

**Why Do NGOs Go Where They Go? Evidence from Kenya**  
**Chapter Two of *Surrogates for Government? NGOs & the State in Kenya***

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**Abstract**

What factors determine how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in developing countries choose to locate their offices and programs within a particular country? Are NGOs influenced primarily by the objective need of the people? Does their placement correspond with locations that are convenient and easy to live in for their staff? Do political considerations within the country strongly influence NGO program location? Using comprehensive data from the national NGO Coordination Board of Kenya, this paper answers these questions as they pertain to one country in sub-Saharan Africa. It finds that NGO location corresponds with objective levels of need in an area, as well as the relative ease of reaching these needy people. Political factors like patronage appear to have little or no significant influence.

**Introduction**

In the past two decades, the position of non-governmental organizations (NGOs<sup>1</sup>) in developing countries around the world has shifted from that of minor and little-discussed players focusing on the welfare of the poor to major, central actors on the world stage of development, receiving, in some cases, more donor funds than their state counterparts (Chege 1999). In sub-Saharan Africa, this shift arose in part from donor frustration with opaque and inefficient state-based systems for development, which spawned an interest in accountability and governance mechanisms involving non-state actors, including NGOs. NGOs have increasingly been seen as more efficient, effective, flexible and innovative than governments, to be other-oriented and ideologically committed to democracy and participatory pro-poor development, and to be more accountable and transparent than the government (Bratton 1989, Fowler 1991, Owiti et al 2004).

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<sup>1</sup> Following the World Bank (1990), I take a broad definition of NGOs: NGOs are not only international charitable non-profits, but also local organizations that are independent from government and have primarily social rather than commercial objectives. In Kenya, their funding tends to come from international sources, but decision-making can be either local or international.

The numbers of NGOs throughout the developing world, and Africa in particular, have skyrocketed. Kenya, for example, has witnessed a virtual explosion in the number NGOs in the country: in 1974 there were only 125 NGOs in Kenya; by 2006, over 6,000 had been registered with the government (Republic of Kenya 2006).

Significant research has been done to understand many implications of these changes. Often through the lens of analyzing state-NGO relations (Bratton 1989, Broadhead 1987, Clark 1995, Kameri-Mbote 2000, Sandberg 1994), scholars have examined the growth and impact of NGOs on service provision and development (Kanyinga 1996, Obiyan 2005, Oyugi 2004, Tripp 1994), accountability (Edwards & Hulme 1996) local politics and collective action (Boulding & Gibson *forthcoming*), governance (Grindle 2004, Mercer 2003, Swidler 2007) and sovereignty (Chege 1999). However, to date, considerable research has focused on NGOs as an explanatory variable.<sup>2</sup> This paper takes another approach, asking not about NGOs' impacts, but about their initial placement. Specifically, it asks why NGOs choose to set up shop in the places where they do work, a crucial question around which there has been considerable conjecture, but scant data. What factors determine where NGOs implement their programs on the ground? Do NGOs choose locations for their projects and offices based on objective need-based grounds, like poverty, illness, lack of education, or other such measures of relative deprivation? Or do other, less-altruistic factors more highly influence these decisions, like the ease of working in a particular location or the national-political implications of the choice? Are NGOs the do-gooders of popular imagination, or are NGO cynics correct in their claims that NGOs simply follow the money, the political desires of leaders, or their own personal comfort?

One can imagine several possible reasons on how NGOs might select particular places in which to implement their programs. For example, project locations could be chosen more or less

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<sup>2</sup> Notable exceptions include Edwards & Hulme 1996, Lister \*\*\*

at random – NGOs might throw a dart at a map to find a village or town in which to work.

Assuming this is not the case, several other plausible explanations exist. Selection may be based on extreme need, meaning that NGOs choose to work where there is the most poverty, illness, lack of education or no safe drinking water. Or NGOs might go where there are a great number of people in relative need. Perhaps they usually work where an individual NGO worker or leader has connections, or where their work won't be interfered with for political reasons. Along similar lines, it's plausible that NGOs are swayed by powerful national politicians, who influence the NGOs to work in their home area either by direct instruction, or because they can offer resources to the NGOs if they are willing to do so. Finally, it has been suggested that NGOs chose their location based on the conditions or comfort level in that place for the NGO workers themselves.

Case studies on this particular question are exceedingly rare, as few researchers have had access to comprehensive country-wide data indicating where NGOs implement their projects. I was able however, to gather sufficient information to answer this question as it pertains to Kenya by obtaining a complete database from the Government of Kenya's NGO Coordination Board (NGO Board), the government agency responsible for registering, monitoring and assessing NGOs' work in the country. This database not only lists each of the over 4000 NGOs operating in Kenya at the time of research, but provides information on which areas of the country they work. I use this data, combined with information from a wide variety of other government, international and non-governmental organization sources on Kenya, to determine which factors are most important in influencing an NGO's decision on where in the country to operate.

This chapter begins with an overview of existing theories of how NGOs chose the locations in which they work. This is followed by a discussion of the data and methods used in the analysis, as well as descriptions for each explanatory variable. Next come data analysis,

including substantive interpretations of the findings and checks for robustness. Finally, the chapter ends with implications for NGOs and policy makers, as well as suggestions for future research.

### **Existing Explanations: Sainly or Self-Centered NGOs?**

Clustering the competing claims into broad categories leads us to two very different hypotheses of NGO placement. The first, which I call the “sainly view of NGOs,” is what the general populace probably assumes or hopes that NGOs follow in decision-making – that NGOs locate their projects in places where recipient need is very great and alternative means of service provision do not exist or are insufficient. This view corresponds to the mission statements of most development NGOs in Kenya, which promise such things as: “to ensure that every African can enjoy the right to good health by helping to create vibrant networks of informed communities that work with empowered health care providers in strong health systems” (AMREF 2008); or “to provide equipment for the drilling of water wells that will provide clean drinking water to the people of Western Kenya in and near the City of Kakamega” (Water for Kakamega 2008).

