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The Contexts and Culture in which PVOs/NGOs Manage
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This paper attempts to place discussions of NGO management within present NGO culture and to trace the changes which have led us to our present state. * Its objective is to sort out some muddles which have surfaced in the growing field of "development management." These muddles exist for many reasons, not least being that so much is now written about "management" that the word itself has come to stand for far too much.

The basic thrust driving the development management movement is this: the NGO sector has to improve its work; has to achieve more impact on the poor. If it is going to evolve and meet the challenge, it's going to have to grapple with the matter of how development projects are managed as well as with how NGOs themselves are managed.

Where does this new emphasis and interest come from? Why now? To answer these important questions, a brief foray into the history and structure of the NGO sector is essential as a first step.

The Historical Context:

NGOs of a voluntary and non-profit character which are oriented to relief and development in the third world, either directly (through their project implementation) or indirectly (through their financial assistance to local groups and institutions as well as local NGOs), have grown rapidly. The 24 member nations of the OECD now channel approximately 15 % of their bilateral aid through NGOs. The number of organizations involved is about 2500. The dollar amount of aid which is under the control of this sector is somewhere around 4 billion dollars. While still not staggering figures, it is clear that the NGO responsibility is now substantial.

* [The term NGO will be used in this paper to refer to both PVOs in the U.S., NGOs in Europe, and other "northern" countries, and to a limited extent to "indigenous NGOs" as well. When only the United States is being discussed, the conventional term PVO will be used. The term includes those organizations which are non-profit, voluntary and work in the international arena, regardless of sector. Except where noted, it includes both "social development" oriented NGOs, relief, refugee and food-aid NGOs, and enterprise oriented NGOs.]

This growing piece of the action has basically crept up on the NGO world almost unnoticed. After all, the NGO sector in no way formally existed 40 years ago. And until the 1970s it existed very informally still, comprised of large numbers of volunteers and part-time people. At best, NGOs were then very much a side line of the development game. While looked at kindly (especially for their relief work) by "mainstream" professionals such as the UN, World Bank and major bilateral agencies, the sector was still privately considered with some degree of condescension, and not taken terribly seriously.

But this has changed and of late NGOs have begun to become an industry, a term we take seriously -- implying significant changes in quality, kind and culture for NGOs.

First of all, there is a growing self-consciousness within the NGO sector. That has translated among other things, into associations and consortia, of which we now have a handful of large ones.

The sector also takes itself more seriously. With age, and more money, better communication, and via a growing and increasingly shared vocabulary within the sector, a culture has evolved, which like cultures everywhere, feeds back identity and meaning to its members. It has become politically more savvy and flexes its muscles more with the major actors.

Major actors are, in turn, taking NGOs more seriously so that we are now seeing what some are calling a ground swell of interest in NGOs as potential central actors in future development assistance. The multilaterals and bilaterals, having taken 15 years to come to the conclusion, now almost all agree that they have no comparative advantage in direct project implementation. Besides channelling more development assistance money through the NGO sector, the structures of some of the major actors are being altered to accomodate a new relationship with the private voluntary, non-governmental sector. This means that NGOs will both bear more responsibility and also receive a larger piece of the development pie.

For example, the UNDP this year has declared a major effort to involve NGOs in its work and set up a department to deal with them. The World Bank's NGO/World Bank Committee has taken on a somewhat higher profile. The OECD has been prolific in its writing on the NGO potential, and now seeks their counsel. The major foundations have been studying the NGO role more. The World Bank has even come to this Advisory Committee to discuss the role of the NGOs in influencing its work, and under its new president is calling for a greater role. Universities and university affiliated research institutes also are moving towards NGOs. One example is the "PVO initiative" of the The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies at Notre Dame.

