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NGO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

A SOURCE OF LIFE
OR
A KISS OF DEATH

COMMUNITY HEALTH CELL

17/1 St. Mark's Road, Pa

NGO Government Relations

*A Source of Life
or
A Kiss of Death ?*

PREFACE

As many of us involved in promoting and strengthening voluntary action in Adult Education began to share our experiences, we discovered that serious questions were emerging about our relationship with our own governments. With our individual experiences and notions, the four of us began to share and analyse the situation more in depth. And we discovered that certain trends had a pattern, and perhaps a wider relevance.

It was in this sense, with a view to promote wider sharing and reflection among leaders of NGOs from different countries of the South, that a four day consultation was convened jointly by Budd Hall (Secretary General of International Council for Adult Education, Canada); Francisco Vio Grossi (Secretary General of CEAAL, Chile); Paul Wangoola (Secretary General of African Association for Literacy and Adult Education, Kenya) and Rajesh Tandon (Corordinator of Society for Participatory Research in Asia, India).

The consultation was a remarkably productive and enriching experience for all of us. It became a forum for critical reflections and analysis. It also built the bonds of friendship and solidarity.

We are grateful to CIDA for its support to this Consultation.

This report has been prepared by Rajesh Tandon. It is an attempt to present common trends and concerns. Detailed cases of different countries are separately available. The report is seen as a vehicle for catalysing further reflection among NGOs in different countries and regions. It can also become a basis for dialogue with governments and donors. We hope that it also serves the broader purpose of strengthening voluntary actions in all our countries.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, there has been increased visibility and reference to the work of voluntary development organisations in the development discourse. The 80's of this century can be characterised as discovering and rediscovering the role, the potential and the limitations of the work of voluntary development organisations in various developing and developed countries of the world. While the existence of voluntary organisations in certain parts of the world had been a long standing historical phenomenon (like India), in some other parts of the world (like Latin America) their emergence is of a much recent origin (particularly in the 70's and the 80's of this century).

Along with the increasing attention, visibility and impact of voluntary organisations, there has also emerged new phraseology, new frameworks, paradigms and perspectives. The term "non-governmental organisation (NGO)", though a negative definition, tends to incorporate the wide range of development promoting voluntary organisations in different countries, particularly in the the countries of the South. The term voluntary is more applicable on the Asian and African sub-continent than it is in the Caribbean and Latin American countries. Thus non-governmental organisations (NGOs) seems to be a category of development promoting organisations which are initiatives voluntarily taken by citizens, professionals, youngsters to focus their attention on one of the developmental aspects of their specific context. Though some references in recent writings seem to include private sector, commercial and for-profit organisations in this category, they are being excluded from the present deliberations. Essentially the reference to NGOs here implies

development promoting non-profit initiatives outside the framework of commercial enterprise, the political parties and the State and para-statal apparatus.

Alongwith the increasing debate, attention and impact of NGOs, issues in their relationships with their local governments have also arisen in recent years. The response of the State and its representatives has varied considerably and has become a matter of great concern for members of the NGO community and their supporters and sympathisers across the world. While many NGOs, their networks and leaders are trying to understand and deal with their respective national governments and State apparatus, it is increasingly recognised that some collective reflections on the situation of NGO—Government relationship across the world be carried out with a view to share our analysis and experiences and to develop some common understandings and strategies to respond to these situations. It was in this context that a consultation inviting 18 NGO leaders from as many countries of the developing countries was held in New Delhi during March 20-23, 1989. The Consultation brought in a small group of experienced NGO leaders to share their experiences of their own national situations on the question of relations with their governments and State apparatus and the ways that this was being dealt with in different situations.

The Consultation turned out to be an exciting opportunity for sharing analysis and demonstrated universally common forces and trends that were applicable in all our countries, which tend to characterise and define the nature of NGO—Government relations. A variety of long-term ideas and proposals for more detailed reflections within the regions and countries and

for more concerted sharing, analysis and actions were also evolved in the context of this Consultation.

The present report is an attempt to summarise the key analysis arising out of this Consultation and to present the range of aspects that characterise NGO—Government relations, the context in which they are situated and the issues which emerge from this reflection. It also draws certain implications for different actors in this situation in order to create possibilities for a more healthy and mutually respectful relationships between the NGOs and

governments. This report should be seen as an outcome of those deliberations and not a detailed reporting of individual case studies from different countries (which are separately available from the organisers). We hope that this report will serve the purpose of catalysing debate on this issue in different countries and regions of the world, further enriching our understanding on this complex issue and creating possibilities for a more sustained and healthy dialogue with those who can contribute towards strengthening the roles and contributions of NGOs in all our countries.

PURPOSES

It is interesting to examine the broad purposes which give rise to the emergence of NGOs in different countries of the South. These purposes tend to provide the rationale for the existence and growth of NGOs, almost like a framework which defines the basis of their work in different contexts. While these purposes have been articulated in different ways, it appeared that there were certain categories of purposes which appeared more fundamental than others in the work of NGOs. A more common stream of purposes was the **empowerment of the poor and the oppressed**. It is the purpose which is based on an analysis of society in a given context, which identifies the oppressed and the powerless, the poor, the labourers, the women, the tribals, the landless, the slum-dwellers, etc., etc. Empowerment tends to include critical analysis of one's reality and enhanced sense of confidence to be able to work on and transform that reality collectively, increased information and competence to be able to work together to transform that reality, etc. It appears that a large number of NGOs in different countries of the South were guided by this overall purpose of empowerment of the powerless, the poor and the oppressed.

The second stream of purposes, related to this, yet distinct in some ways, was the **building and strengthening of people's organisations**. People here are defined as members of the popular classes, the poor, the oppressed, the powerless, the unorganised—who do not seem to have a collective voice of their own, whose needs and aspirations are not recognised in the larger public policy arena nationally and internationally, who seem to get marginalised and further deprived as a consequence of the contemporary development policies and trends

in different countries. Underlying assumption here is that collective and organised effort by such people alone can bring about increased attention and response to their needs and concerns, thereby creating the basis for their economic, social and political well-being. Building peoples's organisations, strengthening them, enhancing their capacities are some of the overriding aspects of this purpose which seem to guide the formation and the continuation of the work of many NGOs in different countries of the South.

A third stream of purposes within this overall framework seems to be the **strengthening, re-energising and rejuvenation of social movements**. These are movements based on social issues which effect the life of vast majority of the under-class in our societies—the issues of unemployment, inflation, homelessness, illiteracy, militarisation, communal violence, corruption, the rights of women, children, workers, tribals, human rights. It is here that the broad guiding force for the work of many NGOs has been to contribute towards the emergence and strengthening of such social movements; not providing leadership to them, but perhaps guiding and strengthening the leadership of such movements.

