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# Small-Scale Family Poultry Production

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## **A case study on the roles of nongovernmental organizations in influencing intergovernmental decisions regarding highly pathogenic avian influenza in Cambodia**

S. BURGOS CÁCERES

28957 Sampson Road, Orange Beach, Alabama, 36561, USA  
Corresponding author: [sbc\\_london@yahoo.com](mailto:sbc_london@yahoo.com)

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During outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza in Cambodia, local nongovernmental organizations managed to strategically influence decision making processes in inter-governmental organizations by highlighting human death tolls, public health, and rural livelihoods. This was accomplished through active participation in conferences, consultations, meetings, and workshops as well as disseminating messages via articles, papers, reports, studies, and websites.

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### **Introduction**

With the creation of the League of Nations, followed by the establishment of the United Nations system and, 44 years later, with the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc, the twentieth century has witnessed a dynamic evolution of the international legal order from traditional international law between sovereign states towards a contemporary and universal international law open to new actors and players, including NGOs, trans-national organizations, and civil society organizations. It is a fact that individual States no longer have a rigid monopoly on international intercourse. International organizations (IOs), IGOs, NGOs, multinational corporations (MNCs), and even private individuals have come to play an increasing role in international relations, and

accordingly international legal norms and rules have evolved to engage these actors (Ku and Diehl, 2009a).

Before moving forward, it is critical to ask this key question: What are NGOs? They are groups of individuals or of societies that are freely created by private initiative to pursue specific interests without seeking to make a profit. In the context of international law, NGOs contribute to the development, interpretation, judicial application, and enforcement of international norms (Charnovitz, 2006). On an increasing basis, NGOs are assisting with elements of international and national legal operating systems, particularly with monitoring and implementation of legal instruments (Price-Cohen, 1990). And, in the context of governance, NGOs provide information, conduct research, and propose and evaluate policies, or actions that introduce ideas and political pressures into national or international negotiations (Princen and Finger, 1994; Raustiala, 1997).

Whether the context is governance, environmental, humanitarian, or international law, it is clear that old and new actors recognize this new state of affairs. Keohane and Nye (2000) observed that, in addition to IOs, IGOs, and States, modern governance takes place through non-state actors and networks that can be both private and public. These derive credibility, legitimacy, and prestige from their altruism, dynamism, and flexibility to address new concerns, issues, and problems with fewer start-up costs. As non-state actors, NGOs can engage in world civic politics using rhetorical persuasion to directly influence the values and behaviours of agencies, corporations, states, and individuals (Lipschutz and Mayer, 1996; Wapner, 1996); so it is believed that NGOs act as a solvent against the strictures of sovereignty (Charnovitz, 1996a).

By their constituting nature, IOs and IGOs act in the general interest of global populations, whereas NGOs defend interests that are often theme-specific. However, the local, issue-specific, and voluntary character of NGOs makes them an extremely useful bridge between sub-national and national communities, and foreign communities and international institutions. By tradition, NGOs were only involved in the process of *creating norms*. Specifically, they raised the salience of global concerns, issues, and problems, made theme-specific presentations, and helped draft treaties, but they did this usually working through national delegations (Ku and Diehl, 2009b). NGOs are strategically positioned to assume increasing complex roles in the *implementation of norms*, especially in areas in which specialised expertise is required (Koven-Levit, 2005). Consequently, NGOs have fostered accords, promoted the creation of IOs, and lobbied in capitals worldwide to gain consent to stronger international norms (Charnovitz, 2006).

A contemporary shift in focus away from the concerns of states and into those of communities and individuals have created vast opportunities for NGOs to play more dynamic roles as a substitute or supplement to the international legal operating system (Ku and Diehl 2009b). In reaction to this shift, academicians, international lawyers, political scientists, and scholars acknowledge the positive influence that NGOs have had on contemporary international norms in areas such as social and economic justice, civil rights, participatory democracy, social diversity, nonviolent conflict resolution, indigenous rights, long-term sustainable development, environmental protections, gender and race equality, human rights, humanitarian affairs, and the wellbeing of individuals (Otto, 1996; Lindblom, 2005). It could confidently be said that modern international norms, at any given time, represent equilibrium between strong opposing pressures.