Even as the "mainstream" reaches out to NGOs, they themselves are experiencing changes in their own demographic profile -- changes

that again suggest how NGOs are fast becoming an industry. Many founders of the older NGOs (especially those which began as relief organizations) are retiring. They are being replaced by a generation which in many instances has spent its whole working life in this line of work. In the case of newer NGOs, those of small and medium size which were founded in the 1960s, 70s and later, the cohort which runs them, and middle level staff especially, are now coming into their 40s and 50s. They have matured within the sector and made it their profession. For them as job holders the stakes are more complex as they approach middle age.

From people who came together out of a rather simple sense of shared feeling for the poor, with relatively pure ideals of concern for others and an optimism about their power to make a difference, many have become "professionals" with an evolved sense of expertise and a professional language and identity, and along with that, a stake in their jobs and organizations.

We now call ourselves "development professionals", or "development practitioners". We have trade associations. We hold meetings, fora, attend "high level symposia", publish in journals of development, travel on planes (often "business class") seem generally less uncomfortable staying in decent hotels, do a lot of networking, hire fund-raising consultants and public relations firms, engage in sophisticated direct mail campaigns, lobby the U.S. Congress, and so forth. These are the normal habits of an industry or trade.

But it is also normal to become self-protective; to want to perpetuate an industry. We are getting self-protective. We are loathe to let outsiders in on all our inside information. We do not want to be too closely examined by the public. We speak about how we are one of the few professions in the world whose long term goal is to go out of business, but clearly too much is already at stake, and we see no instances of that happening voluntarily. On the contrary we see many new organizations entering the industry (e.g. a steady rise in the number of U.S. PVOs registered with AID, many of which are brand new organizations).

Not just our identities, our companies, our jobs, our mortgages are at stake now, but our reputation. We act often, as sociologist Peter Blau has put it in a study of a large bureaucracy, more "to protect the record" than to serve our clients. [Peter M. Blau, The Dynamics of Bureaucracy, Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1955] We compete for contracts, against each other. and we join together to face our critics with one voice. We are not only behaving like ordinary humans, but we are, in short behaving like professionals in other fields.

The great seminal thinkers in the study of institutions and organizations would not call this "bad" but rather quite predictable, if not inevitable. Max Weber would say we are changing from a calling to a profession or vocation - and in the

process becoming somewhat bureaucratized. (Weber believed that one of the great cultural historical phenomena in the west was the continuous advance of bureaucratic organization. By impersonalizing the organization there can be regularization, the routinization of things. Productivity, Weber argued, is related to that phenomenon.)

Others have seen the evolution of professional organization more negatively. For Thorstein Veblen, for example, a need for "invidious distinction" moved new professionals at the turn of the century in America. In Veblen's view, new professionals wanted to separate themselves from the rising tide of the masses and hence stressed the specialness of their own fields and expertise.

More recently, sociologist Burton Bledstein traced what he called "the culture of professionalism" in the United States from its origins in the 1880s. His comments seem to strike a chord when we think about our own evolution as development "practitioners".

Bledstein talks of the development of a protective vocabulary, with its veil of expertise, its specialness, its "attempt to define a coherent system of necessary knowledge" which in turn, results in the creation of professional courses of study, schools and institutes, and international societies. He also reminds us of the tendency to construct symbols around the burgeoning profession, including the lifestyle of the practitioner, and finally the tendency to "cultivate an atmosphere of constant crisis - emergency - in which practitioners both created work for themselves and reinforced their authority..." [p.100, in Burton J Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism, Norton, N.Y. 1976].

The Nature of our Dilemma

Against this background of the "industrialization" of the NGO sector and the rise of a new professional development culture - with its budding self-consciousness and tentative confidence - there are of course many skeptics. These skeptics, largely outside our community, but a few within, argue that the so-called ground swell of interest and faith in the NGOs for the future is nothing but rhetoric, a sop that is just one notch up on the scale of condescension. They say that the major actors still see most NGOs as not very professional, not very serious, as adversaries of the public sector, and most important, as without any real empirically demonstrated impact of any scale. Some of these critics rightly lament the fact that there is very little data- for the NGOs have been loathe to spend any time collecting it and others have only begun to do comparative studies.