It also corresponds to the reason that many highly educated people – both foreign and Kenya – give for their decision to work for an NGO. NGO workers in general have the skills and abilities to earn considerably higher incomes through employment in the private sector, but chose to work in NGOs for humanitarian or altruistic reasons. For example, one international NGO worker I interviewed said that she chose to take a 40% pay cut to work for a non-profit “because I really wanted to give back in some way... so [my] main reason is service and mission driven” (2008-3).<sup>3</sup> Another mid-level NGO worker told of “a personal interest to work on issues that I

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<sup>3</sup> Kindly note that references in the format (date-number) represent the author’s interviews during field research. Because of confidentiality requirements of the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of

had an opinion about and cared for” (2008-7). Many others told me their organizations hoped to reduce “duplication of efforts” in service provision in order to reach a greater number of people. Another said, “We don't just talk about the bottom line. We get a chance to talk about why we are doing what we are doing, and debate what is the right thing to do” (2008-8). Similarly, a Kenyan education NGO manager told me that before she started her organization, she earned more money selling maize and beans meals in the shantytown, but she couldn't stand by and watch so many children remain uneducated (2007-26). Likewise, a young Kenyan left a paying job to start an organization to keep boys in school and out of trouble in a highly turbulent slum in Nairobi. He relied only on donations to maintain the organization (2007-36). These workers believe the organizations work where they do in order to improve the lives of those that truly need assistance.

Some recent scholarly research confirms these sentiments. In the international relations political science literature on norms, for example, Tim Büthe and his colleagues asked the question, “What explains the allocation of private-source development aid across recipient countries?” and found that American private development assistance is dispensed along need-based lines, following idealistic, altruistic and principled norms of serving underdeveloped and neglected populations (Büthe et al. 2008, 2). It is not allocated in ways that serve primarily to aid the survival and self-perpetuation of the NGO or of the personnel working for the NGOs. In fact, they point out that “difficult work under often unpleasant conditions for quite low salaries leads to self-selection among the often highly educated NGO staff, so that those who make a career in development NGOs tend to be strongly motivated by a commitment to indeed feed the hungry,

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California, Berkeley, personal identifiers are not used. This interview numbering system allows the reader to understand that citations are from a wide variety of interview sources.

treat those in poor health, educate the illiterate, and to do so in ways that create conditions for long-term improvements in aid recipients' quality of life” (*ibid.* 4).

Should this “saintly” view of NGOs be true, we should expect to see a number of specific factors strongly correlated with high levels of NGO activity. Districts with high poverty and low human development should tend to have more NGOs, all else being equal. Similarly, poor health, education, sanitation and economic indicators should correspond to higher NGO penetration. High population or population densities might also be associated with NGOs, since this would allow NGOs to do good for the greatest number of people.

The second category, the “cynical view of NGOs,” is more often held by policy-makers, embittered NGO workers, donor country representatives, politicians, and critical academics. Cynical views can fall into two sub-categories: political theories and convenience theories. These both suggest that NGOs provide services not where they are necessarily needed the most, but where there are instrumental reasons to provide them.

In the case of political theories, cynics tell several related stories. First, some suggest that NGOs are most plentiful in areas where powerful national politicians hail from, since African politicians are known to use their access to the national cake to feed their home areas (Ekeh 1975, Jackson & Rosberg 1984, Joseph 1987, Bayart 1993, van de Walle 2001). NGOs have come to play a role in this distribution of benefits ever since “corruption” became the buzzword of the decade: national resources are frequently funneled through politician-initiated NGOs to sanitize them (Bratton 1989, Fowler 1991). A variant of this holds that NGOs are more prevalent in districts where elected politicians are most popular – or at least repeatedly reelected – since in a patronage-based political system, a politician will tend to be popular only if he/she delivers. Thus areas displaying loyalty to the national government would be rewarded by the government

(Barkan et al. 2003) through the steering of NGOs to those areas. In the Kenyan context, this was said to be true throughout the Moi administration, during which time the saying “*siaya mbaya, maisha mbaya*” (bad politics, bad life) was often repeated, meaning that areas with “bad” political affiliations and voting records would not receive state-based development funds (2008-58).

A second story holds that NGOs often do not choose their own locations, but are told where to locate projects either explicitly or by implication by powerful politicians and administrators at the national government level – people at the Ministries of Health, Education, Planning, etc. A variation of this theory contends that NGOs are influenced by powerful donor country governments who see strategic placement in their own self-interest.

These political theories lead to a set of testable hypotheses. If true, we should see that districts from which very powerful politicians hail have more NGOs than their less fortunate counterparts. Second, we should expect that districts with low electoral turnover have higher numbers of NGOs than those districts with high turnover, all else equal. Finally, districts that show strong allegiance to the national government should have more NGOs than those that do not.

Like political theories of NGO placement, *convenience* theories hold that NGOs choose their location to the instrumental benefit of the NGO workers or the NGO as an organization (Easterly?). For example, proponents of this theory believe that NGO prevalence is correlated with ease of access to a location. Since there are so many people in need in developing countries, choosing to help the ones that are relatively easy to access with personnel or supplies might seem reasonable to NGO decision-makers. Why pick someone in need who is very difficult to get to when there is another person in need right along a nicely paved road? These theorists also

believe that just as developing country government officials often consider it “punishment” to be sent to remote locations with poor living quality and limited access to elite goods (McSherry & Brass 2007), it is difficult to find high quality NGO workers – particularly well educated local elites – eager to live in such areas. Indeed, in my own experience, I have known vastly under-qualified individuals (by their own admissions) to be considered for high-level positions in such locations for lack of alternative candidates (2006-9). On a related note, some argue that NGOs choose locations to work based on where individual members of the organization have connections – both professionally and personally, including family connections. In Africa, this not only helps these workers develop their community status as “patrons” (Kaler & Watkins 2001), it also allows them to spend time with people they care about.

