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THE IMPORTANCE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS  
IN MAINTAINING SOCIAL STABILITY IN MONGOLIA

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN MAINTAINING SOCIAL STABILITY IN MONGOLIA

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## ABSTRACT

The involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is crucial for social stability and can achieve high results at low costs. NGOs make significant contributions to social development in areas such as community engagement, human rights protection, education, environmental conservation, and social services. However, their activities face numerous challenges, necessitating effective strategies to overcome these obstacles and enhance their impact on social stability. To support and strengthen the importance and participation of NGOs in ensuring social stability in Mongolia, it is essential to emphasize social cooperation, government support, and public involvement. By analyzing the operational focus and current status of NGOs in Mongolia, we can identify and implement ways to improve their importance and contributions to social stability, which will serve as a foundation for the country's internal security. The relationship between the government, businesses, and NGOs is interdependent, and when they work together effectively, the nation can achieve development. NGOs, established by citizens, contribute to building a culture of cooperation that empowers the country and is considered the third largest sector in social development. Thus, NGOs should operate with sustainable, consistent, and unified characteristics to positively impact social stability. Moving forward, it is crucial for government policies to facilitate the growth of civil society in Mongolia by ensuring equal participation and consultation in governance. This will enhance the capacity and stability of NGOs while increasing their benefits and development through support from national and local governments.

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## KEYWORDS

Social Stability, Internal Security, Non-Governmental Organizations, NGO Importance, NGO Participation

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### **Introduction.**

In any country, NGOs play a vital importance in promoting social development, increasing public participation in societal issues, and addressing social problems. The National Security Concept of Mongolia (2010) states that "Ensuring human rights and freedoms, reinforcing constitutional governance, upholding the rule of law, preserving the continuity of the Mongolian state, and maintaining national unity while strengthening state management, supporting the development of political parties, civil society organizations, and free media, as well as ensuring social order and stability, are fundamental to internal security".

According to Mongolia's national security concept, social stability encompasses:

- The maturity of political parties as a cornerstone of a democratic system, supporting internal democracy, and enhancing the responsibilities of the state and society. It aims to coordinate and regulate political party activities and develop mechanisms for reaching consensus based on national interests.
- Promoting the development of civil society by ensuring equal participation and consultation of NGOs in policy-making and governmental oversight. It involves creating a supportive legal environment for NGOs serving society and fostering constructive cooperation between the government and civil society.
- Strengthening the independence and accountability of the media, establishing professional journalism ethics, and ensuring social stability.
- Preventing the erosion of law, order, discipline, and accountability, which can lead to disorder.

Social stability, fundamental to ensuring a country's internal security, relies on various factors, including the internal social structure, economic development, environmental protection, human rights safeguards, and the quality and accessibility of social services. These factors influence the development of creative methods and forms of cooperation between the government and civil society. Mongolia's social stability is dependent on multiple factors, with NGOs being a key component of civil society. NGOs engage in activities aimed at supporting social development, protecting human rights, and increasing public participation. They operate independently of the government, with a common goal of promoting the public good and are non-profit organizations.

Additionally, NGOs play a crucial importance in ensuring social stability by supporting public participation. They identify pressing social issues, listen to public opinions and needs, and focus on problem-solving. Therefore, this research aims to examine the role of NGOs in Mongolia's social stability, the challenges they face, and future trends.

### **Current status and trends of NGOs operating in Mongolia.**

The concept and terminology surrounding NGOs vary. Some researchers refer to them as non-profit organizations, while others use terms like civil society organizations or voluntary organizations. However, NGOs operating within the legal framework of a nation should ideally develop in relation to civic engagement and sincere initiatives.

In Mongolia, NGOs can be divided into two main categories: international and foreign NGO branches and representative offices, and NGOs established by Mongolian citizens.

As of today, there are 79 branches and representative offices of international and foreign NGOs (2023) operating in Mongolia. Based on their areas of activity, they can be categorized as follows:

1. Humanitarian activities - 17
2. Political activities - 2
3. Educational activities - 17
4. Social welfare activities - 12
5. Health-related activities - 8
6. Agricultural activities - 3
7. Environmental activities - 10
8. Economic activities - 10.

These NGOs adhere to the regulations outlined in the "Procedure for granting, extending, invalidating permits for the operation of branches and representative offices of international and foreign NGOs in Mongolia, and monitoring their activities" (2022). This research focuses on the operational areas, current status, importance in social stability, pressing issues, and development trends of civil society organizations that provide services to the community, established by Mongolian citizens, using document analysis and both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

The Constitution of Mongolia (1992) states, "The aim is to develop a humanitarian, civil, and democratic society in our homeland," and "Citizens of Mongolia have the right to establish political parties and other public organizations based on social and personal interests and beliefs, and to freely associate". Based on this fundamental regulation, efforts have been directed towards improving the legal environment to support civil society organizations and ensure their representative participation, resulting in the adoption and implementation of various policy documents.