Other critics speculate that even if NGOs are being taken seriously, their structural limits mitigate very forcefully against them being able to take on the huge challenge being posed by the big players. These critics say that NGOs do good development work, when they are good, because they are small,

because they are rapid, because they are flexible, because they are voluntary, because they are non-profit. But that is also why they cannot replicate widely; why they cannot reach large numbers.

Still others have postulated that those very advantages of NGOs are not as real as has been thought.

We, as NGOs, are therefore caught in a complex bind. Some segments of the NGO world, especially the social development NGOs, cling to our putative advantages as if to a religion. Yet at the same time many are in fact moving away from them in the thrust towards "industrialization" or "professionalization."

The heart of the dilemma is that our advantages are also disadvantages. We are being asked to take on more, to deliver more, to have greater impact. That is both seductive to our sense of importance as a "profession" and in keeping with our original founding "culture." It seems to hold the promise of our being able to help more people and, given our new identity as a forceful and seemingly sought after community, we are now desirous of more clout and a larger role.

But we also, many of us, have come so to believe in our special characteristics as the key to our effectiveness that we do not want to compromise them. Yet we at the same time, occasionally see through those characteristics and recognize that they may stand in our own way.

After years of being a minor guest at the wedding, we are now standing in the bride's (or bridegroom's) spot in front of the altar. And we are both ready for it, reluctantly, and in significant ways not at all ready for it, and quite afraid. As bride, we are less virginal than we have projected ourselves to be, and as groom very worried about whether we'll be able to perform.

We are quite ambivalent. We are not sure we want to be here at all. Can we have our cake and eat it too? So far we seem to be trying to do both (have new clout and status and keep our old identity).

"Management" as the Magic Solution

Into this picture now comes development management. For the answer to all these dilemmas, we seem to have collectively decided, is "management". But interestingly, we have been careful not to define the term very closely, and by leaving it loose and defining it in myriad ways, management has come to take on the status of a magic bullet. Because we seem to want some kind of magic technical fix for this dilemma, rather than something more prosaic and limited, we seem to need at this point to load the magic with our needs of all kinds, all at once.

Hence in the last few years, we have seen and heard the call for something called "development management". Many papers have been written on the subject, and by and large, most are calling for a "new kind of management", one that is specially geared to our kind of work, one that is participatory, strategic, problem solving and so forth. (Some of these concepts are selectively borrowed from the corporate sector).

Piers Campbell reviews the literature quite thoroughly in a recent paper and this author has also recently discussed the subject. But to give the reader who has not had the chance to read those papers some idea of the dimensions of what is being included in the concept of development management, a few excerpts are in order here.

Campbell quotes from a monograph called "Managing Rural Development with Small Farmer Participation" by Bryant and White.

"Participatory development is more difficult to design and implement than development managed from above by administrators. It requires more social learning, risk-taking, coordination skills, and patience."

This seems on the face of it to ring true, but what does it mean? First it implies that participatory management and "management from above" are two different things, with one being fairly clearly better than the other. Let us for the moment put aside the question of the valuative claims regarding these different management concepts. A more immediate and in some ways larger problem is that when it comes to figuring out how to do it, the "practical strategies" we are offered are these:

"Improve listening skills...

"Build on the natural interests of the peasants...

"Find ways to ensure that participation is seen as a benefit..."

and so forth.

Such approaches, like Mom and Apple Pie, cannot be argued against. But they do not help us much in the field, for they are not at all practical strategies, but a continuation of the same theoretical ideal. Not only don't they help the practitioner to know how to do these things, but there is no empirical evidence to suggest that this is indeed the most effective route to take in reaching the goal of empowering poor people.

