

## Whatever Happened to Reciprocity? Implications of Donor Emphasis on 'Voice' and 'Impact' as Rationales for Working with NGOs in Development

Alan Thomas

Eliminating world poverty is a job for everyone, not just governments. In 2005, people around the world raised their voices to demand change.... NGOs will help deliver services, especially in fragile states. ... civil society groups will hold the Government to account in the UK, and encourage their counterparts in developing countries to do the same. (UK White Paper on *Eliminating World Poverty*, DFID, 2006: 81).

This chapter concerns non-governmental organizations and the rationale for their involvement in development. It analyses how donors view NGOs, looking particularly at the example of the UK Department for International Development (DFID), arguing that NGOs are expected to conform to one of two prescribed models of what they do, which tends to ignore or downplay the value basis of what NGOs *are* and the variety of ways they relate to development.<sup>1</sup>

The chapter suggests *reciprocity* (Polanyi, 1957) as an organizing principle that incorporates the variety of values underlying NGOs and differentiates them from both private firms, based on a rationale of self-interest and exchange through the market, and government agencies, based on a rationale of legitimate authority and coercive redistribution. At the same time, it seeks to place NGOs within 'civil society', which in political rather than economic discourse has also been used to describe the space between the state and the market. However, usage differs as to whether 'NGO' is a synonym for 'civil society organization' (CSO) or refers to one particular type of CSO – for example, one that delivers humanitarian relief or promotes 'development' for others.

Both the private and state sectors are modern sectors contrasting with a 'traditional', 'community' sector, based on a rationale of mutuality, reciprocal relations and ascribed roles. NGOs can be regarded as belonging to a

third modern sector, based on some of the positive values of community but with more openness and universality. Arguably this third sector also corresponds to the organizational dimension of civil society.

Invoking the idea of 'civil society' is one way of investing the third (modern) sector with some positive attributes. Many authors agree that it should not be defined as just a residual category (*non-profit* and *non-governmental*) but consists of 'value-based' or 'value-led' organizations (Paton, 1991; Hudson, 1995), though which values are to the fore is subject to much debate. Suggestions include voluntary association (Streeck and Schmitter, 1985), charity (Butler and Wilson, 1990), membership (Stryjan, 1989), trust and solidarity (Gherardi and Masiero, 1990), enthusiasm (Bishop and Hoggett, 1986), among others. The values underlying development NGOs in particular are if anything even more varied, although many relate to participation or empowerment. Some derive specifically from movements based in developing countries, for example Freire's (1972) conscientization, or Gandhian concepts such as *gram swaraj* (village self-rule) or *sarvodaya* (the welfare of all). Other value-based ideas taken up by many NGOs, while of Northern derivation, are specific to attempts to deal with problems of development, such as Schumacher's (1973) 'small is beautiful', Korten's (e.g. 1990) 'people-centred development' and Chambers's (e.g. 1997) ideas of participative rural appraisal and power reversals.

It might appear that the values involved are too diverse to generalize about the underlying principles. Some are the values of groups set up for the mutual benefit of their members while others relate to organizations set up for the benefit of others or for general public benefit. However, over time successful voluntary organizations tend to combine elements of all three categories of benefit (Handy, 1988). Indeed, all organized voluntary action can be seen as combining the human impulse to act directly in response to a perceived need with the need to pool resources by acting in groups. I suggest that the best attempt at defining this impulse in terms of a single principle is Polanyi's (1957) idea of reciprocity, where goods, services or effort are given freely not for immediate exchange but in the expectation of reciprocal assistance being available when required (a similar notion underlies Titmuss's (1970) 'gift relationship'). However, a general understanding of voluntary, non-profit or 'civil society' organizations must also recognize that they are often small and specific in their area of operation. Thus the third sector – or 'civil society organizations', including NGOs – comprises organizations which may all be value-based and rely on reciprocity but are based on a variety of specific values and focus on the needs and interests of particular groups.

NGOs have become increasingly important in development since the 1980s, as the neoliberal combination of market economics and liberal democratic politics became dominant. As Edwards and Hulme explain,

NGOs fitted into the 'New Policy Agenda' promoted by donors, appearing simultaneously 'as market-based actors' and 'as components of "civil society"' (1995: 849). Thus, on the one hand, the increase in provision of services or 'gap-filling' (Vivian, 1994) by NGOs was seen as part and parcel of the privatization of state services, despite NGOs' non-profit basis. On the other hand, NGOs were seen as prime agents of democratization (Clark, 1991), or even as intrinsically democratic simply by virtue of being part of civil society (ROAPE, 1992).

In practice the contribution of NGOs to development is enormously varied and multidimensional, reflecting their sheer numbers and diversity. There is a huge difference between international NGOs, mostly based in the developed world, and indigenous local or national NGOs in the developing world. Often started as charitable relief or missionary welfare organizations, the former generally work in developing countries through their own branches or with local partner organizations, often NGOs themselves. The majority of the latter are small, but they include organizations such as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), the largest national NGO in the developing world, with over 97,000 employees in 2005.<sup>2</sup> BRAC and other large NGOs (especially in South Asia) often function as para-governmental or quasi-governmental organizations, operating in parallel with the state and complementing it in the provision of social services.

However, for some time, many working in NGOs have wished to go beyond simply providing relief or other services within the neoliberal model of market-led development. A symposium on 'Development Alternatives: The Challenge for NGOs' held in London in March 1987 explored the suggestion of a distinctive 'NGO approach' to development based on empowerment and the idea that poor people could be supported to become the agents of their own development (World Development, 1987; see also Poulton and Harris, 1988; Thomas, 1992). However, despite a number of well-reported success stories at the local level, it was unclear whether this 'NGO approach' could have a broader impact. In one of the papers from that London conference, Sheldon Annis (1987) asked, 'Can Small-scale Development be a Large-scale Policy?', and this question of how to 'scale up' from local experience became perhaps the most important of a number of distinct challenges to development NGOs which remain relevant today.

A number of writers have seen these challenges in terms of a sequence of strategies. At the same conference, David Korten distinguished between three 'generations' of NGO strategies: the first committed to relief and welfare activities, the second promoting small-scale local development that empowered local communities and broke their dependency on humanitarian assistance, and the third involved in a range of activities designed to achieve

institutional and policy change. Later, he suggested the need for a 'fourth generation' strategy, committed to increasingly complex networks and to advocacy at international as well as national level (Korten, 1990: 123-4). Individual NGOs could be involved in various mixes of the strategies. In a similar vein, Alan Fowler (1997: 220-21) characterized NGO activities as a mixture of three types of effort: 'welfare and delivery (the global soup kitchen)', 'strengthening people's organizations and movements', and 'learning for leverage'. He suggested NGOs should shift away from the first by either 'concentrating on building people's capacities to look after and demand for themselves' or 'gaining leverage on structural changes to governments and markets which benefit the poor' (Fowler, 1997: 220-21).

The rest of this chapter concentrates not on the NGO perspective but on how donors justify working with NGOs. The next section charts the changes in donor funding and expectations of NGOs from the 1970s to date. The following two sections analyse more closely how 'voice' and 'impact' are currently the dominant rationales put forward by donors for working with NGOs, looking in particular at policy and other statements by DFID. The final section considers how these two rationales may 'squeeze out' fundamental aspects of NGO work in development, many of which can be summed up in terms of the concept of 'reciprocity', and concludes with some implications.

### Changes in Donor Funding of NGOs and Its Rationale

Throughout the period of the above-mentioned discussions on how to move from small-scale successes to making a bigger difference, resources for development through NGOs have increased consistently. From 1970 to 1999, NGO aid went up from US\$3.6 billion to US\$12.4 billion annually, equivalent to 21.6 per cent of total development assistance from members of the OECD (see Table 5.1).

For most of that time official donor grants to NGOs also increased. Although the proportion of official aid going through NGOs has reduced since the mid-1990s, private funding of NGOs continues to increase and more than offsets this decline. In fact, the proportion of NGOs' resources coming from private sources has never fallen below 65 per cent and by 1999 it was above 85 per cent and rising. Nevertheless, access to official aid funds has become extremely important to NGOs generally, and particularly for some NGOs. Thus, although NGOs have their own agendas and cannot be regarded simply as vehicles for implementing official aid policies and programmes, donors' expectations of what NGOs should do has a considerable influence on them.

Donors still put considerable amounts of finance into NGO provision of relief and services, despite the growing presumption that state provision is the best long-term solution (and NGOs should shift to the above 'voice and accountability' role). However, there are many states without the capacity to undertake poverty reduction programmes, or lacking the political commitment or willingness to do so within the PRSP framework preferred by donors. Within the past two years a specific secondary role for NGOs has developed in donor thinking, namely to deliver humanitarian relief and other services in these 'fragile' or 'failed' states, in the hope of achieving direct impact on the MDGs (see Fowler, this volume).

The next two sections discuss 'voice' and 'impact', respectively, as the main current donor rationales for working with NGOs.

### 'Voice' as the New Donor Rationale for Working with NGOs

Interpreting the political role of NGOs in terms of 'voice' can be traced back to an influential paper by Samuel Paul (1992), which applies the seminal work of Hirschman (1970) on 'exit, voice and loyalty' to the question of accountability in public services. Paul suggests it is important to have available both the option of 'exit' – via a market-based alternative to state services – and that of 'voice' – promoting responsiveness and opportunities for public participation:

Public service accountability will be sustained only when the 'hierarchical control' (HC) over service providers is reinforced by the public's willingness and ability to exit [i.e. marketization] or to use voice [i.e. direct participation]. (Paul, 1992: 1047–8)

By 1999, at the Third International NGO Conference in Birmingham, on 'NGOs in a Global Future', Harry Blair (2000) could claim that 'much and probably most of the international donor community' embraced a 'democratic development paradigm' involving a linear model in which participation for marginalized groups leads to representation and hence empowerment, which in turn allows these groups to influence policy to benefit their constituencies, leading over time to poverty reduction and finally to sustainable human development. This model is not directly about NGOs, and Blair himself expressed doubts about its effectiveness. However, he characterized the paradigm, and NGOs' role in it, as follows:

[N]ewly empowered groups become part of *civil society* and within a political environment of *democratic pluralism* they advocate policy changes that lead to *poverty reduction*. Northern and Southern NGOs, along with developing country

governments and international donors, are the principal outside actors motivating, supporting, and in many way shepherding the process along. (Blair, 2000: 109)

Thus, as with the older rationale of NGOs providing effective relief and development services, the newer idea of donor support for NGOs as part of civil society is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. Currently, the *ends* (or aims) of donor policy are very publicly focused on the MDGs, none of which concerns support to NGOs or CSOs or to civil society per se.

In the UK case, DFID has a biannual Public Service Agreement with the British Treasury, which commits it to a programme of activities and a number of specific targets relating to strategic objectives in support of the MDGs. However, there is no mention of working with NGOs and other CSOs in DFID's PSA 2003–06 (the 2005–08 PSA mentions NGOs, but only as sources of monitoring information on conflict situations), and only brief mention of NGOs and civil society in DFID's latest self-evaluation, the 2006 Autumn Performance Report, which reports against the objectives of the PSAs. The impression is not of any systematic working with NGOs and civil society but rather that this happens to be useful in particular cases, reinforcing the view that working with NGOs is a means rather than an end. This is stated explicitly in the recent National Audit Office report on DFID's engagement with civil society (NAO, 2006).

By 2005, DFID had produced several Institutional Strategy Papers, some identifying specific roles that NGOs and civil society may play with respect to achieving particular MDGs. However, DFID has no strategy paper or other single authoritative benchmark statement of policy on engagement with NGOs and other CSOs. Hence its rationale for working with NGOs has to be inferred from a range of sources, including ministerial speeches, the 1997, 2000 and 2006 White Papers on International Development, the internal DFID guide on *How to Work with Civil Society*, target strategy papers, country assistance plans and programme partnership agreements.

Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development, made a speech to the 1999 Birmingham NGO conference suggesting a model very similar to that put forward by Harry Blair at that same conference. For Clare Short, government provision is the best way to provide core public services such as basic health and education. Civil society can push for the major reforms required if governments are to meet poverty reduction and other development goals. In this model, aid to governments is more effective than 'isolated development projects', but only if there is 'local leadership committed to poverty reduction which is backed by access to expertise'. Civil society is the source of the political will that ensures that commitment:

What we need in order to ensure that we meet the 2015 targets is for [civil society] groups throughout both the developed and developing world to know that a major

advance in poverty reduction is possible, and to demand of their governments that the international system is put to work to ensure that it is done.

Within this general model, Southern NGOs are seen as having 'a crucial role in helping local people to realize their human rights and demand improvements in the provision of core government services', while Northern NGOs are 'building a popular base for development' in the north, 'lobbying governments and international institutions', and 'helping to empower the poor'.

In her speech, Clare Short says that 'it is important that southern NGOs do not confine themselves to service delivery or advocacy on behalf of the poor' (they should move beyond that to 'enable the poor to make their own demands'). This perhaps implies that service delivery and advocacy work continue alongside the new emphasis on 'development-as-leverage'. However, service delivery otherwise has no specific place in this basic model of the role of civil society.

With no DFID strategy paper specifically on civil society or the role of NGOs, the 2006 White Paper on International Development (*Eliminating World Poverty: Making Governance Work for the Poor*) is possibly the most authoritative statement of government and DFID policy on engagement with CSOs. The ideas have partly become embedded and partly changed from the previous White Paper in 2000 (*Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for Poor People*), produced very shortly after Clare Short's Birmingham speech.

The 2000 White Paper made it clear how DFID was impressed by the Jubilee 2000 debt campaign and saw support for this type of international campaigning and networking as potentially more cost-effective than funding NGOs to run small-scale development projects. It signalled a move away from working specifically with NGOs to engagement with a broader range of civil society organizations, with more emphasis on working with Southern CSOs and with faith groups in particular. Thus,

It is particularly important to strengthen the voices of civil society in developing countries and of a range of organizations including faith groups, human rights and women's organizations, trade unions, NGOs and cooperatives, each of which can play a stronger role in giving poor people a greater voice. (HMG, 2000: para. 361)

The DFID document and online resource *How to Work with Civil Society*<sup>3</sup> works out the implications of this 'voice' model within developing countries. It explores a variety of ways in which DFID can work with Southern CSOs to achieve 'a means for poor people to claim their rights', quoting the idea that 'effective and accountable states need effective and accountable civil society'. Importantly, it states that strategy for working with CSOs must depend on an analysis of civil society in each particular country.

In fact, several DFID country offices have worked out somewhat different versions of a similar rationale. Some now have funds specifically for local civil society, usually managed by locally created consortia or boards drawn from a range of local CSOs, with their own criteria for the projects and organizations that will be supported. Thus in Orissa: 'DFID aims to develop partnerships with CSOs in order to help strengthen the capacity of poor people to articulate their needs, and to improve the policies that affect them.' From this basis, the Orissa civil society fund is oriented specifically towards strengthening 'voice', 'knowledge' and 'identity', in order to promote accountability, transparency and responsiveness in government.

The Southern Africa Trust was set up in 2005 with support from DFID and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, following a consultative process including a commissioned study by CPS (2002). It is very clear about the importance of recognizing power relations and the contested nature of poverty reduction policies:

Effective policies that have strong popular support are a political outcome of negotiation and bargaining amongst many different interests and constituencies in society. These processes are crucial to building democratic participation and to creating accountable, responsive governance....

The Southern Africa Trust was therefore established in 2005 to support civil society organizations in southern Africa to participate effectively and with credibility in policy dialogue so that the voices of the poor can have a better impact in the development of public policies.<sup>4</sup>

It is also noted that most Southern African states are at best 'emerging' democracies, while civil society is generally weak and fragmented. The Southern Africa Trust explicitly adopts a 'rights-based approach', and it puts forward a rather different emphasis from the Orissa fund, on the promotion of regional dialogue, learning and joint action.

The largest civil society fund is the Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) programme, with £27 million allocated over seven years and covering the poorest districts of six states of India. Others include Manusher Jonno in Bangladesh, the background paper for which explicitly links good governance and human rights, stressing that 'the rights-based approach demands a paradigm shift from welfare/charity ... to entitlement' and looking for practical approaches to development which operationalize this link. (Beall et al., n.d.). By 2004, Tanzania and Nigeria also had similar funds, with others planned for Ghana, the Caribbean (region-wide), Iraq and Indonesia (CDS, 2004). Some DFID country offices have a specific Civil Society Strategy – for example, Nigeria, Cameroon, South Africa – although no new ones appear to have been developed in the last two years. In all cases the rationale is a variation on the theme of promoting accountability through making the 'voice of the poor' heard.

