**CSOs (Stakeholders)**

**Introduction**

Civil society organizations (CSO) are any type of organization that consist of people who are working together for a similar purpose and interest. “CSOs can range from local neighborhood associations and religious groups to powerful national-level lobbying organizations” (Crane et al., 2019, p. 433). For example, it can be a community group consisting of people who are supporting the environment, or people who fight for their rights of labor in the workforce. CSO can be identified by their non-profit or non-government (NGOs) status and do not associate with business or profitable organizations. It is represented as an intermediary institution that encourages actions to various sectors and raises public involvement and awareness.

Stakeholders for CSO are people who can be affected or involved by actions or process of the organization. There are internal and external stakeholders. The internal stakeholders would be associates, volunteers, managers and members. There are various parties with different interests that have needs and agendas will raise their voice through the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) process (EU FLEGT Facility, 2014). The role of a stakeholder within a Civil Society organization could be service provider, launching campaigns, monitoring government compliance on human rights, building active citizenship, and participating in the global governance process. (Cooper, 2018) External stakeholders could be recipients, donors, beneficiaries, governments and the public.

***Rationale***

One of the CSO issues that is going to be mentioned is boycott. The issue has been chosen because it is a form of ethical consumption, and also because “boycotts are probably the most commonly recognized, most widely used, form of nonviolent direct action” (Crane et al., 2019, p. 447). CSO involvement is usually displayed by organizing a group of consumers, who refuse to make purchases on certain products or services due to unethical reasons or negative impact on society or environment. Their objectives are usually to send a message, raise awareness for others and make a direct influence on corporate policy and the way they function (Crane et al., 2019, p. 447). For example, organizing boycott campaigns for a particular company or product, or they could lead an employee resistance to a labor practice. CSO’s boycott is vital to the powerless consumer, helping them to influence the marketplace that they are a part of.

Another issue arising surrounding this topic would be CSO’s accountability. The reason why the issue has been chosen is because CSO now has increased the importance of their role and recognition in today's society from local to international (Cooper, 2018). This leads to more responsibility to account for what the organization does and how it does it. There were some cases identified in CSOs of misuse of power and funds, corruption or poor practices performed (Bettoni, 2018). Therefore, accountability and transparency is necessary to their resources, projects, objectives, authority and outcomes. Inconsideration to what is a well accountability; the organization needs to classify their closest stakeholders; to their needs and expectations. In the case of the accountability model, there is no specific model that works for all organizations, due to the different interests and strategies. (Bettoni, 2018) Though, publishing the information to the public highlights the accountability of an organization; this will ethically help the stakeholders to make suggestions, demands, and changes to how the organization should function, therefore it is a significant issue.

**Debate on Boycotts and CSO Accountability**

**Boycotts**

**Nike Boycott**

***Issue:***

In 2018 Nike decided to include former American football player Colin Kaepernick in their ad revolving around the 30th anniversary called “Dream Crazy”. This caused a lot of controversy, this is because Colin Kaepernick was very famous/notorious at the time for being the first football player in the country to kneel during the national anthem, as a form of protest against police brutality and race discrimination. This caused a lot of people to boycott Nike. There were certain stores around the country refusing to sell Nike products for example in Colorado where a sports store owner decided to offload all Nike products despite knowing he would lose a main revenue source. (Almasy, 2019)

***Argument:***

For Nike: By having someone like Kapernick on their ad Nike is backing someone who is fighting for what they believe in despite its consequences, this is an ethically honorable pursuit for such a big company. For boycotters: it is understandable why people would feel disrespected as Kapernick refused to stand for the country's national anthem  which honours the American way of life, by supporting Kaepernick's decision to kneel, Nike takes this same stance and therefore it is understandable that several people would boycott Nike for their views.

