UK NGOs AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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Explanatory Note

I have used the term non-government organisation (NGO) to refer to all NGOs, where specific reference is made to UK or sub-Saharan NGOs, for example the terms UK NGOs and sub-Saharan Africa NGOs are used.
Introduction

The following paper explores significant issues facing British based international aid charities, also referred to as non-government organisations (NGOs), providing development aid in sub-Saharan Africa. Key points in the paper relate to the expansion of the NGO sectors in the UK and sub-Saharan Africa, and with respect to this expansion how the interests of libertarian socialism co-exist with the interests of individual choice, competition and privatisation. The strengths, weaknesses and constraints experienced by NGOs implementing projects to reduce poverty and to strengthen civil organisations and civil society\(^1\) are examined, and the implications of how NGOs are funded for what they can achieve in these respects is discussed. Finally, I suggest areas of further research to improve the performance of UK NGOs. Where possible I refer to examples, but individual organisations will only be identified where the information is already available in literature or is public knowledge.\(^2\)

The UK International Aid Charity Sector

Out of the top 500 fundraising charities in 1994/95, 37 were international agencies (Charities Aid Foundation 1996:142), who were defined as such because the major part of their work was abroad, including for example, eastern Europe. Under the broader category of international aid, which included charities for religious and Israeli causes there were 61 (Charities Aid Foundation 1996:143). These figures obviously exclude a large number of

\(^1\) The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines civil society as that pertaining to the community of citizens. The term is commonly used in "development language" to refer to the social space where NGOs and community based organisations are active. Strengthening civil society is commonly used in a very general way to refer to the interests of NGOs and official donors with respect to encouraging popular participation in development, good governance and democracy, and privatisation.

\(^2\) This paper originated as a seminar presentation which was intended to provide an overview of the contribution of northern NGOs to development in sub-Saharan Africa, and to identify areas of research to reduce poverty. Following the interest shown in the seminar I was asked to make the presentation available as a paper, which this is. The contents remain the same except the context of the northern NGO sector is made more specific to UK NGOs, and some findings and the conclusions have been expanded.
smaller Third World oriented charities which fall outside the top 500 and the total number is considerably higher; from a combination of sources I estimate there to be approximately 200 charities concerned with Third World relief and development issues. Including very small outfits, which are not necessarily registered charities, there could be over 400 in Africa alone (pers com Neil Thin).

Organisational size varies considerably, with Save the Children and Oxfam consistently being in the top ten, with annual incomes in the range of UKL80 - 100 million in recent years. In 1994/95 the total annual income of Save the Children was UKL92 million, and UKL87 million for Oxfam. Oxfam received the greatest amount of voluntary income, UKL54 million, 61% of its total income. Save the Children received UKL41.4 million, 45% of its total income. Voluntary income includes donations from the public, what is commonly described as charity, and income from other fundraising charities, for example Charity Projects. Other NGOs in the top fifty are ActionAid, Christian Aid, Tear Fund, Charities Aid Foundation, World Wide Fund for Nature UK, World Vision UK and Sightsavers (Charities Aid Foundation 1996:114-116). Towards the bottom end of the top 500 fundraising charities in 1994/95 were Action on Disability and Development with a total income of UKL0.93 million, and Opportunity Trust with a total income of UKL0.52 million (Charities Aid Foundation 1996:138).

UK international agencies raise income from two main sources, voluntary contributions and official donors (mainly the Overseas Development Administration of the British Government, and the European Union). Other sources include covenants and gift aid legacies, charity shop income, corporate donors and the sale of goods and services. Another major source of funding in 1997 will be the International Programme of the National Lottery Charities Board which will start funding Third World development projects and programmes.

There are a number of NGOs, which although they are registered charities, have a small charity base and rely heavily on project funding from other charities and official donors, for example BirdLife International, Action on Disability and Development, and

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3 These sources include Charities Aid Foundation 1996, a list of NGOs co-financed under the Overseas Development Administration Joint Funding Scheme and personal knowledge
VetAid. Commonly these are specifically focused development-oriented NGOs with a small constituency in the UK. Conversely international agencies with a significant welfare and relief component have a more substantial funding base, although funds raised may fluctuate according to the size of a disaster and public response, for example Oxfam, Save the Children, Christian Aid and CAFOD.