A fourth stream of purposes seems to emerge from the broad global trend towards anti-authoritarianism. It seems that in the contemporary context, authoritarian forces, internationally, nationally, locally, within families, organisations, enterprises have been on the rise, resulting in increased centralisation, control and regulation; and in response to these forces, there has been an emerging force of democratisation. NGOs in several parts of the

Chile : NGOs and Dictatorship

The rise of NGOs after 1973 has been in response to growing socio-economic and political crisis in the country. Struggling against human rights violations, political oppressions and the neo-liberal economic model created the conditions for their emergence. Protected by the Church, NGOs in Chile have begun to articulate an alternative development programme for the country.

In the current process of transition from military dictatorship to democracy, NGOs are playing key roles. They have been involved in educating the people, and training volunteers; to defeat the dictatorship in the referendum. NGOs are working towards the promotion of democracy and strengthening of a civil society based on collective self-reliance. It will be interesting to see how future democratic government will respond to the work of NGOs.

world seem to be working towards the **promotion of democratic practices and processes**—strengthening capacities of people to create and operate democratic organisations and working towards what has come to be known as participatory democracy. Thus a major guiding frame for a large number of NGOs in many countries of the world seems to be to work towards creation of democratic structures and processes in our societies, institutions, organisations, families and lives, and not merely in representative or formal sense, but also in the sense of daily practices and processes. The right to information, right to participation, right to be heard, right to know, right to learn, right to speak, right to associate etc. in their daily manifestations seem to be the key foundations of participatory democracy. It is a move against previous tendencies of democratic centralism. It is bringing democracy to the daily practice in our lives, in our families, in our institutions, in our polity.

The above streams of purposes seem to guide broadly the emergence and continuance of the work of many NGOs in different countries of the world in contemporary years. These

purposes need not be the purposes which have historically been in operation to define the roles of NGOs. It appears that political movements, particularly related to liberation struggles in different countries of the south, did provide an arena for and an impetus to the work of NGOs in several countries (some of the African countries, India, etc.). Historically, "doing good to the sick, needy, destitute" individuals was also a major starting point for much of the philanthropic, welfarist, social service work of NGOs over these decades. However, in our analysis, we seem to indicate the larger social context and rationale arising out of that context to serve as the basis for the emergence and development of the work of NGOs in many of our countries of the South.

If we examine these streams of purposes outlined above, they seem to indicate a dimension of continuity, because these purposes do require work over sustained periods of time in all historical moments and contexts, though the form of work may vary as the manifestations of these purposes will change over different periods of history.

TYPES OF NGO ROLES

It was interesting to observe the different distinct types of NGOs based on the nature of roles they played. There were also different types of NGOs based on the level and their membership. Let us start with the latter. The Consultation did make certain key distinctions between village-based, slum-based, local peoples' organisations and indigenous voluntary development promoting organisations being referred to here as NGOs. Peoples' organisations, peasant movements, womens' organisations, tribal associations, womens' clubs, federations of workers, unions, cooperatives were seen as local peoples' organisations and are not being referred to as NGOs in this deliberation. On the other hand, there were Expatriate NGOs (ENGOS) located in the countries of the North with their branches, projects and programmes in the countries of the South. This phenomenon is wide-spread in Africa, though it is also visible in some other parts of the world. These are efforts of Expatriate NGOs with roots outside the countries of the South and "doing good" in the countries of the South. These were also excluded from the definition of NGOs in the deliberations mentioned here. Indigenous NGOs are those which are operating with their roots and origins within the countries, with people within the countries providing leadership and working with these NGOs. They may vary in their level from national to state to village and community level NGOs, but in most cases, they comprised of initiatives of people who were guided by the overriding purposes mentioned above. In this regard, the Consultation distinguished NGOs in this definition from the initiatives of a group of workers to form their own union, the peoples' organisations in the current debate within this category of

indigenous voluntary organisations or NGOs.

Four broad types of roles seem to emerge in all our countries, though they were being played to varying degrees of effectivity and coverage.

Type A : Service Providers

The first type comprised of **welfare-oriented or service-providing NGOs**. These are NGOs which are inspired by "helping others", by welfare concerns, and they largely provide services for the poor and marginalised communities. They do believe that the services would lead to some of the purposes mentioned above. Much of these services have been in the area of health, through clinics, hospitals, health provisions; in the area of education, through schools, colleges, training programmes, non-formal education, literacy, etc.; in the area of drinking water and sanitation, areas of agriculture and irrigation, and in the areas of reforestation, non-conventional sources of energies, appropriate technology etc. etc. The sector of development or the problem of development may vary, but these organisations essentially provide a service which is needed by the members of a community. They provide this service with great sacrifice, with high efficiency, with low expenses, with extreme commitment and dedication. These services are flexible, responsive to the needs of the community, locally grounded and relevant and tend to fulfil an important gap that exists in meeting the basic minimum needs of that community. In some situations, such service-oriented NGOs operate in those areas where government programmes and services are non-existent.

This has been particularly so in those countries where the State has increasingly

withdrawn from any kind of social service support or development role, either as a direct consequence of the World Bank, IMF, Chicago School policies (as in many African and Latin American countries) or indirectly in response to the growing militarisation, dictatorship etc. (as in countries like Chile and Philippines). In these situations, many NGOs have increasingly begun to play the role of providing services even though they may not start from that orientation.

A related category of welfare work is that which arises in situations requiring relief and rehabilitation, the work with refugees, the work in situations of great crises and disasters, cyclones, famines, wars, etc. It is in this context that the work of these NGOs needs to be seen and understood. The debate seems to indicate that in recent years most NGOs which started with a service and welfare orientation seem not to get limited to that but see it as a means to the wider focus of work in some of the purposes mentioned above.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines : Stages in the Relationship

In the relationship between NGOs and the Government in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean, three distinct stages can be traced.

The first stage was the period of colonial rule till end of 1960's. This period saw the birth of many service/welfare NGOs—like Red Cross, Jaycees, Rotary and some Church related. They were comprised of businessmen and professionals, civil servants and the rich who treated NGOs as an expression of their benevolence.

The second period was marked by national resistance till 1979. Many new NGOs emerged in this period to work for the development of an anti-colonial consciousness. They comprised of students, youth and other activists who looked upon these organisations as vehicles of political transformation.

The third period since then has been characterized by a rise of development oriented NGOs like Projects Promotion, Commission for the Development of Peoples, the Rural Transformation Collective, etc. Recently, an umbrella organisation National Alliance of Development Organisations has also been formed.

Type B : Empowerment NGOs

The second type of NGOs are those which are development oriented NGOs which directly work on the question of **organisation and empowerment** or work through educational interventions in certain development sectors leading to those broad purposes. These NGOs have begun to address a variety of development concerns—drinking water, economic activities, literacy, adult, non-formal education, etc. These are the popular education NGOs as they are called in Latin America. These NGOs are largest in number in most countries of the

South and have contributed towards development of many innovative approaches to strengthen socio-economic status of the poor and the deprived. Their approaches to planning, to interventions in socio-economic programming etc. have been very innovative, flexible and impactful. As a result, in many countries of the South, the ideas derived from the work of such NGOs have been attempted to be utilised in national policies. The classic, of course, is the community health and primary health care orientation to the entire work of fighting ill-health. It is here that the work of such NGOs became the basis for formulation of

national and international policies and programmes in the field of health. Similarly, the work of many NGOs in the area of literacy and adult, non-formal education has become a model for many national campaigns and other national programmes.

