unlimited protocols set by the military establishment.

Eventually the sphere of influence and working contracts for local NGOs minimized to the extent that only a handful of NGOs would be involved in rehabilitation efforts post 2015. Some believed it to be a temporary phenomenon, but leading to the write up for the final analysis in 2017, the situation remains the same. This scenario meant that most NGOs have already seen their best days!

It is however under such circumstances that this research found existing NGOs molding into entities that defy institutional constraints and learning to live and thrive under the new conditions. The next chapter discusses how NGOs are undergoing changes post 2014 to remain relevant and active players in the region’s HDF.

## 4.8 Conclusion:

This chapter first identified key events to answer the first research objective which aimed at empirically assessing events that explains the outcome of decreased NGO legitimacies. To further substantiate the incidence of decreased NGO legitimacies, a follow up rich analysis was presented on how, and on what grounds, entities within the HDF evaluate NGOs legitimacies. NGOs as structures themselves were looked into from governance, programmatic technological, process, and communication angles.

To answer the research objective 1.2 on identification of causal mechanisms, the process of abduction was employed that resulted in the identification of three key mechanisms. These mechanisms works within a structure that is visible only when the context of different crisis post 9/11 is explained. The chapter ends with signaling the larger shift in logics of the humanitarian-development field itself that explains the causal mechanism better. In the next chapter, this structure is made manifest through the strategies of NGOs themselves to create various forms of legitimacies.

In the following chapter the structure of causal mechanisms is dealt with and then legitimacy building strategies of case NGOs are presented to substantiate how the identified mechanism work.

# Chapter 5- Multiple institutional logics and NGOs strategies for legitimacy building

## 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to answer research questions 2 and 3 and related objective 2.1 and 3.1 respectively. Objective 2.1 is concerned with how logics multiplicity impacts NGOs structures and the kind of responses that such multiplicity elicit from NGOs. While objective 3.1 is to examine ‘emergence’ of the newer humanitarian development framework and NGOs roles therein.

The chapter first combines insights from Critical Realism (CR) and Neo-institutional theory (NIT) to synthesize how the identified mechanisms works under the structure of logics multiplicity. Then the newer logics are synthesized and their repercussions for NGOs made clear. Thereafter NGOs legitimacy building strategies are outlined under broader categories. Attention to these legitimacy categories reinforces the analysis in that existence of multiple logics required diverse NGO strategies. At the end of the chapter key theoretical contributions are presented.

## 5.2 Institutional logics and its centrality in CR & NIT

In line with the analytical framework (figure 10), the research attempts an ‘institutional explanation” to the declining state of NGOs legitimacies and how NGOs as entities interact with the institutional arrangements to gain legitimacy for their existence. This explanation requires a holistic view of the interaction between structures of HDF and NGOs’ agency. Both NIT and CR consider actors and structures as separate entities continually interacting to shape reality (Danermark et al., 2002). Before going on to establish multiple institutional logics as the ‘structure’ where causal mechanisms cause the outcome of legitimacy decline for NGOs, it is worth starting with how NIT and CR together explain the ‘real’ level where structure resides.

The key insight NIT provides is that institutional structures are deterministic but actors’ agency is not out rightly discounted in bringing institutional change ([Seo & Creed, 2002](#_ENREF_181)). However the problem of conflation, i.e., reducing structure to action or action to structure requires particular attention (Archer 1995). A non-conflating institutional theory to explain change is required where the ontological separation of both actors and structures are seen as independent but related objective realities. This is where an institutional analyses based in critical realism can explain how actors “use the causal powers of pre-existing structures to create new institutions or challenge existing ones” ([Leca & Naccache, 2006, p. 628](#_ENREF_131)). NGOs thus are embedded within the structure of HDF but exert institutional agency by using logics from a different standpoint to enhance their legitimation.

Like NIT, Critical Realism too consider both structures and actors agency as relatively autonomous entities having emergent properties and continually interacting ([Danermark et al., 2002](#_ENREF_62)). Reality under critical realism is stratified having the domains of empirical, actual and real. At the empirical level are the actor’s impressions or perception of reality. At the ‘actual’ level are the events that may or may not be processed by human agency. If identified correctly, these are manifested at the empirical level. Events happen when the causal mechanisms of the entities are activated and critical realists have to access the domain of ‘real’ by identifying structures and mechanisms behind the actual events ([Leca & Naccache, 2006](#_ENREF_131)).

Based on Leca and Naccache (200), the combination of both approaches to explain institutional mechanisms at three levels can be presented as table 22. It is shown that actors experience of decreased legitimacies for NGOs at the empirical level exhibit themselves as events in the domain of real. However the structural explanation can only be assessed at the real level, where multiple institutional logics shape the way entities are accorded centrality or alienation in a field.

Table - Institutional logics as the real structure

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Domain of real | Domain of actual | Domain of empirical |
| Institutional logics | V |  |  |
| Institutions | V | V |  |
| Actors experiences | V | V | V |

Based on ([Leca & Naccache, 2006](#_ENREF_131))

Similar both NIT and (CR) draws on the normative aspects of organizations in complex social settings and both focus on mechanisms of institutional change and examination of causal powers that objects inherently have. The study area is a complex social setting and both theories used together have implications of the humanitarian development scholarship. According to [Wry (2009)](#_ENREF_219) both provide a useful lens to study beneficial and harmful organizational practices by examining the mechanisms and outcomes that organization-structure interaction produces.

In the following, sources of change in logics in HDF are presented to retroduce the existence of newer logics and their implications for case NGOs.

## 5.3 Sources of logics multiplicity and implications for NGOs

The first phase of data collection (mapping of HDF & perspectives on NGOs) began in early 2014 which coincided with the long debated implementation of the post-crisis strategy, called the Post Crisis Needs Assessment (PCNA). Government of Pakistan purportedly produced it but being a small part of the exercise, the researcher witnessed the whole process as led by international agencies, particularly the World Bank. The strategy rightly called for more focus on ‘state’ institution building to gear up for long-term development and institutionalizing effective humanitarian response structure with State at the center. The post-crisis needs assessment was done at time when parts of the study region were still reeking with militancy and no real peace was in sight. More than the government of Pakistan, it was the coalition of donors that steered the strategy and government bureaucrats followed suit.

The transition thus had little ownership indigenously and suddenly entities within the HDF faced an uphill task of setting their sails from the dominant referent point of ‘relief and rehabilitation’ towards higher goals of ‘peace building and sustainable development’. A change in donors’ priorities soon became evident and the immediate fallback, amongst many others, was decreased donors-NGOs interaction in the new development-oriented settings. Government pressed for more centrality and leading the process limiting space for other entities, including introducing a near ban on INGOs. The coalition of INGOs in Pakistan (Pakistan Humanitarian Forum or PHF), suggested that this transition has several contributing factors such as global changes in humanitarian funding architecture, political will of donors, and host government’s political priorities. The changed focus from humanitarian to a long-term development framework hampered NGOs operations and a steady building of donor perception that partnerships with humanitarian NGOs in the changed framework may not be a good model to continue with.

This happened because the logics of humanitarian and development settings differ in many ways as outlined in the table 23. Analysis of shifting logics at field level meant different outcomes for NGOs as discussed after the table.

Table - humanitarian vs developmental logics bases

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Norms at field level | Humanitarian settings | Development settings | New logics |
| Missions | Rescue, relief & rehabilitation | Sustainability & peace building | Institutional building |
| Vision | Effective response | Stop recurrence of humanitarian crises | Bridge the humanitarian-development divide |
| Nature of Services | Social & humanitarian | Public services | Governmentalism |
| Sources of funding | International development agencies & INGOs | International development agencies, government, self-reliance | Self-sustainability |
| Accountability | Minimal | Standard | Results-based |
| Transparency | Medium | High | Norms-based |
| Organizational capacity | Efficiency | Effectiveness | Professionalization |
| Level of competition | Minimal | Acute | NGO niche |

Source: analysis of interview data

The first point of differentiation between humanitarian and development logics is at the mission level of the field (HDF). Humanitarian norms are characterized by immediate response by formal and informal institutions. This response is lauded if it is formal (institutionalized entities such as the State, military, international relief agencies) but equally welcomed even it comes from non-institutionalized informal entities (self-help groups, private) in crisis situations. For example when banned militant outfits and their philanthropic wings supported flood afectees in 2010, no one raised an eyebrow to their involvement in HDF. On the other hand, the norms of development action requires organizations in the HDF to display behaviors that are consistent with the international norms of legit organizational set ups, low cost, high impacts and immediate response. While NGOs showed total commitment in the first two crisis (section 4.7) to the straightforward and apolitical job of relief operations, the political nature of the third period made their involvement superfluous as they lacked the professional demeanor and perceived seriousness of purpose to indulge in the long term developmental agenda. NGOs were not considered serious contenders to be assigned the long-term challenges of poverty alleviation and strengthening institutions.

Secondly the vision of HDF started to change from piecemeal response to different crisis to a somewhat settled mechanism where newer logic of bridging the divide between humanitarian and development operations took precedence. Easily said than done, the logic suggests that development initiatives had to have an inbuilt capacity of preventing humanitarian crisis. While this is a not a new thinking in humanitarian literature (Lindahi, 1996), the wholesale adoption of this vision perplexed unprepared entities within the HDF. NGOs suddenly found themselves incapacitated to respond to HDF’s new vision.

Thirdly, the nature of services provided in the two domains differs. While humanitarian scenarios mean service provision of all sorts, developmental settings only allow for those services that are prioritized by government through its international bindings. The newly introduced Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for example, has identified 17 areas for governments to prioritize and localize. NGOs under the newer developmental logics have to include ‘governmentality’ in their operations if they have to contribute under the new scheme of logics.

Fourthly, The traditional institutional logic for NGOs to exist is ‘public benefit’ that has social value creation as a strategic focus. Institutional demands in the form of stakeholders incessant questioning of organizational missions and operations are paramount as NGOs’ are reliant on grants and donations (Nicholls A & Murdock, A; 2012) in producing public goods ([Dennis R Young, 2001](#_ENREF_221)). This is because organizational behavior literature looks at accountability from resource dependence and stakeholders’ theory generally ([Ebrahim, 2003](#_ENREF_80)). While NGOs were entirely reliant on international development agencies and INGOs in the humanitarian phases, that is no more the case. With government coming to the center stage, most resources have begun to be appropriated by public sector. The developmental logics underscore the importance of self-reliance of entities within the field and are averse to total reliance of NGOs on external funding. This means NGOs have to start looking for avenues to produce revenue components to support their missions and show sustainability of sorts to reflect they are legitimate.

Fifthly, humanitarian environments strives for accountable action by all concerned but are relatively tolerant towards the way resources are utilized as the primary objective is swift action to save life and property. This is not so in development settings that has set standards for accountability.

“In humanitarian situations, NGOs were less concerned with how it spent the resources and more with the burn-rate required by donors and government alike. It does not however mean that NGOs were totally unaccountable but the scale of operations was huge and everyone moved on (Assistant director, PDMA)”.

NGOs that thrived in humanitarian support phases with little formal procedures gradually realized that settling into the newer ‘development’ mode requires considerable changes in their structures and practices or be ready to face extinction. The newer focus on results-based accountability seems more attuned towards stopping leakages in the aid chain. It runs along the chain from top to bottom in development settings and value for money needs to be established at each stage.

Sixthly, the transparency of NGOs operations from ‘within’ became an issue in the changed HDF settings. The new direction alongside accountability of NGOs also aims at their operational transparency ([Brakman Reiser & Kelly, 2011](#_ENREF_38)). The norms of transparency in humanitarian action were geared towards holding all entities accountable for the way inputs were processed to produce outputs. Owing to urgency of meeting crisis environments, the transparency concerns may be termed as ‘low’ to ‘medium’ for the ‘humanitarian and relief’ settings. In the newer developmental settings however the norm of transparency changes to ‘high’ as entities are required to come clean on their internal operations. NGOs, the most opaque of entities when it comes to internal working were required to shift to more transparent organizational structures. This is further evident in legitimacy building strategies of case NGOs in the next section.

Seventhly, just like lesser accountability was the norm in managing crisis situations, it was implicitly tolerable that NGOs capacities were limited in responding to humanitarian crisis but that is no more the case. Humanitarian environments were concerned more with efficiency of NGOs. While developmental environments are based in ‘result-oriented’ frameworks where long-termism allows for proper monitoring and evaluations of NGOs outputs. More than monitoring aspect, the development domain is concerned with effectiveness i.e., if the organization structure itself is reflective of the field-wide values. More than how the organization produces it services, the question is about what are they producing. The new logics require NGOs to be more professional, bureaucratized and exhibit seriousness of purpose. This led to the observed wave of professionalization in NGO services as is evident by strategies employed by case NGOs in next section.

