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Title

Dynamics of Japanese NGOs in the Contexts of Official Development Aid

Abstract

A significant topic in the debate on development aid has been the role and significance of NGOs and their collaboration with the other actors. The partnership is often controversial, but it is recognized as being necessary. In the 1970s, it was widely believed that the Official Development Aid (ODA) of many northern countries has failed to register a positive impact on world poverty; however, many NGOs successfully demonstrated sustainable and participatory ways of reducing poverty at the community level. In the 1980s, therefore, many NGOs gained public support for development activities, and government often attempted to build partnerships with them by offering subsidies and grants. NGOs have thus become increasingly important player in the international community. In Japan, NGOs had appeared in public relatively later than other Northern NGOs. This paper analyses the significance and the role of Japanese NGO in relation with the Government. What will be the future role of Japanese NGOs and their collaboration with Government: are they going to become an instrument of ODA projects or an influential actor in ODA policymaking? The Japanese aid system is different in nature from that of other countries. The government has traditionally played a dominant role in delivering foreign aid and has left limited space for NGOs. ODA led by the Government has been structurally used for national interests, and there had been no debate of its aid policy until the 1990s. The dynamics of ODA policy is consistently contrasting with NGOs’ philosophy. Japanese NGOs had rapidly grown since 1980s, however they are relatively young and are led by ordinary citizens’ initiative. A few NGOs are of international standards compared to other Northern NGOs, in spite of Japan’s commitment abroad. There had been no discussion of the purpose of the aid until the 1990s; however, Government initiated its assistance to NGOs’ projects in 1989 and to their institutional capacity in 1999. At the same time, the communications between them have been strengthened since 1996. A
variety of actors have become involved in the Japanese aid industry, and collaborations have been made. The Japan Platform was started in 2000 as a new model of collaboration of three Japanese constituents, NGOs, business and the Government, to collaborate in international emergency relief. It is an important aid giving structure in Japan. This; however, paper finds Japanese NGOs increasingly act as service providers after their participations in ODA, however their substantial influence over aid administration is still limited, even if the increasing dialogues among themselves and with the Government.

**Keyword**

Japan; NGOs; ODA; aid policy; partnership; Japan Platform