Unfortunately voluntary income is not broken down into its constituent parts in the Charities Aid Foundation figures, and as already noted it includes grants from other charities in addition to public charity; but government and multilateral donor grants, from the Overseas Development Administration and the European Union respectively, are recorded separately. The contribution of official donor aid in 1994/95 to NGOs varied between 4.2% for the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, to 88.7% for Voluntary Service Overseas (Charities Aid Foundation 1996:115-141). Official donor aid to NGOs fluctuates substantially from year to year within an NGO and between NGOs. For example the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund figure is exceptionally low; it has been higher in past years and is expected to increase in the future again, and Voluntary Service Overseas, which is the largest UK volunteer-sending agency, is almost entirely dependant on Overseas Development Administration funding.

UK NGOs have experienced a substantial increase in government funding; for example the share of official Overseas Development Administration aid to NGOs increased from 1.4% to 3.6% in the ten year period preceding 1993/94 (Overseas Development Institute 1995:1). In an international comparison of the share of official aid to NGOs in eleven donor countries, the Overseas Development Institute (1995:2) calculated the share of Overseas Development Administration aid to UK NGOs in 1993/94 to be low compared with 29% in Switzerland, 10% in the Netherlands and 6% in Australia, and only Japan was lower with 1%. These figures exclude emergency funding.

But this official aid figure is not an accurate reflection of the total amount of Overseas Development Administration aid received by UK NGOs. It excludes bilateral aid funds which are directly channelled to NGOs in-country, for example Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania; funds used to commission NGOs to implement official aid projects (op cit.:1) and emergency funding for relief operations.
The real increase therefore is considerably higher\textsuperscript{4}, and it has translated into, for example, for Oxfam and SCF an increase in Overseas Development Administration funding from 15\% to 24\% and from 12\% to 37\% respectively between 1984 and 1993 (Edwards and Hulme 1995a: 850). These figures include all Overseas Development Administration receipts, and although separate emergency funding figures are not available, we can assume this to be a significant amount. Certainly emergency aid (including refugee and food aid) was the largest component of Overseas Development Administration aid channelled to UK NGOs in 1994/95 (Overseas Development Administration 1995b:157).

As noted above there is a considerable variation between the contribution of official donor aid to UK NGO incomes, but there is also a wide difference between the average contribution of official donor funds to UK NGO incomes and to NGOs in other European Union countries. For example in Sweden in 1994, 85\% of NGO funds were derived from official sources, compared to 10\% in the UK in 1993 (Overseas Development Institute 1995:2). There is also a substantial difference in the general pattern of income sources between UK NGOs, and NGOs in Germany, the Netherlands and Scandinavia. UK NGOs on the whole are far more dependant on voluntary income, and many are strongly underpinned by a distinctive tradition of public charity. Indeed some NGOs are very reluctant to over-depend on funds from the Overseas Development Administration (or for that matter, any other single source, preferring diversified sources of income). Whereas continental NGOs receive most of their funding from government funds.

In the past few years some British NGOs have experienced a drop in income. According to Save the Children this was due to less emergency activity, especially in Africa, rather than to recession (The Guardian 5 April, 1995:26). It is too early to draw conclusions about the impact of the lottery on NGO income raised through public charity, and equally it is also possible that voluntary income will increase once the National Lottery Charities Board International Programme starts funding overseas projects in 1997. For 1997/98 the lottery will make available UKL25 million for

\textsuperscript{4} Neil Thin estimates that about 15\% of ODA funds are channelled through NGOs.
100% funding of development projects and larger, more complex, programmes.