Lastly, the level of competition in developmental setting is far stiffer than in humanitarian situations as is clear from fewer committed resources for humanitarian services post 2014 (GoKP, 2017). NGOs that would usually manage dozens of projects before 2013 soon found out lesser to offer to the development setting. Almost every NGO that wanted to support populations during crisis got off with some form of resources previously but as the developmental focus set in, the resources were hard to come by and case NGOs started facing stiff competition from government line departments, bigger national NGOs from other provinces, and of course the rehabilitation wing of Pakistan Army. Even the private sector has jumped into the fold of development, particularly in developing technology solutions to issues of governance and poverty. Government has started incubation of social enterprises to fight the entrenched challenge of poverty and inequality. The increased incidence of competition has led NGOs to work on their output legitimacies as presented in section 5.4.3. This is also suggestive that unless NGOs develop their own niche areas, their existence remains jeopardized.

The sources of uncertainty and change described above have not only impacted NGOs but also other entities within the HDF. Perhaps more than the change in logics, the co-existence of both logics at the time of data collection seems to have provided the impetus to the perception of NGOs decline of legitimacies. Logics coexistence post-crisis seems to have caused complexity for NGOs to understand their exact roles. Logics multiplicity also seems to have deeper impacts on NGOs at surface and deep levels. Case NGOs were impacted at the identity and mission levels as discussed in section 5.5.3. More importantly NGOs felt that chasing their missions have induced a kind of fatigue that was hindering them to achieve their full potentials (section 5.5.2).

The structure of how legitimacy eroding mechanisms work is thus visible from the logics multiplicity inhabiting the HDF. This shift caused uncertainty for all entities in the HDF but more importantly for NGOs, that at the time of second phase of data collection were busy in practices to counter balance changes in the field (HDF) and macro social environment (changed political priorities and global practices of humanitarianism and development)

## 5.4 NGOs strategies as reflective of the shift in institutional logics

This study takes institutional logics on legitimacy from a critical realist perspective that fundamentally accepts separate ontological status of both actors and structures, and prioritize structure over agency ([Leca & Naccache, 2006](#_ENREF_131)). Critical Realist perspective acknowledges that institutional logics conditions rather than determines actors action to leave space for diverse range of responses ([Delbridge & Edwards, 2013](#_ENREF_65)), thereby creating conditions for actor-structure interaction.

Neo-institutional theory suggests that organizations operating in complex environments (logics multiplicity) are inhibited by an isomorphic and mimetic behaviour that reflects change in the macro institutional environment (Greenwood et al, 2011). Case NGOs for example increasingly tend to prioritize abiding to the regulative aspects on institutions because it is coercively applied to them. However NIT, too, is equally open to diverse range of organizational responses that are oftentimes prioritized in terms of actors’ salience, power, and urgency (Mitchell et al, 1997). Cases A and C, for example, are prioritizing downward accountability and changing partnerships choices. Case B on the other hand is more prone to strengthening upward accountability and introducing indigenous streams on revenues to keep its mission intact as would be further discussed under the cognitive legitimacy building strategies.

The *strategic approach to legitimacy* looks at agents as having power to change institutions. Intercepting the strategic and institutional approaches provide richer rationale to how and why actors use their discretion to act in ways other than what the dominant institutions demand ([Sonpar et al., 2010](#_ENREF_191)). Generally data trends suggest that strategic legitimacy building in terms of case organizations seems to fall along two lines. First is the conventional ways in which NGOs respond to multiple logics by focusing foremost on those aspects of institutional complexity that affects organizational survival (this includes instances of decoupling as well). This includes, foremost, the cognitive struggles at the executive and managerial level that enacts legitimacy in day-to-day operations of the organization. It also includes dealing with the unpredictable ‘resource’ scenario in HDF which has moved from highly resourced humanitarian environment to a constrained, short-term, competitive tendering processes in the ‘developmental’ settings. Together these two may be termed as legitimacy building sites at the ‘input boundary’ level of case NGOs. Under NIT, these two may be classified into normative and cognitive legitimacies.

A clear distinction between normative and cognitive legitimacies is not readily accessible from field data. However as outlined in section 2.5 (literature review), normative legitimacy is judgemental while cognitive legitimacy is to a larger extent knowledge-based (Suchman, 1995). The former includes attention to the consequences, procedures, structures and related attributes of organizations while the latter includes comprehensibility and taken-for-grantedness of organizational practices. Both are discussed in further detail below.

Second is the NGOs struggle to find consumers for their outputs or to develop niche areas where the HDF is forced to institutionalize their roles in the long term developmental settings. Strategies employed by case NGOs under this category are termed as output legitimacy building strategies in the text to follow.

Key empirical finding supporting the structure of causal mechanism as shifts in logics is clear from the strategies employed by case NGOs to enhance all kinds of legitimacies. Analyses suggest that NGOs strategies are moving in the direction of prioritizing the emerging field norms of developmentalism but at the same time there are uncertainties with regards to proper understanding of externalities. NGOs agency is shaped in a particular way in light of this finding as research participants spoke about the specific nature of changes that case NGOs are undergoing. In case of HDF, it is critical to situate the NGOs work in the changing macro level context where both the humanitarian and development challenge are conflated into one combined goal. More on this is presented in the last section on ‘crisis in developmentalism’ to answer the third research question.

### 5.4.1 Building Normative/regulative legitimacies

Organizational legitimacy building can be defined as a process of actions that are geared towards acquiring and maintaining legitimacy ([Díez-Martín et al., 2013, p. 1954](#_ENREF_72)). This is important as organizations then have easier access to resources for their growth and survival (Zimmerman and Zeitz, 2002). There is distinction between performance related legitimacies and value related legitimacies (Hirsh & Andrews, 1984) or between an obligatory ‘logic of appropriateness’ than a calculative ‘logic of consequence’ (March & Olsen, 1994) in legitimacy literature. For NGOs, the value orientation comes first than the efficiency concerns of converting inputs into outputs.

Normative legitimacy is value laden having a ‘moral base’ and is judged through actions of what an organization produces and how it is produced ([Dart, 2004](#_ENREF_63)). Analyses of evidence suggest that, faced with multiple logics of humanitarianism and development, two types of normative legitimacy building strategies amongst case NGOs- internal and external as shown in table below.

Table - Instances of normative LEGITIMACY building strategies

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| * Legitimacy type | * Domains | * Specific instances in cases | * Explanation |
| * Normative (Moral) legitimacy | * Internal | * Transparency of organizational structures | Exhibition of Internal representation for transparency |
| * Democratizing NGO structures | Professionalization; investing in employees schemes, advertising key positions, focus on program level staff against project-based hiring |
| * Proactive disclosures (regulatory) | Putting information in public domains; certifications, detailed project information on websites & verified statement of accounts |
| * External | * Representation of real constituencies | * Prioritization of beneficiaries/members over donors; * Shift towards demand driven model |
| * Promoting participation downwards | * Strengthening relations with CBOs, community leaders & activists, women groups |
| Revitalizing networks | * District, provincial, national and international networks |

Source: Categorization based on primary data analysis

#### 5.4.1.1 Internal representation for transparency

Internal normative legitimacy building strategies are the procedures through which organizations embrace socially accepted ways of producing output. This relates to the increasing incidence of case NGOs showing a drive towards documenting protocols related to human, financial, and operational procedures. Case NGOs are far from being democratic spaces within. As discussed in section 4.4, these organizations are considered personal fiefdoms run by families and friends. With closer government watch and increased presence of on-duty security personnel, some of the practices within the organizations are changing for good. NGOs working on government projects have to follow the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (KPPRA) rules on procuring goods and services. While there are instances of institutional decoupling where, for example, advertisements as required by the law are to be placed in newspapers and online, but hiring of goods and services are still carried out in opaque manner. Scores of individuals working for NGOs have died in the line of duty and two case NGOs reported to have started life insurance schemes. For field duties, even project staff gets some form of life coverage. This amounts to institutionalizing the security imperatives in NGO work.

Another area of normative reforms are the case NGOs focus on hiring and retaining individuals not for particular projects but based on long-term programmatic priorities. Serendipitously there has been a proliferation of academic degrees in development studies programs in the study region. At least five universities are awarding degrees in such programs and three have ‘NGO management’ as specialization areas. Increasingly NGOs are getting professionals who demand transparency and accountability of NGOs work from within. This has a positive effect on NGOs work as the norm of professionalism (in the form of internal legitimacy representation) seems to be transfusing NGOs structures which bodes well for NGO’s internal and external legitimacies.

#### 5.4.1.2 Proactive disclosure of information

Under the new government regulations post 2014, NGOs, political parties, and business organizations alike are required to proactively provide information on their activities and importantly on the sources of their donations, revenues, and work areas. With the promulgation of the all-important ‘Right to Information” Act (RTI, 2014), there is a high premium now on making organizational information public. These disclosures initially caused inconvenience to NGOs and the board members who reported of government intrusion into their private affairs. . This has instilled a positive impact as NGOs now actively strategize to make information public on their websites and in public interaction to purchase necessary regulatory legitimacies. NGOs now seems to understand that they stand to gain from such disclosures.

Case NGOs have hired professional law firms and taxation experts to keep their records impeccable to the extent that it is physically evident to find law firms in the vicinity of NGOs offices in the biggest business center in Peshawar. The institutional demands on transparency have thus spun into existence new law firms that specialize in nonprofit laws and accounting procedures. A formidable presence of law professionals are developing expertise in nonprofit management, which bodes well for the governance of the sector, and decreasing public sector- NGO mistrust. Where audited accounts of NGOs were previously an anomaly is now considered a norm. It is easy to find audited copies of NGOs’ accounts online.

#### 5.4.1.3 external normative legitimacy building strategies

NGOs are increasingly catching up to dispel the notion that they are representative of the elites or work for the powerful segments of the society. Successive governments and citizenry post 9/11 have maintained a unanimous perception that NGOs have failed their real constituents- vulnerable segments of the society.

Since many INGOs have already left due to government’s harsh stance and case NGOs are bracing up for the space left open for them to directly work with citizens and present their demands purposefully. Previously donors (mostly INGOs) were considered the immediate evaluating audiences by case NGOs. There is a shift now to centralize citizenry as the main constituencies. Case ‘C’, for example has a crosscutting theme of open community engagement in proposals for developmental projects. On a project on ‘healthy neighborhoods’ in Peshawar, Case C went all out on radio programs to both amplify the project message but more critically mentioning the donor just once in the end of the episodes as a footnote and focusing more on the listening audiences.

Depicting a sense of cognitively conceptualizing urgency towards establishing better downwards accountability, case C disseminates material that has implicit messages of prioritizing citizens and dispelling the notion that NGOs are just implementing partners of donors. However there are still decoupling practices visible at ‘means’ level where programs design and success matrices are drawn by donors with little say of partner local NGOs.

This is short of promoting citizens demands through bipartisan agenda setting for development but still the right first step in the direction of citizen-centric development. It is however getting extremely evident that case NGOs are pushing for demand driven initiatives and purposefully present this case in donor meetings, interaction with government and through small self-financed advocacy campaigns. Case A has started a small endowment fund to create projects on women empowerment that it considers as a core area of operation in future.

Donors’ agencies and INGOs too have started running programs that focus on citizen’s-state engagement as a strategy to building peace and NGOs have a key role to play in such programs. NGOs capacities vis-à-vis informal community based organizations are far superior. In an environment of little trust, case NGOs sense that these kinds of programs will give them better credentials with their beneficiaries and promote their representational legitimacies.

#### 5.4.1.4 Promoting participation downwards

Working with community-based organizations on micro level also enhances the representational legitimacy of NGOs. This is clear from the efforts being put in by case A and C to keep their forty plus CBOs intact on different projects. A shift is visible, as described above, where NGOs are taking the downward representation as seriously as upwards accountability. For example, the social mobilization techniques employed by cases A and C to run most of their rehabilitation programs centered on formation of community based organizations (CBOs). Once the project objectives were achieved, case NGOs moved on taking little care in sustainability of those CBOs. Now there are clear patterns that these CBOs are taken seriously with one kind of interaction or another throughout the year. The understanding seems to have sunk in that without grassroots support, these NGOs lose their instant advantage as well as risk alienating their primary support base.

Case NGOs however suggest that while they are taking participation of beneficiaries seriously, there is an equal dearth of similar arrangements in the HDF locally. All three case NGOs are registered with the government at district levels (besides other registrations) but there are no mechanisms in place where district governments encourage participation of NGOs in planning and monitoring processes. NGOs want to be on boards and planning sessions at district and provincial level but such facilitation is not extended to them.

During interviews it became clear that the government-NGO gulf could only be bridged if government takes NGOs expertise seriously and taken them on various boards, committees, task forces and make them responsible for specialized initiatives. This would be a better way to harness NGOs potential than for the government to consider NGOs as competitors or pressure force at least in services delivery sectors.

#### 5.4.1.5 Revitalizing NGO Networks

The Pakistan Humanitarian Network (PHN) and its affiliates at provincial levels were mostly a sight of in-fighting and conspiracies. NGOs used to gang up in consortiums for bigger projects only to start finding faults with one another after getting contracts on roles and shares. There used to be less focus on substantial issues of NGOs’ freedoms and building consensus on ensuring accountability from within the sector. With decreasing pie of humanitarian aid and stringent regulatory regimes, there is a sense of purpose and seriousness emerging.

