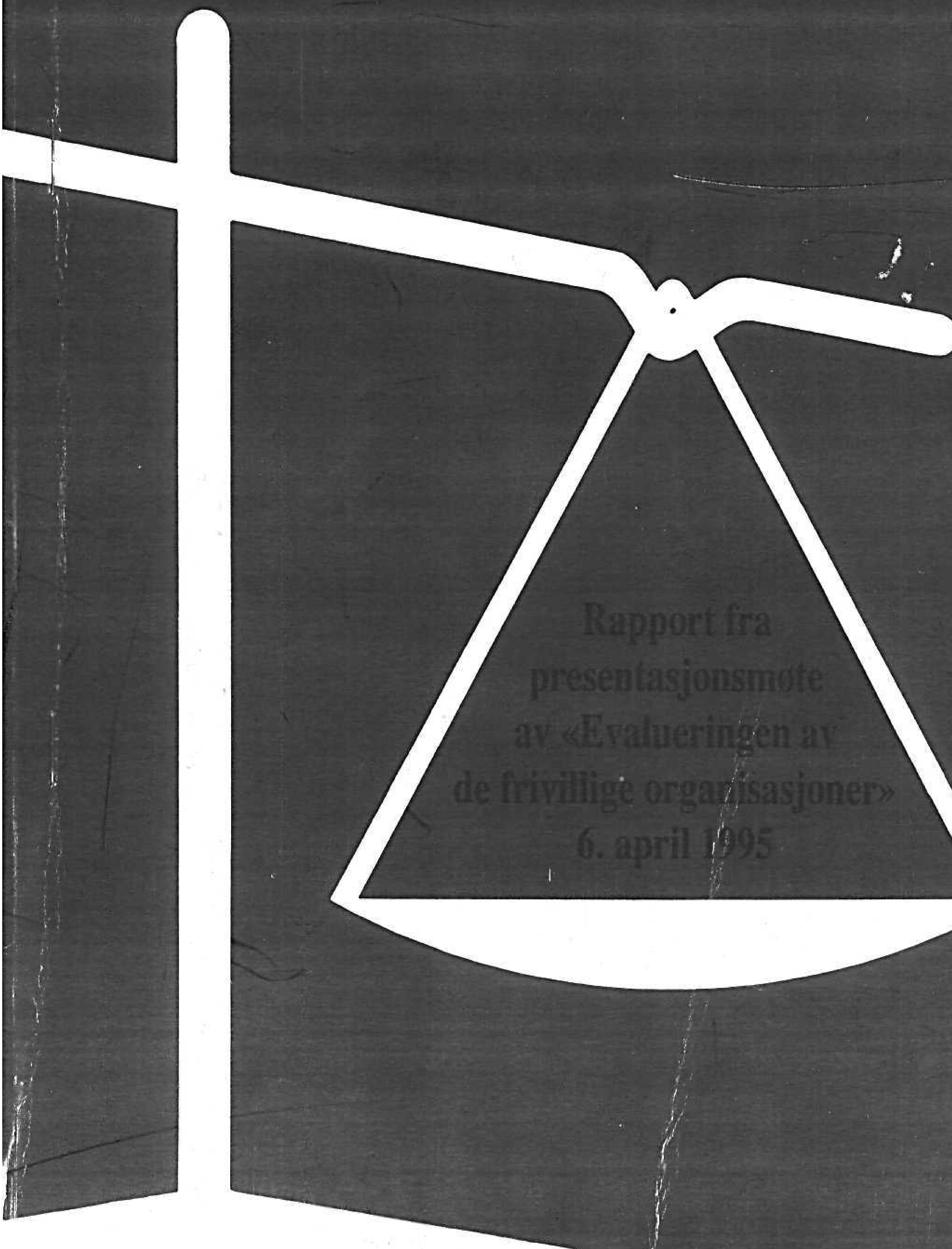
DET KONGELIGE UTENRIKSDEPARTEMENT
NORGE

Evalueringsrapport 3A.95



Rapport fra
presentasjonsmøte
av «Evalueringen av
de frivillige organisasjoner»
6. april 1995

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(Most studies are available in English and Norwegian)

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Rapport
fra
presentasjonsmøte av «Evalueringen av de frivillige organisasjoner som kanal for norsk bistand»

Oslo 6. april 1995

Synspunktene i denne rapport står for innledernes regning.

Forord

Evalueringen av de frivillige organisasjoner som kanal for norsk bistand er den første samlede evaluering av slik bistand siden Norsk utviklingshjelp startet i 1962. Det er samtidig det største evalueringsarbeid som UD til nå har finansiert. Evalueringen har gått parallelt med et omfattende evalueringsarbeid av frivillige organisasjoners bistand også i våre nordiske naboland.

Formålet med møtet 6. april 1995 var å presentere og drøfte enkelte viktige problemstillinger som springer ut av disse evalueringene. Dette også som et innspill til organisasjonenes egen oppfølging av studiene.

Innleggene som ble holdt på presentasjonsmøtet var av høy faglig kvalitet og egenverdi. Flere av deltakerne ga derfor uttrykk for at de kunne tenke seg foredragene og kommentarene samlet og distribuert.

Dette ønske skulle nå være innfridd.

UD, 15.06.95

INNHOLDSFORTEGNELSE

ÅPNING

Ved Spesialråd Knut Vollebæk

For litt over tre år siden - 20.februar 1992 - møttes representanter for UD/NORAD, de frivillige organisasjonene og evalueringskonsulenten Senter for utviklingsstudier(SFU) i dette møterom for å diskutere opplegg for evalueringen. Idag skal vi presentere, men også i noen grad drøfte resultatene av arbeidet utført av prosjektleder Terje Tvedt og et tverrfaglig team med i alt 25 historikere, geografer, antropologer, økonomer, statistikere, revisorer og statsvitere. Det foreligger 16 spesialstudier i tillegg til de to hovedrapportene, tilsammen ca. 1500 sider. Ringen skulle således nå være sluttet.

Arbeidet er den første samlede evaluering av private organisasjoner som kanal for norsk bistand siden Norsk Utviklingshjelp startet i 1962. Det er samtidig det største evalueringsarbeid som UD til nå har finansiert. Parallelt har det pågått et omfattende evalueringsarbeid av frivillige organisasjoner også i våre nordiske naboland. Kunnskapsgrunnlag når det gjelder denne bistandsformen er derved vesentlig utvidet.

Som emner for dette møtet har vi valgt noen av hovedtemaene i studien. Dels ønsker vi å sette søkelyset på hva de frivillige organisasjonene oppnår som bistandsoperatører. To sentrale begreper fra "bistandsvokubularet" er plukket ut: **fattigdomsorientering** og **folkelig deltakelse**. Dels vil vi også se på framtida og drøfte rollene til frivillige organisasjoner som bistandsoperatører, også i forhold til norsk utenrikspolitikk. Spørsmålet blir reist om likeverdig organisasjonssamarbeid-partnerskap er mulig i en verden med kryssende religiøse, kulturelle og økonomiske hensyn.

Antallet norske organisasjoner som mottar norsk offentlig støtte har hatt følgende økning: fra 7 i 1963, 20 i 1975, 30 i 1981, 60 i 1986, til 134 i 1991. Totalt har nærmere 500 organisasjoner, norske og internasjonale, mottatt slik støtte. Norge er representert i mer enn 100 land på denne måten. På 10 år fra 1981 til 1991 har den totale norske statlige bevilgningen økt fra 204 mill. kroner til 1,2 milliarder. Idag er beløpet nærmere 1.4 milliarder, som utgjør 25% av den tosidige, norske bistanden. Mer enn 10 milliarder kroner er brukt gjennom kanalen de siste 10 år.

Samtidig har verden endret seg. Det internasjonale Fredsforskningsinstituttet i Stockholm har nylig slått fast at 140 mill. mennesker er blitt drept i165 større konflikter siden 1945. Det er særlig antallet større interne konflikter som har vokst på bekostning av de internasjonale. FNs Høykommisariat for flyktninger økte sitt årlige forbruk fra 12. mill. USD i 1970 til 1. milliard i 1990. FNs Barnefonds humanitære bistand økte fra USD 35 mill. i 1980 til 240 mill. i 1992. EUs katastrofebistand ble tidoblet fra 1989-92. Ifølge Det internasjonale Røde Kors ble i gjennomsnitt 50 millioner mennesker årlig ofre for katastrofer på 1970-tallet, antallet på 1980-tallet steg til 125 mill. I 1990-årene anslås det at over 250 millioner rammes av katastrofer hvert år. Tendensen synes bare å aksellerere. Ett av de større probleme vi står overfor i norsk bistandsadministrasjon og utenrikspolitikk idag er derfor hvordan forebygge katastrofer. Ikke bare bygge forbindelseslinjer mellom nødhjelp og langsiktig bistand, men også hvordan bruke langsiktig bistand til å forebygge? Norske frivillige organisasjoner vil ha viktige bidrag å gi i løsningen av problemkompleks av denne art.

Departementets vurdering er at den evalueringsrapport som foreligger presenterer en rekke aktuelle, til dels provoserende problemstillinger. En viktig funksjon er at den fyller et behov for historisk oversikt; for første gang er en mer enn tretti år gammel utvikling framstilt samlet. Dens viktigste svakhet er at rapporten i for liten grad har fanget opp holdninger og synspunkter hos de berørte parter når det gjelder vurderinger av samarbeidet i fortid, nåtid og framtid. Det ligger derfor en hovedutfordring for framtida på et bedre vis å **kontinuerlig** vurdere både enkeltinnsatser og kanaler, slik at norsk bistand kan være mest mulig effektiv.

Jeg vil til slutt understreke at Bistandsadministrasjonen ser evalueringen som et viktig bidrag til til nytenkningen om frivillige organisasjoners rolle i norsk bistand. Vi håper organisasjonene ser det på samme måte og nyttiggjør seg de muligheter rapporten innebærer.

«Frivillige organisasjoner eller NGOs i bistanden.»

av Terje Tvedt

INNLEDNING OM FRIVILLIGE ORGANISASJONER ELLER NGOS I BISTANDEN

Terje Tvedt

Er de frivillige organisasjonene mer effektive enn staten i bistanden? Når de de "Fattigste blant de fattigste" på en mer effektiv måte, og fremmer de demokrati? Her vil spørsmålet besvares på en måte som indirekte vil vise at spørsmålet må stilles på en annen måte, fordi det er formulert innenfor en tradisjon og et språk som ikke fanger inn mangfoldet av faktisk aktivitet innenfor det komplekse sosiale system som kan kalles NGO-kanalen.

Først vil jeg diskutere hva jeg oppfatter som noen helt sentrale begrepsmessige og analytiske problem i studiet av NGO i utviklingshjelpen, som har direkte relevans for spørsmål som "effektivitet", "fattigdomsorientering" osv.
Spørsmålene er ganske fundamentale: Hva er en NGO? Hvorfor eksisterer de? Og hvordan skal et NGO-landskap analyseres? Tiden gjør at jeg bare skissemessig kan gå inn på den tradisjonen studien opererer innenfor, og som jeg stiller meg svært kritisk til.

Først litt om utgangspunktet: NGO-støtte har i mer enn et tiår har vært et satsingsområde for alle givernasjoner. I den seneste OECD-studien hevdes det at omtrent 70 milliarder kroner årlig går gjennom denne bistandskanalen. Nye organisasjoner har sprunget opp som sopp etter regn i svært mange land. Det er anslått at nærmere 5000 vestlige NGOer arbeider i utviklingsland, og at omtrent 20 000 organisasjoner i disse landene mottar støtte. I tillegg kommer alle de muslimske organisasjoner med støtte fra muslimske land.

Til tross for denne eksplosjonsartige utviklingen har studiet av feltet kommet svært kort, både teoretisk og empirisk. (Bare ett eksempel: Ulike rapporter om de samme land gir helt ulike tall for antall organisasjoner og budsjett for NGOene i landene, uten at dette ekspliseres eller drøftes.)

Det er mange årsaker til denne situasjonen som vi ikke vil gå inn på her. Innlegget vil presentere et forsøk på å oppnå konseptuell og analytisk klarhet, og å fremme et perspektiv som jeg mener er fruktbart for å analysere denne utviklingen. Det er viktig å forstå fenomenet, fordi det endrer verden: Foreign Affairs publiserte i sommer en artikkel som kalte prosessen en "associational revolution", en revolusjon som i betydning blir sammenliknet med nasjonalstatenes framvekst på 1800-tallet.

For det første er det viktig å ha klart for seg hvor omfattende og sammensatt feltet er. I dominerende NGO-litteratur blir NGOer beskrevet som fleksible, grasrotorienterte, verdiorienterte, folkelige, anti-statlige osv. De er gitt en normativ beskrivelse som på den ene siden bidrar til å opprettholde myter om organisasjonene, men som gjør forståelse vanskelig. Første oppgave ble følgelig å forsøke å bryte ut av den normativt, ideologiske tradisjon som har dominert NGO-forskning siden 1980-tallet. (Den har dominert i Verdensbanken, OECD, de fleste forskningsmiljøer og ikke minst i Norge).

Feltet omfatter alt fra Ford Foundation, som har et budsjett som overgår mange regjeringers sosialbudsjett, til små misjonsorganisasjoner med noen få medlemmer, som Mary's Venner i Norge, til store u-landsorganisasjoner som BRAC i Bangladesh, med et årlig budsjett på ca. 210 millioner kroner, 1,1 millioner medlemmer og 12000 betalte ansatte som driver store trykkerier og andre fabrikker i konkurranse med det private næringsliv, til små kvinnegrupper - uten lønnede ansatte - på landsbygda i Colombia.

Det omfatter også helt ulike typer organisasjoner:
Noen er sterkt "verdi-orienterte", som politiske grupperinger, misjonsorganisasjoner, islamske, fundamentalistiske grupper, miljøorganisasjoner.
Andre ligner på business-foretak, dvs. organisasjoner hvis primære mål er selvopprettholdelse og ekspansjon.

Det finnes organisasjoner som er opprettet av regjeringer for å være en trakt for givermidler, og det finnes organisasjoner som er opprettet for å bekjempe ikke bare regjeringers legitimitet, men staters legitimitet.

Som vi ser: NGOene har ingen felles politiske eller ideologiske egenskaper, uansett hva NGO-språket tilsier. Hvordan skal da NGOene bestemmes?

I enkelte vestlige land er det en lett utvei; de kan bestemmes basert på relativt klar nasjonal lovgivning. I et komparativt perspektiv er det vanskeligere, siden lovgivning varierer fra land til land. I USA er det f.eks. slik at en PVO ikke kan motta mer enn 50% av sitt budsjett fra det offentlige, for å forbli en PVO eller NGO. Med tilsvarende lovgivning ville det ikke vært mange norske utviklings-NGOer igjen. En av de fremste forskerne på feltet, Kramer, fant kun ett fellestrekk i de vestlige velferdssamfunn: at de var enheter "unntatt skatteplikt". Men som kjent - det gjelder ikke norske frivillige organisasjoner.