The "National Security Concept of Mongolia" outlines that "Equal participation and consultation of NGOs in state policy formulation and oversight will support the maturation of civil society," and "We will create a legal environment that supports the activities of NGOs serving society and develop constructive methods and forms of cooperation between the state and civil society."

The law on non-governmental organizations of Mongolia, originally enacted in 1997, has undergone amendments in 1998, 2002, 2003, 2015, 2016, 2020, 2021, and 2024; however, there have been no fundamental changes in its content or principles. This law applies to all NGOs except for political parties, trade unions, and religious organizations. The law also applies equally to international and foreign NGOs, their branches, and representative offices operating in Mongolia. According to this law:

- A "non-governmental organization" is defined as a non-profit organization established voluntarily by citizens and legal entities other than state bodies (legislative, executive, and judicial authorities) to operate independently of the government based on their social and personal interests and beliefs.

- A "non-governmental organization serving society" is defined as an NGO that operates for the benefit of society in areas such as culture, arts, education, humanitarianism, science, health, sports, environmental development, human rights, and the interests of specific groups and layers of the population.

- A "member-serving non-governmental organization" refers to an NGO that serves its members and has as its main objective the protection of their legal interests, distinct from those that serve the broader society.

When registering, NGOs must specify in their regulations which of the two types they fall under, and they are registered accordingly with the national registry. Citizens of Mongolia, as well as legal entities other than state bodies, have the right to establish NGOs independently or in cooperation with others based on their interests and beliefs without obtaining permission from state authorities. Additionally, it is prohibited to unlawfully restrict citizens' rights to establish NGOs, to force individuals into NGOs, or to discriminate against individuals for joining or participating in NGOs, including limiting their rights and freedoms.

The activities of NGOs must be transparent to the public. Foreign citizens and stateless individuals who reside legally in Mongolia can establish NGOs or join existing NGOs according to the law on non-governmental organizations, unless otherwise specified by Mongolian law or international treaties.

The government of Mongolia considers "ensuring human development as the foundation of good governance" and has emphasized the strengthening of partnerships between civil society, the private sector, and the government in its long-term development policy document, "Vision 2050" (2020). A strong presence of NGOs contributes to making the government more open, transparent, and accountable, and enhances the accessibility of government services to citizens. Furthermore, NGOs play a crucial role in delivering services in environments where government services are lacking, raising public awareness, and fostering social change.

The number of NGOs in Mongolia has been rapidly increasing year by year. In 1996, 584 NGOs were registered with the Ministry of Justice; this number grew to 1,075 in 1998, 3,492 in 2005, 6,915 in 2010, 11,879 in 2015, 17,685 in 2017, 17,634 in 2018, and reached 24,276 by 2020, of which 10,806 were actively operating. Since 2013, the number of registered NGOs and those not engaged in activities has been increasing rapidly. The proportion of NGOs among all registered business entities rose from 5.7% in 1998 to 9.7% in 2020 (National statistics office, 2020).

Currently, there are a total of 23,614 registered NGOs in Mongolia, with just over 4,000 operating sustainably, while 83.0% do not operate regularly. The uneven activity of most NGOs can be explained from multiple perspectives, but the two main factors are related to funding and political influence. (Luvsan-Yondon.J.2023) It can be said that most civil society organizations have weak experience and capacity to secure funding at both domestic and international levels. As a result, they primarily rely on membership fees and donations for their main sources of funding, which often leads to financial instability and closures. Therefore, these organizations need to learn how to obtain funding at the international level. The majority of registered NGOs in Mongolia focus on improving public oversight of the government and providing services to society. The number of NGOs in this sector has increased by 2.2 times over the past five years. NGOs are focusing on the following issues:

1. Conducting policy analysis, participating in policy and decision-making processes, and conducting advocacy campaigns.

2. Monitoring the performance of government agencies, the activities of public servants, and ethical standards.

3. Creating social capital and helping citizens understand and express their values, beliefs, norms of civic relations, and practices of democracy.

4. Organizing specific groups of local citizens, particularly vulnerable and marginalized populations, to actively participate in political and social life and providing them with necessary services.

5. Contributing to deepening good governance through development activities aimed at improving the livelihoods of their members and other citizens.

