

NGOs' Work for Uplifting the Non-Muslim Citizens of Sindh

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan holds a significant number of non-Muslim people, which are labelled as minorities, a term with discriminatory connotations. The total number of non-Muslim citizens is about seven million, comprising 4 percent of the total population. Of these, the majority of the Hindus (93 percent) live in Sindh. Their uplift is ignored by the mainstream development agencies of the government and private sector which is a crucial issue. Their social marginalization enhanced their disadvantages during disasters and relief/rehabilitation work, too. Almost all the non-Muslim groups are facing multiple problems due to social exclusion. Disadvantaged groups mostly need external help to get out of trap of unfavourable conditions; a job best done by the non-governmental organizations. This study is focused on the interaction of NGOs with the non-Muslims of Sindh province. A small number of mainstream NGOs target them in particular, and they have set up their own organizations, too. A sample of 29 such organizations; big and small, working in different parts of urban and rural Sindh, was selected for survey. This study investigates general social

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attitudes towards the non-Muslims, and the role, challenges and experiences of the NGOs while working with non-Muslim Pakistanis. With the rise of extremism, the socio-political environment of Sindh and the country in general have gone so much critically against the minorities and the NGOs that those who support the non-Muslims are facing serious threats. In this context, the present study explores a critical dimension of the relationship between the non-Muslims and the third sector. Focusing upon the marginalized citizens, the analysis has been conducted in the socio-historical context of Sindh province.

Non-Muslim Citizens of Pakistan: Historical Context

Pakistan was envisaged as a country where Muslims could live with freedom to exercise their religion and culture, but the country also included a significant number of non-Muslim citizens. The proportion of non-Muslims rose after September 1974 when Ahmadis were declared by the Bhutto government to be non-Muslims. Since that time, Ahmadis do not have the secure status of a minority because they have been constantly constrained even in their worship places, not to mention the publication and dissemination of their religious material, a right that is constitutionally secured.¹

On account of various problems in drafting the country's first constitution, Pakistan was initially governed under the Government of India Act, 1935. Because there was no clear policy on the status of the non-Muslim minorities, and also as a result of poor governance, both the Muslims and non-Muslims have suffered due to political instability, the disruption of democracy, mal-governance, underdevelopment, poverty, and the uneven development of various regions. Society has also suffered because of social cleavages along ethnic, sectarian, class, and gender lines. Sectarian conflict

¹ Tanveer Ahmed Meer and Ali Murtaza Shah, in *Pakistan kay Mazhabi Achhote* (Islamabad: Al-Haseeb Publishers, 1998), explain their version of the problems. Jamat-e-Ahmadiya is the organization set up by the Ahmadis, but they refuse to accept their status as non-Muslims and try not to identify themselves as such, so they refuse to cooperate in surveys.

and violence, religious extremism, obscurantism and religious militancy grew under the Zia government. Then only one Muslim sect was allowed to dominate the new religious scenario, and so levels of hatred and trouble were heightened for all other sects and religions. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan since 1979 nurtured a Jihadi culture, and boosted militarization and Talibanization of Pakistan. In the wake of the 911 attacks, the global events and the US-led 'War on Terror', promoted armed conflict within the region. Pakistan has been a willing ally of the US in this war. Continued religious extremism and weaponization together have now brought Pakistani society to a point where a large number of civilians and security persons (over 50,000) have been killed at the hands of terrorists and insurgents. Such a scenario can explain only briefly what price the non-Muslim citizens of Pakistan have been paying despite being neither extremist/terrorists nor supporters of these tendencies² sectarian minorities (Shias, Hazaras) and Ahmadis in particular have been victimized.

Religious Diversity in Sindh

Sindh presents the highest level of religious diversity in Pakistan. The non-Muslim population in Sindh is estimated to be Christians, 399,571 (2.7 percent), Hindus, 3,090,552 (7.5 percent).³ Sindh has 92 per cent of the total Hindu population of the country (as being 3,311,500) and 14 per cent of total Christian population (as being 2,836,000). They are found in higher ratios in Umerkot (47.6 percent), Tharparkar (40.5 percent), Mirpur Khas (32.7 percent), Sanghar (20.1 percent), Badin (19.9 percent), and Hyderabad (12.1 percent). Hindus (making 1.85 percent nationally), in Sindh, are reported divided into Jati Hindus (2,683,633) and Scheduled Castes (406,919), which together make a population bigger than the Christians, who

2 For details see, Iftikhar H. Malik, *Religious Minorities in Pakistan* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2002).

3 Extracted from, *Religious Minorities in Pakistan's Elections* (Karachi: Church World Service-Pakistan/Afghanistan, 2012), 114–17.

are the second largest minority at the national (1.58 percent) and Sindh level. Qadianis/Ahmadis account for 58,975 (15 percent of the group total in the country). Other religions (being 0.07 percent nationally) are thought to be 32,287 followers in Sindh, making about 25 percent of their total population in Pakistan.⁴

Effective political participation at the local, provincial and national levels can bring a sense of equality and may ensure alleviation of problems as well. The minorities are a 'significant electoral' number and deserve due representation, but the electoral system has been shifting from a separate to a joint electorate model, according to the preference of various governments.⁵ The previous three elections, however, in 2002, 2008 and 2013, were held under a joint electorate and ten additional seats were also allotted to the non-Muslims.

Non-Muslims' Role in the Civil Society of Pakistan

Pakistan had an incipient civil society at the time of its creation. There were voluntary organizations, trusts, educational institutions and charitable bodies, which were serving the people of their own ethnicity, region, occupation, religion, as well as indiscriminately beyond that. There seems a stronger tradition among the non-Muslims of working through the civil society groups than the Muslims. The Parsis, Christians and Hindus had their hospitals, colleges, orphanages and business houses. All such organizations, although they felt a shock from the outmigration of non-Muslims, nevertheless provided a foundation to the Muslims. Many of the partition in-migrants were uprooted, with no secure job or place to live or educate

4 *Religious Minorities in Pakistan's Elections*, from table data, 115.

