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RESERVE

**NON—GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS (NGOs):  
CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT**

Proceedings of a Seminar held at the Institute  
for Development Studies, Nairobi, 19 September 1985



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College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
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P.O. Box 30197, NAIROBI,  
KENYA

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT

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for Development Studies, Nairobi, 19 September 1985

Edited by  
Kabiru Kinyanjui

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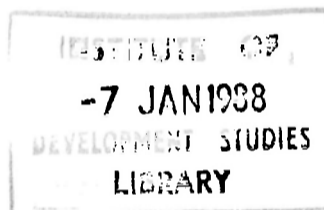
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## PREFACE

This Occasional Paper presents five papers which were given at a seminar held at the Institute for Development Studies, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Nairobi, in September of 1985. The aim of the one-day seminar was to bring together the people working with the Non-government Organisations, government officials, and researchers, and thereby initiate dialogue and sharing of experiences and challenges of being involved in development.

The papers have been revised, edited and issued as an Occasional Paper which we hope will be a contribution to the ongoing debate on the role and place of Non-government Organisations (NGOs) in the process of development in Kenya in particular, and Africa in general.

We regard the debate on the role of NGOs in development as an important and healthy phenomenon which should be encouraged. This debate should, however, be based on the best available information and accurate data. Research work in this field is therefore crucial in generating the required knowledge. In addition, dissemination and sharing of the available knowledge and research findings has to be actively promoted if an understanding of the work of NGOs is to be realised among the NGOs themselves, within the government, among the local communities, and by researchers. In this way the development efforts of various groups can be enriched and enhanced.

As indicated the papers were prepared to generate and provoke discussions and sharing of experiences during the seminar. In issuing them to a wider audience, the Institute hopes that they will not only contribute to the ongoing debate but they will encourage more sharing of experiences among NGOs, research, and reflection on the work of NGOs in development.

The papers were written by Alan Fowler, a Development Consultant, Samuel Kobia, Director, Church Development in the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK), Harold Miller, Peace and Food Concerns of the Mennonite Central Committee, Cyrus G. Mutiso, Director of Mutiso

Consultants and Kabiru Kinyanjui, Institute for Development Studies.  
The writers are people with wide experience of practical and academic nature in this field, acquired here in Kenya as well as many other parts of the world.

The Institute would like to express our thanks and appreciation to the writers of the papers and all the participants of the seminar. At the same time we would like to apologise to them for the delay which has occurred in publishing the results of this seminar.

Our thanks go to Mr. Tony Trougher for assisting in the editing of these papers and to Ms Esther Werehire for her tireless efforts in the preparation of this monograph.

Kabiru Kinyanjui  
Director, Institute for Development Studies

March, 1987.



Chapter One

THE CONTRIBUTION OF NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS) TO  
DEVELOPMENT: SOME CRITICAL ISSUES

Kabiru Kinyanjui

1. Any analysis of forces and dynamics of change in Africa today must come to terms with the presence and involvement of Non-government Organizations (NGOs), both foreign and indigenous, in the economic, social and political development of the continent. Although this subject has not been given the analytical rigour and documentation it deserves, it is becoming increasingly recognized as important. The recent OAU summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, not only paid tribute to the NGOs for their relief work in various parts of the continent, but went on to urge them to continue with their efforts. But, while requesting this continued assistance the OAU stressed the need for agencies to go beyond emergency services and relief. I wish to quote the relevant section of the OAU Declaration (1985):

We wish to express our profound gratitude to the international community, particularly to the United Nations system and hundreds of voluntary organizations and agencies, and to millions of people all over the world who have contributed so generously to Africa's relief. We reiterate our call to the international community to continue to provide adequate humanitarian assistance for the people in the affected countries.

We, however, wish to stress that the current battle to save lives and to reduce the impact of hunger and famine should not be the only focus of international support and co-operation. Otherwise, the international community will unwittingly be contributing to making the emergency a permanent phenomenon.... we are also determined to go beyond emergency and get to the root of Africa's food and agriculture crisis.

2. We need to note the context in which this recognition and appreciation of NGOs in Africa has occurred. First and foremost is the emergency situation in which many African countries find themselves. The famine in Ethiopia is only the most dramatic and tragic. Natural disasters - drought, famine and environmental deterioration - compounded by man-made disasters (misguided economic policies and political instabilities), have all contributed to the current crisis in Africa, a crisis which goes beyond economics and politics to shake the very foundations of the cultural values, attitudes and psychological disposition of African people.

The second factor in this process has been the failure of African states to bring the development which independence promised. Virtually all the African countries have failed, through their centralized bureaucracies, parastatals and controlled political structures, to stop the decline of per capita agricultural production, and the overall downward trend of social and economic development. The critical and central role which the State assumed at independence as the engine for development is becoming recognized as a major development mistake of the past two and half decades. This disenchantment with African state activity has corresponded with the re-emergence of a philosophy of privatization in the North and a strong tendency to move away from what is called 'big government'. This thinking has penetrated virtually all donor agencies and international NGOs.

3. The African situation has however, been crystallized and dramatized by the Western Press, TV documentaries and pop singers. These pop singers have not only raised money for the African hungry but have made many conscious of the starving Africans. The record "Do they know it is Xmas in Ethiopia?" followed by the hit "We are the World" generated waves of sympathy and funds in the West, which Bob Geldof of Band Aid was skilfully able to utilize in an even more electronic drama to raise more money for Africa. What we need, however, to note is that in these efforts the NGOs are not content just to raise funds and hand them over to the traditional relief agencies. Those raising the money are keen to supervise how their

money is used - through overseeing the shipping of food, medicine and other materials to their destinations. They are even overseeing their distribution inside African countries to those to whom they are destined! Here is a clear illustration of distrust in the old structures of charity and relief. The "hot money" from the North is being delivered to those who need it while it is still hot! Too many intermediaries (NGOs, bilateral agencies and government bureaucracies) lower the temperatures of these funds.

4. We also need to note that this proliferation of NGOs and the search for new and alternative channels for reaching the victims of disasters and poverty is not a phenomenon unique to the West, but is a process which is being replicated here in our midst. The "traditional" NGOs are being side-stepped and new structures are being created. This is a situation which needs a critical review.
  
5. Having analyzed the context in which the NGOs in Africa are thriving and carving out their spheres of influence, it is necessary to emphasize the obvious, that is that the NGOs are going to become an important and permanent feature of the local developmental landscape. The question then is how they are going to influence, shape, disfigure, or disrupt the cultural, social, economic and political space of our continent. This seminar is intended to address pertinent questions as to the role and contribution of NGOs in development.

In this connection I want to raise a few critical questions. These fall into three categories: those related to the place of NGOs in structural change; those dealing with the workings and characteristics of NGOs; and those concerned with the relationships of NGOs and other institutions.

6. Structural change

- i) With what concept(s) or definitions of development do NGOs operating in Africa, and Kenya in particular, guide their activities? Do they take definitions of development from their home countries or their host country, or do they attempt to find the meaning of development from those they are serving?

How are these concepts or definitions different from the old concepts of civilization, westernization or modernization?

What visions of the future do these NGOs have for Africa in the coming ten, twenty or fifty years?

- ii) In what ways are the NGOs, which provide relief, welfare and development assistance in Africa today, involved or engaged in activities which challenge or sustain structures which maintain poverty, injustices and underdevelopment in the countries where they operate?

In other words, how is the work of NGOs related to the transformation (or lack of it) of the structures (international and national) which are the root causes of the conditions with which they are dealing?

- iii) In what ways are the NGOs operating in our countries, involved in the building and strengthening of communities in terms of awareness, self-reliance, dignity, participation and social justice?

7. Internal workings of NGOs

- i) Are the NGOs serving the poorest sections of our society (poor peasants, pastoralists, squatters, unemployed and so on)?
- ii) Are the NGOs' leaders as competent, highly motivated and optimistic as they are often painted? Or do they form a class which, in terms of personal employment, is dependent on administering and managing resources intended for the poor.

- iii) Are NGOs management styles efficient or economical? Is small beautiful? Are they cost-conscious and guided by financial discipline? Or is this the major weakness of NGOs in Kenya and Africa as a whole?

How flexible are NGOs? In this sense, how are they suited to work under the District Focus development strategy?

- iv) How much independence do they have in relation to
  - a) their financial supporters?
  - b) the governments under which they are working?
  - c) structures in which they operate, for example, religious structures?
  - d) the expectations of the community they serve?
- v) Is their role in development innovative, catalytic, pioneering, or do they just provide more of what the government and the private sector already provide? Do some NGOs have a prophetic role in denouncing structures which hinder the realization of development for the poor?

8. NGOs and their relationships

- i) How do foreign NGOs relate to their governments, supporters and key donors?
- ii) What relationships do they establish with the government under which they operate?
- iii) What relationship do they establish with other NGOs - foreign or indigenous - in terms of co-ordination, sharing of experiences, avoiding duplication conflicts, unhealthy competition, and so on?
- iv) In what ways are they involved in building institutional capacity - training and strengthening local and indigenous institutions?

9. There are many questions that can be asked about NGOs but a primary one is whether they will go beyond relief and welfare, and come to grips with the complex problems of transformation and change in the prevailing circumstances of hunger, stagnation, indebtedness, environmental degradation, instability and overall underdevelopment. Hence, there is an urgent search for a transformative paradigm which will enable people and communities to take up and advance the struggle for their own development. I believe the answer to this question can only be found by involving researchers, development workers from NGOs and the government, and indeed the grassroots communities they are supposed to serve, in dialogue and communication which is informed by a continuous process of analysis (research), action and reflection. This seminar is intended, in a small way, to initiate this process.

10. In conclusion to these introductory remarks, I would like us to note that in the last few years governments, donor agencies and to some extent the African people have placed great hope on what the NGOs can do in the field of development. We need therefore to question whether this hope is justified, or are we to find in another few decades that we misjudged the situation and thereby misplaced our hopes and energies?

## Chapter Two

### NGOs IN AFRICA: NAMING THEM BY WHAT THEY ARE

Alan F. Fowler

#### INTRODUCTION

It is probably superfluous to say that currently there is an overwhelming interest in Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the role they play in development in the Third World. The whole phenomenon of NGOs, especially in Africa, is subject to research, publicity, analysis, criticism and debate. Notably multi- and bi-lateral government assistance agencies and departments are actively exploring possible areas and methods of co-operation with NGOs in their development efforts. It is interesting to note that NGOs themselves are aware of the potential problems of such co-operation. For example, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies has gone as far as to issue guidelines for acceptance of government funds (ICVA 1985).

In my view, such research, publicity, linkage-seeking and other NGO-related activities are being hampered by the fact that there are no terminologies available or in use at present which actually describe what these organizations are, as opposed to what they are not. The American term Private and Voluntary Organisation (PVO) is better, in that it is a positive identification of two characteristics which are relevant in America. However, in its turn, PVO is derived from a particular context and legislation and has acquired a usage which does not necessarily translate easily or correctly to other countries and situations.

The lack of positive terminologies and the classifications which they could give is a serious problem. Not only does it lead to confusion, ambiguity and plain misuse, but it can also do injustice. For example, is it right to equate, by name and inference, a lobby organization for family life with a group of rural women who are co-operating in order to put metal roofs on their houses? Or to compare a "front" organization for a Trans National Corporation (TNC) with an African self-help group mobilized around improving their access to water? They can all be described or describe themselves as NGOs involved in Third World development, at home or abroad.

A task therefore is to try to find structural attributes of NGOs in Africa which will allow a meaningful distinction to be made between them, and permit us to name them for what they are. This will, I believe, help us in discussion on NGOs - their strengths and weaknesses, and their contribution to development.

This paper is therefore an attempt to try and differentiate between, and name, major types of NGOs which are involved in development work. The organizations of interest are those which have (taken) as a mandate a (self)-improvement in the situation of the population in the Third World.

The focus will be predominantly but not exclusively on NGOs operating in Africa, where possible with local examples. I believe that as just about every type of NGO involved in development is working on the continent, most major cases will be covered.