The 2006 White Paper further acknowledges the important role of civil society in international campaigning, with very positive mention of the Make Poverty History campaign, which like Jubilee 2000 before it prominently included faith groups. In his Preface, Secretary of State Hilary Benn states that 'Governments did change their policies and made new promises' (HMG, 2006: 5) in response to the global campaign. However, the White Paper implies that there will be no need to change policy again; apparently we now know how to achieve the MDGs, and the challenge is to implement agreed policies and 'to make good on these commitments' (6). The main way this is to be done is through 'good governance', both globally and in individual developing countries. This means that 'the capacity and accountability of public institutions needs to be strengthened' (9).

The focus on governance includes a clear importance given to civil society, though this is stated in a rather general way. Thus, '[b]uilding effective states and better governance' means that 'we need to work not just with governments, but also with citizens and civil society' (HMG, 2006: 21). However, a large part of the rationale is exactly as in the 'voice' model described by Blair: helping to articulate needs, especially those of the poor, participating in policy formulation and particularly holding governments to account. This includes monitoring international donors' performance, but is particularly important in helping build the capacity and accountability of developing states:

Accountability is at the heart of how change happens ... beyond the formal structures of the state, civil society organizations give citizens power, help poor people get their voices heard, and demand more from politicians and government. (HMG, 2006: 23)

NGOs are mentioned in the White Paper mainly as service providers and particularly in the context of 'fragile states' – which lack entirely the capacity or political will to implement poverty-reducing policies. This is a new and major concern of the 2006 White Paper. NGOs are hardly mentioned in the discussion of how to achieve good governance, as though they are quite distinct from civil society. Nevertheless, DFID's funding of CSOs still goes overwhelmingly to international development NGOs, particularly British ones. However, as announced in the White Paper, a new £100 million Governance and Transparency Fund was launched in 2006, which is 'designed to help citizens hold their governments to account through strengthening the wide range of groups that can empower and support them'.<sup>5</sup> It will be interesting to see whether this new fund in practice broadens the range of types of civil society group supported directly or indirectly by DFID.

### 'Impact'

Alongside 'voice' is a quite different rationale, of service provision having a direct impact on achieving the MDGs. As noted above, where democratic accountability is not the logic, then funding services by NGOs and other CSOs may still occur if this is seen as the best way to achieve 'aid effectiveness' in a particular context. Note that there is no specific theoretical view about civil society or NGOs underlying this rationale.

DFID defines the concept of aid effectiveness in terms of achieving the MDGs not only through increasing aid but also by ensuring 'better' aid, which among other things means aid that is 'delivered through effective institutions' and 'focuses on results not inputs'.<sup>6</sup> The clear preference is for state provision of basic services, but NGOs may continue to supply services directly if they happen to provide the most effective means of achieving results in terms of impact on the MDGs. This may be the case where they have a strong historical presence and government agencies lack capacity, or particularly in what are increasingly referred to as 'fragile states'. Also, within a neoliberal logic, private service providers can be awarded contracts on a competitive basis, and some of these may be NGOs or other CSOs. They may simply offer the best deal in commercial terms. In other words, NGOs may be regarded as just another private firm, expected to compete for donor contracts on the basis of meeting criteria of efficiency and impact.

In its 2006 White Paper, the UK government lists four public services – education, health, water and sanitation, and 'social protection' – as essential for achieving the MDGs (HMG, 2006: 52). In cases where a government is committed to the MDGs but lacks the capacity to provide these services to the mass of poor people at a sufficient quality to make an impact, they might be contracted out to NGOs (53). The danger of undermining the development of state services is noted: 'in fragile states ... giving aid only through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or private contractors can actually hold back the process of building the capability of the state' (25).

In practice, in many countries, despite the dominance of 'voice' as the rationale for working with NGOs and other CSOs, these organizations continue to be contracted to provide all kinds of services aimed directly at development goals. Thus, on 2 March 2005, in a written parliamentary answer about support to CSOs in Bangladesh, Secretary of State Hilary Benn pointed out that the Bangladesh Country Assistance Plan 'emphasizes access for the poor to resources and services, and the realization of their rights'. He said that approximately 40 per cent of DFID's Bangladesh programme is channelled through CSOs, but this includes funding for NGO programmes on education, livelihoods improvement and HIV/AIDS (including some very large amounts to certain NGOs – BRAC, CARE

Bangladesh, Samata), as well as considerable but smaller amounts for 'voice' and 'accountability' activities and strengthening civil society – for example, through the Manusher Jonno fund, mentioned above, which provides grants to smaller CSOs 'demanding better human rights and governance'. In other words, the main publicly stated rationale only accounts for a minority of the funds channelled through CSOs.

Bangladesh may be a special case in having several large, well-established NGOs providing services to huge numbers of poor people in parallel with state services. When DFID's 2006 Autumn Performance Report gives examples of how DFID intends 'to address underperformance on those PSA targets that are off track', Bangladesh accounts for three of only six mentions of working with NGOs. Nevertheless, there is no sign of any general model of mixed provision of basic services in donor thinking, as represented by DFID, despite the fact that voluntary organizations form an important part of such mixed provision on a sustainable basis in the UK itself.

As well as countries suffering extreme civil conflict or attempting post-conflict reconstruction, the concept of 'fragile states' also covers cases like Zimbabwe and Burma where the government currently is hostile to donor-promoted models of 'good governance' and refuses to take part in, for example, the PRSP process. The point is made that it is precisely in those countries where the model of good governance breaks down entirely that there is the greatest need for basic services to try to reach the MDG targets. With other donors, the UK is prepared in such cases to bypass government and use CSOs and other agencies to deliver aid:

Where the government is not committed to helping its citizens, we will still use our aid to help poor people and to promote long-term improvements in governance. But we will do this by working outside government, and with international agencies like the UN and civil society organizations. (HMG, 2006: 24)

Finally, NGOs and other CSOs may be included in sectoral programmes at a global level – for example, on health or education – within which there is a considerable amount of co-funding between donors. In these cases there may be no systematic attempt to keep track of the involvement of NGOs and other CSOs as such. For example, one of DFID's major programmes is the Global Health Initiatives and Global Health Fund, which has a commitment to funding through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). While the majority of private partners are commercial firms, NGOs also figure strongly, but would not be treated differently from any private-sector entity. An example in Tanzania is SMARTNET, a joint project between DFID and the Royal Netherlands Embassy for social marketing of insecticide-treated bednets, regarded as a 'trailblazer' for the global 'Roll-Back Malaria' partnership,<sup>7</sup> and

implemented by Population Services International, a non-profit organization based in Washington DC, which prides itself on being 'an amalgam of the worlds of commerce and charity'.<sup>8</sup>

### 'Squeezing Out' Fundamental Aspects of NGO Work in Development

Both these rationales have importance, but judging NGOs only by their direct results in terms of either 'voice' or 'impact' downplays several fundamental aspects of NGO work in development.

First, the discourse on 'voice' fails to acknowledge sufficiently the organizational aspect of facilitating democratic participation. One example is a recent report for DFID on general budget support (sometimes called Direct Budget Support – DBS) (Lawson and Booth, 2004). DBS can replace project-based finance, and potentially cut NGOs out of aid finance entirely. Lawson and Booth state the chain of causality and the key assumptions behind the DBS approach in some detail, explaining the role of policy dialogue, democratic accountability, participatory budget processes, human rights and empowerment, but do not specify a role for CSOs or NGOs. The 2006 White Paper identifies civil society as a source of democratic accountability, but separates this from NGOs – seen as a type of private service provider useful where state capacity is lacking.

However, NGOs also epitomize the organizational element of civil society and play a range of specific roles in democratization (Clark, 1991; Fisher, 1998) and in what we may call 'development governance' (Clarke and Thomas, 2005). These have several dimensions, which do not all conform neatly to one model. For example, Clark (2003) takes the World Bank's (1992) four 'pillars of good governance' (transparency, accountability, rule of law, citizen's voice) and suggests that NGOs should work to hold multi-lateral institutions and transnational corporations as well as governments to these principles. Tandon (2003: 70–72) suggests a number of roles for civil society in governance in addition to the 'watchdog' role of ensuring the accountability of market institutions and of government at all levels, as well as monitoring elections and compliance with international obligations. These include a demonstration role in how NGOs and other CSOs govern themselves, contesting the dominant development paradigm, and acting to 'influence public negotiations for public good'. They all seem valid, but go well beyond what is implied by the simple 'voice' model.

Second, there is a contradiction between fitting NGOs' political activities into a prescribed 'voice' model and their advocating and contesting policy issues from an independent position. The CPS (2002) report on the

Southern African case, and the related quote above, show how conflictual are the issues.

Development governance involves both cooperative arrangements and conflict. An emphasis solely on cooperative arrangements may neglect the ingrained ideological assumptions of governance and overlook the contested nature of development. For example, in South Africa Wooldridge and Cranko (1995: 344) argue that although governance is about mediation between various social interests, the process is not impartial and involves the state as a 'biased broker'. Donors such as DFID generally adopt a model of 'good' governance similar to that of the World Bank, which reflects neoliberal values by requiring marketization (Leftwich, 1996). In this model NGOs are expected to help promote development in the sense of poverty reduction or other actions aimed at 'ameliorating the disordered faults of progress' (Cowen and Shenton, 1996), while accepting the inevitability of the form 'progress' is taking through the combination of globalized capitalist industrialization with liberal democracy.

Some NGOs, however, may challenge the assumptions and values that underlie particular models of governance and development, while others (or even the same NGOs in different contexts) accept them. Howell and Pearce (2001) consider this a basic distinction, contrasting NGOs which participate in donor-supported 'good governance' within the 'mainstream' neoliberal project with the 'alternative', where CSOs mobilize and act as a focus for 'strong publics' that contest this project with its associated vision of development. Thus, NGOs' advocacy and facilitation is not always aimed at holding government to account to ensure that pro-poor policies are carried out within the existing economic framework, but may in some cases oppose the whole basis of government and donor policies. An obvious example is opposition to privatization where that is a condition for development assistance that includes backing for a civil society 'voice and accountability' role.

A third aspect relates to how NGOs provide humanitarian relief and other services. These activities can fit into the 'mainstream' discourse of development, not questioning the neoliberal basis of globalization, but there are possible 'alternative' roles which challenge this discourse. This occurs when services are provided on a non-market basis. Just as the facilitation of opposition to neoliberal marketization and globalization may be 'squeezed out' by the dominance of the linear model of 'voice and accountability', so 'alternative' forms of service provision may be 'squeezed out' by the dominance of the logics of 'efficiency' and 'impact'.

In fact NGOs often provide quality services for their own sake, not to achieve specific targets. Many working in co-operatives, mutual or charitable organizations would argue that some quality comes specifically from the

value basis of such organizations – which can often be summarized as aspects of 'reciprocity'. For example, a local CSO may promote community- and family-based support to AIDS orphans by building up reciprocal relationships which are valuable in their own right, beyond the impact on poverty measures. It is perhaps surprising that this type of rationale seems to have been lost completely – there are sound arguments why mutual or non-profit provision has advantages in particular circumstances.

Using outcomes like impact or efficiency to compare services provided by NGOs and other agencies has several serious deficiencies. Wallace and Chapman (2003) point out that two important issues tend to be glossed over in outcome-based evaluations: the quality of relationships (between donor and NGO, between Northern NGO and local partner organization, between all these and 'beneficiaries'), and the process or methods through which NGOs and CSOs work (e.g. trying to empower women or address the needs of the most excluded at the same time as meeting specific output targets). Both are aspects of reciprocity. The 2006 UK White Paper does mention empowerment of women and girls through NGO activities, but does not consider how NGOs come to be good at this type of work as a result of their value basis.

Concentrating on impact implies measuring the short-term performance of interventions or organizations, and may disregard sustainability (see e.g. LaFond, 1995). Some authors go further, arguing that pressure for measurable accountability actually acts *against* sustainable development. For example:

the demands of sustainability contradict the requirements for an unambiguous demonstration of [NGO] achievements. To be sustainable, benefits of external inputs must be generated from changes in economic, social, political, environmental and other processes – which continue once external assistance withdraws. To achieve this, the outcomes of an [NGO's] activities must merge into ongoing processes rather than clearly stand apart from them. ... If they do their work properly, [NGO] effects cannot be kept separate in order to be measured. (Fowler, 1997: 162–3)

A fourth point is about the relationship of NGOs and other CSOs with government agencies. The dominant donor rationale sees NGOs either playing a part in holding governments to account or else filling in gaps in services where governments cannot or will not provide them. But there is also the possibility of working in partnership with government, either through 'co-production' of services by governmental and non-governmental actors (Tendler, 1997) or 'co-governance' in the political and policy arena (Ackerman, 2004). However, although the 2006 UK White Paper repeatedly calls for government and civil society (and indeed the private sector) to 'work together', this remains rather vague. Neither 'co-production' nor 'co-governance' ideas seem to figure in current donor thinking.

Fifth, NGOs' service delivery and promoting 'voice' or rights work are not necessarily separate but may reinforce each other. Thus, for example, developing a new and innovative approach to a particular service will provide that NGO with experience and data to inform lobbying for a change in approach by state agencies. Similarly, a participative style of service provision can lead to empowerment as well as staff satisfaction and hence underpin advocacy or demands for rights.

To illustrate this point, consider the following case study, taken from research by Johnson and Thomas (2003, 2004). A Ugandan NGO shifted its aims from providing services for children with disability (CWDs) to promoting their rights. The idea was to achieve an institutional set-up with an expectation that provision for CWDs should be included in state services, so that the resources of other agencies (schools, ministries) would be leveraged in and accountability demanded if services did not become available. Rather than abandoning the NGO's own work with disabled children in favour of a combination of state provision and a lobbying role for the NGO, its director insisted that the NGO should continue providing services which embodied the notion of rights for such children by treating them with full respect, as a means of promoting these rights more generally. This was undertaken at the same time as participation in the national poverty strategy forum and lobbying nationally and internationally for the rights of disabled children.

This combination seems crucial (rather than concentrating either only on service delivery or only on lobbying). Grassroots involvement motivates staff and helps to maintain the organization's values internally, while at the same time providing credibility as well as the evidence of detailed examples to assist the lobbying effort. Conversely the policy involvement and networking strengthens the NGO's commitment to children's rights and participation, and reinforces its resolve to carry these particular values through into its everyday practices.

Finally, NGOs and other CSOs have a strong role at a global level which is underplayed by concentrating on the role of 'voice' in holding individual governments to account and the 'impact' of services provided in particular countries. The 2006 UK White Paper has a chapter on promoting good governance internationally, which has just a couple of mentions of CSOs with respect to particular examples, but no systematic role for global civil society, and another chapter on reforming the international development system which does not mention civil society and only discusses NGOs with respect to improving the international response to humanitarian crises. Similarly, in the chapters on promoting peace and security and managing climate change there is virtually no mention of NGOs or civil society and certainly not of their potential global lobbying role. This is a remarkable

omission from DFID's rationale for working with NGOs, particularly since apparently it was admiration for global civil society campaigns like Jubilee 2000 and Make Poverty History that led DFID to incorporate such a strong 'voice and accountability' role for civil society in their model of good governance.

In conclusion, it appears that the value basis of NGOs and other CSOs is in danger of being devalued. At the beginning of this chapter we noted the diversity of values and interests underpinning NGOs and other CSOs. I argued that many of these values can be brought together under the rubric of reciprocity (Polanyi, 1957), as an organizing principle that differentiates NGOs from both private-sector and government agencies. NGOs' work can be divided into their political role in civil society and their practical role in providing services. Donors such as DFID conceptualize their work with NGOs mainly in terms of these two roles, but in each case they are expected to perform in a very limited way, conforming to a prescribed model based on the rationales of 'voice' and 'impact'. This tends to ignore or downplay the importance of reciprocity as an organizing principle, and the variety of values underpinning the way NGOs relate to development within this principle.

What are the implications? We should not throw out the baby with the bathwater. The 'voice and accountability' agenda is a great advance on what went before. Where there is recognition of the contested and conflictual nature of the issues, as in the Southern African example, there seems to be a very good basis to build on. But it also seems essential not to lose what is specific and uniquely valuable about NGOs by making them fit into simple linear models.

