

# Non-governmental organizations as a subject to provide social assistance to the population

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Received: September 03, 2020 | Revised: September 13, 2020 | Accepted: September 30, 2020

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4539885

## Abstract

This article explores the role of non-governmental organizations in realization of social work, the types of services and the challenges faced by non-governmental organizations when working with people, analyzed the cooperation of non-governmental organizations with government agencies to improve the quality of social services in Ukraine. The activity of public and non-governmental organizations is analyzed according to their typical status. The focus on meeting the needs of society is determined. The conditions under which a non-governmental organization assumes the functions of the state are defined.

**Key words:** non-governmental organization, “third sector”, Social Work.

## Introduction

A difficult period of political and social developments, economic instability experienced by Ukraine nowadays have affected the development of new forms of community participation in solving the social problems. Given the current economic and political environment, the Ukrainian state often evades

addressing a wide range of issues related to the lives of the disadvantaged, engaging only in their social protection. Therefore, the role of public organizations, associations and groups of individuals, in particular those that unite representatives from various social policy entities is increasingly growing.

## Material and methods

The activity of public organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in accordance with their status is aimed at meeting the needs of their members. In particular, it is implied that an NGO assumes functions that the state cannot or is reluctant to perform. Among the scientists and researchers studying public, non-governmental organizations in the social sphere and their role in social services, we can point to, R. Kravchenko, N. Kabachenko, O. Vasylichenko (representatives of the School of Social Work named after V. Poltavets), O. Sidorenko (a representative of the Center for Innovation and Development). In addition, these issues have been elaborated in the researches of

T. Semigina, I. Mygovych, P. Zhovnireno and others (Zhovnireno, 2017).

Taking into account the relevance of development, existence and activity of public, non-governmental organizations in social services, social protection and delivery of social services to the population, we aim to:

to define the terms “public organization” and “non-governmental organization”;

consider the types of social services delivered by public organizations and the challenges they face in carrying out the social work;

to analyze the forms of NGO’s cooperation with the local self-government bodies.

Considering non-governmental organizations and their social activities, firstly, we have to

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define the terms of a “public organization” and a “non-governmental organization”. The definition of a public organization is enshrined in the Article 3 of the Law of Ukraine “On the Association of Citizens”, under which “a public organization is an association of citizens to meet and protect their legitimate social, economic, creative, age, national, cultural, sports and other common interests”. (Law of Ukraine “On Associations of Citizens”, 2007).

The Ukrainian literature regards “public organizations” as voluntary citizens’ formations,

set up as a result of their free will to express collective interests and to address public issues and challenges. The term “public organizations” is common for the Ukrainian scientific literature and practice, and it is practically absent or is only occasionally used in foreign legal literature and regulations.

Abroad, the terms “unions”, “associations”, “alliances”, etc. are mostly used (Beschastnyi, 2018).

## **Results and discussion**

The multidimensional activities of non-governmental organizations have led to the fact that there is no uniform definition of a non-governmental organization in the scientific literature. Thus, British researcher P. Riding suggests the following definitions:

1) a self-governing association of people who seek to achieve mutual benefit through joint actions;

2) an organization established on a voluntary basis;

3) a social force, which ensures integration of individuals into the society, promotes unity and cohesion of the society;

4) a way to relieve tension between the needs of the community, social policy and social services delivery (Galaburda, 2017).

Teachers and scientists of the School of Social Work named after V. Poltavets suggest the following understanding of a non-governmental organization in the social sphere as a non-profit, non-state, non-commercial organization declaring as its mission providing a solution to general social problems or a solution to the problems of individual groups (Galaburda, 2017).

The “third sector” term is also used, mostly in the United States, where there are two other commonly defined sectors: public and profitable. At the level of individual states, specific terms are commonly used: non-governmental organizations (NGOs), non-profit sector – for the United States, Vereine – for Germany.

The formation of Ukraine as a social and democratic state is closely linked to the development of the private sector. The role of public and charitable organizations in such spheres as human rights protection, health care, education, social protection of the population, ecology, culture, etc. is growing. Recently the third sector of the modern civil society has been playing an important role in the implementation of the Ukrainian social policy. It is a non-state, non-governmental, non-profit, independent, non-commercial, charitable sector of voluntary activity. These are non-governmental, non-budget, non-profit organizations dealing mostly in the spheres of culture, health care, education, social assistance, housing and communal services, sports, etc. (Galaburda, 2017).

Many people to whom the state guarantees a right for social assistance (social services) apply to non-governmental organizations helping them to overcome their difficulties and maintain social activity. In this case the state does not fulfill its obligations to these people. To overcome the social risks, the social services system must respond quickly and adequately to the demand and changes in people's needs. This requires new approaches, diversification of resources, expansion of the range of service providers. In addition to the state bodies, the social services in Ukraine are also provided by public organizations.