This paper does not try to evaluate the types of NGOs, their activities and approaches, merits and demerits. Rather the intention is to seek out fundamental features which distinguish one type of NGO in Africa from another and which offer a basis for classification. After a brief review of the current terminologies, I will go on to argue that looking at what NGOs do, how they have evolved, what sectors they operate in, the target groups they have, their operational features and the like, does not help us very much in differentiating between NGOs, in a way which is useful.

The paper proposes that, from a management perspective and analysis, the ways in which an organization is made accountable for what it does and who it is accountable to offers a useful and valid first level basis for identifying and naming NGOs for what they are. When the features of accountability are coupled to an organization's degree of control over its resources there is a basis for a meaningful classification.

The final section of the paper therefore makes a first attempt at a differentiation of NGOs based on their accountability and resource control characteristics and suggests a nomenclature for them.



Two notes of caution are called for. Firstly, defining any entity inevitably brings a culture, a context and constraint to it. Such a definition may not be wholly correct or do it justice or reflect or describe its true essence. This cannot be avoided and all one can do is be aware that this is the case and try to tread carefully; ideally one should deal case by case.

Secondly, it is necessary to realize that in this paper the term "development" is taken to be more than just projects and programmes of donors or recipients. There are various "people's" organizations and groups involved in development activities and efforts, which are not seen by them as "projects". Many observers, have argued that projects are a construction necessary to the bureaucratization of the induced development process and must not be taken and treated as the sum of Third World development efforts. This paper tries to take this into account.

## 2.0 CURRENT TERMINOLOGIES

The intention of this section is to briefly describe the nature of the current terms in use when dealing with types of development organization. Naturally each organization has a name or title in its own right, but these seldom tell you what the organization is or does. For example Action Aid, Foster Parents Plan (now just called Plan), World Vision and Save the Children Fund all originated as child sponsorship organizations (but now all claim to be doing community development rather than just child sponsorship).

### 2.1 Definitions

The two most commonly used global terms for the actors on the non-government development stage are those noted in the introduction, abbreviated as NGO and PVO. The former, whilst a negative definition, is probably the more universal and is the term recognised and used for organizations accredited to the United Nations Economic and Social Council in which context it was originally defined (Resolution 288(X), of 27th February 1950).

The term NGO is often used interchangeably with Voluntary Agency but this is not correct. A Voluntary Agency and, as we will see later, a PVO, is a particular class of NGO. ICVA summarizes the main characteristics of a Voluntary Agency as follows: It should

- 1) be established by a group of private individuals or NGOs;
- 2) be autonomous;
- 3) be managed by an independent, volunteer board of directors elected periodically by the membership;
- 4) have a clearly defined constituency and be accountable to that constituency;
- 5) be financially independent;
- 6) have a formal legal status, permanent headquarters, and employ professional or volunteer staff;
- 7) have humanitarian objectives and programmes (ICVA 1983).

The above characteristics/criteria would apply to many of the agencies involved in Third World development and if broadly interpreted, in the context of Third World countries, could probably accommodate local community groups. Later we will look in more detail at three items in this list; autonomy, constituency, and accountability and financial (resource) independence.

The term PVO is specifically used in the US. Its main purpose is to designate an organization in such a way that its status can be ascertained for tax deduction and grant purposes. It is by no means the case that the estimated 300,000 PVOs in America are development organizations; in fact (in 1981) there were only 156 PVOs registered with USAID, which received 11 per cent of the total funds donated to PVOs in that year.

PVOs are defined by USAID as follows:

"non-profit organizations which receive some portion of their annual revenue from the private sector..... and receive voluntary contributions or money or staff time or in-kind support from the general public...."  
(USAID 1984 p2).

The "development PVOs" are more often recognized as such if they succeed in acquiring registration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). There are six conditions for registration, the first of which is that the organization must be "private and non-governmental". Only one of the six conditions is related to development, that is "...it must be or anticipates becoming engaged in voluntary, charitable or development assistance operations abroad..." (USAID 1982b pp. 3-6). Other conditions are more organizational and relate to tax-exempt legal status, accounting practices, limits to overheads, unpaid Board members and so on. This is obviously and intentionally meant to offer a wide scope for registration, but does not provide any real basis for further differentiation. However USAID does distinguish five categories or types of organization, which will be discussed later in the section on the NGO phenomenon.

There is no universally accepted distinction made between a Voluntary Agency and a PVO. However, "...it is suggested that the main difference between a PVO and Voluntary Agency is that the former can receive a significant proportion of, or even all, its funding from the government, whereas the latter must receive most of its funding from private sources". (ICVA 1983 p3).

Summarizing so far one can say that PVOs and Voluntary Agencies are distinct types within the overall term of NGOs and the terms are not strictly interchangeable.

## 2.2 Indigenous PVOs and other terms

A cursory glance at some of the American development organization literature (for example, Gorman 1984) shows that, almost of necessity, other terms have to be used to distinguish PVO types. "Indigenous PVO" (IPVO - not to be confused with IPVO as an abbreviation for International PVO) crops up from time to time but it appears that this can be used to mean an "affiliate of an International PVO" or an "autonomous organization" (Gorman 1984 p87). It is far from clear what actually is meant by, or more importantly, what are the essential features of "indigenusness". This illustrates the confusion and possible

misuse of terminologies, but does acknowledge a difference in a feature of accountability, that is within or outside of an organization.

RPVO/RNGO is also sometimes used to designate a religious PVO/NGO but again does not help much when trying to distinguish between (say) Catholic Relief Services, a National Christian Council, the Development Services department of a diocese, a conscientization team working in a diocese or a parish development committee.

Even current terminologies can be corrupted. For example, one observer when commenting on the problems associated with PVOs accepting USAID funds whilst maintaining their autonomy has gone as far as suggesting that PVO can mean "Parastatal Voluntary Organization". The inference is that such a name could be applied to organizations whose identity and function has been compromised by accepting USAID funds (Minear in Gorman 1984 p36).

### 2.3 Conclusions

In sum one can say that the present terminologies are inadequate when describing or analyzing the roles, positions and relationships between development organizations. Moreover, as the examples above show, in some instances they mystify rather than clarify and they can do an injustice to many groups seeking self-development in their own way and with their own resources.

## 3.0 NGO TYPOLOGIES

### 3.1 Limitations and purposes

It is not within the scope of this paper to look at the way NGOs have evolved, the motivations of those who support them or who work within them, how they justify their presence and activities, what they consider to be their strengths and unique role or their relative cost/benefits and cost/effectiveness. The volume edited by Gorman (1984) covers most of these topics for American PVOS. A USAID Discussion Paper by Tendler (1982) offers a more critical look at NGOs as development

agencies and the mythologies, or in her terms "articles of faith", to which NGOs often subscribe. There seems to be little comparable literature for the European NGOs although the Society for International Development Journal does offer a more European view and experience, as do the ICVA publications.

The purpose of this section is to try and explain why the categorization of organizations into types based on what they do is not suitable for a meaningful classification in terms of our problem.

### 3.2 Types of NGO

Perhaps it is useful to begin with a quotation from someone who has looked at the variety of NGO types in terms of an individual wishing to donate money for a specific purpose.

...typically, it is difficult for a PVO to claim that its programme is unique either in terms of people affected or the type of assistance provided. A quick review of PVO programme statements indicates that whether viewed along the dimension of functional categories (health, education, agriculture, commerce, labour), geographic distribution (Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East) or particular groups (children, women, refugees), assistance is forthcoming from several and frequently many PVOs. (Roberts in Gorman 1984 p.103).

There are so many ways in which one can differentiate the NGOs involved in Third World development it is difficult to know which to choose. To try to illustrate this point there now follow three different approaches to dividing up NGO types. According to Roberts (1984) they could be classified into three categories:

The first group consists of no more than labels. At the international level, these are organizations which use their independent non-governmental status only to work for either governments or for uncontrolled private organizations and TNCs with dubious vested interests. At the national level, these 'NGOs' are either phoney offices created by business-minded charlatans for the sole purpose of extorting their stake in the 'development funds' pie, or organizations of contractors and sub-contractors who use their local contacts and facilities only to implement projects with the 'participatory' cheap labour of the poor and the unemployed.

A second group of NGOs may be identified which constitutes the majority of cases. These are NGOs whose main function consists of delivering conventional 'development' services, sometimes with greater cost-effectiveness, sometimes with a larger understanding of field realities and the cultural sensitivities of their 'target populations', and sometimes with a more genuine desire to invite people's voluntary participation.... Yet, as these organizations seldom challenge the basic assumptions of the delivery system approach and also, for reasons of both efficiency and diplomacy, avoid as much as possible situations of tension and conflict with their government counterparts, their comparative contribution to the cause of grass-roots populations should not be overestimated.

Finally, a third group of NGOs could be identified as a different breed. These are NGOs with active and solid links to grass-roots movements. Their basic difference with others is that they have a holistic view of human and cultural groups.... They do not claim to 'develop' or 'educate' the populations.... In short, they try to organize themselves mainly with a view to responding to what the grassroots want for them. The aim of these NGOs is to work out new, creative and horizontal forms of partnership and interaction with the people concerned, in order to help them develop their own alternative approaches to their development problems. (Majid Rahnema 1985)

The grouping of NGOs as chosen by Rahnema is based on a mix of factors. In the first group the primary factor is whose interests are really being served. In the second and third the main features are who is being served and by what methods. The distinction between the groups is based on the aims and methods employed and an aspect of legitimacy, that is "active and solid links with grass-roots movements".

The following differentiation of NGO types comes from a recent issue of an international development publication which attempts to explain to a layman the different types of groups to whom s(he) can donate money. Here I will only repeat the major categories and some of the organizations listed under each heading. The types used are:

- The Generalists
  - . Oxfam
  - . Corso
- Human Rights
  - . Amnesty International
  - . Anti-Apartheid Group
- The Educators
  - . Development Education Centre
  - . New Internationalist
- The Church Channels
  - . Christian Aid
  - . CAFOD
- The Traders
  - . Trade Aid New Zealand
  - . Third World Shops
- The Child Minders
  - . Save the Children
  - . Action Aid

(New Internationalist June 1985)

Here the groupings are related to their activities in the development field, that is, on how Third World development is to be assisted or, as in the case of say the Child Minders, which target group is aimed at.

The following division of NGOs is used by Smith in his analysis of Canadian and American NGOs:

- Predominantly Relief
  - . CARE, USA
  - . CRS
- Predominantly Technical
  - . VITA
  - . Technoserve

- Multiservice, Institution and Network Building
  - . PACT
  - . Lutheran World Relief

(Smith in Gorman 1984 pp118-122)

In the above, the distinction is clearly based on the mode or type of major activities, that is, what the organizations do.

Finally, we will note the main categories of registered organizations used by USAID:

- Co-operatives and credit unions
- AFL-CIO Institutes
- Family Planning Organizations
- Non-profit consulting firms
- Traditional Voluntary Organizations (PVOs)

Such a categorization is naturally related to the history and specific mandate of USAID and its incorporation as one of the foreign policy instruments of the United States.

In Europe the situation is somewhat different in that governments tend to enter structural financing agreements with NGOs whose history or traditional linkages to the Third World give a recognized expertise and mandate. This can be for example in trade unionism (for example, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Germany) or in religion (ICCO and CEBEMO, two christian denominational donor agencies in the Netherlands).

The foregoing is meant to illustrate the arbitrariness and lack of coherence in the distinctions made -predominantly in OECD countries - between organizations involved in the development enterprise.

### 3.3 The African Context

We have now to touch on the problem of terminologies in Africa, which are related to the problems in the West. Many development organizations in the Third World are, not surprisingly, frequently referred to in terms of their recipient or "counter-part" status. If anything this has either inhibited the search for an own status or identity, or



influenced the way in which an identity is formed. This is natural where the Third World organization is an offshoot, offspring, bi-product or dependent of a Western NGO.

However, it is different when the organization has been formed locally and is moulded to fit the recipient or counter-part status required of it by those outside (who have the resources). The disparity in use of terminologies from the West offers little in the way of indication of how to designate organizations in the Third World. Yet the nature of the development business, and the resource imbalances on which it rests, means that the links of a local organization to the outside world have to be taken into account. Thus, looking at the nature of most development organizations in Africa cannot be done in isolation from the influence of the West.