How do NGOs become consultative parties? In 1945, Article 71 of the UN Charter established IOs and IGOs consultative practices regarding NGOs. Gradually, this consultative role became an established practice throughout the United Nations system

(Charnovitz, 1996b). For instance, Article V(2) of the Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO) stipulates that 'the General Council may make appropriate arrangements for consultation and cooperation with nongovernmental organizations concerned with matters related to those of the WTO.' By 1996, the General Council had adopted guidelines specifying the depth and breadth of intercourse between NGOs and the WTO secretariat. While it is true that they are not allowed into the actual negotiating forum, it is important to stress that NGOs have been granted a growing role in the proceedings through *amicus curiae* briefs (Lamy, 2009). Over the past two decades, *amicus curiae* briefs have been admitted into commercial, trade, and investment adjudication at the WTO, but the truth is that the roles of NGOs flowered tremendously in the monitoring of global human rights, humanitarian, and environmental laws (Charnovitz, 1996b).

Inter-governmental consultations with NGOs can enhance the credibility and legitimacy of international decision making, but it is the consultation itself that makes the contribution, not the quantity of NGO support obtained (Charnovitz, 2006). Today, the notable prominence of racial and women's issues on international agendas and the adoption of treaties such as the Landmines Convention and the consensus-based statute for an International Criminal Court are examples of strategic state-NGOs alliances that came as a result of well organized political lobbying (Ku and Gamble, 2000). For example, the strategic partnership reached between NGOs and the Canadian government to promote a convention to ban the use of antipersonnel landmines demonstrates the collaboration that various actors undertake in international legal processes, thereby giving new actors and players a role in lawmaking and subsequent implementations (Ku and Diehl, 2009a).

In a number of areas IGOs have contributed to the heightened prominence of NGOs as these have relentlessly sought to circumvent governments. In cases where cash-strapped states seem less able to agree on inconvenient standards or willing to meet the financial requirements of norm monitoring and implementation, IGOs have opted to tap the large pool of private wealth available through the intermediation of NGOs that count on philanthropic funding (Ku and Diehl, 2009b). As a direct consequence of this, states have been less willing to conduct the duties imposed by international legal operating systems. Also, States have reneged on supporting large IOs that will perform oversight and compliance functions. It is here that NGOs have been called upon to pick up the slack, often as subcontractors to broader IGOs efforts in many countries.

Slaughter (2004) explains that NGOs tend to be effective in influencing external actors because they are somewhat informal groups and networks that are strongly cohesive and highly recognized by those who are critical to the work in specific areas. The bottom-up approach embraced by NGOs acknowledges and exploits the fact that such arrangements can exist outside of the formalistic government sphere and can also have important normative and regulatory effects because the expected behaviours will be more or less consistent among all those actors belonging to the groups and networks. In fact, the former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, noted the importance of NGOs functioning as an increasingly relevant part of civil society by stating: 'We must also adapt international institutions, through which states govern together, to the realities of the new era. We must form coalitions for change, often with partners well beyond the precincts of officialdom' (Office of the UN Secretary-General, 2000).

In many instances, the crucial and pivotal roles that NGOs play has led governments to accord rights to them that are typically granted only to IOs and IGOs. This did not happen without criticism. Over the years, many analysts have pointed to the need for NGOs to be more accountable and transparent. Another issue is whether a consultation process assures a fair balance of NGOs from different parts of the world and not only

from rich nations (Charnovitz, 1996a). Also, the involvement of NGOs in national, regional, and international negotiations has led governments to formulate and implement impractical agreements in economic, commercial, social, and political domains. Another concern is that the exertion of pressure on negotiations by single-interest NGOs makes it harder to formulate a genuine common interest and to implement norms that reflect the true trans-boundary interests of multiple stakeholders (Charnovitz, 1996b).

Lastly, NGOs will continue to propose competing facts, opinions, views, and sentiments into public debates. IGOs-sponsored consultations with NGOs will help achieve a deeper enmeshing of civil society interests in foreign discourses that may result in more balanced international norms.

### **Avian Influenza, Cambodia, NGOs, and IGOs**

Avian influenza, or bird flu, is caused by type A influenza viruses that infect a wide range of domestic birds, wildfowl, and shorebirds and many other species, including humans, pigs, horses, minks, felids, and other mammals. The virus replicates predominantly in the intestinal tract, is shed in faeces, and subsequently transmitted and maintained by faecal-oral transmission, but poultry trade and mechanical movement of infected materials are also likely modes for spreading avian influenza. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) emerges from Low Pathogenic viruses in host birds. These HP viruses mostly emerge in domestic poultry and have differing levels of pathogenicity (Burgos and Burgos, 2007). Avian influenza represents a new challenge for smallholding family poultry keeping given that the disease results in high mortality rates in humans (60%) and poultry (90-100%), which impacts on the human population, animal and human health, poultry-related incomes, and wellbeing (Branckaert, 2007).