Komparativ forskning eller en studie av NGOers funksjonsmåte i flere samfunn er altså svært problematisk også innenfor de relativt homogene industrielle samfunn. NGOer i bistanden er enda vanskeligere å bestemme, fordi det empiriske feltet er mer kaotisk og lovgivningstradisjonene enda mer sprikende (f.eks. eksisterer ikke bare katolske og protestantiske tradisjoner, men også ulike islamske, hinduistiske, konfusianske, etc., etc.). I noen land, som f.eks. i Tanzania, Etiopia og Nicaragua har de ikke hatt formelle prosedyrer og retningslinjer overhodet. At loven ikke opererer med NGOer betyr ikke at de ikke finnes. Snarere kan nettopp mangel på statlig lovgivning i landet være en av forutsetningene for den eksplosjonsaktige veksten i development-NGOs. Slike formalkriterier er også vanskeligere å anvende fordi regelverket er mindre stabilt i f.eks. Etiopia, Nicaragua og Sudan enn det er i England, Norge og USA. Organisasjoner som anerkjennes som NGOer av et regime, kan være forbudt dagen derpå av et nytt regime som definerer de som politiske undergrunnsbevegelser snarere enn som altruistiske NGOer. Det er også organisasjoner som ikke anerkjennes av landets myndigheter, men kun av donorene. Som FN-ansatt i Sudan var jeg for eksempel med å arbeide gjennom en jesuittisk organisasjon som var nektet godkjennelse av regjeringen i landet. Noen av de største prosjektene gjennom NGO-kanaler er jo nettopp i konfliktområder hvor implementerende NGO svært ofte er på kant med regjeringen. Særlig kjent er støtten til ERA og REST på Afrikas Horn og SSRA/SPLA i Sudan. I begge tilfellet truet jo landets regjering med å bombe hjelpesendingene og NGOene.

Innen bistandsfeltet finnes det ikke, etter min mening, hensiktsmessige, formal-juridiske kriterier av denne typen.

2. Samtidig er dette et felt hvor det skjer store endringer. Det har skjedd en fantastisk vekst det siste tiåret. I Bangladesh oppgis antallet til 16 000 organisasjoner. I Brasil er det i løpet av få år vokst opp nesten 100 000 kristenbaserte grasrotorganisasjoner. I Chile sies det at det er 27 000 non-profit organisasjoner, i England er det 275 000 veldedighetsorganisasjoner etc. Dvs. begreper og forståelse blir fort avlegs.

Enn videre: Denne eksplosjonen finner sted under lyden av fanfarer med sterk politisk-ideologisk karakter. Det er selvsagt mange årsaker til denne veksten. Her vil vi bare kort nevne noen momenter som har bidratt til å skape denne konseptuelle og analytiske uklarhet.

På 1980-tallet var det et sammenfall mellom det Nye Høyre og Reagan og Thatchers angrep på staten som kveler av det frie initiativ og det mer populistiske venstres kritikk av det moderne samfunns fremmedgjøring etc: begge så oppbyggingen av frivillige sammenslutninger som (Thatcherismen i USA, den nye kommunitarismen i USA og deler av f.eks. den norske venstresiden som oppfattet NGOene som uttrykk for grasrotorganisering og grasrotmobilisering mot en parasittisk, utbyttende stat, satte alle staten under press og ut i fra ulike begrunnelser fremmet NGOer som en Løsning. Organisasjonene og NGOene var derfor fra første stund tema for sterke politisk-ideologiske lojaliteter.

Nå, ved begynnelsen av 1990-tallet, er den sterkeste ideologiske retningen av betydning for dette feltet, "The New Development Paradigm", påvirket bl.a. av Fukuyama (*The end of History*). Perspektivet innebærer en fundamental redefinering av forholdet mellom stat og samfunn, hvor NGOene representerer ikke bare den private sfære eller sektor, men intet mindre enn statens alternativ, dens motstander, den som skaper et pluralistisk, demokratisk sivilt samfunn mot en overvektig, undertrykkende stat - hvor de to parter ta del i et null-sum spill.

Ideologi spiller altså en rolle, men også næringsinteresser.

I løpet av den samme perioden er det skapt et stort antall organisasjoner med et stort skikt av utviklinsgdiplomater som har sitt levebrød knyttet til disse organisasjonene. De har interesse av å skape og opprettholde myter om organisasjonenes rolle, karakter og betydning, i en verden hvor det er åpenbart at meningene innen NGO-samfunnet er mye mer sprikende enn næringsinteressene tillater at kommer opp i dagen. Samtidig har det offentliges avhengighet av organisasjonene som velferdsprodusenter i velferdssamfunn og som utviklingsprodusenter i bistanden skapt et felles-statlig behov av å framstille denne utdelingen av offentlige oppgaver som uttrykk for effektivitet etc.

3. Til sammen har dette skapt en situasjon hvor det ikke finnes noen transnasjonal eller overhistorisk enighet om hva en NGO, en "nonprofit" eller en "privat frivillig organisasjon" er for noe, og hvor det i stedet eksisterer uklarhet og mangel på stringens.

La meg nevne bare to eksempler: ODI ga i begynnelsen ut fire bøker om NGOer i Afrika, Asia, Latin-Amerika og et mer generelt bind. Ingen av bøkene anvendte samme definisjon, uten at dette ble problematisert. OECD ga ut rapporter om NGOs in development i 1983, 1988 og 1993; også her var den implisitte NGO-definisjonen flytende og varierende. Verdensbanken har en definisjon som gjerne inkluderer business-foretak, Norge har en som gjerne vektlegger verdiorientering og at de ikke er businessforetak, mens f.eks. Bangladesh definerer NGOs som Private Frivillige Organisasjoner, uten at dette er blitt tilstrekkelig problematisert i litteraturen. Så lenge dette er situasjonen, hvordan skal en da foreta en meningsfull analyse av NGO-kanalen i utviklingshjelpen, dens betydning og potensiale? For vi som skulle studere NGO-kanalen internasjonalt måtte dette spørsmålet håndteres først.

Først mener jeg det er nødvendig å tillegge to forhold særlig vekt:

a) En vinner ikke noe på å gruppere de som gruppe i den såkalte tredje sektor. I Norge kan dette være hensiktsmessig, men å snakke om kvinnegrupper i Madi eller Toposa som en del av Sudans tredje sektor er lettere absurd. Verdensbanken anvender denne terminologien, men glemmer da at USA og Somalia ikke er det samme. Ville noen finne på å kalle haugianismen eller Lutheranismen på 1500-tallet som del av den tredje sektor? Poenget her er ikke at utviklingslandene kan sammenliknes med Norge på 1800-tallet eller Europa på 1500-tallet (så langt i fra), men å vise at begrepet har relevans kun i bestemte sosio-økonomiske kontekster.

b) Betydningen av å skille ut de organisasjonene som mottar støtte gjennom bistandssystemet fra de organisasjonene som ikke gjør det. Finansierings- og styringsmekanismene skaper organisasjoner av en spesiell karakter og med en spesiell funksjonsmåte. (Eks: Språk. Penger. Rapporteringsrutiner. Frynsegoder, Legitimitet.)

Det finnes et behov, etter min mening, for en definisjon som er mest mulig universell, dvs. som kan anvendes med fruktbarhet i studiet av alle land, og som ikke neglisjerer variasjon i nasjonal kontekst og som samtidig tar høyde for NGO-kanalens særegenhet i forhold til organisasjonslivet for øvrig. Min konklusjon er: *En NGO er en organisasjon som mottar finansiell eller annen støtte fra donorer for utvikling og som er institusjonelt adskilt fra staten og regjeringen og som ikke distribuerer profitt til sine medlemmer.*

II: Hvorfor finnes slike organisasjoner som vi kaller NGO eller på norsk - frivillige organisasjoner" i bistanden?

(I Norge er organisasjonene gjerne kalt "private organisasjoner". Begrepet oppsto allerede på 1960-tallet, og representerte et brudd med hva som var vanlig i Norge; frivillige organisasjoner.'" En hovedårsak var sannsynligvis at Arbeiderpartiet med det slikt begrep ønsket å oppnå støtte for uhjelpsprosjektet fra den tradisjonelle høyresiden i norsk politikk. Siden ble Kontoret for private organisasjoner opprettet, og alle senere stortingsmeldinger beskriver dem som private, til tross for at de i stadig større grad får sin virksomhet betalt av staten, og til tross for at det virker noe søkt å kalle NLM, LO, KN eller Latinamerika gruppene for private organisasjoner.)

En hovedforklaring internasjonalt har vært funksjonalistiske forklaringsmåter. Organisasjonene oppstår som samfunnets svar på ulike "failures" innen de andre sektorene i samfunnet. De fyller nisjer som ikke fylles tilstrekkelig være seg av staten eller det private. Her finnes det en ganske omfattende litteratur det fører for langt å gå inn på her.

Poenget er at disse teoriene oppfatter organisasjonene som noe som oppstår for å fylle visse behov, at de er samfunnsmessige svar på mangler ved stat eller marked.
Implisitt fører dette til en teori om at organisasjonene er svært fleksible, tilpasningsdyktige og nødvendige, og at de gjerne eksisterer i et dikotomisk motsetningsforhold til det offentlige, hvis mangler de oppstår for å dekke.
Jeg vil ikke her gå nn på disse teorienes fruktbarhet når det gjelder organisasjonsmessig

vekst generelt i vestlige samfunn eller innenfor visse mikrosammenhenger. Jeg vil kun begrense meg til en diskusjon av teoriens relevans innenfor bistandsfeltet.

Poenget med denne teorien er at den ikke kan forklare verken feltets vekst, dens karakter eller de store nasjonale variasjonene. (Jeg kan ikke her gå inn på empiriske detaljer. Jeg vil bare nevne noen hovedsaker.)

a) Det var en politisk beslutning, først fattet av den amerikanske regjeringen, og senere ført videre av den britiske og nederlandske regjeringen i FN i 1963, som førte til at de vestlige giverstatene satset på frivillige organisasjoner. Årsaken var ikke state-failures, men at staten ønsket å bringe dem inn på banen for å styrke bistandsprosjektet som et nasjonalt og vestlig prosjekt.

b) I Norge var det staten - full av tillit til egne evner - som inviterte organisasjonene inn på arenaen i 1963. Da fikk sju organisasjoner støtte til sju prosjekter.
Ikke "state-failures", men offensiv statspolitikk. Heller ikke "undersupply" fra det offentliges side, men snarere "oversupply" (av bistandsmidler), som ga støtet til (pipeline-problemer) den kraftige veksten.

Nå går omtrent 25% av total norsk bilateral bistand gjennom NGOs. UD alene vil i 1995 bevilge i underkant av en milliard til norske NGOer. Ikke på grunn av statens "failure", men fordi de av staten oppfattes som viktige utenrikspolitiske instrumenter. (Ta Bangladesh som eksempel: Tabellen fra Bangladesh/tabellen fra Norge over vekst i antall og typer NGOs).

Konklusjon: Veksten kan altså ikke forklares funksjonelt, men som resultat av statlige initiativ. Dette var tilfellet for giverlandene, og kanskje i samme grad, men på en annen måte, i utviklingslandene. Der var det eksterne staters initiativ som ga rammebetingelser for organisasjonsvekst, rammebetingelser som i og for seg hadde lite med state- eller "market-failure" å gjøre, men snarere var et resultat av politiske strømninger i giverlandene.

De funksjonalistiske forklaringene har hatt klare bistandspolitiske implikasjoner: organisasjoners framvekst har blitt oppfattet som naturlig, universelt, på grunn av deres iboende egenskaper, deres nisjeegenskaper. Følgelig er det for såvidt naturlig at ingen givernasjon til denne dag har utviklet noen klar, landspesifikk strategi for støtte av NGOene, kanskje med unntak av amerikanerne under Suez-krisen, Korea-krigen og Vietnam-krigen.

III. Et alternativ til denne forklaringsmåten er hva som i litteraturen om vestlige velferdssamfunn og organisasjoners plass og rolle er blitt kalt "a national style approach" (NSA) (vis til sitater som sammenfatter tilnærmingens hovedinnhold. Vis også tabell Bangladesh/Zimbabwe for konkret å diskutere hva "nasjonale tradisjoner" kan forklare. Diskuter også historien til Mekane Yesus Kirken i Etiopia.)

IV. Som et alternativ har jeg foreslått å studere som del av et internasjonalt sosialt system.

Hva menes med dette???

Begrepet NGO-kanalen indikerer systemisk sammenheng. Det er et systems institusjonelle trekk og strukturelle egenskaper som skaper stabilitet og likhet i tid og rom. Dette perspektivet gjør det mulig å studere kanalen ikke bare som en kanal for ressurser og autoritet fra sentrum til periferien, eller fra giverne til mottakerne, men også som en kanal med informasjon og legitimitet fra periferien til sentrum, eller fra "Bunn til topp". Slik jeg definerer systemet inkluderer det ikke bare NGOene, men også de delene av donor.systemet som interagerer med NGOene; dvs. som et elvesystem: Ikke bare elven, men også kilden. Det som holder det sammen er ressurs-spredning og språk, og dets grenser blir hele tiden reprodusert og skapt av grensene for den finansielle støtten. Jeg har ikke tid til å gå inn mer på dette her, men jeg tror det er et fruktbart perspektiv.

V. Fordelene ved dette perspektivet:

For det første: Maktaspektet forsvinner ikke. For eksempel: Det blir meningsløst å kun fortolke organisasjonslandskapet i Etiopia ut i fra et NSA, når vi vet at ambassadører fra vestlige stormakter har grepet inn på vegne av NGO-sektoren, at Verdensbanken stiller krav om restrukturering og NGO-spillerom. Eller når jeg selv var med på å bygge opp kvinnegrupper og Young Farmer Societies i Sudan. Det er følgelig ikke bare snakk om en "global associational revolution", men også en "global westernization". Gjennom NGO-kanalen blir det vestlige utviklinsgsprâket fattigbøndenes språk (nettopp maktaspektet, vestliggjøringen kan fra et synsted være kanalens fremste og mest produktive trekk).

For det andre: Søkelys kan settes på systemets interne utviklingsmekanismer. Retorikken om "let the grassroot speak", "putting the last first" etc. tildekker at de sentrale beslutningene treffes i giverorg. hovedkontorer og av organisasjoner lokalt som svært ofte er speilbilder av vestlige organisasjoner som er etablert med eksterne pengeinjeksjoner.

For det tredje: Det fokuserer forskjeller og berøringspunkter mellom dette systemet og det generelle organisasjonslivet i et gitt samfunn og systemets ulike relasjoner til ulike typer statsmakter og institusjoner. Framveksten av NGO-kanalen vil ha fundamentale langtidsvirkninger på lands øvrige organisasjonsliv, på landets politiske språk, på denne nye elitens holdninger og verdier. På samme måte som organisasjonene i Norge har produsert politikere, og misjonen og kolonialismen produserte de nye statenes politikere, vil mange av framtidens politikere i disse landene ha sin bakgrunn i development NGOer.