In the November 1995 budget it was announced that British aid would fall by 5.4% in cash terms in 1996/97, but funds available to NGOs under the Joint Funding Scheme have risen in 1996/97 by 3.4% to UKL36.2 million. Beyond 1996, what share of the budget will be available to UK NGOs is uncertain, but it is expected to increase in absolute terms even as overall aid declines. By 1998/99 the overall aid budget will have fallen by 6.1% in real terms (Aidwatch 1996:2).

The financial data above speak for themselves; UK NGOs have experienced a phenomenal growth. They are fashionable and credible with the public and with official donors; public charitable contributions to the aid charity sector have increased, and the importance of NGOs in development is growing as more bilateral and multilateral donors, including the World Bank, expand their funding of NGO projects. In the following section I briefly review some of the major factors which have contributed to the growth and popularity of UK NGOs, and of the expansion of sub-Saharan Africa NGOs.

Factors Underpinning the Growth of NGO Sectors

NGOs have become the 'favoured child' of official donors (Edwards and Hulme 1995:849) because of their capacity to target at the specific needs of the poor, for their rapid and honest use of funds, and because of their people-centred approach. This preference for NGOs is in line with a general movement of opinion in the UK about the role of philanthropy and charity; since the 1980's prevailing opinion has been moving away from the statutory provision of welfare to a broadening awareness of the possible range of activities which can be undertaken by charities (Prochaska 1988:2). This is referred to as 'gradualist welfare pluralism' (Gladstone 1979 quoted in Prochaska 1988:15), and the expansion of the sub-Saharan Africa NGO sector has very close parallels with what has been happening in the UK. In the following paragraphs I will chart the expansion of the NGO sector in sub-Saharan Africa from the 1970's when the tide turned in favour of the NGO approach.
In the 1970's the general poor performance of integrated rural development programmes to deliver a sustainable improvement in the lives of the rural poor resulted in an opportunity for the targeted small scale approach of NGOs. These official donor programmes which were funded by official donors and implemented by governments were generally directed at increasing agricultural productivity in low potential agricultural areas through, for example, investment in irrigation and the provision of seeds and fertiliser. They were also intended to strengthen the capacity of governments to implement complex rural development programmes. Parallel to the agriculture based programmes were range management programmes which were directed at improving livestock production and marketing in pastoralist areas of low agricultural potential. Both types of programmes commonly suffered from poor design which was technologically and socially inappropriate for local conditions. Their failure led to a general re-consideration about how to approach rural development if programmes were to benefit the poor. More focused, and narrowly defined programmes and projects were preferred and participation, community development and organisational capacity building were emphasised as necessary components to improve performance and sustainability.

Official donors have been using northern and southern NGOs to support emergency and relief projects for sometime, including relief distributions and managing refugee camps, as most official donors have had no capacity to manage disaster relief themselves. The funding of NGO development projects was a natural progression of this. In recent years there has been a substantial increase in emergency funding by official donors and NGOs, and a significant shift in the proportion of aid spent on relief compared to long-term development work. The proportion of emergency relief in aid budgets has increased more than 500% since the early 1980's. For the United Nations system (including the Food and Agricultural Organisation and the World Health Organisation) nearly 50% of all funds are allocated to emergencies (Maxwell and Buchanan-Smith 1994:24). The British figure is lower, around 10%, but this increased from 2% in 1982/83 as a consequence of the large number of natural disasters and famines in the 1980's, and more recently of conflict and civil unrest (Holden 1994:105). During this period many UK NGOs expanded and the number of sub-Saharan Africa NGOs expanded dramatically; many sub-
Saharan Africa NGOs were established to channel assistance to people suffering from the consequences of drought, famine and conflict etc.

Scepticism about what can be achieved by large budget official donor development programmes continues to pervade the "development scene", and overall there is more confidence in the "small is beautiful" approach of NGO projects. But it is not only social philosophy or a particular ideology which underpins this prevailing preference; social and economic change in the UK has demanded an expansion of the charity sector to meet social welfare needs at home, and this has also had an impact on development aid charities. In 1975, the Joint Funding Scheme (JFS) was launched by Labour to co-finance UK NGO projects and the projects of their southern partner by up to 50%. In the late 1980's the Conservative government increased the allocation of the aid budget to NGOs, and in effect built on what had already been started by the Labour Government. Interestingly, only three years before Labour introduced the JFS, the Heath government considered official overseas development aid for NGOs as "undesirable", and preferred inter-governmental co-operation on development (Burnell 1991:205).