For a vast majority of rural households in Southeast Asia, poultry serves as an important source of protein and as part of the social fabric, a situation that is not likely to change in the near future. Therefore, national, regional, and international policies toward HPAI and its control necessarily implicate the rural poor majority. Agriculture is paramount to the health, promotion, and development of the Cambodian economy. Agriculture alone accounts for almost 40% of GDP, and the livestock sector contributes roughly 15% to agricultural GDP. Poultry, comprising mainly chickens (~80%) and ducks (~20%), are an integral part of rural peoples' livelihoods in Cambodia. Poultry densities directly correspond to human population densities, both of which are high in regions that have cities serving as hubs for agricultural, commercial, and industrial activities. A large share of poultry outputs from traditional extensive production systems is consumed by households, thus upholding food security. What is left, after satisfying the needs of family nutrition, is destined for sale; a source of cash income (Burgos *et al.*, 2008).

With this in mind, one can assert that backyard poultry keeping in Cambodia contributes to supporting livelihoods by providing food, that otherwise would need to be purchased, and as a source of easy-to-convert cash to cover minor household expenses. Rural households engaged in variegated poultry keeping obtain between 10 and 30% of total household revenue from this activity. Estimates of income from poultry as proportions of total income may underestimate the importance of poultry to livelihoods as these estimates do not take into account to whom within a household this income accrues. This has also been noted by NGOs in the field, whose direct work with farmers brings anecdotal reports of the importance of poultry in women's lives (ADI, 2007). On average, Cambodian households spend roughly 60% of their budget on food purchases.

This is important to highlight given that negative impacts on household incomes affects budgets, which end up modulating food purchases and consumption patterns (Burgos *et al.*, 2008). A rapid rural assessment performed by Vétérinaires Sans Frontières found an average expenditure of US\$50 per month for food for households of 5 to 6 persons, which translates into an average food expenditure of about US\$9 per month per person in rural areas (VSF, 2005).

In Cambodia, between January 2005 and March 2012, there have been more than 20 HPAI outbreaks comprising over thousands of cases in birds (chickens, wild birds, and ducks) reported to the Paris-based Office International des Epizooties (OIE). In this same time period, the World Health Organization (WHO) reports that the cumulative number of confirmed human cases of HPAI in Cambodia is 19, of which 17 have resulted in death. After HPAI outbreaks started, the Cambodian government imposed poultry movement restrictions and permitted culling of infected flocks without compensation. Also, 3 km protection zones and 10 km surveillance zones were established around outbreaks. Temporary suspension of sales and purchases of all birds was mandated. Other measures included moving away from free-range systems, information campaigns, and erecting poultry fencing and housing to improve biosecurity. According to a report by the Pasteur Institute of Cambodia, general media reports in Cambodia about HPAI through radio and television broadcasts appear to have been effective in creating high awareness and widespread knowledge about HPAI in the country (Ly *et al.*, 2007).

A survey carried out in central Cambodia pointed out that it is very difficult for rural smallholders to escape from raising poultry as part of their livelihoods as this activity is mainly a source of food, but not of significant amounts of money. In fact, seasonal poultry losses are expected and accounted for in advanced in their risk constructs (CEDAC, 2007). Based on these results, CEDAC, a local NGO, leveraged the narrative of 'ensuring food security' to *advocate* against foreign-led recommendations on culling of birds. Another study conducted in northern Cambodia ascertained that the poor and poorest rural farmers are not directly or seriously affected by avian influenza outbreaks because these households depend much more on selling their labour for farming or non-farming activities (*i.e.* harvesting crops, garments, and construction) than on poultry keeping (CENTDOR, 2008). With this information in hand, CENTDOR, another local NGO, stated that any measure carrying a cost component to farmers (*i.e.* on-farm biosecurity enhancements) should be reassessed by government officials in view of the 'negative impacts' this would have on poor rural farmers.

Additionally, in Cambodia, chickens are more frequently afflicted with Newcastle disease (which does not cause death in humans), which is perceived as a disease quite similar to avian influenza in terms of symptoms. This confusion between bird flu and Newcastle disease resulted in dissonant bio-scientific categories (Hickler, 2007). As a result of this confusion, Cambodians assigned equally low risk profiles to two different diseases that share similar symptoms. Low risk perceptions translated into high-risk practices such as preparation of dead or moribund poultry for household consumption and handling sick birds without personal protective equipment, which increases the risks of transmission of HPAI from poultry to humans (Van Kerkhove *et al.*, 2008). A number of NGOs used this locally-generated informational knowledge to advocate education campaigns and awareness raising programs instead of lending support to costly mass vaccination schemes.