For det fjerde: Det får fram særegenhetene ved måten NGOer i bistanden fungerer på:

Noen eks: Begrepsparet "nærhet" og "fjernhet" er blitt introdusert for å studere relasjoner mellom organisasjoner og stat i de vestlige velferdssamfunn. I denne sammenhengen synes det å være fruktbart. I vår sammenheng vil organisasjoner som er nært knyttet til mottakerstaten ofte nettopp derfor ha et fjernt forhold til donorene eller omvendt; organisasjoner med nært forhold til den amerikanske eller norske staten kan stå på kollisjonskurs med sin egen stat.

I forskning om organisasjoner i vesten er det gjerne snakk om at organisasjonen har to valg; "exit" eller "loyalty", dvs. at organisasjonene ikke har noe annet alternativ enn full integrasjon eller avbrutt samarbeid med det offentlige eller dets finsnieringskilde. Poenget i bistanden er at fordi systemet er internasjonalt har organisasjoner flere valg. (Diskuter NoFo, Norge og BRAC, Bangladesh, som eksempel). Disse organisasjonene kan spille ulike offentlige myndigheter mot hverandre, og dermed balansere bedre mellom "exit og loyalty.

Igjen i forskning om organisasjoner i vesten snakkes det gjerne om institusjonell isomorfisme", det viser til atferd som "make organisations more similar without necessarily making them more efficient". Drivkreftene bak denne likedanningsprosessen er dels resultat av behov for økt legitimitet, og dels imitasjonsprosesser. Det er altså snakk om naturlig tilpasning mellom elementer i en populasjon, med likedanning som uunngåelig resultat. På den ene siden foregår det en slik likedanning på det retoriske plan, men på grunn av mangfoldet av aktører og donorer blir denne likedanningsprosessen hele tiden undergravd på en annen måte enn det som er tilfelle i et vestlig velferdssamfunn.

Konklusjon: Forskning om NGO-feltet har kommet svært kort. Stor begrepsmessig uklarhet, og dermed også mye uholdbare data (Eks: Etiopia). Det er nødvendig med en begrepsopprydding for å kunne forstå, studere eller planlegge for feltet på en mer rasjonell måte. Dernest har jeg søkt å stimulere blikket for denne kanalens særegenheter i forhold til andre områder hvor frivillige organisasjoner er involvert. Her er forskjellene fokusert, noe som ikke innebærer at det ikke også er store likheter, men det er i denne sammenheng et annet spørsmål.

«Poverty orientation and popular participation.»

by Roger Riddell

INTRODUCTION

The Overseas Development Institute in London has been directly involved in a number of impact assessments of NGO projects over the past six to seven years on behalf of official donors, and quite closely involved in monitoring impact assessments undertaken by other donors. These have included the following bilateral aid agencies: Australia; Canada; Denmark; Finland; the Netherlands; Sweden; the United Kingdom and the United States; and the following multilateral agencies: the Inter-American Foundation (funded by USAID); the EU, the UNDP and the United Nations Research Institute for Social (UNRISD).

To our knowledge, all these impact assessments have evaluated the projects selected against the project objectives set when the project received official donor funding. But, additionally, most have been assessed against a cluster of wider criteria. The most recent impact assessment we carried out, of Swedish NGO projects, assessed projects against the following criteria:

> **cost effectiveness; poverty focus; beneficiary participation; gender characteristics and impact; environmental impact; project sustainability; where relevant, the impact of external technical assistance; the innovativeness, flexibility and replicability of the project; and pre-project appraisal, ongoing monitoring and post-project evaluation.**

The SIDA study also assessed projects in relation to the manner in which they had promoted democracy and focused on human rights concerns.

A few donor-initiated impact assessments, including those undertaken by our own Institute have additionally attempted to make assessments "beyond the project" in order to try to assess impact in relation to a cluster of broader trends and indicators. This has usually been done for two reasons. First, to try to judge the impact of a particular donors' cluster of NGO-supported projects against the impact of other NGO projects in the country which might previously have been assessed (an increasingly common phenomenon for certain more "popular" countries, such as Bangladesh, Chile, India, Nepal, Nicaragua, Kenya and Zimbabwe). Secondly, a wider assessments has been undertaken to try to understand both what role and room for manoeuvre NGOs have in the development process in the context of other development trends within the country, to try to assess what particular advantage (comparative or absolute) NGOs from the donor country in question might have and, where relevant, to review actual or potential comparisons and potential complementarities between NGO and official aid initiatives within the countries studied.

In this particular presentation I have been asked to focus on two aspects of the wider criteria of the direct project assessments, namely poverty orientation and popular participation, though I shall take the liberty of including some aspects of our gender assessments as these relate directly to both the issues of poverty and popular participation.

POVERTY ORIENTATION

I will start with a few very general remarks arising from my reading of the bulk of the impact evidence we have assessed. I will then go on to discuss the whole poverty issue slightly more deeply in relation to the SIDA study which our Institute has recently completed. This was based on case-study evidence from just less than 40 projects evaluated in four countries: Bolivia, India, Kenya and Zimbabwe.

Some general comments on NGO projects and poverty

It is quite common for NGOs to claim or assume that their projects reach the poorest or that they are working with the very poor. It is almost equally common for NGOs **not** to undertake any form of poverty assessment which pinpoints precisely who the poorest are in a particular locality and how they might be reached. Not surprisingly, therefore, a high proportion of project assessments judge that the poorest are not reached. Nonetheless, a significant proportion of NGO grassroots interventions are aimed broadly at the poor and more marginalised, and they achieve considerable success in reaching such groups. Many NGOs would appear to have a capability of "reaching down" further to those at lower income levels than do either comparable government or official donor programmes. Very few NGO projects appear to be set up for the rich. If government and official aid programmes fail to reach the bottom 20% of income groups, most NGO interventions probably miss the bottom 5-10%.

The Swedish NGO impact study

Assessment of NGO projects against poverty criteria are of fundamental importance in Sweden because the core principle underlying all the funds the Swedish Parliament provides in the form of development assistance is that they should be used to improve the standards of living of the poor. Two main questions were addressed: the first, how far the Swedish NGO projects in fact work with and reach the poor, indeed right down to the poorest - a claim widely made by NGOs inside and outside Sweden; secondly, the extent to which the funds provided make a sustained impact on this poverty.

POVERTY REACH Perhaps surprisingly, three of the four the country studies suggested that the NGO projects often did not reach the poorest, and not even necessarily the very poor. In large measure, at least a contributory factor was the absence of any initial baseline studies in order to identify and target the poor, and indeed the absence of any thought about undertaking such a survey. It was quite common for the NGOs simply to **assume** that they were working with the very poor. In some cases – such as the trades union-supported projects – the absence of a poverty focus arose because the natural partners of the NGO were not organisations that usually represent the very poorest: trades unions by definition are organisations of those in formal employment. The Zimbabwe case study concluded that only a third of the projects reviewed reached the poorest, and, as in Kenya, some of the most effective in this regard were those working with disabled people.

However, some caveats need to be made before such statements are used out of context to criticise NGOs. Firstly, it is by no means an easy task to identify the very poorest, even if one wishes to do so. It is often even more difficult to find a way of working with them when they are identified. The very poorest frequently lack the resources, as well as the individual and group security, to allow them to participate in any sort of project, and can only really be helped by more general employment generation. Attending meetings and participatory rural appraisal exercises are an unaffordable luxury for the poorest. Additionally, in some cases of service provision programmes there may be sound reasons for working with both the poor and the relatively wealthy, for instance in order to be able to use funds provided by the wealthy to cross-subsidise services to the poor.
Equally, there may be some tension between having an orientation towards the poorest in projects and working to achieve other objectives, such as being innovative and experimental: it is common for the poorest to be able to afford experimentation.

The purpose of making these cautionary observations is not to suggest that NGOs should not be poverty oriented. Rather it is to stress that even if an NGO is alerted to the need to focus explicitly on the issue of poverty (and, as noted, many appear not to do this) working effectively with the very poorest is often not easy.

POVERTY IMPACT and economics One of the principle ways in which Swedish NGO supported programmes can have an impact on poverty will be through increasing the income of the poor. This may be done through improving the income they derive from their existing economic activities: for instance through improving product quality; accessing new higher value markets; or expanding output by removing economic constraints to production (such as credit). It can also be done by generating new employment opportunities for the poor by creating new jobs, or enhancing their competitiveness in labour markets (for instance through training). All the case studies come to a similar conclusion in this regard – that there is little evidence to suggest that the work of Swedish NGOs has made much of an impact on poverty.

Three things are striking across the case studies in this regard. First, many Swedish NGO projects do not begin from a conceptualisation of poverty: of what it is, of what causes it, and of how to address it. The important point is that without a theory of poverty, it is largely going to be a hit and miss affair as to whether a project will address poverty. Interestingly, one sector in which there was a greater conceptualisation of poverty was that of projects with disabled people.

Secondly, there are very few Swedish NGO projects that even attempt to achieve any of these objectives. Projects are dominantly service delivery and training projects which only very indirectly attempt to address poverty. Thirdly, of those few projects that do aim to enhance income and employment, the impact is very limited - and sometimes totally dependent on continued funds provided by the Swedish NGO.

There are many reasons for the state of affairs just described. On the one hand, they reflect a situation common not only among Swedish NGOs but elsewhere too. Quite simply, the staff and experience of Swedish NGOs do not equip them well, nor predispose them, to focus on analytic issues related to income and employment generation, or markets and market analysis. On the other hand, the limited resources of individual NGO projects are often not sufficient to make the types of investment necessary for some of this sort of work, such as the investments in an initial capital fund for a reasonably sized rural credit programme. The challenge of generating income and employment in stagnant economies where markets are weak or absent surpasses the resources and capacities of many Swedish NGOs.

POVERTY IMPACT power and advocacy Political and power relationships that marginalise poor people are both a condition and a cause of poverty. They deny entitlements, and they restrict poor peoples' ability to make claim to entitlements. This political dimension of poverty is a complicated one for Swedish NGOs to address as foreign institutions operating in another country, and some therefore restrain from this. Yet it is equally clear, from the case study evidence, that those Swedish NGOs which have engaged in or supported more politically relevant work have had impacts on poverty, or have enhanced capacity within the popular sectors to have such impacts. In the former case, they address the power relationships that cause poverty; in the latter instance, they strengthen poor peoples' abilities to claim and defend entitlements. Examples were found (in Bolivia) of Swedish NGO projects strikingly succeeded in making an impact here: the PMU worked to demarcate, petition for and gain a Presidential decree to recognise traditional territory of an indigenous group, the Weenhayek, whose land has been progressively occupied by non-Weenhayek.

In other cases, rather than do advocacy on behalf of, or alongside the poor, the Swedish NGO has supported popular educational, leadership training and legal aid work that aims to enhance the capacity of the poor to organise and to assert their rights, and of local NGOs to support the poor in these political and livelihood strategies. The impacts of thee initiatives are indirect and thus more difficult to trace: nonetheless, the principle underlying the work is coherent: that to build organisational and political capacity in the popular sectors will build capacity to question dominant power relationships.

Yet one dimension of questioning power relationships in which Swedish NGOs have not been strong has been to foster activities that question **gender relationships** and that enhance the capacity of women to do so. A number of projects examined claim to be gender sensitive because they meet womens' needs (for instance in maternal and child health service provision). But in many regards, these are activities that address the symptoms far more than the causes of gender-linked poverty. The case studies did identify a few cases where gender relations are questioned. Thus the DIAKONIA supported Indian NGO, SIRD, has begun to address issues of dowries, female infanticide and domestic violence in its work, and has worked in the establishment of a womens' group based credit and income generation programmes. It is also providing legal aid and training para-legal workers. In other cases, activities which, at one level, may appear to endorse stereotypical gender roles can nonetheless help create new spaces of organised womens self management which have a significant empowering and symbolic effect in the communities where they operate. This seems to have happened in Kenya, in the SMR supported posho mill project with the Young Womens' Christian Association (YWCA), and in some of the women's groups supported via BIFO and Future Forest, It is also visible in PAS's work in highland Bolivia.

POVERTY IMPACT what it is it reasonable to expect of NGOs? In many instances, poverty is only going to be ameliorated if structural changes occur in regional economies and social relationships. In areas such as parts of highland Bolivia, where regional markets are weak or absent, and where there is little dynamism in the economy, then it is difficult for any NGO to make much of an impact. If a multi-million dollar rural development programme such as the European Union supported programme for peasant self-development in Potosí feels it can make little impact, then we should not expect much of small and isolated NGO projects.

One conclusion is that often NGO impact tends to be greater where there is a supportive infrastructure, and this often means where there is a stronger state. Ironically, NGO impact tends to be less where NGOs are needed most and where it is most difficult and most costly to succeed – in isolated communities ill-served by either state structures or official donor projects. This often means that when NGOs work in areas of economic decline and stagnation, then their work is likely to be focused mainly on alleviating poverty and easing some of the pains of economic transition. Their work is only likely to have a sustained development impact in areas where the economy is relatively dynamic.

It is for these reasons and in those countries in which there is a large Swedish NGO presence that the impact assessment study began to raise questions about the whole Swedish NGO effort and asked, for instance, whether the discrete individual project approach is the best way of Swedish NGOs contributing to poverty alleviation over the longer term.

PARTICIPATION, POPULAR PARTICIPATION

Some general comments on NGO projects and participation

It is common for NGOs to argue that beneficiary participation is a central tenet of their overall approach. There are a number of factors which support the view that it is. Most NGOs tend to work with small groups where face-to-face contact is often the most prominent characteristic of their style of operating. A large number of impact studies have not only highlighted the importance of participatory approaches for sustainability, but have shown that this was a dominant feature in many NGO interventions. And there is evidence of groups with whom NGOs work profoundly influencing pre-conceived notions of both the appropriate form of assistance and help required, and the manner and timing of the proposed intervention.

Equally, however, the evidence suggests that one needs to guard against the naive view that NGO interventions will **always** promote participatory development – in some instance they clearly do not. For instance, it can - and does - happen that if too much emphasis is placed on the **delivery** of services or inputs, the participatory component can be diluted or even lost. Although the evidence remains incomplete, participation tends to be far stronger in some phases of a projects than others. In particular, community involvement tends to be strongest when the project or programme is "up and running". It tends to be weakest in terms of the original formulation of the intervention, and in involving the community on the precise manner in which withdrawal of the implementing NGO should take place. Group participation in assessment and evaluation tends to be particularly weak, in part because overall assessment and evaluation tend to be relatively low priorities for most NGOs. Additionally, it is evident that participation of women is rarely, if ever, something that which will happen in a balanced way unless positive steps are taken to encourage it. Most evaluations indicate that women's participation is a difficult area, especially when it involves a degree or involvement which is out of balance with prevailing norms in society.

