BUILDING SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

View of Government Decision-Makers, Influentials and Interested Citizens on the Role of Non-profit Organisations in International Development

Findings from China, France, Germany, the U.K. and the U.S.
I. INTRODUCTION

The Building Support for International Development study provides a roadmap for the development community for connecting more meaningfully with key constituencies in donor-country discussions about international development policy issues and priorities. The study, launched by InterMedia in 2011 with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, included qualitative and quantitative research with three key target groups:

INTERESTED CITIZENS
Members of the public who are predisposed to engagement with international development issues, based on their self-reported interest in global health and international development issues, and their previous participation in activities in support of development causes (such as donating, volunteering, writing to public officials, etc.) The research included national urban surveys with 3,624 interested citizens and focus group discussions with 160 interested citizens in China, France, Germany, the U.K. and the U.S.

INFLUENTIALS
Citizens with the potential to influence decisions by government officials on development policies. 88 in-depth interviews were conducted with influential in China, France, Germany, the U.K., and the U.S.

GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKERS
Elected and appointed officials in government and the parliamentary committees in France, Germany, the U.K. and the U.S., who are engaged in forming, implementing and overseeing policies on international development and global health. Due to political sensitivities and time constraints, no interviews were conducted with government decision-makers in China. 40 in-depth interviews were conducted with government decision-makers in France, Germany, the U.K. and the U.S.

The Building Support study covers the four largest bi-lateral aid donors—France, Germany, the U.K. and the U.S.—as well as China, which is fast becoming a major player in the aid arena.

All research reports based on this study are available on InterMedia’s Building Support Portal at www.audiencescapes.org/buildsupport. They include:

- The main report, which covers the key findings for each of the target groups;
- Five detailed country reports;
- Four topic reports on the role of celebrities, public opinion, research organisations and non-profit organisations in international development.

This topic report focuses on the perceptions of government decision-makers, influential and interested citizens in China, France, Germany, the U.K. and the U.S. on the role of non-profit organisations in international development. Non-profit organisations covered in this report include donor-country foundations, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and faith-based organisations, which were referenced in the context of international development in the research with the three target groups mentioned above. Inter-governmental organisations, such as the U.N., IMF, OECD, World Bank and their subsidiaries are not covered in this report, nor are research organisations, such as academic institutions or think tanks. The role of research organisations is discussed in detail in a companion report View of Government Decision-Makers and Influentials on the Role of Research Organisations in International Development (Topic report 4/4).

For more information about the Building Support for International Development study, or to arrange a customized Building Support workshop, contact:

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Non-profit organisations play a vital role in government decision-makers’ information-gathering process and formulation of governmental policies on international development issues. They are valued particularly for their ability to supply up-to-date information from the field, report on the effectiveness of government’s policies in developing countries and advise on practical solutions to improve the positive impact of these policies. Decision-makers also rely on non-profits to assist them in the policy-forming phase with expert advice and detailed analysis of development issues. They often engage non-profits in this process through formal consultative committees and working groups on individual development issues.

However, the influence of individual non-profit organisations on policy-making varies significantly. Large, established international NGOs, such as Oxfam, are consulted on a regular basis and are considered an important and highly trusted source of information by government decision-makers from a wide range of sectors and across countries. Donor-country foundations, particularly German political foundations and U.S. private foundations also play an increasingly important role; input from the latter is valued by some government decision-makers particularly because of their innovative, results-oriented and entrepreneurial approach to resolving development challenges. On the other hand, smaller or niche non-profit organisations - either those from the donor countries or those based in developing countries - rarely participate in the policymaking process and their influence tends to be very limited. This is a result of the combination of reasons: government decision-makers’ reluctance to turn to new, unknown, un-vetted sources; their wariness of entities they view as having a hidden agenda; their continuous struggle with information overload; and reliance on a small number of trusted sources, who are able to provide them with the information targeted to their specific interests. Consequently, the network of entities government decision-makers typically turn to for advice on policy issues tends to be quite small, well established, long-term and difficult to penetrate.

