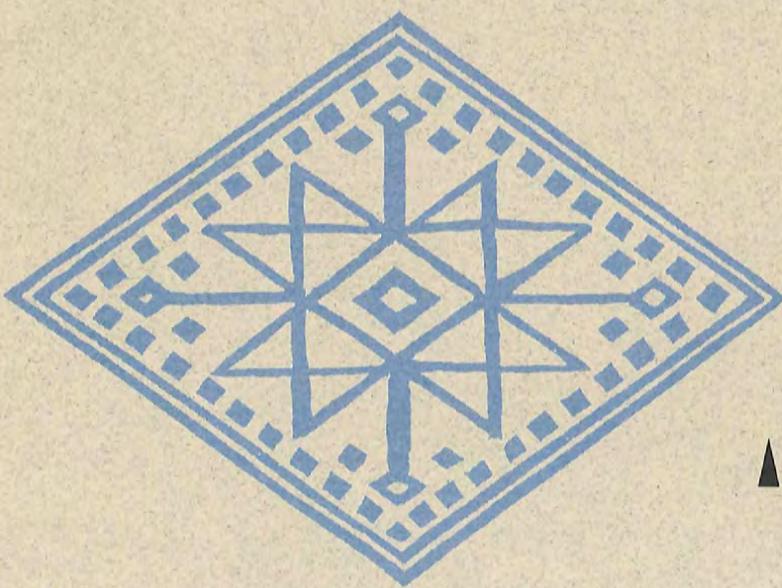


**A RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY
AGENDA FOR AFRICAN NGOs IN
EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA**

*Background Papers for the
PIP-Funded MWENGO Seminar*

THE PVO/NGO INITIATIVES PROJECT
The Research Paper Series



DATEX INC



PX-ABM-084

78970

**A RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY
AGENDA FOR AFRICAN NGOs IN
EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA**

*Background Papers for the
PIP-Funded MWENGO Seminar*

September 1992

Submitted to:

Office of New Initiatives
Bureau for Africa
U.S. Agency for International Development

Submitted by:

PVO/NGO Initiatives Project (698-0526)
DATEX, Inc.

Under A.I.D. Contract No. AFR-0526-C-00-9072-00

PREFACE

The PVO/NGO Initiatives Project (PIP) is a multi-year project funded by the Africa Bureau to promote collaboration and foster closer working relationships between USAID, PVOs, and NGOs. It has sought to do this, in over 20 sub-Saharan countries, by facilitating increased dialogue between them, acting as a catalyst in forming new partnerships, building the technical and institutional capacity of NGOs, and by developing comprehensive informational databases.

An integral part of PIP has been the development of research papers and case studies commissioned for seminars and workshops. All of these have been accomplished by African researchers and form the research paper series. Under PIP, two important studies were completed: the umbrella study which examines the design and implementation aspects of umbrella projects, and the registration study which examines the impact of the registration requirements on African NGOs. Finally, the impact reports look at the effect of selected project (PIP) and non-project activities on NGOs.

We are very pleased to have been able to publish these and to provide them to you. Please note that the views expressed herein and those of the author(s) and are not necessarily those of the Agency for International Development, nor of Datex, Inc.

DATEX Inc., an international management consulting firm, currently holds several long-term contracts with the Agency for International Development. These include **ENRIC** (Environment and Natural Resources Information Center), **PIP** (the PVO/NGO Initiatives Project), the gender specialist and social analysis portion of **DESFIL** (Development Strategies for Fragile Lands), and the financial and grants management portion of the **Democracy Enhancement Project** in Haiti. In addition, Datex also manages two worldwide IQCs: the **Food Aid Programming and Management IQC**, and the **Health Financing IQC**; a Mission-based IQC with USAID/Haiti; and has recently been selected for the **Monitoring and Evaluation of Policies, Programs, and Projects IQC** and (by the Department of State) for the **Refugee Programs IQC**. Datex has carried out numerous other short and long term assignments for USAID, the World Bank, and for the United Nations, throughout the developing world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
---------------------------	----------

PAPER ONE:

GOVERNANCE AND POPULAR PARTICIPATION: THE ROLE OF NGOS	2
--	----------

Introduction	2
Non-participation of the public in socio-economic planning and decision-making, and in the political structures that control them.	2
The impact of NGO activities on the relationship between political pluralism and development.	3
Concept of Popular Participation: Definition and Role	4
Popular participation in development, charting the path to progress.	5
Implementation and participation	6
Popular participation and accountability	7
Popular participation, socio-economic and political change	7
Popular participation as a source of alternative foci of socio-economic decision-making	8
Popular participation, decentralization of decision-making and accountability	11
NGOs and popular participation in the development process	12
NGOs and self-reliant development as factors leading towards economic independence and political pluralism	14
The need for an enabling environment	15
The growth of service-oriented NGOs	16
Conclusion: NGO influences on governance, leadership, accountability and stimulation of political pluralism	16
References	18

PAPER TWO:

LINKING GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS IN AFRICA	19
---	-----------

1. Grassroots Organizations and Development	19
2. Research Institutions and Development	23
3. Link Between Grassroots Organizations and Research Institutions	24
4. Areas for Cooperation	26
5. Mechanisms for Collaboration	28

6. Plan of Action	28
-----------------------------	----

PAPER THREE:

THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN SITUATIONS OF CIVIL CONFLICT 30

Introduction	30
NGO Characteristics and Approaches	31
The Rise of New Institutions	36
War and Its Consequences in the Sudan	36
Policy Issues	40
Moral and Legal Justification for NGOs in Situations of Armed Conflict	43
Overcoming Barriers by Governments/Positive Use of International Law	43
Conclusion	45

PAPER FOUR:

GRASSROOTS PERSPECTIVES ON AFRICA'S CRISIS GOVERNMENT/NGO RELATIONS: THE CASE OF THE SUDAN 47

Summary	47
Background	47
Context and Basis of Government/NGO Relations	49
NGO Workspace	49
Government Policy Towards NGOs	50
Government/NGO Relations Responsibilities and Obligations.	52
Government Changes and Effect on Government/NGO Relations	53
Government/NGO Relations During Colonial Times	53
Government/NGO Relations: From Independence 1956 - 1972	53
Government/NGO Relations 1972-1991	53
Operation Lifeline Sudan	55
Government/NGO Relations: Issues and Future Options	55

INTRODUCTION

The agenda for both foreign and African NGOs has changed rapidly since 1990. Among several key issues now commanding new or heightened attention: pro-poor development strategies, progress toward participatory democracy, better governance, environmental protection and respect for human rights. Achieving these goals requires changing the policies and behavior of African governments, African NGOs and the international donor community. The new NGO agenda has prompted intense debate on how African governments and NGOs, international agencies, and foreign NGOs acting singly or in concert can best promote consistent long-term development initiatives. Further, the intensified debate over the evolving consensus by donor governments and international organizations to condition aid on political reforms suggests that "conditionality" will now play a major role in the work of both African and foreign NGOs. The shift in emphasis is especially intense and clear for recipient countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where many people view Africa's economic crisis as a direct result of repressive and unrepresentative political systems.

It is too early to assess the new donor policy of concessional aid and their impact on NGO activities in Africa, especially in fragile democracies. But the following studies by African researchers on past and present NGO projects suggest that much hard thinking and hard bargaining will be required by donors, governments and NGOs to develop the kinds of strategies and financing required to put sub-Saharan Africa on a path of sustainable development. The changed international agenda has brought the issue of NGOs front and center.

These four research papers were commissioned by the USAID/Africa Bureau funded PVO/NGO Initiatives Project (PIP), which is managed by Datex, Inc. In presenting these to you we have deliberately restrained from over-editing the text in order to leave their flavor intact.

GOVERNANCE AND POPULAR PARTICIPATION: THE ROLE OF NGOS

Seifulaziz Leo Milas, Consultant, UNICEF/Nairobi

INTRODUCTION

Africa's development crisis is much more than that. It is an extensive institutional crisis, a crisis of the State and its foundations. The crisis arises largely from the nature of the State, its origin as a set of inherited institutions, rather than as an outgrowth of indigenous institutions and culture.

The crisis of the African State - and by extension, of the society and its development - centers on the role of the State in three main dimensions, in each of which it has a limited success. In the dimension of sovereignty, the African State is besieged, unable to defend the country's real interests in the international arena: the State complains of foreign debt, of unfavorable and inequitable international economic and political orders, and is clearly unable to cope. In the dimension of determinant of power relations in society, the State is often isolated from the people and their aspirations and is non-accountable to them and fails to provide an appropriate response to their needs in the area of policy-making, a vital element of public participation and development. Finally, the African State usually fails in the dimension of execution of policy; it becomes over-extended through attempting to control all aspects of society.

The African State is the legacy, not of traditional society, based on limitation of power, sharing of power, and the rule of law, but of its predecessor, the colonial state, based primarily on force, rule from above, and divergence of interests between the State and society. The colonial State was run by a small, but somewhat efficient government bureaucracy for external and mainly economic interests. The emergent African State tended to lack the efficient administrative institutions, personnel and culture needed for the efficient management of a state and society with different objectives from those of the colonial State.

Non-participation of the public in socio-economic planning and decision-making, and in the political structures that control them.

Most African States arose from creations of colonial powers, set up with little or no regard for ethnic, linguistic, economic or other relationships to serve their interests. The resulting post-colonial State, which usually did not yet represent a nation, but aspired to create one, was built on a basis of authoritarian rule by a small elite and to achieve its goals, opted for state/party control of all aspects of the economic, social and economic life of the people.

The nature of the State was elitist; its style of governance, was direct and centralized control of the society and its activities. Centralized control of society by the new elite necessitated the expansion of the bureaucracy and the expansion and empowerment of the bureaucracy, which derived its basic administrative concepts from its colonial predecessors, further encouraged an elitist, top-down approach to management of public affairs, which left little space for public participation in governance or economic development.

The growing bureaucracy also developed its own momentum, and its coverage of an ever-increasing area of economic, social and cultural life. It did not, however, increase its efficiency. On the contrary, efficiency levels almost invariably declined, with the administration becoming a burden to society, and consuming a growing proportion of its sparse resources.

The impact of NGO activities on the relationship between political pluralism and development.

Over the past three decades, African governments have largely proven unable to develop their countries and satisfy the needs of their people. The political formula of authoritarian rule and state-centered development efforts has become a grave liability. Instead of serving as the engine of development, the State has often become an obstacle to progress. The centralization of political power and the emphasis on the State as the principal source of development and development planning has led to public apathy and non-participation.

At the same time, it has become increasingly clear that the State cannot effectively serve as the sole entrepreneur and organizer of development. It needs to share the burden with other institutions in society. It has become obvious that any practical progress towards socio-economic development will require popular participation and support. For that to be a practical option, greater flexibility is needed, and more space for the articulation of views by others than political leaders.

A basic condition for development is participation by the people to determine and pursue their development needs as they perceive them. This suggests a need for change in other areas, such as limitations on the power of the State and its rulers, the sharing of power and increased accountability, and the rule of law, all factors that are often inadequate in the African State.

NGOs offer possible alternatives for improvement of development related governance. They help to empower people to participate in their development. By establishing lines of communication between state agencies and the people, they help to influence those agencies. NGOs are less bureaucratic and often more highly motivated than state institutions. They enjoy greater participation of the people. NGOs can also often respond more rapidly and adequately to public needs and demands, and they provide a means through which power can be diffused and shared.

Concept of Popular Participation: Definition and Role

Popular participation is both an aspect of and a prerequisite for socio-economically sustainable development. This arises, at least in part, from the nature of development itself.

Development is not merely a matter of change in the material attributes of a society. It necessarily involves transformation of the society itself and the people who compose it. The people who transform this physical environment "developing" it, transform themselves in the process. This transformation involves change in culture, concept, beliefs, skills, etc. It involves the actions of people as critical beings with the capacity to analyze and decide.

Development is both a physical and a social process in which popular participation is an essential aspect. As Arigbede says, "Popular participation is the very essence of human communities." Development is not an individual, but a community process, with its individual element being involved in shaping and reshaping the community as they shape and reshape themselves.

Development takes place within social spaces, and in most societies there are spaces at various levels, national, regional, local, etc., the local space being the most active in terms of the direct involvement of the people in development. Popular participation is based on the vitality of groups formed by the people in the daily efforts at survival and self-improvement.

Popular participation is therefore a prerequisite for development. A pre-condition for sustainable development is the access of each individual to ways of effective contribution to the development of the society's ideas and priorities. It is the commitment born of participation that opens the way to development.

People build different forms of organizations to fulfill the need for participation. These organizations within which people contribute their views and efforts are building blocks for development. Popular participation within popular organizations is often the only secure basis for popular self-management, and the essential interplay of needs, opinions and efforts in the spirit of solidarity and commitment to a common cause.

Popular participation concerns power of people at the grassroots and other levels to take the initiative and to make decisions in formulating and implementing activities concerning their future. It is a continuous and dynamic process that allows people to identify economic and socio-cultural institutions that support these programs and chance their efforts.

Participation relates not solely to development. It should be viewed to comprise political, social and economic activities. A key element in participation is the relative power wielded by different groups and individuals. The basic problems of participation are seen as lying essentially in the weak power base of the impoverished and marginal groups (D. Ghai). This is a relationship of interdependence of the political, social and economic domains. For instance, participation in the political domain may reinforce the ability to participate in the economic field (D. Ghai).

In most societies there are powerful elite groups, which though numerically small, can participate adequately in national affairs at all significant levels, such groups as for example, industrialists, landlords, senior officers and the political elite. The least powerful groups and often the largest include the landless, unskilled workers, the unemployed, marginal workers in the informal sector and poor peasants. Women workers are usually the most vulnerable. The main problems of participation concern opening the way to effective participation by the weaker groups, which require creation of an environment favorable to participation and to efforts and initiatives on the part of these groups to seek greater economic and political strength (D. Ghai).

Ensuring effective participation by the weaker groups requires both an environment favorable to participation, and efforts and initiations of the excluded or marginalized groups to seek greater economic and political strength.

Power is a central element in participation. Those who have power are better placed to participate than those who do not. The more a group is deprived of power, the more likely it is to be marginalized on the economic, social and political levels. The major sources of power include military strength, political authority, wealth, knowledge and skills, and organization. Organization enhances the power of the members of a group through the creation of an organism, which can intervene in a coherent and organized way to present and enhance their interests (D. Ghai).

Participatory processes tend to flourish when certain conditions are satisfied. The most important such conditions are: a democratic environment, satisfaction of basic material needs, and a wide dispersal of political and economic power.

Popular participation in development, charting the path to progress.

Both participation and development are somewhat ambiguous concepts, subject to different interpretations. Development, for example, may be treated as synonymous with economic growth and significant increase in labor productivity, declining share of agriculture in GDP, technological progress, industrialization and organization.

A second interpretation of development concentrates on such indices of living standards as poverty, income distribution, nutrition, infant mortality, life expectancy, literacy, education, access to employment, housing, water supply and similar amenities. It does not however, focus on involving people in dealing with these problems in their way for their benefit.