The 2016 dialogue of PHN with military and government under its new leadership was indicative that the NGO sector has realized that a unified, inclusive and democratic front is the only way they can prosper and contribute to the region’s development. A realization is settling in where the value of stronger networks and measures for self-accountability are being considered as ethos of the NGO sector.

The body has since then re-codified its constitution and membership criteria to make it more representative of the civil society organizations and have welcomed in its fold academics, policy consultants, and trying to get on board government bureaucrats. The new focus is on presenting a joint front and advocate for the rights of NGOs to operate independently.

### 5.4.2 Strategies to build cognitive legitimacies

Organizations are social systems and require recognition at the cognitive level foremost to achieve organizational goals ([Suddaby et al., 2010](#_ENREF_196)). The cognitive legitimacy may be divided into two domains of ‘comprehensibility’ and ‘taken for grantedness’ and both are knowledge based in that audiences need to have an understanding that these NGOs are in consonance with larger cultural schemes and that they are producing outputs as desired from entities of such mandates. Table 25 outlines key strategies that NGOs employ to gain cognitive legitimacies.

Table - Instances of cognitive legitimacy building strategies

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| * Legitimacy type | * Domains | * Specific instances in cases | * Explanation |
| * Cognitive | * Comprehensibility | * Alliances with established entities | * 3 Ms (Mullah, military, media) |
| * Alliances with government | Earn goodwill of government and citizens alike |
| * Categorization of donors | * A public relationing focus to earn cognitive consonance |
| * Playing the ethnicity card | * Persuasive utilization of localness- local development with local organizations |
| * Mission modifications | * Mission creeps as response to institutional multiplicity |
| * Taken for grantedness | * Professionalization | * Focus on hiring and retaining best professionals |
| * Enhanced focus on Peace-building | * NGOs are peace-building entities and not anti-state |
| * Contesting government ineptitude | * Low performance of NGOs but better than government |

#### 5.4.2.1- Proactive alliances with three Ms

Three major entities - Mullah, military and media, direct masses effortlessly on major religious and worldly issues including domestic and foreign policy frameworks of the country ([Husain, 2005](#_ENREF_116)). Case NGOs like other political organizations are aware of this fact and consciously try to appease these three key institutions. This alliance is inaudibly referred to as the ‘deep State’ or ‘establishment’ and everyone, particularly the local NGOs, seem afraid of their diatribe. Case NGOs when probed gave the sense that it is unwise to fight the big fish when you are a small fish in muddy waters.

In the second phase of crisis (2006-11), the role of these three institutional entities, particularly that of military, got entrenched into the structure of HDF. Initially NGOs seemed reluctant to engage with military, however it started changing during and after the third crisis period, such that NGOs now seem eager to be on their side. As already mentioned, NGOs have been cowed into allowing even working space for personnel of government and security agencies at their premises. For case C, such accommodation of serving officials was unpleasant initially,. Later on it seemed to be working for the NGO as everything passed through the officials, the employees and higher ups of the NGO felt less worried about someone picking them up at night for interrogations. With incessant demands being made on NGOs to procure NoCs and meeting military protocols, case NGOs seem more inclined towards hiring services of ex-military men. Just like for profit businesses, NGOs too now have ex military men on their payrolls for pragmatic reasons.

As for the proactive involvement of religious leaders (mullahs), this has been a shielded norm even during crisis support programs by NGOs. NGOs were conscious that entering into any area requires community gatekeepers to be taken into confidence including elected representatives, local council members, prayer leaders (imams), and other influential people. For most part distribution of food items and non-food support were announced from mosques anyways but lately religious leaders of various factions have been mainstreamed in NGOs areas of interventions. This is done through various mechanisms but mostly mosque leaders are approached with real sense of purpose. They are made part of various needs’ assessments beforehand, involved in oversight of work during implementation and incentivized by ways of recognition, certificates and made key speakers in community seminars. This ploy seems to be working as little hate appeared to be spewed out of mosques’ loudspeakers against NGOs lately.

Lastly NGOs are taking media, both electronic/print and social media, very seriously. However both require substantial investments to air pro-NGOs contents and show success stories, suggested communication specialist at PCNA. A better alternative is to resort to online activism and present the positive face of NGOs. A cursory analysis of ‘Facebook’ usage of case organizations and other NGOs clearly suggest that this low cost usage of social media is reaping initial dividends. Before hitting official NGO websites, much of the project information is placed on social media to solicit users feedback. Similarly a comparison of existing websites of case NGOs to a few years back suggest that effort is being spent in making their online presence meaningful and engaging.

#### 5.4.2.2 Increased efforts to involve the public sector

The common strategy being used by NGOs is to penetrate the government channels though personal networks. Data shows that case NGOs that have an inside sympathizer bodes well on winning government contracts and trust. It is also a helpful ploy in procuring NoCs that remain a big challenge for NGOs. One case organization ensures concerned government officials are treated with guest and off-record consulting opportunities. Also some projects now have a capacity building component that amounts to provision of traveling allowances to the capital city and/or foreign countries for higher-ups in the counterpart government departments.

Even under funding from international organizations, NGOs make sure to incorporate off-location ‘trainings’ to local government officials, judges, media, and police. This suggests that malpractices are still being tolerated when it comes to facilitating a section of government functionaries.

One of the case NGOs has tilted in government direction to the extent that it now resembles a Government Run NGO. The board has two new inclusions. One is a former director at the Local Government department while the other is a serving official from the health department. The former during a brief interview suggested that NGOs need to strengthen their structures by having more people from the government. He justified more government officers on NGO boards to actually help them get rid of ‘donor clutches’.

#### 5.4.2.3 Categorization of donors and donors’ preference

Observations and data analysis suggest that one of the key cognitive bias of evaluators and citizens alike is that NGOs are akin to foreign secular organizations in their ideologies, mandates, and values. Case NGOs acknowledge that they were totally reliant on USAID, DFID, and EU in the past and may have extended their agendas unknowingly. The popular sentiment has been that USA invaded Afghanistan with the help of NATO allies spearheaded by Britain and EU countries and that these nations are responsible for the subsequent chaos created in the study area. Even if they wish to help through reconstruction, both people and intelligentsia look at their peace building efforts with suspicion.

Increasingly then a preferred way for case NGOs to suggest comprehensibility of deep rootedness in local cultural frames is through suggesting that they have moved on to donors that are multilateral and countries that have played a positive/neutral role in Afghanistan and adjoining province of KP and FATA. This is clear from a cross case comparison of projects over the study period (2001-2016) delivered by the three NGOs. It is clear that the focus is going away from USAID and DFID more towards EU countries, UN, multilateral institutions, and foundational grants. This shows three trajectories: One is to present the NGOs as more locally rooted and send signals to HDF as more representative of citizens’ demands. The second is to show political correctness as partnerships with USAID and DFID brings all kinds of security issues for NGOs. These security issues do not emanate only from the security apparatus of the State but also explicit threats from Islamist militants, local fundamentalists, and thug groups that are routinely involved in ransom acts. Faith based NGOs also pose a potent threat playing on public sentiment that these NGOs have their missions aligned with western secular forces. Lastly given the evolving structure of HDF away from humanitarian programs require NGOs to build different skillsets and capacities to brace up for the long-term developmental challenge. That a shift in logics causes crisis of comprehensibility but also presents avenue for positive organizational change is visible in case NGOs.

During interviews also, participants would usually mute much of their work with USAID but discuss more of their projects with EU, UN, multilaterals, Islamic countries and private donors therein, and government. A cursory look at the shift in donors base from the table 26 testifies to this fact.

Table - Donor categorization through the three peaks (in order of preference)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Case organizations | Period I  2001-06 | Period II  2007-11 | Period III  2012 -16 |
| Case A s | USAID, DFID, UNHCR, Care Int’l, Save the children (US) | Oxfam, UNHCR, Care Int’l, UN, MSF, USAID, Local government Department | UNICEF, FAO, Federal Govt, Islamic relief, local Govt, DFID, USAID |
| Case B | USAID, GIZ, UNHCR, DFID, UNDP | GIZ, World Bank, Halcrow group, USAID | Provincial government, FAO, UN, ADB, GIZ, KSA |
| Case C | - | USAID, Open society foundation (OSF) SF, UNICEF, Education Department | OSF, UN, GIZ, Office of Ombudsman, Local government |

Source: Project profiles of case NGOs and primary interviews (2003-2016)

#### 5.4.2.4 Local NGOs trumpeting the ethnicity logic

Case NGOs conform to institutional norms to a larger extent but also contest, oppose and protest as a form of legitimation. A case in point is the open disapproval of NGOs coming from other parts of the country to work in the region.

As the relief and rehabilitation phases of crisis grew thinner, case NGOs found themselves sitting on the fringes. Case A has to close down field offices in five locations that existed for more than six years. While the NGO was hopeful of getting projects to consolidate its work in these locations, but had to fire the staff and vacate the premises as more and more work was reportedly being channeled through the military or through new NGOs coming from Punjab province. Large programs, for example of school reconstruction previously approved for the study region, started to be diverted to other parts of the country citing security reasons. These projects were approved and the government did not want to give back resources to foreign donors and so diverted work to other parts of the country.

This led to a strong conviction amongst local NGOs that the State government post 2012-13 misappropriated the local humanitarian resources on the one hand, and gave a free entry to NGOs from other parts of the country, on the other. This was believed to have been done at the behest of men in uniform and the ruling Party’s corridor of power, which are predominantly form Punjab. The politics of humanitarian aid got a lot more complex post the third crisis with power and authority adding to the complexity.

Faced with power dynamics, NGOs in the region started showing some teeth and openly flouted government orders to appropriate regional resources meant for the study region to the rest of the country. This was a formidable political strategy that local NGOs evoked to brush aside issues of effectiveness, corruption, and capacity directed against them. At the same time, they raised noise level to claim representativeness of the region alone. This strategy of protest was particularly visible in Network meetings of NGOs where the meta national narratives of preferring Punjabis to other ethnicities were perhaps over-played. Proponents of the view suggest that INGOs like ‘Care international’ and MSF have been stopped from working in the province on security pretexts while the same funds have been diverted to Punjab bypassing the needs of the study region. This is interesting area for further scholarship as an ethnicity, Pashtuns for long have craved for equal resources within the federation of Pakistan, and the meta logic of ethnic discrimination has flowed into the humanitarian and development discourses. Some use of this ‘ethnic’ card is justified as in the crisis of displaced populations (2009-13), the government of Punjab passed an order to stop Pakhtuns displaced populations from crossing into Punjab citing reasons that Pakhtuns are no different than Taliban themselves. This was presented in a provocative manner in national media where property owners were instructed not to let any Pakhtun get a rented house or shop in parts of Punjab.

The local NGOs network presented this issue of discrimination through Pakthun intelligentsia on social media, mostly twitter, and in cluster meetings where PDMA usually chairs. Predominantly comprising of Pakhtun members, the researcher witnessed in one such cluster meeting that most stakeholders agree to this assertion by local NGOs.

Pursuing this political strategy partially shifted the focus away from NGOs inefficiencies towards a bigger cause of deprivation and political alienation of the citizens in the study region. It has to some extent overshadowed the cognitive biases against local NGOs as they for a time championed to get resources back to the province.

5.4.2.5 Modified missions of NGOs

Mission statement summarizes the foundational purpose and a common rallying point showing boundary setting of an organization. It also motivates members, staff, volunteers and help evaluators make an opinion about an organization ([Helmut K. Anheier, 2005](#_ENREF_9)). That case NGOs have transformed their missions to align with competing logics show a form of cognitive legitimacy building strategy on the part of CEOs and management. A shift from humanitarian to post-humanitarian and development logics has necessitated changes at the mission level for case NGOs. Case A and C have changed their missions markedly in both written and practical terms. The mission of case C now reads;

“To help create a just society based on the principles of equality, freedom, justice, and to make poverty history”.

During the first two crisis periods, Case A remained solely focused on relief and emergency programs for displaced populations. Sensing other organizations getting into the center of humanitarian action has led case A to change course. The organization now fancies more success with regular development projects than delivering humanitarian services that has seen a disproportionate centrality for military actors and ‘outsider’ NGOs. Alongside mission creeps, organization’s physical presence is now more in the capital city than the city of its origin to be close to humanitarian action.

Along side changes to mission statements, it is interesting to note that Case A even underwent a change in its name. The mere name in change shows long-term vision and more to do with the developmental notions than humanitarian or welfare aspects. However unlike the other two cases, case B choose not to move out completely of humanitarian services. It believes that historically the region has seen calamities one after the other and it would be no surprise to have calamities in near future. This however does not mean that case B is not mimicking other NGOs in strengthening its capacities in development and advocacy domains.

NGOs missions seemingly are now more geared towards gaining leadership in addressing the local policy and institutional setting. But there is an equal dearth of ideas and implementation strategies at the disposal of case NGOs. A decoupling is visible when NGOs adapt the ‘currency’ of development but have little actual capacities or leanings to sustain it.

The mission change is accompanied by constant organizational restructuring at the level of program and field but seldom in the higher management. Apart from cosmetic changes to the board by two case NGOs, chief executives and directors still hold all the authority at the top. Financial procedures have also undergone changes in face of strict donor demands and government oversight. Yet it seems more at the ‘means’ level. The ‘end’ level hasn’t seen much change with opacity and complex ways of maintaining financial records.