These perceived strengths and weaknesses of non-profit organisations, as well as the key communication and engagement channels with government decision-makers, and most frequently cited non-profit organisations are discussed further in this section.

It is important to note that there were no substantial differences between the views expressed by elected and appointed government decision-makers. In addition, the responses given by government decision-makers were not country specific; thus the findings in this report are organised thematically rather than by country.
Most frequently cited non-profit organisations by government decision-makers in France, Germany, the U.K. and the U.S.

* The size of the bar indicates the relative number of times that each non-profit organisation was mentioned.
1.2 Benefits of non-profit organisations

The key defining quality of non-profit organisations, particularly large international non-governmental organisations, is their presence on the ground in developing countries and, consequently, their ability to observe the implementation and the impact (or the lack of impact) of development policies firsthand. Their close contact with the populations in developing countries enables them to identify the gaps in development policies and programmes in real-time and provide government decision-makers with practical solutions for future improvements. Concise, but detailed analytical papers and briefings based on such on-the-ground experience are highly valued and form one of the key sources of information for decision-makers working in the international development sector.

Large, well-established international NGOs, such as Oxfam and Save the Children, tend to be the preferred suppliers of such information, largely due to their capacity to provide feedback fast and from multiple countries. Smaller NGOs are turned to less frequently, due to their limited operational capacity and typically narrower issue focus.

“...my main sources of information are the aid agencies, such as Oxfam, who are out there in the field and can see the benefits – or a lack of benefits – that are taking place. I think they’re the most accurate in terms of reporting back on the success of some of our programmes.”

– (UK government decision-maker)

“...NGOs provide excellent information about the host country and the problem they are managing.”

– (French government decision-maker)

“...I think NGOs, and smaller NGOs, have the most knowledge of [developments] on the ground, in the country, and they write about real life experiences, which I think is very important in leading the focus areas.”

– (US government decision-maker)

Faith-based organisations are also viewed as a valuable source of real-time feedback from the populations in the developing world. They were referenced by government decision-makers across the four countries, although there was no specific entity that stood out in terms of the frequency of mentions.

“...I think that the country level staff from the Catholic Relief Services in the Philippines is doing amazing work and that’s something that I consider as examples of leaders [in this sector].”

– (US government decision-maker)

“...CAFOD and Christian Aid – those are the ones that provide briefings and some of them are really good.”

– (UK government decision-maker)

Foundations focusing on international development issues are recognised as increasingly important and influential players in this sector by government decision-makers across the four countries. The U.S. private foundations, particularly the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation,* appear to play the most prominent role, and are considered important sources of information and influence on development issues by government decision-makers in France, the U.K. and the U.S. The foundations derive their influence largely from their considerable financial power and the ability to bring new, fresh ideas to the sector, as well as their innovative and entrepreneurial approach that challenges the established methods of addressing development issues.

“I think it’s a good thing that the responsibility [for addressing development challenges] is going to be shared out a bit more. It’s the kind of dynamism that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has brought in, or the Hewlett Foundation, or the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. All of these foundations have brought in a private sector entrepreneurial spirit, which has challenged some of the traditional practices within the aid community, and it has made us think harder.”

– (UK government decision-maker)

“We certainly pay attention to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on health issues; we certainly listen to what they had to say. They would be an example of somebody that is putting money into this issue and has a lot of expertise, and hires a lot of people with relevant background and expertise. We certainly listen to people like them and others that are involved in certain areas of development.”

– (U.S. government decision-maker)

“We have new players next to the traditional DAC donors from the OECD countries, and emerging countries, who are gradually becoming important for international cooperation. We also have private foundations, the most emblematic of which remains the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, but there are many like that.”

– (French government decision-maker)

German government decision-makers, on the other hand, tend to rely heavily on the expertise and advice of their national (political) foundations, such as the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Freidrich Ebert Stiftung, which are associated with the centre-right Christian Democratic Union and centre-left the Social Democratic Party, respectively.