Likewise, others offer prescriptions which are tremendously attractive. David Korten's work has been very helpful in getting NGOs in development to think about where they want to go to have greater impact. Yet his concepts of development management are still very far removed from the level of practical application. In Korten's terminology of development management "strategic action" and the development of strategic capacities are the keys: As he says in his paper on micro-policy reform,

attitudes within NGOs should be reoriented to "the development and maintenance of a total institutional capacity for strategic action".

The point here is not so much to point to missing links in the different positions being put forth on development management but to ask why we embrace these tenets in the first place. Perhaps by embracing these ambitious tenets, it becomes possible to believe that we can keep our old character and our special qualities and at the same time become heavy actors in the development business. It makes it possible to do this without having to get down to the business of actually defining exactly what we mean.

As humans we have needs which are universal. One is to make things as neat as we can - to make order out of chaos.

When we talk about using a problem solving mode of management rather than a predictive blueprint mode this helps us feel good. We say that a participatory development management is more difficult than "management from above". This helps to continue the separate identity we want to maintain as NGOs and also plays into our subtle need to be seen as having our own proprietary kind of process, special to our trade and profession.

The values of democracy, of concern for people, of a desire to see the lives of poor and oppressed people changed so that the benefits which we so cherish may be theirs as well, embrace in quite an effective way, the underlying motifs of our shared culture as development practitioners. They reflect back to us -in effect give back to us- our cherished original values of service that made us at one time a calling.

Thus Charles Handy, calling for a new theory of management of voluntary organizations talks about how "authority will come from below, from the people over whom it is exercised, not from above." (p.13 in Campbell)

In a similar way, Korten, discussing a very effective NGO in Bangladesh, (BRAC), makes recommendations about a rural development program for landless peasants, suggesting that the strategy to pursue is one which is based on the assumption of all the technical and managerial functions of the peasant associations by the members themselves. The perspective is a horizontal (as opposed to a hierarchical vertical one) and the structure is one in which there would be a "low level of differentiation of leadership roles." [David Korten, BRAC Strategy for the 1990s, Observations and Recommendations, 2/6/87]

These values of empowerment are central to the culture of the NGO sector. Therefore it is totally natural that they permeate the present discussion of development management.

But in the field, on the ground, the practitioner operates on a level which does not lend itself to a direct translation of

ideal to action. Cultural ideals and tactics for action are different realms. The one can inform the other, but they are not in a straight-line relationship to each other. In fact, in the field, directly translating these tenets into action is very difficult, if not, in some sectors of development, impossible.

Some would argue, as this author does, that management, in its most generic, most plain definition, refers to the process of organizing resources, human and otherwise, so that intended things get done. While a part of management involves deciding on what should get done and setting out a course of action to get those things done, that part of management is not the whole thing - it is only the beginning. The lengthy, subtle process of carrying out the actions, over time, of sustaining the organization of action, over time, is in fact the hard part. It continues to be neglected. Yet this is the bulk of the work in the field, at the grass roots project or program level. The irony therefore, is that by insisting that we front-load all of management with our particularistic cultural system we avoid coming to terms with any really useable notions about how to do the really hard part of our work more effectively.

The calls for participatory management, for authority from below, for a kind of strategy which envisions a directly engendered empowerment of people, are calls for such grand solutions that they are almost utopian. Laudable, of course, but staggering: we are talking about changes in mentalities, in political structure, about making bureaucracies less so, about making governments more enlightened, about making people less venal, about making communities in which kindness and fellow-feeling are the norm, rather than the exception. And, we are asking, in some instances insisting, that these changes come FIRST, or at least get started first, before the project work itself is really carried out.

In effect the prevailing development culture is translating into development management its desire to see major social transformation in our own lifetime. It is basically a revolutionary rather than an evolutionary mind set. And in setting this up it is subject to an accusation of being relatively impractical, if not in fact, sequentially wrong. The basic presumption in the core of development management thinking that empowerment, through participatory management should come first, after which development will take place on the economic plane, is, as yet, not corroborated by development experience.