5 The study by Church World Service indicates this on the basis of voter strength, and the history and nature of contests in constituencies, and the concentration of non-Muslim voters in a particular constituency of the National Assembly. It is concluded that every twelfth voter (1,531,500 out of 18,432,877 total; i.e., 83 out of 1000 voters, Table 1, 122) in Sindh was a non-Muslim in the 2013 elections. There were 70 provincial constituencies with over 5,000 non-Muslim voters in Sindh, 12. See, *Religious Minorities in Pakistan's Elections*, section 3, 118–58.

their children, but the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital, Sobhraj Hospital, Uncle Sarya Hospital, Holy Family Hospital, Spencer Eye Hospital, Ida Riu School, and other similar facilities, welcomed them with open arms.

The tragedy defined by Partition was that the non-Muslims left in Pakistan faced a serious blow to their social prestige, power and privileges, because they had turned into a minority. Their prestige, property, majority status, in short overall security was highly threatened so they had to migrate to India. Those who stayed suffered a lot, with few exceptions. The Muslims, who fought for majority status in a new state, started treating the majority of former years in a degrading manner, perhaps forgetting their own potential imminent fate in British India. This has been well documented and explained through personal narratives by Bhavnani.⁶ Mubarak Ali has indicated that demand for a separate homeland for Indian Muslims was fostered by the denial of a secular and democratic political environment, and the partition changed the dimension of the majority-minority conflict. The new outlook thoroughly thwarted the democratic process so much so that the numerical majority of Bengalis (in East Pakistan) was denied, with the result that the country finally broke down in 1971. He adds that the conflict did not stop there, rather became multi-dimensional and religious, racial, cultural and linguistic minorities felt their identity under threat.⁷ Such minorities have been living in a constant fear of their respective majorities thereafter. Civil-society organizations were perhaps a great panacea for the new minority of non-Muslim people, who deserved equal treatment according to the pledge of the Father of the Nation; a pledge which turned sour soon after Independence. This ultimately spoiled the dream of turning

6 Nandita Bhavnani, *The Making of Exile, Sindhi Hindus and the Partition of India* (Chennai: Tranquebar, 2014). Especially see Chapters 14, 15, 16.

7 Mubarak Ali, "Minority Majority Conflict," in *Contemporary Conflicts*, ed. S. Haroon Ahmed (Karachi: Pakistan Psychiatric Society Sindh Chapter, 1991), 12–13.

Pakistanis into one nation, Mubark Ali regret.⁸ The Objectives Resolution was the first step to Islamize the system in Pakistan and the same was perceived as turning the non-Muslims into 'constitutional shudras',⁹ and it was then proved in the following years that non-Muslim citizens could not be integrated in the collective political and social process and consciousness of the mainstream society. This is despite the fact that their most problems are same as of the majority community, but their efforts to demand for their due rights is taken as exaggerated to win undue favour. Therefore, the majority community must advocate the minorities' cause to express solidarity and nurture a sense of connectedness.¹⁰

Now seventy years down the road, a high level of religious discrimination, negative stereotyping, hate speech, violent attacks and government's unwillingness to protect the minorities' rights and religious diversity prevail. It has been recorded by an MRG/SDPI study. It further reiterates the law enforcement agencies, media, religious leadership, the civil society and the community at large to engage in the efforts for lowering inequalities and heightening a sense of security among the minority religious communities.¹¹

While looking into the services of non-Muslim Pakistanis for civil society, one can mention a series of significant

8 Mubarak Ali, "Minority Majority Conflict", 13.

9 Ahmad Salim, *Pakistan aur Aqliyatain* (Karachi: Maktaba-e Daniyal, 2000), 22.

10 Salim, *Pakistan aur Aqliyatain*, 23. Salim has explained this point of view in the book, by highlighting minorities' role in nation building and projecting their heroes, so that the historical wrongs and neglect are explained in the historical context. He asserts that the minorities should not be forced to advocate their own case, but the society must create a space so that a larger number of majority people come forward who take minorities as a part and parcel of the Pakistani society, and take their problems as own problems. Unless the majority ensures the minority that the latter are not alone in their struggle, no real integration can be fostered.

11 Minority Rights Group International (MRG), *Searching for Security: The Rising Marginalization of Religious Communities in Pakistan* (Islamabad: SDPI/MRG, 2014), available as: https://www.sdpi.org/publications/files/MRG_Rep_Pak_ENGv2_PRESS.pdf, accessed April 25, 2018.

names. The detail is well documented in Ahmed Salim's *Role of Minorities in Nation Building with Focus on Karachi*, which demonstrates the number of undeniable good examples set by minorities in all important fields of life.¹² With that backdrop, if one sees that the non-Muslims have been continuously targeted or made to feel insecure, one has to look into the reasons; some of these are discussed and explained in the following section.

The Root Cause of Problems of Non-Muslim Citizens in General

The problems faced by religious minorities are largely embedded in the socio-political and economic system, on account of which other disadvantaged groups also suffer. On the one hand, the religious instructions of Islam—the majority religion—and a defined position in the constitution favour the minorities; yet on the other hand, political approaches, certain legislation, the general attitude of the majority community, and recent upsurges of extremism played havoc with them. Problems which they have in common with the majority community include poverty, unemployment, exploitation, bonded labour, lack of access to health and educational facilities, substandard housing, poor quality of life, environmental degradation, drug addiction, ignorance, and women's subordination. The problems faced by the minority communities in particular include social discrimination and exclusion, vulnerability to harassment, crimes and violence, lack of citizenship documentation, maltreatment by the police, and discrimination in admission to schools, jobs, and social places.