Here-in therefore lies a meeting of different political opinions. It demonstrates how those of different political views share in common a belief in the voluntary ethic and the welfare responsibility of government, and how the interests of libertarian socialism can co-exist with the interests of individual choice, competition and privatisation. In the next section, I look at the role of NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa with respect to structural adjustment and the strengthening of civil organisations and civil society. In both of these respects NGOs have an important role to play between the state and its institutions and the people in the provision of essential services and the promotion of democracy, but I also believe the appropriateness of the transfer of western liberalism and political theory to the sub-Saharan Africa situation needs to be critically examined.

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5 The "small is beautiful" term is of course attributable to Schumacher 1973.
Structural Adjustment and Civil Organisation: Major Issues on the Development Agenda

The increase in official donor funding to NGOs since the early 1980's applies to all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. Currently as the "favoured child" (Edwards and Hulme 1995a: 849), northern and southern NGOs are viewed by donors and themselves as having a unique role to play between the state and the people. This together with the financial inability of most states in sub-Saharan Africa to keep pace with the increasing costs of providing essential services and the need to invest in human development for the benefit of the poor has, as in the UK, heightened the importance of the contribution of NGOs. Respected for their non-government position and their value based approach, NGOs are favoured as an alternative means of delivering essential services to the poor, and for their community development approach.

Implicit in the NGO approach with its emphasis on people, social relationships and participation is their potential to become significant civil organisations intervening between the state and the people, not only in the delivery of services but in the strengthening of civil society. Good government is a policy objective of the Overseas Development Administration (and other official donors) which includes enhancing the legitimacy of government and non-government institutions (Overseas Development Administration 1995a:15). Here two different interests come together - those of NGOs promoting the political representation interests of the poor and strengthening civil society, and those of official donors promoting good governance.

For the rest of the paper I wish to set out the contribution, the potential and the constraints of the NGO sectors in the UK and sub-Saharan Africa vis-a-vis poverty reduction and the strengthening of civil society.

Indicators of Performance.

The following section presents an overview of NGO performance in the reduction of poverty as assessed holistically in social and economic terms. Performance is characterised by small scale success and impact tends to be localised; projects are filling gaps in
the provision of basic needs, and, with economic crises and debt, these gaps are increasing. In 1995, 48% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa were living in poverty. In the year 2000 this is expected to reach 50%. Poverty is increasing not only in terms of the total number of people, but also in terms of the proportion of the population (Oxfam 1995: 4). It is difficult to achieve a sustainable reduction in poverty when essential services and infrastructure cannot support an economy and growing population, and the poor continue to get poorer. But NGOs simply do not have the financial and human resources necessary to fill this gap.

NGOs may not reach the poorest of the poor, but they do tend to reach the poorer and more marginal sections of society which do not receive the same level of investment by governments and official donors as those living in higher potential areas (Carroll 1992:67; Edwards and Hulme 1995b: 6; Farrington and Bebbington 1993:184, and Riddell and Robinson 1995:60). According to a report of the United Nations Development Programme NGOs probably miss the poorest 5-10% of income groups (United Nations Development Programme 1993:96).

Evidence is also emerging that NGOs are more cost-effective but not necessarily cheap. The Overseas Development Institute study (Robinson 1992) of NGOs in poverty alleviation found that when costs per beneficiary were compared between NGO and government projects, the cost was broadly equivalent or even higher for NGO projects because they were more staff and resource intensive. As Robinson noted "targeting the poor is a costly exercise" (Robinson 1992:33). NGO projects are widely considered to generate more benefits to justify their cost, and benefits are defined not only in economic terms but also in social and political terms, for example, increased self-respect for women, reduced vulnerability to drought and illness, increased participation in decision-making and political influence. But that said, there is insufficient "post-project" impact information available to assess how sustainable such achievements have been in the longer term.