The fascinating paradox here is that as staggering as these prospects are, putting them forward as the keys to management in development amounts to taking shortcuts. In not grappling with the details, with the tremendous complexity of the day to day battle on the ground of development, in not helping us to better deal, albeit more strategically, with that level of reality, we avoid getting on with the job.

And the tension in the difficulty we are having with development

management is that actual field practice, as well as recent history in development suggests that the process is much more evolutionary and organic than the more radical social transformation. It is not so much transformation that takes place in reality as slow change, and that change is, like most, not easy to trace- it is for example, almost always unpredictable (as Albert Hirschman with his concept of the "hiding hand" in development which results in "unintended consequences" reminds us), certainly not unidirectional and it is not, always and everywhere, change for the better.

As for day to day practice of development, any slogger with a few years under his belt in the field, will tell you over a beer that the game is one of constant compromise, of backbiting, politicking, deal-making, slim pickin's for tangible results, one step forward two steps back, hard going, cajoling others, and tremendous efforts to communicate the simplest things to people.

And even when participatory management seems to work, the changes that do occur are often ones which disappoint the instigators of change. People who have been encouraged to speak out, encouraged to understand their situation, encouraged to articulate their needs, helped to think strategically about their place in their world, sometimes turn into leaders, who in their turn, become authoritarian, and push others around. But more important, more often than not they are left without anything concrete into which, over which, or through which to apply their learning - all dressed up and no place to go.

This is not an argument to say we should not try, but an argument for recognizing what seems to come first in the sequence, and for basing our management on realities that years of field experience have, or should have taught us.

Very often, the more lasting change seems to come from paying attention, even rather narrowly, to the business at hand- getting a clinic running, or putting a cooperative on a sound business basis, the more physical and economic needs of the people seem to engender changes in peoples' sense of themselves, without too much attention paid to a lot of what we are hearing now about development management.

Indeed the management of the clinic or the coop may well be rather much like management from above, which, so long as it is competent, and allows for a process through which the membership or the employees or the community are heard, gets the job done, without too much clamor about what kind of management it is.

Again some thinkers in organizational theory, can be called on to help us make sense. S.N.Eisenstadt has said of Max Weber that Weber noted the constant and continuous tension between constrictive and liberating aspects of institutions and social organization.

This tension is normal. We cannot get around it. It may put

things into better perspective if we can see the two sides of the tension in our own NGO sector in the following way:

One side of the tension is our desire for the NGO sector to be liberating, by making out of development management a magic bullet which will directly render poor people in the third world empowered.

The other side is the reality that organizations, both ours and those in the developing world which we are trying to help, are also by their very nature constrictive and that management cannot be management if it too, is not in part constrictive.

Michel Crozier, putting the issue of organizations into the perspective of power relationships (which is also, the way in which we often talk about the empowerment goals of development) says:

"A realistic appraisal of power relationships and power problems, shortcuts. ^{... can only be made when one has realized that there are no} One must face at the same time, the problem of the rational achievement of goals and that of the human means..."

[Michel Crozier, The Bureaucratic Phenomenon, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1964.]

These two things are in tension and each set of determinants - the achievement of goals, and the human means, establishes the others' limits.

In other words, it is quite unlikely and unrealistic to expect that in development management we can somehow break away from the boundedness that is inevitably imposed by any set of rational goals. The minute we start to think about a set of goals, we are already locked into a tension that includes both the need to manage the achievement of them (through some kind of structured organization) and the fact that the human means, the only means at hand, wants it to be freer and liberated from the structure.

II. The Consequent Difficulties That NGOs Face Regarding Management.

The general unwillingness to acknowledge the tension between the utopian aspects in ^{an} present call for development management and the constrictive nature of management in the plain every day organization has had some interesting consequences for the NGOs.