As with individual workers, NGOs as organizations may also choose to work where members of their organizational network or field works already, such as in a place where an organization with which they have successfully collaborated in the past already has a project. Thus we might expect to see a snowballing of like-missioned organizations in one general area.

On the organizational level, many people have argued or implied that NGOs choose projects based primarily on the survival imperative of the organization itself – and less on the needs of the people they claim to help (Hancock 1989, de Waal 1997, Alexander Cooley and James Ron 2002 cited in Buthe et al. 2008). In the organization theory literature, this is addressed by theorists who claim that many organizations lose sight of their initial goals in order to survive. “Natural” systems theories of resource dependence, for example, would point out that NGOs are dependent on their external donors for their survival. For this reason, an organization may choose to locate a project in an area that is important to the donor; that is highly visible in the news and therefore likely to receive funding from the populace generally; or that is “hot” in

the development field. Each of these could help to ensure the organization's survival through success in accumulating resources needed for continuation.

If it is true that NGOs choose their location based on these convenience and livability factors, then certain correlations should hold. First, NGOs should be more prevalent in places that are easy to get to and where they can access a high density of people, all else being equal, meaning that one can expect to find NGOs along major highways, near well-trafficked airports, in areas with well-paved roads and larger cities, etc. Second, NGOs should be more common in areas where there is increased access to “elite goods,” such as restaurants, entertainment facilities, imported or processed foodstuffs, resorts and high quality medical and education facilities for the families of these workers. Third, we should see a correlation between any stated interests of major donor countries and NGO location – although this might be more obvious *between* countries than within them. Finally, over time, we would expect to see a snowballing of NGOs in otherwise inexplicable locations. For example, in the town of Busia in Western Kenya there is a sizable community of academic workers that has largely formed via the snowball method. NGOs might prove to do the same thing.

### **Data & Methods**

I estimate a linear regression to assess the competing claims made about where NGOs choose to locate. The dependent variable in this analysis is the number of NGOs located per administrative district of Kenya. To clarify for the reader unfamiliar with Kenya, a district is the third-level administrative unit in Kenya: it is below the national and provincial levels, and above the division, location and sub-location level. The highest-level administrator in a district is the District Commissioner, who is part of the Provincial Administration civil service. The district is therefore an administrative, not a political unit, though it usually overlaps with several sub-



work in the country. This database lists over 4200 NGOs considered active in the country at the time of research, including: all the NGOs registered in Kenya between 1991, when the NGO Board was created, and December 2006, during my field research in Kenya; plus about 50 NGOs registered between 1953 and 1991 that were entered in the database upon its creation; minus all NGOs stricken from the record over the years for various reasons. For example, 304 and 340 NGOs in 2002 and 2003 respectively were struck from the register for failing to adequately file required paperwork, only 20 of which were successfully able to appeal (National Council of NGOs website, accessed 2006). Based on the numbering system of the NGO Board, it appears that 2164 NGOs have been struck from the register since its creation – there are organizations numbered to 6375, but only 4211 records.

The NGO Board database includes a plethora of data on each organization. Basic information such as the NGO's name, ID number at the NGO Board, postal and physical address, contact information, and registration date exist alongside more interesting information like the organizational objectives, date of last return to the NGO Board, mission statement, origins, amounts, and spending patterns of organizational resources, and – most crucial for this paper – geographical location. Specifically, the database includes information provided by each NGO on which districts in Kenya it works or will work.

As a caveat, I recognize that while this database is remarkably complete, there are, not surprisingly, several factors whose existence suggests that the data might not be flawless. Specifically, some of the NGOs listed have not submitted required annual reports consistently since they were first registered, meaning it is unclear whether the organization still operates generally, and in the location listed specifically. Since the NGO Coordination Board does not have adequate staff to follow up with each of these organizations, many of them are left in the

database in years that reports are not submitted, giving the organization the benefit of the doubt – it, too, is likely lacking in administrative resources. Yet as already mentioned the NGO Board has struck many organizations from the register over the years, suggesting that there is a strong attempt at maintenance of the database.

An equally problematic element in the database is that it relies on self-reported location information from the NGOs. This means that the database lists the districts where each organization *says* that it works, but not where the NGO can actually be shown to work now or in the past. Because a good number of NGOs register but never get off the ground, or their strategy changes between registration and implementation, it is not always clear that they ever actually had a presence in the places listed in the database. Moreover, it is unclear whether the location information is updated each time an annual report is submitted, or whether it is entered once, at the time of initial registration, and never updated.

Nevertheless, I use the data. I argue that this data can be used despite these potential errors since: it is far and away the most comprehensive dataset available for the country; it is the data that the Kenyan government uses to determine NGO-related policies and regulations for the country; it is updated as well as possible, given the Board's capacity<sup>5</sup>, with inactive NGOs removed each year from the registry; and it holds up to tests of robustness when compared with alternate, smaller datasets. Specifically, as shown later in this chapter, results from this the data are robust against those of the *Directory of NGOs in Kenya (2005)*, from the non-profit organization responsible for coordinating all NGOs in Kenya, the NGO Council. While the absolute number of NGOs in Kenya is not consistent between the two organizations, the variable

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<sup>5</sup> While I mention the NGO Board's limited capacity, I believe that this is more due to a lack in the *number* of personnel, rather than the *quality* of personnel. The NGO Board workers, relative to most other Kenyan government agencies I visited, were extremely professional, motivated, interested in their work, and willing to assist my research as well as they could. Board employees themselves recognized their own resource scarcity and did not cover up or attempt to hide limitations in their work.

of interest to this paper, geographic distribution of NGOs, *is* highly correlated, at .9478.

Moreover, there is no reason to believe that any errors that may exist in the database were placed there intentionally or in any systematically biasing manner. Thus, while there are most certainly errors – as there are with all statistics and with any statistic from a developing country in particular – there is no reason that the errors are biased in any systematic way.

*Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variable: NGOs per District*

<i>Obs</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
70	249.9	42.5	204	534

In addition to the database received from the NGO Board, I collected a wide variety of information during field research that will serve as proxies for my explanatory variables. These proxies come from Government of Kenya censuses and census analysis from 1989 and 1999, UNDP Human Development Reports for Kenya, and seven different Kenyan government agencies or ministries. I divide these independent variables into three categories, relating to the theories detailed above: *need* factors, *political* factors, and *convenience* factors

Need factor proxies include such measures as: the percentage of the *population without access to drinking water or health care, HIV levels, or adult illiteracy* rates.<sup>6</sup> If relative need for assistance determines NGO placements, we should see a significant positive coefficient for lack of access to drinking water and health care, high HIV prevalence and adult illiteracy. These

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<sup>6</sup> I do not use a proxy for “poverty” generally, as many of the poverty indicators, such as that used in the UN Human Development Reports, are composite indices combining several factors. I choose to tease out these individual factors for greater precision. While it might be useful to do so, I do not include GDP per capita or other measure of wealth either, as this is both highly correlated with several other measures included in the models (such as urbanization, population density and road density) and can be a distorted measure in places with very high income disparity.

represent the need for infrastructure, health care, assistance responding to the HIV epidemic, and education respectively.<sup>7</sup>

As proxies for political factors in NGOs' decisions, I first compiled data on district-level allegiance to the national government using electoral data from the presidential elections of 1997, in which a highly unpopular Daniel arap Moi squeaked through the vote, retaining the presidency after already serving nineteen years in office. Aggregating constituency-level voting data into district-wide average electoral support for Moi allows us to determine a particular districts' allegiance to the national government in the late 1990s. According to the dominant neo-patrimonialism theories of African politics, one would expect that districts strongly supporting Moi would be rewarded with NGOs by this most-powerful patron. Should politics be a major factor in their location decisions, *support for Moi in the 1997 elections* should have a significant positive coefficient.<sup>8</sup>

Next, I calculated the average amount of electoral turnover in a district by determining the average number of MPs per constituency in the whole district for the three parliamentary elections between 1992 and 2002. This variable measures the power of patronage at the *local* rather than national level. Since politics in Kenya is highly personalized with electoral competition based on the candidate's individual characteristics and not party platforms (Oyugi et

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<sup>7</sup> These measures of need largely correspond with the primary area of involvement for the overwhelming majority of NGOs in Kenya. In four representative sample districts (Machakos, Mbeere, Taita Taveta and Siaya) for which I analyzed the NGO focus area, the distribution of NGOs was virtually identical. Using Machakos as an example, the distribution of NGOs' foci is as follows: 40% general development and poverty reduction; 19% issues pertaining to women, children, youth or disabled people; 12% health; 11% education; 6% environmental issues; 4% agriculture; 4% governance issues like civic education, human rights or corruption; 1% emergency relief, and 3% other. Thus over 90% of NGOs are focusing on poverty reduction in some fashion or another. Even many environmental NGOs' mission statements profess to want to address issues such as drought and deforestation because they negatively impact poverty reduction efforts.

<sup>8</sup> Using the same methods, one might think that this could change following 2002, when Moi's chosen successor lost the presidential election to the opposition coalition candidate, Mwai Kibaki, who is now in his second term in office. I therefore calculated district-level support rates for Kibaki in the 2002 elections. However, these two political variables, vote share for Moi in 1997 and Kibaki in 2002, were highly (and negatively) correlated with one another, so I relying only on the 1997 vote share for Moi as my electoral variable.

al. 2003), this is a measure not of *party* turnover, but of changes in the individual voted to serve as MP in a constituency. This variable is derived by determining the number of electoral turnovers in each constituency in each district, and then averaging the number for all constituencies in the district.<sup>9</sup> Since there were three elections in this period, this variable ranges from 1, meaning the same person was elected as MP in all constituencies in the district during the three elections, to 3, meaning that no MP in any constituency served more than 1 term in the time period. This variable is called *Electoral Turnover of MPs* in my regressions, and I expect to see a significant and negative coefficient on this variable.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, to measure NGO convenience factors<sup>11</sup>, I collected information on the *population density* of the district, under the assumption that NGOs will go to areas where they can access relatively large numbers of people from a single office. I also computed the *distance of each district's administrative headquarter from the capital city*, Nairobi as well as the *density of the district's road network* by dividing the absolute kilometers of paved roads in each district by the total area of the district. Data for these computations came from the Kenya Roads Board, a government agency in Kenya. Since many of the largest districts in Kenya have the least infrastructure, measuring road density should provide a magnified result for ease of access. If NGOs chose location based on ease of access, we should see a strongly positive and significant

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<sup>9</sup> While constituencies are a political unit and districts are an administrative unit, they overlap, such that multiple constituencies (between two and eight, depending on the district) are contained within the district boundaries.

<sup>10</sup> I have not yet come up with a measurement for powerful politicians coming from a particular district, given the lack of statistically significant correlation for the other two political variables, I'm not convinced it's worth devising. I also chose not to examine the theory that NGO placement is based on the interests of specific donor countries or popular views of "important" districts. I made these decisions strategically, based on the research and results Büthe et al. (2008) found for a similar question internationally – they did not find any correlation between portrayal in the news and NGO funding between countries. I feel that I am even less likely to do so within a country.

<sup>11</sup> It has been suggested that the proportion of students attending secondary school in a district would also be a good measure for convenience, as it indicates whether there is a pool of educated people from which to draw NGO personnel. Because of the national centralized nature of the school system in Kenya, however, students often attend secondary school – usually boarding school – outside of their home district, meaning that enrollment rates are not an entirely accurate measure for this.

coefficient on the paved roads variables, and a negative coefficient on the district's distance from Nairobi.