“You can inform yourself really well through foundations and trusts, which for me as a Social Democrat is primarily the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, but also all others like the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung or the Hanns Seidel Stiftung and the Norma Stiftung, no question.”

– (German government decision-maker)

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* The Building Support for International Development study was funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. However, the interviewees were not informed of this and any reference to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation was thus incidental.
While non-profit organisations play an influential role in the policymaking process on international development issues, few individuals from this sector stand out as prominent champions of development issues, who can connect with diverse audiences.

Government decision-makers were asked to name the individuals that they view as current or potential champions for development issues and global health. The only representative of the non-profit sector who was often mentioned alongside national politicians as an effective champion of international development was the co-founder of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill Gates. He was mentioned by the government decision-makers across the four countries and is perceived as having sufficient knowledge, credibility and the power to effectively engage with policymakers in donor countries and governments of developing countries on one hand, and holding sufficient star power to inspire the general public on the other.

“We naturally think of Bill Gates [as a development champion]. He launched GAVI and he is now the advocate of international cooperation for development aid. George Soros has also written on innovative funding or public health issues and the promotion of international public assets. They are not from the international cooperation milieu. These can be people who are an important connection with the general public and can mobilise the international public opinion.”
– (French government decision-maker)

“I think [Bill] Gates and [WHO Director-General Margaret] Chan talk to widely different audiences. There is a bit of an overlap with the global health community; the multilateral aid community listens to both of them. On the other hand, the public at large would know who Bill Gates is, but would not have a clue who Margaret Chan is.”
– (UK government decision-maker)

The Importance of Interpersonal Networks

While government decision-makers and non-profit organisations draw on a variety of different channels and tools to communicate and engage with each other, the importance of personal and professional networks cannot be overstated. These represent government decision-makers’ most trusted, and often the most immediate channel, for obtaining, sharing and verifying the information on development issues they obtain from other sources. Entering these well-established networks may be challenging for younger and smaller non-profit organisations, particularly those with a modest presence on the ground, whose ability to supply policymakers with regular, up-to-date feedback from developing countries is limited.

“I’m in Zeit Stiftung and Draeger Stiftung. There are various foundations and these are very important contacts that you have and from whom you can get information in case of doubt. There are regular meetings with guests and a network has been created, which is very important for information.”
– (German government decision-maker)

Decision-makers also engage with non-profits face-to-face through regular formal meetings, conferences or working groups focusing on development issues and bilateral cooperation agreements. They also receive information passively via newsletters, detailed analytical reports and briefings, or directly on their online portals. However, communication via these more passive channels is often managed by the junior staff, who act as information gatekeepers for government decision-makers, and is typically considerably less effective than face-to-face interaction.

“They (non-profit organisations) provide briefings etc. When you go on their websites they regularly update their databases to give you some ideas about what’s going on in the areas and the countries they’re involved in. It’s a two-way process; they’ll write to us, but we can also contact them by using their website.”
– (UK government decision-maker)

“We have direct contact with NGOs or federations of NGOs. For example, there is an NGO evaluation committee managing diverse issues for the French Development Agency (AFD), which has eight members, who are all representatives of federations or NGOs specialised in development.”
– (French government decision-maker)
Government decision-makers across the four countries struggle with information overload and often criticise non-profit organisations that flood them with materials that are not specific, concise or are of a speculative nature. Unsolicited materials that are not targeted to their area of interest and come from unknown sources are often ignored or intercepted by junior staff, who filter the information on government decision-makers’ behalf.

“I’ve had to work the hours of 10 minutes, if I’m at my desk, and if I’m not rushing off to something I’ll have a look at the e-mail and I’ll read a briefing from the thousand and one organisations that send me stuff. But actually, it’s not a great route as a channel for me to see stuff.”

