

additional planet Earths to produce resources and absorb wastes ... and good planets are hard to find!" [3].

The Impact of Poverty on the Environment is as following: for example, Nepal and Bangladesh suffer from such environmental problems as increasingly devastating floods, often believed to be resulting from large-scale deforestation. Forests provide the world with clean air, in addition to working as "sink holes" that help reduce the drastic climate changes seen in the world today. With the increasing level of deforestation taking place, the environment is taking a heavy blow and finding it difficult to recover. Impoverished communities, harmful ways of using natural resources, such as forest wood and soil, are continuing the destructive cycle that spirals the environment further downward [4].

Air pollution and overpopulation are other ways in which poverty contributes to environmental degradation. The more the global population grows, the more weight is placed on the environment. Every human being consumes their share of resources, and with so many births originating from poor communities, the burdens placed on the environment grow heavier each day [3].

For years, rich countries have been migrating some polluting industries to poor countries, but still producing primarily for rich countries. This has been possible insofar as it is cheaper than to pay for costly environmentally clean technologies that people demand. There is a saying: "When money talks, the poor have no voice".

So as we can see, environment and poverty are interconnected issues. The relation needs more recognition if environmental degradation, poverty and other global problems can begin to be addressed.

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A CASE STUDY OF UMBRELLA ORGANIZATIONS IN POLAND – KARKONOSKI REGIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (KSON) IN JELENIA GORA

1. The concept of umbrella organizations

The umbrella organizations are associations of institutions which represent the interests of their members. The representation is also considered as the protection of these interests thus the mentioned comparison to an umbrella. The purpose of establishing the associations by organizations is to become more perceptible and therefore more difficult to be ignored.

The umbrella organizations do not associate the organizations that run specific activities only, yet they are striving to define their membership as wide as possible to represent the civil sector in full measure and not in fragmentary way. The most notable form of umbrella organizations are National Associations which are recognized by European Network of National Associations and fulfill all of its policies. The National Associations are also defined as:

- The nationwide network of non-governmental organizations and associations;
- The institution that focuses on supporting the general and cross-functional interests of non-governmental community in a particular country;
- The membership organization consisted of other entities from different sectors of civil society;

- The organization that acts independently of governments and commerce.

The main goals of the National Associations are, among others, to:

- Facilitate the debate and advocacy of the interests of their members or the entire non-governmental sector, as well as the support of general issues that are important to the European-wide civil society;
- Strengthen the potential of non-governmental organizations and associations, and to provide them with the space for effective functioning;
- Provide services to their members and community.

The oldest National Association is the National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO) based in England, which recently – in 2009 – celebrated its 90th anniversary of foundation, while the youngest is the Norwegian association called Frivillighet Norge, founded in 2005. In Poland, the National Association is known as the National Federation of Polish NGOs founded in 2003. The similar organizational structures are established in many other European countries, as well as in other parts of the world.

The National Associations often face obstacles in their daily work. As the associations – which gather various members working in specific fields with different scale of activities – they ought to strengthen, protect and run the advocacy of these principles and postulates that are the lowest common denominator of civil activities. In this case, “umbrellas” are the result of what the third sector is in the particular country and its specific social and political conditions. Therefore, the difficulties in activities of umbrella organization occur when it has to reconcile the lowest common denominator with its aspiration to represent something more than only the interests of its members. The umbrella organization often has an ambition to run as a whole one which the potential and the power is much more larger than it might have resulted from the sum of potential of its members. To make this aspiration come true, it is important to draw a definition of the common good – both internally and externally with different stakeholders.

The discussion on drawing a definition of the common good keeps being a never-ending story for the umbrella organization which longs to do its job responsibly and with the respect for its social environment. Being a leader of the debate, organization draws its vision of citizenship and engagement towards the common welfare, and addresses it to all stakeholders: membership organizations, employees, sector and non-sector partners, donors, and citizens. This is a huge challenge and great responsibility.

2. KSON – characteristic of the organization

Karkonoski Regional Council for the People with Disabilities (KSON) is headquartered in Jelenia Gora. It acts as the association of organizations and other entities which was founded on March 27, 2001. The KSON is registered and represented by the chairman. Council sets independently its goals, programs, and organizational structures, as well as issues acts and enacts new internal rules concerning its activities based on the social work of its members and volunteers. To achieve its goals, the organization owns an office and employs a staff. KSON is consisted of 15 non-governmental organizations of Jelenia Gora region and 5 workshops (including 4 sheltered workshops) acting on behalf of thousands of members and non-associated people with disabilities which makes it a voice of large part of the society. Moreover, it acts on behalf of these people as an umbrella organization. Since March 8, 2004, KSON has the status of public benefit organization. In December 2005, KSON was awarded with the Marshal of Dolnoslaskie Voivodeeship prize and named The Best NGOs from Dolnoslaskie voivodeship.

The mission of Council is to:

- Represent the interests of disabled people;
- Coordinate the activities of membership organizations, as well as to facilitate the necessary conditions and platforms for disabled people to foster their participation in social life;
- Foster the physical and scientific education of disabled children and youths.

The statutory purpose of KSON is also the social and occupational rehabilitation of disabled people. Moreover, the organization strives to solve regular problems of these people in partnership

with the local government of Jelenia Gora, the county and the voivodeship. Also, the goal of the Council is to conduct public benefit activities on behalf of disabled people – both members of the Council and non-associated individuals.

3. KSON as an umbrella organization

The current and statutory activities of the Council are backed by:

- The Social Advocate for Disabled People;
- KSON Office.

The Council strives to ensure the financial stability of the main organization and the associated ones. Without the permanent funding from various sources, the Council has no chance to perform its operations within the community. The activities that cannot be proceeded without funding are for instance:

Research activities;

- Advocacy for disabled people;
- Educational and informational activities;
- The social and occupational rehabilitation, as well as running the labor office ;
- Cutting the operating costs of the Council.

The execution of mentioned tasks above is carried through:

- The identification of problems and needs of disabled people, and conducting informational activities via various channels, like: “TU I TERAZ” bulletin, official website, online radio NTiT, as well as Telephonic Point of Contact;
- The career counseling and work agencies for disabled people, and through establishing the Social Work Agency;
- The workshops for employers and advising the entities employing or planning to employ disabled people within the Social Work Agency framework;
- The integrative, activate, therapeutic and legal activities such as organizing the touristic, sport and integrative events, as well as securing the free legal advisory;
- The voluntary activities;
- The support of equal opportunities of disabled people, and counteracting discrimination in the public sector.

The functional structure of KSON includes: The Social Advocate for Disabled People, KSON Office, the Social Work Agency, integrative common room, editorial office of “TU I TERAZ” bulletin, official website, and online radio. The other worth mentioning works done by KSON are, among others, securing the touristic events and rehabilitation retreats. To ensure the execution of mentioned tasks, KSON requires a decent number of well-skilled workers, as well as eager volunteers.

Literature

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