An important exception are those organizations which are based and function on the lines of traditional social groups - be they age sets, clans, villages or other forms derived from the local situation and its history. Something is known about how such traditional group management and decision-making systems function in a situation of induced development. Uphoff *et al* (1979) and rural development authors such as Chambers (1983) and Brokensha *et al* (1980) are urging that we listen to and learn from such traditions. This should be an important research area. For the time being, however, we will have to make do with making current Western concepts and parlance more appropriate.

#### 4.0 NAMING AFRICAN NGOs FOR WHAT THEY ARE

##### 4.1 Common Features

Our search is for features which can be found in every NGO but which manifest differences of a nature which would allow distinctions to be made between one major class of NGO and another. We have argued above that what NGOs do is not a sound enough basis for differentiation and does not allow a reasonably unambiguous analysis of what they are. The ICVA guidelines, when translated to an African context, offer a useful starting point for our search, and we will start by briefly reviewing each of them.

The establishment of an NGO by individuals or other NGOs is a sine qua non for the type of organization we are dealing with. However, the motivations behind such a formation can be, and are, very different, as the quotation from Rahnama shows. The only feature which could be regarded as universal in this area is that all such organizations base their legitimacy on the fact that there are poor people in the Third World. How the NGO relates to the populations who are their raison d' etre is an accountability question.

Autonomy is in practice a question of the relationship between accountability and the degree of financial resource control of the organization. This is a difficult issue and ideally needs to be judged case by case. The fact that ICVA have issued guidelines on this subject highlights the importance of this feature for NGO identity, functioning and relationships.

Management by an independent, volunteer, board of directors elected periodically by the membership is prescribing a particular type of management and method of accountability. For many registered rural groups there is no board of directors but a committee elected by the members.

The degree of definition of the donor or beneficiary constituency varies widely. Organizations which rely solely on spontaneous individual donations would find it very difficult to define the constituency that they are accountable to; conversely, community-based groups in Africa would find this much easier. The way in which an NGO makes itself accountable to its constituency, however defined, is one of the two key issues and bases for classification of an NGO for what it is.

The fifth characteristic on the ICVA list is "financial independence" and is another basis for classifying an NGO. This is a determinant for attaining autonomy, and will be discussed in more detail later (see 4.4).

The features of legal status - a headquarters and employment of professional or volunteer staff - are of less relevance to rural groups, although it is a normal requirement that a group registers itself. Such registration can be a step away from autonomy as there is always a tendency for governments to have a national set of criteria or

guidelines which tend to be prescriptive. Conforming to the requirements may mean that a group has to compromise on what it would actually like to be and do.

The last ICVA NGO characteristic is to have humanitarian objectives and programmes. This point relates back to the justification used by all NGOs in the development field and the sincerity with which that justification is held. It is virtually impossible to assess this feature, as there is always a mix of self interest and wanting-to-serve in the formation of any such organization. The only sound basis of judgement is the actual performance of the organization, what it achieves in practice, for whom and how. Statements of motivation and purpose are not enough.

The foregoing suggests two features which every NGO possesses and which can be used to try and distinguish what they are: their access to and control over financial resources and their accountability to a constituency. I argue however that there is an additional dimension to all NGOs in the African development field which is fundamental to their functioning. This is their relationship to those they seek to serve and who are used to justify the existence of the NGO in the first place. This of course refers to the intended beneficiaries: the poor majorities in Africa. In other words for NGOs, and especially for those working in Africa, the accountability has not only content but also direction - upward or downward.

#### 4.2 Accountability

Accountability is a universal feature intrinsic to any human grouping which calls itself an organization. It is also a universal intra-and inter-human experience no matter how it is culturally manifested. We all know what it is to be held or hold ourselves responsible for some action or thought. It is not really necessary to go into the psychology, theology or mythology of accountability, for our purpose is to look at accountability in the specific context of development NGOs in Africa.

This aspect of NGO and rural development organization is not particularly well documented or commented on in the development literature. This is

surprising given that accountability is a major factor in meaningful, as opposed to token participation. Jon Moris in his excellent book on rural management argues that any organization working the field of induced rural development must become downwardly accountable to those which the organization is seeking to serve. He, however, acknowledges that this would involve a 180 degree turn from present practice and is very difficult to implement. Almost universally, organizational award systems focus on satisfying the demands from the top. Personnel are rewarded for implementing the project or programme rather than for responding well to demands and needs of the target group (Moris 1981 p19).

Traditional organization and management systems had accountability built in not least by virtue of the fact that the persons involved knew each other and their ascribed roles (Brokensha, Warren and Werner 1982). Such features have become weakened by the impositions of national development efforts and approaches, and lack of accountability is frequently cited as a major failing of government development projects (Moris 1981 p120, Rondinelli 1983 pp85-88).

Unlike governments, with their (multi) party systems, the NGO sector has a degree of flexibility in the way in which an organization chooses to attain and maintain its accountability to the population it says it is set up to serve. Such accountability is not a choice but an obligation; if this is not the case NGOs must face much of the criticism which they level at governments - being non-participatory, top-down and the like (Tendler 1982 p2-7).

If an NGO is not set up in such a way that this downwards accountability can be attained it is reasonable to question why, and whose interest is actually being served. I am not saying that such a direction of accountability can be achieved overnight but that the organizational form should enable it and that the organization itself should work towards it.

The recent creation of two NGOs in Kenya may illustrate this point. These organizations are the Kenya Women Finance Trust (KWFT) and Voluntary Agencies Development Assistance (VADA). The KWFT is constituted as a

membership organization, in part to try to raise local funds. The current membership fee levels preclude the people who form the initial KWFT target group (poor women) from becoming members. However, the organization form does already have a built-in structure to hold the Board and staff accountable and it will be a simple evolution to expand membership to include the actual beneficiaries, that is, a downward accountability.

VADA is an organization which has a self-selected Board of Directors and management. There is no formal membership who can hold VADA accountable and from whom local resources are derived. Any accountability to the target groups is via the intermediary organizations which VADA seeks to serve and thus depends on the structure of such organizations.

Determining where accountability really lies can be achieved by trying to find the answers to the following questions: Firstly, who actually hires and fires senior management, board and committee members? Secondly, who in reality sets the agenda (priorities) for action and determines the methods to be used? Thirdly, how does the organization generate and obtain its resources and to whom is it accountable for their mis(usage)?

#### 4.3 Indigenous organizations

The Oxford dictionary defines indigenous as "that which is produced or belongs naturally in a region". The dominance of induced projects and programmes and the organizations which carry them out has diverted attention from the fact that the populations of Africa have been organizing themselves for their own development, that is, mutual improvement, long before the term was coined in its current usage.

The volume by Uphoff et al (1979 chapter 27) gives an extensive view of "indigenous" organizations, their forms (age-grade, burial societies, rotating credit and savings societies and so on), and functions (insurance, welfare, reciprocity, productive asset pooling) and activities and potential for peoples' development. Uphoff et al (1979 pp51-55) uses the term "induced-organization" to signify those that are the result of external intervention rather than being indigenous to the community

themselves. In a strict sense, therefore, the term "indigenous organization" should not be used to designate those constructed along Western legal lines for development activities, even if staffed by nationals of the countries concerned. To describe "induced-organizations" as indigenous is even less suitable when their (financial) resource base is external to the organization and subject to conditions which reduce own control.

Such "induced" organizations may be "indigenous" to a local elite but not to the poor majority.

A local NGO is almost always an induced organization which can of course, recognize and co-operate with the many "indigenous" organizations in the country. In some respects an example of this is in the government's use of indigenous traditional Elders "courts" to settle land disputes. It therefore clarifies things to use Uphoff's distinction between "indigenous" and "induced" organizations.

#### 4.4 Resources

All organizations need resources in order to function and question three above referred to the generation of resources. Naturally the related question is: where do the resources come from? How far are they derived by the organization itself, how far from external sources (and with what degree of conditionality) and how far by the target group themselves? In the ICVA guidelines the point is made that the percentage of resources obtained externally (that is, above or below 50) is not really the point at issue. Rather the point is in how far the decision-making processes of the organization are altered or compromised by receiving external funds. It is clear of course that any organization which cannot exist (at any level of operations) without external funding cannot be autonomous.

The last point needs clarification with respect to rural community development groups. Such groups seldom have much in the way of their own resources but nonetheless do undertake development in their own way and at their own pace. External provision of resources for such groups may

effect their autonomy but not the legitimacy of their presence. The same does not necessarily hold true for Intermediate Organizations<sup>1</sup> which purport to be independent. The ICVA guidelines on NGO acceptance of external funds covers most of the issues involved and will not be repeated here.

However, there is particular concern at the present time over the effects of the high profile of Africa as a continent with urgent development problems. The creation of special (multi-lateral) funds and the enormous amounts being donated for assistance efforts are creating a situation of money looking for and chasing African-based organizations. The consequences can already be seen in the emergence of new organizations and the pressure on existing organizations to spend. Disbursement is becoming a higher priority than development; downward accountability and organizational autonomy can only suffer in the process.

#### 5.0 CLASSIFICATIONS OF AND TITLES FOR DEVELOPMENT NGOS IN AFRICA

The previous sections propose that there are two features of NGOs in Africa which offer a basis for their classification. The first is organizational accountability (essentially a human dimension) divided into the direction the accountability takes: up, internal or down. The second is organization resource base or control (essentially a financial dimension) divided into external, internal or target group. The combinations of these two dimensions lead to six types of non-governmental African development organization.

Whilst somewhat constraining and artificial I have tried to designate the organizations by means of 3 words and therefore three-letter abbreviations.

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1. An Intermediate Organization is defined as one which can position itself between the target group organization, the service delivery system and other agencies in support of the groups development. For a fuller discussion on the role and characteristics of such an organization see Fowler 1984 pp 15-22.

To illustrate how these classifications relate to each other I will begin with a summary matrix, after which the combination of features for each organization type will be discussed.

Summary Matrix

Organization Types Resources or resource control	Actual Organizational Accountability		
	Upward external	Within the organization	To the target group/beneficiaries
External to the Organization	(DLO) Donor Local Organization	(ILO) Induced Local Organization	(IPO) Induced Peoples Organization
Internal to the Organization	see note below	(LDO) Local Development Organization	(LPO) Local Peoples Organization
Internal to the target group	see note below	see note below	(ICO) Indigenous Community Organization

Note: These combinations are theoretical cases, in that accountability is seldom external if there is no receipt of external resources.

5.1 A Donor Local Organization (DLO)

These organizations are quite common and frequently are local branches of international donor agencies. Management staff are usually expatriate international workers appointed externally. Virtually all resources are obtained from abroad although communities involved in the programmes may be required to provide some local inputs as part of the strategy. CARE KENYA, ACTION AID, OXFAM, KENYA RURAL ENTERPRISE PROGRAMME (KREP) are examples of DLOs. The trend towards the contracting of programmes means that the donor can be represented locally by a foreign contractor; such is the case with KREP. Seldom are any local, elective accountability structures built in, although prominent persons from the country may be on advisory committees or nominated to the Board.



5.1 An Induced Local Organization (IDO)

Such organizations, set up on Western lines, are dependent on funds from external sources on conditions which mean that they don't have full control and are donor-dependent. The management, if not all the staff, are nationals of the country and are selected and appointed locally. Organizational accountability is either within the organization itself (nominated Board and committees) or to a membership, which is not made up or representative of the intended beneficiaries. Such organizations in Kenya are VADA, Christian Children's Fund, Partnership for Productivity, and at present KWFT.

5.3 An Induced Peoples Organization (IPO)

To my knowledge there are, as yet, no national organizations in Kenya which have the characteristics of such an organization. That is, one in which the beneficiaries actually form part of the accountability structure of an organization, set up along Western lines and relying on external resources. Staff are locally selected and appointed. An IPO is the type of organization Rahnama was talking about in his third category of NGO and would be the result of the reversal which Moris proposes. Whilst at present relying on external resources, KWFT could evolve into an IPO by the inclusion in its membership of target beneficiaries or their representatives.