Some other NGOs such as CARE, Heifer International, and Save the Children argued that many internationally-led and government-mandated disease control measures were implemented under emergency mode without conscientious considerations of rural

farmers' livelihoods under highly uncertain circumstances. The divergent opinions and views coming out from local voices against foreign expertise suggested that there was a non-alignment of interests and perspectives among the government, donors, IOs, IGOs, and rural smallholder farmers that had important implications for effectiveness of disease mitigation measures and livelihood impacts. As noted previously, the Cambodian government instituted a policy of not compensating for culling infected poultry. When this measure was combined with the evident lack of emphasis on livelihoods, it resulted in mistrust of the government, avoidance to report outbreaks, discovery of human victims before poultry outbreaks were detected, low risk perceptions, risky behaviours, confusion, and outright disregard of animal-public health efforts (Ear and Burgos-Cáceres, 2009).

It has been documented that NGOs actively participate in the delivery of animal (and human) health services in developing and transitioning countries (Catley, 1997). To this end, national and international bodies have liaised with a diverse portfolio of NGOs in developing nation-states, such as Cambodia. These comprise civic and social organizations and institutions such as ADI, Agronomes Sans Frontières (ASF), CARE, CEDAC, CENTDOR, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Red Cross-Cambodia, the International Federation for Animal Health (IFAH), the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Wildlife Trust, VSF, Heifer International, and Save the Children. All these logistical and operational partnerships, as well as cooperative engagements, have flourished owing to the conceptual dichotomy between 'enabling' and 'doing', that is, the realisation that nimble, dispersed, localised, and small entities tend to be more effective in reaching target groups in distant rural locations than larger IOs and IGOs which are more effective in influencing regional and international policy frameworks (Burgos and Otte, 2009).

Civil society organizations, NGOs, and animal-human health networks that are in closer proximity to the realities 'on the ground' frequently liaise with other national and international agencies to deliver grassroots animal and human health programs and services after careful identification of operational gaps and overlaps. These global partnerships are needed to address the most pressing issues arising against a background of contemporary challenges. This colossal endeavour requires true champions as the driving force moving forward holistic and proactive approaches to disease risk management from rhetoric to tangible actions (Burgos and Otte, 2010).

## **Influence of NGOs**

Without any doubt, NGOs have gained a great deal of popularity in the past two decades. The awarding of the Nobel Prize to The International Campaign to Ban Landmines in 1997 and to Médecins Sans Frontières in 1999 has highlighted the emergence of these non-state actors as new forces in international politics. To be sure, there are a variety of activities, interactions, and relationships between NGOs and states, IOs, IGOs, and in international politics. A survey of case studies on national and international NGOs shows that their involvement includes working on HIV-AIDS, economic progress, social development, political and press freedom, foreign aid, technical assistance, biodiversity and ecological conservation, humanitarianism, international security, human and women's rights, food security, and global environmental activism, among many others (Ahmed and Potter, 2006). In the case of HPAI in Cambodia, NGOs were working on animal and human health, and seeking to influence IGOs decisions and recommendations.

The increase in participation of NGOs in international and transnational institutions reflects the changing state of global democracy. A number of interviews, polls, and

surveys of citizens in developing countries show that respondents trusted NGOs working in their territories more than their own governments. In reaction to this, governments have had to increasingly listen to the opinions and views of their citizens, oftentimes by supporting NGOs or following NGOs positions (Spiroa, 1995); and this is what occurred in Cambodia. This suggests that NGOs can carry considerable political weight. It has become evident that the kind of pressure an NGO can put on governments can indeed persuade them to change policies and official positions. This effective persuasion arises because NGO representatives propose practical solutions or present workable ideas that can transcend state boundaries, which often affect the global commons. The growing and significant roles that NGOs play in negotiations in IGOs are thought of by scholars as practical experiments in 'democratizing intergovernmental decision making' (Hastings, 2011).