What NGOs have achieved in terms of strengthening civil society is not well documented, but drawing on examples from my own experience of the NGO sectors in Zimbabwe and Tanzania, and an example from an article by Bratton (1990) certain trends can be
discerned. From a micro, or single issue, perspective there is evidence that NGOs have influenced government policy. This may arise, for example, from the legitimacy of the lobbying work of a well run and high profile membership organisation of the poor or disadvantaged, or the result of collaboration between several agencies with different fields of expertise. Examples of the former include the National Council of Disabled Persons in Zimbabwe, the Campfire programme in Zimbabwe; the Zimbabwe Farmer's Union, and the campaigning efforts of pastoralist NGOs in Tanzania. These NGOs have facilitated new forms of social organisation outside the traditional forms, and they provide an alternative means whereby people can channel demands for development and representation to a wider public.

The National Council of Disabled Persons in Zimbabwe which was established in 1975 is the principle organisation of disabled persons (i.e. staffed by disabled people), and it has taken a leading role in fighting for the rights of all disabled people in Zimbabwe. It derives its legitimacy from its membership and a federal representative structure, and from its own high profile fundraising efforts; it raised Z$4 million locally in 1991 from two musical shows imported from South Africa (with support from Oxfam UK). Within the NGO sector it is at the forefront of lobbying. Soon after independence in 1980 it started negotiating with Parliament for a specific piece of legislation for disabled people, and eventually in 1992 The Disabled Persons Act was passed into legislation. The Act is a significant piece of civil rights legislation in Zimbabwe, the very fact that it has been passed is an example of the organisational and lobbying skills of the National Council of Disabled Persons in Zimbabwe.

The Campfire programme in Zimbabwe which heavily influenced Government policy on the sharing of revenue from nationals parks with surrounding communities, was introduced by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management in 1986, and was effectively started by a collaborative effort between Zimbabwe Trust, World Wide Fund for Nature and the Centre of Applied Social Sciences at the University of Zimbabwe. The Campfire programme is now is fully implemented by district

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6 Formerly known as the National Farmer's Association of Zimbabwe.
7 Oxfam UK for two years had adviser in the Harare office helping local NGOs develop their own fund-raising capacity.
councils and has its own association. It marks an important step in the decentralisation of revenue control from central Government to district councils, and in promoting people's participation in the management of communal and natural resources. Its experience has been drawn on by other revenue sharing schemes outside Zimbabwe, for example, in Zambia, Namibia, Botswana, Tanzania and Kenya (Muir 1992:85).

The Zimbabwe Farmers Union is a national membership organisation of small holding, low income, farmers which has had several notable successes at policy level, including changes to taxation which have benefited small scale farmers, and it sits on a number of Government boards (Bratton 1990:101).

A growing number of pastoralist membership NGOs in Tanzania, Ilaramatak Lolkonerei, Inyuat-e-Miopo, Inyuat-e-Maa, Kiretto and Kipok, have been campaigning since 1991 against the alienation of Maasai grazing areas to commercial farm land. This has taken the form of protest at local level, and a successful case in the local court to have a small amount of land returned which had been illegally allocated for small scale farming to local individuals. A larger case has been brought against two commercial farm owners and has reached both Parliament and the High Court, but at the time of writing in June 1996, it had made little progress. Not only pastoralist NGOs are active, but a group of local women successfully lobbied to have wells which had been included in a newly established town boundary returned to the traditional system of ownership. These successes are however minor, and this example is a reminder of how NGOs have to operate within the framework of the state.8

Overall the performance of NGOs with respect to strengthening civil organisations and the representation of the poor has been stronger at the project, local, level. As Fowler points out, the comparative advantage of NGOs is in the quality of the relationships they create (1990: 11), but even if this is a strength at project level, nowhere is the impact of this clearer than when NGOs successfully use the experience of their client groups and develop formal and informal connections with relevant government officials to effect advantageous changes in government policy. But there are relatively few NGOs with such

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8 Thanks to Jim Crees for the up-dated information in this paragraph.
effective advocacy and lobbying strategies, most are primarily involved with implementing projects. On the plus side for implementing agencies, the NGO approach has had an important role in pushing, for example, gender, environmental concerns, the promotion of local participation and a more people-centred approach on to the agenda of bilateral and multilateral aid, and government development programmes.