Many of these NGOs start with a development intervention, and then build strategies for organising and empowerment of the people. Some others seem to start by bringing people together on issues of common concerns, conscientising and empowering them through a process of reflection and struggle and then building on development interventions and initiatives for their regeneration and sustenance.

Type C : Support NGOs

These are newly emerging and recognised NGOs which provide a variety of support functions to different grass-roots NGOs, mostly of the types A and B mentioned before. The support functions vary depending on whether it is related to a sector (like health or education or forestry) or a general support. The work of these support institutions has been to provide inputs that would **strengthen the capacities of grass-roots NGOs** to function more effectively and impactfully. The work of support institutions, therefore, has comprised of training, evaluation, programme planning etc. etc. Many large NGOs in some of the countries of South Asia (like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh etc.) have developed their own support units within the ambit of their organisations. In some other countries, where many of the NGOs are of smaller size at the grass-roots level, separate institutions playing these functions have also emerged.

Newness of this category of NGOs makes it rather difficult for their work to be recognised or their impact to be assessed. But it appears that they seem to contribute towards the strengthening of the work of grass-roots NGOs and also those of peoples' organisations and social movements by extending the kinds of

support which is otherwise not available to them. In broad terms, this could be defined as educational support, and not financial support, though the latter may also, in some occasions, be part of the overall package. Most national and international decision-makers, development agencies and institutions have so far not recognised the work of such support NGOs, though some beginnings are visible.

Type D : Umbrella or Network NGOs

It is interesting that the 80's also marks the rise of **networks of NGOs, and umbrella or federation type NGOs**. The networks are more informal, limited purpose and, therefore, time-bound associations of NGOs coming together to work on a common issue or concern (like tropical forest, drug abuse, womens' rights, occupational health, etc. etc.). Umbrella NGOs or associations or federations are more formal attempts of linking NGOs together. In many countries of the South, such networks and umbrella NGOs operating at state or national levels have emerged. The main reason for their emergence and continuance is their need for bringing together the experiences in different micro settings to bear to address an issue that requires collective strength, advocacy and wider perspective. Thus many of these umbrella NGOs have begun to play an important role in raising the issues to the level of national and international policy debate and to contribute towards changing the frameworks and strategies of development based on the experiences of grass-roots NGOs operating in local settings.

It is interesting to note that there has been a historic process of the evolution of these types of NGOs in different continents. Service, welfare-oriented NGOs historically have been the first to emerge. In many countries they date back to the 19th century, guided by the work of missionaries, religious and spiritual leaders, nationalist leaders struggling for freedom, etc.

Jamaica : Different Umbrellas

The history of NGOs in Jamaica can be traced by looking into the history of two distinct and opposing Umbrella organisations. Council of Voluntary Social Services (CVSS) was established in 1940, now having 67 members NGOs primarily oriented to service/welfare approach. It was initially funded by Jamaica Welfare (funded by an American Multinational United Fruit Company). Later, the government of Jamaica started funding it regularly. Since 1984, CVSS has received large funding from USAID, which resulted in the loss of its autonomy to an American model CVSS—United Way for administering these funds.

The Association of Development Agencies (ADA) came into being in 1984 and has 12 development oriented NGOs (of recent origin) as its members. ADA focuses on networking and support to its members and does not receive any grants from the Government.

The approaches and experiences of CVSS and ADA are quite different. While the former has a close relationship with the government (almost bordering on dependence), the latter maintains an autonomous and dignified posture towards the government. As a result, ADA and its member organisations have faced a lot of tension in its relationship with the government. It is attempting to play an active advocacy role in respect of government policies and programmes.

The second type of NGOs are more a phenomenon of the post second world war period, in some countries the phenomenon of the 70's of this century. Type C NGOs have predominantly emerged in the 80's of this century, though a few had their roots in the 70's and 60's as well. In most countries of South type D NGOs are very recent in their origin. It is this historical process which is also, therefore, reflected in different ways in different continents. It seems that the roots of NGOs work are perhaps the longest in many Asian countries, particularly of those of South Asia. The roots of NGOs work in its contemporary form in Africa is still very weak, particularly if we refer to indigenous NGOs. Very few countries of the African continent have even a visible presence of indigenous NGOs. Even

where indigenous NGOs do exist in Africa, most of them are of type A, though only in recent years in some countries like Senegal, Mali, Kenya, Zimbabwe, some type B and type C NGOs are beginning to emerge. The situation in Latin America is of different order where almost all these types of NGOs began to emerge only in the last 20 years or so, particularly as many Latin American countries began to experience the demise of democracy and the rise of dictatorship. There are some variations in Central American countries from the Latin America, but the overall picture is one where all these four types of NGOs co-exist. The presence of such NGOs in newly democratising countries like Argentina is much less visible than in countries like Chile, Brazil, Bolivia and Peru.

RELATIONS WITH THE STATE

Let us now examine the nature of the State in different countries of the South and the relations that these different types of NGOs seem to have with the State. Broadly speaking, the Consultation identified three types of State.

The first type of the State is characterised by a dictatorship, military rule, autocratic, authoritarian functioning. This is the case with Chile at the moment and has been the case with Philippines, Brazil, Argentina. It appears that in a State with dictatorship, all NGO work, irrespective of type, was seen as outside the framework of any legitimate social order or governance. Thus NGOs in the Philippines and Brazil, though in large presence during dictatorship, were not seen as NGOs and perhaps more a part of the opposition political force opposing the dictatorship. The same seems to be the trend in Chile in recent years. In some countries with dictatorship, like Argentina, NGOs did not exist in any substantial force and are only now beginning to emerge after the return of democracy in 1985. Thus most NGOs, irrespective of their type in a State which is controlled by military dictatorships, seem to be outside the purview of any legitimate activity and were seen as a part of the political forces opposing that State. There was no question of

any relationship that State had with these NGOs, except the nature of relationship that the State would have with its political opponents in such a context.

One variation seems to be Bangladesh where the State continues to be a military dictatorship but has an administration which is more development-oriented than in some other similar political contexts. Here the presence of NGOs is also very large and visible and the State does maintain relationships with the NGOs, albeit in its own framework. Bangladesh seems to be similar to some other South Asian countries (like India and Sri Lanka) in this aspect.

The second type of State is that which is characterised by a single ruling party—a situation very common in many African countries (like Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana etc.). In these situations the State seems to accept the work of type A NGOs, but reject all other types. In fact, in many of these situations, much of the NGO work was limited to type A only as has been in many African countries. An interesting variation in this was that the Church in many African countries was also promoting NGO work of type A—the service and welfare-oriented—and that the

Brasil : Attempting Political Unity

Brasil is another Latin American country witnessing transition from dictatorship to democracy. NGOs have a long history in Brasil. A wide range of NGOs with diverse perspectives and approaches co-exist in Brasil today. Their heterogeneity is also a challenge at this historical juncture.