As a measure of physical comfort and quality of life for NGO workers, I examine the *urbanization* level of the district, since urban areas are known to have significantly higher levels of elite goods than their rural counterparts all over the world – and perhaps magnified in Africa. The urbanization variable is calculated as a ratio of the urban population of the district to the entire district population, based on the 1999 Kenya Government census. If it is true that NGOs chose their operating locations based on their employee's convenience, we should see a positive and significant coefficient on this variable.<sup>12</sup>

### **Analysis of NGO Placement**

With this data in hand, I am able to now determine which factors correlate with the geographic distribution of NGOs in Kenya at the district level, all else being equal. I begin with a basic model (Model 1 in Table Two below), in which I have included several factors that represent each basic hypothesis, and conclude by showing that several need and convenience variables – lack of access to health care, high HIV rates, high population density and close proximity to the capital, Nairobi – are consistently significant indicators of NGO placement in Kenya (Model 5), while political factors have no clear influence on NGO placement.

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<sup>12</sup> I do not currently have a measure for organizational location snowballing. Qualitative evidence gained through interviews suggests, however, that NGOs do not intentionally follow this strategy for choosing location. If anything, the opposite is true – NGO leaders and workers reported overwhelmingly that they avoid duplication of efforts in a particular village, Sub-Location or Location. While these administrative units are smaller than the District level, and may reflect a different strategy than NGOs have at the District level, I do not believe this to be the case. (For example, interviews 2008-14; 2008-18; 2008-37 all reported this emphatically.)

**Table Two: Number of NGOs according to NGO Board**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>
<i>Need Factors</i>					
Adult Illiteracy Rate	0.404 [0.370]	0.365 [0.358]	0.036 [0.275]	0.083 [0.325]	
Percent w/o access to clean water	-0.256 [0.293]	-0.318 [0.284]	0.006 [0.195]	-0.118 [0.226]	
Percent w/o access to health care	0.24 [0.369]	0.041 [0.368]	0.479* [0.276]	0.697** [0.337]	0.743** [0.310]
HIV Prevalence		2.299** [1.040]	1.849** [0.822]	1.906* [0.971]	1.675** [0.803]
<i>Convenience Factors</i>					
HQ Distance from Nairobi	-0.052** [0.026]	-0.063** [0.026]	-0.034 [0.021]	-0.057** [0.024]	-0.054** [0.021]
Urbanization percentage	1.552*** [0.271]	1.405*** [0.271]			
Km of paved roads per 1000km <sup>2</sup> of area			0.082*** [0.009]		
Population Density				0.056*** [0.009]	0.058*** [0.008]
<i>Political Factors</i>					
Ave # of MPs per constituency in 92-02 elections	4.848 [10.423]	2.891 [10.124]	-3.252 [7.808]	-3.185 [9.151]	
Percentage vote for Moi – 1997	-28.184 [18.174]	-6.664 [20.100]	-0.071 [15.888]	1.633 [18.582]	
Constant	235.194*** [37.014]	237.885*** [35.834]	214.641*** [27.514]	205.905*** [33.794]	194.017*** [19.383]
Observations	65	65	70	70	70
R-squared	0.49	0.53	0.67	0.55	0.55
Standard errors in brackets					

Note: All tables depict OLS estimates with Huber-White robust standard errors in brackets where \* p < 0.1; \*\* p < 0.05 and \*\*\* p < 0.01, two-tailed tests. I used Stata 10.0 to derive all estimates.

Most NGOs claim to locate based on objective need. To cover a variety of types of need, I include measures for education, infrastructure and health care generally, represented by adult illiteracy, lack of access to clean drinking water and lack of access to health care respectively. Interestingly, two of these independent measures of need have very little impact on the model. The first, adult illiteracy, is never remotely statistically significant (p-values of .279, .313, .897 and .799 in Model 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively). Moreover, the coefficients on the statistically

significant variables barely change when it is discarded in Model 5. While I do not include all models attempted here, I never found adult illiteracy to be statistically significant – its significance only decreased as I added other measures. As an alternate measure, I used primary school enrollment rates in the model in the place of adult illiteracy. I use the UNDP's *Human Development Report* for Kenya (2006), which estimates the school-age population from the 1999 census relative to the enrollment figures.<sup>13</sup> This measure was always insignificant.

Like adult illiteracy, the second additional measure of need, the percent of people in a district without access to clean drinking water, which can be seen both as a measure of absolute poverty and as one of need for infrastructure services, proves not to be a significant determinant of NGO presence. Additionally, it had a coefficient with the “wrong” sign: while the theory implies that as the percentage of people without safe water goes up the number of NGOs in a district should also go up, the results in Table two indicated that as the lack of clean water goes up, the number of NGOs in that area, all else held constant, goes down. This variable does not have a large impact on the coefficients of other significant variables or the overall fit level of the model.

The last measure of need included initially in these models was the percent of people without access to health care in a district. While this does not initially appear to be significant, when the model is refined to include different measures of convenience and drop insignificant factors, it becomes significant (p-value of .088, .043 and .019 in models 3, 4 and 5), with a positive coefficient, all else held constant.

I add HIV rates to my indicators of need since I was told frequently during field research that a high proportion of NGOs in Kenya work specifically to fight the AIDS epidemic

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<sup>13</sup> This statistic can appear incorrect, as enrollment rates in Kenya are occasionally over 100%. However, this is not an error: the introduction of universal free primary education in Kenya in 2002 brought a large number of adults back to school, and children older than the cohort age often attend school in Kenya.

throughout the country. HIV rates in the country were thought to be around 14% in the early 2000s, although, as in many countries of the world, estimates have recently been lowered to around 6%, largely due to improved prevalence measurement tools (World Bank 2008). While this may at first seem to be the same thing as lack of access to health care since they both pertain to illness, in fact the two are correlated at an extremely low level (.01). Rates of HIV infection have little to do with health care coverage, since HIV cannot be cured and its spread is largely unrelated with treatable medical conditions. Thus, I include them both in the model. As seen in Table 2, the estimated coefficient for HIV prevalence is positive and statistically significant, as hypothesized. Clearly, need factors – particularly those pertaining to availability of social services and the HIV epidemic – are explanatory factors in determining NGO placement.