It is then a case of institutional decoupling that has been wisely employed by case NGOs in various domains of its work, beyond financial reporting. For example Case NGOs have names that reflect welfare, participation, development, empowerment, sustainability, and awareness etc. with mission statements changed from relief to democratization, peace building, skills enhancement, equity, and poverty alleviation. This reflects an outward orientation towards ideal type developmental focus, a hallmark of sustainable NGOs. However the major issue of capacity to deliver the missions remain elusive and case NGOs acknowledge continually failing to showcase success that show greater representation of the developmental focus.

5.4.2.6 Contesting government ineptitude

As a further evidence of agentic dynamism in face of institutional constraints, NGOs openly and covertly flout government capacities to handle humanitarian crisis as well as leading the routine development work. NGOs contest the less than ideal role of government particularly in crisis environments and claim that government has repeatedly failed in coordinating and effectively responding to the situations. Accountability of government is equally if not more required and NGOs pressurize the state through social media, conferences, seminars and selective and concealed use of print media.

Under the law of ‘rights to information’ (RTI), some NGOs write directly or through third parties to various government departments for details on their services. When the response is not provided in due time, these NGOs raise their noise level through the same mediums. There is seldom direct intervention by local NGOs in the affair of government services delivery as these organizations alone or in a consortium do not hold sufficient clout to stop malpractices in public service delivery. It is through activation of the state machinery through various means that case NGOs front up to the State. Use of RTI, quasi-legal, and legal mechanisms are being used to push back the State to its constitutional role and for NGOs to wrestle back and claim their own independence.

NGOs now realize that in addition to supporting with service delivery and advocacy programs on development issues, they need to perform the role of watchdogs. Previously if such role was ever perfected, it was only in relation to some aspect of government working rather than the reportedly massive corruption happening at various level of governance in the region. Now NGOs understand that if they are to be taken seriously, they have to be politically involved and try to hold government accountable on key public policy priorities.

Together these strategies goes a long way in dispelling the notions that NGOs alone should be held responsible for whatever is wrong in the HDF. The government by virtue of leading and directing the whole enterprise needs to be named and shamed. This proactive attitude may go a long way in decreasing the cognitive disillusionment of citizens with NGOs.

#### 5.4.2.7 Peace building as integral part of programs

NGOs have to be entities that are bulwarks against militancy and extremism than mere service provision organizations. With the change in logics from managing crisis environments to managing sustainable change and peace building, it is no surprise that the development industry from top to bottom have modified its strategies, associated jargons and labels. Consider, for example, the DFID ‘Awaz’ program and USAID’s ‘Citizen’s Voice Program’ (CVP). Both donor agencies have sensed that their sociopolitical legitimacies have dwindled and thus they are running programs with new labels usually in native language. The mechanisms of aid too have changed from one with direct funding to partners (including NGOs) to more of grant mechanisms managed by third parities in a lean structure. Mostly these third parties are staffed with locals up to the program levels while the higher management including chief of parties are expat staffs.

Of more importance though is the increasing centrality of the peace-building theme within the work of aid agencies. That the era of brick and mortar and high value contracts is long past, NGOs and other actors within the HDF have started shifting sails into the direction of long-term gradual process of institutionalizing peace-building into their programs. This was visible in case NGOs programming priorities. Both Case B and A have been able to win projects in the 2nd (2015) and 3rd (2016) rounds of the competitive grants respectively. The grant sizes are kept small intentionally and budgets allocated on quantifiable deliverables.

### 5.4.3 Strategies to build output legitimacies

As outlined in section 5.3, humanitarian NGOs were effective in providing relief to population in trouble to a larger extent. They could build tent cities in matter of days and support with supplies, emergency health, and education services. But when it comes to transforming communities over the longer term, NGOs start to appear like culture-producing organizations with a lack of specific technologies required for deeper societal change ([Watkins et al., 2012](#_ENREF_213)).

Perhaps then the most critical are building legitimacies that the social good produced by NGOs are unique, of value, and measurable. It also means that NGO structures are transparent in themselves and that there are sufficient technical and monitoring mechanisms available within these organizations that their products are of value. Instances of output legitimacy building are produced in table 27 and explained afterwards.

Table - Instances of output legitimacy building strategies

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| * Legitimacy type | * Domains | * Specific instances in cases | * Explanation |
| * Output legitimacy | * Organizational structure | * Professionalism & moving into niche areas | * Workers have expertise; clear relationship structure between managers, EDs, & board; meritorious boards, technology |
|  | * Communication & strong M&E | * Internal & external communication for results; strong monitoring structure |
| * Structure of Accountability | * Accountability is result oriented | * Use of organizational autonomy to show trustworthiness & success |

#### 5.4.3.1 Professionalism as reflected in organizational structures

As discussed earlier under normative legitimacy building strategies, professionalization of NGO work is a normal cliché that one hears from top management but it is not confined to hiring best people for the job. Instead the organizational structures need to look effective and transparent to outsiders in a number of concrete ways. To being with, case NGOs have embarked upon making CEOs/MDs accountable to board of governors. Case C even puts it on its website the minutes of meeting where CEO presented performance of the NGO for 2015. It also means separation of powers between management and managers to give them more operational and financial autonomy of key aspects of the projects under respective heads. The performance matrices are eagerly discussed amongst the supervisors and supervisees and an annual system of reward has been put in place by case C. Technical expertise of the managers are seriously deliberated upon and even clients (development agencies) are asked for feedback on employees performance.

Similarly more energy seemed to be spent on internal evaluations of projects for organizational consumption and learning. Case B particularly likes to call itself a ‘learning organization’ and keeps an inventory of processes for standardization purposes.

Above all there is more focus now on using technology to exhibit professionalism. The use of Statistical software, qualitative data programs, digitized maps, and advance excel programming are getting traction within case NGOs.

A considerable effort is evident in bolstering NGOs capacities in emerging niche areas of conflict-sensitive development practices, online advocacy, and state-citizen dialogue in the three cases. Part of it is demand-driven as the meta logics of the field are moving into new domains but partially it is the NGOs’ understanding that without developing organizational fortes, they may not be able to grow in the changed environment.

#### 5.4.3.2 Communication & strong M&E

There is little in way of case NGOs to show that they effectively contributed to humanitarian crisis in the first two phases or bracing up for the sustainability challenge post 2013. This is partly because of a lack of trained and capable communications departments in these NGOs, and partly because of the nature of donor’s dictates who get the ‘success stories’ published under their own names. While NGOs record success stories for ‘donors consumption’ regularly, there are instances of good work that NGOs have produced but could not project properly.

During crisis times, interviews with government disaster management authority personal suggest that there is not a real value in what NGOs have produced. For example, distributing rations in a camp or providing water solutions is a one-off activity. They suggest that this could have easily been the job of private sector that also supports the government in times of reconstruction.

Case NGOs agree that they have been unable to showcase their successful projects prominently and have tried to introduce communication specialists as key positions. This is clear from the Facebook and twitter feeds on websites of NGOs, updating of material regularly, and spending organizational resources on marketing material such as annual reports, brochures, and use of print media.

Case NGOs as part of their regular evaluations submit reports on completion of projects to donors. These reports are never relayed back to communities for validation in a layman language. Case C has particularly embarked on an initiative in a couple of projects to show their impacts.

“We have the 2015 calendar and a month’s leaf depicts our work with child protection in emergencies with pictorials in Urdu language.”

While this in itself doesn’t amount to greater impact of the NGOs work, at least there is an effort to disseminate information about what these organizations stand for. There seems greater awareness that NGOs need to produce material for outward consumption so that their decreased legitimacies could be mended.

#### 5.4.3.3 Result oriented accountability

Case NGOs realize that unless and until they are able to produce and show actual results, it will be hard for them to convince any entity within the HDF of their true value. There is a conscious effort now of projecting quantifiable results not only to project donors and government but generally relaying results by various means to direct beneficiaries and general public. NGOs consortiums have come together to define and agree on an indigenous framework to relay the sectors’ results as whole but lack of resources and other pressing issues relating to NGOs security and repressive regulations always pushes back intended reform from the sector within.

Just like building the cognitive legitimacies, output legitimacies also require organizations to show trustworthiness and independence. Case NGOs resort to different strategies to reflect this angle of their structure. For example, case NGOs have started certifications from various national and international organizations. Case B and C are registered with multiple national ranking agencies like Pakistan Center for Philanthropy, NGOs resource center and district bodies to show trustworthiness.

## 5.5 Impacts of multiple logics on NGOs - Theoretical contributions

Based on the evidence of the continuous fall in NGOs legitimacy’ stocks, and validating it from the institutional analysis of how NGOs strives to rebuild their legitimacies in previous section, we establish that NGOs are aware actors and responsive to the sources of change in institutional arrangements. They understand that transparency, participation, accountability, and long-term focus are ingrained in newer logics of ‘developmentalism’. Logics associated with humanitarian response are long past and NGOs need structural changes to remain relevant in region’s HDF. The use of both NIT and CR to examine logics multiplicity as sources of institutional change and subsequent organizational responses, this study makes four theoretical insights.

The first one is the actual conceptualization of ‘legitimacy’ under NIT, as an ever-present phenomenon for organizations, particularly, in contested fields

([Déjean et al., 2004](#_ENREF_64)). In that sense while the existence of a certain level of legitimacy is a bare minimum, organizations with higher legitimacy stocks would face lesser institutional antagonism in emerging and contested fields. However organizations with depleted legitimacy stocks would do better to show a nuanced understanding that legitimacy fissures are time bound. Organizations would do better if they understand that enhanced scrutiny of some aspects of organizational domains would come under government’s radar only temporally. As the macro environment changes, there will be a shift in another direction and organizations would do well to wither the storm through positive engagement in situations (phases) of lowered acceptability.

The second one is the ensuing fatigue or burnout that organizations face in chasing necessary legitimacies that oftentimes prove detrimental to achieving organizational missions. Thirdly, such circumstance may lead to altogether newer organizational structures that could otherwise have not been possible to foresee, as case NGOs modifying into hybrid entrepreneurial outfits. Lastly NGOs may be construed as institutional entrepreneurs who may very well change the values not only wthin but throughout the HDF. This role is far-fetched in the current scheme of things but may not be out rightly overruled.

### 5.5.1 Legitimacy as a temporal object dependent on nature of crisis

Predominantly NGOs in the study region emerged mainly from the traditional community based organizations (CBOs) or through the entrepreneurial streak of professionals already working in humanitarian sector. The major motivation has been the prevailing sense of repeated humanitarian crisis and continuous relevance for NGOs, in face of weak public service delivery. Predominantly the logics under which these NGOs were established embodied the spirit of social service, philanthropy, localness, low cost, demand driven, and a normative desire to support the disenfranchised segments of society. However with the change in nature of the three crisis epochs (as outlined in chapter 4), a changed foreign/government aid scenario, breakdowns in the aid chain, and security infused humanitarian situation, the structure of NGOs evolved oftentimes perplexing evaluating audiences.

Case NGOs started off in wake of resource availability for such organizations while the orthodox development NGOs, still negligible in the study region, were not in sight during this while. A change in institutional logics at the HDF level post 2013 pushed NGOs to buttress their developmental focus and advocacy capabilities and vouching for projects in governance, environment, capacity building and policy research. With little capacities and technologies to show that case NGOs were capable of delivering the ‘development’ challenge, evaluating audiences started questioning their existence. This resulted in increased regulatory mechanism to check further growth of NGOs. Turning towards the newer focus on developmental and advocacy has brought down further institutional constraints for NGOs, despite best efforts by case NGOs to remain relevant in HDF.

It is then easy to understand that government extended a somewhat supportive postures to NGOs in the first two crises that later turned skepticism when NGOs started to move into developmental and more critically political advocacy roles shown in figure 16. Case analysis show that as long NGOs supported the ‘temporary’ and ‘complementary’ services delivery in humanitarian crisis they were somewhat supported, but when the focus of NGOs turn towards long-term development projects and/or advocacy, the government stance changes to tacit or overt antagonism.

Figure -Government posture towards NGOs

Support tacit support Neutrality tacit hostility Hostility

Government Posture towards NGOs

Phase 1 (relief focus) Phase 1 &2 (relief & dev focus) Phase 3 (dev & advocacy focus)

Source: Field data and based on ([Rashid, 2011](#_ENREF_165))

NGOs would do well to consider newer institutional constraints as a form of temporary measures. That a shift in focus of HDF is of cosmic proportions, it is argued that this is a ‘temporal’ phenomenon and is fathomable if NGOs moved along proactively.

The first theoretical insight thus is stated in terms of ‘temporality’ in conceptualizing ‘legitimacy’. A primary requisite in larger stocks, loss or decrease of legitimacies are highly logics specific and actor’s agency may play a part in contextualizing the (il)legitimacy base to respond accordingly. Even though case NGOs tried to develop necessary legitimacies to remain relevant, the cognitive role assigned to such entities as limited to humanitarian work served as a constraint for these NGOs to move forward. Furthermore, this temporal breakdown of legitimacies may give way to field-wide acceptance of NGOs’ news missions as ‘development’ and ‘advocacy’ organizations once the norms associated with humanitarianism completely gives way to developmentalism, keeping other things constant.