In this transition to democracy, NGOs need to come together in a manner so as to contribute towards this transition. This is a challenge of forging a political unity with other sectors of the society—political parties, labour unions, citizens groups, etc.

NGOs willing to accept the role of the State in defining development frameworks and paradigms, NGOs willing to implement the programmes of development prepared and financed by the governments are accepted, recognised and legitimised by such governments.

The third major reason seems to be most common to single party States, but reflects the situation of many left parties in different countries of the South. It is the belief that the party is the voice of the people and that the party represents the aspirations, the concerns, the wishes, and the needs of the popular classes of all sections of the people, particularly, the

not necessarily get reflected in the programmes, approaches and strategies of such parties in government.

It is here that many NGOs have brought to the attention of the State and national debate, the concerns and the needs of such sections of the population and the issues being thrown up as a consequence of implementing a model of development. The highlighting of pollution issue, the highlighting of the issue of occupational health, of destruction of forests, of rights of women, of the question of small scale local development efforts, of traditional practices in health, education, irrigation, agriculture, etc.—those have been brought to

Philippines : New Contradictions Under Democracy

With the overthrow of Marcos regime in February 1986, NGOs in Philippines began a process of dialogue and discussion to promote a more equitable and democratic path of development. However, this turned out to be a short-lived hope as the new government failed to bring a more pro-people agrarian reform. As a result, several NGOs and people's organisation began to form alternative coalitions and federations. Congress for People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR) emerged as a coalition of 12 peasant organisations and several NGOs in mid 1987. Freedom from Debt Coalition is another such network.

The new government has initiated certain legislations to enhance the role of independent people's organisations and to guarantee the rights of NGOs. But these bills may actually reduce NGO autonomy and relegate them to mere implementers of official development policy. The government is also bringing another bill to investigate NGO fund utilization.

The government is also trying to divide the NGO community by selective involvement of "favoured" NGOs in consultation on government policies and programmes.

The NGOs are once again on the collision course with the government as its policies move away from the interests of the poor.

powerless, the marginalised, the exploited and the deprived. But in many situations where the party has become a part of the State, where the party is ruling the State, the party is governing the State, the gap between the party and many sections of the people has increased. The concerns of the very poor, the landless, the tribals, the women, the environmentalists, those displaced by dams and large projects, workers in the unorganised and the informal sectors etc. do

the attention of the State and national debate by the work of NGOs. A common line of the party in situations where a single party is ruling the State, has been that all such work with the poor and the oppressed and on issues and problems concerning the country must be done under the umbrella and within the organs of the party. Since NGOs are autonomous, independent initiatives, intentionally taken outside the framework of the State and the party, these are

not accepted or liked by the single party (or the left parties) ruling the State. These are branded as divisive efforts, as imperialist designs, as initiatives intended to deflect the attention from the common purpose which seems to be defined in narrow terms of capturing the State power and bringing top-down, centralised models of development and change. Given the overall purposes mentioned early on in this report, it is evident how most NGOs in countries of the South would be working on perspectives and rationales different from the single party States, even when those parties define themselves as socialists, leftists, communists, etc.

Acceptance

The debate in the Consultation also looked at the reasons why the State has been accepting certain types of NGO work and why there has been some increasing trend towards its ambivalence, a sweet and sour acceptance of the work of certain NGOs in certain countries. One of the main reasons for accepting the work and the contribution of NGOs has been the recognition that **NGOs demonstrate a capacity to deliver** programmes and services to most inaccessible and unapproachable areas and

communities where the State delivery mechanisms fail to do so. The work of the NGOs demonstrates close rapport and relationship with the people, is generally very responsive to the needs of specific communities and is carried out in a flexible, informal and efficient manner. Thus most NGO programmes, even of service delivery, seem to be highly inexpensive in comparison to the State delivery of the same programme.

The **second** broad reason for increasing acceptance of the NGOs and their contributions by certain States has been an **international pressure** coming from multi-lateral, bilateral and other international development financing agencies. Many countries of the South are increasingly under pressure to accept the work of NGOs, to involve them in many development programmes financed by bilateral and multi-lateral agencies. Even the World Bank has recently begun to demand the involvement of NGOs in many projects that it provides loans and credits to. Thus pressure from outside, from powerful funders, donors and international policy-makers seems to influence the representatives and the agencies of the State in many countries of the South, to

Bangladesh : National Collaboration

The tradition of voluntarism was consolidated in Bangladesh after independence. A large number of NGOs have emerged to play serious roles in the reconstruction of the country since then. Since more than 200 NGOs have been receiving foreign funds, the government brought in a legislation in 1978, which was further tightened in 1982. Now, all NGO projects have to be approved by the Government before they can be implemented. In recent months, there has been further attempt to restrict NGOs, which has been resisted by the NGO coalition.

BRAC is one such example of a large NGO which has found from its experience that large size of programme helps in convincing the government. In a nationwide child survival programme called Extended Programme of Immunization, BRAC covered about 85,000 villages in Bangladesh to help organise the people to take advantage of the programme. This example of collaboration with the government in a national programme helped build the credibility and recognition of BRAC in the eyes of the government. Yet, NGOs in Bangladesh recognise how widespread is the ill-feeling of bureaucrats towards them.

at least look at and pay attention to, and provide partial recognition to the work of certain NGOs in their countries.

The **third** and increasingly profound and important reason for the acceptance of NGOs and their contribution by many governments of the South has been as increasing advocacy and "noise-making" roles of NGOs within the countries and internationally. On several questions like health, drug policy, environment, peace, women's rights, rights of the indigenous people, literacy, etc. NGOs within many countries of the South and through their international networks, umbrellas and federations have made sufficient noise, brought sufficient attention to these issues and attempted influencing national and international decision-makers in a concerted manner such that their work is now being recognised by governments and their agencies. This is one of the increasingly important reasons also for the continued "sweet and sour" character of the relationship that the State seems to feel with certain types of NGOs in the countries of the South.

Relationships

If one, therefore, examines the nature of relationship that NGOs have with governments, three broad categories can be identified.

Dependency

The **first** most common and most predominant form of relationship is where the NGOs are in a **dependent-client** position vis-a-vis the governments. This dependency/clientism arises in situations where NGOs are either implementing development programmes prepared by the State and its agencies, or receiving funds from the State, or both. It is a dependency of ideas, of money, of resources. The analysis of the experiences in all countries of the South represented during the Consultation seems to indicate that funding by

the government was largely available only for the development programmes and strategies prepared by the government itself; therefore, it relied on the assumptions and models used by the government, and, in most countries where such funding was available, NGOs accepting such funding are in a dependency-client relationship with the government; and this dependency/clientism was most common and wide-spread among type A NGOs, those initially providing only services or engaged in welfare work. These are also the ones who are the largest recipients of government funding and they are the ones who demonstrate most predominant dependency—client relationship with the government and its agencies.