Like some of the need factors, convenience factors have a highly significant impact on NGO placement in Kenya. To test the convenience hypothesis, I chose the district headquarter distance from Nairobi as a measure, since, on average, the farther one gets from Nairobi, the less well-maintained the roads are – and therefore the more pain involved in getting there *and* the fewer the elite goods traveling along those roads. This measure is also the “convenience” factor least correlated with any other possible convenience measures. For the most part, throughout the models, this variable is strongly significant with consistent substantive meaning.

Because many of my convenience measures are fairly highly correlated with one another (but not with the district headquarters’ distance from Nairobi) and all represent access to a high number of people as well, I alternate these measures throughout the models to confirm that convenience factors do play a role in determining NGO placement.<sup>14</sup> I include only one

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<sup>14</sup> Since population and road network absolute levels and densities tend to be strongly correlated, road network density also serves as a measure for an NGOs ability to access the greatest number of people with a single organization. The correlation this allows us to control for population and area of a particular district, even if we do

additional proxy measure at a time. Thus, in Models 1 and 2, I include an urbanization measure, which is highly significant (p-value of .000 in both models). In Model 3, I exchange urbanization for the density of paved roads in the area. My coefficient on the road density variable is highly statistically significant (p-value of .000) and has the sign predicted by the convenience theory. It suggests that as the road density in a district increases, the number of NGOs in the district increases, all else being equal. Because I believe population levels and densities to be the clearest pull-factor for ease of access by NGOs, I include a measure of population density in the final models. Like the other convenience measures, population density is strongly significant and positive (p-value remaining .000 in both models). I discuss the substantive meaning of this finding below.

Finally, I include measures to test the politics-based explanations of NGO presence in Kenyan districts, which are never statistically significant in my models. I used the percentage of the vote for Moi in 1997 as a proxy for political influence in the locational choice of NGOs. A high level of support for Moi in the 1997 elections suggests a good deal of loyalty to Moi as a national-level patron, able to bring development support to the district. Because politics in Kenya is largely based on patron-client ties, however, it would be likely that support for politicians closer to the local level than the president would have a greater impact on NGO placement in a district – for example the patronage relationship between an MP and his/her constituency is more direct than that between a district and the leader of the entire nation. For this reason I also include a measure of MP turnover, which finds the mean number of MPs in the district in from 1992-2002, in the regression. Remarkably, neither variable has any significant impact on the regression coefficients; when removed from the equation in Model 5, they change neither

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not include them explicitly in a particular model. Population levels and the km of paved roads in a district are correlated at .8447; Population and road density at .6923, Population density and road density at .9193.

coefficients, nor significance levels, nor the fit (r-squared) of the model in a meaningful way.

Political motivations or pressures are not the reason that NGOs chose their project or office locations in Kenya.

In Table Three below, I summarize the substantive meaning of each coefficient in Model 4 in order to show the predicted effect of each variable. The first column reminds us of the variable's coefficient in the model; the second shows the real meaning of one standard deviation change. The last column on the right shows the impact of this one standard deviation increase on the number of NGOs in a district, all else being equal.

In meaningful terms, I find that both need and convenience variables play a large role in the determination of NGO locations in a district. For example, for each standard deviation (13.8%) increase in the percentage of people without access to health care, we find approximately 10 more NGOs in the district. Likewise, the estimated coefficients for the HIV variable suggests that for each standard deviation increase in HIV prevalence in a district – or about 4.6% increase in prevalence – we find an increase of approximately 9 NGOs in a district. Stated another way, as we move from a district with the median HIV prevalence in the country (4.05% HIV prevalence) to one at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile HIV rate (6.7%), we find an increase of approximately 5 NGOs, all else being equal. In real terms, this is equal to about a quarter of 1 standard deviation in NGO number.

Similarly, while less significant than HIV prevalence, the estimated coefficient for my convenience measurements, HQ distance from Nairobi, implies that for each standard deviation increase in the distance of a district's headquarters from Nairobi, we find approximately 11 fewer organizations, all else being equal. This means that being located only 190km (114 miles) away from Nairobi results in a district having almost dozen fewer NGOs than average. I find

that holding all else constant, a one standard deviation increase in the population density of a district (493 people per square km) leads to an increase in the number of NGOs for that district of 28. Stated another way, as we moved from a district with the median level of population density (164 people/km<sup>2</sup>) to a district at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile rate of population density (323 people/km<sup>2</sup>), we find an increase of 9 NGOs in that district.

*Table Three: Substantive Meaning of Model 4*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Model 4 Coefficient</b>	<b>One Standard Deviation in the Variable</b>	<b>Impact on the Number of NGOs in a district</b> (rounded to the nearest whole number; the average number of NGOs is 249)
<i>Adult Illiteracy Rate</i>	0.083	15.1%	+1
<i>HIV Prevalence</i>	1.906*	4.6%	+9***
<i>Percent w/o access to clean water</i>	-0.118	17.9%	-2
<i>Percent w/o access to health care</i>	0.697**	13.8%	+10**
<i>HQ Distance from Nairobi</i>	-0.057**	190.2 km	-11**
<i>Population Density</i>	0.056***	493 people/km	+28***
<i>Ave # of MPs per constituency in 92-02 elections</i>	-3.185	0.41 MPs	+1

### **Tests of Robustness**

Using an alternate measure of NGOs, the data from the National Council of NGOs, itself an umbrella NGO responsible for non-governmental coordinating NGO activities, we find that the major results hold, as shown in Table Four. While HIV prevalence, one of the variables representing the need hypothesis, is no longer significant, the other key indicator of need that was significant using the first database, lack of access to health care, remains strongly significant. Likewise, both of the measures of convenience that were significant using the first

database remain so. Most importantly, there is no indication that the political hypothesis needs to be reconsidered when this new data is employed. Thus we can be confident in our results.