According to the law, the state sector includes such entities providing social services to children, youth and women, as: executive bodies, local governments, centers of social

services for children, families and youth, children's services and other services and institutions of state or communal ownership.

The non-governmental sector of social services is less varied. Abroad, in each country, the social policy is pursued by the relevant non-governmental infrastructure organizations: bodies of social partnership systems, non-governmental (non-profit) organizations, foundations. Issues of the social sphere of Ukraine are dealt with by non-governmental non-profit organizations, which according to the legislation of Ukraine can be of the following forms: public organizations, charitable organizations, charitable foundations, credit unions.

These NGOs have chosen the following social missions (in percentage of the total number of NGOs): protection of interests and their lobbying – 2.9%, work with youth – 5.4%, work with women – 3%, protection of interests and work with veterans – 3.4%, sociological survey – 0.6%, charity – 1.8%, assistance to the elderly, pensioners – 2.8%, the Chernobyl accident solving issues – 2%, health care – 6.8%, solving issues of families, children, orphans – 7.6%, solving issues of the disabled – 7.8% (Vovk, 2019).

Besides giving the opportunity of civic engagement, these non-profit associations offer jobs for a certain group of people, provide socially essential services to the disabled, large families, low-income and other socially vulnerable categories of citizens, thus reducing the pressure on the state budget. It is mostly through these organizations that domestic business structures and international donors provide funds for the implementation of social projects in Ukraine.

The Center for Strategic Studies points that almost all non-political and non-profit public associations in Ukraine can be broadly divided into the following categories: "club for communication", "battle zero", "sect", "yes – organization", profitable NGOs, "the so-called NGOs", NGOs (Vovk, 2017). Since early XXI century the number of public associations in Ukraine has been growing steadily and rapidly. In 2000 there were about 300 organizations in Ukraine, in 2015 – more than 18 thousand, and

in 2019 – about 27 thousand. Meanwhile at the beginning of the XXI century there appeared the so-called "resource centers" – public organizations aimed to provide services and various types of free assistance to other public organizations. Depending on the territory covered by the activities of the public organizations the legislation of Ukraine envisages associations of citizens enjoying national, local and international status.

About 40% of the organizations extend their activities to a single city, and only 8% have all-Ukrainian and international status. This fact indicates a high degree of interest, primarily, in the local affairs, in the arrangement of the nearest living space, opening broad prospects for cooperation between the public sector and the local governments.

Nowadays there is a fairly extensive legal framework for the provision of social services, but it contains significant gaps and contradictions in the provision of the social services by the NGOs. This situation does not contribute to the development of social services in the private sector. We must admit that the list of types of services provided by the NGOs is quite short. The delivery of social services is mainly focused on providing material (financial) assistance to young people, children and women who find themselves in difficult life circumstances. Other services are provided to a lesser extent (Shevchuk, 2019).

The provision of social services in Ukraine has traditionally been the prerogative of the state. However, one cannot ignore the existence of non-governmental organizations, which are capable and mostly meet the demand for social services in the community. The non-governmental organizations can rightfully play a leading role in delivering social services at the community level. The NGOs respond to social needs by an average of five years faster than public ones. These organizations are often the first to be involved in solving new social problems. Due to their mobility and creative approaches, they are capable to identify and meet the needs of various vulnerable groups of citizens, while promoting the development of competitive social services.

In their work, the NGOs are guided by the expectations and interests of their clients, have an extensive experience in helping them, and enjoy the trust of local communities. Due to close proximity to the customers, the NGO's can perform specific functions which the state either cannot perform or their arrangement will require significant administrative and financial resources. Delivering services through an independent contractor rather than through the government agencies is more effective because the NGOs seek to use the most efficient management and pay. The NGOs can exploit such resources as volunteer work, the members' initiative and activity, psychological support based on the "equal to equal" principle, alternative financial resources in the form of donations, grants, membership fees. They may invest the revenues from their own activities to develop social services.

Thus, the role of non-governmental non-profit organizations in the implementation of the state policy to reform the social services system is increasing. The most typical functions that a non-governmental organization can perform in this system are the following:

- a direct targeted provision of social services at the community level;

- a study of the customers' needs and expectations;

- an information collection on the demand for services as well as changes in the community social situation;

- involvement in forming the local social programs and social services development planning at the local level;

- ensuring the public control over the social services quality and effectiveness of local social programs.

As a rule, the public organizations and charitable foundations statutes define the main activities such as representation of interests and assistance to their members or charitable activities. The most typical activities of the Ukrainian NGOs are the protection of rights and interests of certain social groups, lobbying, training and counseling, education and dissemination of information to the public, addressing social issues, educational activities.

The range of the NGO services covers the following social areas: solving disability problems, working with children and youth, helping families with disabled children, preventing negative phenomena among young people, combating the HIV /AIDS epidemic, working with the homeless and shelterless, mental health protection, etc.