In DFID's case, the recent paper *Civil Society and Development* also mentions civil society's roles in conflict resolution, global advocacy and innovation in service delivery approaches, plus an 'elusive' role in 'global fellowship and solidarity'.<sup>9</sup> These ideas are found very little elsewhere in recent DFID documents. They probably represent a description of the variety of roles played by CSOs in different parts of the world, where they have various histories of action and relate to donors such as DFID in many different ways. It is not clear if the simpler dual rationale of 'voice' and 'impact', found for example in the 2006 White Paper, is likely to be imposed more strongly in the future, with the concomitant danger of 'squeezing out' other valuable aspects of NGOs in respect of development. The alternative is that the variety of civil society roles in *Civil Society and Development* shows the potential for DFID policy, and hence that of other donors, to evolve in a way that brings back a recognition of the importance of the variety of values motivating NGOs and other CSOs, particularly the underlying principle of reciprocity.



## Notes

1. Part of the introductory section is based on material published in the *Handbook of International Development Governance* (Clarke and Thomas, 2005). Some of the data were collected for use in a study of DFID's Engagement with Civil Society commissioned by the National Audit Office. Thanks to Gerard Clarke for his collaboration. Thanks too to Diana Mitlin and participants at the Manchester Conference for their critical comments. The overall argument, and its weaknesses, are mine.
2. [www.brac.net/about](http://www.brac.net/about) (accessed 5 March 2007).
3. [www.dfid.gov.uk/aboutdfid/DFIDwork/workwithcs/cs-how-to-work-intro.asp](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/aboutdfid/DFIDwork/workwithcs/cs-how-to-work-intro.asp) (accessed 6 March 2007).
4. [www.southernafriustrust.org/background.html](http://www.southernafriustrust.org/background.html) (accessed 5 March 2007).
5. Governance and Transparency Fund Criteria and Guidelines, [www.dfid.gov.uk/funding/gtf-guidelines07.asp](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/funding/gtf-guidelines07.asp) (accessed 6 March 2007).
6. See note on Aid Effectiveness on DFID website: [www.dfid.gov.uk/mdg/aid-effectiveness/what-is.asp](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/mdg/aid-effectiveness/what-is.asp) (accessed 6 March 2007).
7. [www.dfid.gov.uk/casestudies/files/africa/tanzania-malaria.asp](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/casestudies/files/africa/tanzania-malaria.asp) (accessed 26 February 2005); for an update see [www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/tb-malaria-control.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/tb-malaria-control.pdf) (accessed 6 March 2007).
8. [www.psi.org/about\\_us/explained.html](http://www.psi.org/about_us/explained.html) (accessed 6 March 2007).
9. [www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/civil-society-dev.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/civil-society-dev.pdf) (accessed 6 March 2007).

## References

- Ackerman, J. (2004) 'Co-Governance for Accountability: Beyond "Exit" and "Voice"', *World Development* 32(3): 447-63.
- Annis, S. (1987) 'Can Small-scale Development Be a Large-scale Policy? The Case of Latin America', *World Development* 15 (supplement): 129-34.
- Beall, J., D. Lewis and C. Sutherland (n.d.) 'Supporting Human Rights and Governance: A Background Paper on Conceptual and Operational Approaches', draft background paper to Manusher Jonno Civil Society Fund for Bangladesh, [www.manusher.org/draft.pdf](http://www.manusher.org/draft.pdf) (accessed 27 March 2005 and 5 March 2007)
- Bebbington, A. (2005) 'Donor-NGO Relations and Representations of Livelihood in Nongovernmental Aid Chains', *World Development* 33(6): 937-50.
- Bishop, J., and P. Hoggett (1986) *Organising around Enthusiasms*, Comedia, London.
- Blair, H. (2000) 'Civil Society, Empowerment, Democratic Pluralism and Poverty Reduction: Delivering the Goods at National and Local Levels', in D. Lewis and T. Wallace (eds), *New Roles and Relevance: Development NGOs and the Challenge of Change*, Kumarian Press, West Hartford CT, pp. 109-19.
- Butler, R., and D. Wilson (1990) *Managing Voluntary and Non-profit Organizations*, Routledge, London.
- CDS (2004) 'A Leap of Faith? DFID Engagement with Faith-Based Organizations and the Role of Faith Groups in Poverty Reduction', report to DFID, Centre for Development Studies, University of Wales, Swansea, December.
- Chambers, R. (1997) *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London.
- Clark, J. (1991) *Democratizing Development: The Role of Voluntary Organizations*, Kumarian Press, West Hartford CT.

- Clark, J. (2003) *Worlds Apart: Civil Society and the Battle for Ethical Globalization*, Earthscan, London.
- Clarke, G., and A. Thomas (2005) 'Non-governmental Organizations, Civil Society and Development Governance', in H. Zafarullah and A. Huque (eds), *Handbook of International Development Governance*, Marcel Dekker, New York.
- Cowen, M., and R. Shenton (1996) *Doctrines of Development*, Routledge, London.
- CPS (Centre for Policy Studies) (2002) 'Civil Society and Poverty Reduction in Southern Africa: Analytical Overview of the Political Economy of the Civil Society Sector in Southern Africa with regard to the Poverty Reduction Agenda', research report prepared for DFID, July.
- DFID (2006) *Civil Society and Development*, DFID, London.
- Edwards, M., and D. Hulme (1995) 'NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World', *Journal of International Development* 7(6): 849-56.
- Fisher, J. (1998) *Nongovernments: NGOs and the Political Development of the Third World*, Kumarian Press, West Hartford CT.
- Fowler, A. (1997) *Striking a Balance: A Guide to Enhancing the Effectiveness of Non-Governmental Organizations in International Development*, Earthscan, London.
- Freire, P. (1972) *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Gherardi, S., and A. Masiero (1990) 'Solidarity as a Networking Skill and a Trust Relation: Its Implications for Cooperative Development', *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 11(4): 553-74.
- Handy, C. (1988) *Understanding Voluntary Organizations*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Hirschman, A. (1970) *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA.
- HMG (2000) *Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor*, White Paper on International Development, Her Majesty's Government.
- HMG (2006) *Eliminating World Poverty: Making Governance Work for the Poor*, White Paper on International Development, Her Majesty's Government.
- Howell, J., and J. Pearce (2001) *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Introduction*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder CO.
- Hudson, M. (1995) *Managing without Profit: The Art of Managing Third-sector Organizations*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Johnson, H., and A. Thomas (2003) 'Education for Development Policy and Management: Impacts on Individual and Organizational Capacity-Building - A Study of Four Postgraduate Programmes Based in UK and Southern Africa', Report to DFID, unpublished.
- Johnson, H., and A. Thomas (2004) 'Professional Capacity and Organizational Change as Measures of Educational Effectiveness: Assessing the Impact of Postgraduate Education in Development Policy and Management', *Compare* 34(3): 301-14.
- Korten, D. (1990) *Getting to the Twenty-First Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda*, Kumarian Press, West Hartford CT.
- LaFond, A. (1995) *Sustaining Primary Health Care*, London, Earthscan.
- Lawson, A., and D. Booth (2004) 'Evaluation Framework for General Budget Support', Report to Management Group for the Joint Evaluation of General Budget Support, Overseas Development Institute, London, February.
- Leftwich, A. (1996) 'On the Primacy of Politics in Development', in A. Leftwich (ed.), *Democracy and Development*, Polity Press, Cambridge, pp. 3-24.
- NAO (2006) 'Department for International Development: Working with Non-Governmental and Other Civil Society Organizations to Promote Development',

- Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC1311 Session 2005–2006, National Audit Office, London.
- Paton, R. (1991) 'The Social Economy: Value-based Organizations in the Wider Society', in J. Batsleer, C. Cornforth and R. Paton (eds), *Issues in Voluntary and Non-profit Management*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, pp. 3–12.
- Paul, S. (1992) 'Accountability in Public Services: Exit, Voice and Control', *World Development* 20(7): 1047–60.
- Polanyi, K. (1957) *The Great Transformation* (1944), Beacon Press, Boston MA.
- Poulton, R., and M. Harris (1988) *Putting People First: The NGO Approach to Development*, Macmillan, London.
- Randell, J., and T. German (1999) 'United Kingdom', in I. Smillie and H. Helmich (eds), *Stakeholders: Government-NGO Partnerships for International Development*, Earthscan, London.
- ROAPE (1992) 'Democracy, Civil Society and NGOs', Special Issue of *Review of African Political Economy* 20(55): 3–8.
- Schumacher, E.F. (1973) *Small is Beautiful*, Abacus, London.
- Streeck, W., and P. Schmitter (eds) (1985) 'Community, Market, State and Associations? The Prospective Contribution of Interest Governance to Social Order', in W. Streeck and P. Schmitter (eds), *Private Interest Government: Beyond Market and State*, Sage, London.
- Stryjan, Y. (1989) *Impossible Organizations – Self Management and Organizational Reproduction*, Greenwood Press, Westport CT.
- Tandon, R. (2003) 'The Civil Society-Governance Interface: An Indian Perspective', in R. Tandon and R. Mohanty (eds), *Does Civil Society Matter? Governance in Contemporary India*, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, and Sage, London, pp. 59–76.
- Tendler, J. (1997) *Good Governance in the Tropics*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Thomas, A. (1992) 'Non-governmental Organizations and the Limits to Empowerment', in M. Wuyts, M. Mackintosh and T. Hewitt (eds), *Development Policy and Public Action*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 117–46.
- Titmuss, R. (1970) *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Vivian, J. (1994) 'NGOs and Sustainable Development in Zimbabwe: No Magic Bullets', *Development and Change* 25(1): 167–93.
- Wallace, T., and J. Chapman (2003) 'Some Realities behind the Rhetoric of Downward Accountability', paper to INTRAC 5th Evaluation Conference, Netherlands, 1 April.
- Woodbridge, D., and P. Cranko (1995) 'Transforming Public Sector Institutions', in P. Fitzgerald, A. McLennan and B. Munslow (eds), *Managing Sustainable Development in South Africa*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, pp. 328–49.
- World Bank (1991) *World Development Report 1991: The Challenge of Development*, World Bank and Oxford University Press, New York.
- World Bank (1992) *Governance and Development*, World Bank, Washington DC.
- World Bank (1997) *World Development Report 1997: The State in a Changing World*, World Bank and Oxford University Press, New York.
- World Bank (1998) *Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn't and Why*, World Bank and Oxford University Press, New York.
- World Bank (1987) *Development Alternatives: The Challenge for NGOs*, *World Development* 15 (supplement).

## Development and the New Security Agenda: W(h)ither(ing) NGO Alternatives?

Alan Fowler

In the space of some twenty years, non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs) have established a distinct, influential position within the international arena. While improvement is always possible, there are many areas and scales where NGDOs have brought positive change in people's lives, in societies and in the workings of national and international institutions (e.g. Fowler, 2000; Edwards, this volume; Batliwala and Brown, 2006). However, as other chapters argue, success has been accompanied by shadow sides.

The evolution of NGDO-ism has itself worked against the achievement of 'alternative development' in the sense expressed in the mid-1980s: a distinct philosophy and theory of change allied to effective, people-centred development practices (Drabek, 1987: x). Examples of NGDO shadows are: compromise in self-determination, growing dependency on official finance, semi-detachment from the mass of civil society formations, and adopting apolitical state-centric development agendas while claiming to operate according to a distinctive, autonomous logic. In the 1980s, some of these challenges were already anticipated. Others emerged in response to the major discontinuity in the world order caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This chapter does not dwell on the many – both just and unjust – critiques of NGO-ism in terms of these and other shortcomings as self-generated constraints on being 'alternative' (e.g. Lewis and Wallace, 2000; Katsui and Wamai, 2006). Rather, the task is to approach the issue of limitations on NGDOs as development alternatives from the direction of a significant reframing of the aid system, broadly labelled 'securitization' (e.g. Duffield, 2002; Fowler, 2005; Howell, 2006).

Within the competitive geopolitics of the Cold War and a modernization perspective, development and security have always been intertwined as a mutually reinforcing reciprocity in a particular sense. Security creates the predictable conditions required for investment to translate into economic growth, which, in its turn, feeds the expansion of human well-being that reinforces the value of stability and hence of security. Until the Soviet collapse, the notion of NGOs as development alternatives was premised on their application of distinct competencies and comparative advantages to serve this virtuous circularity.

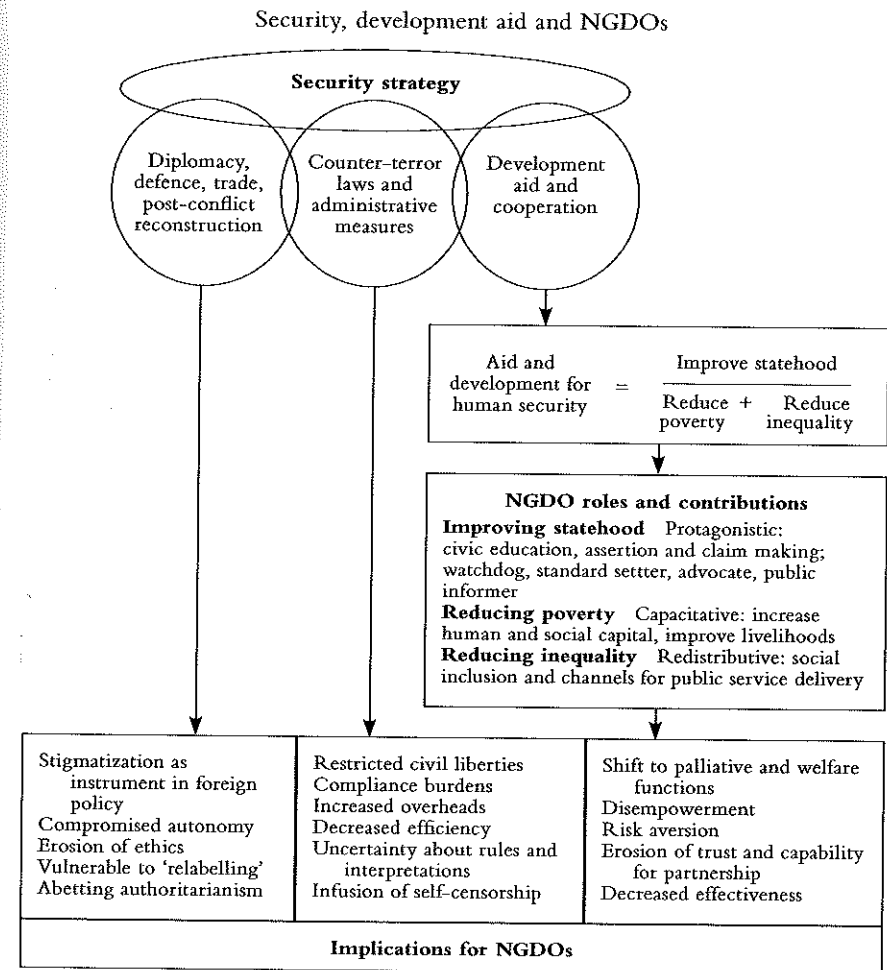
Post-Cold War, the supposedly reluctant but necessary American hegemonic pursuit of a particular type of world order argued for by Mallaby (2002), with its monotheistic undertones lamented by Lal (2004), have invited increasingly violent reactions and the emergence of international insecurity with a new, complex configuration. While perhaps elevated to global consciousness by the terror of al-Qaeda, contemporary insecurity is not simply arising from a supposed clash of cultures, beliefs or civilizations. Insecurity also stems from deeper and wider responses against the dysfunctions – in change-driven anxiety, in environmental unsustainability, in inequality, in injustice – of an enforced globalization of free-market capitalism to which there is, apparently, no alternative either possible or to be tolerated. At a world level at least, the relationship between growth in wealth and national and human security appears not virtuous but inherently destabilizing (Hardt and Negri, 2000). The quest for economic equilibrium on an increasing scale contains forces for disequilibrium (Harvey, 2003). The global system requires active control and management through global governance that may not be up to the task but in any event stubbornly favours the interests of those already empowered.

In this contrary context, NGOs – within the contending concepts and concomitant agency of civil society – face substantive questions about what ‘alternative’ means and entails in theory, strategy and practice. In light of the ever deepening reliance of NGOs on official forms of aid, serious questions arise from the growing integration of overseas development assistance (ODA) into a comprehensive security strategy for the West. Such a strategy is not uniformly employed by each donor country within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Nevertheless, the contours of an emerging development for security agenda (DfS) seem likely to shape the possibility of NGOs either offering or becoming alternatives.