Importantly, the civil society continuously responded to the threats, attacks and systemic discrimination of the religious minorities. Both non-Muslims and Muslims have promoted the efforts for equal status for all religious groups. On each notable event of violence against minorities, such as attacks on churches and mass killing of Hazara Shias in Quetta, protests were launched. Many such CSOs, the

12 Karachi: Church World Service – Pakistan/Afghanistan, 2007.

activists and human rights defenders have been targeted, harassed and killed. Commendable are the efforts of such groups and individuals, who protest and voice concerns about minority rights, despite being labelled as foreign agents and promoting foreign agenda. Conscientious workers of civil society believe that it is their duty to protect the small religious communities to ensure global justice.¹³

Victimization of Minority-based Organizations in Sindh

NGOs have been facing serious challenges on account of their mission, vision, and engagement with disadvantaged people, non-Muslims, and powerless groups, who are expected to be empowered and enabled to live a more independent, dignified, and secure life. Those who do not agree with the concept of equal human rights, such as extremists and religious bigots, oppose and target NGOs' work. Since anti-non-Muslim feelings have been cultivated by various means; groups working for non-Muslims have always been at risk, and with the rise of religious extremism they have been opposed and targeted. Such individuals and institutions have been facing hate campaigns, media trials, defamation, legal battles, threats and a strict watch by the agencies who doubt them as engaged in anti-state activities. Forced conversions of the Hindus and marriages with Muslims have recently emerged as a problem, about which the Supreme Court of Pakistan has made a historic decision, calling upon the Government of Pakistan to provide all protection to the religious minorities.¹⁴ The problems in effective working of such protective agents arise from their

13 MRG, *Searching for Security*, 26-27.

14 The court has recommended and directed the government to set up a task force, promote religious tolerance through the curricula, stop the negative role of social media, set up a national council for the rights of the minorities, launch a special police force for protection of the religious places and people of minorities. The government is further directed to ensure enforcement of minority quota in all departments, and punishing criminals who have violated the sanctity of the religious places and attacked the non-Muslims. See, *Pakistan mein Aqliyaton kay Huqooq Supreme Court ka Tarikhi Faisala*(Karachi: PILER, 2014).

scattered efforts and lack of awareness among the minority communities.

The trials and tribulations of the minorities have been going on and producing concern in certain sections of the civil society. Idara-e Amn-o-Insaaf Karachi was targeted by the terrorists when seven of its staff members were murdered in the office in 2001.¹⁵ Shahbaz Bhatti, a politician and activist for minority rights, was murdered because of his open dauntless support for minority rights. The regular killings of non-Muslims are reported because of their faith. In 2017 the alarming fact was disclosed by annual report of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan that the total number of minorities is squeezing in total population of Pakistan, as many Hazaras migrating for safety, Ahmadis living in exile, and attacks within the country continue amidst rising religious extremism and bigotry. The social media facilitate the hate campaign and sectarian ideology. The report further gives data of ruthless killing, bombing, attacks on churches, and undesirable legislations proposed for Christian marriage and divorce. Desecration of temples, abduction of Hindu traders and forced conversion of young Hindu girls are at the roots of steady outmigration of Hindu families.¹⁶ Blasphemy laws have been used to victimize non-Muslims, since the procedure to implement that law is not clear though some effort is underway to improve its implementation.¹⁷ The life, property, honour and civil and political rights of the minorities are regularly violated. The details on the subject are available in the reports of local, national and human rights agencies. NGOs themselves have a large contingent keeping a watch on human rights abuses.¹⁸ Some other

15 The researcher has been working in the Women Committee of the Idara in its last days.

16 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, *State of Human Rights in Pakistan 2017* (Lahore: HRCP, 2018), Chapter on Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion, 81-96.

17 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, *State of Human Rights in Pakistan 2017*, 93-95.

18 For instance see the newsletters and annual reports and fact-finding mission reports by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (*Jehd-e Haq*,

publications of the NGOs have particularly focused issues concerning minorities' rights, interfaith harmony, peace-building, hate speech, hate contents in the textbooks, court verdicts and discussion on them.¹⁹

Objectives of the Study

Major objective of the study was 'to investigate the interaction between NGOs and the religious minority population, and to see how it could be improved'. The study was conducted through a questionnaire, whose initial questions dealt with profile of the NGO, such as year of registration, areas of activity, sources of funding, number of beneficiaries, proportion of Muslim-non-Muslim employees, and volunteers and beneficiaries. More focused questions dealt with exploring whether accessibility of women for the Muslim and non-Muslim NGOs depended upon women's (beneficiaries') religion. Inquiry was made into the most urgent problem of the target community, NGOs' priority area of work (to see the relevance of NGOs work for the community), community's reaction to NGOs' activity, and nature and causes of challenges faced by NGOs were explored. The analysis also involved putting forward certain recommendations.

Methodology: Population, Sample, Sampling, Fieldwork

The Sample: A sample of 29 NGOs working in different parts of urban and rural Sindh was selected through judgmental method for survey, as given in Table 1. Judgmental method mean choosing items on the basis of

Urdu Newsletter), Amnesty International, the State Department of USA. Also see publications of local NGOs including SDPI, *Searching for Security: The Rising Marginalization of Religious Communities in Pakistan*, 2014, Church World Service–Pakistan/Afghanistan; Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research, *Religious Minorities in Pakistan: Constitutional Rights and Access to Judicial System* 2013.