The third view of development focuses on the development of human potential and capabilities. Here, development is seen in terms of enhanced understanding of and involvement in social, economic and political processes, increased competence to analyze solve problems, expansion of skills and greater control over economic resources. The focus is placed on realization of human potential in terms of enhancement of social, economic and technical capabilities, social emancipation, and such elements as human dignity and self-help.

The concept of participation is equally ambiguous. There are various ways of looking at it. The term is often used to refer to "mobilization" of the people to undertake activities that are conceived and designed from above, with the people being "mobilized" to implement them. In many such cases the result may benefit more the affluent groups than those being "mobilized."

Another view of "participation," equates it with decentralization in governmental or related organizations. Resources and decision-making powers may be transferred to lower levels. This may facilitate local-level decision on the choice, design and implementation of development activities. However, it does not guarantee meaningful participation of the rural and urban masses, particularly the poorer and more marginalized elements of these groups (D. Ghai).

A third interpretation of participation focuses upon the aspect of empowerment of the deprived and excluded. This view considers the differences in economic and political power among different social groups and classes. Therefore, participation is seen as strengthening the power of the deprived element of the population. It aims at: sharing of power and scarce resources; deliberate efforts by social groups to control their destiny and improve their living conditions; and at opening up grassroots opportunities. This type of participation requires the creation of organizations of the poor that are democratic, independent and self-reliant.

One aspect of the effort at empowerment is organization, the pooling of resources to obtain collective strength and power. Another is the enhancement of skills, planning and managerial competence, and analytical and reflexive abilities. Such enhancement of competence and of resources, often leads to enhanced power, and hence of enhanced possibilities of economic and political participation.

Implementation and participation

The Six-S group provides an example of the mobilization of resources, and of empowerment of poor and marginalized sectors of the population through self-help and cooperative efforts with NGO support. Six-S was started in 1974 in Burkina Faso. It aimed to take advantage of the long dry season to initiate self-help social and economic activities to improve the living standards of the rural people. The initiative relied on enlistment of traditional Naam groups with a tradition of mutual help and cooperation to promote a large-scale self-help movement. The Six-S has expanded to number some 200,000 members and extends into other Sahelian countries such as Mali, Mauritania and Senegal.

The Six-S groups are based on people's perceived needs and their effort to resolve them. They undertake a variety of income-generating, community and social activities. To generate income, groups undertake gardening, milling and a variety of other activities. Communal activities include construction of dams and dikes: soil conservation work, digging of wells, afforestation, etc. There are also a wide variety of social projects including primary health care, schools, rural pharmacies and other joint efforts to improve living standards through participation in

development activities. Participation and mutual cooperation are the key. The established groups help new ones in various ways leading to a rapid multiplication of groups in the region.

All Six-S groups have a savings fund built with member subscriptions and receipts from income-generating activities. This enables Six-S to help stimulate or support various sort of social or other activities. Established Six-S groups assist new-ones in various ways, particularly technical assistance, and the development and propagation of new techniques.

The Naam groups organized in the Six-S are responsible for a wide range of commercial development activities such as water catchment and storage schemes, reforestation, soil conservation, cereal bank to enhance food security, development of artisanal production and communal farming. They operate credit and savings societies, provide guarantees for individual and collective loans and organize a variety of welfare schemes and social activities.

The implementation of these activities in which the participants are involved at all stages has both enhanced their standards of living and their competence, hence their power and ability to participate on other levels.

The activities of Six-S and similar groups have contributed stability, increased production and income, enhanced food security, fuller employment and introduction of improved techniques.

Popular participation and accountability

Organizations such as Six-S have a wide range of social and cultural activities such as literacy, schools, nutrition, child care, help for the old and handicapped, village clinics, personal hygiene, etc. Such activities, like those of economic development require the voluntary participation of the population. Accountability by those exercising responsibilities is an important factor in attaining and retaining a broad voluntary participation.

Popular participation, socio-economic and political change

The activities and accomplishments of the Six-S in Burkina Faso show that participation in voluntary cooperative groups can be an important determinant of social attitudes and behavior. When the members of such groups analyze their problems and needs, they may initiate social changes of broad significance.

Participation in grassroots organizations that effectively contribute to socio-economic improvement, also may promote political change by enhancing people's capacity to articulate and press their views on vital issues of concern to them. In many ways, such organizations serve as schools for democracy, enhancing the capacity of people to participate in a pluralistic environment.

These participatory initiatives provide an example of basic democracy at work. The Naam groups and similar organizations tend to be run in an open and democratic manner. They usually work through discussion and debate, with decisions reached through consensus. Such groups also learn to resolve such problems as accountability of leadership, prevention of concentration of power in the hands of office-holders and active participation of the membership in the management of group activities. For instance, the Six-S groups seek to prevent perpetuation of hierarchical division of labor by rotating tasks among members. Office-holders are elected for limited periods.

The grass-root initiatives aid democratic processes by helping to develop the intellectual, moral, managerial and technical capabilities of their members. At the same time they are stimulated to make use of these capabilities. The organizations, through their style of work, promote group discussion, consultation, planning and implementation of joint activities and resolution of conflict through debate, all practices that contribute to pluralism and progress toward participatory democracy.

Positive results in terms of satisfaction of psychological and material needs of the members have been important in sustaining interest and commitment. These flow from the style of operation, building on African experience of cooperation in mobilization of internal resources; and attraction of external funds for production diversification, infrastructural development and technological innovations. This pattern of development based on grass-roots participatory organizations encourages individual and group initiatives, which promotes a somewhat egalitarian distribution of income and access to common services and facilities (D. Ghai).

Popular participation as a source of alternative foci of socio-economic decision-making

Popular participation in development almost of necessity, requires the existence of alternative foci of socio-economic decision-making. It requires that people have a voice in, or a way of influencing socio-economic decisions that affect them, particularly decisions, the implementation of which, depend largely on the "mobilization" of the people.

Recognition of the importance of such participation is suggested in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's African alternative framework to structural adjustment programs for socio-economic recovery and transformation, which states:

"The key role of the government, in this respect, will embrace the creation of an enabling environment and institution-building and vigorous support for grass-roots initiatives. On the other hand, democratization and popular participation will encourage the people to increase their development effort and to accept whatever sacrifices that may be implied by the program, thereby consolidating and deepening the process for national self-reliance." (ECA, 1987, pp-49-50).

There is a growing if belated recognition by the ECA and other bodies concerned with African development that the prevailing top-down style of governance provides an arid climate for grass-roots development. Policies and programs are all too often framed without consulting the people that they affect and on whose support they depend for success. The result is often an unaffordably high rate of failure, as peoples' perceptions of their vital interests diverge from those of governments and development planners.

Most African countries have authoritarian, top-down styles of government. They are urban-based with power and authority radiation from the center. There is a wide gap between the city where policies are made, and the village, where bureaucrats from the center tell people what to do. The peasants have little voice.

Africa's perennial food shortages are often related to this. Efforts to increase food production regularly fail because the prices paid to farmers give them little incentive to increase their production and to take the risks inherent in trying new methods and buying inputs to increase their productivity.

In Tanzania, people's participation has a very checkered history. There are indications that such participation and frequently, its absence, has played an important role in the ups and downs of the country's economy.

When Tanzania achieved its political independence, it adopted a dual track agricultural transformation policy - the improvement and transformation approaches to agricultural development. The former emphasized the ex-colonial progressive farmer policy, while the latter encouraged village settlements based on carefully selected peasant populations and heavy components of external aid and management. In both cases, the direct beneficiaries were a small section of the peasantry. The rest were expected to benefit from a trickle-down effect of the development process (Ernest N. Magenya). Meanwhile, most peasants were free to find their own way.

In the late 1960's the dual strategy of agricultural transformation was replaced by policies based on the Arusha Declaration that were supposed to provide a "voluntary, participatory and egalitarian model of development."

"The Ujamaa village is a new conception, based on the post-Arusha Declaration understanding that what we need to develop is people, not things, and that people can only develop themselves. (.....1974, pg.70)

Practice, however, soon diverged from theory. The top-down practices of governance prevailed. The Vjam ... Vijiini policy aimed at agricultural transformation through formation of communal villages on a voluntary and participatory basis failed thoroughly and dramatically.

Obviously, the policy as implemented did not consider the peasants' own perception of their interests and the best way to attain them. In 1973-1974, a massive and often compulsory

concentration of rural population in Ujamaa villages was followed by a drastic decline in agricultural production (Maganya, 1990, p.4).

One reason would appear to have been the absence of an effective grass-roots democratic structure, allowing full participation by the peasants, and a degree of self-management, a vital element in successful grass-roots participatory development. The peasants found themselves to be effectively deprived of a voice in their development, as all political institutions of popular participation were brought under the control of the ruling party.

Ernest N. Maganya describes the process that led to the dissolution of the local government administration structure in 1972 and that of the cooperative unions by 1976.

"At every level in this process, the objective was not to give more power to the ordinary members of these organizations in order to enable them to exercise greater control over the leadership, but to extend the control and regulatory mechanism of the State." (E.N. Maganya, 1990, p.4).

The supposed reforms in the local government and cooperative systems resulted in diminished popular participation in governance and development, and increased bureaucratic control ... the reforms developed the decision-making process, not to elected grass-roots leadership, but to regional and district authorities. This process was completed by the adoption of the village and Ujamaa villages Act of 1975, which reconstituted village governments as political economic entities emphasizing vertical links to district and regional party and government structure rather than horizontal ties to grass-roots organizations. (E.N. Maganya, 1990, p.5).

In effect, popular participation was largely stifled. In most cases leadership, even at the lowest level, was dominated by party and government officials. In spite of the 1982 reforms, which to some degree separated party and local government functions, the party remained supreme. There were few possibilities of alternative foci of decision-making. The country's mass organizations were themselves sub-structure of the Party. According to Maganya, they didn't accord effective representation to the rural masses and to give them an effective voice in vital matters of socio-economic life.

The local and international NGOs were a potential channel for popular participation, but indigenous grass-roots NGOs were allowed very limited independence. Maganya attributes this to the concept of party supremacy being interpreted to mean total control by the party of the potential organs of popular participation.

By way of contrast, government policies in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Ethiopia, offered far greater scope for popular participation in decision-making and participation of grass-root NGOs in the development process.

Popular participation, decentralization of decision-making and accountability

The elected leadership of Burkina Faso's Naam groups, Cameroon's Peoples' banks, and Ethiopia's peasant associations, and a style of work based on public discussion and consensus led to decentralization of decision-making and accountability of leadership.

In Cameroon, a major option of government policy is self-reliant development, the development of man, for man (Emilienne Ngo Basse, 1990, p.1). The extent of popular participation in development is related to the type of development planning, the institutional framework, and the extent to which this framework allows for grass-roots participation.

The institutional framework is composed of the various mechanisms and practices used to enable people to participate in the design and implementation of development project within or without the scope of the five year development plan. The development committees are a very key part of this framework.

In theory, the development committees provide channels by which the people, through their representatives, express their views in decisions that affect the development of their area. In practice however, the committees tend to be composed of the elite. They meet twice yearly and deliberate in camera. Such sessions appear to reflect requirements of the elite rather than the aspirations of the people. (Emilienne Ngo Basse, 1990, p.4).

There are also informal non-governmental structures, associations of various types that bring together people from a particular area. They contribute to the development of their community by carrying out, with their resources, projects of common interest in the community. The effectiveness of these village development associations varies from area to area, but in general they tend to have a significant impact (Emilienne Ngo Basse, 1990, p.8)

Popular participation in socio-economic development is also expressed through savings and mutual loan cooperative such as the caisses populaires or peoples' bank, and tontines (informal credit associations). These are seen as an expression of the process of economic democratization open to various production groups operating in the formal and informal sectors (Florence Tobe Lobe, 1990).

The peoples' banks and tontines provide a vital function for people, particularly the poor and those working in the informal sector who have little hope of obtaining loans from formal sector banks. This informal banking system mobilizes the savings of the poor to help the poor.

Due to the difficulties encountered in dealing with formal sector banks, people have strengthened their informal associations that provide a more easily accessible and flexible community savings structure. Several types of savings and credit cooperatives have proven successful. Some are reserved for a specific group such as a particular village, trade union, or professional association, or a particular category of membership such as craftsman, farmers or fishermen, slum women, or youth cooperatives, etc. (Florence Tobo Lobe, 1990).

The system opens access to small loans to people who lacking security or regular income could never obtain even the smallest loan from a traditional bank. It is based on the allocation of loans to members of small grass-roots associations which meet regularly. When the peoples' bank grants a loan, the group as a whole guarantees payment. Social pressure ensure that the individual follows the rules of the association and repays his loan.

Popular participation is the basis of these voluntary savings cooperatives. Management is based on open discussion and consensus; and social ties and pressures help to ensure accountability.

NGOs and popular participation in the development process

Cameroon's savings cooperatives play a significant role in grass-roots development. They mobilize capital in a variety of ways: through deposit of a lump sum, by regular deposit, or through the subsidies of local NGOs formed by grass-roots people who use loans for purchase of equipment and goods, and for trading activities. The savings cooperatives are of two main types: the Peoples' banks, and the many varieties of tontines.

The Nylon People's Banks (CPN) are an example of a savings cooperative, born out of the free association of grass-roots people in Douala, Cameroon's commercial capital, who pool their savings for mutual support. This provides members with access to loans to enable them to improve their productivity, to secure housing, or to have assistance in case of accident or other misfortune.

The CPN operates under the cooperative principles of freedom to join or resign, democratic management, limited interest rates on savings, and proportional distribution of any earnings or dividends. Membership is open to grass-roots associations, youth and traders cooperatives, craftsman, schools, parents association, and sporting clubs. The CPN provides a variety of savings and credit services such as: housing loans, start-up capital loans to young people going into business; and support to young traders and craftsmen by underwriting loans to cooperative members from financial institutions, etc.

The People's banks have very limited resources in comparison to commercial banks and development institutions. They, however, do make a significant contribution to the development and welfare of the poor sectors of the community. This is indicated by their rapid growth. According to the League of Cooperative Peoples' banks in Cameroon, there were some 4000 members with savings amount to CFA Francs 16 million and loans of CFAF 10 million in 1969. By 1988 this had increased to 70,000 members with savings of CFAF 10,000 million (Florence Tobe Lobe, 1990).

In effect, by mobilizing individual resources and eliminating financial middlemen, the cooperative banks mobilize substantial volumes of personal savings and redistribute them in small loans. This has contributed to attaining productive and social goals of the community and improving its living standards.

The cooperative Peoples' banks have enabled their members to set up new businesses or expand existing ones. They have helped farmers buy inputs to increase productivity, assisted traders to increase their stocks and craftsmen to buy new equipment. In one way or another they provided member families with access to funds that have helped them to become more productive and self-sufficient (Florence Tobo Lobe, 1990, p.7).

The savings mobilized through the Peoples' bank system provide an excellent example of popular participation in development. By injecting local savings into the economic life of the community, resources that would have been unproductive in their traditional hiding places were put to work improving productivity and quality of life (Lobe, 1990, p.9).