Finally it is important to note that the evidence shows that some projects with minimal beneficiary participation have nevertheless been able to achieve their objectives. In other words, beneficiary participation is not always a pre-condition for project success: to suggest it always is, is to fly in the face of the more complete evidence.

The Swedish NGO impact study

THE DIFFERENT PARTICIPANTS We found different types of stakeholders in projects supported by Swedish NGOs. When the term participation is used, one commonly thinks of the direct beneficiaries – sometimes referred to as the "primary stakeholders". However, there is also a range of secondary stakeholders involved in these interventions: the counterpart organisation in-country, and the different offices and individuals within the organisation; other interest groups affected by the intervention, such as the local state, or those living in the locality but not included in this particular project. As a general rule, it is usually necessary for each of these stakeholders to feel that it has a "stake" in the successful outcome of the project. Thus, when participation is discussed one ought to be thinking how far these different groups have a chance to participate in the conception, implementation and the monitoring and evaluation of a project, even if one's principal focus will usually be on the participation of primary stakeholders.

PARTICIPATION AT PROJECT CONCEPTION The Swedish country case studies report that at the conception/design/planning stage of projects there has been limited participation of the primary, and many of the secondary, stakeholders. There was little evidence of community-based planning and a prioritising of needs preceding project conception and design, although there was more evidence of consultation with beneficiaries prior to the commencement of activities (of already designed projects). Thus UBV in Bolivia is one of the few NGOs which has decided only to work with community and membership organisations; these community organisations plan the project that UBV then supports. More widely, the evidence collected from this sample of projects suggests that pre-project participation in church or mission implemented projects was particularly weak.

Weak participation at the stage of conception and design is a critical failing, and can lead to problems deriving from a poor fit between project goals and local priorities. This can be partly righted when there is on-going participation in the monitoring of projects, allowing feedback and adaptive planning. There was more evidence of this type of participation occurring. In several cases, this on-going participation resulted in considerable improvement of projects which were initially very prescriptive and top-down.

It should be noted, however, that it is not directly as a result of the nature and work procedures of Swedish NGO that participation was limited in the projects examined. In many instances, this is a result of the culture and style of the organisation with which the Swedish NGO is working. Some of these – for instance some of the unions in Kenya and Zimbabwe – appear to have a somewhat authoritarian management style. In other cases, as noted in the India case study, local partnership organisations work on the basis that poor people "need educating." Likewise, in some instances, the counterpart can have a rigid internal structure which does not allow its staff or component divisions to participate in programme management. In other words it is often more important and appropriate to understand the inner workings of the relationship between the northern and local NGO than it is to "blame" the northern NGO for failure in terms of participation.

PARTICIPATION AND PARTNERSHIP The greater the extent to which the counterpart organisation participates on equal terms with the Swedish NGOs in all these stages of the project cycle, the more that one can talk of a "partnership" between the Swedish NGO and the local NGO - a word increasingly used between NGOs of the north and the south. Similarly, the greater the extent to which the Swedish NGO allows the local NGO to subject the Swedish NGO to scrutiny and monitoring, the more we can talk of partnerships. In general, the relationship becomes more of a partnership the more that it goes beyond a simple funding relationship. In some instances, the Swedish NGO was making moves in this direction.

On the other hand, it is important not to take the partnership argument too far. Swedish NGOs are also stakeholders in these projects; they, too, have a right to exercise voice and opinion - so a partnership in which the local organisation makes all the decisions would also not be ideal. Indeed, the quality of projects supported could well increase if the Swedish NGOs were to express this voice. For instance, UBV's experience in Bolivia suggests that the quality of projects would probably be improved if it were to work with its membership organisation counterparts in developing strategies, rather than simply responding to the strategies that the counterparts develop by themselves. Conversely in Kenya and Zimbabwe, it would appear that some Swedish partners tend not to be sensitive to finding out and acting upon the views of the primary beneficiaries. In cases such as these, the Swedish NGOs have a role to play in pressing that the voice of the primary stakeholders are effectively heard. Finally it needs to be recognised that southern NGOs do not always behave as ideal partners and can use the rhetoric of partnership to try to dissuade Swedish NGOs from becoming engaged in projects they support, or from enquiring into the work of the local NGO. For instance, it is not unheard of for local organisations either to conceal - or to fail to reveal - sources of funds provided by other donors, sometimes for similar activities as those funded by SIDA.

In the end, the most crucial dimension of participation is that in which grassroots capacity is built: a participation that empowers primary stakeholders to become stronger economic and political actors in their own right. The way that this can be built up and promoted links in crucially to the various issues of sustainability, especially institutional sustainability - one of the other criteria against which individual projects were assessed in the Swedish study.

The likelihood of sustainability is greater when primary and different groups of secondary stakeholders are committed to the project and the processes that has been initiated. If they merely participate because of the stream of benefits that the existence of external funding delivers to them, rather than because they see the ideas underlying the project as priority concerns to them, then there is little likelihood that the processes and activities initiated by the intervention will continue once Swedish funds have been withdrawn.

This is an apparently obvious point, but it is not at all trivial. Some Swedish NGO projects come with packages which they implement because that is what they know and are good at doing. Whilst there are exceptions, providing a package, especially one which is home-grown in Sweden, runs the risk that the project has not grown out of priorities as defined by local stakeholders. This increases the risk that what is imparted will not be sustained beyond the duration of the funds provided. More generally, the relatively limited use of participatory problem identification, pre-project appraisal, and participatory design methods in the work of Swedish NGOs means that there is a higher risk that projects will not respond to stakeholder priorities.

Finally, and to complicate the issue of stakeholder participation yet further, there is no reason why all interest groups with a stake in the project should view the project with equal glee. Indeed in many cases, there may be real conflicts of interests between different stakeholder groups. This is particularly true in those projects that address and aim to change relationships of power, be these between social classes, between women and men, or between different ethnic groups. Yet, as noted, these are precisely the projects that are likely to have a positive influence on the livelihoods of the poor.

There is clearly far more that could be said on this particular issue, but sufficient should have been said to highlight the fact that the theme of participation tends to encompass a range of issues which extend well beyond this particular aspect of the development process.

«The challenges of NGO assistance».

by Roger Riddell

Presented to Norad, 7th April 1995, Oslo

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this topic is to shed light on knowledge, gaps in knowledge and research needs with regard to the (northern) NGOs relations with the south. As the topic is very broad, and on advice from the Ministry, I have decided to focus on three areas. These are: recent impact assessments and gaps in knowledge on impact; the issue of partnership between northern and southern NGOs and the differing agenda which northern donors have in supporting and funding the work of southern NGOs.

STEPPING BACK FROM IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

There are a number of points I would like to emphasise on gaps in our knowledge on NGO impact, a number of which derive directly from my first presentation this morning.

* Firstly, as a general rule, northern NGOs have not placed great emphasis on undertaking impact assessments as a **regular activity**, on publishing the results of regular impact assessments and, for me the most important issue, in using the results of impact assessments undertaken to enhance the development impact of the next round of funded projects.

* Secondly, while the rapid growth of donor-initiated impact assessment studies have gone beyond project impact in relation to immediate project objectives, there has not yet emerged a consensus on what particular criteria should be used to assess project impact more widely in order to deepen understanding of the development impact of NGO projects. I am not necessarily arguing that there should be a consensus, indeed there are arguments for maintaining considerable flexibility. However I also believe that sufficient work has been carried out for donors to do some further work on deriving at least a minimum criteria methodology. Perhaps this is what the Nordic initiative will try to do.

However I do have some additional views on this particular subject which I think it is worth highlighting. First, I think it is worth pointing out that certain differences between many NGOs and some official donors concerning these NGO project impact assessments. One donor reaction from these impact assessments is that future work needs to place increased emphasis on cost effectiveness issues, minimally by insisting on NGOs providing information on costs per beneficiary, but more substantially by encouraging NGOs to carry out base-line studies on a regular basis and to make a more rigorous attempt to gather cost data and link costs outlaid more closely to benefits achieved. For their part, most NGOs are willing both to undertake more evaluations and bring more rigour into the methods used, though they remain suspicious of pressure to quantify both inputs and outputs and even risks.

Secondly, I worry that in the minds of some in donor agencies these project impact assessments are viewed as a major way in which answers can be given to the question: ***what impact do NGOs have in development?*** I worry about this in the same way as I worried ten years ago when donors were trying to answer the question - does aid in general work? - by trawling through and totting up the results of collections of official aid project assessments. For official aid, most people now recognise that this information provides an extremely partial picture and that aid impact depends critically on the context in which it is given. There is thus a danger that more and more project assessments fuel the lie that development consists largely of making projects work better. As more NGOs switch their attention increasingly away from **projects** to development **processes**, they are likely to be less interested in the results of project evaluations and concerned that a continued emphasis on project evaluation may reinforce a donor view that discrete projects constitute the meat of NGO development activities.

- Thirdly, and relatedly, I think that from the viewpoint of most constituencies – northern NGOs, donors, southern NGOs and hopefully host governments – more effort should be focused on increasing knowledge more generally about assessing the role of NGOs in development within particular countries, including their room for manoeuvre given the social, economic and political constraints under which they function. As the involvement of donor country NGOs increase in a particular country, the donor agency in particular needs to know the comparative advantage of NGOs from its own country over and against other northern NGOs and indigenous NGOs and thus where it should channel the funds it has available. For their part at some point, northern NGOs need to step back from continually responding to requests for funding on an individual project by project basis, especially where these request are being driven by survival strategies influenced by implementing structural adjustment programmes. Thus NGOs, too, need eventually to ask the same question: what is our comparative advantage as northern country NGOs working in this particular country, over and against other northern NGOs and indigenous NGOs? Should our work continue to be project based and if not what proportion of our resources should we devote to helping to build up local NGO capacity and if so how should this be done?

These are the sorts of issues which I feel are of growing importance and which, at present, there is a lack of data. The ODI and Dutch studies focused the latter part of their evaluations on country assessments. More work is needed in this area - the World Bank have conducted country studies in Cameroon. I think again that cross-donor and cross-NGO information exchange would greatly help not only in broadcasting current knowledge but in shaping methods used in assessing impact more broadly.

* Fourthly, some of the wider impact assessments, such as the Swedish and Finnish studies, have included an examination of the inter-linkage of NGO programmes funded by particular donors and the donor's own official aid programme. A common finding is that it is not easy to compare NGO and official aid projects, largely because they usually implement different **types** of project and often of a different **size and scale**. That does not mean, however, that there are no lessons to learn. Most studies revealed a high degree of mutual ignorance of the other's programmes: NGOs don't know much about the official aid programme and officials executing and monitoring the official aid programme know little about the NGO projects funded (perhaps thousands of miles away) by their own agency. In rare cases, this has meant that donors have double-funded the same project, more commonly it has meant that different programmes of the same local institution has been funded unknowingly through NGO and official aid channels. But the most worrying feature of this mutual ignorance has been the large numbers of instances where potential opportunities for the mutual enhancement of programmes and have repeatedly been lost. Consequently, in many cases there is an urgent need to institutionalise a regular exchange of information about, and eventually, greater coordination of NGO and official aid programmes and activities.

* Fifthly, as noted already, the impact assessments which have been carried out thusfar have predominantly been assessments of those projects put forward for funding by the NGOs themselves. But perhaps the most rapid expansion in NGO funding as in the growing common agenda between NGOs and official aid agencies lies in their common concern with democracy and human rights issues and with initiatives to strengthen civil society. There is much we do not know here: what comparative advantage official donors and NGOs have in this area, and in which particular contexts, the extent of overlap between what NGOs wish to do to further this agenda and what official donors want; the extent to which northern NGOs have advantages over southern NGOs and overall methods by which one might reliably assess impact in this rather new area. Again, this is not only an area where there are large gaps in our knowledge but areas where it seems to me it is of increasing importance that we have far more data than we currently have.

NORTHERN DONORS AND SOUTHERN NGOs

Historically, most donor funds have gone to support the work of NGOs based in their own countries, even though the bulk of the funds provided has been spent in developing countries. An early reason for this was that there were few viable, efficient and effective indigenous NGOs. Yet over the past 15 years, there has been a rapid growth in the number and capability of NGOs based in developing countries, now frequently referred to as southern NGOs. The marrying of a donor view which saw increasing merit in working through NGOs with the growing strength of southern NGOs has led more and more donors to supplement their support of northern NGOs with funding southern NGOs directly. This particular donor-NGO initiative began to become prominent in the mid-1980s and has continued to expand thereafter.

A crucial knowledge gap here is the paucity of quantitative data indicating the extent to which northern donors are funding southern NGOs. The SIDA study revealed that whereas SIDA Stockholm's statistical reporting revealed very little money going to this type of initiative, in practice it was running into tens of millions of Swedish Krona.

Mirroring the support given to northern NGOs, official funding of southern NGOs has usually taken two concrete forms: the funding of initiatives put forward by southern NGOs, and utilising the services and talents of southern NGOs to help donors achieve their own aid objectives. Though accurate statistics indicating the share of funds for each of these purposes are not collected by official donor agencies, there would probably be broad agreement that proportionately more official funds channelled through and to southern NGOs are used to further donor objectives than is the case for official funds channelled to and through northern NGOs.

However the reasons why official donors support southern NGOs is wider than this. In general there would appear to be four broad purposes. These are:

* to help local NGOs further their own objectives;

* to utilise a new/different channel to achieve the donor agency's more immediate aid objectives more efficiently and effectively;

* to work to strengthen civil society in the host country, not least by building up the institutional strength and capacity of local NGOs and local NGO institutions; and,

* to expose the donor more to what has termed the 'reverse agenda' – to open the agency up to the influence of, and to provide the means by which, local organisations, including NGOs, become practically involved with influencing the donor's aid agenda, including project/programme choice, execution, monitoring and assessment of donor aid projects and programmes.

Though data and information have not been rigorously gathered, it would appear that the greatest involvement with southern NGOs is often dominated by working to achieve the second objective: **southern NGOs have been supported largely with the purpose of helping ODA better achieve its country-specific aid objectives more efficiently and effectively.** Interaction with southern NGOs to help strengthen civil society is most often side-stepped in circumstances where it is needed most - where democratic processes are not present or under threat and where a strong NGO sector can play a positive role in uncovering corrupt practices. In such circumstances it is continually tempting for donors merely to support poverty-focused projects for distant communities - a type of initiative which might well be seen, perhaps inadvertently, as reinforcing prevailing structures within and across society.