19 Centre for Social Justice, *Combating Hate Speech beyond Administrative Measures*, 2015, *Showing Peace in the Mind-Fields* 2016, *When Compliance Fails Justice*, 2016, South Asia Partnership published, *Pakistan main Aqliyatain Aik Ja'iza, Siyasi Jamatain, Waday aur Haqaiq, Pakistan ki Mazhabi Aqliyatain aur Qaumi Assembly ka Kirdar*. These are just a few examples of literature produced on minorities' affairs.

desirable characteristics for the study instead of some systematic or scientific sampling methods, which may miss some of the units, and when the sampling frame is not available, carefully applied judgmental method is very useful. It was thought suitable to include variety of NGOs' characteristics such a scale, focus, location, approach and activities. The selected NGOs/CBOs included organizations from very small to international level, rural or urban and both rural-urban in location, variety of work like uplift of desert area, rural/agricultural development, peace, environment, women, labour and human rights. It included NGOs dealing with all religious groups, as well as those representing the Christians, Hindus, Dalits (scheduled cases) separately. There are included organizations working for welfare, education, participatory development, rights and education as well as research. Very important is the organization with secular approach, which refutes the religious differences in its service delivery. In this way the sample is made balanced and representative in many ways.

TABLE 1: SAMPLE NGOS

S.No.	Name of NGO	Domain of Work
1	Baanhn Beli	Tharparkar
2	National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP)	National
3	Upgrade Minorities for Integrated Development (UMID)	Karachi (rural/urban)
4	Urban Resource Centre (URC)	Karachi (urban)
5	Sindh Academic Foundation	Lower Sindh
6	Green Rural Development Organization	Sindh
7	Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER)	Sindh, Punjab
8	District Development Association Tharparkar	Tharparkar District
9	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan	National
10	Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO)	National
11	Human Aid Organization	Sindh
12	The Salvation Army	International
13	Bhandar Sangat	Sindh, Balochistan

14	Pakistan Hindu Council	National
15	Dalit Mahaz	Sindh
16	Peace Foundation	Sindh
17	Indus Earth Trust	Sindh
18	Action Committee for Human Rights	Sindh
19	Aanchal Social Welfare Organisation	Sindh
20	Social Democratic Women Organization	Karachi (urban)
21	Peace and Development Organisation	Karachi (urban)
22	Sindh Secular Forum	Sindh
23	Pakistan Masihi Biradari	Karachi (Baldia Town)
24	Sindh Rural Partners Organization	Sindh
25	Marvi Development Organization	Sindh
26	Dhani Mandal Hari Samaj	Karachi (Shah Faisal Town)
27	Right Way Foundation	Sindh
28	Arain Welfare Association	Karachi
29	Clifton Awami Welfare Society	Karachi (Urban)

Sampling: No discrimination in sampling is made among the NGOs run by non-Muslims or Muslims, for ideally at least the civil society should not be divided on this aspect of human uplift. There are a few NGOs exclusively serving the non-Muslims, as in actual life they are rare, but those serving all citizens are in abundance. Those with an exclusive focus on their own religious community are devoted to promotion of their religion and so do not feel the need to invite other people to religious activities. This is very much true for the majority community as well. One can even find organizations serving people of one sect only disallowing other sect people in their activities. Hence, this practice should not be criticized. Diversity can flourish in an environment of tolerance only; but it should not be exploited for creating chaos.

Field Work: The sample NGOs' top executives and functionaries were approached with specific questions after explaining the objectives of the study. Both the authors and one trained field investigator collected data from the respondents. No worth-mentioning trouble was faced at this

stage, as most NGO functionaries knew the modes of survey and research.

Major Findings of the Study

Biographic data of the 29 respondents reveals that there were 6 (20.7 percent) women and 23 (79.3 percent) men responding on behalf of their organizations. Men dominate the NGO sector working in the rural areas in particular as they feel freer to work with communities in remote areas and where women are more confined and men are accessible. Their age range was 18-25 (3.4 percent), 26-35 (41.4 percent), 36-45 (24.1 percent), 46-55 (17.2 percent) and above 55 years (13.8 percent). The respondents had mostly earned an MA/MBA degree (65.5 percent), followed by graduates (20.1 percent), whereas one each case of Intermediate, Matric and illiterate (3.4 percent each) was interviewed. The position of the respondents have been mostly 23 (79.3 percent) in the senior administrative rank such as president, chairman, chief executive, executive director, manager, coordinator, secretary general, finance secretary, and only 6 (20.7 percent) were medical officer, worker, field coordinator, member, youth president or social mobilizer.

Sample NGOs' Profile

The sample included both old and young NGOs, as there have been 9 NGOs registered before 1990 (31.3 percent), 5 during 1991-2000 (13.8 percent), 11 during 2001-2010 (37.9 percent), and 4 during 2010-2014 (13.8 percent). There were non-Muslims employed/working for 18 (62 percent) organizations while 11 (38 percent) reported having no employee at all, as these worked with volunteers only. The volunteer's proportion was 100 percent non-Muslim in 3 NGOs, 50-99 percent in 11 (38 percent), 1-50 percent in 4 (13.8 percent), and nil in 3 (10.3 percent) cases; the rest did not report it. The beneficiaries were non-Muslims for all 29 NGOs (100 percent), Muslims for 21 (72.4 percent), male 29 (100 percent), and females 21 (72.4 percent) NGOs, thus showing women were excluded from at least 8 sample

NGOs' beneficiaries. Only 3 NGOs (10.3 percent) reported having exclusively non-Muslim beneficiaries, the rest welcomed without discrimination, indicating their openness. It was reported by 7 (24 percent) organizations that they felt no problem in accessing non-Muslim or Muslim beneficiaries; 6 others were more at ease in contacting the non-Muslim people, whereas 'the access' depended upon the situation,' was reply of 15 (52 percent) NGOs.

