

Analysis of the development of China's NGOs

Wang Ming and Jia Xijin

Tackled from three facets, the article illustrates the authors' standpoints on the development of China's NGOs. The authors state that the term NGO refers to those social organisations which neither aim to be profit making nor belong to any governmental bodies, but nevertheless enjoy the status of formal organisation. They are, to a certain extent, self-governing, voluntary, public-serving and mutually beneficial. Acting as social organisations of a transitional nature in a mutating era, China's NGOs encompass, in a broad sense, the following structures: membership-based non-profit organizations, operating organisations (foundations), community-serving organisations (private non-profit organisations), mutual aid societies¹ (of an economic or social nature), a variety of unregistered organisations and those registered with a different status, together with public service units and people's organisations existing in a transitional period. These social groups, labelled NGOs, play an active role in the social, economic, cultural and political arenas of the country in its transitional period. They are particularly vibrant in domains such as social services, environmental protection, the alleviation of poverty, trade co-ordination and policy advocacy. Yet, for the most part they also face challenges such as lack of resources, skills and autonomy, as well as erratic developments. The authors believe that the problems are fourfold: first, an absence of fundamental values; second, loopholes in the institutional structures; third, lack of conviction within the NGOs; and lastly, the time lag between rapid social developments and sluggish administrative reforms. On examining six areas of development for Chinese NGO, the authors suggest two possible ways forward for them: their empowerment by the state (the way to autonomy) or taking control of themselves (the way to independence).

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¹ A mutual aid society is an [organization](#) or [voluntary association](#) formed to provide [mutual aid](#), benefit or [insurance](#) for relief from sundry difficulties. Such organizations may be formally organized with charters and established customs, or may arise ad hoc to meet unique needs of a particular time and place. (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benefit_society)

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