At present among most U.S. PVOs prevalent management models of the ordinary old school are pretty much rejected as not applying to us: We take refuge in our voluntary character, our status as non-profit, our commitment to social development. Against this backdrop, described in detail above, basic management skills, "plain" management, is seen as antithetical to our very being-Some would even go so far as to say that it takes the character out of the voluntary organization.

However, as pointed out above, the community is flexing its muscle right now and wants to achieve greater clout and impact and answer the call for a greater role in development. So there is a recognition that something is needed in the way of management.

As a result we are now seeing the rise of an interest among U.S. PVOs to tackle management. By and large, the curriculum that is desired is one based primarily on group process types of skills.

These are team-building, problem solving, facilitation skills, active listening skills, conflict resolution, coalition building skills.

While these are necessary for many organizations, I call them fancy management. They are useful skills, but to an extent there is a danger that by seeking these kinds of skills, NGO managers are neglecting the plain ones. These are the ones which are more prosaic and come in more old fashion packages. They are less sexy: Planning, budgeting, maintenance, administration, recruiting and personnel policy, and so forth- the things needed to "run an organization", as opposed to orienting the organization.

We should not forget, that as voluntary organizations or non-governmental organizations, we are still organizations.

In taking refuge in the first part of our description and neglecting the running of the second, we are able to turn our backs with disdain on the positive aspects of bureaucracy and traditional kinds of skills that go into "running an organization". Bureaucracy does of course have a function. It enables things to get done in routine fashion. Authority, and hierarchy are not antithetical to progress or even to strategic organization. Indeed, the concept of strategic organization, of people-centered management may even at times be fostered by structured, well-organized, clearly hierarchical organizations.

What are the kinds of problems - of the prosaic sort- that we need to deal with?

We need to clearly articulate, as organizations, what our mission is. We need, as organizations to select, to choose a target, an approach, a sector or sectors, in which we say we are going to work. To do that is much the same as corporations periodically reminding themselves what business they are in.

We need to pay attention to the kinds of skills needed to be able to carry out the mission. That is to say, we need to recruit people who have those skills. Recruiting is a management function that has been grossly neglected by NGOs- in part because of that culture which has focussed too much on the "voluntary" in the term PVO, as if we did not have to be as strict in hiring people because what was really needed was a good heart, the right values, and an appropriate lifestyle.

We need to be better stewards of our money. It is after all not our money. Indeed here is one area where we do indeed have a particular characteristic as voluntary, non profit organizations, that is fundamentally different from the private or corporate sector. We have historically had a free ride from our donors. This is one of the few businesses where "success" is not defined in terms of money- either by how it is spent, or how it comes in. In fact, we have never really had a stringent accountability imposed on us by any kinds of donors. Mostly what has been asked for is that we tell a good story.

As a partial result, we have not developed a budgeting process and in fact have been culturally anti-budget for the most part.

We need to stop worrying so much about whether or not our flexibility will be compromised by blueprint approaches to our internal management. The fact is, many NGOs have been so flexible to the point where they have no core at all and are completely supply driven. It is these sorts of habits which lead to conflicts over values, purpose, even life styles in organizations. Where the organization has not paid attention to defining its purpose, to setting up systems, to routinizing certain things, conflicts arise.

We need to recognize that blueprints can be helpful. An engineer or a builder will tell you that there is nothing either magical, or devilish about blueprints. They enable you to begin. And they are in effect made to be changed. But at least you have something started and a good sense of where it is you are going.

While we are becoming an industry, the fact is we haven't matured as one. We have not yet derived new and creative funding sources. We are still, in this country, driven very much by AID, which is our fault, not AID's. We compete too much with each other, do not really employ rigorous management internally, and yet take refuge in saying that we are different since we are voluntary and socially conscious and have a higher set of goals. In fact, we have already lost many of those characteristics.