Role, Challenges and Experiences of the NGOs working with non-Muslims

a. NGOs Beneficiaries

The NGOs were asked to give an estimate of their annual beneficiaries. Its range was found as 0.5 million to 500. Those reporting many thousands were 19 (66 percent). The rest included those who could give estimate such as: 0.5 million, 0.3 million, 50,000 (two cases), 25,000, 2100, 2000, and 1000 (two cases) and then 300 persons of the *para* (locality) for which all sort of assistance was provided by their own CBO. Since the beneficiaries are not enumerated, an average cannot be calculated, but the given data shows the impact of NGO work in the province, and many sample NGOs have been working for over two decades.

b. Need for NGO Work

The perception of NGO functionaries regarding the most pressing problems of the community reveals an interesting and highly diverse picture, as Table 2 shows, where the problems are listed in descending rank order, calculated by addition of scores given by respondents to each category. (For example, if score for problem A was, 1, 3, 5, 1, 2....., then adding it up would bring total figure less than the entry for a lower rank problem B; as adding B's score would give higher number). Small number meant high rank.

TABLE 2: NGOS' PERCEPTION ABOUT PROBLEMS OF THE NON-MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

(n=29, multiple answers)

S. No.	Problem	Added Score	Rank
1	Social inferiority	25	1
2	Poverty	35	2
3	No effective political representation	49	3
4	Lack of education	58	4
5	Unsteady income	60	5
6	Threats from anti-non-Muslim elements	61	6
7	Victimisation by various mafias	63	7
8	Living in isolated localities	70	8
9	No decent job in public sector	73	9
10	Poor health	76	10
11	Lack of employment opportunities	80	11
12	Attack on property	86	12
13	Inadequate job quota for non-Muslims	88	13
14	Attack on business assets	89	14
15	Housing problems	91	15
16	No national identity cards	97	16
17	Harassment by police	97	17
18	Narcotics	108	18
19	Domestic conflict and violence	112	19
20	Admission in schools	115	20
21	Crimes in the environment	120	21
22	Low quality of life	126	22
23	Unhygienic environment	129	23
24	Large family size	151	24
25	Others*	No rank	--

Others*listed in Table 2 included issues perceived to be important but not mentioned in the Table. These include: no worship place, landlessness, shortage of food, ignorance of hygienic principles, self-medication, not going to doctor in time, dense population in urban areas, and Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority not solving the problems. Moreover, they have problems regarding constitutional rights, ineffective representation in the assemblies, forced conversion, forced marriage, Hindu marriage law, blasphemy laws, attack on

their worship places, forced migration, and inhuman treatment with non-Muslim prisoners.

c. Priority Areas of Sample NGOs' Activity

In response to the community needs, the NGOs have chosen various types of job for them. The most common activity is reported as provision of education, health, and employment to fight poverty. There are reported activities like constructing a security gate at the end of the street, improving conditions of the street and water and sewerage services, solar energy, construction of houses for flood-affected people, fighting against eviction to ensure housing rights, and resisting the land mafia. Regarding economic needs there are reported programs for entrepreneur training, agricultural training, helping in jobs, and struggling for quota in jobs. People are made aware of their constitutional rights, and citizenship rights are secured through getting them national identity cards and Form B. Various activities are continued to ensure their political representation, democratic governance, social justice, peace, social harmony, and free legal aid. Discriminatory laws, terrorism and extremism are checked. Advocacy for a variety of rights of disadvantaged sections (labour, women, minorities, scheduled castes, and children) is made. Forced labour is banished. Relief activities are carried out in disasters. The last but very important mention is of arranging worship activities by getting the statues and necessary items. A community hall was built by a CBO for worship as well as other community activities. *Langar* (large scale charity food) was distributed through collection of donations. This description can give an idea of the nature of NGOs work in the communities, whose need may vary, but their need to have NGOs among them working is established by a number of active NGOs and CBOs, which are largely run not by outsiders but their own members.

Community's Reaction

TABLE 3: COMMUNITY'S REACTION TOWARDS NGOs SERVICES

Reaction	Frequency	Percentage
Very good	13	44.8
Good	14	48.2
Moderate	1	3.5
Poor	1	3.5
Very poor	0	0.0

A negative impression was received about the NGOs in only four responses. In fact, the community reaction was initially poor or of indifference, in the cases where the community was so introvert inward and self-centered that to any intervention from outside they were suspicious. They took some time to see things in right perspective and be open to NGO work for their own betterment. One sample NGO started working with a poor locality, but had less resource than the demand, so they were criticized. Another NGO had to face undue demands. The negative reception was also perceived to be coming from people who do not appreciate a minority community getting on its feet and moving forward. Own inability to follow-up was also admitted by an NGO, as it had caused trouble.

Challenges for the NGOs

TABLE 4: FACTORS BEHIND ATTACKS ON OR OPPOSITION OF THE NGOs

(n=29, multiple answers)

Factors Causing Problems	Frequency	Percentage
No problem at all	3	10.3
Local extremists	16	55.2
Local political leadership	13	44.8
Criminal elements	9	31.0
Attack on staff	8	27.6
Local population	7	24.1
Attack on office	6	20.1
Opposition by other NGO	6	20.1
Any newspaper/magazine	4	13.8
Security agencies inquiries	2	6.9
Police excesses	1	3.4

Table 4 shows that mostly NGOs working with non-Muslim people have been suffering at the hands of the extremist, politically influential persons, or the criminals.