At a grassroots level one can identify as IPOs many of the community groups set up through external (donor, government) interventions. These groups, if they were not there before external funds were made available, often cease to exist once the funds are gone. They are usually organized as water committees or health committees or such types of induced organization, with the people themselves providing chairpersons, treasurers and so on.

5.4 A Local Development Organization (LDO)

In this type of organization resources are locally derived and/or controlled, the organization form is along Western lines and the management staff is made up of nationals of the country, who are selected locally. There are very few examples of this type around because self-financing in development is so seldom achieved. The closest to this type at present are probably the churches who are building up a finance base through local investments in buildings (for example, NCCK, Diocese of Maseno South) and which obtain income from the church members. Organizational accountability is internal but not to the target group, who are usually multi-denominational. Another example is the local fund-raising walks of the Kenya Freedom from Hunger organization. It is unlikely that this type of organization will evolve quickly given the deteriorating economic situation on the continent. However, the allocation of undesignated block grants to such organizations, as has been tried by some donors (for example, Christian Aid) would certainly speed up the process (and is argued for by ICVA).

5.5 Local Peoples Organizations (LPOs)

At present there are thousands of these in Kenya. One has only to look at the formally registered women's groups in the country, and the artisans and other self-help groups. They have been formed in the formal organization (rather than traditional) way, required by government for recognition, and have undertaken activities on their own without the inducement of external assistance (whilst naturally this is always a hope). Their existence will not depend on external funding and they will carry on developing without it, albeit at a slower pace. Harambee could be considered to fall in this organization type.

At a national level this is at present a rare breed of organization for the same reasons as noted for the Local Development Organizations (LDOs). Lack of own resources or real control over external support hampers the evolution of such LPOs at this level as does the difficulty of Western-style local organizations adapting to accountability to below.

The emergence of such organizations would signal the capacity for Africa to accelerate its development with its own resources in its own way and with greater equality.

#### 5.6 Indigenous Community Organizations (ICOs)

As these are seldom legalized or recognized, and are often positively discouraged, it is very difficult to know how many exist and are functioning, and what their role is in the development process. We have already discussed such organizations in section 4.3, and in my view trying to get a better understanding of such organizations in relation to development is an important research topic. As Uphoff et al put it:

"Questions have been raised as to whether existing organizations such as we are characterizing as 'indigenous' can be fully engaged in what are thought of as modern development tasks. Our view, based on reviewing the literature, is that the possibilities of engaging existing organizations should be actively explored, making no assumptions in advance that they are capable (or incapable) of serving rural development project goals".

(Uphoff et al 1979 pp 51-52)

#### 5.7 Observations

What emerges from the above typology is an apparent cleavage from top right to bottom left (in the matrix). There does not seem to be much in the way of strong national-level organization between the dominant LDOs and ILOs on the top left who are seeking to develop people and communities and the ILOs and LPOs at bottom right who are originated by, and exist to try, to develop themselves. The middle ground national-level organizations, the LPOs and LDOs, need to be strengthened as part of a necessary transition from left to right and top to bottom, that is from organizations to people and from foreign to indigenous.

6.0 SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

I have tried to argue that the debate on the NGO phenomenon in Africa would benefit from positive terminologies which try to reflect what non-governmental organizations actually are. The foregoing has been one approach to doing this and I think it helps in the analysis of the position and role of NGOs in national development.

From such analysis it can be observed that the nature of the NGO development enterprise, the "articles of faith" to which they subscribe and their quest for legitimacy, when combined, give an inclination to all organizations to claim to be more "indigenous" than they actually are. There is a parallel here with the difference between political and economic independence of post colonial nation states. It is not sufficient to Africanize the senior posts in development organizations to be able to claim that they are "indigenous". Until the development organizations in Africa also control their resources (from whatever source) they will be part of Western-dominated delivery systems.

This is one reason why it is important to name organizations for what they are, so that our attention is not lost to the reality of what is happening and the roles that are being played. The term NGO is a sort of "negative umbrella" allowing us to avoid being confronted with the true nature of the development process and the economic and political power structures which it contains.

The use of positive, descriptive terminologies and classifications such as those suggested will, I hope, be one way of persuading those in the West, who collect and administer the funds that are donated in good faith, to let the organizations which are here and which can (but too seldom do) represent the poor, have more control over that which is given. Then development can become more local and the legitimacy of the NGOs in the West and in Africa will be better founded.

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### Chapter Three

#### THE OLD AND NEW NGOS: APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT

Sam Kobia

#### INTRODUCTION

This paper is not an evaluation of the NGOs' contribution to development, nor is it the result of in-depth research on NGOs' approaches to development. It is basically devoted to reflections and observations on the role the NGOs tend to play in the field of development. [The paper treats the subject matter in a fairly general way, assuming that elsewhere in the seminar the issue will be dealt with in a more specific manner.]

The title of the paper talks of old and new NGOs. It is therefore useful to start by trying to understand this differentiation. Are there old and new NGOs? There is a sense in which we could categorize NGOs as old and new. The difference is not necessarily ideological, but it is to be found in the political and economic interests they exist to serve at a given point in history.

The second part discusses in greater detail the social, economic and political reasons for the formation and proliferation of NGOs. It will be shown that there are socio-historical factors both in the North and in the South (Kenya for our purposes) that are conducive to the proliferation of NGOs. The focus here will be more on new NGOs.

The third part will show how the NGOs' approaches to development are conditioned by their nature. Here the objective role and limitations of NGOs, as intermediaries in the 'game' of development, will be discussed. It will be shown that on the one hand the Kenyan situation provides NGOs with tremendous opportunity to contribute to development, while on the other hand the NGOs' role could be an obstacle to genuine development.

#### 1. Old and New NGOs

As a term, NGO (non-governmental organization) is relatively new; as a concept it is very old. However, both as a term and as a concept, NGO is complex and could be misleading. Who qualifies to be an NGO, and under what criteria? It is not easy, at least for me, to understand the parameters of NGOs. The NGO Group in Kenya is a forum that brings together a host of organizations. The Group's meetings are attended

even by departments of some government ministries, sectors of foreign missions, some UN agencies, and some individuals in their own right. "NGO", therefore, could mean just about any organization, depending on what is at stake. For the purpose of our discussion in this paper we shall limit our definition of NGOs to organizations that are not part of the government and are voluntary, non-profit-making and non-partisan.

In my view the oldest NGOs are charitable organizations, usually having close connections with the church or other religious bodies. In Kenya, at least, that has been the case. During the colonial period there were very few such organizations and they were dominated by non-Kenyans, since at that time Kenyans could not afford the luxury of organizing charitable groups. Such religious-based charitable organizations originated mainly in Europe and North America. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into the history of the origins of such organizations. Suffice it to say here that such organizations were funded to a large extent, and sometimes even sponsored, by the richer sectors of the community. That means the organizations were in no way a threat to the status quo. This is a point to which we shall return later.

Also during the colonial era there was another category of voluntary organization about which there is very little written. As Africans migrated into urban areas they found it necessary to start associations mainly to help them survive the pressures of urban life. Some of those associations were culture-based and others were finance-based, for example, credit unions. The phenomena were more prevalent in West than in East Africa. Some of these associations provided the basis for political organization directed against colonialism. Hence, perhaps, the reason for having so little said about them as voluntary organizations. And besides, there was little freedom for Africans to form their own organizations.

As the time of independence therefore voluntary organizations were quite few and their leadership was dominated by missionary interests. During the 1960s, the first decade of independence, the number of voluntary organizations increased. The spirit of Harambee provided a favourable climate for the formation of volunteer organizations and so a small number was added to those already in existence. That was the situation until the mid-1970s.



Until then very few NGOs were involved in what we could call development. Charitable organizations were mainly urban-based and their main activity was to hand out basic necessities like food and old clothes to the urban destitutes. The rural folk could fend fairly well for themselves, particularly because their lifestyle was based on subsistence agriculture. It was the drought of 1960/61 and the floods of 61/62 that heralded the move to the rural areas of a few urban-based NGOs. Famine relief was the main activity, after which a few rural training centres were established.

One of the NGOs involved in that kind of work was the then National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCCK). When the NCCCK went to Northern Kenya for the first time in early 1960s, it was a pioneer. Until the mid-1970s there were hardly any other NGOs in that part of Kenya, and the same was the case in other so-called marginal areas. In other areas various forms of social services were started by a few NGOs.

Maendeleo ya Wanawake was one of the indigenous NGOs to be involved in rural development activities in 1960s. It helped its members in things like building better shelter, and undertook a few projects in water development and farming. Otherwise most of the work of voluntary organizations was a kind of "ambulance-service" to alleviate suffering caused by such situations as floods, drought and fire outbreaks.

In my view NGOs that operated until mid-1970s are what could be categorized as "old" NGOs. A number of them became fully established and built up a network of contacts in many parts of the country. They operated at grassroot level in both urban and rural areas, the majority offering social services to the poorer sections of the communities.

It was not until the mid-1970s, and especially in the 1980s, that NGOs proliferated and became a major socio-economic phenomenon in this country. I would categorize the late-comer NGOs as "new". Characteristically such NGOs know little of the country and have no networks of their own. However since they have funds to dispense they tend to reach the grass-roots through contacts established by the older NGOs. In very few cases do the new NGOs build networks of their own. Of course it takes time to build up a network, and the time factor is crucial for the new NGOs. Many of them are under pressure to spend money in order to

prove their worth. Hence they sail on the popularity of those who went before them.

Another characteristic of the new NGOs is that they tend to be aggressive and pushy. They are under pressure and so they tend to pressurise other NGOs and the communities. They are impatient, particularly with the older NGOs which have become fairly bureaucratic and therefore take time in making decisions.

The new NGOs are run by fairly well-trained personnel both local and from overseas. So they portray an image of being more efficient in comparison with the older NGOs. And without an extensive bureaucracy it is very likely that they are more efficient, particularly in the dispensing of funds.

Most of the new NGOs claim to be involved in development, not social services or charitable work. Later on we shall return to this point and discuss more about the kind of development they are involved in.

The characteristics I have mentioned above to differentiate old and new NGOs are by no means exhaustive. It would be useful if in the seminar there were provision for further discussion on this matter.

2. Proliferation of NGOs

Let us go back a little bit to the socio-economic reasons for the establishing of charitable organizations, particularly in the North. In the paper we shall use this term to refer to Europe and North America. We made mention above of the fact that the rich contribute to charitable organizations and sometimes even sponsor them. What interest do the rich have in doing so? By their very nature they would like to perpetuate the status quo. Hence charity is one way of dealing with the poor. It helps to sustain the poor. The poor will be grateful to the system and will most probably not rise against it. So charitable work is one way the economic system could buy friendship from the poor, and therefore avert potential social upheavals.

In advancing the above argument I hope it will not be misconstrued as an attack on charity as a virtue. I am well aware that many of those

involved in dispensing charity are very well-meaning individuals. Some of them such as the Salvation Army, have taken charity work as a mission of the church and have done very commendable work. The argument here is that charity could easily be manipulated by an exploitative economic system for its selfish ends.

What I have said above should not be understood to mean that all NGOs are charitable organizations. The point I wanted to bring home is that charitable organizations, being among the oldest NGOs, did and still do serve the status quo fairly well. The charitable organizations progressed into social service-oriented and later development-oriented NGOs partly because the consciousness level of the poor and the oppressed was raised, so much so that dispensing charity became less credible. New ways of dealing with or regulating the poor had to be devised, not necessarily only by those involved in running NGOs.

Let me qualify the point I have just made. Some NGOs have played a very useful role in conscientizing the poor. There is no doubt some of the day-to-day work of some NGOs has awareness-building as part of its agenda. But as we pointed out earlier, the NGO phenomenon has become very complex. We need to do a little deeper analysis if we are to begin to understand the world of NGOs.

One of the main functions of the NGOs is to administer foreign aid. So if we wish to understand NGOs fully we will have to go into the politics of aid. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into that in a detailed way. However, in order to understand one of the main reasons for the proliferation of NGOs in recent years, a brief discussion on 'aid and NGOs' will be in order.