- (German government decision-maker)

“I think it’s important to make sure that the agenda is not driven by narrow lobby groups. Those lobby groups may be able to show results in what they’re lobbying for, and that’s not to say those aren’t worthy causes. It’s just saying that actually we need to make sure the government’s agenda is driven by big picture issues, rather than being diverted into putting resources into the smaller other issues that are important, but less important.”

- (U.K. government decision-maker)

Some of these views and concerns expressed by the government decision-makers were also shared by the influentials, whose opinions are discussed in more detail in the next section.
2 Influentials

2.1 Overview

Non-profit organisations, particularly large international NGOs and donor-country foundations, represent an important source of detailed analysis of development issues and objective and robust data for influentials across China, France, Germany, the U.K. and the U.S. The data-based evidence is valued particularly by influentials from the academic sector, who are sceptical of non-profit organisations that do not base their advocacy initiatives or development programs on robust research.

Due to their financial power, expertise and innovative approach to addressing development challenges, influentials identify the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as the world's leading non-profit organisation with significant power to influence the global development agenda, particularly in the global health sector. Large international NGOs, such as Oxfam, are also valued for their ability to provide fast and regular feedback on developments on the ground from a wide range of countries, and support influentials with detailed analysis of specific development issues.

Overall, the views expressed by influentials were not country specific, thus the findings in this section are organised thematically rather than by country.

2.2 Benefits of non-profit organisations

Influentials from a diverse range of sectors turn to non-profit organisations primarily for detailed, expert analysis of specific development issues they work on, and to gain access to objective, robust data and other research-based evidence, relevant to their area of work.

Large international NGOs and donor-country foundations, particularly Oxfam and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, are – aside from the U.N., the World Bank and other multilateral organisations – the primary sources of this information, as they are seen as some of the few non-profits with sufficient financial and operational capability to support such large-scale research studies. The importance of grounding development initiatives in research-based evidence was emphasised particularly by influentials from academic organisations, who believed that non-profits' programmatic initiatives and advocacy efforts are often undermined by being grounded in unreliable, anecdotal and vague information.

"I subscribe to the World Bank newsletters. [I also get information from] reliable official websites, such as WHO, UNFPA, UNDP and the World Bank. I trust reliable NGOs, but if an NGO is new to me, I don't trust it."

– (Chinese influential)

"I would say we rely on the usual suspects. Anything that the World Bank and the regional banks publish is obviously very useful to us, as well as anything done by the traditional researchers, such as the British ODI and Oxfam, which is certainly an extremely reliable and credible source of information, and has been for a very long time. There are also many other sources, for example certain specialised groups that do research in the areas that I cover; for instance, when I am looking for information on natural resources, I would go to one of the [specialised] NGOs, like the IIED."

– (French influential)

"I often look at different charities and what they are doing, particularly in the research area; organisations like Christian Aid, Oxfam or Action Aid, any of the big ones. I keep an eye on their publications, because there is always a lot of good research going on."

– (U.K. influential)

Influentials across the four western donor countries also regularly engage with a plethora of other, smaller non-profit organisations, in order to keep up with the latest developments in their specific area of work, develop and maintain professional networks and stay informed about the realities on the ground in developing countries. Non-profit organisations believe influentials are considerably more responsive and faster in providing information on developments on the ground than multilateral organisations such as the U.N. or the World Bank.

On the other hand, Chinese influentials' engagement with non-profits tends to be much more limited and they prefer to rely on inter-governmental sources (U.N., the World Bank) or Chinese national research institutes and academic organisations. Oxfam, the Red Cross and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation were some of the few non-profit organisations cited by Chinese influentials as sources of information and influence with respect to their decision-making, in addition to a small number of Chinese domestic NGOs, such as the All-China Women's Federation and China Youth Development Foundation.

"Our most reliable source on any given country's situation are NGOs reports. They are humanitarian actors and their reports are more factual. There's no journalistic aspect, just direct reports on situations."

– (French influential)

"If something major happens or if there's a prominent development then I will tend to look at the big charity websites like Oxfam, Christian Aid and read the charity blogs, to find out a bit more about the facts and what's happening on the ground."