*Table Four: Robustness Test Using National Council of NGOs Data*

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>
<b>Need Factors</b>					
Adult Illiteracy Rate	1.139*	1.103*	0.367	0.41	
	[0.634]	[0.634]	[0.457]	[0.619]	
Percent w/o access to clean water	-0.428	-0.477	0.071	-0.265	
	[0.502]	[0.504]	[0.323]	[0.432]	
Percent w/o access to health care	0.349	0.186	1.058**	1.403**	1.496**
	[0.631]	[0.650]	[0.458]	[0.641]	[0.594]
HIV Prevalence		1.906	1	1.377	0.781
		[1.839]	[1.363]	[1.850]	[1.540]
<b>Convenience Factors</b>					
HQ Distance from Nairobi	-0.152***	-0.161***	-0.097***	-0.146***	-0.137***
	[0.044]	[0.045]	[0.034]	[0.046]	[0.041]
Urbanization percentage	3.268***	3.149***			
	[0.465]	[0.478]			
Km of paved roads per 1000km <sup>2</sup> of area			0.172***		
			[0.016]		
Population Density				0.109***	0.112***
				[0.017]	[0.015]
<b>Political Factors</b>					
Ave # of MPs per constituency in 92-02 elections	2.191	0.603	-10.726	-11.589	
	[17.817]	[17.871]	[12.928]	[17.412]	
Percentage vote for Moi - 1997	-37.981	-19.989	-5.834	-1.437	
	[31.157]	[35.652]	[26.426]	[35.513]	
Constant	47.979	49.766	10.754	8.16	-22.517
	[63.650]	[63.632]	[45.811]	[64.686]	[37.467]
Observations	64	64	69	69	69
R-squared	0.59	0.6	0.75	0.55	0.54

Standard errors in brackets

Note: All tables depict OLS estimates with Huber-White robust standard errors in brackets where \* p < 0.1; \*\* p < 0.05 and \*\*\* p < 0.01, two-tailed tests. I used Stata 10.0 to derive all estimates.

### **Areas of Further Inquiry**

This paper represents a first-pass attempt to address NGO location in an Africa developing country, and does not aim to be the concluding view on the matter. Already, space for additional research presents itself. For example, the author is currently working to identify whether an

organization's *primary* area of involvement makes a difference for this findings. Do we find that NGOs focusing on health issues are drawn to areas with peculiar characteristics, while other NGOs – like environmental NGOs – are drawn by different characteristics? Do health NGOs go to malaria and HIV zones, while education NGOs go to places with low adult literacy?

Likewise, one might be able to develop more precise measures of political influence or interference. One reviewer suggests that perhaps the Presidential Administration during which an NGO registered might be correlated with the districts that are loyal to that administration, and this deserves further consideration. Another Kenyan colleague pointed to the fact that high-level administrators' home districts might be unusually favored, if not always deliberately. He sited an example in which a then-unknown UK-based NGO approached the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Services to ask where they were needed. According to the story, because the NGO positioned itself as a child-welfare organization and not a development organization at a time when development projects were in demand, the PS had trouble garnering excitement for its work. As a result, he instructed the NGO to go to his home district to work, since he could influence the District Development Committee to welcome them (2008-58). Developing a measure of the role of this type of non-elected "influential elites" might shed more light on the politics of NGO placement.

Similarly, several reviewers have commented that whether the organization is an "international" or "local" NGO might influence the results. While the author feels that this distinction makes little empirical sense in the Kenyan context, where nearly all registered NGOs receive the vast majority of their funds from non-Kenyan/international sources and an alternate registration category exists for truly "local" organizations or community groups, it is possible

that in other contexts, this distinction will provide analytically useful.<sup>15</sup> Alternatively, future papers might examine specific sources of funds by country of origin and by whether funds come from private or public sources.

Finally, while this chapter gives us a valuable snapshot of where NGOs report to be working, future research should examine changes in NGO locations over time. This would provide greater insight into such things as whether organizations are, in fact, snowballing – choosing to locate where their NGO compatriots are working already – and whether they follow “hot spots” in need, as might happen after a natural disaster or political instability resulting in refugees. It might also settle the question of the role of influential actors in NGO placement, as we could determine such things as whether the promotion of such individuals to high position correlates with increased NGO numbers in that or following years in their home districts.

### **Conclusions: Pragmatic Saints in Kenya**

In this chapter, I have addressed the issue of what factors influence NGOs in Kenya to choose their location in the country. Do they base their decision on where they are most needed? On where it's convenient to go, either for personal reasons or to have access to the greatest number of people? Or on political factors like patronage at the local or national level?

According to the findings from a range of models, NGOs in Kenya appear to pick districts in which to work for two reasons: first, they go where they are needed, largely to fight health-related issues, particularly HIV/AIDS and where service provision infrastructure is

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<sup>15</sup> The author finds this distinction analytically invalid in the Kenyan context, as nearly every representative of an organization registered as an NGO that she interviewed to in the course of her research reported receiving the bulk of their funds from abroad, meaning that foreign donors had the opportunity to influence areas of involvement for nearly all organizations equally, not only those that are headquartered in another country. Moreover, nearly all “international” NGOs have a staff that is 95% or more Kenyan, making them quite “local”. And since a formal registration process exists for local organizations that do fundraising internally and aim for self-help and development goals (they register as membership societies through the Ministry of Gender, Culture and Social Services under the Societies Act), the author feels that organizations registered as NGOs in Kenya should all be considered as one type in the international-local dichotomy.

lacking. As we will see in Chapter Four, this is not entirely surprising, considering that the Ministry of Health has shown itself to be quite willing to work collaboratively with NGOs in the provision of health care, and is indeed required to by large-scale donors such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS Tuberculosis and Malaria. Second, they locate their projects where it's convenient – where the road network is good and where there is access to a high density of people and to elite goods.