"Aid can be used as a way of diverting attention from much deeper economic injustices which perpetuate poverty on a far greater scale than the most generous aid programme can relieve it," says Dr Charles Elliot, former director of Christian Aid. He gives the example of world trade which obviously is ordered in such a way that the rich North reaps handsome benefits out of it while the poor South is always the loser. Any serious attempt to redress the unjust international economic order is obstructed, manipulated and sabotaged

by the rich North and replaced by token mechanisms, sometimes in form of aid. And part of that aid, especially in the recent years, has been designated to be administered by NGOs. In that sense NGOs, particularly but not exclusively the new NGOs, run the risk of being pawns in the chess game of manipulating the poor in order to perpetuate unjust global socio-economic relationships.

Let us for a brief moment have a closer look at the kind of aid allocated to be administered by NGOs. That will help us to understand the process that has led to the proliferation of NGOs.

It is no secret that official aid from governments in the North to those of the South is decreasing. This is happening as the New Right in the North becomes increasingly powerful. The politics of the New Right have won the day and so has its economics. It is a fundamental belief of the New Right that "the market allocates resources most effectively and therefore anything that interferes with the market is likely to prove inefficient and in that sense inequitable." That belief sees aid as interfering with the market. Hence it is inadvisable to give aid at all. By the same token the New Right is opposed to some forms of public expenditure at home.

The New Right argues that there is little public support for aid to the poor countries of the South. This argument holds some water in the face of economic recession in the North. Unemployment and social deprivation, particularly among the youth and minority races, are now subjects of much political debate. It is easy to convince those deprived that their conditions are exacerbated by the fact that so much aid is given to Africa, Asia and Latin America. Hence we should not be surprised to hear that opinion polls in some countries of the North show that aid is unpopular.

Of course the New Right is not so stupid as to cut off aid altogether. Official aid may be on the decrease but that does not mean it will be stopped completely. But excuses have to be cooked up to explain the decrease. One of them is that the states of the African continent just like those of the rest of the South, are inefficient and corrupt and therefore, aid meant for the poor does not reach the poor. Hence the reason for cutting down on official aid in favour of increasing non-official aid, to be given through NGOs.

So we see that almost suddenly NGOs become the darlings of the donors. If official aid to governments is decreased because they are inefficient, corrupt and alienated from the grassroots, then NGOs will logically be described as the necessary opposite. Of course the NGOs have helped to popularize that view by projecting themselves as being more cost effective, more innovative, better at reaching the grassroots, more participatory in their approach, able to disburse money faster, less dominated by recipient government priorities than any official aid programme can ever be. No doubt there is a grain of truth in all those claims but, of course, one cannot swallow the whole thing. It is too good to be completely true.

Anyway partly because of the above claims, and partly because of the political environment in the North, lots of funds have been made available to NGOs in the last seven years or so. In some cases it has become necessary to form new NGOs to spend money that must be given out without delay.

The situation in the South has also provided a good opportunity for the proliferation of NGOs. In Kenya the mini food crisis of 1981 and the major one of 1983/84 made famine relief a necessity. In a situation of national food crisis nobody will be stopped from participating in the game of food aid. And there is a tendency for NGOs involved in crisis situations to linger on long after the crisis is over. One tactic used for perpetuating their stay is to embark on 'development' activities after the food crisis or other disaster is past. And with so much money available for NGOs, why not?

Let me mention yet another factor that has contributed to the proliferation of NGOs; the increased interest in participation in development. Indigenous NGOs are also on the increase. Any group of a handful persons can register as an NGO, and they will almost certainly find some funds somewhere.

Now many groups go into development without any idea what development is all about - or so they are made to believe by some experts. The answer - consultancy. I have

not done any research to find out, but I believe there are many consultancy firms specializing in development. It is easy to convince any donor that the NGOs involved in development need consultants. Hence consultancy funds are very much included in the development aid package by many donors.

The spirit of Harambee in Kenya also provides a socio-economic climate conducive to the proliferation of NGOs. It encourages the formation of groups for self-help and for participation in development. That is why, perhaps, there are more NGOs in Kenya than in most other countries of Africa.

Let me end this part by pointing out that I do not mean to paint a negative picture of NGOs in this country. I thought, however, that it is useful to understand the processes that have precipitated the proliferation of NGOs.

Most of us here are involved in the work of NGOs in one way or another, directly or indirectly. What I have said above is certainly not new to many of us here. Also I take it that sometimes as individuals we are caught up in a contradiction between what we believe in and our involvement in what seems to be a power game. The essence of the contradiction I point to is best summarized by Dr Charles Elliot. He says that many NGOs "depend upon right-of-centre money while acknowledging the need to apply the money to left-of-centre objectives. There is hardly a major voluntary development agency that in one form or another does not face the starkness of this contradiction".

3. NGO approaches to development

I intend to make this part very brief. First I should say that with the exception of a very few NGOs, the majority are led by the elite. The elite naturally sees development as an elite process. That fact conditions the way many NGOs approach development.

In recent years NGOs have developed a keen interest in rural development. Many of them believe they possess the knowledge if not the skills for rural development. So in most cases NGOs know already

what they want, long before they started it. But there are usually certain (elite) patterns that are followed. It all starts with research. Not that there is anything bad with research, but when you look at some research proposals you will wonder whether all that is necessary to start a small rural development project somewhere.

Many NGOs are convinced that there is a great gap in the body of information about development among rural people. They are equally convinced that there is also a great lack of communication among such people themselves about their areas of common interest. Those are facts that cannot be disputed and NGOs involved in filling that information/communication gap are making a good contribution.

Of late there is a growing respect for the wisdom, knowledge and skills that the local people possess. Although we have an elitist approach to development, I have observed nevertheless that there is a greater amount of respect for even the rural people. Today a good number of NGOs believe that the rural folk have ideas about what they want, but may not be able to articulate these ideas. The snobishness of the elite may after all be giving way to some humility, even among the academics. I have come across a number of them who are ready to admit that what they have written is not necessarily their own ideas, but ideas taken from the people. All they have done is to organize and articulate them.

If the above is an attitude of many NGOs then it seems they are on the right track. It means they will be involved in development work which will respond to the genuine interests and aspirations of the people. NGOs claim they emphasize peoples' participation in development. Development should be a process in which those that are the direct beneficiaries must participate at all levels.

Some NGOs see their role as that of "information-brokers" in a given area. That allows for a process which could become "an effective stimulus towards reflection and practical co-operation on development issues. In other words the same information reaching different leaders with somewhat different, but converging, interests could be a catalyst for further information-seeking action".

As "information brokers" NGOs see their role as that of translating the available information into an easily understood format, making it readily available to those who need it. NGOs "might also relay to professional organizations aspects of traditional rural wisdom on such matters as food, health, child-rearing, trees and so on".

Still at the level of information, some NGOs consider part of their role is "to serve as an information resource for the international aid agencies which support development here".

Here the NGOs could be treading on dangerous ground. It is important to ask what kind of information the funding agencies need. Of course there are reports to be shared, but NGOs should not see themselves as informants.

Some NGOs see their role as being that of a facilitator. That is a good point of departure if they believe that essentially it is the people who are responsible for their own development. You cannot develop a people. The recent "development decade" turned out to be an exercise in futility because those responsible for development thought they had the answers and all they had to do was to go out there and "develop the people" - and the resources of course - by raising a few questions for discussion.

4. Some questions to consider

- (a) The problem of underdevelopment is essentially the question of poverty. Historically poverty has been structured, and that is why even after independence abject poverty among many still reigns supreme. How do the NGOs see their role in attacking the root causes of poverty by actually working with the poor? In a sense it is possible to eradicate poverty but there still will be poor people. Compare for example the US where, by using general economic yardsticks (GNP, per capita income), we conclude that there is no poverty. Yet there are many poor people.

How do NGOs see and get involved in development vis-a-vis social justice? How seriously can NGOs take the issue of justice without alienating the donors and host governments?



- (b) The role of NGOs as intermediaries could be tricky. How do you avoid being a buffer or cushion between the poor, and the system that produces the poor, and the rich, all at the same time? Couldn't such a role mask and mystify the realities?
- (c) Related to (b) above is the question, don't NGOs run the danger of being paternalistic, therefore making it difficult for the poor to be emancipated? How do you avoid creating dependency on the part of the aid recipients?
- (d) If indeed aid is a political issue, how can some NGOs escape being used as fronts by the aid donors?
- (e) To whom are NGOs accountable - the donors or the people who are the recipients of their services?

These might appear to be disturbing questions, but they need to be asked. NGOs must be involved in a self-criticism process otherwise they can easily pass for what they are not.

## Chapter Four

### AMERICAN NGO BIAS: An Overview of Selected Value and Operational Patterns

Harold Miller

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Serious questions about the development enterprise are being raised. On every side are indications that major paradigmatic shifts are underway. An overview of this nature could focus on any number of indicators. A few obvious ones will suffice.

Northern industrialized economies have experienced a general slow-down, resulting in under-utilized productive capacity. Amongst the standard development paradigms is the assumption that developing countries offer considerable potential as markets for excess productive capacity in the industrialized countries. Like other models, this assumes the appropriateness of 'North-South' interdependence, requiring only periodic adjustments to account for any anomalies which arise. The Lome Conventions are based on such assumptions.

Other development paradigms reflect a preoccupation with some form of 'de-linking'. Among these is the option for increased emphasis on so-called 'South-South' linkages. But even within the South-South option there is the question of the most desirable forms this could take. Do the proposed South-South links become merely localized replicas of the 'North-South' set-ups with their inherent dependencies, or does the option point up a more radical cleavage, one between 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' development strategies?

If by some collective international will, available resources could suddenly be shifted toward support of a South-South, bottom-up strategy, the question of the most appropriate support and implementing vehicles would still remain open. Some attempt is being made at a restructuring of the more entrenched bilateral and multi-lateral tools/agencies. A part of that exercise focuses on a new fascination with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as potential implementing catalysts for the people-centred paradigms.

NGOs are generally accepted as being able to display flexibility in their approaches, greater access to grassroot situations, and an ability to attract personnel with high levels of motivation. Critics observe that NGOs, almost by definition, operate on a micro-scale in a somewhat scattered fashion. Their micro-specific genius is further unbalanced by their notorious inability to co-ordinate development initiatives amongst themselves. But for the time being, given the growing disillusionment with development efforts in general and with multi- and bilateral efforts in particular, there is some hope that NGOs might lead the way through the present impasses. Time will tell whether that hope is justified.

In this overview there is a limited focus. The paper touches on certain characteristics of a selected North-American NGO collectivity during the post-war period that collectivity undertook several major tasks which elicited substantial constituency support, but which could hardly have been effected without significant collaboration with the United States Government.

The supporting dialogue was always focused on a search for NGO 'space'. At the very least, it was so perceived by the NGO community. As will be shown, that 'space' was criss-crossed and intersected by a variety of influences.

## 2. WORLD WAR II

American NGO largesse, to a significant but not to an exclusive degree, had its beginnings in the 2nd World War. An awareness of the massive destruction in Europe triggered both governmental and NGO responses. Many of the larger American NGOs were born in this context, among them the Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, the Lutheran World Service, CARE, and others. Yours truly, the Mennonite Central Committee, for certain historical reasons, had its beginnings in the early 1920s. For both newly created and older agencies, the post-war period was in every way extraordinary.

Early on in the post-war period, several dozen (43 eventually) agencies banded together for certain collaborative purposes. The collaboration soon took institutional form and was known as The American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service. ACVAFS in turn provided a forum in which collective and co-ordinated action could be taken on the issues of food, refugees and to a lesser extent, development.

a) Food

During the 1940s, the US war machine had been tooled up for massive food production. Predictably, when the hostilities subsided, surpluses quickly accumulated. By the early 1950s the surpluses had become embarrassingly large.

It was on the surplus food issue that the ACVAFS was most successful in its lobbying with the American Government. The argument was simple and at the time cogent: "How can we in good conscience stock food surpluses when somewhere in the world hunger persists?" (The argument has a strangely current ring to it!)