– (U.K. influential)
Most frequently cited non-profit organisations by influentials in China, France, Germany, the U.K. and the U.S.

* The size of the bar indicates the relative number of times that each non-profit organisation was mentioned.
The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation was singled out by a number of influentials across all five countries as the most prominent and effective non-profit organisation focusing on development issues, particularly in the area of global health.

The Foundation, as well as Bill Gates and Melinda Gates themselves, are viewed by influentials as development pioneers, who have transformed the development field, and improved effectiveness of development initiatives through their entrepreneurial, innovative and results-driven approach in this sector, challenging some of the methods traditionally applied by development organisations.

Influentials also recognise that a combination of the Foundation’s financial power, the ability to attract highly skilled and experienced staff, and high profile and charismatic founders, also enables them to effectively engage with government decision-makers as well as raise awareness of development issues among the general public.

“If you were thinking of who’s really influencing this government, you’d probably think of organisations like the [Bill & Melinda] Gates Foundation. They certainly seem to carry a lot of clout with politicians and policymakers across a lot of development issues.”
- (U.K. influential)

“Bill and Melinda Gates are really pushing the envelope in encouraging other wealthy individuals and organisations to contribute their wealth in a way that no one really has done yet. I think that’s phenomenal.”
- (U.S. influential)

“Someone like Bill Gates as an individual has driven forward the health agenda, for example, the vaccine campaigns. There are of course discussions about the ‘super-rich’ giving something back to society, but personally I would single out Bill Gates here. I know that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is active in many other areas, but I mainly associate him with the area of health.”
- (German influential)

“The organisation that caught my attention in a positive way in the last few years is the [Bill & Melinda] Gates Foundation. I have the feeling that they have good advisors. When I look at their projects and their main focus then it seems they are very close to the real problems, and they also drive less on the emotional track than other organisations.”
- (German influential)

“The Bill [& Melinda] Gates Foundation funds public health organisations to use commercial approaches to develop strategies. When we form development strategies we have to consider the cost and the benefit; otherwise we just keep pouring money into a moulding plan without any justifiable output and productivity. The Bill [& Melinda Gates] Foundation supports NGOs, but at the same time also asks to see real output and impact of their financial investment.”
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- (French influential)
While government decision-makers struggle with information overload and tend to primarily focus on digesting information received from non-profit organisations that is pre-filtered by their junior staff, influentials take a more active approach to information gathering. Aside from relying heavily on their professional networks to keep them up-to-date with developments in the field, influentials tend to actively seek information provided by non-profits on their websites and blogs, or subscribe to their newsletters or email alerts. Influentials, unlike government decision-makers, also tend to be more open to accepting information from new sources to obtain a fresh perspective on their issues of interest.

Participation in professional networks and associations of non-profit organisations is considered vital for developing relationships with other experts and advancing the development agenda, as are formal bilateral agreements with non-profit organisations. It is interesting to note that, aside from Chinese influentials, who often rely on their domestic non-profit organisations, influentials in western donor countries tend to have well established links with donor-country NGOs or foundations. On the other hand, despite their openness to new information sources to obtain fresh alternative points of view, they rarely engage with non-profits based in developing countries.

“I’m a member of various networks, for example, women networks, such as the Open Forum, Open Forum and Better Aid keep me informed about the AIDS discussions that are happening. Women in Development Europe is an organisation that keeps me informed about the issues and activities focusing on women and I’m also on the BOND e-mail list.”
– (U.K. influential)

“There are of course my personal contacts. These include the personnel at the embassy, and international development specialists from OECD, UNESCO and many NGOs.”
– (French influential)

“We have had projects with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung about centralisation in Africa. We’re in contact with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, basically with all political foundations that have delegates in developing countries. We’re working with the WWF and the [Bill & Melinda] Gates Foundation. Since I’m responsible for many topics and countries, the list of cooperation partners is huge.”
– (German influential)

A minority of influentials, largely from the academic sector, are sceptical of non-profit organisations, including faith-based organisations, and the quality of the information and counsel they provide. They believe their input is often based on biased information, and tends to be emotionally charged and agenda driven.