On an even less formal level are the non-profit family-type associations called. They also collect savings from their members and provide loans. These unofficial credit associations keep the savings of million of rural and urban dwellers in Cameroon, Central and West Africa. (Lobe, 1990, p.9).

The tontines are part of an informal system of economic solidarity based on mutual assistance. They play a significant role in Cameroon and various other countries of West and Central Africa. Tontines have various direct and indirect functions: social integration and organization, and economic education, as well as mutual assistance.

There are two main types of tontine in Cameroon; mutual tontines, based on cooperation at the family, professional and ethnic level for mutual assistance and ethnic solidarity, are common among women in West and Central Africa. A similar phenomenon is found in the neighborhood Mahbars formed by women in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. In Cameroon they often provide a means of helping women to expand their economic activities and thus, their power of social and economic participation.

Financial tontines play a significant role in business activities with services often not available from the traditional banking sector. They are composed of business people, traders and wage-earners, usually with a similar regional ethnic background. They provide short term loans for productive purposes to their members and make possible a rapid mobilization of savings with minimal financial brokerage costs.

In Ethiopia, the Peasants' Association often provides the most appropriate socio-economic framework for participatory development. It does not represent the kind of bond, kinship and unity of purpose that usually characterize traditional Ethiopian communities (Constantinos Berhe, 1990, p.10). However, in a society where authoritarian and hierarchical forms of decision-making are often the rule, it provides an alternative form, more open to grassroots discussion and direct popular input into decision-making.

The Peasant's Associations have had varying levels of success. In the North, where feudalism has been less pronounced, people deeply resented the collectivization of their land. This led to significant resistance to the Peasants' Associations and limited their effectiveness.

In the South where land tenure had been most inequitable and feudalism most oppressive, the Peasants' Associations found more ready acceptance. Peasant families were given the use of small plots of land and feudal dues abolished. For the first time many peasants felt that they were in a position to control their destiny. While ownership of land was vested in the State, its control and allocation were in the hands of the Peasants' Association, to which all farmers belonged.

The Peasants' Associations elect their leaders and do much of their important business through general assemblies. They provide a channel to voice their members concerns to local government, while simultaneously acting as a basic and unpaid arm of local government.

At Oda Belina near Hirna in the Hararghe region of Eastern Ethiopia, popular participation has made important contributions to farmers's productivity and quality of life. In an area threatened by soil degradation and recurrent food shortages, the local people working through their Peasants' Association have found significant solutions.

The leaders of the Peasants' Association, with the help of conservation workers, convinced farmers cultivating steep mountain slopes that were being rapidly eroded to move down to more suitable areas to allow reforestation of the hillsides. This was made possible through agreement of other members of the Peasants' Association to make room for them by a redistribution of land. (Paul Harrison, *The Greening of Africa*, 1986, p.128).

The replanted slopes were closed to grazing, but people were allowed to cut the grass to make home for their livestock. The trees planted on the hillsides now provide the members of the Peasants' Association with a source of poles and fuel. As part of a comprehensive water catchment rehabilitation plan, a deep gully some 9 kilometers long was planted with elephant grass and acacia cyanophyll, and its lands protected with lines of eucalyptus trees. The gully that was useless and a threat to the surrounding cropland, become a source of wood and forage. Then a small earth dam was built to collect the run-off from the hills during the rainy season. This enabled the farmers of the Oda Belina Peasants' Association to irrigate some 60 hectares of rich river-bottom cropland during the dry season. This dam provided an important source of income and a hedge against future droughts and food shortages.

NGOs and self-reliant development as factors leading towards economic independence and political pluralism

In Ethiopia, Cameroon, Burkina Faso and elsewhere, the efforts of grassroots NGOs have demonstrated significant potential in promotion of economic independence among poor and disadvantaged sectors of the population. This has strengthened the capacity of such groups for self-reliant development and self-management, and helped to create conditions for development of political pluralism.

In Cameroon, for instance, the Peoples' banks and tontines do not only foster economic growth and development. While doing so, they act as a training ground for discussion and democratic

decision-making, accountability, and other elements of popular participation, which tend to create an enabling environment for movement toward pluralism and democracy.

Much is the true of the development efforts of the Peasants' Association's in Ethiopia. In Southern Ethiopia, the Peasants' Associations here "genuine community organizations, commanding popular support, with significant local powers and an all-purpose brief" (Paul Harrison, *The Greening of Africa*, 1986, p.287).

In the Bale region of Southern Ethiopia, the UNICEF supported Regional Integrated Basic Services (RIBS) project used the local Peasants' Associations to pioneer a new participating relationship between popular organizations, government and aid donors. The project is based on response to perceived needs and popular demands. It is centered around each village's Peasants' Association and its development committee that includes representatives of women and youth. The project's grassroots workers encourage the Peasants' Associations to examine their problems and needs and set their priorities. UNICEF helps to bridge some gaps between local demands and available resources.

The development committees of the Peasants' Associations coordinate development work with the emphasis on what people can do for themselves. The role of government is to provide technical assistance and limited material support. UNICEF supplements local resources to permit development activities that might otherwise have to be put aside. The result has been "the creation of an integrated set of essential services ... general to the genuine needs of communities and are low-cost, self-sustaining and flexible to changing needs." (Harrison, *The Greening of Africa*, 1986, p.287).

There are other results, as well: higher productivity and improved living standards. Like the Naam Movement in Burkina Faso, the Integrated Basic Services Project has been highly successful in stimulating a wide range of development activities. The success of these activities is largely due to their being initiated by the people and corresponding to their perceived needs and aspirations. The Peasants' Association that provided the organizational framework for popular participation, served as the vehicle for attainment of the peoples' shared goals.

The need for an enabling environment

Participation on this level has other benefits. Such grassroots organizations as the Peasant's Organizations, the People's banks and the Naam groups provide an enabling environment in which people and groups learn to do things for themselves. They learn to set and express their goals, make their decisions in collaboration with others and enforce accountability. This involves respect for human dignity, peoples' views, accumulated wisdom and traditional practices. These are qualities that lead away from top-down governance towards basic democracy and political pluralism and provide a foundation for initiation of similar practices on a higher-level.

In Cameroon, and Burkina Faso, the tradition of village self-help groups provided an enabling environment for initiation of development activities based on popular participation in areas not effectively controlled by government. The success of those initiatives tended to expand and consolidate opportunities for popular participation in development, and the roles of grassroots organizations and other NGOs that help them.

In Ethiopia, with a tradition of authoritarian governance, the removal by the 1974 revolution of the former sources of local authority and delay in replacing them with other effective forms of centralized authority opened the way to increased popular participation. The Peasants' Associations created by the new government to mobilize the support of the rural population expanded into that space, transforming themselves into vehicles for popular participation as well as basic units of local governance.

The successes of popular participation in various areas of development in Cameroon, Burkina Faso and Southern Ethiopia, were facilitated by situations that provided space for initiation of such participation. By way of contrast, the failure of one of Tanzania's major development initiatives, the Ujamaa villages, was closely linked to lack of popular participation.

The growth of service-oriented NGOs

As government development activities are increasingly constrained by lack of resources, service-oriented NGOs are growing as people turn to self-help to provide essential services. Such NGOs often cover a wide range of local needs.

In Bale, Southern Ethiopia, Peasant's Associations with UNICEF support provide primary health care to local villagers using volunteer health assistants elected by their communities and trained for three months. By 1986 nearly 600 community health assistants had been trained and equipped. The health assistants are unpaid, but other community members help them in their fields at crucial times of the year. (Paul Harrison, *The Greening of Africa*, 1986, p.287).

Conclusion: NGO influences on governance, leadership, accountability and stimulation of political pluralism

NGOs influence governance by promoting the dispersal of economic and political power through direct influence and advocacy and through empowerment of disadvantaged and marginalized groups to participate more fully in society.

In the process of promotion of development, NGOs lay the foundations of stimulation of political pluralism and accountability. They serve as a vehicle of participation of their members. They help in initiation of economic or social activities that enhance the socio-economic interests, and consequently the power of their members or serve as pressure groups to pursue those interests. Of particular importance, they help in enhancing the managerial, organizational and

technical capacities of their members, encouraging discussion, reflection and decision-making through consensus. This not only increases their capacity to pursue their goals in the larger society. It also contributes to the values, attitudes and procedures conducive to development of political pluralism and democratic society.

A key condition of sustainable development is securing effective citizen participation in decision-making. Few projects succeed unless they are well understood and desired by their intended beneficiaries. To succeed, a project usually needs to address problems and aspirations identified by them, and have a management and decision-making structure in which they have confidence.

The Six-S and Naam groups in Burkina Faso, and the Peasants' Associations in Bale, south Ethiopia, provide examples of how NGOs (or quasi-NGOs) built on popular participation, can influence governance, particularly on the local level that most directly affects the population. The Naam groups with the support of Six-S carry out a wide range of activities, which would otherwise be left to government agencies if left undone. In the process, they help to raise the economic level of the rural population, involving the people in their governance, establishing examples of leadership accountability as a basis of governance, an example that helps to promote the demand for accountability at higher levels.

Many NGOs are changing their strategies of relating to the State. This is often because of discovery of political analysis, heightened self-awareness, and persuasiveness. Sharpened political analysis helps the NGO to understand how various state policies may conflict with or facilitate its own development objectives. Increased self-awareness leads to realization of its own limited capacity for effecting large-scale change. And thus, of the importance of providing examples and showing the way to others, particularly the State, as popular participation on a significant scale can usually only be achieved through reforms in official structures, not simply through multiplying NGO projects. Increased persuasiveness helps the NGO to convey the message from its political analysis and self-awareness, to a broader audience. It learns to put its experience in the context of the current politico-economic debates and discover ways of influencing those debates.

The NGO also may explore ways of injecting lessons from its successful project approaches into official development programs. In particular, it may seek to project its positive experiences of popular participation into efforts to democratize the institutions and development approaches of the State.

NGO's may seek to influence governance by opposing state institutions, by complementing them, or by helping to reform them. In most African countries, the latter two options tend to be more practical. To complement the State, the NGO might evolve its own programs to fill gaps in the state services in ways that make those services more relevant to the people and more subject to democratic influences. For instance, village nutrition groups in Zambia have helped to reorient the priorities of the official Primary Health Care Service to better respond to the requirements of the poor. They have stimulated increased accountability.

REFERENCES

Basse, Emilienne Ngo, Analysis on the Reality of Popular Participation at the National Level: The Case of Cameroon. (Mimeo) E/ECA/ICPP/90/28.

Berke, Constantinos, Popular Participation: On NGO Perspective (Mimeo) E/ECA/ICPP/90/29

Ghai, Dharan, Concept and Practice of Participation: Some Theoretical Considerations (Mimeo) E/ECA/ICPP/90/3

Participating Development: Some Perspectives from Grassroots Experiences (Mimeo) E/ECA/ICPP/90/23

Harrison, Paul: The Greening of Africa.

Kouassivi, Akpalo, The Roles and Responsibilities of Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) and Grassroots Committees (Mimeo) E/ECA/ICPP/90/22

Koumba, Barry, Popular Participation in Burkina Faso: Contribution of the Peasant Society (Mimeo) E/ECA/ICPP/90/27

Lobe, Ernest N., The Role of Popular Participation in Meeting the Challenge of Recovery and Development in Africa, The Case Study of the United Republic of Tanzania (Mimeo) E/ECA/ICPP/90/35

Ngatara, Ludovick A., Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa: Case Study of Tanzania (Mimeo) E/ECA/ICPP/90/36

Nyerere, J.K., "Freedom and Development," in Man and Development, OUP. 1974

UNECA African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Program for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation. Addis Ababa, 1989.

LINKING GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS IN AFRICA

Eshetu Chole, University of Addis Ababa and the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern Africa (OSSREA) and

Abdul Mohammed, Inter-Africa Group, Nairobi/Addis Ababa

1. Grassroots Organizations and Development

The 1980s have been described as a lost decade for African development, and legitimately so. In fact, the African crisis has been unfolding for about a generation. According to the World Bank, "Africans are almost as poor today as they were 30 years ago".¹ Such a dismal record has naturally generated a lot of controversy on the underlying causes of the crisis and on ways of resolving it.

This is not the place for joining the debate, but it should be stated that Africa's disappointing development record is due to a multitude of inter-locking factors, some of internal origin, others externally generated. However, one fact that cannot be denied is that the problem is in no small measure due to erroneous strategies of development. Most African countries in the immediate post-independence period, and for a long time thereafter, pursued policies and strategies that placed an exaggerated faith on the state and, as a corollary, displayed an almost studied neglect of private enterprise and grassroots initiatives. Again in the words of the World Bank:

The post independence development efforts failed because the strategy was misconceived. Governments made a dash for "modernization", copying, but not adapting, Western models. The result was poorly designed public investments in industry; too little attention to peasant agriculture; too much intervention in areas in which the state lacked managerial, technical and entrepreneurial skills; and too little effort to foster grassroots development. The top-down approach demotivated ordinary people, whose energies most needed to be mobilized in the development effort.²

In recent years, there has been growing awareness of the limitations of such a strategy and a recognition that the state should be confined to tasks in which it has a proven advantage or which cannot be accomplished by other segments of society. This has meant greater attention to the role of grassroots organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

¹The World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* (Washington, D.C., 1989), p. 3.

²*Ibid.*

Grassroots organizations is an umbrella term that covers cooperatives, self-help associations, women's groups, savings institutions, etc. created and sustained by popular initiatives. Such organizations, it must be stated, are not novel to African societies. In fact,

Africa has rich traditions of community and group welfare. This is reflected in the widespread practice of sharing among people, with its emphasis on grassroots initiatives and community-based projects. Such cooperation tends to be spontaneous and informal. Community-based development projects provide an avenue for mobilizing "community savings" in cash or labor for a range of local activities.³

The major strength of grassroots organizations is that, on account of their closeness to the people, they are best placed to understand and articulate their needs. As such, they are a very important source of information and insight regarding the living conditions, needs, problems and aspirations of vast majority of people, who are, or at any rate should be, at the center of development. They are also indispensable for any serious efforts at popular mobilization.