A vivid example is the All-Ukrainian NGO Coalition on Protection of the Rights of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, which unites 84 regional entities providing services to people with intellectual disabilities and their families. Of these, 60 are non-state. However, in Ukraine only 20% of the non-governmental organizations solving the social problems receive financial support from the authorities (on average 17% of the total budget of these organizations). 10% receive revenues from commercial activities, such as social entrepreneurship. The average income obtained from such activities accounts for 4% of the organizations budget.

The comparison can be exemplified by the figures on the NGOs different sources of funding in the developed countries. Thus, the UK non-governmental service organizations receive 26% funding from the state with their own revenues amounting to 35%. The Finnish NGOs obtain up to 57% of the public spending and up to 38% of their own revenues (Sidelnik, 2019).

Despite the fact that the authorities formally recognize an important role of non-governmental organizations in solving social problems, the social services state procurement is actually carried out exclusively from the state institutions. The NGO projects state funding extends only to a limited number, namely: organizations for the disabled, veterans, youth and children's public organizations. Organizations dealing with large families or the terminally ill, in particular, are not eligible for governmental funding. Experts have pointed out that a limited involvement of the non-governmental organizations in the social services market and the low level of state social services hinder the solution of urgent social problems.

The researchers have identified the current legislation gaps preventing the NGOs from engagement in the social services market. These

gaps include restrictions on the types and scope of activities of the public organizations envisaged by the Law “On Associations of Citizens”; lack of a single list of social services and target groups to which they are guaranteed; lack of universal standards of social services establishing equal requirements for the services and entities, regardless of their form of ownership.

Among the financial barriers to the non-governmental organizations access to the social services market, the experts attributed a lack of budget allocations for financing the non-governmental organizations’ services; unclear licensing conditions for professional activities in the delivery of social services; a lack of benefits for socially beneficial activities, etc. (Sidelnik, 2019).

The formation and development of the non-governmental sector as a whole in Ukraine is not easy. The activity of non-governmental organizations is complicated by a number of issues in financial, technical, informational, and

personnel support. The NGOs need cooperation with the government agencies and other public organizations to successfully achieve the declared tasks. The state social policy measures have to ensure functioning of the most structures enabling the provision of the quality social services. Such agencies can be communal institutions and non-governmental organizations.

It is necessary to achieve a balance of power between the state owning the resources and the entities having knowledge and ideas to solve specific social problems. The state has to learn to devolve the powers to the private sector, to establish mechanisms of support to the public initiatives at the local level. The principle of subsidiarity of the state services (at the community level) should be crucial in building relations between the state and independent non-governmental organizations in the social sphere.

## **Conclusions**

The state should not set up new state institutions if there are already non-governmental organizations providing such services. They should only be ordered from these suppliers. The most important condition for this mechanism functioning is a quality legal basis. Ukraine’s existing legal basis is not always conducive to the non-governmental sector. For effective cooperation of the NGOs with the governmental agencies and improving the quality of social services delivery to the population, the following points should be taken into account:

- to develop a set of national regulations on minimal standards of social services;

- to develop a regulatory framework for social procurements;

- to staff the system with a professional personnel;

- to improve the training of specialists for the services and institutions delivering social services;

- to elaborate a procedure for professional development and accreditation of specialists of the social institutions of all forms of ownership;

- to develop requirements for the specialists’ qualification level, regardless of the form of ownership and subordination of the entities.

- to introduce a system of social workers’ training at the workplace, including a specialization in working with certain groups of clients;

- to develop a system of social services quality and efficiency indicators with their further introduction in the general state system of control over the implementation of social programs. Monitoring the methods and performance indicators should be based on the aspects of life improvement quality of the clients receiving such services;

- to develop and implement a methodology for studying the needs of local communities in social services;

- to plan the social procurement and the appropriate provision of the services in the community based on the identified needs;

- to conduct training of the local government officials on identifying the needs of the community and planning the social services, etc.

In addition, the NGOs provide good opportunities for self-realization of the citizens, advocate flexibility and innovation, call for reforms, and adapt quickly to the changes. However, the “third sector” of Ukraine is still in a transitional period of development, characterized by insufficient institutionalization and financial instability, causing a rather unstable work of the public organizations.

#### **Prospects for further research**

1. In the future, public sector research is important. Undoubtedly, the problems faced by the non-governmental sector during a period of establishment of an organization, conducting its

activities in the society, delivering services, in particular, the social services, affect the level and quality of the services provided by the public organizations, successful implementation of all statutory kinds of activities.

2. The contribution of NGOs to the development of the civil society in Ukraine is becoming increasingly important. This is evidenced not only by their growing number each year, but also by the experience gained while carrying out this activity, by their developments and achievements. Research continues in this direction.

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