Seeking Police Assistance

There were 12 (41.4 percent) responses for seeking police help in case of trouble for NGOs. Their experience with police was that one respondent excused from revealing details, another found police itself involved in trouble, so it was approached through higher authorities to stop that. However, police continued creating issues in the NGO work later on. Another NGO reported both supportive and corrupt role of police at times. In the Sudo Odho case, 89 hostages were freed, of course, with the help of police, as the NGO persons have admitted. A community living near the Pakistan Air Force area reported that police comes in case of any crime, but does not disturb us. In case of violent attacks, NGOs are bound to report to police and this they do; but they may or may not be satisfied by the police performance in the case. There are big old NGOs, who do not want to bring on record their experiences with the police or security agencies, as they have been threatened or troubled many times. The NGOs having any link with India or having 'peace-building' as their objective are also under watch. Seeking peace is very much lawful in the interest of the state, so it should not create any unnecessary harassment for such NGO workers. But certain NGOs are suspected to support and finance terrorists and anti-state agents, for which the recent move to crush terrorism has brought NGOs under tough scrutiny as well. Every NGO is now taken as a criminal, unless proved otherwise. This trend has, therefore, created bad air for the NGOs, since following the state authorities, the masses also start looking at NGOs as potential threats to the country and society, just because of wrong media propaganda against them.

Those who do not seek any help from the police expressed that: 'police is generally not cooperative'. The respondent from Dalit Mahaz held that: 'when people within the fold of our own religion (Hindus towards schedule

castes) do see us with hatred, what treatment would be with us in a police station is obvious fact!' Moreover, another pure Hindus' NGO has complained, 'we are not treated properly in the police stations when we go there for any legal help.' 'Police support is an uncertain fact'. We called police to curb narcotics racket, but police itself is involved with the gangsters'; 'Police has made it a routine business to arrest people from our (Christian) locality in Karachi, and they release person only after payment of huge amounts, which people supply by selling off their property, etc. So seeking help means inviting the trouble; police itself is trouble'. The NGO thus resorted to build a security wall around the community. A respondent of Christian NGO informed that the church land was illegally occupied with the help of police, and despite their effort to approach the high level authorities they could not get it back. Two non-Muslim focus NGOs tried launching FIRs in the police, but they were refused.

The NGOs having no complaint or expectation from the police said that: 'We mind our business, and do not complain'. 'Our medical service is availed of by the police itself'. The overall impression is that the police force is least helpful for the NGOs run by the non-Muslim citizens, as is clearly mentioned by them. However, the police create problems for others as well, but they are not highlighted in this study.

Muslims' Attitudes towards Non-Muslims

TABLE 5: ATTITUDES OF MUSLIM TOWARDS NON-MUSLIMS DURING NGO ACTIVITIES

(n=29, multiple answers)

Muslims' Attitude	Yes No. (percent)	No No. (percent)
Showing hesitation in contact with non-Muslims	18 (62.1)	16 (55.2)
Showing aversion in contact with non-Muslims	15 (51.7)	19 (65.5)
Showing dislike in sitting with non-Muslims	18 (62.1)	16 (55.2)
Expressing glory of Muslim religion more than the non-Muslims	23 (79.3)	10 (34.5)

Dishonouring other religions before their believers	14 (48.3)	18 (62.1)
Disrespect to non-Muslims for taking non-Muslims as poor	21 (72.4)	8 (27.6)
Avoiding interaction with non-Muslims for taking them as 'impure'	23 (79.3)	5 (17.2)
Avoiding giving fund to NGOs serving the non-Muslims	24 (82.8)	5 (17.2)

The responses received in first five categories of Table 4, showed no common but different attitudes depending upon the persons, urban-rural setting, and fear of extremists/terrorists. Regarding the issue of not giving fund to non-Muslims, the Muslim point of view, as reported by mostly Muslim respondents, was due to religious bindings—religious tax of Zakat cannot be given to non-Muslims. Reported reasons indicated this preference fair as per concept of belief (*Iman*). Religion-based discrimination, the concept of reward in hereafter, ethnocentrism, lack of social consciousness, and social fragmentation were mentioned as reasons. The urban NGOs have reported that both the non-Muslims and Muslims give fund indiscriminately. One respondent pointed out that at international non-Muslim donors give fund to Muslims, and another response indicated giving to non-Muslims in individual capacity, and giving very often to NGOs in case of relief needs. Two bitter responses showing Muslim selfishness were received from non-Muslim respondents in this regard, too. It was generally expressed that such social distance and discrimination is due to religious teachings and extremist *maulvis*.

Discussion

The data received through qualitative and quantitative means, discussion with the NGOs functionaries and the background literature suggest following dimensions of the problems of minorities, and of the NGOs that work for them. To start with, the religious dimension: Service for humanity, charity and welfare are taught by every religion, and philanthropy prevails in the religions of South Asia. Even if it is confined to its own community, philanthropy can be a

good agent of improvement in the lives of the bottom declines of poverty. The amount of present giving is needed to be focused rightly and timely to give relief and push-up to the needy sections. The government must provide its share of resources without any discrimination to fill the gap between the demand and available resources.