In spite of this, conventional strategies of development have tended to ignore or marginalize the contribution of grassroots organizations. There is often a forbidding gap between such organizations and the state, and the relationship between the two is not always a harmonious one. To bridge this gap and to contribute to the effectiveness of grassroots organizations is or should be one *raison d'être* NGOs. They are generally regarded as "valuable and cost-effective intermediaries between the central agencies and community groups".⁴ This is because they "are closer than government to the rural communities. Since their staff often are located in the communities, they develop an empathy that government staff generally lack".⁵ It is in recognition of this fact and of other positive characteristics of NGOs that donor assistance is increasingly being channelled through them. For example, in 1987 NGOs received about \$2.2 billion from official sources, which -- we are told amounted to 5 per cent of official development assistance. Further, NGOs are reported to have collected about \$3.3 billion through private fund-raising from the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).⁶

This reflects a growing belief that most NGOs are committed to addressing the problems of developing societies and the needs of their poorest members in a manner not matched by government officials. NGOs have learned how to work with grassroots organizations and how to put together projects with minimal

³*Ibid.*, pp. 168-169.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁶*Ibid.*

financial and external technical assistance, thus helping poor people to help themselves...This compares starkly with the widespread concern that official assistance has created dependency. NGOs have demonstrated a flexibility and dynamism within the donor community that is comparable with that of the communities with which they work. In particular they have moved increasingly from emergency assistance to development assistance, particularly in agriculture, water supply, nutrition, education, and health. They have found new support in donor countries, particularly because they are seen as helping the poor directly - without the costly bureaucratic intermediation of donors and recipient governments and without the danger of assistance ending up in the pockets of the rich, the military, or the corrupt.⁷

All these virtues, however, should not lead us to think that NGOs are without blemish or that their strengths should be taken without qualification. In the first place, although donors prefer to channel funds through them rather than through state bureaucracies, the aid is so channelled - it is argued - to benefit local elites more than ordinary people. According to a severe critic,

Local elites ... are grabbing the opportunity to spawn into existence a myriad of NGOs, the primary purpose of which in practice is to attract foreign funds. Some state or state-connected bureaucrats overnight patronize or place themselves at the head of NGOs. These have been aptly described as GONGOs (Government Organized NGOs). Then there are foreign NGOs or FONGOs providing plush jobs to both home and host country elites. And so many local NGOs (LONGOs) are basically foreign-funded or FONGOs.⁸

The same critic goes even further:

The NGO initiative remains an elite enterprise; it has little or no constituency in, and accountability to, the working people. The latter are at best grateful recipients of the benefaction, their life destinies still controlled from elsewhere. Such NGOs add little to building or re-building the organizational capacity of the working people. Organizational building itself from the bottom is an indispensable democratic exercise so necessary for democratic struggles. The NGOs are not an adequate response to that urgent necessity so far as the working people are concerned.⁹

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁸Issa Shivji, "The POs and the NGOs: Reflections on the Place of the Working People in the Battle for Democracy", CODESRIA Bulletin, Number 4, 1990, p. 9.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 10.

Many NGOs will no doubt take exception to this charge, and it may be too broad a condemnation. But it does make a point, even if it overstretches it somewhat.

Secondly, NGOs are not as politically neutral as they are sometimes made to appear. To the extent that they depend on their home governments for financial support, they are bound to be politically compromised. In other words, their assistance is not always disinterested. Thirdly and more importantly, many NGO-supported projects have been wanting in sustainability. It is not unknown for projects to collapse as soon as NGO support is withdrawn.

It is in this connection that the role of indigenous NGOs arises. Africa, relative to Latin America and Asia, has a fairly short history of local NGOs.

NGOs in Africa tend to be less solidly structured than in other regions of the Third World. Whereas many national NGOs in Latin America, for example, emerge from a background of years of activity within their own countries, most national African NGOs came into being as autonomous organizations only at or since the time of independence, with a greater degree of financial dependence on sister NGOs in the industrialized countries.¹⁰

And those that mushroomed in the last two or three decades also tend to be heavily dependent on foreign support; all too often they operate under the tutelage of northern NGOs. To the extent that this is so, the question of sustainability remains unanswered, and it figures as an important item in the agenda of the future.

Another frequently voiced criticism pertaining to NGOs is that they tend to concentrate on relief/emergency assistance to the neglect of long-term development needs. While this charge can be exaggerated and while it can not be denied that there are a number of NGOs whose orientation is development, it must also be recognized that there is a kernel of truth in the accusation. Where this is indeed true, NGO intervention tends to be of limited impact, failing to obviate repeated cycles of short-term intervention, and in the process contributing little or nothing to the recurrence of the disasters that make such interventions mandatory.

When both sides of the ledger are closely examined, however, the balance is likely to tip in favor of NGOs. This is all the more so when their record is contrasted with that of government agencies, whose performance has been uniformly dismal almost all over the continent. Therefore, any strategy for African development cannot omit NGOs. They should be seen not merely as providers of relief but as agents of long-term development.

¹⁰Report of the FFHC/AD Regional Consultation for Africa, Accra, Ghana, 17-21 June 1965, p. 4.

2. Research Institutions and Development

In discussing research institutions, one has in mind institutions of higher education and specialized research establishments. The history of higher education in Africa, and also that of research, cannot be understood outside of the colonial legacy. The academic institutions of the continent were for the most part set up as mirror images of their counterparts in the colonizing countries, notably Britain and France. Therefore, whatever education and research was conducted in these universities and colleges tended to have little relevance to African realities. In spite of a growing awareness of this limitation, there is little that has been done to date to break away from the colonial heritage.

With respect to research, we can distinguish between two types of institutions: those doing social science research and those focusing on research related to natural/physical science and technology. Many an African university now has a research institute dealing with development issues, e.g., the Institute of Development Research in Addis Ababa, the Institute of Development Studies in Nairobi, the Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies in Harare, etc. In addition, there are institutes of agricultural research, technology, management, etc.

Even though such academic institutions perform valuable research, they are also known to operate under a variety of constraints, one of the more formidable being funding. The economic crisis has taken a particularly severe toll on the social services, including education. Especially affected have been higher education and research, the latter often being considered a luxury in times of economic adversity.

Consequently, the material conditions under which research takes place, including salaries and facilities, have deteriorated. In the words of one scholar,

Perhaps the most strikingly visible feature of the crisis of social sciences in Africa is the disintegration of the research infrastructure. Libraries are, as a result of the "Book Hunger", collapsing; means for travel to carry out field work hardly exist and, where they do, they are linked to some short term consultancy work for government or external agencies.¹¹

The African brain drain, which has of late assumed alarming proportions, is in no small part caused by this phenomenon. Researchers who remain on the continent are forced to make a living under virtually impossible circumstances and resort to a variety of stratagems to make ends meet. Of particular significance here is the "consultancy syndrome", the practice of doing usually quick research, seldom of theoretical import, to supplement regular incomes. While such research has its own uses, it is rarely of the kind that contributes to building a solid understanding of African realities.

¹¹Thandika Mkandawire, "Problems and Prospects of the Social Sciences in Africa", *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review*, Vol.V, No.1, Jan. 1989, p. 9.

In Kenya, for example, virtually all university social-science research that is not for a degree or thesis consists of short term contract work applied to specific problems...the strength of demand in relation to supply has meant that a particular style of social science - short-term contract work - has come to dominate social science activity. Social science has come to mean the presentation of recommendations on a prescribed topic, in response to a request, and by means of an activity whose total time rarely exceeds six months, usually lasts two or three weeks, and sometimes is accomplished in a matter of days. In Kenya the nexus has become commercialized, in Tanzania nationalized, but the pattern and results in both cases have been remarkably similar.¹²

Another consequence is that, almost invariably, the research institutions are dependent on foreign financial and technical support. This has the obvious disadvantage that in many cases the research agenda is decided from without, and has little if anything to do with the development priorities of a given country. As one report points out,

The problems connected with this dependence are well-known: insecurity and lack of continuity, a tendency to favor "project funding" at the expense of core support to institution-building, the danger of directing research towards easily fundable projects which the donors happen to favor at the moment, the neglect of basic research, a preference for "mainstream" themes and methodologies at the expense of innovative or critical research, etc. As in all aid, conditionality is always present - after all - funding agencies are accountable to their own countries - although it may be subtler in research cooperation than in ordinary development projects.¹³

3. Link Between Grassroots Organizations and Research Institutions

Another limitation of research institutions is that, although they have strong links with the state (though not necessarily harmonious), their relationships with NGOs are tenuous at best; in many cases they are non-existent. True, many NGOs hire indigenous experts to conduct all kinds of studies for them; there is no shortage of this kind of research. There are, however, at least three problems in this regard.

First, the links between NGOs and researchers are seldom institutional; most of the time they are individual. In other words, one rarely observes established relationships between NGOs and research institutions as institutions. Because of this absence of institutional links, research

¹²David Court, quoted in Mkandawire, *op. cit.*, p. G.

¹³Stefan de Vylder and Anders Hjort af Ornas, *Social Science in Africa: The Role of CODESRIA: Pan-Africanism in Cooperation* (Stockholm: 1991), p. 3.

centers rarely benefit from studies conducted by their own members, and such research is seldom enriched by scholarly debate.

Secondly, even when research is carried out institutionally, the topics are almost invariably determined by the NGOs; the task of researchers is merely to execute the studies. It is not uncommon to find situations in which "a badly funded institution is forced to engage in a wide range of completely unrelated research projects, all in responses to the idiosyncracies of donors anxious to get instant 'action-oriented' reports or the force of passing fads".¹⁴ The problem here is that research institutions, which could contribute significantly to determining research priorities, are denied the opportunity of doing so. The ultimate losers in this instance are the people whom the NGOs set out to serve.

Thirdly, the studies commissioned by NGOs are mostly confined to specific problems of specific localities. There is, of course, a lot of utility in such studies, because they enable interventions to be tailored to the specific needs of given communities. At the same time, however, if research concentrates on micro-studies to the neglect of the wider environment within which development is supposed to take place, there is the usual danger of losing sight of the forest by confining one's attention to individual trees.

These problems need to be addressed, and the best way this can be done is by forging closer links between NGOs and research institutions. In such a partnership, both parties have significant inputs to make.

The strength of research institutions lies in the fact that they are repositories of indigenous expertise. Within their ranks one finds scholars who are familiar with the general development environment of a given country; there are also those who may have done specific research on given regions and problems. If closer links are forged between them and NGOs, the latter would benefit from studies that are firmly rooted in the ground. An additional, practical, consideration is that local experts cost less than expatriates.

The forte of NGOs, as pointed out earlier, is that they are close to grassroots communities and hence well-placed to understand their problems and to receive feedback. Their weakness, however, is that, by the very nature of their calling, they rarely pose to reflect on the larger meaning of what they are doing. Because they are absorbed in day-to-day tasks, they have neither the inclination nor the capability to raise the larger issues of development. And it is precisely in this regard that research institutions can make a singular contribution. Scholars with a broad exposure to theoretical paradigms, historical experiences and empirical knowledge are in a better position to provide the wider reflection in which NGOs are wanting.

On the practical side, another advantage NGOs have is that they have access to resources, financial and other, part of which could be channelled to studies designed to promote viable

¹⁴Mkandawire, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

development strategies. Therefore, links between NGOs and research institutions offer a unique chance for blending theoretical work with empirical knowledge, global understanding with specific realities, and foreign funds with local expertise. It is a potential that needs to be assiduously exploited.

4. Areas for Cooperation

If this is indeed the case, one must define the priority areas for cooperation by the two parties. First, there is much that can be done to articulate a proper paradigm of development. We have come a long way from the days when development used to be equated with growth in per capita income. But there is still much to be done in defining and refining the concept of development. It brooks no dispute that development means human development; but the essential ingredients of this concept need to be defined.

It would be unfortunate if this is regarded as a merely academic exercise. All too often in the past, development strategies failed to deliver what they promised, largely because the very notion of development was poorly conceived. Thus, it was only after decades of a mad chase after high national income growth rates that it was realized that growth is not synonymous with development. Growth in per capita income, it was discovered, did not necessarily translate itself into poverty alleviation, greater equity and more employment. The articulation of an appropriate development paradigm is therefore of more than academic significance.

To begin with, development must be participatory. This means that traditional top-down approaches must be discarded and development accepted as a task that grassroots communities do for themselves. Unfortunately, they are seldom involved in the major decisions regarding projects. All too often, donors (whether NGOs or others) choose projects (including sites), make most inputs available, run the administration of projects, and are mainly responsible for evaluating projects and determining whether they have benefitted the communities. The "target groups" figure only marginally in this scheme; they are passive observers of something "done for them." But such an approach is self-defeating, because it does not help build a capability for self-reliance.

Moreover, the absence of grassroots participation means the priorities of donors sometimes take precedence over those of recipients. In such a case, a lot of resources may be committed to activities that have very little relevance to the needs of the recipients. Therefore, if assistance is to be effective, full community participation is of the essence.

And if participation is to be more than a hollow phrase, it cannot be other than democratic. In other words, development cannot be something that is benevolently handed down, whether by the state, or donors, or NGOs. This is therefore an important area of research and, as indicated earlier, both NGOs and research institutions bring unique contributions to this task.

Once it is recognized that development has to be participatory and genuinely democratic, one has then to address the question of how to enhance such development. Given the repressive nature of the state in virtually every African country, this is bound to be a rather complicated task. It requires a critical examination of all actors in the development field: governments, donors, NGOs, grassroots organizations and, of course, the people. Both research institutions and NGOs can bring different-and mutually enriching-perspectives to this enterprise.

Another priority issue is how to make development sustainable. Again as pointed out earlier, the problem with most NGO-assisted projects is that they collapse as soon as assistance is withdrawn. As is well-known the litmus test of all aid is the extent to which it makes further aid superfluous. If a society is to escape the fate of being perpetually dependent on aid, then it must ultimately reach a stage where it becomes capable of generating the resources requisite for its development. Collaboration between research institutions and NGOs could play an important role in charting out the modalities for attaining sustainable development.

It may be said that this is taking too naive a view of NGOs, for the simple reason that they are inherently not in the business of delivering sustainable development. For instance, one author makes a call for setting up "People's Organizations" (POs) as opposed to NGOs:

POs have to be based on a different conceptualization than NGOs. They are not simply funnels for channeling funds; rather they are a process of summing up the experience of people's struggles; vehicles for defending their interests; based on the needs and wants of the people as perceived by them and sharpened in the course of fighting for those needs and wants.¹⁵

It is precisely this kind of challenge that cooperation between research institutions and NGOs must rise to.

Another area of concern is the relationship between the state, NGOs and grassroots organizations. In many African countries, this relationship is characterized by visible tension. Where democratic rights are minimal or non-existent, the contradictions between the state and society are considerable and manifest themselves in many different ways. Nor can it be said that governments and NGOs always have amicable relationships. Also, NGOs and local communities do not always see eye-to-eye. In such circumstances, it is important to work out modalities for a harmonious relationship between all actors concerned. This represents a useful area of cooperation between NGOs and research institutions.

In the final analysis, therefore, the ultimate target of cooperation between research institutions and NGOs is to contribute to development that is participatory, democratic and sustainable.

¹⁵Shivji, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

5. Mechanisms for Collaboration

Mechanisms for collaboration can be worked out at country, sub- regional and continental levels. Whatever level is envisaged, and it seems that all three are indispensable, the central idea is to work out a structure that will facilitate the processing of inputs from both research institutions and NGOs.

At the country level, it would be fruitful to set up a country-wide joint consultative body made up of representatives of both parties. In countries where there are umbrella organizations for NGOs and research institutions, the task is simple, because it is one of forming a joint body out of the umbrella organizations. Since most countries have a forum in which NGOs are represented, this can easily be taken advantage of, and it would not be a difficult task to create a mechanism for the representation of research institutions. Such a joint forum would be an appropriate place for clearing ideas, formulating policies, working out programs, and monitoring developments.