Case NGOs steadily seem to have imbibed this understanding and believe that once the developmental ethos set in, they will be able to get to better organizational standings within the field. This temporal understanding of ‘legitimacy’ construct is critical for organizations to go about their business as routine but at the same time mend legitimacies at the foundational logic level. Organizations that are challenged at the societal and State level (NGOs in our case), lowered or higher legitimacies would not matter in the end analysis. They have to attend to the strongest of institutional demands of society and field foremost.

### 5.5.2 Legitimacy fatigue and institutional decoupling

Despite efforts by case NGOs, entities within the HDF (particularly the powerful military) pushed for more institutional constraints to further alienate NGOs. This thesis in major argues that despite best efforts, managing dominant actors in the HDF has caused promising NGOs to compromise on their main objectives of serving the disenfranchised and moving on to evolve into sustainable organizations. Rather too much focus on maintaining and building legitimacies has actually obstructed NGOs from growing confident about their missions and growing organically to represent their constituents.

NGOs have endured a long struggle in proving their capacities and sustaining institutional disdain on daily basis from various evaluators. From donors to government to security apparatus and citizenry, everyone has something negative to offer on their roles. Given the nature of their work, it is a shame that the whole NGO sector is maligned for the bad work of a few organizations. It is really hard to get to a status of repute in nonprofit world and a small mistake can ruin years of hard work. Field interaction with NGOs show that they indulge in excessive legitimacy-seeking behaviors which has taken a toll on their self-belief and effectiveness. Literature too suggest that organizational effectiveness may improve with optimal accountability challenges, but a singular focus on proving legitimacy may have the opposite effect ([Sonpar et al., 2010](#_ENREF_191)) as is evident from cases in this study.

The positive spinoff, however, of increased scrutiny of NGOs has led them to forge alliances at the meso level with one another and even with INGOs who too are increasingly implicated in transparency issues nationally. Literature within NIT suggests that organizations faced with institutional multiplicity respond with a range of measures including contestation and resistance. It is becoming clearer that NGOs have started presenting a unified stance on their willful ouster from HDF and questioning of their mandates as anti-State, anti-Islam, anti-society, profit-oriented, and pro-elite. They have started contesting the general narrative and attribute their lower acceptability to the complexity of HDF itself and to the wider societal and contextual occurrences. A vehement stance at the meso level is that the aid chain itself is plagued with malevolence with no objective yardsticks to measure which segment is more effective. Case NGOs along with other local partners have put forth a proposal to the NHN to develop common matrices for success in NGOs programing independently. This shows that NGOs are tired of the various derogatory labels placed on them.

Given the centrality of organizational legitimacy as a necessary resource for NGOs, it becomes a tiring effort for these organizations to prove their worth at all times. This is because of the diversity of NGOs audiences, increasing relevance of their services, referent groups, salience of stakeholders, or who should these NGOs emulate. Is it the government, which is already too bureaucratic to be followed, or the private sector firm model? Or do NGOs try to emulate the donors or INGOs who do not have local binding and living in a different reality altogether? This is an open research agenda for sociological inquiry as NGOs legitimacies “lies in the symbolism they carry and the larger aspirations they embody” ([Ossewaarde et al., 2008](#_ENREF_152)).

Another way of dealing with the burden of proving legitimacies is for NGOs to decouple (or loosely couple) their operations and structure from institutional requirements. This is observable at several levels. For example, as stated earlier in the chapter, NGOs have names that reflect both the humanitarian and development logics together. These names are usually a collection of three or four key words including welfare, development, citizens, empowerment, protection, sustainability, governance, awareness, accountability and so on. The mission statements too are chalked out at broader level of society including democratization, peace building, skills enhancement, quality of life, equity, and poverty alleviation. This reflects an outward orientation towards ideal type services delivery notions. This is however accompanied by weaker focus on how efficiently are services produced and delivered. ‘Legitimacy fatigue’ thus may be symptomatic of institutional decoupling rather than a consequence of it.

Similarly the decoupling of NGOs from their institutional environments seems to be an outcome of organizational learning more than as a response to the complex institutional environment ([Cruz et al., 2009](#_ENREF_61); [Fiss & Zajac, 2006](#_ENREF_88)). The introduction of humanitarian logic post 2001 initially posed similar concerns to community-based organizations (CBOs) that wanted then to turn into humanitarian NGOs that they ultimately became. With the passage of time, they evolved into successful local humanitarian NGOs, through employing the classic strategy of means-end decoupling. This include having names and missions depicting humanitarian values, maintaining multiple registrations with humanitarian bodies, creating an acceptable professional outlook, and above all perfecting their roles with lesser proven credentials.

Now though the shift has moved on from how the organizations produce their services (efficiency) to what are the services themselves- effectiveness ([Cruz et al., 2009, p. 96](#_ENREF_61)). The former is case of institutional decoupling while the later may be termed as loose coupling. While it was easier to deal with efficiency concerns at the organizational boundary levels, the fight to justify that organizations are producing products that must be produced by such organizations is hard to maintain. Thus the legitimacy fatigue seems symptomatic of loose coupling with institutional requirements. Summarily then, legitimacy fatigue of organizations may not lead to outright institutional decoupling, but to ‘loose coupling’, which in itself is a legitimacy building strategy.

### 5.5.3 shaping an entrepreneurial Identity & Hybridization of NGO structures

Literature in neo-institutional theory is suggestive of the fact that identity has a foundational connection with a change in institutional logics, where organizations skillfully manipulate the inherent contradictions in logics to further their self interest ([Glynn & Abzug, 2002](#_ENREF_99); [Lok, 2010](#_ENREF_134); [Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005](#_ENREF_197); [Thornton & Ocasio, 2008](#_ENREF_200)). While NGOs post 9/11 embraced a ‘humanitarian’ logic to their work, the recent shift towards a ‘developmental’ and ‘peace-building’ logics has forced NGOs structures to respond to the changing nature of institutions. This has spurned the NGOs into a form of ‘organizational settlement’ to accommodate the multiple logics ingrained in the HDF. It means a specific configuration of structural and cognitive elements to accommodate institutional complexity and steering organizations to relative stability ([Schildt & Perkmann, 2016](#_ENREF_176)). A clear manifestation of the kind of organizational settlement may be categorized as ‘hybridization’ that is visible in case NGOs grapping with multiple logics ingrained in HDF.

Literature on organizational identity informs that ‘hybridization’ itself is legitimacy building strategy to accommodate multiple and conflicting logics by means of, for example, micro-practices within organizations ([Battilana & Dorado, 2010](#_ENREF_21)). The introduction of specialized units within the case NGOs dealing separately or in combination with relief and developmental/advocacy requirements is one such example. Case B believes that the shift is temporary as disasters are not over by any stretch of imagination. While case NGOs generally have moved on from the relief ‘logic’, disasters can happen any day in this region and it is well known that government still doesn’t have the capacity to handle these alone. That is why NGOs retain a focus on emergencies even though their structures are bracing up for developmental domain. This suggests that NGOs are settling into organizations embedded in both logics simultaneously that lead to further complexity in understanding their structures.

But the most interesting theoretical insight this thesis offers is that logics multiplicity may change organizations for better. Though still barely visible, NGOs are moving out of passive ‘iron cage’ of aid chain intermediaries into active entrepreneurial outfits. NGOs identities have changed in fundamental ways in the course of three crisis and they now willfully resemble entrepreneurial organizations that intend to stay and engage with the new field realities. If one manifestation of an entrepreneurial outfit is ‘continued survival’ in face of adversity, NGOs in their current manifestation fits these criteria. Faced with logic multiplicity that initially caused confusion, NGOs show considerable agency in formulating structures that play to both humanitarian and developmental logics. Combining both logics to the best of their abilities, these NGOs are showing an entrepreneurial side of their being. This is clear from alliance buildings with the three Ms and government (chapter 4) but also there is increased incidence of NGOs partnerships with for-profit corporations for sustainability purposes.

At the other extreme, the hybrid structures are also visible in the complementary operations that NGOs indulge in such as running business enterprise alongside core NGO work. Examples include research consulting outfits, education coaching academies, skill development centers and transportation services. This business like approach seemed to suggest that the original humanitarian logic has gone to the background and NGOs are innovating into hybrid roles to ensure their sustainability as required by ‘developmental’ logics. How successfully this is being done without jeopardizing the core NGO missions is, however, yet to be known.

### 5.5.4 NGOs as institutional entrepreneurs

The last theoretical insight is related to the third one but on a slightly different note. It is evidently clear that NGOs have to change considerably not in the direction of institutional change but to change the institution of humanitarianism and development itself. This sentiment has been echoed during interviews with well-connected, educated, and resourceful NGO professionals. They believe that change has to come from the NGO front to correct the issues inhibiting the field of humanitarian development alluding to institutional roles from champions within the sector. This is a fertile are in mainstream entrepreneurial scholarship.

Institutional entrepreneurship is the phenomenon of trying to solve the challenge of institutional change by organized actors having adequate resources while institutional entrepreneurs are actors who can ‘disembed themselves from existing institutional arrangements to create new institutions’ or change existing ones ([Leca & Naccache, 2006](#_ENREF_131))

.

In transition times where governments are withholding their limited support and international resources drying up soon, the NGO sector in the region has to undergo a structural change. In words of [Fowler (2000, p. 637)](#_ENREF_90), NGOs will have to relinquish their role as an intermediary in the declining aid system and build a new scheme of interaction with upward and downward constituents. Such a system has fostered the dependency ailment and has led to financial malpractices on global. A rethinking of the whole nature of NGOs and development itself, not premised on aid, may be required if we were to legitimize the existence of NGOs and the entire humanitarian development chain.

There are consistent calls for Nonprofits to reinvent themselves in face of wider global forces where social entrepreneurship is defining what it is that the nonprofits sector should do. Traditional nonprofits across the world need to conceive of appropriate niche strategies that position them productively between government, business, and community interest ([Dennis R. Young, 2003](#_ENREF_222)). Many of today’s leading social entrepreneurs have created organizations that are neither businesses nor charities, but rather hybrid entities that generate revenue in pursuit of social goals. The desire to blend purpose with profit has nothing wrong with it and may prove to be the best template to follow in circumstances where humanitarian crisis are a recurrent phenomenon.

There is thus a need to look at NGOs from the perspective of entrepreneurial theories. Non profit entrepreneurs are 'professionals', "believers', 'searchers'; 'conservers', 'power seekers', 'controllers', 'players', and several others suggesting that certain personality typologies would be attracted to the nonprofit enterprises anyways ([Badelt, 1997, p. 165](#_ENREF_16)). Entrepreneurship theories and their application to nonprofits have been emerging lines of reasoning, although exact borderlines between theoretical concepts are not easy to define. This line of reasoning to explain organizational behavior in nonprofits can bring greater insights into explaining larger institutional shifts and their impacts on organizational structures. Application of entrepreneurship theories may hold the keys to revealing and comprehending the driving forces and underlying character of nonprofit organizations ([Andersson & Self, 2015](#_ENREF_7)). Instead of the usual outcome based evaluation of the nonprofit sector, this will open up avenues to indulge in nonprofit behavior that presents a gamut of processes between initiation and outcome, particularly in complex institutional environments.

## 5.6- Emergence of the newer Humanitarian Development framework

The last piece of discussion is with regards to the evolving humanitarian development framework to answer objective 3.1, which is “to examine ‘emergence’ of the newer humanitarian development framework and NGOs roles therein”.

The discussion has to begin with the conceptual dichotomy between humanitarian relief environments and development environments and why the two must be treated on a continuum to successfully achieve better outcomes. Also a brief case is made on the need for centralizing NGOs in the new framework.

### 5.6.1 A crisis of developmentalism

Crisis events since 9/11 relegated the ‘developmental’ agenda to the background and donors together with GoP started aligning their focus on fighting emergencies on ad-hoc basis. This had a knock on effect on indigenous NGOs whose understanding of ‘development’ remained limited to an emergency and relief perspective. Natural disasters followed up armed conflict and with huge population displacement, the development focus was relegated to the background giving way to firefighting crisis scenarios. A good indicator of this lost focus is the Country’s failing to achieve any of the Millennium Development goals by 2015.

One of the fatal incongruence has been the shortsightedness of the so-called ‘establishment’ that in the region’s context means the higher echelons of power shared by the military top brass and government bureaucracy. The political nature of aid that came to the country post 9/11 has left its mark on every facet of the society including its economy that remained reliant on such aid. Society at large also got afflicted with strains of aid and developed into a place reliant on renter economy than participating in productive economic exchanges. Local politics got affected too as donors’ prescriptions in the shape of ill thought-out and temporary reforms transmitted corruption to the lowest levels of governance. Multiple studies suggest that aid has largely been counter-productive to the development goals and instead have deteriorated development outcomes ([Andrabi & Das, 2010](#_ENREF_8); [Asgary et al., 2012](#_ENREF_11); [Ibrahim, 2009](#_ENREF_117); [Nasir et al., 2012](#_ENREF_148); [Wilder, 2010](#_ENREF_217)).