The following section establishes an analytical framework for understanding this problematic. It does so by sketching the major domains of policy and action that donors can deploy to operationalize their foreign relations in an era where domestic security is seen as dependent on the (preventive)

development of countries overseas (Beall et al., 2006). Subsequent analysis concentrates on a security-premised official aid system. The anticipated roles of NGOs are investigated in terms of conditions that militate for or against behaviours or as ‘alternatives’ in this security for development triad. The concluding section draws the optics together in a discussion of what alternatives might mean and the extent to which the imperatives of NGO-ism predispose towards particular choices and possibilities.

**Figure 6.1** Overview of potential NGO limitations due to aid in a security strategy



### International Security: A Strategic Framework

Figure 6.1 sets out one perspective on the overall strategy towards international security being deployed by 'traditional' donor countries of the industrialized West. It contains three overlapping domains with components that are applied in different combinations depending on the geopolitics in play for any particular donor. The first focuses on dilemmas that can act as constraints on (humanitarian) NGOs involved in security-related reconstruction. Second are limitations faced by NGOs arising from the introduction of and compliance with counter-terrorism and related legislation and administrative measures (CTMs). The third lens places NGOs within a development-for-security imperative to stabilize, strengthen or prevent the falling apart of states considered to be failed, weak or simply unable to govern effectively. Here, the major tasks of aid are substantively to reduce poverty and inequality while simultaneously redressing inadequate statehood, understood as conditions of poor governance. Each domain brings implications for NGOs either directly through a financing relationship or indirectly by the ways in which operating environments are shaped through security-premised interactions within and between countries.

The aim is to analyse the implications for NGO alternatives that emerge from the growing emphasis on each of the three domains of action outlined above, namely: post-conflict reconstruction; counter-terrorism measures; and the securitization of the development agenda. Given the recent nature of the shifts we are discussing, and the contested character of the implications, such an analysis is necessarily contingent and to some extent speculative. Nonetheless, there are initial signs that the evolving security agenda has started to make life even more difficult for NGOs seeking to forge meaningful alternatives in this new geopolitical context.

### Taking Sides in the War on Terror: Sharpening the Dilemmas of Complicity in Managing Imperialism

The Global War on Terror (GWOT) was sold as a pledge to eventually ensure stability and security for all the world's citizens. Thus, perversely justified military force, lacking in UN legitimacy, was applied to protect the interests and extend the influence of the existing political and economic power holders in today's imperial hierarchy. The premiss underlying the pledge is a long-standing belief in the universalism of Western values and political-economy that informed colonialism and orientalism (Wallerstein, 2006). Today, this conviction is pursued through the peaceful assertion of diplomacy, trade and negotiation in international institutions. But, when (violently) challenged, it is imposed and managed using force and favour.

However, hard military power has limits. In the aftermath of violence the 'soft power' of mobilizing public support is necessary to create the conditions required for stabilization of a new order. A key soft power element of the security agenda is provision of aid for post-conflict reconstruction, particularly as witnessed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

One outflow is a role for the military in 'armed social work' to win hearts and minds through reconstruction while maintaining order by force of arms (Kukis, 2006). For example, through the US Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI) and Department of Defence Directive 3000.05, of 28 November 2005, America has probably gone furthest in its policy and practice of integrating military functions with aid efforts.

Stability operations are conducted to help establish order that advances U.S. interests and values. The immediate goal often is to provide the local populace with security, restore essential services, and meet humanitarian needs. The long-term goal is to help develop indigenous capacity for securing essential services, a viable market economy, rule of law, democratic institutions, and a *robust civil society*. (USDOD, 2005: 2, emphasis added)

The blurring of military and humanitarian efforts in post-conflict settings is already well explored in terms of moral issues (Schweizer, 2004). For example, while NGOs may be non-uniformed 'alternatives' to the military, they can be locally perceived as indistinct from their home country's interests. Associated pitfalls include: stigmatization as an instrument of foreign policy; compromised autonomy; eroded ethics; vulnerability to political relabelling of states or groups within them as 'terrorist'; and exposure to charges of abetting authoritarian regimes that are of geopolitical interest to a donor government (FIFC, 2004).

However, the contemporary security situation sharpens existing dilemmas for NGOs in that it more clearly exposes the extent to which, in providing humanitarian relief and post-conflict reconstruction services, they are complicit in serving a geopolitical agenda of dubious moral and legal grounding. So, can NGOs fulfil humanitarianism in 'alternative' ways that do not make them politically complicit? To do so,

NGOs would require a radical change in their relationships to western governments, UN agencies, and the marginalized communities they work in. The political analysis of humanitarian crises and humanitarian action is deeply challenging to humanitarians, particularly NGOs. Its central message is that, in a global economy with global communications, no one sits outside the power structures that shape people's lives, least of all NGOs with a western genesis largely funded by western governments and a western public. These are not easy issues for NGOs to face, not least because they are premised on political-economy models which owe as much to one's political beliefs as they do to empirical evidence. As a result, opting for these models requires agencies to make political judgments. (Feinstein Centre, 2004: 82)

Some NGOs reach political judgement by refusing to work in post-conflict settings such as Iraq and Afghanistan or do so without finance from assailable states. Others assume that it is possible to finesse, deny or ignore ethical ambiguities which implies a compatibility between a unilaterally pursued hegemonic world order, respect for human rights and politically neutral humanitarianism that may be more fiction than fact. Pragmatism rules. Yet others assume that, through on-the-ground experience, their advocacy can 'humanitarianise politics without politicizing humanitarianism', a position of business as usual (Janz, 2006).

The second dilemma of alternative lurks in the quotation from the US military. This is the role of NGOs in building a robust post-conflict civil society. In whose image? With what methods when shielded by an occupying military force? With what approach to political autonomy given the overbearing presence of external power? These and other difficult questions also apply to the development lens detailed later. But here, after the trauma of war and destruction, neither NGOs or anyone else seems capable of building civil society in the conflict-ridden hinterlands of the latest imperial encounter.

A third dilemma flows from the second and can be applied to other types of complex political conflicts, such as Darfur and the Ivory Coast. This is the enduring question of an appropriate division of roles between local and foreign NGOs. Are alternative policies and strategies required that may or may not be served by the developmental notion of 'partnership'? And, given the political-economy of Northern NGOs alluded to on the Feinstein quotation, are empowering relational alternatives feasible?

### Constraints on NGOs Associated with Counter-terrorism Measures

Enhanced counter terrorism measures (CTMs) were prompted by the al-Qaeda-instigated attack in America, with United Nations Resolution 1371 of 2001 calling on all members to apply themselves to combat terror within their areas of jurisdiction. Satisfying this entreaty has typically relied on counter-terrorism measures that apply to all citizens and organizations, with what most observers agree are negative implications for the exercise of basic civic rights (Sidel, 2004). Our reading of CTMs suggests that they are likely to have a series of negative implications for NGOs, in terms of:

- restriction on the basic civil liberties under which they are created and operate;
- additional burdens for compliance;
- increase in overhead costs;
- uncertainty about rules and their application;

- infusion of self-censorship;
- heightened risk aversion.

We outline each concern in greater depth before exploring the evidence to date.

### Legal and administrative demands

A primary structural response to prevent violent terrorism has been the passing of new legislation in countries of the North and South, alongside the employment of existing administrative procedures to achieve similar ends. The breadth and scope of these laws has rendered their effects pervasive within the aid system – from back donor to the local office of an International NGO to Southern NGOs, communities and residents. They are critical tools in a central approach to combating terrorism: starvation of funding, allied to tracing terrorists through the resources they mobilize. The sums involved in terrorist attacks are not necessarily large and could easily be hidden within transfers between NGOs. For example, the Madrid train bombing is thought to have cost around €15,000.

To a significant extent, CTMs introduce and rely on government-specified lists of proscribed individuals and organizations. Such lists are shared between governments and posted on the Internet. Because lists come from security services and the prospect of terrorist acts makes governments more mistrustful, secretive and risk averse, they cannot be effectively challenged.

### Know yourself and beyond

Legislation and 'voluntary best practices' require an NGO to ensure that none of their staff or those known to be providing funding is on a proscribed list. 'Know yourself' also implies adopting and continually monitoring procedures and systems to ensure compliance with what CTM requires. A natural tension arises from the 'know yourself' maxim when NGO employees find themselves subject to employer scrutiny. Demonstrating and confirming in writing that an applicant for public finance is able to comply with CTM are now part and parcel of USAID's procedures and a formal requirement for Australian Aid.

### Know (beyond) your partner

Counter-terrorism legislation is creating a direct obligation on Northern NGOs, foundations and similar funders to vouch for the probity of the recipients of their support in terms of eligibility and ultimate use of assistance. Approaches to the interpretation of CTM laws also appear to require a funder to vouch for a partner's partner or, even further, for the bona fides of the final recipient of benefits that funds create. Some US government

agencies also now require a Northern NGDO or Foundation to certify in writing that it has not only checked lists of terrorist organizations but also investigated the data available publicly about its grantees.

### **Follow the money to and from your organization**

To ensure that financial resources are not directly or indirectly deployed to support terrorists or their causes, new laws on international financial transfers are now being applied to NGDOs, as well as remittances. In addition, previously existing laws or regulations defined and propagated by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in the US are being more vigorously enforced. Originally established to counter money laundering, in 2002 FATF's mandate was extended to combat terrorism financing.

Two other constraints arise in the 'follow the money' issue. First, the US Laws apply to not only the transfer of money but also prohibit 'material support' to terrorists or foreign terrorist organizations. These and related laws define support to include 'lodging, training, expert advice or assistance, safe houses ... communications equipment or other physical assets except medicine or religious materials' (InterAction, 2004). Second, US and many other laws prohibit making illegal money legal. This means that the NGDO must not only follow where it sends money, but also know where it came from to ensure that the organization is not being used as a 'laundry' (US Government, 2002; OECD, 2002).

### **Administrative measures**

Alongside these public and overt measures are preliminary indications of subtler ways in which counter-terrorism strategies are pursued. In the case of aid, governments are seldom legally challenged about the way public funds are allocated to NGDOs. Consequently, a choice can easily be made to tighten procedures and requirements – for example, by demanding more information and to apply more stringent risk assessments. Moreover, one of the reasons why decisions about fund reallocation may not be challenged is because Northern NGDOs seldom want to 'rock the boat' or seem to be too difficult or too demanding – the dilemma of being 'too close for comfort' (Edwards and Hulme, 1995). NGDOs that do take issue with such moves are often financed from other (private) sources, which can deepen schisms and the strength of a united front among NGDOs. Thus, self-censorship can result in grudging compliance, although the political realities of a country determine the degree to which this covert scenario plays out.

### **Organizational implications: burdens and risks**

It is clear that laws and procedural changes require much greater NGDO diligence. Examples are: staff educational programmes on the laws, background

checks on employees, internal notification systems and confidential procedures for reporting suspicious transactions, manual or electronic review of lists of 'blocked' organizations, use of 'red flag' checklists to identify potentially dangerous grantees, more complex grant agreements and procedures, reduction or elimination of cash transfers in favour of international correspondent banks, and certification by the recipient NGDO confirming proper fund use.

The costs involved in compliance are likely to be added to organizational overheads. This places additional strain on an already contested (comparative) measure of NGDO efficiency. And, it is far from clear that donors will allow their funds to be used to satisfy CTM requirements. Unlike others, the USA has accepted high overhead levels due to auditing compliance requirements. The danger for non-US NGDOs is that their respective countries adopt CTM but are not willing to accept the extra costs of conforming to what the law requires. At the same time, violation of the laws has serious consequences. In the USA, organizations and individuals associated with the organizations that make improper financial transfers are subject to both criminal and civil penalties. Additionally, charities run the risk of losing their charitable and tax-exempt status.

A normal organizational response to increased threats and uncertainties is to reduce risk, and NGDOs have several options here. Selection of partners and programmes is one of the most obvious. But making significant effort and investment in order to comply fully with legal and administrative requirements can also reduce risk. Another possibility is for a governing body to redefine their risk tolerance levels and risk management strategies and communicate them publicly to show both awareness and openness that improve public image and funders' confidence.

Although the cases of diversion of non-profit funds to terrorism may be few and far between, the precautionary and preventive intentions of counter-terrorism measures mean that, like all other CSOs, NGDOs have to conform.

### **Implications and experiences**

Evidence that CTMs are tightening the space for civil society is increasingly available via the journals and periodic publications of specialist NGDOs, like the Civicus civil society watch programme (CIVICUS, n.d.), which monitor and report on the refinement of legislation and rules justified by terrorism. A common move – under way for example in India – is to (further) increase government oversight and discretionary control on the flow of foreign funds to local CSOs. Enhancing a state's legal ability to restrict the freedom of (religious) association is also becoming more common. However, and although it is not easy to establish effects in practice, some insights are possible.

For example, in order to create awareness and stimulate well-considered, collective responses, during 2006 and 2007, the International NGO Training and Research Centre (Intrac) organized a series of exploratory workshops on CTMs. These events, each with about twenty-five participants mainly from the region concerned, took place in Europe, South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, the USA and with the Somali diaspora in the United Kingdom. These forums provided an opportunity to gather and share information about NGO experiences of these measures in action. The difficulties involved in doing so became readily apparent.

For example, after the first event in the Netherlands, the term 'counter-terrorism' was seldom used to title subsequent workshops. Participants envisaged problems with security and immigration services if this term was used in correspondence or invitations, and so urged caution for reasons of obtaining visas and reducing visibility of the initiative. Instead, workshops were often labelled as reviews of relations between state and civil society.

To provide confidence in a space for open discussion, workshop results were not widely published and were only accessible on the Intrac website for those with passwords. Further, workshop notes or reports did not attribute comments to any specific person or organization. Even then, exchanges were often guarded. Self-censorship is in play, particularly with Southern NGOs. Talking about the constraints imposed by CTMs can too readily be treated as an attempt to discredit the government, inviting punitive responses with little expectation of legal redress.

There are the signs of other effects. Some are well-publicized cases of NGOs, such as Interpal. This British charity was designated a terrorist organization by the US government for its alleged role in channelling funds to Hamas. Despite the Charity Commission finding the charity 'well run and committed', the British government would not intercede to have the designation removed. A Danish NGO found itself in a similar situation and, when cleared of any wrongdoing, was advised to change its name because the government was unable to get the organization taken off the US listing. Examples are also emerging of the 'war on terror' being used as a cover for government harassment of NGOs and popular forces raising critical voices on issues such as the environment in Peru and land rights in Pakistan (Intrac, 2007).

In refusing to sign CTM certification clauses, some NGOs are reducing their resource base. Others are having to deal with government requests to accompany staff to the field as well as having to explain their partners to government agents. Paradoxically, this effect may induce Northern NGOs to remain or re-become development implementers so that they can avoid the hassle and risks of this role being taken up by their local counterparts, which many have been striving for. This would mark a step backwards

in the wider project of Northern NGOs 'handing over the power' to Southern NGOs, particularly vis-à-vis the 'authentic partnership' mode of building inter-organizational relationships (Fowler, 1998). Further, for some American Foundations the administrative burdens of CTM compliance are being accommodated by reducing the number (and increasing the amounts) of grants. A result may be less small seed finance for innovation and for experimenting with alternative forms of social development.

Overall, evidence of the impact of CTMs on NGOs and development processes is still scanty. One reading suggests that a situation of unclear effects may continue as a form of resistance often adopted by a weaker party (Scott, 1990). Faced by a shifting burden of proof of innocence onto their shoulders, NGOs are adopting a position of limited disclosure of CTM impact. They are doing so to protect their relationships and to avoid an insinuation that CTMs are making a notable difference, which would suggest that their house was not in order.

A natural collective response of NGOs would be to argue against the blanket effects of CTMs by advocating for risk assessments of individual organizations. But this approach involves complicity in making easier the government's job of implementing unreasonable regulations. Instead, the body representing UK NGOs involved in international development recommended compliance with requirements of the Charity Commission – the oversight body – which would thus be burdened with working through thousands of pages of reports to gauge regulatory observance (Bond, pers. comm.).

There are very few legally challenged, let alone proven, cases of NGOs as supporters of terrorism, making it difficult to assess actual outcomes. One possible reason for the lack of hard evidence could be of a Machiavellian character. For example, one could imagine governments everywhere not only enhancing CTMs for the formal restraint they impose on civil society, but also because the power of (ambiguous) CTMs lies less in their actual application – which would open up challenges showing their limitations – than in their potential to create an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. Without much additional state effort at monitoring compliance, CTMs provide an opportunity to induce a self-shrinking of space for NGOs to be 'alternative' in practice as well as in thinking.