The same modality can be followed at the sub-regional and continental levels, although it must be recognized that the higher the level of aggregation, the more difficult coordination becomes. In this case, organizations such as CODESRIA (Council for Economic and Social Research in Africa), OSSREA (Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern Africa) and AAPAM (African Association for Public Administration and Management) can play important coordinating roles. Similar sub-regional and continental NGOs can also play useful roles.

6. Plan of Action

It is difficult to envision a detailed plan of action in advance of the setting up of coordination mechanisms, but certain tasks suggest themselves. An obvious starting point is setting up the coordinating mechanisms suggested above. This has to be preceded by a series of consultations both within and between research institutions and NGOs. After such consultations, the next step would be to convene a meeting or series of meetings to give shape to the proposed coordination mechanism, and then set it in motion.

In this connection, it would be useful to convene sub-regional meetings of research institutions and NGOs in, say, Nairobi, for Eastern Africa, Harare for Southern and Central Africa, Dakar for West Africa, etc. Such meetings could establish appropriate mechanisms (e.g. steering committees) for planning and follow-up.

The mechanisms, once established, would then chart out a detailed plan of action. As a starting point, however, they may have to begin by drawing up directories of research institutions and NGOs, with detailed information on areas of interest, past activities, future plans, etc.

A plan of action would have to be accompanied by a determination of resource requirements and how they are to be fulfilled. This must be followed by systematically soliciting funds.

Ultimately, what has been done at sub-regional levels should be done continent-wide.

THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN SITUATIONS OF CIVIL CONFLICT

Abdul Mohammed, Inter-Africa Group

INTRODUCTION

During the past two decades, the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) has been increasingly seen as the most appropriate type of body to deal with a broad spectrum of activities, especially in such areas as emergency relief and socio-economic development. More recently, and with their increasing numbers and visibility, many questions arise about the role of NGOs and the appropriateness of their approaches and interventions.

The term "NGO" is a very broad one and carries a variety of meanings. It covers various types of organizations, most of which could be divided in three main categories. The first type is what is commonly referred to as an operational agency, which focuses on work in the field where it is usually directly involved with the people that its activities are designed to benefit. A second type of NGO is concerned with public education. Agencies of this type are usually not involved in field activities, but concentrate their efforts on educating the general public; often in industrialized countries where many of the operational agencies are based and raise funds, about political concern and development issues. A third type of NGO concentrates on the area of public policy and acts as a pressure group to influence the positions of governments and, in some cases of other agencies. Some of the older, well-established NGOs are involved in all three areas of activity, but the first type, the operational agency, is most in the public view and is usually what people are referring to when they speak of NGO's. This paper will attempt to deal with the three main types of non-governmental organizations.

NGOs can also be categorized according to the "domain" or area of activities in which they concentrate: local or international. There are many NGOs throughout the world, perhaps the majority, which are mainly involved with local concerns and which operate autonomously. Another type is the international NGO, primarily an "overseas agency," typically based in Europe or North America, with operations in Asia, Africa and Latin American.

Much of the current debate concerns the role of the latter, though strengthening local NGOs would probably help a great deal towards answering some of the criticism. There are also NGOs that are both local and international.

Conflict can also be defined in various ways, as conflict of one type or another is a common aspect of human interaction. In the present context, however, it refers to overt, violent and military conflict; to political violence, armed insurgency or civil war. The two most widely publicized NGO interventions of the 1980s - in Ethiopia and Cambodia - were first and foremost

concerned with famine, rather than conflict. Yet, conflict at various levels - super-power, regional, domestic and local, was a crucial factor in both cases. Likewise, the two most publicized NGO interventions within a single country, Uganda, the Karamoja famine in 1980 and the West Nile refugee crisis of 1981-86, also involved conflict among a complex of underlying causes.

The responses of NGOs to any kind of emergency, whether natural, man-made or a combination of the two, tend to be similar, as are the concerns these responses raise. Any discussion of these concerns must take account of the fact that conflict is only one of a variety of situations that lead to NGO interventions, and the way in which a particular agency views conflict, determines the kind of response.

NGO CHARACTERISTICS AND APPROACHES

NGOs tend to differ from governmental, multilateral and corporate organizations in various ways. They have certain characteristics which are seen as making them particularly appropriate for emergency relief and development activities. These include:

Different motivations. Most NGOs profess an explicitly religious or humanitarian ideology, and tend to recruit staff who profess the same kind of beliefs. This has led to a generalized perception of NGOs as humanitarian or altruistic bodies.

Orientation towards a holistic approach. NGOs tend to have a "people-centered" approach, concerned with relationships as well as projects. They prefer to deal with the complexity of issues affecting a particular group or locality rather than singling out a single problem to address on a wider, but less people-centered scale.

These characteristics or some combination of them led to NGOs receiving increased attention from governments, foundations and donors in the past decade. Many of the same characteristics carried the seeds of the current criticism of NGOs, which indicates that newer characteristics have developed with new NGOs.

Yet many of the actual approaches towards work undertaken by NGOs have remained the same. In the area of humanitarian activities in armed conflict, the variety of NGO responses can be presented as a continuum from conventional to unconventional. Such a continuum is presented below, beginning with the most conventional, ending with the least. The first four are largely typical of the so-called operational agencies, some of which have experimented with the fifth. The sixth, seventh and tenth, are mostly associated with education or policy-oriented NGOs.

1. Relief Activities - By far the most common involvement in conflict is to provide food, shelter and medical care for victims. Once this was largely for combatants themselves. In the contemporary context relief activities are carried out mostly for refugees who have

fled conflict, and who are presumed to be innocent victims. Recent analysis have outlined the kinds of activities involved in the provision of humanitarian relief and some of the problems that have arisen with it.

2. Creation of New NGOs - One of the most striking features about NGOs is the rate at which they are proliferating. Each time a new "incident" occurs that requires some kind of emergency response, new agencies spring up to carry out the response, which then usually find some other rationale for their continued existence. Often these "incidents" are conflicts. The International Committee of the Red Cross was formed in response to a nineteenth century European war. Both the World Wars of this century led to the formation of the church-based NGOs in the West. More recently the stimulus for the formation of new NGOs has been media attention to various "crises" throughout the globe.
3. Media Hyperbole - The relationship between the media and operational NGOs is a very curious and, in some ways, parasitic one. Modern NGOs, especially the new ones, cannot live without the media, and are often as concerned to be visible in the press as they are with meeting human needs. Many, if not most NGOs, also have their own media information departments, and mimic the sensationalist media in fund-raising efforts. Large scale relief efforts usually utilize sensational reporting in the media, as was graphically demonstrated in Ethiopia in 1984. Hence even as the media mobilizes NGOs, NGOs attempt to mobilize the media.
4. Attempting to Link Relief with Development - Two separate lines of thought have led some NGOs to consider longer-term responses than simply the provision of relief. These have led to attempts to utilize relief goods, especially food, for developmental purposes. The first of these is the fear that simply providing relief assistance will lead to a dependency syndrome on the part of the recipients, leaving them worse off than ever when the agencies inevitably pull out or cut back. The second is the recognition that causes of conflict are complex, but sometimes revolve around underdevelopment or regionally distorted development (whether one is talking about the so-called Third World or industrialized countries). Hence utilizing relief aid for developmental purposes might help address one source of conflict.

The most common way of attacking this problem is the "food-for-work" approach, where people (most commonly refugees, displaced people or famine victims) are paid in food for employment on public works schemes. Nearly all agencies are involved in some variation of this kind of work, where the need for relief assistance is prolonged.

5. Working on "Both Sides" - In an attempt to emphasize the humanitarian nature of responses to conflict, as distinct from the political nature of conflict itself, some NGOs deliberately attempt to assist victims on both sides of a conflict - an approach originally associated with the Geneva Accords and the ICRC. Again the actual nature of what is done tends to be along the lines of emergency relief, though the ICRC also manages prisoner exchanges, provides communication links to families split by conflict, and similar work.

Any attempt to work on "both sides" presumes that there are only two sides to a conflict, and that the battle lines are clearly drawn; presumptions that have their roots in European wars, but have been less applicable to African conflicts and particularly to the case of Uganda.

An important innovation in Africa and else where in working on both sides recognizes the multi-sidedness of many conflicts, and some NGOs have deliberately adopted the policy of working across or between communities in conflict, whether these communities be ethnic, religious or political. This is important for several reasons. First, it involves working within a conflict situation, as opposed to aiding victims who have escaped a conflict. Second, it is an attempt to come to grips with causes of conflict rather than treating the consequences. Third, it is an innovation pioneered more by local or indigenous NGOs than by the international NGOs which are mostly involved in large-scale relief operations.

The actual work done in such efforts tends to be "developmental," at the same time as it is linked to conflict resolution by encouraging cooperation of people from different communities, building trust by identifying and working on problems of mutual concern while minimizing sources of dispute. Alternatively it may involve direct work with particularly vulnerable groups in the context of conflict - widows, orphans or disabled. This kind of work casts the NGO in a distinctly different role - that of facilitator, rather than provider.

6. Awareness Raising/Advocacy - While there are problems of exaggeration in the media, there is nevertheless a very strong need for public education about conflict. Part of this, inevitably and unfortunately, has to do with NGO funding; but part of it also has to do with the important role of public opinion in influencing the actions of governments or opposition movements which are party to a conflict. Amnesty International is the best known NGO involved in an approach of advocacy by public response, though Amnesty restricts its work to individual cases, not general conflicts. A particularly important role of Western based NGOs is in mobilizing their home constituencies to influence actions of their own government in foreign or proxy governments. Even a government as recalcitrant as that of South Africa can sometimes be influenced by public opinion in allied countries, and awareness raising about apartheid is now a common activity of some NGOs based in the West.

Of course, the obvious problem with awareness raising or advocacy is that it is directly linked to the political views of a particular NGO. There is no such thing as a unified political stance among NGOs - humanitarian ideologies notwithstanding. NGOs represent all shades of the political spectrum.

7. Solidarity - Closely linked with awareness raising is the phenomenon of solidarity groups that spring up to identify with weak or oppressed groups in conflict. Again these solidarity groups are often in Western countries whose governments are involved in a foreign conflict. The importance of this kind of NGO is that it rarely involves any "field operations" - funds or relief goods are channelled directly to the party in the conflict. Often this is the political enemy of the national government of the country where the solidarity group exists. American Quakers gained notoriety for doing this during the Vietnam War - now it is commonly practiced by groups on both the political left and right.
8. Peace education - NGOs have, occasionally, attempted to introduce into conflict situations, through school curricula or adult education techniques, concepts that promote cooperation, conflict-resolution practices, non-violence and peaceful coexistence. This is clearly long-term work, best undertaken by local groups familiar with cultural precedents, but in conflict situations it has been undertaken by outside groups as well - especially the so-called historic peace churches: Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren. Because of its church-based nature much of this work has focused on theological issues as well as practical ones.
9. Peace research - Related to peace education, and in some ways more culturally relevant, is investigation into the ways in which people resolve conflict in the context of their communities. This involves collecting and understanding a broad range of stories, examples, symbols or songs that a particular group associates with reconciliation. Until fairly recently formal investigation in the field of peace conflict studies was almost exclusively oriented to Western case material, which sometimes resulted in the misapplication of conflict resolution practices in non-Western contexts.
10. Strengthening Traditional Systems - Traditional social institutions, threatened everywhere by modernization, often crumple under the double onslaught of conflict and emergency relief. Rather than exacerbate this process, calls are made to assist conflict victims in ways that strengthen, rather than destroy, their own social systems and cultural heritages. NGOs, especially international ones, are only very slowly learning how to do this in development work. There is little evidence of much progress on this issue in NGO work in conflict situations, and especially in emergency relief. One author repeatedly criticizes agencies involved in settling refugees from the West Nile for failing to learn from the

example of self-settled refugees outside of agency camps who by most indicators including infant mortality, level of nutrition and self-appraisal, were better off than refugees inside the camps.

11. Direct Mediation - Diplomacy and mediation between or among conflicting parties, at any level other than inter-personal, are viewed largely as the prerogative of governments, since they control the "legitimate use of violence" needed to enforce agreements. Yet occasionally NGOs have also attempted to play a role in direct mediation - not as enforcers, but as honest brokers; or as a third party trusted (at least to some extent) by both sides. Two African examples of this include attempts to mediate in the Nigerian civil war by Quakers, well documented by Yarrow; and a largely undocumented effort also by Quakers (both national and expatriate) during the long struggle for independence and majority rule in Zimbabwe. Both of these conflicts, however, were largely two-sided, and hence somewhat more amenable to mediation than the multi-sided strife elsewhere on the continent. In both cases NGO involvement was implemented to other political processes such that the relative powerlessness of the NGO was actually an asset to the process. In Zimbabwe they played a small but important role in the process that eventually led to the Lancaster House negotiations and the 1980 elections. In Nigeria the Federal government won a military victory before any mediated settlement was reached.

At a simplistic level much of the work of NGOs in conflict situations has been portrayed as humanitarian, apolitical and representative of the best in motivations. NGOs have sought to maintain this image, partly because it stilled any critical evaluation of their work. Recently public perceptions have changed, and both NGO staff and outside critics have demanded that closer attention be paid to come of the unresolved issues arising out of NGO work. The pretence that NGO involvement in conflict situations is strictly apolitical has largely been modified, though NGOs do attempt to protect their neutrality in field operations. There remains, however, a strong tension between the political implications of becoming or remaining involved (particularly in relief programs) and the humanitarian implications of not becoming involved or quitting.

Concern also exists over the extent to which humanitarian aid is blatantly used for partisan political purposes. There has been a loud and bitter row in the past over the extent to which relief assistance is utilized by authorities to strengthen their position.

The fact that the NGOs are reviewed sometimes as at least neutral and humanitarian if not political, makes them very convenient vehicles for disguising otherwise political initiatives. The problems arise when the ideological stance and material self-interest of NGOs converge with the political interests of local governments or big powers. As noted earlier NGOs almost always have a humanitarian or religious ideological stance; but, like most institutions, they also have a strong tendency towards self-preservation. Maintenance of funding, reputation and visibility are key goals. Large scale, well publicized relief efforts serve both the ideological and material

interests of NGOs. Such efforts can help needy human beings but they can and do serve political interests as well.

THE RISE OF NEW INSTITUTIONS

While people suffer and institutions break down in conflict, new institutions arise as people struggle for their survival and well-being. It is appropriate to examine how and why these institutions have arisen, and to learn from their successes and failures.

War and its consequences in the Sudan

It is estimated that more than half of the population of southern Sudan has been displaced by civil war and famine. Many thousands have moved to the southern towns, but there too, security is tenuous, and food, fuel and other basic necessities, in short supply. Some 1-2 million people have moved to Khartoum and other northern towns in search of food and security. An estimated 400,000 others who had crossed the border into Ethiopia, have been again displaced by war in that country and have fled back into Sudan to seek refuge in almost uninhabitable swamps along the border.