A related cause of underdevelopment of the region is the complex channels through which development money from donors move. The development budgetary process and public financial management system in the country are weak and there are noted discrepancies in published and actual developmental budgets ([GoP, 2009](#_ENREF_101)). There are instances that donor’s money is re-appropriated for political causes without any accountability of the public sector.

Similarly political instability since 2001 ensured that reforms agenda presented by the three successive governments (one military, two democratic) are at odds with each other. While combating terrorism, overcoming energy crisis, and reforming governance remained on the agenda of all governments, there is little to show for success, as all of these priorities were tied to aid and loans. The study period saw, for the first time, powers being delegated from the federal government to provinces in the form of NFC (National Finance Commission) awards. Donors spend years building capacities at the federal level, for example, to improve fiduciary aspects to account for developmental spending. Now there is a gigantic task for the development community to work with provincial bureaucracies where huge reforms are required. The challenge does not end there as with the devolution further to district levels even require bigger efforts.

The central issue has been the consistent proportional increase in donor allocations to relief domain than mainstream development over the course of past fifteen years, a trend that is reversing post 2015. The study region saw multimillion-dollar programs in emergency education, emergency health, and emergency livelihoods rather than a sustainable developmental approach with embedded relief priorities. Ad-hoc relief programs still override the long-term development focus of aid. That emergency aid has been the antithesis of development can be established from the occurrences in the region where disparities have widened between the have’s and have not’s. NGOs have reaped considerable gains in the spoils of such undocumented and unaccountable aid, thereby rightly earning the label of commercial ‘enterprises’ having lower acceptability.

Another critical issue that surfaced from discussions with case NGOs and interviews at field level is an utter lack of distinction between crisis events. Responses to natural disasters and protracted armed insurgency were taken together as one. This has both policy and practice implications.

At policy level the regional government’s strategy as outlined in PCNA 2010 and integrated development strategies (2008-13 and 2014-18) both implicitly mention all kinds of crisis as monolith. While flooding is almost an yearly feature, the fact that it is not distinguished from the protracted conflict going on in the region has resulted in skewed priorities for the region’s provincial government. The nature of transient polices framed for tourism development, mining, and agriculture are all attentive to a crisis scenario than to a forward-looking growth outlook.

At a practice level, this understanding has spilled over into donors strategies who seems aware of differentiating between conflict and natural disasters, yet they toe the government line as embodied in the government policies and strategies. Post 2011, the PDMA has taken the coordination role between donors, UN agencies, INGOs, district governments, and NGOs efforts even in routine matters of development. Donors and international agencies find it hard to knock over PDMA on critical development lines and outcomes.

This crisis in developmentalism has further alienated and confused NGOs who finds themselves at fault for the inconsistencies emanating from the wider field environment. However lately they are finding a common ground to be part of the policy making process and making development an indigenously led process. The outcome of their late effort is far from certain though.

### 5.6.2 Emergence of humanitarian-development nexus

The dichotomy between relief and development has long been identified as an artificial division. The establishment of UN department of Humanitarian Affairs (UNDHA) in 1992 with the explicit objective of linking relief and development is a testament to this fact that there have been earnest efforts to synchronize the two at least theoretically (Lindahi, 1996). The UN has conceptualized this dichotomy as relief, rehabilitation, and development continuum. Still other agencies work with the ‘development relief’ phrase to combine the two but practically this could never materialize as evident from experiences in African, South American, and south Asian contexts.

There is another transition step in the relief-development continuum dubbed as ‘rehabilitation’. The logic presented is simple; if relief and rehabilitation can be linked seamlessly, better ‘development’ will result, that in turn reduce need for emergency ‘relief’ planning in future. Similarly better ‘relief’ informed by resilient structure of ‘rehabilitation’ framework will contribute to ‘development’. By extension then a better ‘rehabilitation’ will ease the transition between relief and development (Buchanan‐Smith & Maxwell, 1994).

Studying events since 9/11 onwards, there seems to be a complete negligence in putting forth a ‘forward looking’ rehabilitation framework. This is evident from the programs pursued by international partners in the study region. Mr. Sohail Akram, a World Bank consultant on developing relief programs, expressed this breakdown from the following excerpt.

“The World Bank designed its multi-donors trust fund on the model of Bosina and Herzegovina post war framework. It meant rehabilitation of enterprises, putting back physical infrastructure, and sub-regional development programs. In all the programs there is criminal lack of foresight that post-crisis long-term development framework requires. These programs were randomly designed with incessant money available rather than with the idea that these can turn into long-term sustainable initiatives”.

These programs go a long way in deciding how entities within the HDF accord meaning to humanitarianism and development. That these priorities permeated through the strategies employed by government, aid agencies, INGOs, and NGOs alike speaks volumes about the lack of a strategic foresight of aid leaders in the country.

While the channels of funding for normal developmental programs is a straight forward issue, too often donors and host governments have failed to bridge this division in face of ever increasing calamities in developing countries. Prioritizing relief activities and planning for it in isolation has induced long-term dependencies for countries under crisis and have instead increased vulnerabilities. This has created parallel structures of relief activities increasing the already complex institutional set up in the study region. An example narrated by assistant director, PDMA shows how parallel structures are creating confusion.

“The DFID in the aftermath of 2011 floods started cash transfers to affectees under the PDMA’s approved ‘rapid response plan’. However DFID wanted transparency and pushed the government to introduce electronic mechanisms for cash transfers and put in a mechanism of ‘watan’ debit cards. We already had ‘Benazir’ cards for transfers to households living below poverty lines and there was no need to introduce a new system. Now most affeectees who had the Benazir card also started having ‘watan’ cards”.

The emerging thinking in international development agencies and INGOs in Pakistan is one of linking the two. This sentiment was echoed in a ‘validation’ interview with program director at Action Against Hunger, particularly with regards to the issue of food security;

“Poor people are nutrient deficient in both peace and crisis periods, so its ironic to plan differently. What we did in the past eight years was exclusively on emergency basis and what is required now is to have sustainable programing that can achieve food security for the poor in stable times so that when a calamity hit, they are better prepared to cope with it”

For the people on ground there is lesser difference between relief and development dichotomy anyways. This dichotomy has gotten under the skin of many INGOs and national NGOs who started operations in wake of war on terror and they are finding their mandates challenged.

A 2017 call for proposal by the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) which represents 63 INGOs delivering humanitarian assistance and development projects in Pakistan is particularly addressing this issue. The call has the following objective;

“To understand the changing donor landscape in the context of the Humanitarian Development Nexus (HDN) in Pakistan and a) provide an understanding of its impact on INGOs’ current business models b) provide recommendations for potential new ways of working and c) build a narrative to support INGOs’ advocacy with donors and other key stakeholders”.

What is clear is the changing focus of humanitarian action towards more sustainable, cost effective, and efficient model. This is only possible if relief programs are designed to counter the effects of disasters as well as mitigating future crisis. Such model would be incomplete without the social capital that local organized efforts could bring. This means streamlining the involvement of local NGOs who over the past fifteen years have learned the jargons of development and know field realities. Marginalizing these organizations would mean a defective strategy going forward in meeting the entrenched underdevelopment challenge of the region.

## 5.7 Conclusion

In the initial part of this chapter, a discussion on the structure of how the identified mechanisms work was presented. It was established that logics multiplicity is at the heart of decreasing NGOs legitimacy in the region. Eight areas of logics incongruence between humanitarian and development environments were discussed. Thereafter legitimacy building strategies of NGOs were presented as three overlapping but discrete categories to answer research objective 2.1. These strategies in part were presented as a response to institutional multiplicity and partly attributed to the dynamism of NGOs as learning organizations. Then onwards four theoretical insights were presented including a) legitimacy as a temporal phenomenon, b) legitimacy fatigue of NGOs, c) legitimacy crisis as responsible for hybridization of NGO structures, and d) hint at a possible role for NGOs as institutional entrepreneurs.

To answer objective 3.1, a discussion is held on the dichotomy between relief (humanitarian) and development environments. It is established that the artificial division between the two environments mean a faulty development framework for the region, that needs immediate modifications. NGOs roles need to be centralized if the government wants sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and managing disaster successfully in the region.

# Chapter 6- Conclusions

## 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present conclusions of the study by means of revisiting the study objectives. It builds on discussions in the preceding chapters and summarizes results from the current research. First up, the three research questions are lined up with summative summaries of findings. Then the research contributions are discussed and avenues for future research identified. Finally limitations of the study are outlined.

## 6.2 Revisiting Research Questions

The overall aim of the study was to retrospectively identify mechanisms responsible for decreasing NGOs’ legitimacies in the crisis affected Northwest region of Pakistan. The study addressed this aim through the following research questions:

RQ1- . Why do NGOs face legitimacy crisis in the humanitarian development field in Pakistan?

RQ2- How do NGOs experience and respond to multiple institutional logics?

RQ3- What does decreasing NGOs’ legitimacies mean for the humanitarian-development framework of the region?

To address the questions above, critical realism was chosen as research paradigm (chapter 3) because it allows abduction of reasoning back in time about a happening- the incidence of decreasing legitimacy of NGOs and consequent alienation within the HDF. In the following each question is separately addressed along with associated objectives.

### 6.2.1 First Research question

Why do NGOs face legitimacy crisis in the humanitarian development field in Pakistan (regions of KP & FATA)? To answer the question, two objectives were posed as follows;

RO-1.1: To empirically assess *events* and *entities* that explain the *outcome* of decreased NGOs’ legitimacies.

Chapter 4 provided evidence that entities within the region’s HDF and their nature of interaction with NGOs exude antagonistic behavior. The interaction of NGOs with key entities within the HDF suggested that NGOs do face a sense of alienation and outright rejection within the field. Government, one of the key entities regulating the HDF believes that NGOs are culture-producing ineffective entities that are only handy in crisis situations to provide necessary relief and rehabilitation services. However owing to multiple reasons, these NGOs are not suitable to be part of long-term development partnerships. Whatever value these NGOs have subsides as the crisis situation starts to calm up. All three tiers of government (federal, provincial and district/local) do not readily approve of NGOs role as a pressure group for advocating rights in post crisis contexts. Particularly the district governments consider NGOs as predatory and competitors for funds for local development.

Similarly international development agencies and INGOs exhibit mixed reactions to NGOs. While it is indeed a look good exercise to partner with NGOs than with government, for the sake of enhancing their own legitimacies, aid agencies too have increasingly looked averse to work with local NGOs in post-crisis contexts. With limited ability to directly monitor the fund’s utility, it becomes cumbersome for aid agencies to quantify their value for money. These agencies generally believe that NGOs have limited capacities and once awarded projects, it becomes impossible to have productive follow ups. Also INGOs fear that local NGOs do not have sufficient clout to get the necessary Non Objection Certificates required by military to carry out timely execution of project activities. Similarly since INGOs themselves are increasingly under the radar (section 4.3.2), they feel lesser motivated to work with NGOs any longer. The pretext usually employed by aid agencies and INGOs is that local NGOs lack necessary capacity and representation of the demands of its beneficiaries.

The most important interaction of NGOs however is increasingly with the Country’s security apparatus both in humanitarian crisis and post-crises phases. By virtue of security challenges in the region, the military has assumed far greater role than their mandates in managing crisis environments and regular development initiatives. Humanitarian and development funds somehow end up in military hands who have initiated a formal development wing that caters for activities other than maintaining law and order. Most of the military personnel in the region come from other parts of Pakistan with little knowledge of local needs and no language skills to interact with locals. They reportedly award community infrastructure contracts to outsiders with no pre-qualifications, advertisements, or procedures. NGOs believe their mandates are curtailed by military to the extent that they cannot operate even when donors/government award them contracts. The military reportedly use different tactics to keep NGOs at bay including coercion, non-issuances of NoCs, stopping NGO personnel on the pretext of security reasons, or not assigning any reason whatsoever. The pretext usually employed by military agencies is that NGOs work on foreign funds and may be involved in espionage and sabotage activities. They are anti-state and needs to be curtailed.

Last but not the least faith-based civil society organizations have their own axe to grind against NGOs. They openly condemn NGOs working with foreign funds and suggest that these organizations are working on foreign agenda to harm local culture and religion. Such faith-based organizations have ready acceptability locally for different reasons and their message resonates well with locals. This group poses a potent challenge for continued NGOs existence in their current forms and manifestations.

The other part of objective 1.1 was to document events that suggest decreasing tolerance towards continued role of NGOs in the HDF. These events are detailed in chapter 4 including strict newer regulations that makes it harder for NGOs to partner with international donor agencies and INGOs. The paper trail required even for short-term projects takes months to complete and work as disincentive for case NGOs. Similarly obtaining NoCs for each and every work package from the powerful military and its government counterpart (PDMA) requires substantial effort. NGOs complained of the lapses of fund by the time NoCs arrive. Other kinds of barriers towards NGOs work are also witnessed including State Bank’s directive not to open accounts for new NGOs unless a plethora of formalities are met beforehand. Security agencies and government officials have a freehand to investigate any aspect of NGOs work as and when they like. The situation was further exacerbated by brazen attacks on NGOs’ offices, vehicles, and personnel on regular basis post 2008. Key local NGOs have to relocate to safer places in the capital city and have left the study region. The most threatening of all events is the direct killing of workers that spiked in 2012-13. In some rural districts, women working for NGOs were publicly shamed and forcibly stopped.

