

EXPANDED ABSTRACT

Development of Mexican Non-Governmental Organizations and its coincidences with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, after decades of international agreements, the United Nations adopted the "Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development", the action plan for the next 15 years to try to solve the current human development problems. This strategy includes 17 goals (no poverty; zero hunger; good health and well being; quality education; gender equality; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation and infrastructure; reduced inequalities; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate action; life below water; life on land; peace, justice and strong institutions; and partnerships for the goals), and 169 targets that are integrated together and are non divisible, and which cover environmental, social and economic aspects. To achieve these goals and targets it is necessary that governments and civil society participate together.

México is one of the countries that signed the Agenda 2030. It is characterized by its big extension (1'973,000 km²) and population (123.5 millions), low economic growth of 2.3% in 2016 (El Economista, 2017), a high poverty level of 43.6% (Coneval, 2016), and a huge biodiversity (fifth place worldwide according to Llorente-Bousquets y Ocegueda, 2008). Because of this complex situation, it is particularly important to assess the contribution of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to Mexican sustainability. Thus, the objective of the this paper is to propose a general overview of the development of the Mexican NGOs, and to analyse the degree of coincidence of their activities with the UN Agenda 2030's framework for sustainable development.

We use a framework close to constructivism and principally qualitative methods, including analysing and researching documentary information and statistic data, while maintaining an interdisciplinary perspective to study the three fundamental sustainability aspects (environmental, social and economic).

The information sources included mainly NGOs web pages, the Ministry of Government (Segob), the Social Development Institute (Indesol), complemented with direct information provided by different stakeholders from the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (Semarnat) and NGOs', which provide different perspectives.

We began by identifying the NGOs and their regional localization. Mexican national records have more than 30,000 NGOs (according to Indesol). The NGOs activity in México is regulated by the law called Ley Federal de Fomento a las Actividades Realizadas por Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil (LFFAROSC), approved in 2004. This law establishes 19 NGOs activities, and activity number 12 relates to sustainable development (SD) and includes: advice for the use of natural resources; environmental, flora and fauna protection; preservation and restoration of the ecological balance; as well as, sustainable development promotion at regional and community levels in urban and rural areas. We work with a subgroup of 5,636 NGOs related to SD, based on activity 12 of LFFAROSC.

Later, we reduce the group to 21 NGOs recognized for their contribution at national level and which have accessible information. These 21 cases were selected by the characterization of a set of variables including their activities, their age and experience, their relationship with the government and the civil society, as well as, the origin of their resources. Then, the contribution from their activities to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals included in the Agenda 2030 is analysed.

It was found that the Mexican NGOs had fast growth and that they have been focused on activity 12 of the LFFAROSC. Also the goals proposed in the Agenda 2030 related to the sustainable cities and communities, life on land, responsible consumption and production, quality education, and affordable and clean energy are covered by the NGOs. In contrast, some of the goals are not the main focus of the analysed NGOs, such as: no poverty, zero hunger, reduced inequalities and quality education (in addition to environmental awareness), among others. Nevertheless, these goals may be covered by NGOs that work in other LFFAROSC activities. Other goals that are not contemplated by the law, particularly those related to economic and political topics (decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation and infrastructure; and peace, justice and strong institutions), where NGOs have less possibility to act. Hence, these responsibilities depended mostly on the government.

In summary, the NGOs contribution to achieve the goals of the Agenda 2030 is relevant in the national context and fundamental in some country regions with less support for governmental programs.

There are some limitations to this study: 1) the 21 NGOs selected for the analysis are not representative of the complete NGOs universe related to SD; 2) the variables used for the analysis were helpful according to the objective of this paper, specially the description of the NGOs activities, the experience, their relationship with government and civil society, as well as the origin of the resources. Nevertheless, it will be helpful to have data about financial and human resources availability (volunteers and remunerated); and 3) with regards to the production of knowledge of the NGOs, we only did a general description of the variety of documents that they use for the diffusion of knowledge, but a deeper content analysis is necessary to think about quality and utility.

The work presented constitutes a first approach to the contribution of the main NGOs activities to SD in México. Further research could look at an impact evaluation that identify, quantify, explain and assess the influence to the country in the light of the goals of the UN Agenda 2030.

KEYWORDS: Sustainable Development Goals, Non-Governmental Organizations, Assessment, México.