Caste dimension: The Hindu community has its caste hierarchy intact, which is still badly affecting the prospects of development of the lower caste Hindus in Pakistan. It is very much true for the province of Sindh, with the largest number of Hindus and scheduled-caste people who, despite being Hindus by religion, are not allowed to integrate with and take the benefits of a larger minority which has a considerable number of affluent people, businessmen, industrialists, professionals, and modern educated persons, who have shown little pain for the Hindus of lower castes. Hence the phrase 'minority within the minority' can explain that in a fragmented Pakistani society, an invisible line of division and disadvantage thereof, exists in the minority community of Hindus.²⁰ It is indeed a unique feature, as when Muslims or Christians give charity, they do not care for castes/subdivisions within their religious groups, rather charitable giving has been declared an act of high reward in both religions. The Hindus of different castes would then also not bother about development of the Hindu community at large, since they do not consider all the castes making one community. This affects the performance of the people as employees of public and private sector organizations. For instance, in education when a Thakur sees a Kohli teacher appointed to teach his children, he feels disgust at the very fact, and in case of any fault he would complain and oppress the teacher. But if a Thakur or Muslim is appointed as teacher, they do not feel responsible towards the Kohli or

20 A report by PILER, a NGO, reveals the dynamics and conditions of this extremely disadvantaged group. It is shown that in 1998, of the total scheduled caste people, 93 per cent lived in rural areas, whereas 77 per cent of total *Jati* (Caste) Hindus lived in there. See, Zulfiqar Shah, *Waqt say Peechhay reh Janay Walay, Pakistan ka Achhoot Hindoon ki Halat-e- Zaar ka Aik Tehqiqi Jaiza* (Karachi: PILER, 2007), 44.

lower caste children, so would relax in his job, since he is powerful, and hence not accountable to an 'inferior' community. The Bheel and Meghwar are better off than Kohli, so their people have acquired jobs in medical profession, too. They do command better respect since they are now more useful for the community. The Kohlis are found to be greatest in number and the most backward, deprived, least motivated for self-development, least organized, and least responsive to the NGO efforts for their uplift. 'Even if they listen to you and allow their boy going to school, very soon he will drop, since they are so much keen to get children engaged in farming', one experienced NGO functionary explained.

Class Dimension: The two extremes of affluence and poverty exist among the Hindus and Christians, both notable minorities in Sindh. These communities can fund their own deserving persons, and they do support, but not enough hence they need support from other sections of the society. Poverty has emerged as the second biggest issue of the minority communities.

Environmental Dimension: The resource-poor region of Tharparkar has a large number of people depending upon livestock-raising and subsistence agriculture. Their dwellings are scattered in the vast tract of districts of Tharparkar and Mithi. Due to close association with land they live tied to it, unless in drought seasons, which come very often, they have to migrate to other areas, where they work as agricultural labour or haris, on exploitative terms. Their livestock perish and the famine situation appears, hundreds of children have died due to malnourishment and hunger. Since 2012, the community's health degrades largely, whereas the health services infrastructure which is not easily accessible due to scatter of population, comes under pressure of saving people who reach there at the final stages of illness. The livestock also cannot be saved as it starts starving or faces some epidemic. Such factors combine to add misery of the region which has almost half of its people as non-Muslims. This region is now prone to major

environmental changes feared to turning into disasters, if level of preparedness remains inadequate, because the whole region of South Asia is now facing major climate changes. In other regions which depend on rain for irrigation, drought means poverty and threats to life. Seasonal migration of Kohli, Bheel, and Meghwar communities to fertile regions is common, but in case of drought this migration is stepped up, causing serious social implications. The mismanagement of the recent drought situation shows insensitivity of the authorities, thus putting simple, illiterate people in further trouble.²¹ Other important environmental factors worth mentioning have been flooding, stormy rain and cyclones. In recent years extreme heat wave killing many hundreds people, mostly poor or weak in health is alarming about more serious threat ahead as more heat waves are predicted.

Gender Dimension: Throughout the province and especially among the region of Thar, conditions and tradition controlling women's lives are extremely detestable. The Hindu girls are now more strictly protected and confined in houses due to threat of their being involved in love affairs, subversion or abduction by the majority community (Muslims), and then cases of elopement, forced marriage, or forced conversion may appear. Allured by affluence, youthfulness, or any other appealing factor may tempt the young girls, but on the other hand the concept promoted by Islamists that converting someone to Islam would bring salvation and a place in Paradise, so both the push and pull factors work. It is observed that where the practice of *piri-muridi* is strong the events of forced marriage/conversion are more common. The areas, where Muslim clerics have resorted more to political activities and party politics than such persuasions, such *sawab*-seeking deed has been lowered. The women in general in lower class Hindu society are highly oppressed despite their engagement in economic

21 Mohammad Hussain Khan, "Experts tell Thar is to Brace for another Drought," *Dawn*, July 18, 2015.

activities, since they do not earn much and in agriculture, the wages/income is mostly collected by men.

Leadership Dimension: The patterns of leadership are crucial determinant of the pace of change through the government and non-governmental agents of change. Rural Sindh is, by and large, still in the grip of feudal lords. The elections for national and provincial assemblies and local bodies are conducted in such a way that the vote is fixed for certain party, regardless of its performance, so the candidates do not feel obliged to go to the community, know their needs and concerns, and also keep interacting with the voters after being elected, too. Such a political system cannot ensure any benefit at the grassroots level; only the high-ups would benefit. There have been demands properly put forward,²² which could be considered by the political parties, but they give little thought to the minorities, who are not insignificant in many constituencies of Sindh at least. The non-Muslim population of Tharparkar region is suffering due to this drawback of not having 'real representation' as well. It has emerged as the topmost problematic factor in this study. The political parties' manifestoes in 2008 elections showed a satisfactory degree of concern and pledges about the issues of minorities and also proposed steps for overcoming the extremism and terrorism, issues.²³ Now it remains to see when such pledges are put into practice effectively, since without political will, no manifesto can bring change in the ground realities.

Urban-Rural Dimension: The social distance, discrimination and vulnerability of NGOs varies from rural to urban. The rural people are found more rigid in certain parts of the province, especially where there is very small number of non-Muslims around them. Tolerance is nurtured by living

22 For instance Syed Abdul Khaliq, *Religious Minorities' Charter of Demands* (Lahore: Minority Rights Commission, 2004).