Different donors have evolved a range of different ways in which they relate to southern NGOs. Some fund them directly from the north, some fund them from the north and the south, some fund them through creating particular organisations which process and allocate the funds (the Inter-American Foundation), some (the Canadians) have set up their "own" southern NGO organisations to channel their funds, while some, again, utilise their own (northern) NGOs to channel their official funds. The evidence that exists, patchy though it seems to be, suggests that some donors (Canada, USAID and more recently, the British ODA) have found that utilising their own staff in-country to overseas southern NGO funding initiatives is a very costly undertaking. A number of donors have also recognised that relating to southern NGOs requires special skills for which the normal donor aid agency training programmes are often not appropriate.

In general, it would appear that there is often a lack of information of what other donors are doing, especially those not considered particularly "like-minded", although some interchange-of information is taking place both through the DAC and through different parts of the World Bank.

RELATIONS BETWEEN NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN NGOs

The evolving and changing relationship between northern and southern NGOs is clearly of major importance to the NGOs concerned. Though it is indirectly an area of interest to donors, influencing perspectives on the proportional allocation of funds to northern and southern NGOs, this is not an area that donors have become directly involved, and have funded particular studies.

The following points are based largely on a 1991-93 reflective study initiated by a group of four northern protestant NGOs entitled *Discerning the Way Together.*

Northern NGOs initially provide resources to southern agencies if they judge that these resources will be used in a manner which, broadly, conforms to the development objectives of the northern NGOs and if they have sufficient confidence in the ability of the southern agencies to execute these initiatives themselves. Northern NGOs will continue to fund the projects and programmes of southern agencies if they are broadly satisfied with the performance of these agencies. Dissatisfaction usually arises when the northern NGO believes there is a major gap between objectives and performance; does not obtain sufficient feed-back on the use to which its resources have been put; or,
believes that the funds it transfers have in some way been misused, either because of inefficiencies within the southern agency or because of resource "diversion".

For their part, southern agencies will make use of the resources which the northern NGOs have available and are willing to offer if they, in their turn, believe that they are able to make use of these resources without compromising their integrity. Acceptance of northern resources does not have to be based on an identical view about development needs and development objectives, but there has to be either sufficient overlap in objectives - or sufficient fluidity in reporting requirements - for the southern agency to accept these northern resources. Clearly, too, southern agencies will require the northern NGOs to specify as clearly as possible what the northern NGOs' own priorities are in order that they submit projects and programmes for funding which broadly conform to these criteria - or which, if they are different, are packaged up in ways which are acceptable. Finally, southern agencies will continue to make use of northern NGO resources if any additional reporting, management and accounting requirements which the northern NGOs make can be accommodated without compromising their integrity.

The relationship between northern NGOs and southern agencies carries with it the potential not only for mutual cooperation but also for tension and strain. It will tend to work best

- if the northern NGOs and southern agencies have identical, or very similar, ideas about how to promote development, especially about how best to help the poor;

- if, in the absence of alternative resources, the southern agencies can continue to rely on the northern NGOs for the resources they need to fulfil their objectives;

- if the southern agencies are willing and able to meet the reporting, management and accounting requirements which the northern agencies require; and

- if the northern NGOs are willing to provide funds over a long time period, and if they are willing to provide funds to cover at least some of the core costs of the southern agency.

In practice, strains occur because these ideals are rarely all met: objectives, methods and approaches to development are not always identical; northern NGOs rarely guarantee long-term funding and resource transfer; and, southern agencies are often unable to meet, or in varying degrees resent, what are frequently seen as excessive demands made on them by northern NGOs.

A major reason for the strains that can arise between northern NGOs and southern agencies is that the relationship is, in essence, an **unequal one**. Northern NGOs are in the dominant position. Not only do they have the resources which the southern agencies need, but they attach two sorts of conditions to their resources transfer: that the resources be used in a manner broadly in line with their own approach to development, and that there is some assurance that the resources transferred are well used. In contrast, southern agencies are weak: either have to accept these conditions or to forego this (important/essential) source of funds. In all its manifestations, conditionality restricts the freedom of those upon whom it is placed: the greater the number of conditions or the greater the extent of conditionality, the less room for manoeuvre the recipient has.

Adding The Partnership Dimension

These general considerations provide the context for the particular relationship which has developed between many northern southern agencies which receive resources transferred to them by the four agencies and which goes under the name of "partnership". As it is commonly understood, the term "partnership" means something very different from the relationship between horse and rider, or servant and master. It carries with it a strong **sense of equality**. The most important implication is that by putting stress on the concept of partnership and by raising its importance, the unequal relationship between "funder" and "funded", between the northern and southern agencies is tempered and changed.

For like-minded NGOs (church-linked, trade union-linked etc.) the partnership of equality is rooted in the shared faith/ideology of the respective agencies and in the importance given to the particular manifestations of that faith/ideology. It is driven by the belief that these provide the basis for shared objectives, a sense of trust and openness between the partners, and a common approach to how these objectives might be fleshed out in practice.

This suggests, more specifically that

* Both partners would take part in discussion about what each does and how their respective roles complement each other.

* Both would be able and willing to allow the other partner to participate in and know more about the internal workings of their respective organisations.

* Both partners would have the potential to influence, if not help to formulate, decisions which the other makes, especially decisions that affect their partnership.

* The overall relationship between the northern and southern agencies would be far more permanent than that between organisations that merely transfer and receive funds, implying that the northern agencies would provide a long term commitment to sustaining the work of the southern agencies.

* Northern agencies would use their resources and skills to help build up and strengthen the capability of their southern partners, and be open to southern partners building up northern agency capabilities, particularly, although not exclusively, in relation to advocacy work.

* Southern partners would be receptive and open to promptings by northern partners to improve their management and accounting procedures in order that northern partners may fulfil the obligation they have to <u>their</u> funders that the resources they provide to southern partners are spent as effectively and as efficiently as possible.

Marrying Theory and Practice

In practice, relationships between northern and southern NGOs vary markedly, with some being strongly at variance with these norms and ideals. Thus, some relationships between some northern agencies and some southern agencies exhibit some of the characteristics associated with partnership, some exhibit the characteristics more akin to the unequal dependent relationship of the funder and the funded. Some are based on trust, some on varying degrees of mistrust and mutual suspicion, some are fairly open, some confused and murky. Perhaps the reason for this is that neither the northern agencies nor the southern agencies have seen it as in their respective interest to sacrifice the degree of independence and autonomy necessary for the ideals of equal partnership to be achieved.

The following constitute some of the major problems which the different agencies currently face vis-a-vis their relationships with each other:-

■ Problems have arisen when a northern agency considers an existing southern partner to be ineffective in achieving the fundamental objectives of tackling poverty and advancing justice.

■ Another challenge to partnership arises because the northern agencies sometimes wish to promote a different approach to development than that which some of their southern "partners" see as appropriate or as a priority. A contemporary example of this concerns gender issues. Many northern agencies are convinced that all initiatives they fund should pay particular attention to gender issues. Likewise, they have developed and are continually refining the ways in which **they** would like their projects and programmes to be executed in areas of health, education, agricultural and income generation etc.. In general, the greater the number and the more extensive the conditions the northern agencies attach to the resources they provide, the less likely are the southern agencies to agree to all these various conditions. Growing northern agency conditionality tends to increase the tension between partnership and (differing) development objectives.

■ A common experience of the northern agencies is that when formal documents of agreement are set up or proposed they tend to fall far short of expectations. They are not uncommonly ignored or by-passed, often by mutual consent. In part this occurs because partnership arrangements are built more on shared good intentions than on practicalities which often swamp noble but often more distant ideals. It is often necessary to come to firm, and often quick technical decisions, which cannot wait for the elaboration of grand plans based on shared agreement of mutual objectives.

■ The partnership approach is built on the assumption that northern and southern agencies know each other well. This is not always true. For example, most southern agencies relate to northern agencies through particular (country-desk) staff members. Thus the southern agency, especially when it is comparatively small, tends to view the agency through the eyes of the particular northern project officer with whom it comes into contact. This often produces a less than comprehensive picture of the whole (northern) agency and of its overall priorities, and, especially in times of crisis, can strain relationships. Relationships and partnerships are also disrupted by northern staff changes - a not infrequent occurrence.

- It is not uncommon for northern agencies to establish relations with new southern agencies, especially, but not exclusively, when the choice is made to work in new countries. It is usually not appropriate to try to establish substantive long-term commitments to these agencies until both the northern and southern agencies have time to asses the extent to which they wish to, and are able, to expand and deepen the relationship.

- While it is a noble ideal to propose that southern partners should participate at least in decisions which have a direct effect on the relationship established between them, the practical difficulties of implementing such a proposal can often be formidable. Should all southern agencies be involved in all decisions, and if not, what criteria should be used for selection? Should southern agencies be involved in all discussions which effect the allocation of resources to broad geographical regions in which they are located? In countries in which the northern agencies work with three, four or even more southern partners, should these southern partners be involved in discussions about the allocation of northern resources between these different southern agencies?

- One of the main building-blocks of inter-agency partnership among church-based NGOs is their shared Christian faith. Yet strains, sometimes severe, can arise because this faith is interpreted differently by different churches and different agencies. In practice, partnership does not provide the basis for sharing common approaches to development. This contributes to failures to deepen trust and openness. Further problems have sometimes arisen between northern agencies and southern ecumenical agencies when northern agencies have developed relationships with other agencies in those countries, which they feel share their own vision of development more than do those who share their faith.

Enduring partnership requires a certain durability and permanence in approach and in the priorities of the respective agencies. However both southern and northern agencies place great importance on their need to remain flexible to respond to changes in the world. In practice, both northern and southern agencies tend to place high value on their own individual autonomy. While the best are committed to developing and deepening their relationships with each other, almost all still want to remain free to make their own decisions and to be able to respond not just to the demands of particular partnership arrangements but to the other demands made upon them. This provides the basis for a relationship from which tension can never be fully removed, and reduces willingness of especially the northern agencies to commit themselves long term either to continuing to fund particular, especially, sizeable, partners, or to fund particular types of intervention. Thus, from their respective perspectives, both northern and southern agencies are therefore most receptive to developing a relationship in which the other party enters into a binding and long term commitment, but which gives oneself maximum freedom and room for manoeuvre. It is this tension which lies at the heart of much of the controversy surrounding the merits of trying to develop a relationship built upon mutual respect and a partnership based on equality, and which has led to the array of inconsistencies which currently often exist between practice and ideals.

The Wider Context and conclusion

The relationship between the four northern agencies and their southern counterparts needs to be considered not only in terms of the manner in which the two groups are linked together. It also needs to be placed in the broader context of the role and purpose of the agencies in the global effort to eradicate poverty.

The notion of partnership with southern agencies is clearly of major importance to the northern agencies for two reasons. First, because the southern agencies are currently directly and centrally involved in the two major activities which the northern agencies. They are the channel through which funds to the poor in developing countries exclusively pass through, while the resources, inputs and insights of southern partners play an important role in the advocacy work which the northern agencies carry out in the north. Secondly, the notion of partnership provides added legitimacy to the work the northern agencies are doing: it provides them with the basis for claiming that they provide a legitimate voice for the poor.

There is clearly considerable unease at present across many northern and southern agencies about the relationship between the two groups of agencies, and about the extent to which the concept of partnership should continue to be used and the ideals of partnership should continue to be pursued in practice. Three points can be highlighted.

* Firstly, The ideals of equal partnership are clearly not being achieved in many instances in practice and it is difficult to believe that they will be met in a more substantial way over the next few years.

* Secondly, to use the term partnership to (try to) describe the relationship between the northern agencies and **all** their partners is not only to hold up an ideal which even in the best circumstances is unlikely to be achieved, but it is to **misrepresent** the form of relationship which exists between a number of southern agencies who are clearly not even perceived as partners in the strictest sense.

* Thirdly, to speak of the relationship between northern and southern agencies as an equal partnership is to suggest not only that the relationship is in some way special because of what occurs between the agencies, but additionally that southern partners are the central focus or

whole ***raison d'être*** of the northern agencies. Though some agencies might wish to claim this, many of the practices of the agencies, both in relation to partnership itself and to other work undertaken, suggest otherwise. And if agencies were to extend their activities beyond north-south structural issues and change their form of engagement with the south, it would become even less true in the future.

Perhaps the biggest problem lies not so much in ***continuing to use*** the term partnership but in trying to **over-use** it - both by suggesting that the ideals of equal partnership can easily be attained in practice, and by implying that what can be achieved vis-a-vis the partner relationship between **some** northern agencies and **some** southern agencies can equally easily be attained in all relationships.

«New knowledge and research needs in relation to NGO-south relations»

by Roger Riddell

THE EVOLVING CONTEXT

Over the past 25 years there has been a growing phenomenon on governments and official aid agencies (bi-and multi-lateral) funding the development activities of NGOs. One of the most tangible indicators of growing interaction has been the change in the quantity of funds official aid agencies channel to and through NGOs. There are two ways in which these figures are commonly presented: the first is official aid as a share of total NGO income, and the second is the share of official aid channelled to NGOs.

The World Bank judges that whereas in the early 1970s about 1.5% of total NGO income came from official donor sources, by the mid-1990s this share had risen to about 30%, with total NGO income probably more than doubling in real terms over this period. Current figures from the OECD indicate that the total amount of official aid going to NGOs in 1992/93 was $ 2.2 bn, while data from the World Bank put the 1992 figure at $2.5 bn, equivalent to just of over 4% of total official aid.

There are four major reasons why these – widely quoted – figures significantly underestimate actual flows.

1 Some major donors, such as the US, have not reported even crude aggregate data for a number of years, while OECD figures quoted for other major donors, such as Japan, vary widely from year to year and differ markedly from national published data.

2 The aggregate data quoted by the OECD are based solely on data provided by (some) bilateral donors. Yet a significant proportion of multilateral aid is channelled to NGOs. For instance, the World Bank's *Social Fund* has now supported some 30 initiatives valued at $1.3 bn, a significant share of which has gone to NGOs while, in 1992 alone, the EU provided some $300 mn directly to NGOs for non-emergency development projects and programmes. Other organisations, such as the UNDP and the Inter-American Development Bank, also have large NGO programmes .

3 The aggregate data provide figures only on official aid funds **TO** NGOs, that is to support initiatives of NGOs. Yet a significant and growing portion of official aid activity involves utilises NGOs to implement official aid projects. This is classified in unpublished OECD data as income **THROUGH** NGOs and is not recorded in the aggregate flows of official aid received by NGOs published by the OECD even though many NGOs count this as part of **their** total income. OECD unpublished data estimates this figure very crudely at $641 mn. In 1994, SIDA alone provided over $30 mn to Swedish NGOs in this manner.

4 Most of the bilateral donor data on NGO income fails to include that portion of bilateral aid budgets which is channelled directly to local NGOs with funds from the respective bilateral aid programmes. Country cases studies of Swedish official aid to NGOs in Kenya and Zimbabwe in late 1994 alone revealed a shortfall of some $10 mn in official data. Additionally, the new British £2 mn programme to fund NGOs directly in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania will not be recorded in the aggregate aid statistics as official aid to NGOs, even though this is precisely what it is.However these figures conceal wide variation across donor countries: for some, only some 10% of total income comes from official donors, for others the ratio is higher than 80%.

