

Definition of International and Cross-boundary Non-profit Organizations

We follow the definitions in the Johns Hopkins Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project (CNSP) with some adaptation to suit the local circumstances. In CNSP, CSOs are defined as entities that are *organized, private, non-profit-distributing, self-governing* and *voluntary*.¹ We also refer to the International Classification of Non-profit Organizations (ICNPO) scheme developed by Johns Hopkins to identify relevant CSO categories, and make necessary adaptations. Given the distinct history of Hong Kong as a former British colony and now a Special Administrative Region in China, cross-boundary organizations are also included in our definition of the international sector in Hong Kong.

Defining INGOs

Our definition covers (a) international NGOs with a base in Hong Kong, using mainly Johns Hopkins definitions, and (b) cross-boundary NGOs, whose main missions and activities are related to (if not carried out in) Mainland China. Following the CNSP, an **INGO must fulfil three criteria:**

- (i) The group is non-profit making, non-governmental, self-governing, and voluntary;
- (ii) The group is organized formally, though may or may not be legally registered; and
- (iii) The group has a base in Hong Kong and carries out as a primary mission international activities under the ICNPO categories as below:
 - Exchange/friendship/cultural programmes
 - Development assistance associations
 - International disaster & relief organizations
 - International human rights & peace organizations
 - Multipurpose international organizations
 - Support and service organizations, auxiliaries, councils, standard setting and governance organizations
 - Other: international organizations not elsewhere classified (in this regard, NGOs with a primary mission to pursue the cause of religion and environmental protection are excluded from the international sector because they are included in the religion and conservation sectors respectively).²

The definition of a cross-boundary organization refers to any non-profit organization which is registered in Hong Kong and exclusively focuses its concerns and operations in Mainland China. If an organization operates in multiple countries including Mainland China, it will nevertheless be defined as an INGO. For simplicity, cross-boundary organizations will

¹L.M. Salamon and H.K. Anheier, *Defining the Nonprofit Sector: A Cross-national Analysis* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 33.

² *Ibid.* p.73.

be discussed as INGOs unless otherwise specified. It should be noted that international environmental organizations and international philanthropy / foundations are in other categories in the Johns Hopkins' classification, and therefore are not included.

Operationalization

Operationalizing the definition of INGO by way of their forms and functions is challenging for two reasons. First, from our literature review and in-depth interviews with representatives of INGOs in Hong Kong, INGOs take a wide variety of organizational forms, ranging from a loosely coordinated transnational network in which affiliated groups exchange information and expertise, to a confederation in which affiliated groups enjoy relatively equal rights to agenda setting, to unitary organizations in which the headquarters centrally direct overseas operations.³ The variety and complexity of organizational forms and the often limited organizational information accessible to the public make it difficult for researchers to ascertain in what way a Hong Kong-based NGO is linked with overseas counterparts or whether it has international operations.

Second, many NGOs are involved in activities overseas or in Mainland China, from organizing occasional training trips overseas to rescue or anti-poverty operations. It is a challenge for researchers to ascertain whether those international activities constitute the primary or secondary missions of NGOs. In the light of the challenges, we covered two possibilities that define an INGO:

- Non-profit organizations which are locally established in Hong Kong and engage in international activities/operations (including Mainland China), or
- Non-profit organizations which are established overseas (including Mainland China) with chapters/regional offices/affiliates set up in Hong Kong to manage international activities and/or coordinate operations with their headquarters or counterparts overseas (including Mainland China).

³ Marc Lindenberg and Coralie Bryant, *Going Global: Transforming Relief and Development NGOs* (Bloomfield, Conn: Kumarian Press, 2001), 139-41; In-depth interview with an INGO representative on 4 March, 2013.

Number of INGOs

The organizational database of individual INGOs was constructed by collecting primary and secondary data. First, primary data was collected from a written and comprehensive survey. 55 INGOs responded out of the population of 215. Second, secondary data was collected from official sources including Companies Registry records and other Internet sources, as well as from 6 in-depth interviews. We completed a database of 215 INGOs based in Hong Kong containing various levels of organizational details:

- (a) 215 INGOs with data of legal instruments of establishment and contacts etc.;
- (b) 209 INGOs with data of year of establishment;
- (c) 174 INGOs with data of board directors;
- (d) 166 INGOs with data of financial income and income sources, etc.; and
- (e) 55 INGOs with a comprehensive set of organizational data, operational data and self-evaluation obtained from the questionnaire survey.

Limitations

First, the INGO population was constructed to the best of our efforts and knowledge and may not be exhaustive. For example, organizations whose names do not reveal their international or cross-boundary character, and do not have any information on the Internet might have been missed. Since we only include INGOs with a legal status in our database, there may be informal groups excluded. For example, groups formed by university students and young people to organize international exchange, service or charity activities that are not registered entities are not included.

Second, certain organizations included in the population have multiple (but somehow related) missions that cross-cut various sectors. While they can be clearly classified into various NGO sectors in theory, they show a high degree of complexity in practice. For instance, some INGOs with a religious background may be actively engaged in humanitarian aid and international development together with their religious works.⁴ Also, many organizations with a focus on environmental issues are well known for their strong international character. In order to avoid double counting, we excluded NGOs with a primary mission to pursue the cause of religion and environmental protection from the international sector, but, despite our best efforts, some might have overlapped other civil society sectors.

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⁴ In a survey on faith-based NGOs with consultative status to the Economic and Social Council in the United Nations, it is reported that about 10% of the NGOs with consultative status can be categorized as ‘international religious NGOs’ or international faith-based organizations engaged in humanitarian aid provision. See M. J. Petersen, ‘International Religious NGOs at the United Nations: A Study of a Group of Religious Organizations’, *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance* (2010), accessed 17 April, 2014, https://sites.tufts.edu/jha/archives/847#_ednref21.