Moreover, the importance of NGOs in Mongolia in providing humanitarian assistance, protecting human rights, ensuring appropriate levels of economic structure and quality of life, and creating social infrastructure is increasingly growing. At the same time, they play a crucial importance in educational outreach, such as:

- Identifying unresolved issues and drawing government attention to them,
- Protecting and ensuring human rights,
- Expressing citizens' interests regarding political, environmental, social, and local issues and conveying their voices to relevant organizations and officials.

#### **The importance, challenges, and obstacles of NGOs in social stability.**

"Social stability" refers to the sustainability of social structures, systems, relationships, and values, their proper functioning, and the stability of multifaceted interactions among the economy, environment, and culture. Social stability includes:

- Economic Stability: Economic growth, unemployment, income, and appropriate resource distribution.
- Social Justice: Equality among social groups, absence of discrimination, and the protection of human rights for all.
- Political Stability: Government policy, rule of law, civic engagement, and political peace.
- Environmental Stability: Sustainable resource use, environmental protection, and ecological balance.
- Cultural Stability: Preservation of societal values, customs, language, and traditions.

These factors play a crucial role in protecting social structures and improving the quality of life for citizens. Social stability enhances relationships among individuals, groups, and social organizations, promoting future development.

Social stability serves as a tool for indicating proper participation in society by utilizing theories of social integration, social control, and social importances. The domains of social stability provide meaning to life and reflect how individuals interact with and contribute to their environment. The ability to fulfill designated social importances creates certain requirements and expectations, which can limit movement but also offer social positioning and support. The concept of social roles is reflected in the most common metrics of social stability, which can be explained through specific criteria based on definitions of social stability. These criteria often include indicators related to employment, family, housing conditions, legal status, and mobility.

The forms of activities of non-governmental organizations serving society in Mongolia and the levels of administrative units are shown in Table 1.

*Table 1.*  
*Forms of activities of NGOs and administrative unit levels*

№	Forms of Activities	International	National	Province and Capital	District and Soum	Community (Bag and Khoroo)	Others
1	Training	81.1%	73.4%	75.6%	55.8%	26.5%	50.0%
2	Research	45.3%	53.6%	47.0%	20.4%	8.8%	37.5%
3	Consulting	47.2%	60.9%	57.2%	41.6%	20.6%	50.0%
4	Advocacy	28.3%	41.7%	41.7%	38.1%	23.5%	50.0%
5	Strategic Litigation	3.8%	7.8%	13.1%	8.0%	2.9%	25.0%
6	Assistance Services	28.3%	26.0%	47.7%	40.7%	73.5%	75.0%
7	Information Services	58.5%	55.7%	38.5%	30.1%	35.3%	62.5%
8	Advertising	18.9%	29.7%	24.4%	18.6%	2.9%	50.0%
9	Monitoring Government Activities and Services	9.4%	12.5%	7.8%	7.1%	-	12.5%
10	Oversight of National and Local Budgets	1.9%	4.7%	4.6%	1.8%	-	-
11	Others	1.9%	-	1.8%	0.9%	-	-

Source: "Research on the state of civil space and the need for a favorable legal environment to support it." 2021. Civil society consortium.

Organizations operating at the national and provincial levels are primarily engaged in training, research, consulting, advocacy, and information activities. NGOs operating at the community, district, and municipal levels typically provide assistance services along with relevant training, consulting, and information services.

However, NGOs focused on monitoring government services, budget oversight, advocacy, and related areas are quite few at any level. This may be related to the weaknesses in human resources and financial capacity of these NGOs. NGOs perform several common importances in promoting social stability, including:

1. Ensuring citizen participation and transparency: NGOs play a vital importance in ensuring social stability by supporting public engagement. They identify pressing societal issues and focus on listening to public opinions and requests to develop solutions. NGOs encourage active citizen participation in social activities and help raise awareness of social issues. Social movements, competitions, and training sessions aim to enhance people's knowledge and support active societal involvement. They listen to citizens' opinions, involve them in decision-making, and support solutions to social issues. Additionally, they actively work on national and international platforms to influence political decision-making and support legal reforms.

2. Protecting and ensuring human rights: NGOs are dedicated to protecting human rights and ensuring their enforcement and promotion. They raise their voices when human rights are violated and fight for justice and equality. NGOs conduct research on human rights violations, report them, and provide legal support within their framework. Their involvement significantly contributes to creating justice and equality in society.

3. Conducting educational and training activities: NGOs operate in the education and training sectors to improve citizens' education and enhance public knowledge. They organize training programs and seminars targeted at children, youth, women, and other groups to develop their skills and increase social participation. They also conduct research and disseminate knowledge and information about social issues, helping to educate and raise awareness.