 ***Resolution:***

There’s not much Nike could do at this point as the damage is already done, the best thing they could do was to ride the wave of the people that did support the movement. The slogan of the as was “Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything.” (Nike, Dream Crazy campaign) Many people believed this to be a brave movement by the company which fit into their image and sales actually went up by 31%. (Martinez, 2018)

  For a company to back one side of a divisive issue is normally not a recommended move and many people that supported Nike still criticized them in a business aspect, however the ad has since won an award for outstanding commercial at the creative arts Emmys (Guardian, 2019). It is also important to consider that no matter peoples views on the ad it got people talking about Nike. On the day that the ad aired “There were 2.7 million mentions of Nike over the next 24 hours” (Trotta, 2018).

**Target Boycott**

There are ongoing arguments about the access and placement of transgender people in gender-labelled spaces, which means spaces designed for people of a particular gender or sex only. This ethical issue reviews the main points of argument, analyzes the issues, as well as possible solutions.

***Issue:***

Target company welcomes transgender people to enter any fitting room or bathroom that matches their gender identity. (Target, 2016). Thereby allows any women and men to enter any bathroom and fitting room which disturbs their own privacy and gives opportunity to danger human-beings to take an advantage and commit a crime. More than 20 violent incidents with children and women happened at Target stores across the U.S. (Stacy on the right, 2020).

***Resolution:***

Unisex bathrooms in public areas are unethical and current problem has to be solved, primarily those which address the needs of transgender people and others involved in this situation.

***Against:***

Boycott: American Family Association called for a boycott of Target after implementing a new policy of private places in public areas (American Family Association, 2016). New regulation endangers women and children by allowing male to use opposite sex restrooms, this is how exactly sexual predators get access to their victim. Over 1 million people signed an agreement to boycott Target stating that protecting females and kids is priority.

***For:***

For Target:GGWash newspaper posted a list of some benefits of unisex bathrooms (Reich, 2019):

  1)  Safe for families with children, as a parent will be able to accompany other-gender children without fear, in fact child assault often takes place in restrooms.

2)   Also helpful for people with disabilities who have other-gender accompaniers, better privacy and lines supposed to be shorter as well.

3)   Allows transgender people feel more secure and comfortable.

***Solution:***

After receiving many complaints regarding bathroom policy, Target decided to spend $20 millions on a single-stall restroom along with men’s and women’s spaces. But, the company still has not changed its rules of unisex bathrooms, which brings children and women in danger (Halzack, 2016).

Target is not only the one who faces this issue, many businesses face the same problems with transgender bathrooms such as schools, hospitals, and all kinds of work places. But the truth is that transgender people are suffering more than anyone else, because they are not actually the one who commit sexual crimes and they just want be to equally a part of society.

**Conclusion:**

Boycotts can impact companies very negatively even when the company may be trying to do the right thing. However, they are essential to today's world because they give the customer or business the power to oppose the companies they don't agree with on ethical points. If a company is making a certain viewpoint public, that is their ethical right. However that company should be accepting of any backlash they may receive for that viewpoint.

**CSO Accountability**

CSO accountability was defined by Andrem et al. (2019) as the principles, processes, mechanisms through which stakeholders hold CSOs responsible for their performance.

***Issue:***

As a third party in the society and non-profitable in usual, CSOs always need to maintain a strong partnership and relationship with their stakeholder groups, especially their donors. Considering the importance of financial support and other resources to the CSOs, sometimes CSOs will focus more on donors' priorities rather than their intended beneficiaries and directly mirror the allocation of the resources, or donations.

***Resolution :***

It is unethical that CSOs set the interests of donors as the priorities, CSOs should build fair and clear relationships with their donors to collaborate with each other in order to achieve shared goals and benefit the society. And effectively and responsibly use the funds and resources to benefit their beneficiaries(Global standard for CSO accountability, n.d.).

**Arguments:**

***For:***

A Chinese red cross case study was assessed to justify the argument of the resolution. The Case was founded during January of 2020, also the outbreak period of COVID-19 in China. Hubei Province was the most severe area of China of the COVID-19 epidemic during the beginning of the outbreak. Almost every hospital had a problem of shortage in medical supplies because of the sudden situation, and the donations of the medical supplies and funds flowed to the Hubei branch of the Red Cross Society of China(RCSC). However, according to the donation distribution list of the RCSC Hubei branch, 36,000 N95 masks were allocated to two private hospitals, which were the donors and partners of the RCSC Hubei branch. And so on, relevant reports proven neither of these two private hospitals were the official patient hospital of the COVID-19 or hospitals that really lack in medical supplies (Xinhua, 2020).