### Constraints Associated with Development Aid for Security

Counter-terrorism measures were an immediate response to violent attack. Later analysis of terror causes and remedies has given rise to a comprehensive security strategy, outlined in Figure 6.1, where ODA is allocated an important role. The recalibration of overseas development assistance places it

more firmly alongside diplomacy, trade and defence as a key instrument of the security agenda (Duffield, 2001; OECD/DAC, 2003; Natios, 2006). Whether or not the use of ODA as a preventative investment can reduce the causes of insecurity (e.g. DFID, 2005) remains subject to ongoing debate. This section describes what this means in terms of possible constraints for NGDOs as alternatives.

### Security and ODA

Terrorism provided an urgent impulse to reconsider the link between aid and security. This process has updated development thinking, goals and policy, particularly in relation to the obligations and capabilities of nation-states to ensure order. The official development community (UNDP, 2005; UN, 2005a, 2005b; DFID, 2005; HSC, 2005: 152) has signalled three expected contributions from official aid to the DFS agenda: enhancing the quality of statehood in terms of both effectiveness and accountability, while simultaneously eliminating systemic sources of instability stemming from both poverty and inequality.

In terms of statehood, all societies contain forces with a potential to undo or block progress in human well-being, destabilize the polity, perpetuate instability and lead to violence. A government's ability to contain disruption is ultimately premised on monopoly possession and application of physical coercion, but also on its capacity to secure popular legitimacy in a broader sense. For donors, this involves a significant shift in relation to their agendas of 'good governance' and 'democratization', in the direction of addressing more fundamental questions of overcoming 'state failure'. While remaining problematic in terms of its pejorative colonial overtones, and largely self-interested in character, this agenda may signal an overdue engagement with the project of promoting 'state formation'.

Importantly, 'state failure' is also conceptualized in socio-economic terms where even if there is peace, a substantial proportion of the population are stuck in poverty (Chauvet and Collier, 2005): a state has failed its people. The relationship between absolute poverty and insecurity as understood by aid agencies is expressed in the following quotation:

Poor countries are most at risk of violent conflict. Research on civil war shows that lower levels of GDP per capita are associated with a higher risk of violent and more prolonged conflict. All other things being equal, a country at \$250 GDP per capita has an average 15% risk of experiencing a civil war in the next five years. At a GDP per capita of \$5,000, the risk of civil war is less than 1%. (DFID, 2005: 8; also OECD/DAC, 2003)

Such a causative link underlies the standards employed by the World Bank to define a country as fragile, with development assistance dedicated to poverty reduction and to have a critical, preventive security dimension.

While absolute poverty matters, Lia and Hansen (2000: 13) argue that relative deprivation is also a driver of disaffection and terrorism. In other words, inequality is a source of insecurity. This causal association is restated in an analysis of the global social situation (UN, 2005b) and finds echoes in the World Development Report 2006 (World Bank, 2005). The general position is that

Violence is often rooted in inequality. It is dangerous for both national and international peace and security to allow economic and political inequality to deepen. Such inequalities, especially struggles over political power, land and other assets can create social disintegration and exclusion and lead to conflict and violence. (UN, 2005a)

In sum, there is a donor conviction that ODA can decrease the potential for (inter)national security by enhancing the quality of statehood while reducing poverty and inequality respectively. What are the possible implications for NGDOs?

### NGDO roles and contributions to development for security

Each dimension of development for security – reducing inequality and poverty while improving statehood – offer potential sites for NGDOs both to be and to produce 'alternatives'. However, it is equally the case – and perhaps to a greater extent – that each site also creates significant difficulties for such projects. Here we explore constraints further, first through each dimension separately and then taken together.

In terms of challenging inequality, NGDOs face considerable obstacles and not just because other constraints combine to steer them towards apolitical functions. They have neither the assets required to promote equality nor the means to redistribute them even if they did. Moreover, they lack the political capacity and uniformity of view or of theory (see Hulme, this volume) to challenge significantly the ways in which socio-economic inequalities have become institutionalized within political norms and structures. Nonetheless, NGDOs can focus on exacting government compliance regarding their obligations to ensure equitable access to public goods, pursuing popular mobilization to this end (World Bank, 2005: 222). Further support can be offered to popular struggles against discrimination. As of old, 'alternatives' lie in operating in niches populated by the most excluded. Given their enduring resource limitations, the security perspective of combining niche with outreach invites exploration of alternative ways of scaling up NGDO ways of working rather than in the identification and demonstration of innovation solely or per se (Uvin et al., 2000). Another way of looking at alternatives is, therefore, for NGDOs to reorient towards systemic collaboration with civic actors and grassroots energies to be found in social movements and other member-based formations. An alternative



lies in being non-dominant, or exploitive parties in new configurations of rights- and demand-driven civic relationships.

Establishing a clearer or bigger role for NGDOs in tackling poverty reduction is no less a challenge. The sheer scale of the global problem demands forms of public action that only developmental states have historically been able to offer, while NGOs have not unambiguously demonstrated an ability to reach the poorest groups in society (Riddell and Robinson 1995; Fowler, 2000). An alternative approach to NGDOs in poverty reduction is, therefore, to rethink the task as one of redistributing the risk and uncertainty of globally connected, locally articulated change away from those most vulnerable and least able to cope. This would be an alternative to technocratic approaches to poverty reduction that are dominated by assets, capital and capabilities, as bringing into focus the substantial 'churning' of populations into and out of poverty that make an emphasis on beneficiary targeting a questionable strategy (Krishna, 2006). The fear and the (frustrated) hope associated with dropping into and of (not) escaping from poverty feeds social anxiety and hence instability. Risk-based thinking invites an alternative discussion when engaging, for example, with poverty-reduction strategies and processes (PRSP). States are sensitive to discontent and the potential for civic disobedience and insurrection. In responding to such sensitivity, development for security offers NGDOs opportunities for creative thinking about and strategizing towards the relationship between poverty, injustice and instability in ways that open up space for civic agency in order to reduce the potential for instability.

States are weak or fragile for many reasons. Donors are only beginning to understand how they might go about addressing this problem, let alone think through the proper role of NGDOs in such context-specific processes. And there is a strong sense that NGDOs may be less important here than other more political actors. For official aid, the DfS agenda is hampered by the Westphalian principle of non-interference in a country's internal affairs, perhaps rendering apolitical and technocratic approaches inevitable. An NGDO alternative is to not self-impose this principle. Instead, in civic solidarity, an option is to work on the foundations of legislative self-determination. This alternative has theoretical, process and substance dimensions worthy of elaboration.

A development-for-security agenda that foresees a robust and democratic developmental state as a condition for enduring stability both highlights and sharpens a perceived contradiction and tension between NGDO roles as civic protagonists, on the one hand, and compliant service providers, on the other. Put another way, it opens up the necessity for a conversation about NGDOs in relation to good governance in the sense of the distribution of power between state and citizen that is inherent to all conceptualizations

and theories of civil society. It points, on the one hand, towards alternatives in the direction of building and deepening the capacities of civil society to redistribute different types of power-selecting processes and time frames that are most likely to succeed under different country conditions and historical trajectories. On the other hand, it implies relational capabilities and strategies to engage with, rather than circumvent, political society in a mutual strengthening that brings the state under the influence of society instead of the other way around (see Guijt, this volume). For Gaventa (2006: 21-30), both reflecting and extending the above, it involves processes of CSO capacity development that are driven by political analysis directed at rediscovering what attaining a robust democracy – now atrophying in 'mature' democracies – means by, *inter alia*,

1. Recognizing the need for context-resonating democracies, rather than the implied one-size-fits-all democracy modelled on the West.
2. Appreciating the multiple identities and the sources of civic energy that political society should reflect.
3. Under constraints of increasing inequality, directing greater attention to the material/financial resource base required for autonomous civic action.
4. Rethinking the grounding of representative legitimacy.

This direction of alternatives towards more politically informed, civic-driven change is highly problematic for many NGDOs. It calls for a quality of partnership that is rooted more in a solidarity perspective and purpose than in efficient redistribution. It calls for creative use of technological innovations that enable horizontal and vertical connections between levels of civic action and governance engagement (Bard and Söderqvist, 2002). Such facilities enable the real-time dialogues required to hold the tensions between the pace, pressures and interests of different environments and constituency expectations. But it also calls for a quality of resources – long-term, process-oriented, flexible and enabling – that are hard to create or to access (although see Guijt, and also Derksen and Verhallen, this volume). Shifting the rules of the aid game in the direction of this type of quality over greater quantity remains a serious problem. Nevertheless, a paradigm that positions civil society and citizens as central agents in establishing the quality of statehood required for robust security is, arguably, an alternative particularly worthy of the name.

### Conclusions

The preceding analysis suggests that challenges coming from the new security agenda call for the notion of NGDO alternatives to be rethought and reconstructed. Two reasons for this stand out. First, there are signs that

power holders already regard (some) NGOs to be sufficiently 'alternative' to require constraint. Put another way, governments are waking up to the fact that, at different socio-political scales, civil society contains and exhibits compliant, indifferent and counter-hegemonic formations and agency. While this mix has always been the case, the concern for security shifts the benefit of the doubt about NGO presence, behaviour and intentions from benign to suspicious. As Mark Sidel observes, development for security now places NGOs in an ambivalent position of being treated as both an abettor of insecurity and a collaborator in its prevention.

A number of governments and political actors seem to regard the third sector as a source of insecurity, not as a civil society but as encouraging uncivil society, not as strengthening peace and human security but as willing conduit for, or an ineffective, porous and ambivalent barrier against insecurity in its most prominent modern forms, terrorism and violence. (Sidel, 2006: 201)

This apparent contradiction can be traced to selective, disputed understandings of civil society and its role in mediating power between citizen and state. The forces involved are played out between different segments, values and interests within the civic arena, dynamics which can be misused by regimes to extend control over citizens' lives. In other words, inter-civic disputes between classes, ethnicities, religions, genders, ages, nationalities and so on allow states to reinforce their mechanisms of constraint on and beyond NGOs. This self-inflicted limitation invites a different approach to what 'alternative' might mean.

A second reason for rethinking the idea of NGOs as 'alternatives' stems from a sharper 'for us or against us' pressure to work within and perhaps reform a particular type of globalization or adopt a counter-position that is unlikely to be funded by mainstream official aid. As one activist observed, the revolution will not be funded (Del Moral, 2005). Through this lens, political neo-conservative ideologists, to be found for example in the American Enterprise Institute, argue that NGOs lack the accountability, legitimacy or right to act as an 'alternative' voice to legally constituted governments (see Hulme, this volume). In contrast, the political far left argues that, far from being an 'alternative', NGOs are complicit in perpetuating a US-led hegemonic, globalizing capitalist economic system that is the root of the social injustice, instability and the very causes they raise money to fight (Bond, 2006). In this framing, the real meaning of 'alternative' and the ultimate source of security is structural transformation of the world order (Sen et al., 2007).

There is little to be gained by trying to adjudicate between these perspectives on alternatives as reformation or transformation, or possibilities reflecting other ideological streams and traditions (Chambers and Kymlicka,

2002; Hodgkinson and Foley, 2003). For they all rely on definitions and uses of the concept of civil society that are self-referential to the theory in which they are embedded. As a result, identifying NGOs as civic actors makes discourse about 'alternatives' depend on the theoretical frame being applied: as much an issue of ideological predisposition as of empirical validity of theoretical predictions over disparate time scales.

More pertinent is to look behind contending theories to their common challenge: this is the task of coherently describing and explaining the evolution, constitution and distribution of power between state and citizens over time (Haugaard, 1997; Lukes, 2005). Such a perspective is intrinsically about politics. And, while the distribution of roles and authority across a society's institutions remains contested across the secular political-ideological spectrum, common cause is that political dispensations should ultimately derive from power founded on and exercised from an adequately informed, capable and self-aware citizenry.

Achieving this condition requires initiatives based on a thorough reading of power in its overt and covert forms, identification of the spaces where they are played out and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion they contain (Guijt in this volume; Gaventa, 2006). Such a capability also calls for what Foucault (1987) terms self-care. That is an honest, critical NGO self-awareness of power deeply embedded and locked within language and discourse – like 'alternatives' – which determine the very thoughts and hence knowledge through which meaning and power relationships are themselves understood, communicated and manipulated.

Adopting this perspective on alternatives could imply an (unlikely) bifurcation of NGOs towards the ends of a spectrum of compliance or resistance. This would alter today's 'bell curve' NGO ecology of mainly middle-of-the-road, more or less critical fellow travellers – with a few more autonomous outliers that eschew public funding – that work for stability within a unipolar, enforced world economic and political order. Realistically, much militates against this future direction for NGO alternativism, particularly as governments possess a growing array of instruments to impede NGOs adopting this type of alternative. Nevertheless, relational innovation between civic actors, reformulation of self-understanding and purpose, and strategic awareness of the long game being played, could all be aligned towards a messy 'transformatory-reformism'. For this condition is likely to be the lived reality in rediscovering and reinvigorating the notion of 'alternative' such that this dimension of NGO-ism does not wither away on the security vine.

## References

- ActionAid/Care (2006) *Where To Now? Implications of Changing Relations between DFID, Recipient Governments and NGOs in Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda: Implications of Direct Budget Support for Civil Society Funding and Policy Space*, ActionAid/Care UK, London.
- Bard, A., and J. Söderqvist (2002) *Netocracy: The New Power Elite and Life after Capitalism*, Pearson Educational, Harlow.
- Batliwala, S., and D. Brown (eds) (2006) *Transnational Civil Society: An Introduction*, Kumarian Press, Bloomfield.
- Beall, J., T. Goodfellow and J. Putzel (2006) 'Introductory Article: On the Discourse of Terrorism, Security and Development', *Journal of International Development* 18: 51-67.
- Bond, P. (2006) 'Civil Society in Global Governance: Facing Up to Divergent Analysis, Strategy, and Tactics', *Voluntas* 17(4): 359-71.
- Burrell, S., and S. Maxwell (2006) 'Reforming the International Aid Architecture: Options and Ways Forward', *Working Paper 278*, Overseas Development Institute, London.
- Chambers, S., and W. Kymlicka (eds) (2002) *Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ.
- Chauvet, L., and P. Collier (2005) 'Policy Turnarounds in Fragile States', Centre for the Study of African Economies, Oxford.
- CIVICUS (n.d.) 'Civil Society Watch programme', [www.civicus.org/csw](http://www.civicus.org/csw).
- Del Moral, A. (2005) 'The Revolution Will Not Be Funded', *LiP Magazine*, 4 April, [www.LiPmagazine.org](http://www.LiPmagazine.org).
- DFID (2005) *Fighting Poverty to Achieve a Safer World: A Strategy for Security and Development*, Department for International Development, London, March.
- Drabek, A. (ed.) (1987) 'Development Alternatives: The Challenge for NGOs', *World Development* 15 (supplement 1): ix-xv.
- Duffield, M. (2001) 'Governing the Borderlands: Decoding the Power of Aid', *Disasters* 25(4): 308-20.
- Duffield, M. (2002) *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security*, Zed Books, London.
- Edwards, M., and D. Hulme (eds) (1995) *NGOs: Performance and Accountability: Beyond the Magic Bullet*, Earthscan, London.
- Feinstein Center (2004) *Ambiguity and Change: Humanitarian NGOs Prepare for the Future*, Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University, Medford MA.
- FIFC (2004) 'The Future of Humanitarian Action: Implications of Iraq and Other Recent Crises', Report of an International Mapping Exercise, [www.famine.tufts.edu](http://www.famine.tufts.edu).
- Foucault, M. (1987) 'The Ethics of Care for Self as Practice of Freedom', in J. Bernauer and D. Rasmussen (eds), *The Final Foucault*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Fowler, A. (1998) 'Authentic Partnerships in the New Policy Agenda for International Aid: Dead End or Light Ahead?' *Development and Change* 29(1): 137-59.
- Fowler, A. (2000) 'NGOs, Civil Society and Social Development: Changing the Rules of the Game', *Geneva 2000 Occasional Paper No. 1*, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva.
- Fowler, A. (2005) 'Aid Architecture: Reflections on NGO Futures and the Emergence of Counter Terrorism', *Occasional Paper No. 45*, International NGO Training and Research Centre, Oxford.
- Gaventa, J. (2006) 'Finding the Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis', *IDS Bulletin*, 37(6), Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.
- Hardt, M., and A. Negri (2000) *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA.
- Harvey, D. (2003) *The New Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Haugaard, M. (1997) *The Constitution of Power: A Theoretical Analysis of Power, Knowledge and Structure*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Hodgkinson, V., and M. Foley (eds) (2003) *The Civil Society Reader*, Tufts/University Press of New England, Hanover.
- Howell, J. (2006) 'The Global War on Terror, Development and Civil Society', *Journal of International Development* 18: 121-35.
- HSC (2005) *Human Security Report: War and Peace in the 21st Century*, Human Security Center, University of British Columbia, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- InterAction (2004) *Handbook on Counter-Terrorism Measures: What U.S. Nonprofits and Grantmakers Need to Know*, Interaction, Washington DC.
- Intrac (2007) *Intrac 35*, International NGO Training and Research Centre, Oxford.
- Janz, M. (2006) 'Ambiguity and Change: Humanitarian NGOs Prepare for the Future', in *Global Future*, World Vision, Monrovia, November, pp. 22-3.
- Katsui, H., and R. Wamai (eds) (2006) *Civil Society Reconsidered: A Critical Look at NGOs in Development Practice*, Institute of Development Studies, University of Helsinki, Helsinki.
- Krishna, A. (forthcoming) 'For Reducing Poverty Faster: Target Reasons Before People', *World Development*.
- Kukis, K. (2006) 'Looking the Other Way', *Time Magazine*, December: 2.
- Lal, D. (2004) *In Praise of Empires: Globalization and Order*, Palgrave, New York.
- Lewis, D., and T. Wallace (eds) (2000) *New Roles and Relevance: Development NGOs and the Challenge of Change*, Kumarian Press, Bloomfield.
- Lia, B. and A. Hansen (2000) 'Globalisation and the Future of Terrorism: Patterns and Predictions', FFI Report 2000/01704, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, Kjeller.
- Lukes, S. (2005) *Power: A Radical View*, 2nd edn, Palgrave, London.
- Mallaby, S. (2002) 'The Reluctant Imperialist: Terrorism, Failed States, and the Case for American Empire', *Foreign Affairs*, March/April.
- Natios, A., 2006, 'Five Debates on International Development: The US Perspective', *Development Policy Review* 24(2): 131-9.
- OECD (2002) *Combating the Abuse of Non-profit Organizations*, Financial Action Task Force, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris, December.
- OECD/DAC (2003) *Development Co-operation Lens on Terrorism Prevention: Key Entry Points of Action*, [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/4/16085708.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/4/16085708.pdf).
- Riddell, R., and M. Robinson (1995) *Non-Governmental Organizations and Rural Poverty Alleviation*, Clarendon Press, London.
- Schweizer, B. (2004) 'Moral Dilemmas for Humanitarianism in the Era of "Humanitarian" Military Interventions', *IRRC* 86(855): 547-64.
- Scott, J. (1990) *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, Yale University Press, New Haven CT.
- Scott, T. (2006) 'Decentralization and Human Development Reports', *NHDR Occasional Paper 6*, National Human Development Report Series, Human Development Report Office, United Nations Development Programme, New York.
- Sen, J., A. Escobar and P. Waterman (eds) (2007) *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires*, Viveka, New Delhi.