Under the fundamental premise that NGOs represent various constituencies bound by common interests, knowledge, principles, and values, NGO representatives are invited to attend conferences, consultations, seminars, symposiums, meetings, and workshops where they serve as technical experts; help to develop draft conventions or rules for NGO participation; participate in plenary sessions, committee gatherings, and side events with slideshow presentations, talks, and interventions; and are engaged in several parallel forums designed to strengthen their connection with other actors and players. It is believed that this increased participation of NGOs in national, regional, and international forums reflects broader changes in the nature of contemporary intercourse in diplomacy and politics. To this end, it is illustrative that NGOs engage directly in one of the most traditional diplomatic activities: formal negotiations in regional and international forums (Betsill and Corell, 2008). The case of HPAI in Cambodia fits perfectly into this picture.

But this direct engagement was not always the case, as Clark (1995) notes: 'Historically, operations by NGOs have been dependent upon interstate organizations for the provision of channels of action. However, partly due to the limitations on participation and expression inherent when international forums are largely controlled by states, these NGOs devised 'new channels of action' that allowed them more freedom. International NGOs not only cross formal national boundaries, they also have created a direct and independent form of non-state diplomacy through networks of their own. The economic, informational, and intellectual resources of NGOs have garnered them enough expertise and influence to assume authority in matters that, traditionally, have been solely within the purview of state administration and responsibility.' Furthermore, many NGOs claim some degree of legitimacy for their causes by virtue of popular representation. Whether or not the influence and independent authority claimed by NGOs by virtue of their expertise and mandate of popular sovereignty amounts to an erosion of formal state sovereignty, is a question that remains unanswered (Clark, 1995; Hannah, 2011).

Either way, NGOs present a solution to the problem of missing legislatures by arguing that they speak for 'global civil society' and therefore ensure that the global polity remains democratic and accountable; 'though NGOs are not accountable themselves to any constitutional process' (Rabkin, 2005). It is thus important to recognize that because international and regional agreements provide working frameworks rather than fixed statements of norms, NGOs have a much wider range of instances and opportunities to influence the development of both the normative and operating systems within IGOs. In some issue areas, NGOs have acquired significant authority in the eyes of national and trans-national actors. A good example is Amnesty International, the human rights group, which began in 1961 with letter-writing efforts to free individuals imprisoned for the non-violent expression of opinions. Since then, and especially within the past two decades, Amnesty International has developed the capacity to conduct research, write

and release reports, and analyse global patterns of human rights violations, empowering it to be a source of record in UN sessions and other halls of power (Ebrahim, 2005).

The evolving authority of NGOs by virtue of their ability and capacity to investigate and research pressing issues as well as disseminating their results empowers them. In fact, networks of national and international NGOs work to hold governments accountable to international norms and standards. Other NGOs, such as CARE and OXFAM, establish socioeconomic development projects and administer economic and humanitarian aid with funding from the pockets of private contributors and philanthropic bodies. What these NGO activities have in common is that, while they often challenge governments and sometimes complement government-provided services, they nearly always act in counterpoint with governmental actors (Spiroa, 1995). For instance, an increasing body of evidence indicates that NGOs influence government decisions to develop domestic policies to protect key resources and to negotiate treaties (Corell and Betsill, 2001). As for the case study presented, NGOs managed to influence animal health measures via lobbying.

Tellingly, NGOs have become skilled at mounting pressures on governments by feeding information into pertinent public and governmental channels for discussion, on the one hand, and distributing and promoting potentially useful legislative instruments, on the other. Further, it is often through such activities engaged by NGOs that newly created norms become formalized and develop meaningful impacts. This process changes the scope of state sovereignty as it reconstitutes the relationship between the state, its citizens, and international actors (Clark, 1995).

Other groups have taken notice of this trend. For example, in recognition of the influence of NGOs in international decision making processes as well as their vital stake in an effective climate regime, small island-states formed a negotiating group called the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) to represent their interests in the international climate negotiations. In fact, AOSIS became 'one of the most vocal participants in the negotiations for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change of 1992 and its 1997 Kyoto Protocol, and is now widely recognized as one of the key players in the climate change regime' (Betzold, 2010). In a sweeping study of decision making in IOs, Cox and Jacobson (1973) conclude that the significance of IOs is more appropriately assessed 'not as how independent they are of states, but how far they involve the effective policy making process of governments.' The case study presented also shows how national and international NGOs have learned from the difficulties, experiences, lessons, and successes of other NGOs working in complex issue areas.