Adversarial

On the other hand, **another** type of relationship could be characterised as **adversarial** where the NGOs and the government are perpetually locked in an adversary relationship. This is the type which was visible in relation to all those NGOs which challenged the policies of the State, its development frameworks and paradigms, on the one hand, or directly supported people's organisations and social movements, on the other. It was the type of relationship where the government perceived NGOs as their adversaries, as raising issues and concerns and as operating in ways and means which challenged the policies of the government, its programmes and strategies, the assumptions underlying its frameworks and models, and the practices of its representatives and agents. In some situations, where government officials at the local and state level were identified as part of the vested interests exploiting, marginalising and harassing the poor and the oppressed, the work of the NGOs towards the purposes of empowerment, building peoples' organisations and strengthening social movements was seen as leading to the questioning of those vested interests, and thereby an attack on the officers

of the government, its structures and apparatus. In other situations, where the NGOs were working towards anti-authoritarianism, towards promoting participatory democracy, towards working for increased voice of, access to and control by the people, their work was seen as a critique of the structures and the styles of functioning of the government and its departments—a questioning of the bureaucratic controlling, unilateral, one-way, secretive, centralised, style of functioning of the government, its departments and officers. Where both the above trends combined together in a specific context, the very work of NGOs guided by the very purposes mentioned above was fundamentally opposed to the very structures, the very manner and very character of the government, its agencies, departments and officers and thus in a fundamental sense a "conflict-of-interest" was objectively present and subjectively portrayed and heightened. It was in such situations that the adversarial relationship was the primary relationship between the NGOs and government.

Response

The interesting aspect of this adversarial

relationship was the manner in which the government tried to deal with such NGOs in such contexts. As has been mentioned earlier, **encouragings dependency and reducing autonomy and independence** of such NGOs was seen as a way of quietening them, of bringing them 'in-line', of making them tow the official development policies; and, funding is most effectively used to attain this purpose. Thus many NGOs, facing the problem of resources and seduced by the allure of local/national, government funding, initially for the work that the NGOs themselves outlined, soon realised how dependent they have become, on the officials, structures and procedures that operate this funding and how curtailed their autonomy and independence has become as a consequence.

The second profound strategy used by government and its agencies dealing with those NGOs where adversarial relationship did, or may, exist was **cooptation**. This was a strategy predominantly used in democratic, liberal settings and the cooptation was done through involvement of NGOs in various policy-making committees, structures and debates of the

Jordan : Funds and Autonomy

The voluntary sector in Jordan comprises of four types of NGOs : Philanthropy, Sport, Civic and Culture. The Philanthropy NGOs are 630 in number, have more than 80,000 persons working with them, and are organised under an umbrella organisation called General Union of Voluntary Society (GUVS).

The government passed a legislation in 1966 to provide a legal framework for registration of NGOs. The Ministry of Social Development is authorized to register Philanthropy NGOs. The law also gave the Ministry authority to investigate and direct NGOs. The Ministry also is authorised to approve the names of elected representatives of NGOs, and this is done only after security clearance is obtained.

Jordanian NGOs have recognized the importance of autonomy and the role of funding in the same. GUVS members raise their own resources from the national and international sources upto the tune of US \$ 30 million per year. One interesting method of raising these funds is by National Lottery. GUVS volunteers run the national lottery in Jordan and its proceeds are used to finance the work of NGOs.

government, thereby getting their commitment and ideas, and neutralising their potential for critique and autonomy. The form of cooptation varied from recognising, facilitating NGO work to including them in official delegations, committees and structures to a variety of informal, interpersonal mechanisms used by various government officials. Whenever debates on policies and programmes are organised, NGOs are invited to participate in a discourse, the arena and the terms of which are apriori determined by the government and its agencies. It is these kinds of strategies which over a period of time lead to neutralization of the leadership of NGOs and the cooptation of their structures and programmes.

The third most common strategy that governments use throughout the world, particularly in the countries of the South, is **regulation of NGOs**. It is interesting that during the last two decades, almost all countries of the South have one or the other legislation brought in by the government to regulate the work of NGOs. This regulation may require registration, may require permission, may require approval of programmes, may require monitoring and scrutiny of programmes, may require regulation, monitoring, scrutiny of funding (particularly if it comes from international, multi-lateral, bilateral or other foreign sources). These regulations are

becoming increasingly restrictive, are being implemented with increasing vigour, and government departments and agencies responsible for their implementation are being strengthened, computerised and made more efficient. The strategy of regulation is one which is within the framework of legal jurisprudence, laws and structures of various countries of the South, which in itself is based against the small, the poor, the weak. Thus individual NGOs can be harassed, kept on tenterhooks, perpetually entangled in procedures and details by regulatory agencies and mechanisms introduced by these governments. It is, for example, very common for NGOs in many countries to spend a whole lot of time in filling forms and complying with procedures under these various regulatory mechanisms. The leadership of NGOs thus gets bogged down with such unnecessary paper-work, thereby reducing their energies and commitments, and blurring their visions for actual work and contribution.

Fourthly, increasingly very common in many countries of the South, **intimidation** as a strategy has been used by many governments and their agencies to deal with adversarial NGOs. Where the relationship with the NGOs is likely to be adversarial, harassment, intimidation (including physical violence), torture and attack have been practiced in many

Indonesia : Legal Permission Required

For an NGO to work at the village level in Indonesia, it requires a permit from the Provincial Government with an acknowledgement from the Regional Government. The Pemda (or Provincial Government) many a times do not provide this permit easily.

Even when permit is granted by Pemda, it does not mean that Bappeda (local planning agency) allows an NGO to work smoothly. When Bupati (President of Bappeda) changes, this permission may have to be sought again. If local NGO work is different from the official plan, it creates further difficulty from Bappeda. In case of such disagreements, an NGO may be forced to withdraw its work from that village. Only personal relationship and understanding with the local Camat (head of the sub-district government) can help in such a situation. This makes the NGO dependent on the personal whims and fancies of the local officials.

countries of the South, irrespective of the character of the State. This has been so in a single party State, and under dictatorship as well as under so-called liberal democratic State.

Consultation meant by the **collaborationist** relationship was a relationship of authentic collaboration which was based on mutual respect, acceptance of autonomy, independence

India : Struggle for Democracy

The history of voluntary action in India is very old. Voluntary action was closely associated with freedom struggle, and found great support in Mahatma Gandhi's call for constructive work.

Since independence, the relation between NGOs and the government have been witnessing ups and downs. While government funds NGOs, and this funding has been increasing of late, regulations to restrict NGOs' autonomy and flexibility are also regularly promulgated by the government. Recent illustrations are the tightening of Foreign Contributions Regulation Act, in 1984-85, and amendments to Income Tax Act in 1987.