4. Protecting the environment: NGOs work to protect the environment and promote sustainable development. They identify environmental issues and mobilize the public to address them through various activities. NGOs implement various projects and programs aimed at environmental protection and green development. Activities such as tree planting, waste recycling, and environmental education play a crucial role in ensuring environmental sustainability.

5. Providing social services: NGOs play a critical importance in offering social services and support to enhance the quality of social life. They provide a range of services aimed at reducing poverty, offering health care, mental health support, and educational services, thereby significantly impacting the normal functioning of society. They work to assist vulnerable social groups, protect their rights, and improve their quality of life.

6. Implementing Projects and Programs: NGOs participate in implementing projects and programs aimed at social stability, addressing economic, ecological, and social issues. They help strengthen cooperation and improve understanding among sectors such as the public, business, and government.

When comparing the activities of NGOs in Mongolia, the following pressing issues emerge. These are also mentioned in reports on studies conducted regarding the actions and capacities of NGOs:

- Funding issues: The operations of NGOs largely depend on donors, grants, and private financing. Insufficient funding can halt their activities, and when project funding ceases, it becomes impossible to maintain sustainable operations. This is evident from the activity reports and social insurance statements of many registered NGOs that do not operate continuously.

- Legal environment: The laws and regulations concerning the activities, registration, and oversight of NGOs frequently change, complicating their operations. In some cases, legal conflicts arise. For example, while the law on NGOs does not specify organizations like funds, associations, or cooperatives, these are explicitly defined in the Civil code and the Law on property tax. The use of these differing definitions creates legal contradictions, highlighting the need to improve the legal environment for NGOs.

- Lack of information: Insufficient information regarding social issues, projects, and programs diminishes the effectiveness of their activities. This lack of transparency can lead to the perception that NGO activities only become active around political election times due to unannounced project initiatives.

- Social expectations: Citizens have varying understandings and beliefs about NGOs. In some cases, instead of support, there is criticism and oversight. NGOs face challenges in using public information and advocacy tools to effectively communicate their activities. This leads to the perception that they do not provide the expected social services.

- Capacity issues: The capacity and professionalism of NGO staff can sometimes be inadequate, hindering the resolution of social issues. Internal management and organization within NGOs are crucial, as active participation and collaboration among members can enhance effectiveness. Therefore, there is a need for government support in training, developing, and professionalizing NGO staff.

- Collaboration: Domestic and international cooperation can sometimes be limited, restricting opportunities for resource, information, and experience sharing. The activities of NGOs are often tied to government policies and decisions, making consultation and collaboration vital for their success.

NGOs operating within a legal framework should promote to the public that their activities must be closely linked to civic engagement and genuine initiative. When considering the state, as a citizen, I am a taxpayer, a voter, and a candidate with rights and responsibilities. In contrast, before a business entity, I am an investor or a customer. Therefore, it is essential for individuals to understand who they are and what kind of involvement they have in relation to civil society organizations. To develop society, citizens can contribute as volunteers or supporters of such initiatives, which is why NGOs have a duty to direct their activities toward social development and stability. Thus, it is crucial for the government to provide support to avoid a decline in credibility due to reasons such as implementing one-off projects, disappearing after a short period, or being used merely as a means of generating profit.

NGOs should not only be stable, consistent, and cohesive but their activities must also be closely aligned with their goals. This is why citizens establish NGOs to take initiative and engage sincerely in solving issues that affect their country and community. As the need for capable professionals who can develop NGOs into legal entities and work diligently until their sustainable goals and programs are fulfilled increases, there is a growing demand for commitment to achieving those objectives. NGOs should strive to expand their collaboration and contribute to creating a culture that strengthens the nation.

### **Conclusions.**

Since the enactment of the law on non-governmental organizations in Mongolia in 1997, NGOs have played an invaluable role in increasing citizen participation, overseeing government activities, and ensuring human rights. To date, the number of NGOs has grown, with their organization, activities, and areas of focus expanding to every province and the capital. They continue to develop their activities aimed at ensuring social stability and fostering civil society. The influence of NGOs on social stability and the importances they play depend on various factors. Data from studies and statistics from the General registration office confirm that NGOs are a genuine form of social capital, existing to serve society and contribute to the common good.

However, the activities of NGOs face numerous challenges that require overcoming these obstacles to work more effectively towards social stability. To support and strengthen the importances and impacts of NGOs serving society, it is essential to stabilize and improve social cooperation, government support, and public engagement. This is crucial for ensuring social stability and supporting future social development. By providing support, regularizing their activities, expanding collaboration, and enhancing capabilities, the government can broaden the scope of activities that support social stability.

Finally, digitizing and making public the activity reports of NGOs will help stabilize their importance, impacts, and areas of operation.

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