It is evident from discussions in chapter 4 that NGOs’ legitimacy crisis are rooted in their sources of funding, conception of development as extension of western values, perpetuation of opaque and corrupt practices in HDF, and lesser positive impacts. These sources of legitimacy crisis are observable at the actual level. This has resulted in the outcome of NGOs being pushed to the outer boundaries of the evolving humanitarian development field unless these entities exert institutional pressure to break their way in again.

Overall chapter 4 established that all entities at the field level have a general disdain of NGOs on one pretext or another which leads us to the second objective of research question 1 posed as;

Objective 1.2: To retroduce the incidence of decreased NGOs legitimacies by identifying plausible *mechanisms* and their *structures*

Critical realist methodology does not stop at the level of events but explains what mechanism makes events discernable ([Bygstad & Munkvold, 2011](#_ENREF_48)). It is to say that if a certain structure exists, then it must posses’ such and such mechanisms and tendencies. The latter part of chapter 4 analysed three key mechanisms by way of abduction that explains the outcome of NGOs decreased legitimacies within the HDF. The first mechanism identified is the general belief that NGOs work against national interest. The structure of this mechanism works at deeper cognitive levels so that everything else becomes secondary. Security agencies, state government, police, and citizenry generally gets a licence to do whatever they wish with entitles that work against the State. So hard it is to dispel this notion that it leads to observable ‘fatigue’ amongst NGOs.

The second key mechanism identified is the particular understanding of evaluating audiences in the HDF is that NGOs exhibit increased commercial tendencies and serving powerful entities rather than disenfranchised populations against their mandated non-profit nature. Entities within the HDF believe that the NGO market became over-crowded post 9/11 not because everyone wanted to support crisis situations but to get benefit from the resource abundance in the field. The introduction of strict regulatory measures (event) perhaps was to discourage this trend. Also with the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan and war on terror coming to its inconclusive end at the start of Trump era, there is a rush amongst NGOs to capture as much rehabilitation contracts as possible. In a scenario of dried up aid environment, NGOs have shown themselves to be competing for funding like commercial entities. NGOs are also seen as entities maintaining the status quo for working in favour of powerful than the disenfranchised populations. This has put off bigger constituency that supported NGOs previously.

A third mechanisms identified is rooted in the cognitive dissonance of populations with NGOs involved in corrupt practices benefiting their owners/elites rather than populations at large, who they claim to represent. The blatant opacity with regards to NGOs operations has led to charges that these organizations are fueling corrupt practices. This perception get credence from the posh offices, four wheel high-end vehicles, appearance of NGO executives in prominent social gatherings, and the general upward trends in living standards of those associated with NGOs in key positions.

As for the structure of how these mechanisms manifest, it is shown in the discussion chapter (chapter 5) that norms within the HDF have started to move away from focus on humanitarian services delivery towards long-term development and peace building. The logics have become plural and oftentimes contradictory creating confusion for all entities within the field but particularly for NGOs which is discussed in the second research question as follows.

### 6.2.2 Second Research question

RQ2 -How do NGOs experience and respond to multiple institutional logics?

This question is being further operationalized as objective 2.1 stating; “to examine the *context* of legitimacy crisis and how case NGOs experience institutional multiplicity as reflected in their *strategies*”.

Institutional change at the fundamental level is the interplay of logics in an organizational field as logics provide the underlying principles for a field (Scott 2008; Thornton and Ocasio, 199; Friedland and Alford, 1991; Reay and Hinnings, 2009). Chapter 5 first introduced the sources of change in institutional logics as the field started shifting from humanitarian ethos to developmental norms. Nine key sources of changes in logics were identified including the change in vision, mission, technologies, and locus of HDF. These changes in macro institutional environment produced field-wide implications for entities within the HDF. While some of the coercive elements of the institutions were readily accepted by NGOs, the rest were either contested or partially adopted or altogether ignored as discussed under strategic legitimacy building strategies of NGOs in section 5.3.

Sensing shrinking institutional space to operate, case NGOs exhibit forward looking tendencies as evident from their legitimacy building strategies to remain relevant in the changed institutional environment. These legitimacy-building strategies are clubbed into three distinct yet overlapping categories of normative, cognitive and output legitimacy domains. In line with NIT, the diverse strategies employed by NGOs show incidence of mimicry, isomorphism, decoupling, and loose coupling suggesting that NGOs agency meaningfully interact with institutional forces to result in compliance, contradiction, contestation, and outright rejection of various demands.

The agency-structure interaction has varying impacts on NGOs structures as humanitarian logics are steadily giving way to ascendency of developmental logics. An organization has to satisfy multiple and oftentimes unrelated institutional demands over its life to grow which is the only way for organizations to appeal to resource providers ([G. Fisher, Kotha, & Lahiri, 2015](#_ENREF_86)). However this induces complexity in organizational structures as old identities are molded to accommodate newer realities enforced by evaluating audiences (Kraatz & Block, 2008). By way of theoretical contributions, the thesis put forth four theoretical insights as NGOs grapple with sources of change in institutional environments arising out of multiple logics.

One is the clear understanding that NGOs exhibited to understand in terms of ‘temporality’ of legitimacy crisis. NGOs while stressed with sources of uncertainty in the institutional environment were convinced that they can wither the storm and may be able to regain their lost space in HDF. That legitimacy crisis is not a permanent phenomenon and one way or the other they would face similar situations in future.

Second is the ensuing ‘legitimacy’ fatigue that NGOs suffered due to prolonged and existential threat to their survival from both field and societal levels. This insight in a sense bolsters the existing thinking in legitimacy literature that too much focus on legitimating organizational practices leads to stagnancy and may prove organizations to be ineffective in the long run ([Glynn & Abzug, 2002](#_ENREF_99)).

Thirdly a positive angle of logics multiplicity for organizational change is presented. Organizations when challenged on the fundamental levels of identity are forced to rethink their structures. NGOs as mission based organizations face multiple challenges from local culture, religion, state and field institutions. A fundamental shift in thinking about humanitarianism and development is gradually appearing and may lead NGOs to turn into hybrids that exhibit both social and entrepreneurial outlook. Hybrids are by nature an outcome of multiple logics that incorporate elements from different logics ([Pache & Santos, 2013](#_ENREF_154)).

Lastly a fourth theoretical insight is by way of possible insinuation that NGOs may play the role of institutional entrepreneurs in changing the norms of HDF itself. Alongside changing their own organizational structures, it is worth an effort that now NGOs themselves realize, that a combined front to remove malpractices within the HDF be tackled proactively. That an indigenous civil society based in the norms of both local culture/religion and local realities will be more acceptable to all entities. This however remains a far cry keeping in view the insurmountable challenges that both humanitarian and development fronts face currently.

Case NGOs are increasingly showing signs of maturity by adopting, meshing, and contesting various forms of legitimacy challenges as is shown by key organizational structures such as hiring practices, monitoring and communication strategies, building alliances with established segments of the society, proactive disclosures of information, promoting participation, and professionalism.

### 6.2.3 Third Research question

RQ3- What does decreasing NGOs’ legitimacies mean for the humanitarian-development framework of the region?

This question is addressed through the associated objective stated as “to examine ‘emergence’ of the newer humanitarian development framework and NGOs roles therein.”

The last section of chapter 5 addresses this question by going back to the basics of humanitarianism and development debate. The section tries to redraw the dichotomy between humanitarian and development domains that has been a cause of concern for international development efforts for the past three decades ([Buchanan-Smith & Fabbri, 2008](#_ENREF_45)). This artificial dichotomy is both a cause and consequence of repeated failures of international development community to oversee successful management of crisis and achieve routine development outcomes. The discussion makes a policy case for taking both domains on a continuum and not to deal with each one as a separate piece, if both are to be achieved.

There is a need for government and indigenous civil society to lead in the ‘in between’ phase of rehabilitation (between relief & development) instead of leaving it to donor’s dictates who have little contextual understanding of drivers of crisis. This is also where NGOs can be of best value in case of the study region. Rather than disenfranchising them, it will be wise perhaps to centralize these local organizations. Relief efforts will only translate into sustainable development, if the rehabilitation phase enshrine the values of sustainability and is not left unattended. NGOs by virtue of their skills built in relief phases have leverage to be leaders in rehabilitation and subsequently able partners in development phases. There too is a strong case of building capacities of NGOs so that the already expansive State can concentrate on larger issues of national security and economic development.

More critically, if left unattended, the space vacated by NGOs may very well be utilized by uncivil actors in the form of religious zealots and their welfare outfits as has been seen in repeated crisis epochs in the region. This has happened before in 2007 in case of Swat region and policy makers may be well advised to have NGOs as buffers in the short run and able partners in the long run.

## 6.3 Contributions of the study

This thesis contributes to knowledge in a number of ways as it deals with intricacies of third sector in a developing country’s context and its institutional space in crisis management and development. The field of humanitarian support is becoming central in face of protracted conflicts in large parts of the world and the resultant large-scale population displacement internationally. It is high time that these problems are contained within the boundaries rather than proliferating into global challenges as has been recently seen throughout Europe. The thesis proposes that humanitarian situations should not be dealt in isolation but in an engaged way on the humanitarian-development continuum. Policy makers in the study region would be well advised to tackle humanitarian situations not as a onetime isolated affair but aligning crisis prevention in its medium to long-term development frameworks. This would be better done if segments of the civil society, particularly grassroots organizations, are seamlessly embedded in humanitarian response and routine development frameworks. Key contributions of the study are presented below.

Firstly, at practice level, much of the existing knowledge in humanitarian development scholarship is top down and represents the point of view of aid agencies or donors ([Elbers, 2012](#_ENREF_83)). This knowledge while attentive to the roles of local NGOs in services delivery totally obscures the limitations of how smaller organizations implement the agendas developed by donors with little participation on their part. A bottom up explanation of how various norms are institutionalized at field level requires more detailed description of small grassroots NGOs and how they experience institutional prescriptions, as they are the critical conduit between government/donors and citizenry. This study contributes to better understanding of these small NGOs not only from a legitimacy liability point of view but focuses on the latent potential of such organizations who could become a bulwark against militancy and harbingers of positive change in regions engulfed with crisis and militancy.

Secondly, on both policy and practice level, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) makes ‘localization’ of attaining development goals a priority. This is where the relevance of legal grassroots organizations such as NGOs are critical as district governments and local administration in under-developed world do not have the capacity, willingness, or incentive to engage meaningfully in achievement of these goals. The region has seen the gap left by dysfunctional state institutions ably utilized by militant outfits that find deeper roots in communities. These groups have more representational legitimacy than the NGOs, as established from discussions in chapter 4. This is a critical point where alienation of NGOs may result in the gap being filled up by ‘un-civil’ groups. There has already been substantial effort in harnessing the NGO sector and that effort now needs consolidation. The capacity of NGOs is low partly because of their own doing. But more importantly NGOs believe in the larger institutions of humanitarianism and development. The emerging humanitarian development nexus is hugely influenced by attainment of SDGs and it will require partnerships at local levels to be successful. There is no dearth of entrepreneurial and altruistic individuals who will find it satisfying and economically viable enterprise.

Thirdly, by locating the study’s major thrust into the concept of legitimacy and its empirical operationalization is novel in the field of humanitarian development. Pervious studies have focused on accountability and transparency ([Agyemang, Awumbila, Unerman, & O'Dwyer, 2009](#_ENREF_2); [Brakman Reiser & Kelly, 2011](#_ENREF_38)), effectiveness ([Bano, 2008](#_ENREF_19)), participation and representation ([Bebbington, 2005](#_ENREF_27); [Peruzzotti, 2006](#_ENREF_158)), volunteerism ([Chen, Lune, & Queen, 2013](#_ENREF_54)), and sustainability ([Watkins et al., 2012](#_ENREF_213)) issues of NGOs. This thesis has dealt with all these critical challenges at the heart of NGOs literature and at the same time taken the conception of legitimacy out of political and business studies into management of nonprofits. The thesis establishes that while all forms of legitimacy building practices are critical, it is important that nonprofit organizations exude a sense of purpose and heed to the fundamental markers of their identities to be successful.

Lastly, this study presented four theoretical insights that may form the basis of further scholarship in NGOs management (in chapter 5 and section 6.2.2 above) in fragile states contexts.

## 6.4- Limitations of research and possibilities for future research

This study has been conducted only for humanitarian development NGOs that are the predominant form of nonprofit organizations in the study region. The findings, therefore, may not be representative of the whole NGO sector. NGOs were present before 9/11 and there a few notable and well established national NGOs having provincial chapters in the region but those are an exception rather than the norm. Also a few newer NGOs post 2015 have established offices that particularly specialize and deal with development and advocacy roles. Similarly there are smaller community based organizations registered as NGOs but do not maintain proper offices or structures. There are also incubation centers for social enterprises but no pure case of such enterprise were operational at the time of this study. All these mentioned forms of nonprofits do not form the sampling universe for this study.