However, the increasingly active stance of NGOs on the international plane still raises questions concerning their position under international law. In the last two decades this debate has focused especially on the question whether NGOs have international legal personality. Clearly, states enjoy all aspects of international legal personality, but this is not necessarily the case for other non-state entities functioning in negotiation settings. Whereas IGOs usually have treaty-making capacities, they cannot invoke contention jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice or of regional human rights courts. Recently, the term 'legal status' of NGOs has been efficaciously defined as a broad concept that embraces a number of practices and provisions which can be used by NGOs for acting and participating in national and international legal contexts, irrespective of which field of law the concern belongs to (Dupuy and Vierucci, 2008).

So, what does the case of NGOs presented above say about the balance of interests and the underlying politics of animal health policymaking surrounding avian influenza outbreaks in Cambodia? Striking to commentators is the number of external actors and players involved in the avian influenza response, considering that Cambodia has only 14 million people. Since the UN-managed elections in 1993, a plethora of NGOs (over 200



currently active) descended on Cambodia's political terrain, bringing transformations in the way decisions and policies occur (Scoones, 2010). The key contribution of NGOs has been their instrumental roles in filling operational capacities and supporting activities taking place 'on the ground', which lessened the responsibilities of Cambodian government officials. What this suggests is that the government became dependent on NGOs grassroots work and their delivery of services to rural communities, so it tended to listen and follow their local-based insights and knowledge instead of acquiescing to top-down guidelines and recommendations on animal and human health from pertinent IGOs.

## **Conclusions**

First, we started examining non-state actors. These range from 'large, territorially organized communities without state status, to organized religions, to groups of individuals sharing a dedication to a particular cause, to business entities seeking a profit, to individual human beings.' Of the many non-state actors in existence, one of the most significant is NGOs. These NGOs come in all shapes and sizes. They may be formed and funded voluntarily by individuals, action groups, companies and MNCs, issue-specific and religious organizations, and even states. NGOs may 'prepare studies for wide dissemination, engage the media in an attempt to influence public opinion, attend international conferences as observers or lobbyists, contribute expertise to government delegations and thereby gaining a seat at intergovernmental negotiations, or even co-opt delegations through promises of various assistances' (Dunoff *et al.*, 2010).

Second, a case study on avian influenza, IGOs, and NGOs in Cambodia was presented. This case showed that in many developing countries poultry is a source of companionship, food, and income. Avian influenza is a viral zoonosis that poses threats to animal and human health through mortality and morbidity, impacts rural livelihoods, and reduces the influx of tourist visits. In response to HPAI outbreaks, disease control and prevention measures range from mild and inexpensive (*i.e.* washing hands after handling birds) to severe and expensive (*i.e.* culling or vaccinations). NGOs used their abilities and capacities to investigate and report on the impacts of proposed measures on rural smallholding farmers and provided feedback to IGOs, government officials, and donors. This was done by active participations in numerous events through articles, face-to-face communication, flyers, interventions, papers, presentations, studies, and web posts. Some of the feedback and recommendations coming from NGOs were listened to and followed by donors, governments, and IGOs because they noted the disruptions and impacts of decisions.

Third, the roles of NGOs were discussed while referring to the case. The political weight that NGOs carry in national, regional, and international forums reflects two things: (a) states and IGOs have opened up previously exclusive forums to new actors and players, and (b) non-state actors, whether or not these are NGOs, have managed to fully insert themselves in the process of consultation and decision making by virtue of their civil representativeness, grassroots activities, and tangible results. Simply, it can be said that NGOs emerge as an alternative real voice to defend the unaccounted, the despondent, the poor, and those living on the margin of societies. In many ways NGOs fill in the crevices and gaps left off by local governments, and have arisen as developers, implementers, and overseers of projects and programs for donors, IOs, and IGOs.

As for reflections, it must be stressed that NGOs, with their 'on the ground' presence, are capable and willing to provide supplemental capacities to other NGOs, host states, and IGOs as to help them keep abreast with very specific details and issues in highly

technical areas, or to report on the impacts of interventions in distant geographical locations that are difficult to reach. This is a very important contribution of NGOs, especially when properly staffed government agencies can rarely dedicate full-time employees to the variegated dimensions and issues that comprise domestic and foreign affairs. The success of some animal and human health-related NGOs in Cambodia in influencing decision making processes in IGOs provides a clear example of the new power that communities or individuals armed with expert information, linked by technologies, organized into a socio-political network with well-funded budgets, and working in alliance with governments can wield. This power should not be underestimated given that local constituencies trust NGOs to share their beliefs, ideas, and views, and to represent their interests.

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