While more and more demands are being placed on northern and especially southern NGOs, especially with respect to changing economic and political policies (economic liberalisation and emerging multi-party politics), there is little evidence to date of serious damage to performance and accountability, but some commentators and analysts consider there to be a real risk of co-option by donors (Edwards and Hulme 1995a:854). This debate is closely linked to criticism of the increasing demands being placed on NGOs by donors and governments to deliver services as government financial resources in many countries are simply lacking. But the demands on NGOs to scale up their projects to increase the scale of their impact, for example by increasing project size, by lobbying or by diffusion, (Edwards and Hulme 1992:15), threaten to compromise the very value base of the NGO approach - its focus on people and participation in the project situation, and its organisational flexibility. Therefore, scaling up is a problematic issue, not least if it requires working with government, and more so if we take the ideological view that government is in the best position to provide the basic services of health, education, agricultural extension and social welfare which the poor are less able to afford. There is, however in Edwards and Hulme's volume, no clear evidence that scaling up compromises quality (1992).

I have been unable to find any empirical evidence from sub-Saharan Africa about accountability between NGOs and their clients and/or members, But in a study in Latin American, Carroll concluded that intermediate organisations9 were as accountable and responsive to their clients as membership organisations, and were particularly successful in strengthening community based organisations (Carroll 1992:176). Wellard and Copestake (1993:297), in a study of agricultural NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa,

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9 Intermediate organisations are southern NGOs, in this case non-membership southern NGOs.
noted that community based organisations may not include the poorest households, and therefore the only alternative for intermediate NGOs wanting to reach the poor/poorest was to find a targeting mechanism themselves by establishing a stronger field presence. We cannot assume that membership organisations are necessarily any more accountable or representative than non-membership ones.

Direct Funding of Sub-Saharan NGOs

The southern NGO sector expanded in the early 1980's; firstly in South-East Asia (especially Bangladesh, and the Philippines), followed by Latin America (especially Brazil and Nicaragua), and sub-Saharan Africa where rapid growth in the last 10 years can be attributed in part to the disasters and famines of the 1980's, and more recently in the 1990's to conflict and civil unrest (Holden 1994:105).

Historically most funding by official donors to NGOs has gone to northern NGOs and through them to southern NGOs, but the direct funding of sub-Saharan NGOs by official donors is increasing. The USA, Canada, Norway and Sweden are leading bilateral donors who fund sub-Saharan NGOs, and multilateral donors are the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, and the World Bank. This support takes two forms - funding proposals and contracting services, for example the United Nations High Commission for Refugees contracts NGOs to work in refugee camps. Sometimes the projects of northern and southern NGO projects are funded directly out of the bilateral or multilateral aid budget, thereby reducing the control of the recipient southern government over the budget, and this has met with ambivalence from some southern governments. Increased direct funding of southern NGOs could also pose a strong challenge to UK NGOs if it reduced the amount of Overseas Development Administration and European Union funding available to them. This must be threatening to many, and as Bebbington and Riddell note, the question of how much UK NGOs and southern NGOs are really partners is clearly an issue (1995:879). But it could also be that direct funding to southern NGOs means that official donors have to rely even more on the
expertise of UK NGOs, and it may not substantially effect their funding.