“[NGOs] are not very important to be honest because, coming from an academic background, we tend to go for much more transparent, more formalised approaches. The trouble if you listen to NGOs is that they all have their own agenda and I wouldn’t place much emphasis on liaising with lobbying groups. I wouldn’t necessarily take what they say at face value.”
– (U.K. influential)

“I believe very little of what big charity organisations and the churches say. They tend to dramatise terribly and emotionalise certain subjects.”
– (German influential)
Interested Citizens

3.1 Overview

Interested citizens across the five countries generally do not consider non-profit organisations as prominent sources of information on development issues, but instead turn to them primarily to access opportunities for personal engagement in development, through activities such as donating, volunteering and fundraising.

However, Chinese interested citizens, in particular, often speak of a lack of opportunities of such engagement. In part, this is due to their own focus on domestic issues, but due to a relatively limited number of high profile non-profit organisations in China that support international development efforts and allow the general public to engage in their activities.

Humanitarian and disaster relief efforts typically draw the widest engagement in non-profit organisations across the five countries, which interested citizens support primarily through donations. However, many interested citizens express scepticism about the effectiveness of such financial contributions and are concerned that much of the aid is wasted, either due to corruption in developing countries, or the perceived inefficiency of non-profit organisations.

3.2 Benefits of non-profit organisations

Non-profits, particularly implementing NGOs and faith-based organisations, act as key points of engagement in international development issues for interested citizens across the five countries, providing them with volunteering, donating and fundraising opportunities in support of development causes. The least burdensome activities, such as donating, attract the largest participation, while those requiring greater effort and time investment are popular particularly among the young. Citizens’ engagement in these activities, and the barriers and facilitators of such engagement, are analysed in more detail in the main report, Building Support for International Development: Results and recommendations from a multi-country study aimed at understanding and communicating with key policy constituencies.

Interested citizens who support development causes by engaging in activities facilitated by non-profit organisations emphasise the need for regular feedback on the impact of these activities, to encourage long-term engagement.

“Amnesty International is really a totally independent organisation, they have specially trained and very strict auditors, and the funds are dealt with in total transparency. Moreover, I regularly receive Amnesty’s newsletter and on the last page they have good news as in, ‘so and so in such place has been freed’, ‘we have succeeded in finding a lawyer for so and so’, ‘a death penalty has been lifted and turned into a jail sentence,’ etc. So it’s small steps, but they are all visible results.”

- (French interested citizen)

With regard to individual non-profit organisations that interested citizens engage with through donating, volunteering and fundraising, the Red Cross was the only non-profit organisation that was regularly mentioned by interested citizens across the five countries, typically in relation to disaster relief efforts. Donor-country foundations, on the other hand, are not top of mind for interested citizens and are rarely cited as either sources of information or points of engagement in international development issues.
Most frequently cited non-profit organisations by interested citizens in China, France, Germany, the U.K. and the U.S.

* The size of the bar indicates the relative number of times that each non-profit organisation was mentioned.
Limited Opportunities in China

Interested citizens who participated in focus group discussions in China often spoke of limited opportunities to engage in non-profit organisations that support international development efforts. The NGOs they most frequently donated to or volunteered for typically focused on local development challenges and domestic disaster relief efforts. The only non-profit organisation many believed they were able to engage in to support international causes, was the Red Cross.

“I have joined the Red Cross, and the Red Cross does not have a border. From that point of view, you can say this is international volunteerism.”

– (Chinese interested citizen)

“We also want to care about differences in poverty globally, but we do not have a suitable channel at present. The Red Cross may have such channel, and may be able to donate to foreign countries, however, we have no ability to donate directly to foreign countries.”