Also NGOs chosen for this research are not ideally representative of humanitarian or development NGOs working in relatively peaceful areas of Pakistan such as Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. Having said that the three cases chosen otherwise very well represent organizations on humanitarian-developmental-advocacy continuum readily observable in the region. The discussion on Legitimacy crisis and strategies thus pertain only to the type of humanitarian service delivery NGOs that are operating in the study region post 9/11.

It should also be noted that interviewees held with case NGOs in large part were from owners, CEOs, and top managers with a few exception of field workers. Views represented may not be extended to NGOs staff who are hired for limited project term basis or belonging to lower cadres. Similarly, a critical legitimacy evaluator is the general public and direct beneficiary of NGOs programs. Views of public are not directly reported though informal interaction with NGO beneficiaries has taken place as part of researcher’s work on different evaluations of development programs as a consultant. Some of that understanding might have crept into the final analyses.

These limitations open up new avenues for further research on NGOs in under-developed and crisis-prone settings as undoubtedly these entities have potential to alleviate poverty, hunger, promote social justices, and bring lasting peace. Future research may engage with direct and indirect beneficiaries of NGOs programs in a theory-testing positivist paradigm to perhaps devise an index of the extent to which people approve of NGOs effectiveness. This may decrease the misgivings that are generally attributed to NGOs as ineffective entities in providing humanitarian and development services. To add more perspective a comparative study of people’s satisfaction with humanitarian work between government and NGOs may give healthy insights. This study established that INGOs and international development agencies have started shying away from working directly with local NGOs for a variety of reasons. Future work may highlight the discontents of the fractured INGO-NGO relationship. Another fertile area can be qualitative evaluations of NGOs communication and marketing strategies that can counter the legitimacy deficit in eyes of immediate audiences.

Lastly a fresher look at NGOs as entrepreneurial entities may not be out of place. The kind of resilience shown by NGOs in face of multiple challenges testifies to the risk taking attitude and entrepreneurial temperament of owners and managers of NGOs.

# Annexure 1- Interview guide for first phase of interviews

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| logo | | **in-sciences-logo** | This questionnaire is part 1 of the two phases PhD research that are being conducted in KP/FATA. The results and respondent personal information will be kept confidential. | | | S.No |
| **Interview Guide**  ***Mapping humanitarian NGOs field in KP/FATA Pakistan post 9/11*** | | | | | | |
| ***Researchers Information*** | | | | | | |
|  | PhD Researcher: **Javed Iqbal**  Email:[**ji1r11@soton.ac.uk**](mailto:ji1r11@soton.ac.uk)  Supervisors: **Prof. Mine Ozkan Karatas & Dr. Lorraine Warren** | | |  | Thesis Title: **Legitimacy challenges for humanitarian NGOs; KP & FATA** | |
|  | | | |  | | |
| ***Respondents Information*** | | | | | | |
| Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_  Email address/Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Primary Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Designation & Organization name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Sector: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Public, Private, Non-profit)  Place: \_\_\_­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | | | | | | |

Instructions: Respondents may generally refer to the development and humanitarian field as a whole while responding to questions. Please make sure responses are further probed in the specific context of local Humanitarian NGOs

1. **Humanitarian Field in Pakistan & KP**
   1. What is your definition of an NGO? Are local humanitarian NGOs any different than international humanitarian NGOs? And is there any visible difference between general developmental NGOs and humanitarian NGOs?
   2. What constitutes humanitarian action and how you/your organization is implicated in the humanitarian support field in Pakistan generally & KP/FATA in particular?
   3. Is humanitarian action part of your organizational mission or it is the only agenda on the mission? Even if humanitarian support is not part of your organizations routine work, does your organization participate voluntarily in such actions in times of crisis?
   4. Humanitarian action is usually limited in scope and time. In your opinion, what does your organization need to do for round the year operations?
   5. What are the value sets & Norms that distinguish work of local humanitarian organizations from that carried out by public or private sector?

**2. Governance of humanitarian sector & organizations**

2.1. How do you see government regulations on nonprofit sector as whole? Are these regulations required in the first place? What ideal regulations will benefit the delivery of effective humanitarian services in the region?

2.2- How does your organization/humanitarian sector judges the public sector’s management of humanitarian crisis?

2.3- How do you see government’s interaction with the humanitarian NGOs. Please differentiate among the range of responses international, national, and local NGOs.

2.4. What is the harshest part of government regulations on NGOs operations?

2.5. How do you see the emerging coziness of pubic sector to attract bilateral & multilateral donors directly?

2.6 Given a choice do you think humanitarian NGOs would prefer direct funding and operational arrangements with donors than interacting with pubic officials?

2.7- How do you see the government’s role in taking local NGOs into its fold for effective services delivery. Is the role of government that of an enabler, adversary, or one of apathy?

2.8- How does your organization see the role of security agencies? Is the role of military that of an enabler, adversary, or one of apathy?

2.9- What do you think should be the measuring sticks for assessing humanitarian organization’s success? Simply how do you differentiate between good and not so great humanitarian NGOs?

1. **NGOs Accountability**

4.1- what does it mean to be accountable? And what types of accountability requirements NGOs face?

3.2- Does the diversity of NGOs affect the logics of accountability in the region?

3.3- Does organizational complexity (such as Board-CEO relationships, CEO-workers relationship) affect NGOs accountability?

3.4- How does the ‘court of popular opinion’, if at all, affect accountability of your NGO?

3.5- Is your organization part of any humanitarian network/group? Has your organization taken a lead on any aspect of humanitarian work post 2001? With what results?

3.6- Are there any in-sector mechanisms in place to hold NGOs accountable? If yes what are those mechanisms?

3.7- Does your organization care about certifications and accreditations? Does your organization carry any such certification or intends to have one?

**4- Collaboration & capacity with Donors (partners)**

4.1- Define your organization’s relationship with key donors (government, bilateral & multilateral agencies, charities etc.). Please elaborate on the sorts of donors that are easy to work with and those that are hard to get along (e.g.,. in some themes work with government might be easier that NRC & vice versa)

4.2- What is the range of funding requirements with donors (yearly, periodic projects, cyclical)? What requirements are particularly troublesome in your opinion?

4.3- Do you believe donors have no/little understanding of local realities and demand results that are not realistic?

4.4- Once in partnership, how does your organization see the large paper trail between donor and your offices? Do you think your staff is sufficiently trained in responding to donor’ requirements?

4.5- Do you have any leverage to maneuver donors’ requirements where you see merit is following a different course of action than what the donor originally suggests?

4.6- What are the power dynamics between donors and recipient local NGOs? Does the template for development all comes from donors or are the local partner NGOs does have an increasing say in achieving development outcomes?

5- **Society, religion, linguistic**

5.1- Do you think our society is more/less acceptable for NGOs presence in the past 10-12 years?

5.2- Some NGOs have religious connections, other political affiliations, and still other entirely communal. Does our society prefer anyone of them to the other. On what grounds do you think our society form opinion that some organizational forms are better than others?

**6- Dominant institutional logics (***please record exact vocabularies even if they are in Urdu or Pashto for this section***)**

6.1. What is your logic on the increasing participation of NGOs in development and humanitarian work in the region? (e.g., logic of socioeconomic development, logic of universal human rights, logic of self-help, logics of value, logic of lower costs etc)?

6.2. NGO are considered as subcontractors sometimes in humanitarian field. They are supposed to be implementation support for donors’ policy of delivering humanitarian aid in certain sectors/geographic locations. Do you think these NGOs can claim to be independent?

**7- Way forward for NGOs:**

7.1. Do you agree that local NGOs are turning from donor-dependence to some kind of sustainability models or to professional service delivery organizations? Please provide pertinent examples from your work.

7.2. Do you think there are mission creeps amongst local NGOs when funding priorities of government/donors change?

**8. Conclusion & Recommendations:**

8.1. What are the three big challenges facing sustainability of local NGOs generally and humanitarian NGOs in particular?

8.2. If you were to start again with your NGO, what three things are you going to do differently?

8.3. What three steps can the government take to make is easy for NGOs to perform effectively.

**Other comments**: Please feel free to provide your own understanding of humanitarian sector working in the country. This can include a couple of interesting stories, if possible.

# Annexure 2- interview guide for second phase of interviews

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| |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **University of Southampton** | | This questionnaire is part of a research being carried out to understand institutional demands on NGOs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa & FATA | | | S.No | | **Interview Guide (Phase 2)** | | | | | | | ***Researchers Information*** | | | | | | |  | PhD Researcher: **Javed Iqbal**  Email:[**ji1r11@soton.ac.uk**](mailto:ji1r11@soton.ac.uk)  Supervisor:Prof. Mine Ozkan Karatas & Dr. Lorraine Warren | |  | Research Title: ***Legitimacy crisis of humanitarian NGOs in KP/FATA post 9/11*** | | |  | | |  | | | | ***Respondents Information*** | | | | | | | Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_  Email address/Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Designation & Organization name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Position (board, CEO, Middle management/lower management/ Field staff\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Place: \_\_\_­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | | | | | |   **Introduction to the topic & interview:**  The field of Humanitarian development is a growing research area owing to conflict and disaster hotspots globally. Humanitarian environment engages an array of actors and institutions including host governments, local and international relief organizations, private sector, military and other marginal groups, having varied interests, mandates, organizational capacities, and certainly limitations. Of all the actors in the field in KP/FATA, the role of both International Non Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and local Humanitarian Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are increasingly being questioned on various pretexts such as lack of accountability, representation, and low impacts.  I am here to interview you on knowing why there are increasing institutional pressures on NGOs, if at all, the nature of such pressures, and how your organization is coping with institutional antagonism.  The interview is in three parts. Part one tries to capture the increasing incidence of NGOs accountability and identification of various institutional actors that interact with your NGO. Part two explores your organizational strategies to deal with such institutional interaction. Part three is interested in examining how this complexity affects your organizational mission, structure, and working.  **Informed Consent:**  Your responses will be kept confidential unless you agree that I can quote some of your responses directly attributable to your name/organization.  Should I proceed to the questions?  **Part I: Institutional challenges and demands on NGOs**   1. Please identify the critical **institutional actors** that your organization interacts with on regular basis? In order of priority, to which actor does your organization accord the highest importance & why? 2. Why has the number of NGOs increased in recent years in our region? What do you think are **founders’ motivations**? (Altruism, social mission, social position, profits) 3. How would you categorize these new NGOs? (Emergency service delivery, advocacy, Research, capacity building etc) 4. Do you think there is increased scrutiny of NGOs in the region? Why is it so? What are some factors for this increased interest? (**Religion**, **society**, **politics** etc) 5. Do you think there is a difference in approach of new vs. old NGOs (pre & post 9/11, 2001)? If yes, in what ways? 6. Do you believe NGOs are seen sometimes as **anti-state**? Why is it so? 7. Describe your working **relationship with the government** (cordial, hostile)? Does this keep on changing with different phases of humanitarian crisis? 8. Describe your **relationship with the military**? Do you think there is increased/decreased interest of military in your organizational work recently? 9. Describe your organization’s **relation with the donors** (differentiate between INGOs/bilateral/multilaterals, if possible) 10. How do you see the funding environment for NGOs changing in coming years? (contracting, expanding, remaining the same etc)   **Part B- Responses to Institutional demands**   1. How does your organization cope with multiple institutional demands? What are some **general** **strategies** that your organization employ? (e.g., working more with government, community participation etc). 2. What are some accountability mechanisms that your organization employ to satisfy **international donors** of organization’s effectiveness & fairness? 3. What are some accountability mechanisms that your organization employ to satisfy **government** (& **military**) of organization’s effectiveness & fairness? 4. What are some accountability mechanisms that your organization employ to satisfy **citizens** of organization’s effectiveness & fairness? 5. Do you believe your organization is sustainable in the long run with the existing structure and mission? What needs to change? 6. How is your organization different from private sector? What distinguishes your organization from emerging social enterprises? 7. Is your organization part of any CSO network? How effective are these networks to guard NGOs interest?   **Part C- Effects of increased accountability demands**   1. How hard is it for NGOs to work in the region? (Compare it with government and private sector working). What does this personally mean to you? 2. What are some of the visible impacts of increased scrutiny of NGOs? Does it impact your organizational missions and **internal working**? In what ways? 3. What are the impacts of NGOs **legitimacy** crisis on delivering services to the citizens? Do you believe in an open environment, your organizational impact will be different?   **Thank you for your time** |

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1. The earthquake took 74,000 lives and left behind 70000 injured and over 2.8 million homeless (Andrabi, T. & Das, J., 2010) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. To put the 2010 floods in perspective, these were the biggest flooding in Pakistan and were rightly ranked the first among the top 10 natural disasters in terms of economic loss and affected people since 1900. These flooding submerged an area of100, 000 km (including morethan20, 000km of cultivated lands) and 78 districts out of a total of 141districts in Pakistan for more than four weeks. It displaced about 20 million people or 11% of the total population (Ali, A., & Anjum, M. 2012) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)