23 Syed Jaffar Ahmed, *Terrorism, Extremism, Law and Order Crisis, and 2013 Elections in Pakistan* (Karachi: NOW Communities Report, 2013). See also his *Pakistan kay Ghair Muslim Shehri Siyasi Jama'at ka Kirdar aur Zimmadariyan* (Lahore: Pakistan Alliance for Free, Fair and Democratic Elections, 2008).

together for long time, and also if the instigating factors are not effective. The urban areas are generally more open, and pose less threat to non-Muslim focus NGOs from the people, but the extremist elements are also more active in urban environment, hence one would find some heinous acts of victimisation of NGOs or human rights defenders in the cities. Rural areas have a certain different temperament, which changes slowly. It may resist new ideas, take time to reconcile with the new, and then gradually get to accept it. Once they own something, they do not let others to spoil it. They believe less in rumours and decide mostly by observing things. The urban NGOs, therefore, feel more turbulence than the rural NGOs.

Sources of Funding Dimension: The small NGOs and CBOs remain less active due to resource constraints. Muslims generally do not give donations to the non-Muslim organizations, which shrinks their funding base. Only big NGOs can approach the foreign donors who have tedious lengthy procedures for funding, and overall funding sources are drying up as well.

Attitudinal Dimension: As per findings, social discrimination and a show of inferiority for the non-Muslims is established as rampant among the Muslims, who do not give due respect to the non-Muslims as equal humans and equal citizens. Non-cooperation or even excesses by the police are reported more by the non-Muslim respondents of the study who work for non-Muslims, hence a bias against non-Muslims is established. It is despite the fact the non-Muslim NGO workers mostly do not confine their benefits to the non-Muslims. Moreover, the NGO has worked against the land and water mafias, to the benefit of all residents undoubtedly. The opposition to NGOs comes from diverse factors such as about real intentions of the agencies working apparently for uplift of the area.²⁴

24 For instance, Baanhn Beli reported in the survey: 'There were suspicions and rumours, such as: these people have an eye on mineral sources of Thar. These are Urdu-speaking people, and will settle the Biharis here. They will contest elections from here, so the organization was bound to

Inclusion and Exclusion: The objective of this study was to investigate the interaction between NGOs and the religious minority population, and to see how it could be improved. It is found that mostly the sample NGOs deliver without any discrimination except a few which are set up exclusively for specific religious group. This is positive in that such NGOs take care of the minority section, which is in a disadvantaged position, which, if all other conditions are found same, even due to different religious identity, is discriminated. Some problem is reported in accessing non-Muslim population in general and women in particular by Muslim-run NGOs, which shows that minority communities' needs have to be addressed in particular. To that end both the community leaders and the general NGOs should work for creating a higher level of confidence. This is necessary since NGOs' help beyond provision of health or relief is crucial as they work towards strategic goal as well. NGOs empower people by giving them awareness and moral support, linking and networking, organizing them in community service groups and building their capacity to seek help for anyone. This strategic role of NGOs is the main reason behind this study.

The pressing problems of the religious minority communities are found to be social discrimination, isolation, poverty, unemployment, violence of many types, ineffective political representation, and access to health, housing, education, and citizenship documents. Table 2 has revealed a plethora of problems which demand immediate attention, both by the government and non-governmental sector. The role of minority-run NGOs is commendable in addressing the issues, but the mainstream NGOs, run largely by Muslims, must provide active support to minority NGOs. It would prove synergic as well in terms of increasing the access and confidence on both sides. Moreover, problems were reported in accessing women beneficiaries by both Muslim and non-Muslim dominated NGOs. It alludes to the general

doom. Slowly the rumours subsided, and the community owned it; now they operate it perfectly.'

disadvantage women face in the patriarchal society. But when non-Muslim women cannot be contacted by Muslim dominated NGOs, there one would find the religious barrier. The situation can be improved by employing more women staff in NGO and making special efforts to explain women beneficiaries about no harm in contacting the NGO. A special focus of NGO work can be about promoting openness and harmony through media by preparing such programs and motivating the media authorities to promote such trends consciously in whole scheme of their programs.

Conclusion

Pakistan has been facing an inherent conflict between majority and minority groups, defined both by their socioeconomic capacity or religio-ethnic characteristics. Diversity has been the hallmark of Pakistan's social scene, but political operators have been trying either to suppress this diversity or manipulate it for their own vested interests. Religious, sectarian and ethnic differences have been aired, and highlighted for pitting one group against another. As a result the ideal state of social harmony, integration and development has not been achieved: an acute degree of social fragmentation prevails instead in the country today. The non-Muslim citizens of Pakistan have been constantly suffering at the hands of anti-social, extremist, terrorist elements which not only violate religious and state law but also commit crimes against humanity.

Feeling insecure, unable to benefit from mainstream development programs and not receiving sufficient support from public sector programs in which they are systemically discriminated against, the minorities and the lower caste Hindus in particular, need more vigorous support from all the sections of the Pakistani population, civil society, and the state. As for the minority communities' efforts to secure their rights in Pakistan, because they were pushed into a disadvantaged position, almost no significant support came from the majority community. This reflects poorly

on the fragmented nature of the underprivileged section of the religious minorities, who are discriminated further due to being non-Muslims. Even their own NGOs are not making any significant dent in their gigantic problems. Though they share the features of poverty and underdevelopment with the Muslim population in similar condition, yet the latter get help from the Muslim majority, and Muslim religious philanthropy flows only within Muslims. The better-off sections of non-Muslims must focus on their lower class fellows. The rest can be done by the majority community through its voluntary action, democratic legislations, extending practical help in need and crises, and showing affirmative action in all opportunities. The ethnic, religious and class pride lays at the roots of discrimination, and to minimize that education, media and opinion-making leadership must work. All these suggestions lead towards a broader scale of NGO activity with sincerity and commitment.