The diversity of perspectives, approaches, styles and size of NGOs in India has been both its strength and weakness. While enriching the pluralistic and democratic framework of NGO contributions, it has also come in the way of building alliances and unity at national level. This is a major challenge facing NGOs in the country.

The law and order apparatus of the State, the police, military, intelligence agencies of the State, are increasingly being used to harass, intimidate or attack those NGOs and their members who are not able to be restricted by other strategies mentioned previously or whose work tends to create major 'conflicts-of-interests' and likely embarrassment for the government, its officials and structures.

Collaborationist

Of course, NGOs respond to those situations in different ways and the Consultation did discuss emerging strategies that NGOs individually, severally and collectively are using to cope with these situations of adversarial relationship. But one of the interesting issues that emerged through the Consultation is that in certain types of social-political contexts, (particularly liberal democratic set-ups), the nature of NGO-government relationship need not be perpetually adversarial and that it could occasionally be collaborationist. What the

and pluralism of NGO opinions and positions, and entailed genuine partnership between NGOs and the government to work on a problem facing the country or a region. It was, however, mentioned that examples of such authentic collaborationist relationship are few and far between in many countries of the South and that this depends on a variety of factors and parties involved in the larger development and social transformation process in a given context.

It was in this context that the role of the donors (particularly international funding agencies) and the role of political parties within a country were identified as making important contributions towards the strengthening of mechanisms and possibilities for building such collaborationist relationships. Before we analyse these possible contributions that international funding and donor agencies can make as well as the contributions that political parties within countries can make, it is important to analyse the various concerns and issues that were raised in the context of the above analysis.

Eritrean Relief Agency

ERA is a unique example of an NGO that operates closely under a national liberation struggle. Started 7 years ago, it now has an annual budget of US \$ 50 million. It works with local groups of peasants, women and youth for supporting their relief and rehabilitation work in villages. While the liberation front organises the people, developmental inputs and assistance are provided by ERA. About 120 professionals work as volunteers with ERA.

While ERA faces no government in Eritrea, and its current relationship with the Liberation Front is harmonious, it faces the future challenge of post-liberation society. What will be its roles then ? The quest for social justice and democracy will keep ERA working among the people, even when political liberation is attained.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Some of the concerns are emerging as dilemmas in the experiences of NGOs of the countries of the South debated and discussed in this Consultation and are posed here for further relection, analysis and strategising.

Voluntarism vs. Privatisation

One of the growing trends in many countries of the South is to promote NGOs under the guise of promoting privatisation of social services for the amelioration of conditions of the poor in the rural hinterlands and urban slums. The policies of the World Bank/IMF and the Chicago School are encouraging many governments to withdraw from provision of social services in health, education, drinking water, etc.; consequently, the private sector is encouraged to play the role of service-provision as well as generation of work/income for the poor and the deprived. It is within this context that a question haunts : whether increased support for NGOs from multilateral, international, governmental sources is not likely to push them into supporting the trends towards privatisation of services ? It is important to examine that NGOs play a distinctive role, and not a role of substituting the State, that NGOs do provide necessary services where it is crucial but in provision of those services, they do not displace the official delivery mechanisms or absolve the State from playing its moral and constitutional role in this regard. This is a question that needs to be examinsd in each specific context and poses a serious dilemma for continued growth and support of NGOs.

Cooperation vs. Sub-contracting

Increasingly, the governments are calling

upon NGOs in many countries of the South (for a variety of reasons mentioned above) to get involved in the promotion of development programmes, largely designed by the State itself. Even where some of these programmes appear to be based on NGO recommended development principles and assumptions, many NGOs are finding that their cooperation with the State, in large measure, becomes a sub-contract for completion of development targets and programmes. The nature of the relationship becomes one of the contractor and the sub-contractor, where the NGOs receive a certain payment for fulfilling certain targets prescribed by the State within a given development framework.

It is, therefore, important to examine each specific cooperation and the extent to which the terms of that cooperation are reducing the role of NGOs to mere commercial implementers of a programme and achiever of targets for and on behalf of the government. This has been particularly so in health and family welfare programmes throughout the world and is increasingly being seen in relation to literacy/education and social forestry activities.

Cooperation with the State does not mean either filling the gap where the State is unable to provide effective and responsive services or fulfilling the targets of governments. It does not imply a commercial relationship, even if some of the resources for NGOs come from the government itself. Cooperation also should not absolve the State from its responsibility to pay attention towards improving and revitalising its own service delivery mechanisms. Cooperation with the State should not lead to obsoleting the government from examining the assumptions and frameworks of its development

programmes and strategies in the light of the experiences generated by the NGOs, through the experimentation, innovation and provision of services, on the one hand, and the critique of the government policies and programmes, on the other. It is important that this dilemma is examined in each specific context and that its implications for sub-contracting understood by the NGOs and the government alike.

Decentralization vs. Coordination

A major challenge in the NGO-Government relationship that has emerged is the apparent opposing forces involved in decentralisation and local planning preferred and promoted by the work of NGOs at the grass-roots, on the one hand, and national policies, priorities and programming to be carried out in a coordinated fashion by the governments, on the other. It does not require absence of either; it is neither desirable to have no national policies and priorities; but perhaps there is a need to evolve them through a process of wide-spread consultations with diverse sections of society, with particular references to the poor and the unorganised as their voices are rarely heard in public discourses and debates. NGOs through their work in micro settings at the grass-roots level do provide a basis for local, decentralised planning and programming, responding to the specific needs of local communities and populations. They have the possibility of mobilizing community needs and aspirations into articulated forums and forms. Yet any attempt to nationally coordinate such decentralised micro efforts is likely to face several constraints.

The first constraint arises out of the hegemonic tendencies entailed in governments' attempt at national coordination, as it tends to promote a single view as the only view of a given reality, a single strategy as the only strategy to deal with that reality, a single framework as the only framework to transform that reality. On the other hand, the work and experiences of NGOs

is pluralistic in nature, diverse in its origins and assumptions, and follows the philosophy "let hundred flowers bloom." Obviously, there is a tension between the two.

Similarly, governments' attempts at national coordination and developing a common framework for setting policies and priorities tends to lead to centralisation of decision-making and planning along with narrow access to and control over resources. The work of the NGOs on the other hand, demands social distribution of power and resources, decentralization and access to and control over resources by communities for their own development. This is another dilemma in this relationship.

Disagreement vs. Opposition

The work of NGOs throws up experiences, ideas and perspectives which are based on their work in micro settings at the grass-roots level. This brings up diverse opinions, approaches and analysis, many a times in opposition to the perspectives and analysis of the government, its officials and agencies. This disagreement also occurs between the NGOs and the political parties as the analysis and the perspectives of two differ on many issues and occasions. This disagreement need not be seen as political opposition in a narrow sense of the word. Disagreement is not necessarily unhealthy in such situations. Development and social transformation are complex phenomenon and no simple or single solution is available for all of them in any given setting. Therefore, multiplicity of views, experiences and analysis can only be healthy in resolving some of these developmental knots.