Repeated lobbying, supported by lengthy documentation and lively presentations, resulted eventually in the enactment of PL480 legislation, releasing huge amounts of food for distribution by the NGO community. To this day, some of the large NGOs depend heavily on current versions of PL480 legislation for access to material aid. And to this day there are American NGOs which lobby for sustained or, at times, increased PL480 food aid.

Europe at the time was hungry, and the surplus food was put to good use. The same applies to situations such as Ethiopia today. But in the intervening years food aid has been used for a variety of ends. There are now accusations that prolonged food aid affects and slowly changes food tastes in the host community. Food which is suitable for international shipment is also expensive to produce. When this food aid dries up host countries have a difficult act to follow; whether they choose to tilt towards international foods by growing them locally, or whether they choose to lead their populations toward accommodation with indigenous foods.

Meanwhile the American agricultural system has undergone changes, producing ever increasing surpluses which call for expanding markets. Additionally, food has been discovered by the US administration as a foreign policy "weapon". It is not in all places and at all times an equally effective tool, but it has become one of many negotiable foreign policy variables. There is a curious and unsettling distance between the early (moralistic?) lobbying in favour of food aid and the advent of food as weapon. The chemistry of food deficits/surfeits would seem to translate into degrees of dependency.

b) Refugees

In the post-war period, Europe was a continent of displaced people. Although displaced people have always been generated by social/political upheavals, the legal and political dimensions of the word refugee were for the first time articulated in the late 1940s. Discussion leading up to the establishment of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees greatly exercised the ACVAFS collectively, both in terms of the philosophical undergirdings of refugee care and refugee rights, and in terms of lobbying in Washington for the support of the UNHCR. The ACVAFS was similarly involved in the articulation of a variety of subsequent UNCHR conventions guiding world-wide application of the basic refugee charter.

The refugee problem has long since shifted from Europe to other parts of the world, notably Africa. Everywhere refugees are in some fashion serviced by the UNHCR and the collaborating local or international NGOs. Refugee rights were articulated in a post-war Europe with fresh memories of human displacement. They preceded by many years the discussion of women's rights or the rights to food and water, particularly as it has taken place during the development decades. While it can be argued that the implementation of refugee rights has been extremely expensive, it could also be hoped that refugee rights might act as precursors to the eventual achievement of other human rights.

African refugees have most directly affected the United States when they have come as students. Very few have come as refugees, although the number is increasing. Affecting the US much more profoundly

were the refugees from Indo-China. In the wake of a bitter defeat in Viet Nam, the United States was obliged to accept many thousands of Indo-Chinese refugees. Quotas regulating the number who could enter were announced in Washington. But the 'donkey work' with regard to the search for American sponsors and eventual settlement was carried out by the ACVAFS in one of their cluttered offices.

The refugee saga had in some strange sense come full circle. It was the ACVAFS which had lobbied intensely for refugee rights. ACVAFS members were amongst those who vigorously protested American policy in Viet Nam. But when the refugees came, the ACVAFS did its duty quietly, saving face for the United States Government.

c) Development

The word 'development' was a bit slow in making its appearance in the post-war period. There was President Truman's famous Point Four programme, aspects of which touched on what is now accepted as development. The term 'community development' was in vogue, but it had not yet been energized by the political considerations of the 1st Development Decade (1960s) nor had it been mobilized by government funds as development aid. For purposes of this review, development had hardly been discovered at all.

Of the ACVAFS' three major committees, the Development Committee never made much progress nor had much impact on the member bodies. The popularization of development concepts was left largely to the dynamics of the Development Decades, touched on later in this paper.

d) ACVAFS Field Co-ordination

In general, as noted earlier, NGOs have not been known for their voluntary pooling of resources nor for any close co-ordination of their activities. Within the ACVAFS community there were some notable exceptions, but, as it happens, these exceptions materialized mostly during relief operations. Officers in the ACVAFS headquarters maintained certain links with member co-ordinating clusters in foreign countries and to some extent serviced those common efforts. In 1965 there were as many as 15 co-ordinating clusters of ACVAFS members in a variety of foreign countries.

The significance of these co-ordinating clusters lies in the fact that they developed most easily in relief situations where host communities were ill-equipped to organize co-ordinating structures. In the intervening years this co-ordination pattern has given way either to more participatory models or to highly self-conscious, task-specific, host country commissions which provide guidance to the donor NGO community.

In each of the major new relief operations, the NGO community meets afresh the co-ordinating dilemmas. There is a sense in which a great deal of the co-ordination takes place outside the host country -- simply because communication efficiencies are more pronounced in Europe and North America and also, of course, because relief aid is usually perceived to come from the North. To that extent there is some kind of power shift toward those efficiencies in times of major disaster response. The situation is exacerbated by the peculiar nature of each emergency or high-stress situation. There does not exist, except in the most rudimentary form, a prior plan of action and mobilization by NGO consortia. Thus any potential host country faces the prospect of dealing with a highly differentiated donor community which offers few ready-made participatory linkages.

e) ACVAFS Relations with US Government

Relationships between the ACVAFS and the American Government have usually been cordial, but points of tension have been not uncommon. It was the Government's Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid which provided the primary contact point for the ACVAFS. The stated purpose of the Advisory Committee was: 'To guide the public, and the agencies seeking the support of the public, in the appropriate and productive use of voluntary contributions for foreign aid'. Initially only those agencies which had as part of their programmes the distribution of government commodities were required to be registered with the Committee. Since then the relationships have become considerably more complex, with any major NGO interaction with government requiring multiple contact points.

Tension points have always arisen when an agency or a collectivity of agencies chose to be active in countries or in areas of the world which for political reasons were at odds with American foreign policy. Viet Nam was a case in point. Some of the agencies insisted on offering assistance to Viet Nam after hostilities had ceased. Only after considerable debate - some of it public - were they successful in their mission.

In general, American foreign policy is a powerful, though not a final determinant as to where American NGOs focus their efforts. As already noted, some of the NGO activity consists at times in 'face-saving'. At the moment a great deal of NGO activity focuses on Central America, some of it in a collaborative mode and some of it in a decidedly hostile relationship with Government policy.

For nearly two decades after the second World War, the ACVAFS perceived itself to be in an unequal dialogue with the American Government. The documents give the impression that the NGO community was rarely accorded its due as a significant mobilizer of foreign aid. Government was usually perceived to require 'education' by the NGO community with regard to the real needs of given situations abroad. The government, in turn, was quite willing to assign 'donkey work' to the agencies whenever it was deemed appropriate. In general it was accepted by both sides that the government and the agencies had their separate tasks, which on occasion were more or less congruent but which at other times were distinctly at odds.

### 3. THE DEVELOPMENT DECADES (1960s and 1970s)

For the 'mainline'(ACVAFS) NGOs, the shift from post-war (World War II) relief activity toward the challenges offered by the vast number of newly independent nations in Africa and Asia was daunting. To be sure, there were certain similarities, but there were also sharp discontinuities between the two ventures.

To this day there is repeated mention in the literature, and occasionally in the popular press, of the famous Marshall Plan which



transferred from the US to Europe prodigious quantities of funds and materials. The precedent is particularly attractive to those who think of development primarily in technical terms. In the meantime it has generally been accepted that cultural congruence provided at least some of the basis for the success of post-war European recovery. It is also rightly pointed out that the exercise represented a massive political will, the singularity of which has not been repeated in today's North-South context.

For the NGOs which became seriously committed to what is now accepted as development work in Africa, it was clear that the inherited working paradigms were less than satisfactory. To their rescue came the series of global United Nations conferences. These conferences, spanning nearly two decades, touched on and identified a remarkable range of what have now become world-wide concerns; environment, food, population, women, housing, desertification, renewable energy, and many others.

Early UN conferences led toward the establishment of a variety of international institutions. Thus the United Nations Environmental Programme was intended to articulate threats to the environment and initiate remedial action. When in the early 1980s, a UN conference on renewable energy was called, the world had had its fill of large, expensive follow-up secretariats. The conference had to satisfy itself with a follow-up committee.

The UN's development agenda is still accepted as a kind of legitimate wish-list. But, as noted earlier, the momentum toward a realization of that agenda has slowed very considerably. There is serious question whether top-down multi-lateral-bilateral-national mechanisms are up to the challenge. Some quarters look to the NGO community as a last resort.

Such confidence in NGOs may be only partly justified. For as this paper tries to show, the NGO community has been receiving its

signals from a variety of sources. One reference which keeps appearing in the literature is Turning PVOs into Development Agencies: Questions for Evaluation, by Judith Tendler. Hers was a study carried out on behalf of USAID and reflects clearly a government perspective: "NGOs have their uses and with a bit of training they might just be up to the demands of proper development." Meanwhile increasing sums of money have become available to the NGO community from USAID and similar sources.

Some of the older American NGOs have been getting signals from other quarters. They have had long-standing relationships with many Africa-based organizations and movements. For Protestant agencies there have been relationships with the network of national Christian councils. These have their roots in the missionary tradition and share in profound ways the continent's nationalist history.

Such institutions and their Catholic counterparts can easily be accused of sharing the top-down history which characterizes the post-colonial period. But it should also be pointed out that there has been rebellion in the ranks. In Catholic circles there have emerged movements which are profoundly lay-oriented (non-hierarchical), mobilizing people at the grassroots level. And in the Protestant community there has been a steady shift from institutional approaches toward participatory strategies.

For the older American NGOs there are dilemmas. Statistically Africa is in a dire situation. The future does not look favourable. It would be easy, and from a Western point of view logical, to mobilize larger sums of money, enlarge all programmes and generally to move ahead on all fronts. But at least some evidence seems to suggest that the most effective bottom-up strategies are very low-cost. Additionally, it has been extremely difficult to mesh grassroots creativity with the demands of official accounting and fiscal procedures. Effective international NGOs recognize the need to align their resources with grassroots needs, but with a light touch. The end of grassroots projects wholly owned and operated by international NGOs is in sight.

4. ENTER THE MEDIA

The effect of the international media on NGO enterprise has yet to be fully assessed. Ethiopia was a case in point. It became a media spectacular extraordinaire. There were press reports on the verbal battles between those who raised funds through the media and those who were entrusted with the application of funds. Several of the NGOs involved have come under fire for their ready accumulation of funds and excessively slow disbursement. The most spectacular effect of the Ethiopian media event was seen in the response of the US Government. Ideological differences had kept the early response at a sluggish level, but this was quickly and completely changed in the face of the media blitz.

For months before the Ethiopian media extravaganza there were warning statistics from the FAO and other world bodies indicating clearly that the drought and the food deficits boded ill. The official system was in fact working. It had become entangled, and to some extent strangled, by international power play. In this instance there was no question about the effectiveness and the necessity of the media's role. But again, it leaves the NGO community with certain dilemmas.

Members of the ACVAFS had for the most part enjoyed the support of specific, identifiable constituencies. Those constituencies were not a bottomless source of funds, though they could always be counted on to produce significant sums. During emergencies they were expected to dig a little deeper and they usually obliged. Even with the best of the constituency efforts, it was always considered that response to massive overseas needs would require government action, ideally some kind of collaboration with the NGO community.

Constituency-based NGOs still function and they still receive excellent support. But on the American scene in particular there has emerged a new media phenomenon. During the past decade religious figures who command mass audiences and attract massive funds have made their appearance on American television. Their collective ability to

assemble public funds has placed them in the category of the FORTUNE 500, America's top corporate empires.

In general America's religious television figures are recognized for their 'right-of-center' political inclinations. Some of them feel comfortable with the political hue of the current administration. Indeed, they take some credit for bringing the Reagan administration to power. Conspicuous has been the confluence of certain religious television personalities and America's relationships with Israel and South Africa.

The relatively new media phenomenon translates into various practicalities. Several of the religious television empires have themselves taken on overseas projects, usually of a relief nature. On at least one occasion the American religious television audience has been asked to support the establishment of a new relief and development organization. (The ACVAFS generation of NGOs, by contrast, was born within an existing constituency, usually within an organized religious or ethnic community). Today a well-orchestrated media appeal can expect to attract tens of millions of dollars. Such money comes from an amorphous audience with relatively thin and fickle loyalties.