Though the precise figure remains unknown, it might well be almost double the widely-quoted 5% ratio.

Both sets of figures - those for official aid as a share of total NGO income, and those for the share of official aid channelled to NGOs conceal wide variation across donor countries. The two tables give some recent figures for selected leading donors.

EVALUATING NGO DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

History

Perhaps surprisingly, NGOs have not placed a high priority on undertaking regular impact assessments and evaluations of their programmes. Very few NGOs, big or small, have a portfolio of a representative sample of evaluation reports of past projects which they place in the public domain. Where assessments have been carried out, especially using external evaluators, these are usually focused on problem projects which, in various ways, appear to have "gone wrong". Understandably, therefore, this biased cluster of impact assessments has not been widely distributed.

The steadily expanding relationship with official donors has now led a growing number of official donor agencies to carry out external impact assessments of NGO projects and programmes which they have funded. However, there was quite a long time-lag between donors becoming major funders of NGOs' own projects (from the early 1970s) and their initiating studies to assess the development impact of the projects funded (from the late 1980s). There are three main reasons for this.

- First, many did not begin to evaluate their own programmes systematically until the early 1980s, and because of the comparatively small amount of official money channelled to NGOs, the evaluation of NGO projects was a very low priority.

- Secondly, as each discrete NGO project funded has tended to be small, at least in contrast with most official aid projects, the costs of evaluating particular projects would form a significant proportion of total funds outlaid.

- But perhaps of most importance have been ownership differences: there is a difference between evaluating one's own programmes and those that are not part of the official aid programme.

However from the late 1980s, an increasing number of donors decided to initiate impact assessments of NGO projects which they had been funding. Between 1988 and early 1995, to our knowledge, the following bilateral aid agencies have initiated sizeable NGO impact assessments: Australia; Canada; Denmark; Finland; the Netherlands; Sweden; the United Kingdom and the United States. Additionally, evaluations have been undertaken by the following multilateral agencies: the Inter-American Foundation (funded by USAID); the EU, the UNDP and the United Nations Research Institute for Social (UNRISD).

It is a growing phenomenon that NGO-donor relations have taken different forms and there are different sorts of projects which donors and NGOs have an interest. One distinction commonly made is between NGO projects which the NGOs **themselves** put forward for funding and those projects which form part of the official aid programme to which NGOs are invited to participate, most commonly as executors of these particular projects. Almost all these donor-initiated assessments have focused on only one group of NGO projects – those considered by the NGOs to be their own projects. Most donors have not (yet) initiated systematic assessments of NGO projects which further the donor's aid agenda, nor projects, programmes and longer term processes aimed at enhancing democracy and human rights or civil society strengthening objectives where these have involved NGOs. Also, bilateral donors (the major official funders of NGOs) have tended to focus their assessments on funds provided to NGOs based in their own country, and not on funds provided direct to southern NGOs. A notable exception here would be USAID which regularly evaluates its growing recipient country-specific support to southern NGOs.

Methods and limitations of the evaluations

Most large bilateral agencies have funded many hundreds of different NGO projects over the past 10 to 15 years: in 1994 SIDA, the 10th biggest official bilateral donor, was funding over 2,000 NGO projects in over 100 countries, and AusAID was funding over 2,200 projects. Understandably, therefore, donors have only ever attempted to evaluate a small sample of projects. In practice, most donor-based impact assessments have done desk studies of the available information on a fairly large number of NGO projects (the Australians covered 274 projects) and have then selected between 16 and

about 40 projects for closer scrutiny, thus constituting only rarely a sample of more than 5% or all projects funded. The most common practice has been to select a small number of countries (usually between four and nine) in which there is a fairly large cluster of NGO projects funded, and then select a sample of particular projects within each country, usually based on a spread of the main sectors and the main NGOs, but additionally incorporating both larger and smaller projects.
Not only has the sample been small, but usually it has not been chosen randomly, though the Australian assessment was largely randomly-based. Most commonly – in large measure because of the projects to be evaluated are usually executed by local NGOs and not by the northern NGO who receives the projects funds from the donor – the choice of which projects to evaluate has commonly been based upon proposals put forward by the northern NGO, after consultation with the relevant local NGO. In most cases, such a selection process will tend to have biased projects selected in favour of what the NGOs concerned perceive as the more successful projects.

How have the selected projects been evaluated? The most comprehensive have usually adopted a three-tiered approach modelled on the following elements.

A. First, the projects have been assessed against the narrow and specific objectives for which the donor has provided the funds. As most of the funds provided have been aimed at undertaking quite specific and narrow activities – building a school, well or toilet, establishing a trade union study circle, setting up a primary health care system, organising a women's income generating project – a concentration on the completion of the concrete project usually gives little indication of the **wider development** impact. Success at achieving immediate project objectives provided little guidance to the overall **development** impact of the projects in question when viewed more broadly. While achieving immediate project objectives is certainly a **necessary** condition for the project to have a substantive and sustained development impact on the beneficiaries, it is by no means a **sufficient** condition. The fact that a school has been built, study circle material produced, printed and distributed, or trees planted tells us little, on its own, about changes in the lives of those touched by these projects. Nor does it tell us much about the relevance, utility or permanence of these immediate impacts. We still know very little about how peoples' lives have been changed. It would certainly have been worrying if immediate project objectives had not been achieved. Yet in most cases, the achievement of direct/immediate objectives fails to answer central questions about development impact: whether people's lives have been enhanced in a lasting way, and the extent to which the people assisted could be classified as amongst the poor.

B. As a result, and secondly, the projects have usually also been assessed in relation to a set of particular criteria, selected both to encompass claims commonly made by NGOs about the characteristics of many of the projects they support or promote as well as specific factors which NGOs now consider priorities for development. Though different impact assessments have utilised a different list of criteria, with more economically-specific projects focusing more on economic indicators, the recent Swedish NGO impact study, which most donors and NGOs would probably find acceptable, assessed impact against the following broader criteria:

> **cost effectiveness; poverty focus; beneficiary participation; gender characteristics and impact; environmental impact; project sustainability; where relevant, the impact of external technical assistance; the innovativeness, flexibility and replicability of the project; and pre-project appraisal, ongoing monitoring and post-project evaluation.**

The Swedish study also assessed projects in relation to the manner in which they had promoted democracy and focused on human rights concerns.

C. Thirdly and most widely, a smaller number of impact assessments (including the Finnish, Dutch, Swedish and British studies) have attempt to move beyond the setting of particular projects in order to try to assess impact in relation to a cluster of broader trends and indicators. This has usually been done for two reasons.

* First, to try to judge the impact of a particular donors' cluster of NGO-supported projects against the impact of other NGO projects in the country which might previously have been assessed (an increasingly common phenomenon for certain more "popular" countries, such as Bangladesh, Chile, India, Nepal, Nicaragua, Kenya and Zimbabwe).

* Secondly, a wider assessments has been undertaken to try to understand both what role and room for manoeuvre NGOs have in the development process in the context of other development trends within the country, to try to assess what particular advantage (comparative or absolute) NGOs from the donor country in question might have and, where relevant, to review actual or potential comparisons and potential complementarities between NGO and official aid initiatives within the countries studied.

Importantly, too, most of the recent donor-sponsored impact evaluations have been joint evaluations, combining the input of a minimum of two evaluators, one an external evaluator selected by the donor, and one from the country concerned.

However even when limited to a small cluster of projects in a handful of selected countries, the costs of mounting these sorts of assessment studies have been large. For instance, the 1994/95 impact assessment of the Swedish NGO Programme cost SIDA more than any evaluation ever undertaken by SIDA.

PROJECT IMPACT

Project impact: the narrow perspective

To what extent have the NGO projects assessed achieved the direct and immediate objectives for which the funds were provided? TheSE impact studies indicate that a large majority of the projects assessed do succeed in achieving their narrow and immediate objectives: in some studies over 90% of projects assessed have been recorded as successes, in most cases the figure has been above 80%. Thus, schools have been built; study circles have been formed; trees have been planted; disabled people have been provided with skills; community-based health care is being provided; NGO networks have been established; and land has been designated as planned.

For the (comparatively few) cases which have not been judged "narrowly" successful four major cluster of causes have been identified:

- a failure of communication, most often between the executing NGO and the key implementing agency leading to project failure;
- the influence of factors external to the project which seriously disrupt or abort plans for project execution;
- a lack of transparency in the executing agency which, at the extreme, prevents any realistic assessment being made; and
- (both last and usually least important) project failure has been caused by the diversion of funds and/or corrupt practices.

Project impact: a wider perspective

Evidence from most of the large bilateral impact studies shows that when NGO projects are judged against more and more of the broader criteria listed above, their aggregate performance rating drops progressively. **Very few** projects score consistently high marks in relation to a **majority** of the broader criteria. For instance in the SIDA country case-study of Zimbabwe, when assessed against the listed broader development criteria, it was only possible to conclude that 30% of the projects funded had been successful. Understandably, where impact assessments contain fewer criteria, as in the recent Australian study, the overall "success" rate tends to be higher. For individual criteria, there has usually been a more mixed and variable performance, both between projects and across countries. The fact that one or two projects have usually scored exceptionally high marks in relation to each of the individual criteria suggests, minimally, that the sorts of criteria used are not only familiar to NGOs but some NGOs have worked out strategies for advancing and making significant progress in relation to these key aspects of development.

Because few projects assessed tend to score consistently high marks in relation to the majority of these broader criteria, it could be argued that this sort of evidence supports the view that official fund should not be channelled to NGO development projects, or that it should be provided far more sparingly - especially when it is recalled that the sample chosen is likely to have been biased in favour of what are perceived by the NGOs as the better projects. However, most impact assessment studies fail to draw such a harsh conclusion. Indeed many contend that the impact assessed is little different from those expected. Two clusters of reasons are commonly given.

* In the first place, a number of these broader criteria, or at least the prism through which they are viewed in these impact assessments, are often quite new to a number of NGOs and executing agencies: most were not raised when the funds were provided. It is thus to be expected that projects which commenced when contemporary understanding of, say, gender or environmental questions were largely unknown would score poorly when assessed through these particular prisms.

* Secondly, it needs to be asked what one's expectations ought to be when assessing the wider development impact of NGO projects. Most assessments of official aid programmes conclude that up to one third of projects tend not to achieve their objectives, while only about one third could be rated highly successful. As a larger share of NGO project beneficiaries tend to be among the poor, often living within hostile and risky environments, *a priori* one would expect a lower success rate than for a cross-section of official aid projects. Additionally as even a small improvement in the lives of poor people can create sufficient space to enable other life-enhancing opportunities to be taken, it will often be inappropriate to use evidence of limited short-run success to argue that official aid to NGO projects should be curtailed, cut back or withdrawn.

It is because of these sorts of considerations that a feature of most of the detailed impact assessment reports is that they strenuously try to avoid being drawn into making sweeping generalisations about overall development impact of the whole NGO programme on the basis of the discrete project impact assessments undertaken. To expect the cumulative evidence from individual project assessments undertaken within different sectors and in very different country contexts to provide answers to the overall development impact and effectiveness of official funds channelled to support NGO projects is akin to the sorts of mistaken expectations of project evaluations of official aid which were quite common in the mid-1980s. Then, the false expectation was created that if the evidence from discrete official aid project evaluations was sifted and accumulated then the evidence collected would (as if by magic) answer the question of whether aid in general "worked".

It would, however, be incorrect to conclude that these impact assessments make no contribution to the debate about the development impact of NGOs. Perhaps their greatest value lies not merely in drawing attention to often a quite large gulf between development objectives and performance, but in the growing body of evidence which pinpoints weaknesses of NGO projects in relation to particular criteria and indicates ways in which some NGOs have overcome problems often in adverse circumstances. I shall now attempt, all too briefly, to comment on some of the more specific results, drawing especially on the recent major impact assessments initiated by the bilateral aid agencies in Australia, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

COST EFFECTIVENESS It is not common when NGOs design projects to relate costs outlaid with benefits expected; some NGOs remain resistant to attempts to link costs to benefits. Relatedly, as most NGO projects do not attempt to gather initial base-line data with which to judge impact or make comparisons with any control group, most impact assessments have had to focus more on qualitative changes and impact, leaving a number largely descriptive. Increasingly, however, evaluations have been influenced by methods akin to participatory rapid rural appraisal.

POVERTY FOCUS It is quite common for NGOs to claim or assume that their projects reach the poorest or that they are working with the very poor. It is almost equally common for NGOs **not** to undertake any form of poverty assessment which pinpoints precisely who the poorest are in a particular locality and how they might be reached. Not surprisingly, therefore, a high proportion of project assessments judge that the poorest are not reached. Nonetheless, a significant proportion of NGO grassroots interventions are aimed broadly at the poor and more marginalised, and they achieve considerable success in reaching such groups. Many NGOs would appear to have a capability of "reaching down" further to those at lower income levels than do either comparable government or official donor programmes. Very few NGO projects appear to be set up for the rich. If government and official aid programmes fail to reach the bottom 20% of income groups, most NGO interventions probably miss the bottom 5-10%.

PARTICIPATION It is common for NGOs to argue that beneficiary participation is a central tenet of their overall approach. There are a number of factors which support the view that it is. Most NGOs tend to work with small groups where face-to-face contact is often the most prominent characteristic of their style of operating. A large number of impact studies have not only highlighted the importance of participatory approaches for sustainability, but have shown that this was a dominant feature in many NGO interventions. And there is evidence of groups with whom NGOs work profoundly influencing pre-conceived notions of both the appropriate form of assistance and help required, and the manner and timing of the proposed intervention.

Equally, however, one needs to guard against the naive view that NGO interventions will **always** promote participatory development – in some instance they clearly do not. For instance, it can - and does - happen that if too much emphasis is placed on the **delivery** of services or inputs, the participatory component can be diluted or even lost. Although the evidence remains incomplete, participation tends to be far stronger in some phases of a projects than others. In particular, community involvement tends to be strongest when the project or programme is "up and running". It tends to be weakest in terms of the original formulation of the intervention, and in involving the community on the precise manner in which withdrawal of the implementing NGO should take place. Group participation in assessment and evaluation tends to be particularly weak, in part because overall assessment and evaluation tend to be relatively low priorities for most NGOs. Finally, the evidence shows that some projects with minimal beneficiary participation have nevertheless been able to achieve their objectives.

GENDER Until the early to mid-1980s, most NGO interventions tended to be "gender blind". In the 1990s it is rare to find an NGO which does not express its support for the "gender agenda". However the impact assessments indicate that there still remains a gap between expressions of support for the gender agenda and what happens on the ground. There is still a wide range of NGO projects which remain "gender blind" or which singularly fail to challenge prevailing patterns of gender discrimination. In some cases, this has happened because the attempts to incorporate gender into ongoing or even in new projects have been superficial - there has been little empowerment of women in practice. In others, successes at the project level have been eclipsed by more powerful forces in the wider society. Yet there is also evidence of advances being made even in quite hostile environments.