But differences and disagreements are generally viewed as deliberate antagonism and opposition by governments, its officials and agencies, parties and their polit-bureaus. This tends to provoke responses from the governments and parties in ways that tends to

undermine the expression of differences and delegitimise those engaged in such expressions. It is important to distinguish between differences and disagreements on the one hand and deliberate opposition on the other. This is a dilemma that delicately influences relationships between these two parties.

Questioning vs. Weakening

A major role of NGOs as mentioned earlier has been to critique and question the policies, programmes and strategies of the government, particularly in relation to promoting development in the country and supporting the socio-economic advancement of the poor and the exploited. This critique has been raised through direct lobbying and advocacy work, through publications, debates and discourses, workshops, seminars and training programmes, through the experience generated from working at the grass-roots, through the mobilization and empowerment of the people themselves, through the networks and federations etc. etc. This is necessary, healthy and crucial.

Yet in situations where the State is withering away, or the state is weakening as a consequence of international forces, continued and indiscriminate questioning may further support the forces and weaken or strangle the State. This has become particularly relevant in the context of international scenario obtaining in recent years and for countries of smaller size and shorter history of independent functioning (as in many African and Caribbean countries). The role of the NGOs in such situations need not be exclusively that of questioning and critiquing or opposing the State, and may occasionally entail cooperation with the State to challenge and oppose more powerful international forces affecting the country, the government and the people. Therefore, a specific analysis of the situation of a given State, its character, the government and its agencies needs to be made on every issue which

NGOs take up for advocacy, critique or influence. It is important to keep in mind that NGOs should not become supportive, inadvertently, of the larger international forces exploiting the economies in the countries of the South.

Voluntarism vs. Statism

The growing Statism and all pervasive character of the State in influencing the lives of ordinary people in many of the countries of the South is also a trend that needs to be contended with. The State has begun to capture every part of the life of the citizens, centralising resources, decision-making and power and centrally determining the range of development strategies, options and provisions. As a result, State machineries and apparatus have become cumbersome, inefficient, corrupt, ineffective, unresponsive, arrogant, bureaucratised, etc. They end up eating large amounts of resources available within the country, resources which are otherwise important for the growth of communities and people in different contexts of the country. Citizens' initiatives, individuals aspirations, collective efforts by communities, students, teachers, women's groups, environmentalists, a host of NGOs efforts need to be seen in the context of growing Statism, as a way of restraining and checking the universal, monopolistic and unilateral impingement of the State on the lives of the people. NGOs can play a significant role in this regard.

But this poses dilemmas referred to above and it is important for NGOs to promote democracy as a process, not merely a structure, against growing authoritarianism, centralisation and standardisation promoted by the State and its agencies. The trends towards increasing militarisation, heavy spending on defence, arms and growing conflicts and wars all over the countries of the South—further strengthen the forces of centralisation, standardisation, corruption, leading to growing Statism in many of the countries of the South. And NGOs need

to play a role with respect to monitoring, checking and restraining these forces with a sensitive and authentic understanding of the national and international context.

Collaboration vs. Autonomy

One of the most important issues effecting the NGO—government relationship is the issue of co-existence with mutual respect, dignity and autonomy. The State, its agencies and officials are relatively much more powerful in relation to individual NGOs and groups of NGOs in many countries of the South. They are much more resourceful, much more informed and much better equipped to deal with resourceless, mostly uninformed and ill-equipped NGOs. Yet on many occasions the relationship demands cooperation and co-existence. The challenge is how does this cooperation occur without undermining the autonomy and the independence of the NGOs. The dilemma is that NGOs require resources and capacities, which the State and its agencies have, can offer and should offer. How does the provision of resources and capacities from the State and its agencies to the NGOs be done in a manner that does not undermine the latter's autonomy and independence, but in fact contributes towards strengthening the same. This is the fundamental question confronting both the NGOs and the governments and other parties in this developmental context. An effort to deal with this dilemma is needed if the complex character of the relationship between NGOs and the government needs to be understood and promoted more carefully.

The above mentioned dilemmas arise out of

the nature of the NGOs, the overall purposes for which they emerge and exist, and the types of roles that they seem to be playing in various societies of the South. They also emerge because of the differences in the character of the State and the manner in which the State responds to different types of NGOs in different historical, political contexts. With increasing trends towards withdrawal of the State under international pressure or withering of the State in many countries of the South, there is a possibility of the seduction of NGOs. This seduction may create a situation where NGOs end up attempting to replace the State or to pretend as if they are the State. It is important, under such circumstances, that the preferred approaches, principles and priorities of NGOs get reflected in a manner in which they function in capturing and recapturing democratic forms and processes, in continuously occupying political spaces and social interstices available in a given context, and in assisting the process of articulation of the voices of the ordinary citizens, their aspirations and demands from the poor and the unorganised. The social distribution of power, its control and accountability, the preference for micro, decentralised modes of operation, the flexible, informal and responsive institutional arrangements, the commitment for a wider and larger vision of social change, the pluralistic and diverse opinions, approaches and perspectives provide a richness that NGOs bring. It is important that the governments find ways to support the contribution of this richness that NGOs bring without killing it.

IMPLICATIONS

What then are the requirements for this to happen? What are the implications of the above analysis for the governments, for the NGOs' for the donors?

(i) Implications for Governments

Several implications emerge from the foregoing analysis if the governments want to strengthen healthy relationships with the NGOs in their countries and internationally. Of course, many of these implications would be relevant for those types of States which are not dictatorship. Yet they are being presented here in their totality.

a.) Policy Support

Governments need to examine various legislations, policies and procedures that attempt to regulate or thwart the growth of NGOs in their own countries. Besides eliminating restrictive laws and procedures, a positive policy support needs to be created if NGOs have to grow and develop to play their important roles in the countries of the South. Thus governments may need to provide deliberate policy support for this kind of situation to develop.

b.) Climate of Trust and Openness

Political leadership, senior officials, representatives of the government and its agencies need to deliberately work towards creating a climate of openness and trust with NGOs, their leaders and networks. This climate of openness and trust must include opportunities for interaction, for dialogue, for debate. The climate must create possibilities for dissent and disagreement being voiced and articulated in relation to the policies and the programmes of the government. It should

include sharing of information and a learning approach towards development planning and programming. An attempt to demonstrate mutual respect, irrespective of size, power and position, can be such a positive intervention towards building a climate of openness and trust that can contribute towards healthy NGO—government relationship and increased contribution of NGOs in solving the problems of society.

c.) Access to Information

Governments need to reexamine their approach towards sharing of information in relation to the policies and programmes that they implement and the problems and conditions of the people in the country. Legislative measures may need to be enacted to support right to information and to create mechanisms for easy and open access to information about government plans and programmes by public at large and NGOs in particular. Experience shows that sharing of information helps influence the attitudes of NGOs as well as contributes to an authentic and serious debate on problems and positions, instead of distortions and speculations. This is a major contribution that governments can make in an attempt to strengthen their relationship with NGOs and to enhance the possibility of their contributions.