Media appeals are no respecters of constituencies. Constituency loyalties tend to become blurred and the issues simplified for purposes of mass appeal and response. There is additionally the problem that media appeals, in order to be effective, must also be sensational. Thus, if the funds are to be available from a mass audience on a sustained basis, each new appeal must be more dramatic than the previous one. Aligned with a particular political bias, this scenario is, for many observers, not a comfortable one. Even television audiences become more sophisticated and in time will respond best to appeals based on substantive information. That is at least a hope.

Meanwhile we are left to contemplate the entrance of the media onto the NGO scene. Its effectiveness has been demonstrated. Its influence on the range of choices open to African host communities is not yet clear. Suffice it to say that the media is a force to be reckoned with in any consideration of the NGO contribution toward development.

5. SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

As a resource for development, the international (for purposes of this paper, read 'American') NGO community offers a great deal. But as this brief and selective overview has indicated, those agencies have travelled a particular path and have in the process accumulated 'period' biases, supplemented more recently by the advent of the media, both as interpreter of far-flung disaster and as homogenizer of supporting constituencies.

The series of disasters such as Vietnam, Biafra, Kampuchea, Ethiopia and the Sudan have elicited from the NGO community a unilateral response, acting first and addressing the more sensitive questions afterwards. Whenever the NGO community moves from relief toward development activities, it meets increasing scrutiny from host governments and host communities. In general NGOs have been ill-equipped for the encounter, with few of them having undertaken the reflection or the preparation for genuinely creative interaction with the development requirements of Africa. Nor have academic institutions and the formal planning facilities of African governments understood or prepared for the choices to be made vis-a-vis the variety offered by the NGO community.

This paper has tried to make the basic point that when developing countries choose to interact in any way with the international NGO community, account must be taken of the fact that there are no 'value-free' NGOs. Interaction with them requires eternal vigilance and astute process.

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## Chapter Five

### Research Agenda: NGOs' Contribution to Development

G.C.M. Mutiso

#### Introduction

This paper does not stem from any basic research. It purely raises questions and comments on problems which I have encountered over the last three years as a private consultant working for the government, the private sector and for NGOs.

#### 1. Who are NGOs?

In the Kenyan context this is not an idle question. It is not enough that one raises the issue in terms of the sterile PVO/NGO debate, as others will no doubt do. It, in some basic sense, violates logic to lump the NCK and Catholic Secretariat in the same category (NGOs) as the rural savings harambee group, or for that matter the limited liability company incorporated by church bureaucrats to siphon off missionary funds in the name of building rural enterprises. Of course, there are those who will argue that a rural harambee savings group is not a PVO/NGO, but that logic is akin to the "native" problem and should be rejected. It may well turn out that assorted harambee groups have made more of a contribution to development than what to date we call PVO/NGOs. Establishing this fact calls for major research.

And yet should the two giants, NCK and Catholic Secretariat - others would add World Vision - which now have entry into all parts of the country, be simply viewed and analyzed as other NGOs? Is there merit in studying their role in development as comparable to other organizations? Are they not better studied in comparison with other "national" bodies with equal influence?

There has in the last year come into being bodies which are incorporated locally as companies with limited public or private guarantee, companies by membership, and all sorts of other legal faces, which solicit money externally for development.

Some of them are no more than creatures of some bilateral donors who see the creation of such bodies as facilitating their work. Local bodies can

do things they cannot do. Are these really still in the same category as Nyakinyua women groups? Even when they are handling millions of dollars?

Of course, given that we ex-colonials are so good in mimicry, we could accept that those PVO/NGOs who came from "out there" and were called so, are the NGOs. Thus we would only have to find out how many from "out there" are operating here and check out their contribution to development. This option does not work so simply, for enough of those from "out there" have learned about the Calibans cursing and have built conduits. They are never to be seen implementing. Nobody has ever seen an EZE, ICCO or Miserior office in rural Kenya for example. Yet I believe that significant development funding comes from such bodies and is passed off as "church development". The implication is that this is "local" church. For our evaluation of development, do we analyze the missionary body or the local church leadership, or a development office under the aegis of the church but staffed by some developmentalists? How do we deal with the issue of directives (diplomatically known as preferences) of the Mission bodies?

Perhaps an even more problematic issue in defining an NGO is who determines what development is to be done by the church? There are too many bishops, who at best can be called development window dressers. In defining who is an NGO we should get to sources and not deal with the dressing.

These points are raised to make it clear that the theory derived out of the West about what is a PVO/NGO does not adequately handle the complexity that exists here. Where the theory is applied dogmatically, as is usually the case, reason flies out of the analysis and/or classification, leave alone explaining non-governmental and non-commercial activities in development work. The theory cannot handle the activities of bonafide Harambee groups.

It is from this perspective then that I would like to suggest that a major research agenda is a new theory of NGOs in the Kenyan context. Such a theory to have saliency, must be able to explain non-governmental



and commercial sector activity now and in the past. Such a theory obviously will have to go back and come to terms with the phenomenon of harambee in the Kenyan situation. It should be able to explain NCKK and Lions, CARE and Technoserve, ICCO and Nguumo Development. In short, the whole universe of voluntary development work.

It will also have to come to terms with the "missionary factor" still afoot in more ways than one. Finally it will have to deal with the body of literature and theory about neo-colonial situations.

2. NGOs in the socio-political arena

Most governments in Africa have ignored the social arena for they have accepted Western developmentalism, which has been essentially materialistic.

The social arena has perhaps, by default therefore, been left to external PVO/NGOs. Historically most came into this sector through the missionary role, and later through social services like schools and hospitals, homes for cripples, and so on. Of course some of these have been taken over by the state, forcing the external PVO/NGO to move on to greener pastures.

Among the greens are development awareness training, community organization and bottom-up development. These are the new Catechisms. They have, one is told, come about because of the conviction that the older forms create dependency and the state is anti-people since centralized planning does not lead to self-reliance of a) individuals and b) communities.

There is something alluring about this argument. Whereas it is true that one can document some of the positive developments from this orientation, it seems to me that this ideology is against the nationalization of the development process.

What is "appropriate development" is a national question, which needs a NATIONAL FOCUS, for all individual and sub-national developments are ultimately controlled by the national processes and structures. The case of an NGO pastoral milk scheme to make a community nutritionally self sufficient, when national food-tastes are going to ugali and maize (including yellow?), is to say the least in the tradition of the proverbial ostrich, if not handled carefully.

It seems to me that PVO/NGO conceptions of self reliance need research. Is it self reliance which serves the local community and the nation simultaneously? If it is to do that it must be accompanied by some commitment to the refocusing of values and beliefs to the national community rather than the parochial. Too many NGOs are being hustled to finance the ethnic calculus, and unevenly too.

It is from this perspective that one objects to the informal splitting of communities by church development activities. For example only Catholics get to know about Catholic feeding programs (agreed not nominally developmental) and water projects. Only Protestants mainly benefit from NCKK water-tank programmes. Only Muslims get to know of development aid from the Gulf.

What is the community and national destabilization contribution of these activities? Are we moving back to the turn of the century when each religious order had its own turf?

Should this nation allow religious organizations to move more money in development work - simultaneously with proselytization - than most government ministries move for development, without any accountability to the national political system?

The business of national development (including the creation of a state) demands, as a basic minimum, the reorientation of resources and processes to the more complex (and often inefficient) nation. Village self-reliance is counter-productive if it keeps people locked there. It is dangerous when donors "own" it.

PVOs/NGOs are sensitive about the impact of their ideology. Most even believe that their actions are totally unpolitical and should not be evaluated as such. Yet the facts do not support this true-believer orientation. Anybody who has raised questions on access to development benefits (be they schools, hospitals or even waterjars) is aware that it matters very much whether the beneficiary gives the impression of support for the ideology of the PVO/NGO. This is not just applicable to churches. It is increasingly true of Kenyan PVO/NGOs which are not only heavily ethnic in staffing but also mainly work in their ethnic

areas. One individual who straddles 20 different PVOs/NGOs (including two of the biggest) clearly articulates the hypothesis of that sector being a bastion for his ethnic group.

Research on the ideology (stated and unstated) of PVOs/NGOs with regard to the question of creating a national community seems to be a priority issue. Such research should not only address itself to the stated ideologies of the PVOs/NGOs but go further and analyze the impact of their activities on relations with the state, as well as detailing the long term impact of a PVO/NGO system. It is not enough that we accept that NGO pluralism is a priori good.

I have in mind issues such as whether it is prudent that a national sector like accounting should be dominated by individuals mainly emanating from one PVO/NGO training system.

If this NGO socio-political impact research is informed, it can lead us into avoiding splitting the professional and social systems in the country more. It could possibly give us options on how to build a nation where existant social groupings which are potentially centrifugal are healed. Here NGO pluralism could be useful.

In my opinion I consider the locally incorporated, or external PVOs/NGOs staffed totally by locals, as potentially more dangerous for their negative impact on the creation of a national community. They are more efficient in manipulation of the existing political situations, particularly unequal access, unlike the missionary who had blinkers, a legally defined turf, and who moved with leaden feet inside the social-political system.

3. NGOs and technics

PVOs/NGOs always claim to be masters of technics. Originally the Bible, the schools, hospitals and the like were the developments sold. Later it was relief. Now the technics talked about are simple technologies and what governments cannot do, or do inefficiently.

PVOs/NGOs incidentally do not do the bulk of the development of technics, since they are predominantly generalists. What makes them claim to be masters of technics is their ability to take primary research by others, tinker with it and offer it to their subjects.

Consider the so-called waterjar. The UN system did significant work on it. Almost every PVO/NGO in Kenya extends it. The variations are endless. Very few though have analyzed the social impact of it. That is beyond technics. That should be an area of major research if ever there was one. Too many NGOs are into activities whose long term impacts are unknown and unplanned.

There is a kind of sheep mentality in the technics which get picked. Almost all external PVOs/NGOs are now into waterjars, roof-catchment, subsurface dams, trees, and of course, relief.

Many are moving into ground water-tanks. Others are into the grey area of small businesses. Almost all are into umeme jikos or its variations. Many are into rural water schemes of one kind or other. It can be predicted that the next concerns will be seeds, storage and rural housing.

All these things are useful - sometimes extremely so - but is it prudent that almost all PVOs/NGOs are into these? Are they the priority development agenda of the assorted communities which get them, since that is what is offered? We need research to establish the warp in community needs and techniques.

For example there are available technics for appropriate on-farm storage. One does not need to be a genius to appreciate the deleterious economic impact of storage wastage and the uneconomic post-harvest sales. Yet PVOs/NGOs who work in these communities do not extend this as much as they push waterjars. How did they arrive at the trade-offs of different techniques, both needed on-farm?

We need historically-based research on what technics PVOs/NGOs have been peddling, since some of it is now considered inappropriate. Consider the wood-beam grain store found in most of Eastern Kenya. Its wastage is higher than the traditional grain kiinga which could store grain for upwards of ten years. Christian PVOs/NGOs introduced this technique as an improvement on native systems! Similarly brick-firing was introduced and adopted. Now the concern with wood has led PVOs/NGOs to push for mud/cement bricks! Yet who can ordinarily afford the shs 4,000 CV Ram to make them? Since there are problems how do we make CV Rams cheap? What are alternatives to CV Rams?

It seems to me that PVOs/NGOs have historically only picked some of the currently available technics, and extend them without much concern about future impact. Such historical experience leads one to scepticism about the future appropriateness of what is currently fashionable. It is a point worthy research, particularly with technics, assuming different future scenarios as far as demographics and production systems are concerned. Such research would identify whether PVO/NGO activities fit into formally identified development plans of the Central Government, and the local communities as identified in the District Focus process. Ironically not many NGOs are aware that they will have to get approval for their projects at locational, divisional and district levels. Such projects will have to fit into a district prioritization framework.

4. Are NGOs developmentalist trainers?

NGOs claim to be the developmentalist trainers par excellence. This is an ahistorical view of personnel movement and the thrust of development.

A long term view of the training of developmentalists would have to take into account the various sectorial appeals. Historically "natives" could only become clerks, teachers and dressers. On independence many of these moved into all sorts of sectors with 'Civil Servant' having the greatest sex appeal.