ENVIRONMENT Perhaps the most significant characteristics of most NGO projects as a whole is that the small scale of most of them means that ultimately they have very little capacity to have either much positive or negative effect on the environment. Still only a relatively small number of projects funded by NGOs are explicitly concerned with the environment. What is particularly worrying, however, is that a not insignificant number of projects have been found to be have had negative effects on the environment in large measure because the project promoters are unaware of, and in some cases have not addressed the issue of, environmental impact. This presents NGOs and donors with a dilemma: the marginal or minimal effect that most NGO projects have on the environment mean that it would be extremely costly to require all projects to be subject to a formal environmental audit. Yet if this does not occur a small, yet significant, portion of NGO projects are likely to continue to effect the environment adversely.

REPLICABILITY, FLEXIBILITY AND INNOVATION It is widely acknowledged that among NGOs significant innovative contributions have been made, for example, in relation to credit provision to the poor and intermediate and appropriate technology. The donor impact assessments, however, were concerned not with innovation, flexibility and replicability of NGOs in general but as applied to the particular projects assessed. Impact in relation to these criteria has usually been far more modest than would be expected from the widely acclaimed successes which have become part of conventional wisdom. Where "innovation" is found, it is most commonly the use of an approach which is not new *per se*, but new to a particular area or country. Yet particularly striking forms of innovation have been found. Most commonly, though, these have resulted from often years of costly research and experimentation: they have not just happened because the implementor was an NGO. As for flexibility, though this is found far more commonly than evidence of unique innovations, it is invariably related as much to the (small) size of the project than to any other characteristic.

It is increasingly realised that replication and scaling-up issues are important but very complex issues. Many (non-innovatory) NGO projects tend to be replications of other NGO projects rather than the source of new replications. However this should not necessarily be seen as a criticism. Some, especially sectorally-specific, NGOs - those involved in health, technology, credit, education or pastoral activities - are found to be successful in doing specialised work which they replicate elsewhere. Herein lies their strength. What is often a weakness is where NGOs specialising in one area (such as health) venture into new areas of activity, such as broader rural development, without the expertise to execute these projects.

PRE-PROJECT APPRAISAL, EVALUATION AND MONITORING Many weak projects are weak because of poor pre-project appraisal: if more donors provided more funds for pre-project appraisal and NGOs did not feel so compelled to continue funding clearly dubious projects for which they have outlaid initial funds then overall development impact could be enhanced significantly. Many NGOs now regularly do some monitoring and evaluation of their projects, though there tends to be far more monitoring than evaluation. However evaluation and monitoring is sometimes done merely because donors require it. In such cases, there is a often a bias towards financial and accounting issues rather than a concern to focus on better ways to enhance development impact. A particular weakness is that few NGOs have developed systems to draw the lessons of impact studies into the next project cycle, a weakness often reinforced by many donors who, while more willing to fund evaluations, do not appear to be particularly concerned to encourage NGOs to benefit from the lessons learnt.

Donors appear increasingly keen to "encourage" NGOs to use variants on the Logical Framework in pre-project appraisal. While a number of NGOs working with these methods have seen their benefits, for many there remain doubts about the extent to which it is possible to maintain a strong participatory dynamic when attempting at one and the same time to specify inputs and outputs and rigorously link the two together.

SUSTAINABILITY There has been a rapid increase in donors' concerns with the financial sustainability of NGO projects funded. Though recently more donors have shown a willingness to extend the project funding period, it is rare for donors not to require eventual financial sustainability as a requirement for funding.

In strong contrast, and not surprisingly, the impact studies reveal a very high proportion of projects which are financially unsustainable. Many are unlikely ever to become financially sustainable, notwithstanding a number of imaginative schemes to raise income from project beneficiaries. Not surprisingly, too, there is a positive correlation between the income levels of the beneficiaries and the share of total project costs which can be obtained from the beneficiaries.

While the sustainability of projects beyond the funding period is of course desirable, there are other benefits to consider even if the process and institutions initiated by the project cannot be sustained. This is perhaps clearest in the case of training programmes which form leaders, impart skills, and build human capacity in general. Yet, skills and experiences acquired by people who participate in a far wider variety of project activities likewise have the potential to live beyond the life of the project. Thus all projects are primarily investments, and the return to that investment can take multiple forms. The most valuable sort of project, and the one whose impacts will be most sustainable – even if it not in the most immediately intended form – is often the project that invests in human and organisational capacity.

Impact beyond the project

There is less evidence of impact beyond the project. But what there is points, unsurprisingly, to the importance that the economic and political context, including the nature, efficiency and effectiveness of state institutions and the attitude of the government to NGOs all have on the nature of NGO activities and their scope for improving the lives of the poor. Perversely but also unsurprisingly, NGO projects have most difficulty in making an impact, and are most costly to implement, in the same contexts in which government and official donor projects have problems: in small isolated communities, little touched by markets and market penetration.

Too frequently, and like many of their counterparts within official agencies, NGOs tend to view their work not only within a narrow, isolated perspective of the particular group of beneficiaries with whom they are working, but their primary role is mainly that of responding to particular requests from these groups. Relatedly, the era of structural adjustment has tended to increase requests for NGOs to initiate new projects and, in a growing number of cases, to take back projects which had been handed over to particular line ministries. Too great an emphasis on responding to requests for assistance has meant that too little is often given to thinking **strategically and realistically** about the development opportunities in the areas in which they are working. This gap appears to be particularly marked for those NGOs who do not have a presence within, and first-hand knowledge of the country and the activities of other NGOs. Consequently, it is not common for NGOs to examine their engagement in a particular country in terms of asking where their own comparative advantage lies vis-a-vis the overall room for manoeuvre NGOs have in the country, and rarer still for even the leading NGOs from a particular donor country to ask jointly where their combined talents and resources might be focused most effectively.

A number of these wider assessments have included an examination of the inter-linkage of NGO programmes funded by particular donors and the donor's own official aid programme. A common finding is that it is not easy to compare NGO and official aid projects, largely because they usually implement different **types** of project and often of a different **size and scale**. That does not mean, however, that there are no lessons to learn. Most studies revealed a high degree of mutual ignorance of the other's programmes: NGOs don't know much about the official aid programme and officials executing and monitoring the official aid programme know little about the NGO projects funded (perhaps thousands of miles away) by their own agency. In rare cases, this has meant that donors have double-funded the same project, more commonly it has meant that different programmes of the same local institution has been funded unknowingly through NGO and official aid channels. But the most worrying feature of this mutual ignorance has been the large numbers of instances where potential opportunities for the mutual enhancement of programmes and have repeatedly been lost. Consequently, in many cases there is an urgent need to institutionalise a regular exchange of information about, and eventually, greater coordination of NGO and official aid programmes and activities.

Finally from this broader perspective, a number of the country studies argue that it can often be more confusing than helpful to talk of an "NGO sector" and then try to isolate and assess the development impact of NGO work as a whole. NGOs work with a range of organisations, many with different functions and social origins: government agencies, other NGOs, official donors and small grassroots organisations. As a result, the nature of the development initiatives supported by different "NGOs" varies as therefore do (or should) expectations of impact. The stress laid on these complexities reinforces the view that it is often misguided to use impact assessment studies to attempt to provide simple answers to questions about the development impact of NGO initiatives funded by official donors.

THE FUTURE

The evaluation findings and the future role of NGOs in development assistance

It needs to be stressed that these evaluation studies have been concerned principally with only one part of the NGO-donor relationship - the funding of projects put forward by the NGOs themselves. The results are likely to have most relevance to the direct funding of southern NGOs insofar as these concern the same sorts of projects.

However, these results are likely to be of less relevance to other types of NGO donor relations, many of which are also expanding. These include work in the democracy and human rights field, work focusing on issues of strengthening civil society, work involved in information and education work at home, and work involved more in emergency and food aid initiatives. Some of the findings have had relevance to the volunteer aspects of NGO work, but it is commonly recognised that thee sorts of relationships usually merit from particularly sharply focused assessments focusing more exclusively on these issues.

Focusing, therefore, more narrowly, on the sorts of evaluations which have been carried out, there are a range of implications and issues raised by the recent batch of studies, some related to methodologies, some to wider questions.

Assessments of the impact of NGO initiatives funded by official donors are likely to continue. However it is likely that there will be a growing realisation among donors that these sorts of that studies are not the best way to answer general questions about development impact - at least one part of the reasons why donors have allocated resources to them. As a result it is likely that the format, thrust and orientation of these studies could well alter.

To the extent that NGOs have seen these largely donor-driven initiatives as beneficial to them, they are likely to decide to undertake more evaluations themselves. Donors are likely to encourage such moves. However, while this is desirable all-round, it is to be hoped that both donors and NGOs will focus not only on DOING evaluations, but in setting up institutional mechanisms for ensuring that the lessons from the studies are learnt, most specifically that they inserted into the next project cycle and across different geographical divisions.

However it needs equally to be recognised that things will not go completely smoothly for there is not an entirely common evaluation agenda. A number of official donors are indicating their wish to focus more explicitly on cost effectiveness issues than has occurred to date, minimally by insisting on NGOs providing information on costs per beneficiary, but more substantially by encouraging NGOs to carry out base-line studies on a regular basis and to make a more rigorous attempt to gather cost data and link costs outlaid more closely to benefits achieved. For their part, most NGOs are willing both to undertake more evaluations and bring more rigour into the methods used, though they remain suspicious of pressure to quantify both inputs and outputs and even risks.

Then again, a growing number of NGOs are becoming wary of the effects of the current donor emphasis on evaluating discrete projects. As more NGOs switch their attention increasingly away from **projects** to development **processes**, they are likely to be less interested in the results of project evaluations and concerned that a continued emphasis on project evaluation may reinforce a donor view that discrete projects constitute the meat of NGO development activities.

Another area of increasing attention is likely to be the whole issue of sustainability, especially financial sustainability. As noted above, donors increasingly require NGO projects to be sustainable, often as pre-requisite to providing funds, while very few of them are ever likely to be financially sustainable. When the overall poor long-term potential of most NGO projects is set against the fact that an equally high number of projects assessed are providing very basic essential services to the poor that neither governments or other agencies would ever be able to provide without a degree of financial subsidy, it provides increasingly persuasive evidence to wish to raise fundamental questions about current demands donors make on NGOs in relation to financial sustainability. On the one hand, the past record of NGOs paying very little regard to financial sustainability questions suggests that all NGOs should be required to address the issue of financial sustainability, but, on the other, the evidence suggests that donors should not require eventual financial sustainability as a *sine qua non* for funding every NGO project.

SHARE OF TOTAL NGO INCOME COMING FROM OFFICIAL DONOR SOURCES

Country	*% of total NGO funds obtained from official aid sources*	*Year*
Sweden	85%	1994
Belgium	80%	1993
Italy	77%	1991
Canada	70%	1993
United States	66%	1993
Australia	34%	1993/94
Austria	10%	1993
United Kingdom	10%	1993

SHARE OF TOTAL BILATERAL AID CHANNELLED TO NGO DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Country	*% of official aid channelled to NGOs*	*Year*
Sweden	30%	1994
Norway	25%	1992
Switzerland	15%	1991
Canada	14%	1992
Netherlands	10%	1993
United States	9%	1992
Germany	7%	1992
Finland	6%	1993
Australia	6%	1993/94
United Kingdom	4%	1993/94
Japan	1%	1992

Sources: OECD (1995) *Development Assistance Committee Report 1994*: Paris, OECD, 1995; World Bank (1995) *World Debt Tables 1994-95, Volume 1*: Washington DC, The World Bank; Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) (1995) *NGO Programs Effectiveness Review*: Canberra, AusAID; I. Smillie and H. Helmich (1993) *Non-Governmental Organisations and Governments: stakeholders for development*: Paris, OECD; and ODA (1994) *British Aid Statistics, 1989/90 - 1993/94*: London, Government Statistical Service.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING DISCRETE NGO PROJECTS TO OBTAIN WIDER DEVELOPMENT IMPACT DATA

cost effectiveness;

poverty focus;

beneficiary participation;

gender characteristics and impact;

environmental impact;

project sustainability: INSTITUTIONAL AND FINANCIAL;

where relevant, the impact of external technical assistance;

the innovativeness, flexibility and replicability of the project; and

pre-project appraisal, ongoing monitoring and post-project evaluation.

In addition the Swedish study also assessed projects in relation to

the manner in which they had promoted democracy and focused on human rights concerns.

Kommentarer til «Evalueringen av de frivillege organisasjoner som kanal for norsk bistand

William M. Lafferty

Sigrun Møgedal

KOMMENTARER TIL EVALUERINGEN

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Kommentarer til Evaluation Report 3.95: "Non-Governmental Organizations as Channel in Development Assistance: The Norwegian System" (Prepared by Terje Tvedt, The Centre for Development Studies, University of Bergen)

[NB: Følgende kommentarer er en punktvis oppsummering av muntlige kommentarer som ble avgitt på et "presentasjonsmøte" i Oslo, 06.04.95. Kommentarene ble utarbeidet under nokså sterk tidspress. De er rettet kun mot overstående rapport, og ikke mot hele evalueringsprogrammet. Kommentarene representerer **et generelt inntrykk** av evalueringsrapporten, og bør ikke tolkes ut over dette. Jeg har ikke hatt tid til en mer grundig lesning av rapporten, eller til en bearbeidelse av kommentarene.]

1. Rapporten lager et meget interessant grunnlag for drøftelse av NGOenes rolle i bistand og utvikling. Mange gode delanalyser og mye nyttig empirisk informasjon. Rapporten er imidlertid heftet med flere svakheter, slik at det er vanskelig å anbefale rapporten som utgangspunkt for videre forskning og utredning.

2. Det er vanskelig å gi en helhetlig vurdering av rapporten. Noen deler er vesentlig bedre skrevet og klarere enn andre, og noen deler oppleves som er i konflikt med andre deler. Mens enkelte NGO-karakteristika fremstilles f.eks. negativt i Kap II, behandles de samme fenomener positivt i Kap IV.

3. Et tvilsomt premiss: "The NGO decade has also played a role in Norwegian national history. It has been important in creating Norwegian attitudes to, and images of, the developing countries. It has changed the Norwegian organisational landscape in crucial ways" (s. i). Dette virker som en overdrivelse. Etter min mening er koplingen mellom NGOene og bistand relativt sett usynlig. Organisasjonene har gjort et kjempearbeid i synliggjøring av de politiske og økonomiske sidene ved enkelte u-land, men har organisasjonenes rolle i bistandsarbeidet blitt synliggjort før i den senere tid? I den utstrekning NGOene har gjort seg

bemerket med hensyn til den internasjonale arenaen, (og har endret det organisasjonsmessige landskapet) har det hovedsaklig vært med hensyn til UNCED-prosessen (dvs. miljø og utvikling).