There are also risks associated with direct funding of southern NGOs. Bebbington and Riddell point to a contradiction, that is that the main interest of official donors has been with southern NGOs as deliverers of aid, rather than to strengthen them as representative civil organisations. They further point out that a consequence of this long established emphasis could be that the agendas of heavily funded sub-Saharan Africa NGOs are donor-led, and that less funded smaller NGOs are "crowded out" (1995:891). Official donor funded sub-Saharan Africa NGOs could also be vulnerable to accusations from their own governments of being in the "pocket" of northern governments. Bebbington and Riddell go on to argue that a more effective immediate role for official donors would be to focus on improving the environment which sub-Saharan Africa NGOs operate in, and if the trend in direct funding continues that northern NGOs should assist in developing a framework about how this should happen (op cit. 1995:891).

It is undoubtedly essential that donors should direct their efforts at improving the political and economic climate which sub-Saharan NGOs operate in, and as noted above, good governance is a priority of the Overseas Development Administration and other official donors. A vital question which is being asked by many official donors, NGOs and observers is what role northern and southern NGOs can play in the parallel process of strengthening civil society. In the next section drawing on instructive experience from Zimbabwe, I focus on the implications of how Zimbabwean NGOs are funded for their development as civil organisations in society. In particular I highlight the limitations of project funding and the powerful legitimacy a sub-Saharan NGO's own successful local fundraising strategy can provide.

Project Funding and Southern NGO Organisational Development

Most funding for sub-Saharan Africa NGOs, from official donors and northern NGOs, is granted for discrete and narrowly based projects, and is usually for 3-5 years. Turning a project into a sustainable development process given short-term funding,
according to many NGOs is problematic. It discourages feasibility work and situational analyses which would contextualise what the organisation is trying to do, and it discourages a long-term broader programme approach and its advantages of interconnectedness. Succinctly put by Riddell in an impact evaluation of official Swedish aid to NGOs to Zimbabwe 'many (possibly most) projects treated in isolation tell us little about development which is usually better informed by examining what is happening to people and processes' (1995:44, original emphases).

In addition it allows only a minimum investment in organisational development which constrains long-term planning. For instance, a key problem for Zimbabwean NGOs is securing organisational finance (core funding for office accommodation, salaries, staff development etc.). The problem is not particular to Zimbabwean NGOs, the same could be said for many countries but I wish to draw on some findings from my experience of the local NGO sector in Zimbabwe to illustrate some implications of how local NGOs are funded. These relate to organisational development, strengthening the role of NGOs as civil organisations, and the strengthening of civil society.

Very few Zimbabwean NGOs raise income locally, and for the few there is a wide variation in the amounts raised. Jairos Jiri (a welfare organisation for the disabled, i.e. staffed mainly by able bodied people) was established in 1950, and is one of the oldest NGOs in Zimbabwe. As a welfare-oriented NGO it has been more successful than development-oriented NGOs in raising funds from the public, from the private sector and from the Government (for salaries). It raises funds locally through the sale of craft work, from organised events, and from the private sector. The National Council of Disabled Persons in Zimbabwe (described earlier in the section on performance) also has its own sources of income at branch level and it successfully raised Z$4 million in 1991. As noted above it has been at the forefront of successfully lobbying for the rights of disabled people, and it derives its legitimacy from its membership and its own fundraising. Both Jairos Jiri and the National Council of Disabled Persons in Zimbabwe are experienced fundraisers, but the National Council of Disabled Persons in Zimbabwe believe fundraising combined with its legitimacy as a membership organisation gives it the edge for campaigning work. Lobbying and advocacy are more developed amongst the membership organisations of the disabled than
amongst the welfare organisations for the disabled and the development-oriented NGOs, although a number of development-oriented NGOs are engaged in lobbying at a national level, and a few of these, for example the Zimbabwe Farmer's Union are membership organisations.

Overall for the very few NGOs with their own fundraising efforts, sources of income include commercial or semi-commercial enterprises, commonly the commercialisation of existing activities, for example a garage or charging for services and facilities. Other means include direct mail appeals; the sale of craft work; the construction of low cost housing; membership fees; and accessing "blocked funds" (the transfer of private investment funds to NGOs at a discounted rate of the foreign exchange equivalent).