The economic and social cost is high for both the South and the North. The escalation of the war in Southern Sudan in recent years has accelerated the country's accumulation of external debt, hindered the economy from coping with payments to service external debt, and eventually brought it to the brink of economic and social collapse.

The expansion of social services between 1972 and 1983 when the country enjoyed a period of peace, did not significantly alter the historical imbalance between southern and northern Sudan. The North-South disparity in resource allocation continues to deteriorate as a result of the civil war. In fact, social services in such essential areas as health, education, transport and agriculture, do not exist in most parts of Southern Sudan.

The socio-economic problems of the three southern regions are greater than ever; 95 percent of the population lives below the poverty line; 25 percent of the people suffer from war-induced hunger; and more than 500,000 are displaced within the region.

During Sudan's first civil war, which lasted 17 years, an estimated 350,000 - 400,000 civilians lost their lives. It is believed that the number of civilian casualties in the current war which began in 1983 could be considerably greater, due to the escalation of tribal conflicts and the introduction and dissemination of more destructive modern weapons.

One of the often overlooked effects of the civil war in Southern Sudan has been the militarization of tribes and spread of tribal conflict. Sudan, whether North or South, is multi-ethnic, and tribal conflicts over such issues as grazing land, water, religion, race, language and

so on, are deeply-ingrained in its history. In the past, however, tribes did not usually seek the total destruction of their adversaries, nor did they have the means for it, so the consequences of tribal conflicts were limited and contained.

Recent evidence shows that the political/military conflict has spread, reviving and exacerbating older inter-communal wars. In order to improve their immediate military situation, the major parties to the civil war have been arming tribal militants friendly to them, with modern weapons that are more destructive than anything known in the past.

The geographic spread of these tribal conflicts through which the major protagonists are waging war by proxy, may have farther reaching consequences than generally realized. For instance, tribal warfare in large areas of Bahr El-Ghazal region has caused thousands of civilian casualties. Attacks by armed militia of the Dinka and Fertit tribes at Wau and in western Bahr El-Ghazal, inflicted heavy casualties on women and children, often considered legitimate targets in such wars.

Similarly, in Upper Nile and Equatoria regions, tribal conflicts which formerly took only a few lives, have given way to large-scale confrontations. Since the introduction of modern weapons, tribal animosities and reprisals have taken on new and deadly dimensions. Disarmament, even when the civil war comes to an end, will not be easily accomplished, and the atrocities are likely to continue for years to come, with women and children remaining the principal victims.

In Ethiopia, protracted civil war has led to economic collapse, the displacement or destitution of millions of civilians, and to chronic famines and food shortages. In northern Ethiopia, civil war began in the Eritrea region in 1961-1962, following the abrogation of the region's federal relationship with the rest of Ethiopia. The conflict spread throughout Eritrea, and eventually contributed to the outbreak of other insurgencies.

In 1974, a revolutionary movement within the Ethiopian Army overthrew the ruling monarchy and set up a marxist military regime. In 1975-1976, a new insurgency appeared in the Tigray region, bordering Eritrea. This was followed by an armed uprising among the ethnic Somali population of the Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia. In 1978, this led to a brief war between Ethiopia and Somalia, and a massive exodus of ethnic Somali refugees, fleeing from the Ogaden to seek refuge in Somalia.

During 1984-1985 an estimated one million or more people died in northern Ethiopia in a famine caused by civil war and drought, a testament to the need for emergency external access to war zones. Many of the lives lost during the 1984-1985 famine could have been saved through such access. The geography of Ethiopia's northern highlands, and the lack of basic infrastructure, makes food movements difficult at the best of times. Armed conflict, the existence of two civil wars in the areas of most affected by drought, Eritrea and Tigray, precluded the use of road transport to many famine-stricken parts of those regions, as all three protagonists tended to use food as a weapon, and give precedence to their political and military objectives, over the plight of the famine victims.

Through the 1980's, large numbers of people from the regions of Eritrea, Tigre, Gondar, northern Wollo, and other conflict-affected areas, were displaced within the country. Others fled to urban areas further south, or to the Sudan, in search of food and security.

Somalia too, has suffered from protracted internal and inter-state conflicts for most of the past three decades. In 1988 an intensified civil war decimated the country's northern region. Fierce fighting and an offensive by government forces displaced an estimated half million people, while spreading hunger, disease and fear to a population cut off from outside help. The 1988 offensive which destroyed the main Northern cities and left much of the population of the region displaced and destitute, was only one episode in an ongoing series of conflicts which devastated the economy, state institutions and population of Somalia over nearly three decades.

Over the following two years, the tempo of war escalated, its extent increased, and it took on an increasingly ethnic character. A number of large towns became the scene of major attacks and counter-attacks. Most of the country was engulfed in brutal uprisings and civil strife. Widespread violence in the countryside displaced millions of civilians into Mogadishu and other cities, as the Somalia State disintegrated into a chaos of inter-clan conflict.

At the end of December 1990, full scale war erupted in the capital, Mogadishu, the beginning of four weeks of urban slaughter and pillage which led to the collapse, not only of General Mohammed Siad Barre's ruling military regime, but of the Somali State itself. By February, 1991, Somalia was a dislocated, displaced and disintegrated society.

An estimated 4,500,000 civilians, more than half of the country's population were affected by the war which has rendered as many as 2,000,000 homeless, and taken a tremendous toll of lives. Much of the population, including more than half a million children, have been left totally destitute, looking for food and basic survival needs.

The role of NGOs in providing humanitarian assistance in emergencies has often been crucial. This role has expanded rapidly during the last decade, particularly where governmental structures were inadequate. This has led to the growth of extensive indigenous and international networks of NGOs, playing key roles in relief and rehabilitation activities. The cross-border relief operations which saved thousands of lives in Ethiopia and the Sudan in recent years, have depended heavily on NGOs.

In Ethiopia, as in Sudan and Somalia, the NGOs have tended to take the lead, while much better funded United Nations and other agencies played a less prominent role in the important duty of preventing people from starving. NGOs have played key roles, both in stimulating action by the major international and bilateral agencies, and in generating the public interest in donor countries needed to move the agencies to action.

NGOs comprise a heterogenous category of organizations. Their backgrounds and motivations vary. Many profess neutrality, but hold definite ideological or sectarian views. Some are

dependent on government funding and so, may not be entirely independent. These differences highlight the need for common ethical standards and more effective co-ordination among them.

Preventing or impeding the delivery of food and other forms of relief has been a traditional practice in war. At the same time, however, an international norm has been emerging, reflected in international law, which aims to ensure access of civilians to humanitarian assistance, and access of relief agencies to civilian victims of war.

In 1988, when famine took the lives of an estimated 250,000 Southern Sudanese civilians, the Sudanese Government and the Sudan Peoples Liberation army (SPLA) rebels bore the brunt of international outrage at their use of food as a weapon of war. Had they allowed greater access to Southern Sudan in 1988, a quarter million innocent civilians, mainly young children, women and the elderly, need not have died.

The launching in April 1989 of Operation Lifeline Sudan was an important step forward. For the first time in the history of the region, an embattled government and its rebel adversaries, agreed to allow relief workers broad access to affected civilians in war zones.

Operation Lifeline Sudan was a combined effort of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and NGOs. The UN provided an umbrella for the operation, co-ordinating donor support and providing logistical and other back-up for the NGOs who played a major role in distribution of relief.

OLS was a success in that it saved thousands of civilian lives. It also set a precedent which was desperately needed elsewhere in the Horn of Africa. Lifeline Sudan was not an unqualified success, but unqualified successes are rare with respect to humanitarian assistance in situations of armed conflict. What may be of greater importance is that it laid a foundation for further progress and brought to the fore various problems which need to be resolved to help ensure such progress.

Some of the major problems cited by an independent research team that conducted a review of Operation Lifeline Sudan were related to what it described as "OLS's structural bias towards government". The review found that the OLS bias towards governments sometimes impeded its collegial relationship with NGOs. While OLS aimed to reinforce and facilitate NGO work, in some cases it made them more vulnerable to political pressure.

The NGOs involved in OLS were particularly concerned that their integrity and effectiveness could be compromised if the operation failed to deal equitably with both protagonists, or allowed political concerns to take precedence over humanitarian issues. Other problems included questions of co-ordination and division of labor among aid institutions, and lack of adequate consultation between the UN and NGOs. The review also drew attention to "inadequate levels of professionalism" of institutions and officials.

In Ethiopia, humanitarian agencies, encouraged by the precedent of Operation Lifeline Sudan, reached agreement with the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) insurgents, allowing humanitarian access to civilians in both government and rebel held areas of Tigray and northern Wollo regions. With the agreement of both sides, the so-called "Southern Route" was established under the auspices of a coalition of Ethiopian church-based relief agencies, the Joint Relief Partnership (JRP). During the 1990, the JRP with support from external agencies, supplied some 100,000 metric tons of food and other relief needs to 18 distribution centers in war zones of Tigray and northern Wollo, greatly diminishing the impact of famine in accessible areas.

In Somalia, the weaknesses arising from the UN's nature as an intergovernmental organization, came to the fore. As Somalia collapsed into chaos, the UN agencies withdrew all international staff, on grounds of security, but the withdrawal also highlighted the difficulties perceived by UN agencies in operating in the absence of a recognized government. With the withdrawal of the UN, the NGOs became the only agencies providing humanitarian assistance in Somalia, though they could serve only a fraction of the war-shattered population's most urgent needs.

Policy Issues

Limitations on the right of access to humanitarian assistance of victims of war, are a major source of concern to NGOs, United Nations and other humanitarian agencies, whose effectiveness in providing aid has suffered in situations of armed conflict. The issue of humanitarian access is not new, but it is a question of increasingly crucial importance.

This was stressed by the Bellagio Declaration in November 1988, which observed that "the major obstacle to eliminating famine remains the destruction or interdiction of civilian food supplies in zones of armed conflict." The interest of NGO's, United Nations agencies and governments in supporting the review of Operation Lifeline Sudan, and the findings of subsequent expert meeting, reflects the growing importance accorded by the aid community to issues of humanitarian access.

There is an impressive body of international agreements affirming basic human rights to such needs as food and medical attention. With respect to humanitarian assistance, Article 59 of the Fourth Geneva Convention states that "If the whole or part of the population of an occupied territory is inadequately supplied, the Occupying Power shall agree to relief schemes on behalf of the said population, and shall facilitate them by all the means at its disposal." The Article notes the special importance of foodstuffs, medical supplies and clothing, and provides that "All Contracting Parties shall permit the free passage of these consignments and shall guarantee their protection." Protocol II of the Convention specifically prohibits "starvation of civilians as a method of combat."

While the States party to these agreements have pledged to respect and work to ensure humanitarian access, many other states, particularly in the developing countries, the most

frequent venues of civil conflict, have either not adhered to, or not ratified the Convention. At the same time, as the Independent Commission on Humanitarian Issues has observed, once "involved in armed conflict, most States qualify, interpret, or ignore" the rules of humanity, evoking state interests and sovereign prerogatives.

The Sudan experience demonstrates both violations of the basic right to humanitarian access, and in some cases, successful efforts to protect that right. In 1988, some 250,000 civilians died from war-related famine and disease, largely due to the military policies of the warring parties, leading directly or indirectly to denial of access of affected civilians to food and medicine, and of access of international humanitarian organizations to needy victims of war.

In early 1989, the situation changed when a combination of factors led to a agreement between the protagonists and the international community on Operation Lifeline Sudan. This initiative was based on the principle that war-affected civilians, wherever located, have a right to humanitarian assistance, and that access to them must be ensured. This became the basis for a relief effort which in 1989, served to prevent a repeat of the mass civilian deaths of the 1988 famine.

In most civil wars, access to affected civilians by external humanitarian agencies has proved difficult. This has been the case in recent years in various settings, such as Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Somalia, Liberia, Cambodia and Sri Lanka. In each instance, however, there have been varying levels of success whether by NGOs, the United Nations, or outside governments, in providing humanitarian aid.

Within the UN system, UNICEF has taken the lead in providing aid in ways which are understood not to express political approval or disapproval of one side or the other. An increasingly common device is the arrangement of zones of peace or corridors of tranquility, within which, by agreement of the protagonists, humanitarian activities are allowed to proceed.

In some recent international conflicts, the provisions of humanitarian assistance has also proved difficult. The sanctions imposed against Iraq in the Gulf War, for instance, contributed greatly to the suffering of civilians, even though, the United Nations Security Council in Resolution 661 had exempted from economic sanctions supplies "intended strictly for medical purposes and, in humanitarian circumstances, foodstuffs."

NGOs make an important contribution to such issues as the right of access to humanitarian assistance, and protection of civilians in armed conflict situations, by bringing the issues to public attention, and eventually through direct or indirect pressures on those responsible. In 1984-1985 in Ethiopia, NGOs played an important role in helping to bring the famine to international attention, in exerting pressure on governments and aid agencies, and in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. NGOs also contribute through study of the issues and dissemination of information. Studies and consultations by NGOs and other humanitarian organizations help to clarify and define the issues; and identify viable solutions.

The Bellagio Meeting; the Annual Hunger Research Briefing and Exchange sponsored by the World Hunger Program of Brown University, in the United States, and the American Council for Voluntary International Action; and a recent Expert Consultation on Humanitarian Access in Situations of Armed Conflict, at Brown University, are examples of such activities.

The Expert Consultation examined three sets of proposals aimed at improving humanitarian access. One set concerned formulation of a checklist for persons involved in providing humanitarian aid and protection in armed conflict. The checklist would help establish agreed principles or operational protocols bringing together lessons learned in a variety of country and regional situations. It would also help clarify which agencies should deal with particular kinds of tasks, thus promoting a clearer division of labor and stimulating more systematic and collegial discussion among aid agencies, helping to make their efforts more effective.

The Consultation also discussed proposals concerning institutional reforms to strengthen the effectiveness of the international community in responding to humanitarian needs in conflict situations. There was general agreement on the need for progress towards a more effective system of humanitarian assistance and protection. It was further recognized that this would require more timely response to major humanitarian needs, less impeded by political constraints.

A third area of discussion concerned the feasibility of a new international agreement on issues of humanitarian access; or alternatively, of a concerted effort to reinforce existing international law through measures to consolidate precedents and build on existing law and practice. It was generally considered that the latter path would be more effective.

The Gulf War and its aftermath have focused attention on the issue of national sovereignty, and the growing view that humanitarian needs may transcend questions of sovereignty, and have suggested that authorities which fail to meet those obligations, compromise their sovereign claims.

The Gulf Crisis also provided new evidence of the need for more effective humanitarian action, and new precedents. In the case of Iraq, the international community has placed humanitarian needs over the demands of sovereignty. This must take its place as a precedent for reference in other cases where governments willfully reject their humanitarian obligations, while sheltering behind claims of sovereignty.