This second conclusion deserves pause. We might dismiss NGOs as locating their projects in places where elite goods are available and the journey to arrive on site is not entirely backbreaking (as it can be in Kenya, where even supposedly major highways can have “potholes” impassible to all but four-wheel-drive vehicles, progressing gingerly through the pock-marked “pavement” at speeds under 10km/hour so as not to lose an axle or tire). Yet, an equally plausible explanation should be considered: NGOs may strategically place their projects in areas with high population density, high road network density, and access to goods and resources so that they can positively affect the greatest possible number with their single organization. While the placement of NGOs near elite goods may also indicate that NGO workers are not themselves all ascetic altruists, it is likely that having even minimal convenience goods draws a higher quality of worker to the NGO field location. Just as the World Bank and other “elite” development organizations argue that they need to pay top-dollar salaries in order to attract the most promising candidates from first-rank universities (but still pay less than comparable jobs in the private sector), NGOs may find that they need to provide some level of physical comfort to their workers in order to entice them into the field. For this reason, it is plausible that need factors are the primary motivation for NGO placement, but that realistic considerations of how to achieve the greatest impact with the highest quality workers also play a

large role. As one NGO leader in Machakos District (70km from Nairobi) reported, the organization, which registered in Kenya in 1996, chose to locate in Machakos during its expansion both because poverty levels, HIV/AIDS along the Mombasa Road (the road from Nairobi to the coastal port town of Mombasa), and unemployed youth rates were high, but also because “Machakos is not too far... its easy to coordinate with [our offices in] Nairobi” (2008-32).

This conclusion is consistent with the organization theory literature on goal displacement, in which the means used to achieve a goal inadvertently become more important than the goal itself, or additional goals are adopted. In this case, the initial goal (drawn from need factors) appears to be retained, but these other, practical goals are also included. In the case of NGO placement, I argue that convenience matters primarily as a mean of better achieving the stated need-oriented, altruistic goals of the NGOs. Thus, it might appear as though NGOs are considered with personal comfort, but only as a means of better achieving their initial need-fulfilling goal. This is consistent with interviews with NGO workers, who reported such things as: “Money was not at all a consideration for me wanting... to work in the NGO domain, but I do value being compensated accordingly for my experience” (2008-5) and “money wasn't critical, but I feel that I STAYED with [the organization] because despite being a non-profit, it was a place where I could grow professionally, and feel stable. [It] provides health insurance, 401 K, competitive salaries, and many extra perks” (2008-2). While these two quotes come from Americans working in the development field, clearly NGO workers have a realistic side regarding compensation and convenience goods.

Another conclusion we can begin to draw from this data is that patronage politics may not hold as much sway as is often cynically said in Kenya. In no model were political factors

shown to have a statistically and substantively significant impact on NGO placement in the country. Neither allegiance to the national government via electoral support for either Moi or Kibaki, nor fidelity to MPs in the district appeared to have any impact on NGO placement in that location. While it is possible – indeed probable – that MPs influence some proportion of NGOs to work in their district, there’s no evidence of a primarily patronage-based storyline, in which prolonged fidelity to a single person results in greater NGO assistance. In a country where patronage and corruption are considered the name of the game, this is a substantial finding.

Finally, and importantly for the remainder of this dissertation, we can conclude from the foregoing analysis that NGOs do *not* appear to be choosing to locate themselves in areas where there is no state. They tend to be more prevalence where the state is also strongest – nearer to the capital city, in cities rather than rural areas, etc. Contrary to popular and oft cited claims that NGOs are “replacing the state,” we instead find that NGOs are *complementing the state*. This claim will be examined in considerable detail in the chapters to follow, which suggest that in many ways NGOs are replacing only the organizational form, or implementing agency of the state, but not its legitimacy, authority, or ability to govern.

## Appendix A: Explanations and Sources of Information

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Definition and Source of Data</b>
<i>Number of NGOs (used in principle models)</i>	Number of NGOs per district. <i>Source:</i> Government of Kenya NGO Coordination Board Database, December 2007.
<i>Number of NGOs (used in test of robustness)</i>	Number of NGOs per district. <i>Source:</i> National Council of NGOs (non-profit NGO coordinating body), <i>Directory of NGOs in Kenya 2005</i> .
<i>HIV Prevalence</i>	HIV Prevalence rate per district. <i>Source:</i> UNDP <i>Kenya Human Development Report 2006</i> .
<i>Adult Illiteracy</i>	Percentage of Illiterate adults per district (aged over 15). <i>Source:</i> Government of Kenya Central Bureau of Statistics, Kenya population census, 1999.
<i>Percent w/o access to clean water</i>	Percentage of residents in a district lacking access to clean drinking water. <i>Source:</i> Government of Kenya Central Bureau of Statistics, Kenya population census, 1999.
<i>Percent w/o access to health care</i>	Percentage of residents in a district lacking access to health care services. <i>Source:</i> Government of Kenya Central Bureau of Statistics, Kenya population census, 1999.
<i>HQ Distance from Nairobi</i>	Distance in kilometers of district's headquarters, which is the city or town administrative center for the district. <i>Source:</i> Government of Kenya, Kenya Roads Board, 2007.
<i>Urbanization percentage</i>	Percentage of district population that resides in an urban area. <i>Source:</i> Government of Kenya Central Bureau of Statistics, Kenya population census, 1999.
<i>Km of paved roads per 1000km<sup>2</sup> of area</i>	Measure of road network density in a district, computed by dividing the total kilometers of paved roads in a district by the total area in the district. <i>Source:</i> Government of Kenya, Kenya Roads Board, 2007, and Central Bureau of Statistics.
<i>Ave # of MPs per constituency in 92-02 elections</i>	Average number of different individuals serving as MP for all constituencies in a district over the 1992, 1997 and 2002 parliamentary elections. Ranges from 1 to 3. <i>Source:</i> Electoral Commission of Kenya.
<i>Percentage vote for Moi – 1997</i>	Percentage of voters in the 1997 election who voted for Daniel arap Moi. Computed as the number of votes for Moi in the constituencies that form a particular district divided by the total number of votes cast in the district in the 1997 presidential election. <i>Source:</i> Electoral Commission of Kenya.

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Kindly note that references in the format (year-number), e.g. (2008-7), refer to the author’s interview notes and on occasion, correspondence. Informants in this research were offered anonymity for their statements, and few chose to waive this right. The author wishes to identify in some manner, however, that the statement or idea came from an informant, not an impression of her own.