4. Et kritisk valg: "The theoretical and conceputal work which was necessary to study the field in a fruitful and comprehensive way is left out from this report, due to the need for brevity" (s. i). Korthet kan være en dyd. Men her er ikke den begrepsmessige siden ved prosjektet tilstrekkelig formidlet. Hele tilnærmingsmåten virker ambivalent på dette punktet. Utgangspunktet er meget "fenomenologisk" - man holder seg veldig nær NGOer som fenomen - og så forsøker man å utvikle et begrepsapparat og teoretiseringer på en nokså induktiv måte. Dette får klare konsekvenser for hele utredningen. Hovedkonklusjonen trekker i retning av at det er veldig vanskelig å si noe generelt om NGOene i denne sammenheng. Komparative tilnærminger avvises som utilstrekkelige og til og med misvisende. Den eneste vei frem (sies det) er inngående analyser av enkelte case-studier. **Dette er jeg dypt uenig i. Fagområdet "komparativ politikk", og særlig studier av "nasjonsbygging", har lange tradisjoner, med vel utviklet begrepsapparater og metodiske teknikker, for å kunne analysere problemstillingen. Rapporten har i liten grad benyttet seg av disse fagtradisjoner.**

5. Deskriptiv analyse: Rapporten er mest deskriptiv og mest problematiserende. Så vidt jeg kan se finnes det ikke en eneste bivariat analyse i hele rapporten. Hele profilen er (igjen) klart "ideografisk" og fenomenologisk. Man får en "Statistical Appendix", men materialet benyttes ikke til statistisk analyse. Det lages kategorier for de forskjellige typer NGOer - kategorier som må antas å være av stor substantiv betydning for hele problemstillingen - men disse benyttes ikke til enten krysstabellanalyser eller multivariate analyser.

6. Blanding av perspektiver: Rapporten tar for seg to forskjellige sider ved NGO-problematikken: (1) NGOenes instrumentelle rolle i formidling av norsk bistand, (2) NOGenes rolle i utviklingsland når det gjelder demokratisering og nasjonsbygging. Etter min mening holdes ikke disse perspektivene klart nok adskilt. Flere steder i rapporten får vi løpende kommentarer der det ikke er lett å vite hvilket perspektiv er under analyse.

Perspektivene innebærer beslektete men klart forskjellige problemstillinger, og det burde vært en hovedoppgaven for evalueringen å holde dem bedre fra hverandre.

7. NGOer som funksjonelle organ for staten: Det sies innledningsvis at: "NGOs in development, rather than being seen as a 'natural outcome' of state and market failures, should primarily be regarded as a product of deliberate state policies". Er dette tilstrekkelig belyst i rapporten? Mesteparten av analysen bygger på premisser om at det er NGOene som nærmest tvinger seg på staten. Hvor er analysene om statens behov for større fleksibilitet og manglende interesse for å bygge opp egne byråkratiske organer for å gjøre den formidlingsjobben som NGOene kan gjøre for dem? NGOene oppfyller for staten en funksjon som kan sammenlignes med "corporate down-sizing". Store bedrifter skal ikke lengre ha egne staber for å utføre arbeidsoppgaver som kan kjøpes billigere på markedet.

8. Manglende dekning av norsk "korporativ pluralisme": Forholdet mellom organisasjoner og staten er ett av de mest utforskede temaer i norsk statsvitenskap. Rapporten gir også her lite tegn til kjennskap til denne forskningen. Istedenfor å spørre hva som er nytt og annerledes med NGOenes engasjement i bistandsarbeidet med hensyn til Norges korporativ-pluralistiske struktur, begynner rapporten nærmest fra "scratch" i et forsøk på å analysere problemet som et nytt fenomen. Det sies tidlig i rapporten at man har foretatt komparative analyser for å få frem de spesielle egenskaper ved det norske organisasjonssystemet, men lite av denne analysen er synlig i rapporten. Referanser til maktutredningen eller de tallmessige analyser av korporativ-pluralisme er fraværende.

9. NGOenes demokratiske legitimitet?: Denne sterke integreringen av NGOene i bistandsarbeidet, med ansvar for overføringer av hundremillionevis av kroner, reiser alvorlige problemer for NGOenes selvstendighet og legitimitet. Hvilken rolle bør organisasjonene spiller i en liberal demokratisk rettsstat? Når er dere delaktighet i offentlig politikk legitim? Og hvilke mekanismer er blitt brukt i andre kontekster/stater for å sikre denne legitimeringen? Her igjen finner vi - selv i kapittelet med tittelen "The Role of NGOs in Connection with Pluralism and Democracy" - veldig lite av direkte relevans. Også disse spørsmål har blitt sterkt diskutert i faglitteraturen.

10. "Kondisjonalitet"?: Drøftelsene av NGOenes rolle i utviklingsland kommer i liten grad inn på problemene tilknyttet de nye og omfattende betingelser for bistand fra de store internasjonale finansieringsinstanser. Gitt at NGOer har en viktig rolle å spille i demokratisering og pluralisering av u-land, hvordan påvirkes denne rollen av de klare øknomiske og institusjonelle føringer som medfølger bistand fra Verdensbanken, IMF og andre markedsorienterte bistandsorganisasjoner? Og hva med den sterke dreining i norsk bistand i retning av mer næringsrettet bistand? Hva betyr dette for både norske NGOenes instrumentelle funksjon i bistandsformidling og u-lands NFO-infrastruktur? Igjen, perspektivene er meget lite synlig i rapporten.

11. NGOenes "komparative fordel": Denne delen av analysen setter en tone for rapporten som etter min mening er overdreven kritisk. Man kan godt akseptere at noen representanter for NGOene overselger sine organisasjonenes fortreffelighet, men dette er ikke nok av et grunnlag for en generell avvisning (eller i det minst negativ profilering) av organisasjonenes "komparative fordel". Det virker for meg som om studiene som siteres til støtte for denne profileringen (ss. 22-23) er utvilstrekkelige. Her er det nesten ikke data som faktisk sammenligner **resultatene** fra organisasjonsformidling med andre form for bistandsarbeid. Det samme gjelder for Riddels presentasjon av data angående "impact assessment". I hele hans fremstilling av de svenske datene kom det frem kun én observasjon som bygde på komparativ evaluering, og det dreide seg om negative resultater for offentlig-bistands prosjekter (ikke NGOer) med hensyn til å fremme deltagelse. Slik jeg vurderer rapporten har den ikke laget en klar argumentasjon for de meget generelle kritiske utsagn om NGOenes effektivitet i det norske bistandsarbeidet.

12. Alternativer?: Når fokus rettes kun mot NGOene, og når resultatene fremstilles såpass kritisk, er man nødt til å spørre hvordan en komparativ evaluering av både "byråkratisk bistandsarbeid" og "markedsstyrt bistandsarbeid" ville falle ut. Ville f.eks en omfattende utvidelse av det norske fredskorpset være en rimelig erstatning for innsatsen (og ressursutnyttelsen) til NGOene? Eller er løsningen en hel privatisert satsing?

Alt i alt følger jeg derfor at rapporten representerer et viktig men begrenset innspill til debatten om norsk bistandsarbeid. Den kan være frukbart som tankevekker med hensyn til det systemet som gradvis har vokst fram, og NGOene har sikkert godt av å betrakte seg selv og sitt arbeid i et mer kritisk lys, men rapporten gir ikke grunn til alvorlige innvendinger mot selve bistandsmodellen. Kritikken som ble reist på seminaret (av bl.a. Nils Morten Udgaard) om at denne formen for internasjonal politikk vanskelig kan forsvares innenfor en tradisjonell forståelse av Norges utenrikspolitiske interesser, er altfor tradisjonell - og altfor snever. Verken Udgaard eller andre på seminaret tok opp Norges globale forpliktelser med hensyn til bærekraftig utvikling og Nord-Sør problematikken. I denne sammenhengen er den norske NGO-modellen fullstendig i tråd med verdiene og målene til UNCED-prosessen. Rapporten kan og bør brukes til å korrigere og forbedre denne modellen. Men evalueringen gir ikke grunnlag - verken normativt eller vitenskapelig - for å ta hele modellen opp til vurdering.

Fattigdom og folkelig deltakelse, hva oppnår de frivillige organisasjonene?

Momenter til kommentar, presentasjonsmøtet 6.4.95 (Sigrun Møgedal, DiS)

Kommentaren er vinklet mot hva vi kan lære av evalueringsrapportene for framtidig handling. Reflekterer også synspunkter som er beskrevet i Bistandskommisjonens rapport. BK har brukt Tvedts rapport sammen med andre erfaringer og vurderinger, men kan ikke sees som sammenfallende med eller som et ekko av Tvedts rapport.

Til tross for svært ulik tilnærming i de to rapportene (Riddell og Tvedt), av interesse å notere seg sammenfallende funn og vurderinger når det gjelder temaene fattigdom og deltakelse.

Brukt mye ressurser og mange ord på å slå fast at NGO ikke er en enhetlig størrelse. Men synes å legge for lite vekt på at NGOer heller ikke er statiske størrelser. De kan heller ikke bare forklares ut fra statens disposisjoner. De eksisterte før bistandsepoken, og reflekterer selv den bevegelsen av kunnskap, innsikt og teorier som har funnet sted gjennom bistandsepoken. Mye av deres handlinger må også forklares ut fra endringer i egne erfaringer og selvforståelse. Dette gjelder også balansen mellom ulike virkefelt og roller, slik som

- Bistandsrollen Allmenne velferds og utviklingstiltak
- Partnerrollen: Mer og mer aktive pådrivere
- Operatørrollen (på vegne av)

Hvordan organisasjonene har definert seg i forhold til dette spekteret av ulike roller er ikke uinteressant når det gjelder spørsmå om fattigdomsorientering og deltakelse. Særlig forholdet mellom de to første rollene er her viktig.

BK bygger på en forståelse av at hverken statlig eller NGO bistand når de fattigste. En er i stedet opptatt av faktorer og prosesser som skaper og opprettholder fattigdom. Tradisjonell bistand har lindret nød, men det er ikke mer enn utgangspunktet for utvikling.

Riddell slår fast at organisasjonene nærmest tar det for gitt at de når de fattigste. Dessuten at NGOer har lite potensiale for å arbeide for reell omfordeling og for å skape økonomisk overskudd. Dette er observasjoner som også kan bekreftes fra annen erfaring innenfor NGO virkeligheten.

Dermed store begrensninger i å skape varige endringer. Dette er også BKs utgangspunkt. Hverken NGOer eller statlig bistand sett isolert kan gjøre dette alene. Trenger en annen vektlegging av roller, spesialisering og komplementaritet. Større bevissthet på kontekst og ringvirkninger.

Lokal deltakelse i utførelse og bruk av aktiviteter, ikke i premisser og eierskap. Ikke alene for at tjenesten skal bli bedre eller mer brukt eller få et lokalt finansieringsgrunnlag. Dette må aksepteres som et grunnleggende problem og informere strategiutviklingen framover. Berører NGOer som sentrale og nødvendige aktører i deet sivile samfunn, for å utnytte utviklingspotensiale og holde stater ansvarlig og utviklingsfremmende.

Organisasjonsarbeid krever mye støre bevissthet
De fleste organisasjoner er likevel bare mellomledd til målgruppen. Dette må tas med i betraktningen når strategier formuleres. Viktig å ikke bare snakke om deltakelse som lokal. Det det handler om er at interessegrupper på ulike nivåer er organisert, slik at de kan fremme og forhandle om egne interesser, og kan stå ansvarlig for de kontrakter som måtte opprettes. Riddell gjør den interessante observasjon at NGOer med politisk engasjement og målgruppe/interessegruppe organisasjonene også er de som best ivaretar fattigdomsorientering.

Det er organisasjoner i landene i sør som kan og må være drivkraft og korrektiv på lang sikt. På kort sikt kan nok dette ivaretas av en ekstern NGO, men dette kan også bli problematisk dersom en ikke parallelt arbeider med organisasjonsarbeid og organisasjonsutvikling rotfestet i egen virkelighet. Det handler om makt, interesser og samspill mellom ulike aktører. Dersom dynamikken mellom stat og sivilt samfunn som i seg selv er en viktig faktor er det viktig å arbeide videre med hva dette betyr i det enkelte land. (ikke nødvendigvis bare som et null sums spill som Tvedt rapporten tar som utgangspunkt).

Tjenestesiden av frivillige organisasjoners virksomhet er mest problematisk.
For svake i møtepunktet med offentlig virksomhet. mest opptatt av å få ting til å virke innen eget begrensede område. Begrensede ringvirkninger (kan ikke så lett påvirke rammebetingelsene).

Det er særlig Riddells rapport som gir substans til disse observasjonene, selv om konklusjonene gjenfinnes også hos Tvedt. Men Tvedt svarer ikke så tydelig, fordi alt problematiseres og ingenting framstår som klare konklusjoner om noe annet enn at dette er problematisk og kan ikke sies noe om.

En kan more seg med å karikere hvordan Tvedt ville oppsummere NGO erfaringen i forhold til fattigdom og deltakelse:

> Kanskje konsentrasjonen om fattigdomsproblemet egentlig er overdrevet og egentlig ikke så interessant i diskusjonen av frivillige organisasjoners virksomhet........og folkelig deltagelse må forstås som et fenomen som har en bestemt plass i tid og sted og ulike politiske og kulturelle konekster, men som er utflytende og upresis når det gjeder teorien for forholdet til stat, etnisitet og eliter, og er det nå egentlig folkelig deltakelse som faktisk er spørsmålet?

Forsterkede myter og forenklede forklaringsmodeller med svakt og selektivt datagrunnlag, kan bidra til å skape overskrifter og vekke til fornyet gjennomtenkning, men har i seg selv svært store begrensninger når det gjelder å komme videre, noe Tvedt rapporten viser, i det den er svak på anbefalinger.

Vi kan i alle fall være enige om at bistand og sørpolitikk er mer komplekst enn en ofte har vært villig til å innrømme, og rope et varsko om at ingen må bruke forenklede modeller, hverken i markedsføring eller i evaluering. Dette må også gjelde Tvedt. Men når det er sagt, ligger det mye spennende i dette arbeidet, som det er vel verdt å gripe fatt i.

VEDLEGG

DET KONGELIGE UTENRIKSDEPARTEMENT

Vår saksbehandler: Byråsjef Erik Berg

Vår dato	Vår referanse
27. mars 1995	
Deres dato	Deres referanse

EVALUERINGEN AV DE FRIVILLIGE ORGANISASJONER SOM KANAL FOR NORSK BISTAND - PRESENTASJONSMØTE

Ovennevnte evaluering foreligger som kjent i utkasts form og er sendt de frivillige organisasjonene til høring. Et omfattende arbeid nærmer seg derved slutten. