



Periodical Profile

The Reality of Civil Work in Egypt: Opportunities and Challenges

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NGOs in Egypt have played a great role in social care since their inception, which has been enhanced with their development. Historically speaking, charitable work has been one of the main goals of NGOs in Egypt since the founding of the Islamic Charity Association in 1878 and the Coptic Charitable Endeavors Association in 1881 up till today. Many associations that were mainly founded for charitable work in recent decades have begun to change their vision and turn to development work or to combine the two, in a way or another. In any case, the modern developmental thinking relies on the active NGOs role in development in the framework of an institutional partnership with the state and the private sector. In this context, the core pressing question, if we are seeking an active and influential role which was clearly indicated in Egypt's Vision 2030, is the civil sector in Egypt in its current state capable of that? What are the requirements to achieve this? In fact this is the right time to raise that question as we witness for the first time in the history of relations between NGOs and the Egyptian state after 1952 a new philosophy for the relationship between the two parties. This new relationship is characterized by a space of freedom and a degree of confidence, which can be built upon in order to build a real effective and influential development partnership.

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to shed light on the current situation of civil work in Egypt, and its most important problems to analyze opportunities and risks on the one hand, and then access the requirements to activate the role of civil work in achieving development and progress in society. These requirements, despite their multi-



plicity, are confined to two basic matters, the first revolves around the nature of the relationship with the state, while the second relates to the internal characteristics and factors related to the civil work itself. In this context, the research will be divided into four sections as follows:

1. A map of the civil work in Egypt: the problem of quantity and quality
2. NGOs in Egypt and issues of poverty and development: a problematic methodology
3. Towards a new methodology for civil work in the framework of laying the foundations for institutional partnership: opportunities and risks
4. Conclusion

Map of the civil work in Egypt: quantity and quality

Recent years have witnessed a boom in the growth of NGOs in Egypt, as the number of NGOs registered in the Ministry of Social Solidarity in 2012 was 37,500 compared to 43,500 in 2013⁽¹⁾ and 50,572 in 2019. It is noticeable from this quantitative development that the increase happened within the framework of Law No. 84 of 2002, which was subject to great criticism by many workers in the civil sector, as it contained articles that restricted civil work to some extent. Rather, the strangest thing is that the period between the issuance of Law No. 70 of 2017 and the new law witnessed an increase of 2,992 associations compared to 47,580 in 2017.⁽²⁾ This indicates the continued quantitative growth of NGOs regardless of the legal framework and the extent of the freedom of movement it provides. The truth is that this essential point is the appropriate entry for the transition to the type and quality of existing civil work, and the extent of its ability to play an active role in the development process, either alone or through building partnerships with state institutions.

The NGO map is characterized by great diversity and complexity, based on a set of determinants, the most important of which are: the size and scope of geographic work, the nature of the approaches that govern the work, and the interventions. As for the size and geographic scope of work, there are small grassroots associations that spread widely in the countryside, and a large number of them are called community development societies. Every countryside in Egypt has one or more associations. It is worth noting that most of these associations focus their activ-