## How Civil Society Organizations Use Evidence to Influence Policy Processes

**Amy Pollard and Julius Court**

The concept of civil society is not new; it has been contested within political philosophy, sociology and social theory for hundreds of years.<sup>1</sup> What is new is the increasing emphasis on the concept over the last decade – ‘civil society’ has become a buzzword within international development. All manner of claims have been made about the potential of ‘civil society’, and specifically ‘civil society organizations’ (CSOs), to act as a force to reduce poverty, promote democracy and achieve sustainable development. But how exactly do they do this? Are CSOs always a force for good? What is the proper role of CSOs in international development? How do they influence policy? A number of studies have responded to these questions, identifying a number of issues around the accountability, legitimacy and effectiveness of the sector (Howell and Pearce, 2001; Lewis, 2001; Edwards, 2004; Van Rooy, 1999; Anheier et al., 2004).

Meanwhile, literature on bridging research and policy in international development has started to explore these very same issues from a different perspective. So far, these streams of thinking have existed in relative isolation. There is remarkably little systematic work on the role of evidence as CSOs attempt to influence policy processes. Does evidence matter to CSO work? If so, how, when and why? Can evidence improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of CSOs? This review will attempt to respond to these questions by bringing together literature on the use of evidence in policymaking with literature on civil society organizations in international development.

We hope that bridging these streams of thinking may help to answer some of the questions that have emerged from the civil society literature as it has grown in prominence. Whilst some consider that the claims made

for civil society have reduced the notion to an 'analytic hatstand' (Van Rooy, 1999) on which any number of ideas about politics, organization and citizenship can be hung, others consider that the diversity of thinking around this single subject invigorates civil society itself, as an 'intellectual space for critical thought and action' (Howell and Pearce, 2001). Debates around the role of CSOs in international development have often focused on the nature of those organizations themselves. This approach has often made it difficult to pinpoint the influence CSOs have in policy processes, developing into a tautology – a definition of CSOs as organizations which work towards democracy and development makes it difficult to identify *how* exactly they achieve these ends. This chapter will examine how CSOs influence policy processes from the opposite end of this puzzle – taking policy processes as the starting point for analysis.

### The Policy Cycle

Following Lasswell (1977), the most common approach to the study of public policy disaggregates the process into a number of functional components. These can be mapped onto an idealized model of the policy cycle (see Figure 7.1).

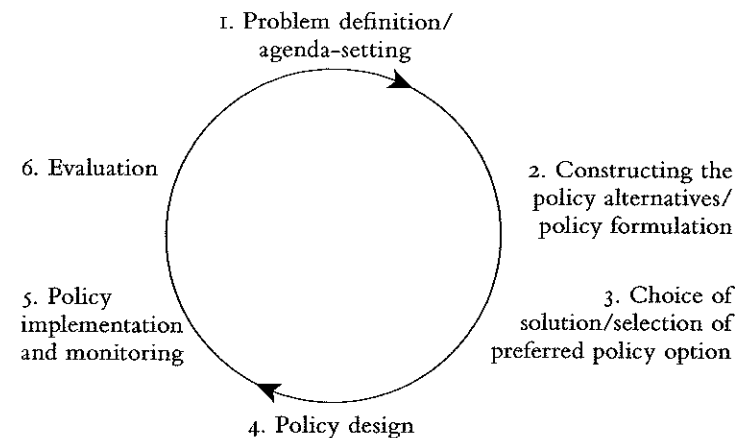
Whilst policymaking may not work logically through these stages in real life, this model does provide a useful entry point for thinking about how CSOs may influence different parts of the process. If policy processes tend to have similar functional elements, it is likely that CSOs will impact upon its various aspects in different ways. It may well be that success in influencing an agenda, for example, often requires a different kind of approach than influencing the implementation of policy.

For the purposes of this chapter, the functions of the policy processes will be simplified into four categories:

- Problem identification and agenda setting
- Formulation and adoption
- Implementation
- Monitoring and evaluation (and reformulation).

These four functions will be used to organize the literature in this section. In each part we will map the specific issues which arise as CSOs use evidence to influence different parts of the policy process, hoping to identify how CSOs may maximize their chances of policy impact.

Figure 7.1 The policy cycle



Source: Young and Quinn, 2002.

### Identifying Problems and Setting the Agenda

In order to introduce a problem to the policy agenda – or 'turn the problem into an issue' (Young and Quinn, 2002: 13) – it is necessary to convince the relevant policy actors that the problem is indeed important and solvable. For many CSOs, being part of setting the policy agenda is a task which plays to their strengths. Those CSOs with practical experience are often in an excellent position to crystallize and articulate the problems facing ordinary people with whom they work. The key issues are often around how the understanding that CSOs have of development problems can be 'packaged' up and communicated effectively so that they gather momentum.

#### Building awareness

CSOs have played a critical role in fostering individual awareness and knowledge – which can eventually lead to incremental policy changes or which can create policy windows. Whether they instigate opportunities directly, respond to them, or simply lay their foundations, to create policy windows CSOs must be adept at understanding and negotiating the contexts in which they work. In the long term, the role that many CSOs play in education may develop a well-informed community with the capacity to pinpoint and articulate development problems in the future (Arko-Cobbah, 2004). For example, Arko-Cobbah argued that libraries in South Africa have been important repositories for information on good governance, which

maintain the possibility for policy shift as enthusiasm on the subject waxes and wanes.

CSOs can also be much more proactive in creating policy opportunities. Fabioli (2000) documents the contribution of Journalists Against Aids, working in Nigeria to highlight the urgent need to address issues around the disease. To be successful with both policymakers and the public, CSOs need to combine personal testimonies with macro-level analysis – emphasizing both the gravity of the situation and the opportunity for action.

Combining personal and wider social analysis was also effective for the Addis Ababa Muslim Womens' Council, working to raise awareness of women's rights in Ethiopia. Mohammed (2003) notes that their meticulous community-based research was matched by detailed engagement with the text of the Qu'ran on the rights of women. Equipping women with this knowledge at community workshops helped them to raise the issues with both their families, communities and sharia courts. Here, it seems that established issues, knowledge and understanding can be an important lever to bring new issues to the fore. Ideology, religious beliefs and mainstream views can work in tandem with more challenging ideas – 'piggybacking' on the respectability of the former.

### **Framing the terms and mobilizing opinion**

CSOs can be key agents in coining or popularizing a particular vocabulary within policy debates. Shaping terminology is often more than just wordplay, but is critical to which ideas and interests are noted, and which are not. Roe (1991), among others, has emphasized the importance of 'policy narratives' from a theoretical perspective. Thompson and Dart (2004) use the case of welfare reform in Canada to argue also that, through the discourses that they use, CSOs have framed the 'subjects' which social policy is intended to benefit, thereby framing the ultimate trajectory of this policy.

Many religious CSOs take this further, using language derived from spiritual sources to emphasize a moral dimension in policy agendas. They can create ideas that carry a sense of morality in policy debates without alienating those who don't share their religious derivation (Omar, 2004). Hutanuwatr and Rasbach (2004) suggest that Buddhist values provide an alternative to modernizing development agendas, providing a conceptual basis on which self-reliant, non-violent communities can form.

The concepts which underlie CSOs can be critical in inspiring and energizing their members. It seems here that the communication of evidence, rather than its empirical basis, is the critical factor for policy influence. Whether sparking a trend or creating a vantage point within a long-running discussion, the key is to coin ideas which have resonance within a particular social context.

### **Crystallizing the agenda**

Some policy processes are tied to specific institutional arrangements through which agendas must formally be set. When it comes to interfacing with complex bureaucracies, donors and governments, the importance of evidence in the work of CSOs comes quickly to the fore. Many writers are particularly pessimistic about the ability of CSOs to influence 'high' policy agendas. Brock and McGee (2004), for example, suggest that trade policy processes are so dominated by the liberalization ideology of donors that CSOs lose any legitimacy in discussions around the agenda as soon as they begin to question it. The technical nature of the languages through which these discussions take place can also exclude those who might critique them. The value placed on donor 'coordination and convergence' is used to sideline CSOs from agenda setting unless they bolster the consensus view. Cornwall and Gaventa (2001) note that knowledge derived from more academic sources is privileged against that from CSOs involved in the practical provision of services. There is a dilemma here as to whether CSOs should respond to this by using more academic evidence in their work, bolstering its credibility, or find other ways to present their practical expertise as evidence in a more credible way.

Pettifor (2004) has argued that this dilemma places a particular impetus on the importance of analysing evidence well. She explained the success of the Jubilee 2000 campaign in raising the issue of debt relief through its ability to 'cut the diamond' of evidence – amassing a substantial volume of data and being able to present it in a way that makes the policy implications clear. It may be that the amount of evidence needed to change an agenda is directly proportional to how radical this change may be.

When CSOs are specifically mandated to influence agenda setting, they may find more success. Many poverty-reduction-strategy processes have made explicit attempts to fold CSOs into how problems are framed and which issues are to be addressed. Participative poverty assessments (PPAs) have been reasonably successful in working towards this (Driscoll et al., 2004; Pollard and Driscoll, 2005). In both Rwanda and Kyrgyzstan, PPAs were undertaken by CSOs, commissioned by the government. Both documents were very successful in setting the agenda for poverty reduction in an evidence-based way. In Rwanda, a CSO facilitated the 'Udbeme' initiative as an action research tool. This was based on traditional Rwandan practice of community self-help, and became a central feature of the PRS. In Kyrgyzstan, CSOs gained access to communities usually sceptical of government officials, gathering rich data on poverty in the country (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001). Here, the question of whether CSO research is influential or not may be a question of whether they are included in policy processes in the first place.

There seems to be a difference between the tactics which are effective where CSOs are deliberately incorporated in the *process* of agenda setting, and where they are not. Where the contribution of CSOs is already written into the policy process, their work seems most effective when it is demonstrably rigorous; with an explicit method to synthesize public interests and views (see also Keck and Sikkink, 1998). Where CSOs must compete to influence agendas, this empirical quality is perhaps less effective than how they package their work. Those aiming to make more radical changes to mainstream agendas may need to make special efforts to be explicitly systematic and empirically rigorous, whereas those closely aligned with dominant views may have to position their work against a network of overlapping interests.

### Influencing the Formulation and Adoption of Policy

For many CSOs, involvement in the formulation and adoption of policy is central to a mandate of 'representing' the interests and view of poor people. CSOs are often key in both outlining the different policy options and deciding between them. This role gives them status as 'democratic' actors. But why should the views of CSOs be taken into account? The major issue is how CSOs can hold a legitimate place in the eyes of policymakers, and also in the eyes of the communities they 'represent'. Another important set of issues concerns the political context within which CSOs operate. There is increasing democratization in many countries at the macro-level and many governments see CSOs as a legitimate and helpful partner. However, the context is less favourable in other countries where CSO activity may be actively discouraged. CSOs will need to respond differently depending on the macro-context as well as regarding each specific policy issue.

#### Working from 'outside the tent'

Some CSOs work as mediators, influencing the formulation of policy by influencing the process in which it is formed. Van der Linde and Naylor (1999) use the example of Kenya's Nairobi Peace Initiative to demonstrate the value of having an independent agent who can facilitate dialogue between two warring factions. This informal network of NGOs was able to act as a go-between, using their tacit knowledge of the area to disseminate examples of inter-community cooperation sensitively to build a process for rebuilding peace. In other circumstances, the political nature of evidence was critical in making it influential. An Indonesian CSO, lobbying to reformulate the government's birth control programme into a family welfare programme, integrated their findings on the effectiveness of this approach

with passages from the Qu'ran and Hadith. This inflected the proposal with a call to respect the interests of the Muslim majority, who had recently been under pressure from Christian, Confucian, Hindu and Buddhist groups. Drawing out the political aspect of this evidence made it more attractive for the government to act upon – because they could do so as a statement of support for Muslims.

Some moves towards 'participative' policymaking – involving local communities in decisions which will affect them – have had more influence 'outside the tent' than inside, where they were originally directed. Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002) note that the efforts to engage civil society participation in macroeconomic policy have often had more success as an education process (for both civil society and policymakers) than as a means for civil society to contribute ideas which directly shape policy. The influence of civil society is 'softer', raising issues in the minds of policymakers, but leaving it to them to interpret how these confer specific policy options. This kind of influence is difficult to gauge, which has made the monitoring of participative practices problematic, and their accountability challenging (Driscoll et al., 2004). Accountability problems are underscored by the difficulties of getting the full range of community members to take part in participative formulation processes. Reflecting wider experience, a project in Argentina found that the most marginalized groups were loath to participate unless they could see the tangible and immediate benefits of doing so (Schusterman et al., 2002). The process of attempting to elicit their participation, however, did improve their awareness of the issues and was useful as a kind of education exercise. It seems that initiatives to include civil society in the formulation of policy have unintended benefits, even where they have less direct influence.

To influence formulation from 'outside the tent' CSOs must often be simultaneously persuasive to policymakers and local people. Where there is a specific need to act and appear independent, tacit knowledge can be a valuable tool to negotiate complex situations. Sometimes CSOs may influence the course of events in ways they did not originally intend. Here knowledge is not exactly used as evidence (in a deliberate and persuasive way) by CSOs, but it does create opportunities for individuals to apply this knowledge as they choose.