Operation Lifeline Sudan succeeded in encouraging the warring parties to meet their humanitarian obligations by welcoming international assistance. The need for cross border operations opposed by the State concerned, was supported by a variety of States in the case of Ethiopia. The international community in the Gulf Crisis, sanctioned the use international force to ensure humanitarian access. These are all useful precedents, which should contribute to international law and practice.

Moral and Legal Justification for NGOs in Situations of Armed Conflict.

Law is only effective when enforced, or at least recognized. There is hence a need for the reinforcement of international law relating to humanitarian access. Such reinforcement could take the form, for example, of encouraging governments to meet their already accepted legal obligations, e.g., the Conventions and Protocols and, to ratify these if they have not already done so.

Overcoming Barriers by Governments/Positive Use of International Law.

Law, to be effective, needs to be known. The compilation and dissemination of existing law, principles, precedents which may not have the force of law, but nevertheless help to strengthen and broaden it, and policy, related to the right to food and humanitarian access, can help in overcoming such barriers. This is an area in which such initiatives as the Experts Consultation at Brown University, are making a significant contribution.

There is an urgent need to overcome barriers obstructing access of conflict victims to humanitarian assistance. There is an equally urgent need to make humanitarian efforts more effective by resolving other problems such as lack of co-ordination, duplication of effort, and competition and conflict between humanitarian agencies in areas of armed conflict. There is a need, for example, to avoid situations in which the protagonists in armed conflict are able to take advantage of differences between agencies to the detriment of those in need of humanitarian assistance.

It is increasingly evident that there is a particularly urgent need for an agreement on humanitarian principles, or a code of conduct for humanitarian agencies operating in situations of armed conflict. All agencies have their own institutional interests. They are likely to have their own values, aspirations and goals, arising from their origins, history or sources of support. They may, and often do, have sectarian, social, political or other interests which may not always coincide with strictly humanitarian goals and impartiality of humanitarian assistance. In some cases, the particular interests of an organization may adversely affect efforts to ensure humanitarian assistance on an impartial basis to all those in need of it.

This has led to growing recognition of the need for development by NGOs and other agencies working in armed conflict situations, of mutually agreed statements of humanitarian principles, providing a basis of a code of conduct to ensure the primacy of the interests of needy victims of armed conflict.

Recent studies of Operation Lifeline Sudan and other humanitarian efforts in conflict zones have highlighted the crucial need for humanitarian codes of conduct for NGOs, governments, and for United Nations and other international humanitarian agencies. All such institutions need, in particular, to affirm the precedence of humanitarian principles, objectives and strategies. While no institution bases its actions exclusively on humanitarian requirements, there is an urgent need

to ensure the priority of such concerns relative to other institutional interests such as organizational expansion, fundraising, religious bias, or in the case of intergovernmental organizations, a structural bias towards governments.

Humanitarian agencies need to establish a more effective division of labor, and systems of co-ordination based on what each does best. There is also a need for more clarity about the extent to which donors should provide assistance through the United Nations, directly to the country concerned, or through external NGOs. More clarity is also needed with respect to the kind of reporting and accountability required.

In all cases there is need of more professionalism and collegiality. The Operation Lifeline Sudan review drew attention to such aspects as the need for a cadre of experienced staff available for rapid deployment; the development of greater familiarity with the political, economic, religious and cultural context of a given emergency, and the importance of exercise of restraint in becoming involved in complex emergency situations. Organizations should first consider the costs and benefits. Another important recommendation was for more training in humanitarian law to ensure that aid practitioners are familiar with applicable international rules and their specific rights and responsibilities.

NGOs involved in humanitarian activities in armed conflict zones need to co-ordinate better with other humanitarian agencies. Recent emergencies have highlighted the need for more effective mechanisms for inter-action, both with non-NGO institutions and among NGOs. There is a need for greater collegiality and willingness to build on the relevant experience of other institutions.

The OLS review recommends strengthening of existing efforts at co-ordination such as Inter-Action in the United States, the Canadian Council for International Co-operation, the Disaster Emergency Committee of the European Economic Community, the Licross/Volags Disaster Steering Committee, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies in Geneva, and the Forum of African Voluntary Development Organizations (FAVDO).

Drawing on the experience of OLS, the research team also pointed out the need for NGOs taking part in such efforts under a UN "umbrella" to accept the responsibility of following UN guidelines and procedures.

The OLS experience, and other recent emergencies have confirmed the need to develop a code of ethics for NGOs in humanitarian emergencies. Further to this, it is important that project staff should be not only humanitarians, but well-trained professionals. This brings forth other urgent policy needs suggested by the OLS review and subsequent expert meetings.

In emergencies, NGOs should "pool their best staff and send joint survey teams to affected areas, in liaison with the UN system, where appropriate". They should "agree on criteria and procedures to identify NGOs which use emergencies for religious proselytizing or whose political ideology contravenes humanitarian principles." In order to have capable personnel, they should take measures to develop career prospects for professionals, and help establish an international

personnel data bank and recruitment network to help identify capable staff with disaster management or relief assistance experience.

It was also recommended that NGOs should affirm their responsibility to monitor human rights issues. In emergency situations, the interconnections between provision of relief, protection of human rights and advancement of development and peace, are such that NGOs must look beyond the focus of their own particular programs.

CONCLUSION

One of the important lessons of the civil war in Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia's is that NGOs need to prepare themselves to undertake a broader role in dealing with humanitarian needs in situations of armed conflict. The Somalia emergency in particular points to this, as it could well be a forerunner of things to come in Third World conflicts, where there is no longer a super-power interest in establishing and supporting the supremacy of one client to another.

In Somalia, the state itself collapsed, leading to a situation in which, for security and political reasons, the international community was effectively paralyzed. The United Nations withdrew its international staff from Somalia, and hence its capacity to respond effectively to the urgent survival needs of millions of conflict-affected civilians in a complex emergency situation.

One lesson from Somalia is that United Nations agencies face severe constraints in coping with a conflict emergency in which there is no recognized government. What little humanitarian assistance has reached the beleaguered Somali population, has been provided by the International Committee of The Red Cross (ICRC) and NGOs such as Medecines sans Frontieres, Save the Children Fund, etc.

An important point for consideration by NGOs is the likelihood of similar situations arising in other countries of the Horn and elsewhere in Africa, where for similar reasons UN agencies may be unable to intervene effectively. Humanitarian NGOs need to take urgent steps to assess their own possibilities if response to such emergencies.

To be able to deal effectively with future emergencies it is imperative that NGOs forge a common agenda to respond to the needs of victims of war and to advocate for impartiality of humanitarian assistances. NGOs also need to consider co-ordinated action to nurture informed and active public constituency for humanitarian concerns.

The OLS review indicated that NGOs and the international community in general need to learn much more about the special problems of providing humanitarian assistance in armed conflict situations. For instance there is an urgent need for better international understanding of humanitarian rights, and issues of humanitarian assistance policy and responsibilities.

More research and debate is needed towards the development of guide lines and a protocol of checklist of essential components of successful humanitarian responses in armed conflict zones. This should reflect the lessons learned from OLS and other relief efforts. Research is also needed on the limits of third party involvement in civil war emergencies and ways of expanding space for humanitarian action in such situations. In many quarters there is increasing support for the view that claims of sovereignty may be transcended by humanitarian obligations, an issue that needs to be considered in the light of precedents arising from the Gulf crisis.

GRASSROOTS PERSPECTIVES ON AFRICA'S CRISIS GOVERNMENT/NGO RELATIONS: THE CASE OF THE SUDAN

Kosti Manibe, Sudan Council of Churches

1. SUMMARY

The number of NGOs found in the Sudan at any one time depends partly on the cycle of man-made and natural disasters. They also depend partly on the attitudes of the government and the men who wield power in government institutions.

Similarly government/NGO relations have moved in cycles since independence, with ups and downs in these relations reflected in the rise and fall of successive governments. Of late, however, these relations have taken a decided turn for the worse. The ups and downs in government/NGO relations also appear to relate to the basis of these relations which are strictly project oriented organized on a short-term basis. Absence of long-term commitments to goals and shared visions have invariably meant that relations established on these short-term aims fail to survive changes in personalities. New relationships also have to be developed once specific crisis situations end.

Examination of Government/NGO relations shows common concerns and cooperative action in identification of needs, programming, and division of responsibilities according to mandate, capacity and interest of the two parties. It also reveals areas of potential conflict and future opportunity. The challenge of the future is for NGOs and government to find creative ways of defusing the areas of conflict and to exploit opportunities to build enduring and productive relations.

2. BACKGROUND

This paper will not attempt a definition of NGOs, assuming that there already exists some consensus on what type of agencies are NGO's. At the very least there appears to be consensus on certain types of activities and methodology of programming and implementation that have become the hallmarks of NGO's.

In the Sudan, other than the Church, which has carried out activities typical of NGO's in typically NGO fashion, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are new-comers on the scene. The beginnings of NGOs on the Sudan scene can be traced to the late 1960's at the time of the first civil war, which started in 1955 but picked up full steam in 1965. Large areas of the Southern Sudan and millions of its people were outside the reach and authority of the Sudan Government. In these areas affected by the war most development and service infrastructure

collapsed, with resultant hardships imposed on the people as a result of lack of basic services like health care and education.

To fill the void created by the war and in response to unmet needs of the population behind Anya-Nya rebel lines, a couple of NGOs, notably of Scandinavian origin went into the Southern Sudan and operated a kind of cross border relief, concentrating on providing inputs and facilities for rudimentary education and health services. These agencies maintained their foothold in the Southern Sudan till 1972, when the Sudan Government and the Anya-Nya negotiated an end to the war. Thereafter, the agencies which had operated cross border relief were joined by others and formally went into the Sudan to help with rehabilitation and reconstruction of war damage.

In 1972 the Sudan Government requested international assistance for the task of rehabilitation and reconstruction. The Sudan thus opened its doors to NGOs for the first time since independence. Many NGOs took advantage of this window of opportunity and moved into Sudan, including those that operated cross border relief into Southern Sudan during the war. Local church groups also formally set up service units for meeting the needs at hand, hence the birth of indigenous agencies like the Sudan Council of Churches and Sudanaid, while most of the NGOs who went in at the beginning were church-based (1) and many were secular NGOs (2).

Until the end of the 1970's the number of NGOs in the Sudan remained small (under 20) and their operational area remained predominantly in the South. For operational reasons, however, many agencies found it necessary to maintain liaison offices in Khartoum, the seat of government. Another handful actually located their head offices in the capital or based the country representative there. The predominance of NGOs presence in the Southern Sudan changed when severe drought hit the Darfur area of Northern Sudan in 1984/1985.

In response to the drought in Darfur, over 50 NGOs went into the Sudan to deliver emergency relief, bringing the total number of NGOs to over 70. All NGOs who had their programs only in the South also moved North partly in response to this new situation but also to escape renewed civil war in Southern Sudan. While escalation of war in the Southern Sudan had forced NGO's operating there to move North, it challenged others to move in and take over their place, operating behind SPLA rebel lines.

It is not possible to give an exact count of NGOs operating in the Sudan at any one time. No unified system of registration exists and responsibility for dealing with NGOs is divided among many government ministries. Some NGOs are required to register and deal with the Ministry of Social Affairs, others with the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission; some with the Commissioner for Refugees, and yet others with specialized ministries like Health, Agriculture Rural Water Development. Some are unregistrable because existing laws governing the registration of Societies are inadequate to register them. The situation is further complicated when one adds the areas under SPLA control that from time to time teems with all sorts of NGOs.

Over 99 percent of NGOs operating in the Sudan are foreign-based/International agencies originating from Western Europe, USA/Canada and Australia. A few are indigenous, including some of the biggest players, in terms of size of programs undertaken, number of beneficiaries served, size of workforce and areas covered (3) - but not in terms of the size of their budgets.

The home base of these Western/Northern NGOs is directly linked to the source of financing for humanitarian assistance and development aid.

3. CONTEXT AND BASIS OF GOVERNMENT/NGO RELATIONS

3.1. Since the 1960's Sudan has periodically been afflicted with a succession of problems, of both natural and man-made origin. Floods, drought, pest infestation have all brought famine and massive suffering in their wake. Armed conflict, acts of organized banditry leading to destruction of life and property and in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people have further compounded the problems and increased human misery. Excepting the 10 year period of tranquility from 1972-1982 when the country had experienced relative calm, there has virtually been a perpetual state of crisis since then, constituting the context in which Government/NGO relations are ordered. Other than the physical context in which NGOs and the Government of the Sudan interact, relations are also based on their perception of each other.

On the one hand, the government of Sudan (GOS) sees NGOs as a welcome source of foreign exchange and grant money to the Sudan. Unlike government to government aid which must be repaid and IMF loans which accrue interest, the money that NGOs bring into the Sudan are grants. Besides NGOs do not stand in the strong position that Western/Northern governments do in their dealing with the Sudanese government. Neither do NGOs have the clout of the IMF or the World Bank. The snag is that the Sudan government does not handle NGO funds directly. On the other hand, GOS sees NGOs (with the exception of Islamic Africa Relief Agency) as the front for penetration of Western/Christian imperialism. NGO perception of GOS depends on the nature of their mandate and agenda in the Sudan. Some NGOs have a clear concept of the role they would like to play in the Sudan and develop their perception of GOS in the light of how it facilitates their work. Others see their role as primarily doing what the GOS requests of them. Such agencies have a more positive perception of GOS.

3.2. NGO WORKSPACE

The Sudan Government holds the position that NGOs are in the Sudan at the request and invitation of GOS. The services these NGOs render are on behalf of the GOS, and therefore should be complementary to government efforts. As guests of the government their activities must be within the national plans drawn up by the government. The GOS provides oversight to NGO programs, including coordination responsibilities to reduce unnecessary duplication and that equal attention is given to all deserving parts of the country. In, theory, therefore, GOS is for policy and planning of NGO roles and activities and for coordination of their work.

Details of program content and where they operate in the country are left to the individual agencies.

In practice, each crisis has defined the initial work locale for the NGOs that choose to respond to an emergency relief situation. Once an NGO has moved into the Sudan in response to emergency/relief situation, it has tended to remain even when the particular crisis no longer exists, and irrespective of its 'mandate' and 'expertise.' From relief work, NGOs have moved on to rehabilitation work, then to reconstruction, then to long-term development, often using the same staff, same approaches and without thorough review of their capabilities. Thus, most NGOs which went into the Sudan to assist with rehabilitation and reconstruction of Southern Sudan in 1972 have stayed on and moved to other areas and activities. Similarly, the majority of NGOs who responded to the 1984/1985 drought and the 1988 floods in Darfur and Khartoum respectively also remained and moved into other activities. The oversight responsibility of GOS seems flexible when it comes to the utilization of NGO expertise.

While GOS regards international/expatriate agencies as its guests and limits their role and activities to being complementary to that of GOS, indigenous NGOs occupy an ambiguous position. They are never specified in policy documents and regulations that mention only international agencies. While international agencies operating in the Sudan are required to and, in principle, do accede to the principle of complementarity, some indigenous NGOs explicitly object to it, rather preferring to treat each case on its own merit. Therefore, subject to the situation on the ground, indigenous NGOs have even more room to define their own workspace.