– (Chinese interested citizen)

“There are large international organisations; they do not have national borders, for example the Red Cross. Even if their own countries have poverty, they will come to their assistance. It does not matter if it is a developed country or if there is a massive natural disaster, they will be there to help; I think that is very fair.”

– (Chinese interested citizen)

Non-profits Not Seen As A Key Source On Development Issues

Non-profit organisations are not considered a prominent source of information for interested citizens. Instead, most of them receive information on international development passively through mainstream media. Only a small proportion of highly engaged citizens occasionally seek out information on issues of interest from the websites of non-profit organisations, or subscribe to their email-updates or newsletters. Some interested citizens, particularly in the U.K. and the U.S., also recalled seeing advertisements by non-profit organisations on TV and in the mainstream press.

“You see there is quite a lot [of TV advertisements], especially during the day. I work part-time so if I am flicking through the TV and I do see a lot of charity organisations advertised during the day, particularly on Sky and similar channels. ActionAid are on TV talking about donating and showing how they are building villages.”

– (U.K. influential)

Concerns About Wasted Donations, Competing Priorities And Ineffective Strategies

Some interested citizens, particularly in the four western donor countries, are sceptical of how efficiently non-profit organisations spend the donations that they receive. Participants of the focus groups are concerned that a large share of donations to non-profit organisations do not reach the intended recipients and is wasted on administration and marketing, or lost due to widespread corruption in the recipient countries.

“That’s one of the things I look at, is how much of the money that I’m donating is really going to go to help people. Unfortunately, the Red Cross is one of the worst ones. They came close to losing their non-profit status for a while; they were only using 30 cents out of every dollar to help people.”

– (U.S. interested citizen)

“Sometimes NGOs should be leveraging the resources that are already on the ground in the country to do whatever they are doing. A lot of the times they just end up doing the same thing, having a “band-aid” approach on major issues and just repeating the same thing over and over, using approaches that aren’t sustainable, simply because they’ve done it for the last 20 years. If you leave, everything is going to collapse. So a lot of the NGOs really are just old and archaic, and really need to begin using strategies that the people in those countries can relate to. You can’t just take something from the West and plop it down in a developing country and expect it to work like it does in the West. It’s not organic to that place, so it’s not going to work as smoothly as it’s working here.”

– (U.S. interested citizen)
Non-profit organisations are clearly recognised by government decision-makers, influentials and interested citizens as unique and vital members of the international development community. They play a key role in the policymaking and information-gathering process, connecting decision-making elites with the citizens in the donor countries as well as recipient countries, and enabling the citizens to engage in supporting development causes.

However, the motivations and channels through which each of these three target groups connects with non-profit organisations vary significantly. Any strategies for optimising engagement with these audiences require highly tailored approaches that must take into account each target group’s specific needs, as well as their concerns with regard to non-profit organisations, including:

- The interested citizens’ calls for evidence of the positive impact that donations as well as other forms of activities (fundraising, volunteering, etc.) are making in developing countries;
- The interested citizens’ concerns about wasted donations and excessive use of funds for bureaucratic purposes;
- The government decision-makers’ and the influentials’ appetites for up-to-date, objective data and regular feedback from the field; and
- The government decision-makers’ reluctance to accept information and policy advice from non-profits that are seen as having hidden agendas.

III. CONCLUSION
ABOUT INTERMEDIA

InterMedia (www.intermedia.org) is a global research and consulting group providing strategic guidance and insight on effective engagement and networking strategies online and offline. A not-for-profit social enterprise, InterMedia equips clients to communicate and connect effectively with communities worldwide.

Based in Nairobi, Kenya; Washington, D.C.; and London, U.K.; InterMedia has worked in more than 100 developing countries. InterMedia research experts use innovative techniques to understand how information, communication and media resources can deliver impact.


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You can share reactions to the Building Support study as well as exchange ideas with interested parties and stakeholders in the global development policy community on InterMedia’s Building Support Portal at www.audiencescapes.org/buildsupport and on Twitter at #supportfordev.