#### Working from 'inside the tent'

When CSOs have become formal participants in the formulation and adoption of policy, a number of questions have been raised over whether they are 'too close for comfort' with government and donors, who often control the terms of that engagement. Hulme and Edwards (1997) suggest that when bilateral and multilateral donors provide funding for CSOs, and

place these same CSOs at the centre of their 'good governance' work, CSOs quickly start to justify their position in terms of ideology, rather than any empirical verification of their legitimacy or performance.

Many have argued that those CSOs that are selected to take part in formulation processes tend to be those whose political sympathies and approaches are already well-aligned with donors, limiting the extent to which they influence policy in any meaningful way (Bazaara, 2000; Ottaway and Carothers, 2000). A related issue may be the funding structures of CSOs. Ottaway and Carothers point out that donor efforts to 'strengthen' the capacity of CSOs to participate in formulating their assistance programmes often risks undermining the legitimacy on which their inclusion is premised. Lewis (1999a) concurs that the pressures of maintaining good relations with donors when part of formulation processes can divert NGOs from their primary task of demonstrating accountability to those whose interests they are supposed to advance.

Evidence may be a useful tool to deal with these issues. For example, the WTO exhibited a bias towards CSOs that conformed with the institution, neglecting its reformist and radical critics to maintain an artificially positive view of its policies (Scholte et al., 1998). There were, however, some CSOs which, despite their radical stances, backed up their views with systematic, rigorous and accessible evidence. These organizations were an influential minority, whom the WTO would seek out as representatives of dissenting views. It may be that CSOs can adjust their use of evidence to carve out a specific role within the formulation process.

Malena (2000) suggests that NGOs working with the World Bank fall into four categories: 'beneficiaries', 'mercenaries', 'missionaries' and 'revolutionaries', each of whom are involved for different reasons, and can use evidence to elicit influence in different ways. Those that take very adversarial positions (the 'revolutionaries') may do well if they make their views accessible with thorough and indisputable evidence. Whilst their views may not be directly represented in policy, they form a 'reference point' in the debate which sets the parameters within which policy will form. Those whose interests are closely aligned with the Bank (the 'beneficiaries') may seek to highlight the political aspects of evidence – acknowledging their stake in it and the potential for it to be disputed, to avoid being accused of exploiting their opportunities.

Some policy processes, notably PRSPs, explicitly require civil society to be involved in the formulation process. CSOs have often been critical agents in facilitating this. To take just one example from the PRSP literature, during the first Bolivian PRS, the Catholic Church organized a large consultation exercise, 'Jubilee 2000', which was highly successful in engaging the public with formulation issues (Booth, pers. comms; Driscoll et al., 2004).

Within Bolivia's diverse and fractious civil society, the Church was one of the few organizations that held widespread credibility and respect. Strong links to local communities and to the government allowed it to generate high-quality, well-evidenced contributions to debates on PRS formulation that were successful in feeding into the strategy.

Scale and rigour may not, however, always be enough to allow consultations to influence formulation processes. Maglio and Keppke (2004) describe how almost 360 activities involving 10,000 participants failed to influence the planning of Strategic Regional Plans in São Paulo. Whilst these events were extremely effective in galvanizing the energies of the CSO community, they did not capture the imagination of the elite economic and business communities. These elite groups acted through their traditional lobby in the City Council, where policies were officially approved and enacted. The absence of elites from the CSO activities undermined the credibility of these consultations – which had staked their claim to legitimacy on gathering comprehensive public opinion from all groups. Instead, the consultations became simply political representations of the interests of CSO groups, which eroded their legitimacy as part of the *process* of policy formulation.

These examples demonstrate that even where some kind of evidence is used to try to generate CSO policy influence, it does not follow that this will happen – or if policy does change that it will be pro-poor. It may not even strengthen the accountability of CSOs to the poor. Evidence can be a critical means to create 'reference points' for arguments within a debate, but, overall, the important factor in whether CSOs can use evidence to influence policy here is how well they are integrated within a policy process. A CSO which uses evidence in a rigorous and robust way may increase its chances of being included, but it may need to provide evidence of its political position as much as its competence.

If the political use of evidence matters, CSOs are bound to face dilemmas when there is a trade-off between promoting positions that are based strictly on the evidence and those that are may not be as supported or at all supported by evidence but which fit with political demands and realities. In sum, there may be trade-offs between influence and evidence-based influence. The nature of the political context is crucial to CSO strategy.

### Influencing the Implementation of Policy

Many CSOs directly influence the implementation of policy as the primary agents responsible for instituting policy shift and making it a reality 'on the ground'. They may be commissioned as 'service providers' by governments



or donors, or they may work independently. CSOs can also provide valuable expertise to other agencies responsible for implementing policies. In all of these cases, evidence may be a valuable tool to make the implementation of policy more effective.

### Providing services

Providing services is one of the most widespread, and also one of the most controversial, parts of the sector's work. CSOs are often well placed to provide key services like health and education – particularly where states are weak and/or where CSOs have embedded relationships at community level. There is huge diversity in the sector, of course, and many CSOs will not have the resources or connections to provide services effectively. Simielli and Alves (2004) have argued that the key to effective service provision can essentially be reduced to social capital. This may be manifested differently in different parts of the world, but at its root successful CSO services are those which create strong, two-way connections with a wide range of community members.

The idea that providing services brings CSOs closer to local communities has been widely criticized. A host of authors argue that when CSOs enter into contractual agreements to provide services with governments or donors, they cater their activities to these interests rather than to those of local communities (see Lewis 1999b for an overview). Foweraker (1995) has argued that even if CSOs have been successful in providing services to small areas, they may face problems in scaling these up or implementing services outside any immediate community in which they have roots.

Both Foweraker (1995) and Robinson and White (2000) argue that governments should improve efforts to capitalize on the experience of CSOs in policy; creating an 'enabling environment' where their expertise in implementation is translated into shifts in the agenda, formulation and evaluation of policy. Mismatch between the implementation of services and the other parts of the policy process is a major source of frustration for many CSOs. Whilst CSOs have a great direct influence on policy as a course of action, this work is often disconnected from any influence over policy as a plan of action. CSOs often find problems in translating their practical knowledge and experience into evidence which can inform the shape and direction of future policy.

### Technical assistance

Many CSOs do not play a practical part in implementing policy themselves, but do offer technical advice and expertise on how it might be implemented better. Think-tanks have become a growing part of this sector, often acting as a bridge between those with practical experience of implementation and

those with responsibility for policymaking. Booth suggests that in Bolivia the key to the success of the think-tank sector has been bridging these two communities (Booth, pers. comms). During the PRS process, several think-tanks mediated a rather antagonistic relationship between grassroots CSOs and government agencies. They have provided clear and independent explanations of the process for both groups, taking much of the heat from their discussions to isolate the key issues for debate. Lewer (1999) warns that groups with access to 'technical' evidence must be careful not to create hierarchies that exclude other kinds of evidence, such as the views and experiences of local communities.

Issues of hierarchy often seem to arise around 'capacity building' efforts. These are another key way that CSOs with technical expertise contribute to the implementation of policy, by facilitating the development of those CSOs that are responsible for implementation. Many capacity-building CSOs might shy away from aiming to 'influence policy' themselves – in this role they work to facilitate the influence of others, not to steer what that influence might be. To take another example from Bolivia, INGOs came under great pressure to avoid 'interfering' with local politics whilst ensuring that local community monitoring systems were not dominated by patronage (Driscoll et al., 2004). Here, it was difficult for INGOs to use their understanding of 'what works' in monitoring systems directly as evidence, as they were not seen as having a right to do this. Instead, this understanding had to be used in a tacit form, to underpin the process through which they worked and ensure that the appropriate parties had all full information and opportunities to make decisions. This demonstrates the need for a 'people-centred' approach to capacity building, focusing on the personal and cultural challenges involved, and that technical 'experts' need to be more adept at *asking* questions than *knowing* the answers (James, 2002).

Those contributing to implementation through technical assistance must be as adept in using their knowledge in an appropriate way. To ensure that technical understanding does not dominate the knowledge of others, they must foster a 'learning approach', and be able to translate their expertise into tacit, implicit as well as explicit, forms. These skills may help CSOs involved with technical assistance to negotiate delicate relationships in their work.

### Independent action

Some CSOs have sidestepped all these problems by simply getting on with the job of changing their communities, and paying no attention to whether this is acknowledged in 'official' policy spheres. Bayat (1997) notes that the most effective means for CSOs in the Middle East to change the course of events on the ground has been through direct action – as he puts it, 'the

quiet encroachment of the ordinary'. This has been far more successful than demand-led social movements, which have been dogged by clientelism and hierarchy. Here, direct action has created realities on the ground which authorities will 'sooner or later' have to adjust their policies to suit.

A similar case demonstrates how evidence may be important in improving the effectiveness of independent action. Young (et al., 2003) found that independent veterinarians working to provide illegal, but highly effective, animal care in Kenya relied heavily on sharing evidence to do their work: Workshops bringing together qualified vets with those with basic training were critical forums to share and solve problems, monitor the success of the scheme and allow it to grow. Whilst sharing evidence was key in allowing the scheme to be effective, it did little to help it become legitimate, and policymakers were roundly dismissive of the initiative. Here, evidence was highly influential on policy as a course of action, but dislocated from policy as legislation, largely due to the contextual factors at play.

This section brings out three broader points regarding evidence and policy implementation. First, expertise can help improve service delivery. Second, the sharing of experience on the ground – promoting 'seeing is believing' – can be very convincing for policy change. Third, there seem to be needs for more effective ways to link implementation experiences with other parts of the policy process.

### Monitoring and Evaluating Policy

Evidence is an intrinsic element of monitoring and evaluation, which must invariably synthesize and analyse information to substantiate judgements on the successes and failures of policies. The effectiveness of CSOs in influencing evaluation processes depends on two factors: whether they can gather and use evidence to make a sound assessment of policy; and whether they can use evidence to demonstrate their legitimacy in doing this.

#### Promoting information availability and transparency

CSOs have a key role in making information on policy publicly available and in an accessible format. Where they retain independence from the state, media organizations have often led the CSO community in this task. The advance of the Internet has enabled groups such as One World and IPS to become global hubs for the civil society media, publishing stories on a wide range of development issues, and creating opportunities for both large and small groups to publish informative reports, commentary and opinion pieces. Placing policy within the public domain has historically been the main contribution of the media to democracy, and is fiercely protected by groups such as AMARC, the association for community radio broadcasters.

They have successfully used media campaigns to hold the Brazilian government to account over their closure of the Porto Alegre independent radio station. While the role of the media in monitoring is frequently asserted, there is a lack of research assessing its impact on policy in any systematic manner.

Those CSOs more oriented around research have often played a part in synthesizing information so that it can be used as evidence. Tracing the success of Mexican activists in critiquing the World Bank, Fox (2001) argues that the lack of good-quality information on institutional performance has allowed independent advocacy groups to gain great leverage through their own monitoring work. In other contexts, the independence of CSOs combined with reputable expertise has been critical to the success in monitoring. There are numerous other agencies, often based in the North, which provide centres for monitoring information. One of the most successful has been the International Budget Project (IBP), which helps to facilitate CSOs in developing countries to analyse and influence budgets (e.g. Mwenda and Gachocho, 2003).

Promoting transparency depends on a CSO's ability to use clear, conclusive and easily accessible evidence which explicitly proves a point to a wide audience. Policy impact depends on how far the evidence is communicated – when an issue is highly 'exposed' in itself this creates pressure for change. High exposure is likely to come from an agency which is well-networked, reputable and high status. These agencies can act as conduits for less-well-resourced CSOs.

#### Participative monitoring

Whilst promoting transparency is perhaps most effectively performed by large 'elite' CSOs – the best networked media organizations and the most reputable research groups – a much wider variety of groups can be successful in 'participative monitoring'. Participation in monitoring and evaluation has been a relatively recent addition to the 'participation paradigm', which has gained momentum in development in recent years (Driscoll et al., 2004). Some have argued that when CSOs are involved in evaluation they will find greater parity with those who contract them to provide services (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2001). The major difference between participative monitoring and conventional evaluation techniques is that local people collaborate with development agencies and policymakers to decide what constitutes successful policy, and what indicators might demonstrate this success (Guijt et al., 1998). It requires a greater emphasis on negotiation, learning and flexibility between these agents – which has translated into a focus on the processes that must be undertaken to incorporate the views of different parties.

The key issues for whether CSOs are successful in influencing participative monitoring seem to be process and timing. Krafchik (2003) notes that whilst civil-society organizations are making effective contributions to the formulation of budgets in developing countries, the timing of auditing processes gives them little incentive to scrutinize these budgets once they are spent. Audit reports are usually presented two years after the close of the financial year, at a time when other budgeting issues compete for CSO attention. By this time, in the fluid structures of many CSOs, the relevant individual and institutional knowledge of this spending may have been lost.

If process is the key to participative monitoring, the way to maximize CSOs' chances of influence may be to build good learning processes internally. Developing better institutional memory can be an effective means to ensure that past events are analysed, referred to and followed up. This allows CSOs to draw on their full range of available knowledge, allowing it to be capitalized on as evidence.

### Reflective practice

Another major theme in CSO influence on monitoring and evaluation is how these tools can be turned on CSOs themselves. As we have touched on earlier, the CSO sector, and particularly the NGOs within it, has come under increasing pressure to raise the standard of its own monitoring procedures. This is a key element to improving CSO work in service provision, but also in ensuring that work in advocacy and mediation is done on a sound basis. Many argue that the measurement and improvement of accountability goes hand in hand with the measurement and improvement of CSO influence. In order to enhance their influence on policy, CSOs need to demonstrate more clearly their sources of legitimacy. Macdonald (2004) proposes that the sector develops 'fluid mechanisms for institutional authorization', which may involve monitoring NGO representatives and holding them accountable.

Providing evidence of legitimacy seems to be critical to policy influence for many CSOs, often those working on advocacy – which need to demonstrate that their arguments are reflections of the interest groups they represent. It may also be critical for the effectiveness of CSOs working to provide services, which must be sure that they have the confidence of the communities they serve, and to substantiate the position of those that offer technical assistance, like think-tanks, to show their advice is given on the basis of real expertise (Pettifor, 2004). In other circumstances, CSO influence is not necessarily contingent on providing any evidence that influence is deserved. In fact, some CSOs seem to manage rather well without it.

So, reflective practice may not necessarily determine whether CSOs will have influence, although it may help others determine how desirable they

judge any influence to be. The key question, then, is who is doing the judging? It may be that different kinds of evidence are required to legitimate CSO practice to different audiences, and for some audiences evidence is not necessarily important in the short term.

### Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the role of evidence as CSOs attempt to influence policy processes. The aim has been to try to synthesize the patchy literature, draw lessons and identify areas for future work. Overall, it seems clear that using evidence effectively can be critical to the success of CSOs in influencing policy, but it is often *how* evidence is used, rather than the nature of evidence itself, which is the critical factor.

Evidence does not always work in a way that is straightforward, obvious or 'rational'. For many CSOs, making evidence rigorous and accessible is the first step for maximizing their chances of policy influence. Clearly, though, the context in which CSOs operate and the relationships between different actors in a policy arena is often at least as important as whether evidence is robust.

If CSOs are to use evidence to bring about pro-poor policy they need to do three main things, which will of course differ according to the social and political context:

- *Inspire*: to generate support for an issue or action; to raise new ideas or question old ones; to create new ways of framing an issue or 'policy narratives'.
- *Inform*: to represent the views of others; to share expertise and experience; to put forward new approaches.
- *Improve*: to add, correct or change policy issues; to hold policymakers accountable; to evaluate and improve their own activities, particularly regarding service provision; to learn from each other.

This is much more easily said than done, and reality is of course much more complex. Rather than focus on the nature of those organizations themselves or take CSOs as the starting point, we have taken the key elements of policy processes (agenda setting; formulation; implementation; monitoring and evaluation) as the starting point for analysis. We focus on how CSOs contribute to different components of the policy process and how they use evidence in their efforts.

To influence *agenda setting*, it seems that the key factor is the way evidence is communicated by CSOs. They may need to generate or crystallize a body of evidence as a policy narrative around a problem or issue. This can help

**Table 7.1** What matters for influencing the key components of policy processes?

| Component of the policy process/ aspects of evidence | Agenda setting | Formulation | Implementation | Monitoring and evaluation |
|--|----------------|-------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Availability   |                | •           |                | •                         |
| Credibility  |                | •           |                |                           |
| Generalizability                                     |                |             | •              |                           |
| Rootedness   | •              | •           | •              | •                         |
| Relevance  |                | •           | •              | •                         |
| Accessibility (communication)                        | •              |             |                | •                         |

create a window for policy change. However, CSOs often use evidence to build momentum behind an idea, until it reaches a 'tipping point' and becomes widely accepted. They will need to use credible evidence if they are to establish themselves as legitimate actors.