One can logically show that by the 1980s the civil service had become marginal as a sexy employer and PVOs/NGOs are now THE employer for locals. Given that the sector has not had highly trained personnel, research should tell us whether the games of the sixties in the civil service, where those over-promoted sat on more qualified personnel to the detriment of programs and creativity, will be replayed. It also ought to demarcate development dependency, as well as the problem of participation.

These concerns, from a research point of view, are made more urgent by the fact that most of the developmentalists moving into PVOs/NGOs as project planning personnel, administrators and field implementers all seem to have cut their teeth as NCKK or Catholic Secretariat (including

Diocesan Development Offices) field personnel. As field personnel they, in the seventies, were ONLY limited to implementation. They have now been kicked upstairs as project planners. Are they really suitable? Do they have background in analysis of development needs? Do they have planning, financial, and administrative skills to suit them for the assumed role of alternative development managers? I have seen many of them fumbling around and mouthing cliches on "people participation" when all they are interested in are the perks of their erstwhile teachers - the cars, office and mini-bureaucracies. In some basic senses these local PVO/NGO types are no more than sad caricatures of their international counterparts who had distinct ideological zeal and who, even when amateurish, had fantastic energy.

For the new PVO/NGO developmentalists, the job is no more than that - a job, preferably in an office. Usually a cover-up for a desired public post.

This argument should not be taken to mean that there aren't committed developmentalists coming out of the PVO/NGO training systems. One meets many in different set-ups. Yet my impressions are that the very best are often marginalized by the local hustler PVO/NGO types. And they are pulverised by the international NGOs who do not encourage 'uppity' locals.

They are not in the key roles. This is very clear in the church PVO/NGOs - where the conservative church leadership looks askance on the enthusiastic developers as rocking the development boat - for they have learned international PVOs/NGOs can be sources of fantastic patronage - in form of finances, trips and so on.

Research on PVO/NGO developmentalists should show us impact. For example are those trained by the Christian Development Educational Service (CDES) any more effective on the ground than those trained in conventional community development, planning and social work approaches?

Many PVOs/NGOs make a fetish about short-term courses and non-formal approaches. Who has evaluated this? Is there counter evidence that

trained planners are more effective community animators? What explains the fact that some of the most effective bottom-up projects are led by innovating people who have not been part and parcel of the PVO/NGO training in development, in spite of later recruitment into that system?

5. NGOs, and the politics of resource allocation

It is common knowledge that PVOs/NGOs have historically moved significant resources into education, hospitals and the like. The allocation of those resources actually DETERMINED regional development. Somehow this lesson has been forgotten. Or perhaps nobody is paying attention to how decisions by PVOs/NGOs are going to impact on regional development.

Research on what money is coming into the country through this sector is a priority. It should be followed by research on what it is spent on and where.

Any allocation of resources which has impact on regional development should very much be seen as part of politics. We therefore should get research on where (districts, locations, sub-locations) PVOs/NGOs are spending their money. Of course most of them are sensitive about this. In a small study of NGOs operating in Machakos there was such sensitivity on this issue that out of 38 NGOs involved we only got data in meaningful categories from 5.

Politics not only intrudes in terms of places where PVO/NGO programmes are located. The key PVOs/NGOs have established financing and delivery channels which are totally outside the supervision (note not control) of the state structures. Thus nobody knows how the finance flows, for it depends on decisions made by PVO/NGO agents and recipients. The recipients are mainly churches. Politicians, particularly when powerful and camouflaged by a church, can get a lot of resources. We need analysis of these networks and how they impact on national politics. Perhaps a good starting point should be those PVOs/NGOs who were attracted to many constituencies between 1976 and 1984.

Related to this is the issue of evaluating NGO projects. Some of the big spenders have never been evaluated. How are we to know the impact of their work?

If the researches identified above are done systematically one would, I believe, be able to show that in spite of disclaimers the PVO/NGO resource allocation system is overtly political. Such research should also establish clearly the few PVOs/NGOs who do not fall into the sin of political power guidance.

6. NGOs: Contribution to bottom-up development

When PVOs/NGOs were sending out catechists, who doubled up as teachers and mission farmers, they were involved in bottom-up development. When Maendeleo ya Wanawake was set up for counterinsurgency purposes during Mau Mau and taught primary health care and nutrition, it was engaged in bottom-up development. So was the initial Harambee movement, before it was hijacked by the politicians.

It is thus phony for current PVOs/NGOs to perceive themselves as the first generators of this approach. To situate their contribution, research should be structured to give us, over time, the people's movement contributions to development in health, education, water and so on. Such research should be structured in such a way as to tell us who were the movers of the main development ideas, how they sold them to the community and what institutions these communities developed to handle some new techniques. For example Karinga schools did not just teach literacy. They also taught brick-making, firing and house construction. They taught the latest techniques in agriculture. They taught community health. Mwethya groups in Kitui and Machakos districts taught similar things. Similarly, mission catechists made new grain stores, covered springs. Ex-settler labourers have been using hydrorams for supplementary irrigation for upwards of thirty years and extending the knowledge. Labourers formerly employed by the African Land Development Board (ALDEV) have been the mainstay of advice on land reclamation, sub-surface dams, appropriate seed selection, seed storage and livestock breeding.

However to give credit where due, PVOs/NGOs have found these enterprising innovators and used them to extend programmes. They have networked such people and ideas extensively. Thus, in many parts of the



country, very large scale development programmes are being run on systems created at the bottom but greased by PVOs/NGOs. This is, in my opinion, a basic contribution of the non-bureaucratic external PVOs/NGOs. It is not a practice of either the bureaucratized external PVOs/NGOs or the local ones, both of which have their own selected systems to sell.

Thus, in my opinion, the current assumption that PVOs/NGOs are in general more into bottom-up development is largely mythical, as many of the external ones (including churches) do not give people choices. Neither do most of the local PVOs/NGOs. Both are mostly no more than conduits of pre-processed ideas. However the intrusion of those ideas into communities energizes them towards development - a process which would take longer if left to state agencies.

Basic research on sources of community innovation in development in this country is an urgent requirement. There are many instances where development is initiated at the bottom in ways we do not know. One PVO/NGO should take it as an area requiring innovative funding and unconventional research, for it is the kind of research which cannot come out of bureaucratized institutions. The methodology for such research would have to come from both social sciences and project evaluation techniques.

7. NGOs in development: Conclusions

This paper is no more than a sketch of what is to be done. Yet I think one conclusion must be emphasized. PVOs/NGOs are too secretive about their operations. They thus leave themselves open to being misunderstood. They need to clearly state the resources they control and on what and where they use them.

The second conclusion is that not many NGOs really solicit community preferences on development. None of them have the patience. Few have personnel in the communities.

The third conclusion is that we do not know how some communities are able to initiate bottom-up development. True, some NGOs have found and

used these community initiatives but we should not give credit to such NGOs for creating the operations.

Fourthly, as more local NGOs are created and external NGOs get local personnel to run them, this nation will be advised to ask basic questions on their political uses. Such power, unchecked and unaccounted, can easily be abused.

## Chapter 6

### Building our Knowledge of NGOs: Some Research Tasks

Kabiru Kinyanjui

The seminar observed that only limited research has been undertaken on NGOs in Kenya. There are, however, numerous evaluation reports which have been produced by researchers and consultants. Unfortunately these reports have had very limited circulation let alone discussion. The seminar therefore emphasised the critical need for research in this field to enlighten the debate on the role of NGOs, and at the same time to guide the planning, implementation and assessment of NGOs' impact on development. The papers and discussion at the seminar raised some interesting research questions which we shall attempt to summarize under seven broad categories.

1. Naming them by what they are: As one of the seminar papers has indicated, there is an urgent task which researchers should grapple with, and that is the need for a practical framework for definition, analysis and description of NGOs. Coupled with this is the need for theoretical work which would address itself to the straddling position which NGOs occupy, between the private and public sectors, in the development process. Research in this field, we hope, would deal with the religious and secular roots of philanthropy which underpins the ideology of most NGOs.

2. Characteristics of NGOs: One of the seminar papers argued that the NGOs have helped to popularize the view of "themselves as being more cost effective, more innovative, better at reaching grassroots, more participatory in their approach, able to disburse money faster, and less dominated by recipient government priorities than any official programme can ever be". This view of NGOs, the seminar felt, should be questioned by looking closely at whether what the NGOs purport to be, is actually so. Their management styles, efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability should all be studied.

In addition to studying the reality of NGO operations in the actual development process, there is need to undertake work on the background of NGOs to see what kind of biases, orientation, weaknesses and strengths they bring to the tasks of development. This applies equally to international and indigenous NGOs.

3. Resources: While it was agreed that NGOs have access to increased funding, it was also felt that there was inadequate data and information on how much money was coming into the country, from where and to whom. The resources coming from outside need to be compared with the resources generated locally.

An equally important question was how the available resources were allocated regionally, to groups and communities. How are the resources allocated for actual development work, as opposed to the administration of programmes? An overriding issue is the equity implications of allocating these funds, at regional, district and community level.

4. Relationship with the State: The work of NGOs requires that they relate and interact with government ministries, parastatals, local authorities and other agents of government. This relationship needs research attention to see how best to promote an enabling environment for the operation of NGOs and a genuine partnership between the various actors in this field. Whether the government should play the role of co-ordinating or facilitating the work of NGOs should be explored.

5. Communication and Sharing of Information and Experiences Among NGOs: Often NGOs work in parallel to each other, with limited communication or sharing of information and experiences. Research needs to address itself to the question of communication and sharing among NGOs, especially those working in the same fields; for instance, in the fields of small business, agriculture, water supply, and health. While some competition is healthy it can often prove unfortunate when NGOs working in the same field do not communicate.

Research should therefore address itself to the obstacles that are encountered by NGOs in their inter-communications and see how these obstacles can be overcome and how channels of communication and sharing may be established.

Communication and sharing of development experiences should not be limited only to NGOs. There are other institutions and government agencies which need to know and learn from NGOs. Linkages with research institutions need attention, as such linkages may be mutually beneficial in terms of generating useful data and disseminating the information and knowledge required for development work.

6. Training: How much and what kind of training are the NGOs providing? This question could be dealt with at two levels. First, and most important, is training at the grassroots level, where NGOs are supposed to work. Research should focus on the various methodologies being used and their effectiveness in achieving the intended goals. What are the constraints and payoffs of various training strategies?

The second level relates to training and utilization of the personnel in charge of the NGOs' development work. How are they trained, motivated and rewarded? Is there a long-term need for training a cadre of development workers, and if so, how, where, and whose responsibility is it?

7. Case Studies and histories: A crucial gap in our understanding of NGOs in Kenya is a lack of serious case studies which would give insights into the operations and internal workings of these organisations. Case studies of current and completed projects and programmes undertaken by NGOs would be very useful to other NGOs, and all those interested in the dynamics of development. In this way we can learn from the success and failure of projects undertaken by NGOs in various parts of the country.

Equally important is for those who have been working with NGOs to describe their experiences. Opportunities should be provided for these people to reflect on such experiences and to share these reflections.

Research institutions should seek creative ways and means of bring this kind of knowledge to the surface so that it may be shared.

There are many research issues which emerged in the course of the discussions held at the seminar. Some of the issues are summarized above, while others are covered in the seminar papers. The objective of the seminar, and indeed the reason for the issuing of this Occasional Paper, is to stimulate debate on the role of NGOs in development. The role of research in stimulating and enriching this debate needs to be recognized, and more research encouraged in this field.

SEMINAR PROGRAMME

- 9.00 Introduction: Some key issues  
Kabiru Kinyanjui - Director, IDS
- 10.00 The old and new NGOs: Approaches to development  
Sam Kobia - National Council of Churches of Kenya
- Reflections on American NGO activities in Kenya  
Harold Miller - Mennonite Central Committee
- 12.45 LUNCH
- 2.00 NGOs: Naming them by what they are  
Alan F. Fowler
- 3.15 TEA BREAK
- 3.30 Research agenda for NGOs  
Kabiru Kinyanjui and G.C.M. Mutiso
- 5.00 Concluding Remarks

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