To get them back, we need to learn again what our true purpose is, to be truly people-oriented, and that means painful choices. It means, saying no, among other things, it means careful management of scarce resources, it means judicious decisions made about attending conferences and meetings. And it means undertaking rigorous, hard looks at our work to see what really works over the long term and why it does or does not. We have by and large avoided both research and data of this kind thus far.

One of the things that has changed us has been the AID relationship. There are some 180 PVOs registered with AID. We say how much we disdain that and we complain about the bureaucracy, the red tape, the procedure, the rapid changes in personnel at AID, and the like. But in fact we are extremely drawn to what has in fact been a very open, generally evenhanded,

and undemanding process of granting us very large amounts of money. The test is that we have consistently protected our turf when ever it comes to an expected cut-off of aid money from the government. Why, because we know that for the most part, it is the easiest money to get. The cost of obtaining one dollar from USAID is cheaper than any other dollar we can get.

We have not come to terms with this seductive relationship and faced the contradiction inherent in our continuing to want to maintain our identity as separate and special.

In the main, we , as NGOs are in a turbulent environment. As much as there is the challenge for us to play a larger and more serious role, the truth is we are remarkably vulnerable. If NGOs do not begin paying attention to these kinds of basics, we are going to go through a bigger "shake out" than we have already seen.

Even more important today, is the danger that exists in the tendency for us as Northern NGOs to want to teach development management to the Southern NGOs. The latter are far more numerous, far more naturally positioned to be in "the development business". We have a tremendous responsibility to be sane and cautious when we are given the opportunity to influence how they manage development in their own backyards.

A recent study of the management needs of Indonesian NGOs written by Britisher Alan J. Taylor, is a reminder of how tempting it is to avoid the basics of management. Taylor says there are between 400 and 2700 development oriented NGOs in Indonesia. In the course of the study a 57 item questionnaire was administered to many of these NGOs to get at their perceptions of what their most pressing management needs were. The larger NGOs seemed to be interested most in planning, scheduling and managing their time better. The smaller ones want greater clarity, less ambiguity and less conflict in their organizations and wanted to learn to motivate people better.

These are very similar to the kinds of things that U.S. PVOs are now talking about when they seek management training. And these things are important.

But it is interesting to note that in the Indonesian case, when an outside consulting organization took a look at the same community of NGOs they came up with a significantly different set of priorities, much more basic and plain than the ones the Indonesians perceived themselves to need.

The outside study, done by DAI, reported a wide range of internal organizational and administrative problems. The report stated: "Nearly all of the Indonesian NGOs have weak accounting systems, inexperienced staff, high turnover, low job security, weak management and administrative systems. Few understand the principles of effective proposal writing, and fewer still have developed adequate systems to assure high quality".

Moreover, observers say that one of the biggest problems is that very few Indonesian NGOs have been able to break away from the habit of "chasing projects".

The problems cited by the consultants are more basic and can be dealt with by "plainer" sorts of management, while the problems cited by the Indonesians themselves, are in some sense, more sophisticated kinds of problems, needing what I call, "fancy" management. We are not saying that only the plain are needed, but that there is a sensible balance to things and that has been ignored.

In short, what is needed here is the full range of management, starting with figuring out what the goals of the organization are. To do that means a focus. Once that focus is established, chasing projects becomes potentially a non problem. But after that sense of corporate purpose is established, then the non sexy stuff comes in and it is relatively plain old management in the most generic sense: accounting systems, administrative procedures, establishing a management information system so that the managers can make intelligent decisions, which is what tends to control for quality, learning how to recruit good people, maintain physical assets, and keep better control of limited financial sources, leading to more efficient use of those. All of these things, once in place, lead almost automatically to the second level of problems; the ones that the Indonesians themselves said were their first priorities: solving ambiguity, conflict, motivational problems and managing time better.

[Alan J. Taylor, NGO Management Development in Indonesia: Discussion Paper and Proposals" (8/11/86)]