(ii) Implications for NGOs

If NGOs are interested and willing to play their long-term roles and make their sustained contribution towards solving the problems of development in their own countries as well as in developing a collaborationist relationship with government and its agencies, there are several things that they need to do for

themselves.

a.) Institution-Building

NGOs need to work towards building their institutional capacities to function as autonomous, independent, effective and competent entities with mechanisms for long-term sustained work. This is important in order to also resist attempted cooptation, delegitimisation and seduction.

b.) Increased Networking

NGOs, particularly those working at the grass-roots level, need to find ways to build linkages across themselves in order to develop wider networks within their own countries and across countries of the South. This will help share information, prepare analysis and find strength to play advocacy and critique roles at the national and international levels. NGOs of the South also need to deliberately build networks and relationships with like-minded NGOs of the North so that they can find allies and supporters for their work from among the NGOs of the North. This is of great importance as the world is becoming increasingly internationalised and linkages across countries and regions are being shortened and made easier. It becomes also important to pay attention to this networking because, as we discovered during the Consultation, many of the forces that operate in each of our countries are common and similar and that their manifestations and impacts are also similar. This will help NGOs to use their experiences and energies in diverse settings to be brought together to deal with common global issues and concerns which can not be dealt with only at the level of a region or a country.

c.) Understanding of the International Context

NGOs working within the countries of the South need to increasingly pay attention to, and develop understanding of, the international scenario, forces and trends. They need to do so such that they can devise their postures vis-a-vis

the State and the governments in their own countries in that light. This is important otherwise NGOs may inadvertently end up supporting the very forces which may harm the interests of their people, if they do not examine the international context within which they need to develop the perspective about their relationship with the national and local governments.

d.) Building Alliances

For too long NGOs have been ignoring the possibility of building wide-spread and larger alliances within the countries of the South. While networks, associations and federations among NGOs do exist, they do not extend beyond their limited horizons. There is an increasing need for NGOs to play an active role in building alliances with other sectors of the society—with trade unions, with cooperatives, with political parties, with citizen groups, with teachers and students etc. etc.

The purpose of building these alliances is to promote a wider education of the people at large of the roles and contributions of NGOs, on the one hand, and the importance of getting involved in the process of reflection, analysis, critique of the policies of the government, its programmes and their impacts, on the other. It is consistent with their need to increase their support base within the countries, on the one hand, and to play their broader role in promoting participatory democracy, on the other. The experience shows that wherever NGOs have done this, their relationship with the government has become one of more equal partners, and healthier.

(iii) Implications for Donors

As has been mentioned earlier, international funding agencies, multilateral agencies, bilateral agencies, UN agencies, the World Bank and a host of other such donors significantly affect the nature of the NGO-government relationship in many countries of the South. Therefore, there

are serious implications for the donors, if they want to contribute towards healthier and more productive relationships between the NGOs and the governments of the South.

a.) The Funding Strategy

The manner in which the international NGOs and other donors devise their funding strategy can significantly undermine the nature of the NGO-government relationship. In many cases, bilateral agencies are engaging in direct funding of NGOs in the countries of the South, thereby creating nervousness and suspicion in the minds of the governments who seem to be by-passed by the this process. Certain donors are bringing in such large amounts of resources that they contribute to overnight growth, and consequent destruction of NGOs from the South. Donors' funding strategies many a times determine programmes, policies and priorities of the NGOs of the South, instead of encouraging the latter to evolve their own priorities and programmes in response to their analysis of the local conditions and situations. In some other situations, donors tend to fund governments for conduiting support to NGOs for different development programmes and thereby strengthen the hands of the government in creating dependency and controlling the operations of the NGOs. There is no easy solution and different funding strategies have different implications; what is important is for the donors to understand that their funding strategies either to the governments or to the NGOs or to both have significant implications in effecting the nature of the relationships between the NGOs and the government in a specific country. Therefore, they need to carefully examine their own funding strategies and assess their implications on this relationship in each given context.

b.) Promotional Role

As has been mentioned earlier, many donors have been promoting the involvement of NGOs by putting pressures on various governments. This pressure is brought at the time of negotiation for funding by the governments and many governments seem to buckle under this pressure and agree to the involvement of NGOs. This leads to certain attitudes of resistance and negativism on the part of the government, its officials and agencies who see NGOs encroaching on their territories, either for resources or for development roles. It is important that international donor agencies are seen as allies and promoters of NGOs in the countries of the South, but not in a way that tends to make government defensive, suspicious or resistant. Their major contribution could be in ways in which they can influence the strategies in programming for development by these governments and create a space for diverse NGO roles within that process.

c.) Encouraging Solidarity

Many donors operating in several countries of the South seem to be building networks around themselves and identities of the NGOs are being defined in relation to their donors. This is an extremely unhealthy practice and needs to be curtailed forthwith. Networks and associations as ways of coming together have to be around issues and concerns, and not around donors and their philosophies. It may lead to divisiveness and fragmentation as has been demonstrated in several countries of the South.

What donors need to promote is building solidarity across NGOs within the countries and across countries of the South and with countries of the North. They need to demonstrate their commitment to building of this solidarity through their actions and not merely through their words.

FUTURE

In some ways the NGOs and governments are contradictions in terms. In some ways, the nature of relationship between NGOs and governments is inherently problematic. In some ways the experience of this relationship in most countries of the South has been such that has generated hostility, suspicion and mutual antagonism. It is important that the contemporary socio-political context in different countries of the South is looked at from the perspective of strengthening democratic processes and mechanisms. It is important that the roots of a civil society are built and strengthened in most countries of the South. It is important that autonomy, independence, the right for self-determination be extended to the nations, states and to the local communities. It is important that local solutions are sought to local manifestations of global problems. It is important that people, their knowledge and wisdom, their understanding and insights, their capacities and competencies, their aspirations and dreams are put in the centre of the entire process of social transformation. It is important that parties and governments, that polit-bureaus and ministries, that federations and departments do not forget the complexities in any process of social transformation.

If all this has to happen, it has become increasingly clear that ordinary people, their

voice, their strength is heard and seen and respected NGOs have and can make important contributions in this regard.

Historically they have played significant roles in promoting understanding and awareness of the people, their mobilization, organisation and participation in determining their own future and in helping them articulate their voices and their dreams. It is important that NGOs are viewed in this way—as expressions of autonomous, decentralised initiatives, as manifestations of democratic processes and forms, as non-profit voluntary efforts, as expressions of social commitment for an equitable and just society. And thus encouraged, supported and strengthened. One of the most significant relationships that can enhance or mark the growth and the contribution of NGOs in any country is the NGO-government relationship, largely determined by the responses, actions and the perspectives of the government and its agencies.

It is hoped that in the years to come, political leadership and official positions will take steps in concrete and definite ways to create conditions conducive for building a healthy, productive and authentic relationship between the NGOs and the governments in different countries of the South.

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