To influence the *formulation* of policy, evidence can be an important way to establish the credibility of CSOs. Here, the quantity and quality credibility of the evidence which CSOs use seems to be important for their policy influence. CSOs need to be adept at adapting the way they use evidence to maintain credibility with local communities and with policymakers, combining their tacit and explicit knowledge of a policy context. CSOs may need to present evidence of their political position, as much as their competence, in order to be included within formulation discussion.

To influence the *implementation* of policy, evidence is critical to improving the effectiveness of development initiatives. For many CSOs involved in providing services and implementing policy directly, a key issue has been translating their practical knowledge and expertise into evidence which can be shared with others. Capitalizing on the practical knowledge and experience of many CSOs can require careful analytic work to understand how technical skills, expert knowledge and practical experience can inform one another. The key to influencing the implementation of policy is to demonstrate the operational relevance of evidence and to make such evidence relevant across different contexts.

To influence the *monitoring and evaluation* of policy, the key factors seem to be to generate relevant information and to communicate evidence in a clear, conclusive and accessible way (whether internally within CSOs or to external policymakers). Many CSOs have pioneered participative processes

which transform the views of ordinary people into indicators and measures which can make policy processes accountable. Others focus much more on empirical approaches to address issues of relevance. Direct communication with policymakers regarding the impact of their policies is often the key to influence in this arena of the policy process. However, many CSOs have often been influential by gaining high media 'exposure' for their policy critiques.

Stripped down, then, the issues emerging in each part of the policy process can be mapped against the five different aspects of evidence which matter for policy influence (see Table 7.1).

### Recommendations

Taken as a whole, our review suggests seven main ways that CSOs could use evidence to improve their chances of policy influence:

1. *Legitimacy* Legitimacy matters for policy influence. Evidence can especially be used to enhance the technical sources of legitimacy of CSOs, but also their representative, moral or legal legitimacy. Making their legitimacy explicit can help others make decisions about whether they wish to endorse CSO work. Linked to this is a more general point that CSOs are more likely to have an impact if they work together.
2. *Effectiveness* Evidence can be used to make CSO work more effective. Gathering evidence can be a tool for CSOs to evaluate and improve the impact of their work, share lessons with others, and capture the institutional memory and knowledge held within organizations.
3. *Integration* There is often disconnect between CSO work on implementation or service delivery and the rest of the policy process. CSOs can have greater influence if they find better ways to turn their practical knowledge and expertise into evidence which can be used to inform other parts of the policy process (agenda setting, formulation and evaluation). This could also help improve the learning which occurs across CSOs.
4. *Translation* Expert evidence should not be used to 'trump' the perspectives and experience of ordinary people. CSOs should find ways to turn peoples' understanding into legitimate evidence and to combine community wisdom with expert evidence.
5. *Access* Access to policymaking processes is vital for CSOs to use evidence to influence policy. Examples in the paper indicate that the question of whether CSO research is influential or not is often a question of whether they are included in policy processes and can respond accordingly. Evidence can help CSOs gain better access to policy arenas.
6. *Credibility* Evidence must be valid, reliable and convincing to its audience. CSOs may need to adapt the kind of evidence they use to

different groups – the same evidence may be credible to some but not to others. Using high-quality and uncontested evidence can allow even politically radical CSOs to be fully included in policy debate. Credibility can depend on factors such as the reputation of the source and whether there is other accepted evidence which substantiates it.

7. *Communication* Evidence must be presented in an accessible and meaningful way. The most effective communication is often two-way, interactive and ongoing.

### Note

1. This paper is an edited version of our ODI Working Paper 249, July 2005, reproduced with kind permission of the Overseas Development Institute.

### References

- Anheier, H., M. Glasius and M. Kaldor (eds) (2004) *Global Civil Society 2004/5*, Sage, London.
- Arko-Cobbah, A. (2004) 'The Role of Libraries in Student-centered Learning: The Case of Students from the Disadvantaged Communities in South Africa', *International Information and Library Review* 36: 263–71.
- Bayat, A. (1997) 'The Quiet Encroachment of the Ordinary: The Politics of the "Informal People"', *Third World Quarterly* 18(1): 53–72.
- Bazaara, N. (2000) 'Legal and Policy Framework for Citizen Participation in East Africa: A Comparative Analysis', LogoLink Report, Centre for Basic Research, University of Sussex.
- Booth, D., pers. comm. to A. Pollard, during interviews for Pollard and Driscoll, 'Strategic Communications in PRSPs: Bolivia case study', in M. Mozammel and S. Odugbemi (eds), *With the Support of Multitudes: Using Strategic Communication to Fight Poverty through PRSPs*, DFID and World Bank, London and Washington DC, 2005.
- Brinkerhoff, D., and A. Goldsmith (2002) 'How Citizens Participate in Macroeconomic Policy: International Experience and Implications for Poverty Reduction', *World Development* 31(4): 685–701.
- Brock, K., and R. McGee (2004) 'Mapping Trade Policy: Understanding the Challenges of Civil Society Participation', *IDS Working Paper*, IDS, Brighton.
- Cornwall, A., and J. Gaventa (2001) 'From Users and Choosers to Makers and Shapers: Repositioning Participation in Social Policy', *IDS Working Paper 127*, IDS, Brighton.
- Court, J. (2005) *Bridging Research and Policy on HIV/AIDS in Developing Countries*, Overseas Development Institute, London.
- Driscoll, R., K. Christiansen and S. Jenks (2004) 'An Overview of NGO Participation in PRSPs', ODI Consultation for CARE International, unpublished.
- Edwards, M. (2004) *Civil Society*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Foweraker, J. (1995) *Theorizing Social Movements*, Pluto Press, London.
- Fox, J. (2001) 'Vertically Integrated Policy Monitoring: A Tool for Civil Society', *Policy Advocacy Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30: 616–27.

- Guijt, I., J. Gaventa and G. Barnard (eds) (1998) 'Participative Monitoring and Evaluation: Learning from Change', *IDS Policy Briefing 12*, November, IDS, Brighton.
- Howell, J., and J. Pearce (2001) *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder CO.
- Hulme, D., and M. Edwards (1997) *NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort*, Macmillan, London.
- Hutanuwatr, P., and J. Rasbach (2004) *Engaged Buddhism in Siam and South-East Asia*, case study for WFDD, Birmingham.
- James, R. (2002) *People and Change: Exploring Capacity Building in NGOs*, INTRAC, Oxford.
- Keck, M., and K. Sikkink (1998) *Activists beyond Borders*, Cornell University Press, Cornell.
- Krafchik, W. (2003) *Can Civil Society Add Value to Budget Decision-making? A Description of Civil Society Budget Work*, International Budget Project, Washington DC.
- Lasswell, H. (1977) 'The Politics of Prevention', in *Psychopathology and Politics*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Lewer, N. (1999) 'International Non-government Organizations and Peacebuilding – Perspectives from Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution', *Working Paper 3*, Centre for Conflict Resolution, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford.
- Lewis, D. (ed.) (1999a) *International Perspectives in Voluntary Action: Reshaping the Third Sector*, Earthscan, London.
- Lewis, D. (1999b) 'Development NGOs and the Challenge of Partnership' in C. Jones-Finier (ed.), *Issues in Transnational Social Policy*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Lewis, D. (2001) 'Civil Society in a non-Western Context: Reflections on the "Usefulness" of a Concept', *Civil Society Working Paper 13*, LSE, London.
- Macdonald, T. (2004) "'We the Peoples': The Democratic Authorization and Accountability of NGOs in Global Governance', ISTR Sixth International Conference, Toronto, 11–14 July.
- Maglio, I., and R. Keppke (2004) 'The City of Sao Paulo Strategic Master Plan – the Making of: From Pressure Groups to NGO's', *ISTR Sixth International Conference*, Toronto, 11–14 July.
- Malena, C. (2000) 'Beneficiaries, Mercenaries, Missionaries and Revolutionaries: 'Unpacking' NGO Involvement in World Bank-financed Projects', *IDS Bulletin* 31(3): 19–34.
- Mohammed, B. (2003). 'Addis Ababa Muslim Women's Council', online case study for World Faith Development Dialogue, October.
- Mwenda, A., and M. Gachochi (2003) 'Budget Transparency: A Kenyan Perspective', *IEA Research Paper Series 4*, Institute of Economic Affairs, Nairobi.
- Omar, R. (2004) *Does Public Policy Need Religion? The Importance of the Inter-Religious Movement*, Claremont Main Road Mosque, Cape Town.
- Ottaway, M., and T. Carothers (2000) *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC.
- Pettifor, A. (2004) 'Some Lessons from Jubilee 2000', *Research and Policy in Development: Does Evidence Matter?*, Meeting Series, Overseas Development Institute, London.
- Pollard, A., and R. Driscoll (2005) 'Strategic Communications in PRSPs: Bolivia Case Study', in M. Mozammel and S. Odugbemi (eds), *With the support of Multitudes: Using Strategic Communication to Fight Poverty through PRSPs*, DFID and World Bank, London and Washington DC.
- Robinson, M., and G. White (2000) 'The Role of Civic Organizations in the Provision of Social Services: Towards Synergy', in G. Mwabu, C. Ugaz and G. White (eds),

- New Patterns of Social Provision in Low Income Countries*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Roe, E. (1991) 'Development Narratives, or Making the Best of Blueprint Development', *World Development* 19(4): 287-300.
- Scholte, J., R. O'Brien, and M. Williams (1998) 'The WTO and Civil Society', *CSSR Working Paper 14*, Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, University of Warwick.
- Schusterman, R., F. Almansi, A. Hardoy, C. Monti and G. Urquiza (2002) *Poverty Reduction in Action: Participatory Planning in San Fernando, Buenos Aires, Argentina*, IIED, London.
- Simielli, L., and M. Alves (2004) 'Nonprofit Sector, Civil Society and Public Policies: A Comparative Study on the Brazilian and Canadian Experiences', ISTR Sixth International Conference, Toronto, Canada, 11-14 July.
- Thompson, S., and R. Dart (2004) 'Third Sector Discourse(s) on Welfare Recipients: How Framing Affects the Social Policy Landscape', ISTR Sixth International Conference, Toronto, Canada, 11-14 July.
- Van der Linde, A., and R. Naylor (1999) 'Building Sustainable Peace: Conflict, Conciliation, and Civil Society in Northern Ghana', *Oxfam Working Papers*, Oxfam-GB.
- Van Rooy, A. (ed.) (1999) *Civil Society and the Aid Industry*, Earthscan and the North-South Institute, London.
- Young, E., and Quinn, L. (2002) *Writing Effective Public Policy Papers: A Guide to Policy Advisers in Central and Eastern Europe*, Open Society Institute, Budapest.
- Young, J., J. Kajume and J. Wanyama (2003) 'Animal Health Care in Kenya: The Road to Community-based Animal Health Service Delivery', *ODI Working Paper* 214, ODI, London.

## Civil Society Participation as the Focus of Northern NGO Support: The Case of Dutch Co-financing Agencies

Irene Guijt

Of the Dutch development cooperation budget, between 11 and 14 per cent is allocated to Dutch non-government organizations that are known as 'co-financing agencies' for supporting partner organizations in the global South. The co-financing agencies (CFAs) claim to further civil society participation in diverse ways: by supporting basic rights education, capacity building on democratization issues, advocacy efforts to address myriad injustices, and strategic networking. In this they take up a long-standing challenge for civil society actors committed to promoting alternative development and social justice: the promotion of citizenship status and rights for marginal people and groups (Nerfin, 1987; Friedmann, 1992). However, and although talk of participation and rights-based approaches is central in their organizational discourse, few use coherent frames of analysis to shape their programmatic strategy or a lens through which to understand the results of the work they fund.

This chapter draws on a recent evaluation that examined how the support given between 1999 and 2004 was used by four of the CFAs - CORDAID, HIVOS, Oxfam NOVIB and Plan Netherlands - to further 'civil society participation' in Colombia, Guatemala, Guinea, Sri Lanka and Uganda (Guijt, 2005). The evaluation team considered over 330 civil society organizations and over 760 contracts from CORDAID, HIVOS and NOVIB, plus three country programmes for Plan. In exploring the efforts of these CFAs to increase and strengthen the participation of citizens and civil society organizations in decision-making processes, within diverse, violent and conflict-ridden contexts, two issues stand out as having a wider relevance for the theme of NGO alternatives. The first relates to the integration of new forms of analysis within the strategic and operational work of development agencies, and thus

concerns the research/action interface that has been identified as critical with regards to the role of NGOs in promoting development alternatives (Hulme, 1994: Introduction). The second concerns the possibility that NGOs can help build progressive linkages between 'big D' interventions and 'little d' processes of development – in this case processes of citizenship building – through recognized funding modalities *within* the international aid system, rather than departing from it altogether (see Edwards, this volume).

In this chapter, I proceed by providing a contextual discussion of how Dutch NGOs have tended to conceptualize and fund work on civil society participation (CSP) in developing countries, before outlining the contextual features affecting CSP in the five countries involved in the evaluation. I then describe some of the CSP work that was observed, in terms of approaches and outcomes, before proceeding to outline the key ways forward for NGOs seeking to support civil society participation.

### Understanding and Promoting Civil Society: Perspectives and Approaches from the Netherlands

Conceptually, understandings of civil society participation amongst the major NGOs or CFAs in the Netherlands originated around concerns to involve the beneficiaries or end users in designing and implementing projects that were to affect their lives, with the aim of making such projects more relevant and more sustainable. Although some aid agencies have always viewed participation through a more radical and political lens, for others it was the rise of rights-based approaches that shifted participation from an instrumental to a political meaning: the right to participate is seen as the right to claim all other rights. Thus, rather than thinking of people as beneficiaries, they are understood as citizens, not in the sense of a certain group of people with formal membership of a particular nation state, but as individuals with inalienable rights that only become effective when claimed through individual or collective action.

Yet it is the term 'civil society building' and not 'civil society participation' that is used by the CFAs to organize their work and report on results to the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation. Civil society building was defined by Biekart (2003: 15) in an earlier evaluation of the CFA's work as a capacity-oriented term, consisting of

- strengthening organizational capacities (of both formal and informal organizations) in civil society;
- building up and strengthening networks of, and alliances between, social organizations;

- building up and strengthening capacities for (policy) advocacy, with the aim of strengthening vertical intermediary channels between civil society and the state and/or the market;
- strengthening citizenship, social consciousness, democratic leadership, and social and political responsibility, with the aim of increasing participation of citizens in the public sphere.

Biekart's evaluation left the CFAs keen for more insights into other issues, particularly related to 'strengthening citizenship', and the concept of 'civil society participation' was proposed by the CFAs as a means to understand this. For the purposes of the follow-up evaluation, they defined it as:

the opportunities of citizens – and more specifically of poor and/or marginalized citizens – and the organizations that represent them or can be considered their allies, to actively participate in and influence decision-making processes that affect their lives directly or indirectly. Participation includes 'agency', e.g. taking initiatives and engagement. (CORDAID et al., 2004: 6–7)

CSP is a layered concept with very diverse manifestations that links three development discourses and areas of practice: participation, civil society and citizenship. Within this, CFAs define civil society, broadly, as citizens and CSOs. As their funding is channelled through partner organizations, this was the unit of analysis of the study, and this has encouraged their adoption of an 'associational' understanding of civil society (Edwards, 2004).

Taken at face value, 'civil society participation' could be viewed as apolitical and neutral in terms of improving the lives of the poor and marginalized. As the explicit mission of these CFAs is to work towards the political empowerment of the poor and marginalized, the evaluation team qualified CSP in terms of its role in addressing societal inequalities. Thus, civil society participation is understood here as an essential contribution towards social justice, democracy and social cohesion.

To help the evaluation team operationalize this understanding, the CFAs identified the power cube framework developed by the Institute of Development Studies as the prime analytical lens for the study. The framework (see Figure 8.1) offers ways to examine participatory action in development and changes in power relations by and/or on behalf of poor and marginalized people (Gaventa, 2005). It does this by distinguishing participatory action along three dimensions:

- at three levels (or 'places'): global, national and local;
- across three types of (political) 'space': closed, invited and created;
- different forms of power at place within the levels and spaces: visible (formal) power, hidden (behind the scenes) power, and invisible (internalized norms) power (see VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002).