Development-oriented Zimbabwean NGOs in general do not attract public contributions (charity) or private sector funding (only the high profile politically affiliated organisations raise substantial amounts), and those working with community based organisations experience greater difficulty in obtaining core funding compared to those providing support services (especially in respect to welfare services, women's interests and environmental issues). With a very few exceptions donors are not prepared to fund commercial assets. Office rentals are a major element in core costs and most Zimbabwean NGOs do not own their office accommodation and find it difficult to raise funds to do so. UK NGOs who raise their own money publicly (charity) find it difficult to explain such expenditure in the face of more immediate and urgent needs. But it is crucial for the long-term development of the national sector that UK NGOs and official donors fund initiatives which will enhance the self-reliance of local NGOs, for example providing funds for office accommodation and commercial enterprises.

Besides improving financial self-reliance, a second area Zimbabwean NGOs wish to improve their organisational capacity in is staff training and development. There is a growing trend in UK NGOs of providing capacity building support to sub-Saharan NGO and community based organisations, which includes training courses, funding for vehicles and advisers, but many remain over-reliant on project funding which has prevented investment in organisational and human resource development.
While there is a trend to send staff for courses, this is rarely complemented with systematic training within organisations.

What are the implications of this? Organisational development, as in the case of the National Council of Disabled Persons in Zimbabwe, has been shown to be inextricably linked to the strengthening of NGOs as civil organisations, and it has also been shown NGOs can make a valuable contribution to the strengthening of civil society, at national policy level as well as at project level. At this point it also needs to be mentioned that there a number of international coalitions of mainly northern NGOs which campaign and lobby internationally to effect change and to broaden the environment in which governments make policy decisions. For example Health Action International campaigns against the marketing malpractices of pharmaceutical companies and the International Federation for Alternative Trade campaigns for better terms of trade which are provided by its members.

There are two points I would like to make here before the conclusion. Firstly, to repeat that poverty in sub-Saharan Africa is increasing, and many states cannot afford what is needed to provide essential services for the poor - and to note that strengthening civil society alone will not necessarily lead to better lives for the poor or for that matter to good governance. Secondly there is a danger of over-focusing on organisational constraints experienced by sub-Saharan NGOs without giving complementary attention to the external context of government policies and practice, and the potential effects of international politics and the global economy.

CONCLUSION

The problem of increasing poverty should not be approached by asking what NGOs can do, but rather from the perspective of what is needed to reduce poverty. In the current political and economic climate I believe there is a risk that NGOs become a panacea which lets official donors, bankers and governments "off the hook" - assuming it is the responsibility of states to provide essential services. But to reduce poverty and to ensure more equitable access to primary education; primary health care and clinics; sanitation; rural markets, roads and transport in many countries, what is needed in the long-term is more public spending on these
sectors - which will disproportionately benefit the poor. While NGOs can supplement the state, they cannot replace it. They do not have the financial and human resources, and as argued elsewhere, by Allen\textsuperscript{10} (quoted in Palmer and Rossiter 1990:48), they lack the legitimacy or authority of government - because they are self-selected, they are not representative of all people.

Therefore more critical analysis is required of the relations between the state, civil society and NGOs, and the effects of these relations and their impact on the poor. More specifically work is needed to investigate the nature of relations between different patterns of governance, and the dynamics of social and economic development; and within this the contribution of NGOs, and other formal and informal organisations (for example trade unions and clan structures) needs to be examined to determine the conditions underpinning success in poverty reduction, and in strengthening civil society. Comparative research is also required on the impact of different kinds of civil organisations (including NGOs) on strengthening civil society and reducing poverty. Finally more work is required on the relations between NGOs and the private sector, especially with respect to the privatisation of services which were once delivered by the state, and the diffusion of technology targeted at the poor. It is important that such studies incorporate a diachronic as well as a synchronic perspective, to ensure they are informed by the lessons of past experience.

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\textsuperscript{10} Chris Allen at the Centre of African Studies Conference in 1990 on Critical Choices for the NGO Community: African Development in the 1990's.
References