As a part of the medical system, the RCSC Hubei branch has the obligation to equally distribute the donations and prioritize allocate enough medical supplies to the front line hospitals, which means RCSC Hubei branch has ‘downward accountability’ to the beneficiaries as the priorities(Andrew et al., 2019). Whereas the RCSC Hubei branch put ‘upward accountability’ in the first place, and from the ethic egoism point view, the RCSC Hubei branch decided to please their donors for potential funds and further relationship as long-term interests through sacrificed supplies which should immediately distribute into the society(Andrew et al., 2019). As a consequence of the RCSC Hubei branch's selfish and egoistic action, serious lack of medical supplies in front line hospitals cost more victims of the COVID-19 epidemic, for instance, front line medical staff were infected, more patients arose, and even more people died.

On the other hand, according to John Locke and subsequent rights theorists' theories about human rights, humans have rights to live, freedom, and property. Andrew et al. (2019) defined human rights as basic, inalienable, and conditional entitlements that are inherent to all human beings, without exception. Especially the rights to life, in the case study, the lack of responsibility of the RCSC Hubei branch indirectly cost loss of lives and harm to the society, directly violating this theory.

Solution and Conclusion:

In this argument, a clear statement has been proved throughout the case study. CSOs should take full responsibility for their action and should always keep the priorities on their intended beneficiaries for any circumstances.

***Against:***

  A case about Wuhan Red Cross would be used to justify the argument of against. At a difficult time in Wuhan, China, where the new coronavirus was first discovered, those patients who been tested positive of coronavirus and the frontline workers are still waiting for supplies sent by the Wuhan Red Cross, which a regional organization belong to International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). It was at this moment that materials from donors all over China and even around the world were not even distributed to the hospitals that needed the most help. All these faults are directed to the lack of accountability of the Wuhan Red Cross. But is this true of this case? As one of the most well-known CSOs in the worldwide system, the operation of the Wuhan Red Cross is not as simple as it seems.

In the civil society, any organization that wants to survive and keep operation needs to maintain a strong partnership with their long-term donors for supporting them to do the businesses. This is no exception for the Red Cross. The long-term partnership allows them to focus on serving civil society. For the Wuhan Red Cross, that is the reason why they didn’t put the most needy people and hospitals in the first place. Instead, they first helped those donor hospitals and even government departments in Wuhan. According a news from CNN talked about that the Wuhan Red Cross is controlled by Chinese government and that caused Red Cross could not make the decision by themselves (“China’s Red Cross is under fire of not getting supplies to hospitals fighting coronavirus. That’s a problem for the government,” 2020). The main reason is that in China, almost all CSOs are operated under the control and supervision of the government. Each CSOs needs to pass the governmental review to continue to obtain national operation approval and donations from PRC (People Republic of China). Due to the pressure given by the governments and in order to survive in the civil society, the Wuhan Red Cross has no choice. Because they defied government control, they may face the risks of financial and political support.

As for the hospitals that have not been helped well as others, in fact, they are organizations that have not obtained cooperation and donation relations with the Wuhan Red Cross. Even if these hospitals have a large number of doctors and patients waiting for the arrival of supplies, this does not mean that there are no patients in other hospitals which have been aided. The Wuhan Red Cross determines the priority of material distribution and assistance by evaluating three characteristics of donors, Money, Partnership and Unique value of Civil Society (“6 ways donors can help build effective civil society,” 2015). Obviously, by comparison, those hospitals that have received a lot of materials have established a strong partnership with the Wuhan Red Cross and donated a certain amount of money. They are deemed to have higher value than the hospitals who did not do much for the civil society and have received more from Material assistance of the Wuhan Red Cross.

Solution and Conclusion:

According to the article, CSOs do not always put all the intended beneficiaries in the priority. CSOs need to cooperate with more valuable donors to achieve their own stable operations, so as to ensure continued development in civil society to help more people.

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