3.3 GOVERNMENT POLICY TOWARDS NGOs

Does the Sudan Government have a policy towards NGOs? What role, if any, do NGOs have in the formulation of these policies? Do multilateral agencies play a role in defining government policy towards NGOs? To address these questions we will look at past and current practices.

Prior to 1972, the only policy of the GOS towards NGOs is that contained in the 1962 Missionary Act. This forbids any missionary activities in the Sudan, and disallows any foreign missionary residing and operating in the Sudan. It also placed other restrictions on the activities of indigenous church personnel and on the churches themselves.

In 1972 when the GOS invited the International Community and NGOs including church based agencies to the Sudan to help in rehabilitation of returnees and reconstruction of war damage, the 1962 Missionary Act effectively went into abeyance. In 1974, the terms of the Government's invitation was expanded to include assistance with long-term development. The GOS undertook to support NGO efforts by facilitating documentation such as issuance of visas, stay permits, work permits, travel permits, and exempting goods imported into the Sudan for use by projects or project staff from custom duties and taxes. In return NGOs finance costs of project implementation from external sources and implement the program mutually agreed in accordance with the program's plan and budget. Where local expertise is required for

implementation of a project is lacking, the NGO in question will hire and import the necessary expertise from abroad. This has remained the broad policy frame of the GOS towards NGOs. However, the fine print in this policy has changed with changes in government. Individual ministries and government departments have written their own rules arguably based on this policy framework while individual officials have freely interpreted the policy according to the prevailing mood at the time.

NGO are not always expressly asked their opinion when new policy guidelines or regulations are being developed. Occasionally such opinion is sought as in the case of Twinning - having international agencies twin with indigenous agencies in implementing programs. More often that not, it is assumed that NGO views will filter into Government policy making circles through the Sudanese Council of Voluntary Agencies (SCOVA).

Discussions and consultations between NGOs and local government authorities are more frequent and more engaged. Local authorities have thus proved more active in supporting NGOs and in advocating for NGO positions with the central government. It can be said that whereas NGO views are not always formally sought when GOS defines policy towards NGOs, there are avenues for channeling NGO views to government circles. This has worked better grievances need to be heard, and amends made rather than in developing policies and practices that will improve the effectiveness of NGO work.

On the other hand, multilateral United Nations' organizations have increasingly become instrumental in the definition of government policy in development planning as well as for relief and emergency response. They see their role primarily as that of strengthening government structure and supporting government policies and positions. Resident experts of these UN agencies sit in government ministries as advisors. UNICEF has played a key role in the development of government policy in the field of health care and water development. And WFP has played a similar role in GOS response to relief and emergency situations.

In the most recent government policy guidelines for relief work in 1991, the GOS named itself (the government) and WFP as the only recipients of all relief aid/donations destined for the Sudan. Furthermore, on the arrival of any relief aid in the Sudan, these materials will belong to local relief committees (Local Government Authorities). All donations and other materials for relief are to be made and consigned to WFP which is given the sole right to clear them from customs and transport them to primary distribution points, irrespective of which agency has solicited or procured the materials, and irrespective of the project/program for which the relief is sought.

In theory, the current policy of the GOS with regard to relief efforts means that the government and WFP can do what they want with the aid without consulting NGOs. However, the unwritten understanding is that relief materials will be released to the agency which has solicited it for use in its programs unless directed otherwise. The practice thus far is that the rules of the unwritten understanding prevail.

The question one may ask is why make such a policy specifying in great detail what will happen if it is not to be carried out. The answer lies in the concluding statement of the guidelines which states, in part, that the GOS "while appreciating the motivation and interest of donor and NGOs in rendering assistance, remains disposed to extend all possible assistance while expecting a clear recognition of the sovereignty of the state and strict observance of the rules and regulations governing civil conduct and political neutrality." Thus, the issues of sovereignty and political neutrality are key GOS policy considerations in relations with NGOs.

3.4. GOVERNMENT/NGO RELATIONS RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS.

The Government of Sudan assigns responsibilities and obligations between itself and NGOs. These are contained in policy guidelines issued from time to time by GOS or by its operating institutions or more commonly in memoranda of understanding.

The GOS assigns to itself responsibility for overall policy supervision of NGO activities and coordination through its various ministries and departments. NGOs must register with the Ministry of Social Welfare or with a government ministry which has supervisory responsibility for the work of the NGO in question. For example, an NGO seeking involvement in a health care program is required to register with the Ministry of Health while another whose programs deal with agriculture is required to register with the Ministry of Agriculture. NGOs are responsible for drawing up detailed program plans, raising funds for implementing these programs and management of programs mutually agreed to.

It is the obligation of the GOS to facilitate NGO work including exemption of the organization from payment of customs duties and other taxes, processing and issuance of permits and other documents required of the NGOs.

The policy, coordination and regulatory functions of the government carried out through its various agencies inevitably leads to confusion and sometimes interministerial rivalry. An NGO engaged in health care and agricultural support programs among refugees may be registered with the Commission for Refugees. However, to obtain duty free clearance of drug supplies being imported for its health work would require it to obtain the necessary authority from the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health may not be enthusiastic to put its stamp of approval since the NGO has not registered with it and has chosen to run health care outside its jurisdiction and authority. It takes many visits, discussions with a large number of government officials and certainly much talk and good personal contact to untangle projects from the confusion of interministerial rivalry.

However, the rivalries have not always had negative effect on NGO programs. Sometimes NGOs have used them to good advantage. In 1985/6 the GOS's Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and the Commissioner of Khartoum were both opposed to NGOs starting any programs in Greater Khartoum for the displaced population. They feared encouraging a greater influx of the displaced into the city. But an NGO was able to persuade the Ministry of Health

to adopt a different stand. The agency argued that without a health program targeted at the camps of the displaced, it would take more than a miracle to avert the outbreak of epidemics and no epidemic will respect the boundaries of the displaced camps and the rest of the city. Thus persuaded, the Commissariat of Health of Khartoum Province, which technically is under the authority of Commissioner of Khartoum, proceeded to adopt NGO health programs for the displaced persons as part of its own programs and to have them implemented under its own mandate.

4. GOVERNMENT CHANGES AND EFFECT ON GOVERNMENT/NGO RELATIONS

4.1. Sudan's 36-years of post-independence existence has seen eleven governments. But 16 of those 36 years were consumed by Gaefar Nimeri's tenure alone. This works out to an average of some 3.3 years of rule for the other governments. What has been the effect of these changes on Government/NGO relations?

4.2. GOVERNMENT/NGO RELATIONS DURING COLONIAL TIMES

As stated earlier, church-based groups could be regarded as the only NGOs in existence in the Sudan prior to the 1960's. Their main area of operations were in the fields of education and health care. Though the colonial administration in the Sudan was secular in character, the men who ran the government maintained close relations with those who were in the church. Government offices and church buildings were normally located adjacent to each other. The church received grants for operating its education and health services. The church and the government were obviously close to each other.

4.3. GOVERNMENT/NGO RELATIONS: FROM INDEPENDENCE 1956 - 1972

On achieving independence in 1956, the new rulers of the Sudan regarded the church as an arm of Western Colonialism. Education and health programs of the church were taken over by the state and the role of the church was limited to the pastoral ministry. The church as an NGO effectively ceased to exist.

4.4. GOVERNMENT/NGO RELATIONS 1972-1991

On conclusion of armed conflict between forces of the GOS and Anya-Nya liberation movement in 1972, provision was made for rehabilitation of affected population in Southern Sudan and for reconstruction of war damage. NGOs, among others, were requested by GOS to assist the Sudan with the task. With the formal return of NGOs to the Sudan under new circumstances and a different regime, Government/NGO relations improved.

NGOs were allowed to function to the best of their ability with minimal supervision. A memorandum of understanding signed between a regional government authority and an NGO was sufficient requirement to enable registration of the NGO in question and for access to facilities and support of the GOS. Registration procedures were simplified, processing of permits were facilitated and discharge of government obligation in duty free clearance of goods brought in by NGOs for relief, reconstruction and development work was undertaken promptly and timely.

The collapse of Nimeiri's regime in 1985, followed by the one-year term of Suar el Dahab marked yet another milestone in the ups and downs of government/NGO relations in the Sudan. With the beginning of the Islamic trend in 1983, the government's attitude towards NGOs started to change. Government propaganda regularly accused NGOs of being agents of Western/Christian imperialism. On the ground, however, nothing seems to have changed substantially. The GOS needed NGO assistance in dealing with famine in Darfur. While 'Western/Christian' NGOs found themselves in the midst of a propaganda campaign, the governments of Nimeiri and Suar el Dahab were busy encouraging another breed of NGOs to step in their shoes - Islamic agencies. In 1986 another government stepped in headed by Saddig el Mahdi. Meanwhile, famine in Western Sudan was being brought under control. The propaganda effort against NGOs was resumed, leading to expulsion of three NGOs in 1987. Relations between GOS and NGOs were on a downward slide yet again, with the government accusing NGOs of supporting and/or financing the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

Some NGOs operating in the Southern Sudan found themselves in a fix. Part or all the area of their operation had come under the control of SPLA. Should they move to new areas still under government control, or should they continue their activities behind SPLA lines? With the expulsion of the three NGOs in 1987, the choices as presented by GOS were clear: NGOs can only work on one side, preferably the side of the government - a position which does not match totally with the requirement of political neutrality on the part of NGOs.

Saddig el Mahdi's government was overthrown by the military on June 30, 1989. The new military rulers made no secret about their distaste for 'Western/Christian' NGOs and proceeded to make life more difficult for them in the hope that they would 'voluntarily' choose to leave. Registration procedures were made difficult, restrictions were placed on movement of staff, issuing of permits were delayed and customs agreements were left unhonored. The interesting point with the new approach of the Beshir government towards NGOs is that existing contractual obligations and memoranda of understanding are not usually canceled. New directives that appear to exist parallel to existing ones are issued either verbally or in writing. The effect could be quite crippling.

For example, a NGO that had imported goods for relief work through the normal procedures was not allowed duty free clearance by customs officials in Port Sudan because the GOS had issued directives halting this practice. The same customs officials also refused to allow the NGO to pay duty and have the goods cleared on the grounds that there exists a valid contractual agreement between GOS and the NGO in regards to duty-free clearance. To have the NGO pay

customs duty would have violated the terms of the contract, something that the customs authorities were not prepared to do.

4.5. OPERATION LIFELINE SUDAN

Operation Lifeline Sudan, (OLS), launched in 1989 to deliver relief into war-torn Southern Sudan, was made possible through the mutual agreement of SPLA and Sudan Government, the warring parties to the civil conflict in the Sudan. In essence, it expanded on and made formal the efforts of NGOs who had carried out cross border operations into the Sudan from 1986/7. How did OLS affect relations between GOS and NGOs?

Despite talk of political neutrality being required of NGOs in their dealings in the Sudan, the position of GOS has all along been that political neutrality means supporting the government. At the very least it should mean operating only in areas under the control of the government. UNICEF which had tried to translate the principle of political neutrality into programs covering areas under GOS control as well as those under SPLA control had met opposition from Sadiq's government. Indeed a UNICEF country representative was forced out of the Sudan in 1988 because of his enthusiasm in pursuing this interpretation. NGOs that conducted cross-border relief efforts into Southern Sudan were viewed as enemies of the state.

Once GOS had accepted OLS, it ceased to openly accuse NGOs operating in SPLA controlled areas of subverting the Sudan. Indeed GOS allowed a few NGOs to operate both in government and SPLA controlled areas without showing hostility towards them, thus accepting the principle of political neutrality which had been denied to UNICEF only the year before. On the other hand, NGOs felt less compelled to operate outside the framework and guidelines of OLS.

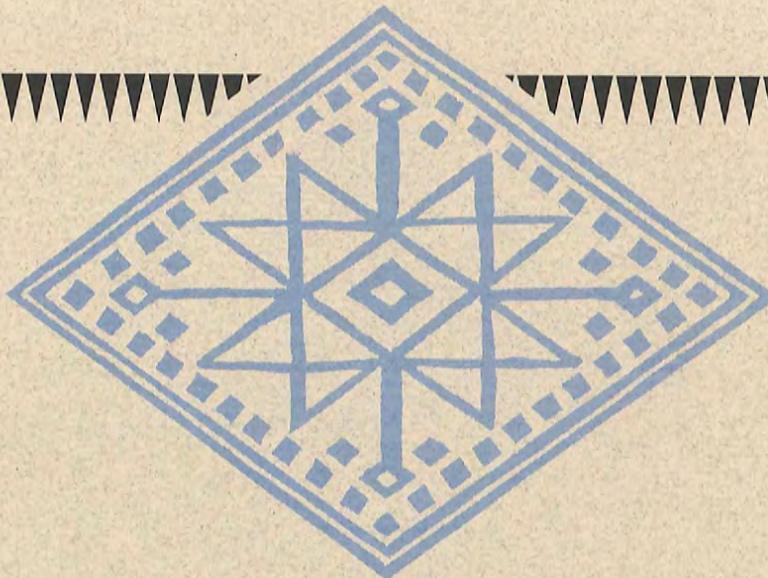
5. GOVERNMENT/NGO RELATIONS: ISSUES AND FUTURE OPTIONS

5.1. In the Sudan and probably in many other 'third world' countries Government/NGO relations tend to build around transient, short-term concerns such as an emergency situation requiring the delivery of food aid and the provision of shelter, or a development project/program usually restrained by budget provisions spanning a period of one - two years - at most. Government/NGO relations are therefore ordered and seen in a short-term perspective that cannot endure beyond particular crises or project plans. Neither can they endure change of personalities. If Government/NGO relations are to outlive changes in government and personalities it is important that they be ordered around long-term goals, rather than specific short-term projects. They should be ordered around shared visions rather than one-year budget plans.

5.2. GOS views NGOs as sources of foreign currency, which the government welcomes. But GOS also resents NGOs for the same reason. With the tendency of Northern/Western governments to channel much of their development aid through NGOs, the government could

become even more resentful of NGOs as competitors for scarce resources and threatening to its authority as they become mini-power centers. In future relations NGOs and GOS may need to work out an understanding of how the external resources flowing into the country through NGOs could be put to the best use of the country without making the government feel threatened.

5.3. Power and sovereignty are things that the GOS guards with single minded jealousy, even when that power and sovereignty do not appear to be there. As NGOs work with grassroots people, organizing and empowering them, they are bound to come into conflict with the government which has arrogated to itself the sovereignty of the state. NGOs and governments, in relating to each other, need to find creative ways of reconciling issues of sovereignty and power with service to the people.



Datex Inc. is an international management consulting firm specializing in organizational and human resource development, financial and information management, and project design and evaluation.

Datex has implemented projects in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and Europe. These projects have included environment and natural resources, health, food aid, PVO/NGO development and management, agriculture, education, refugee assistance, and democratization, among others.

For more information, contact:

Datex Inc.
1400 Eye Street, NW
Suite 750
Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202/789-4300

DATEX INC

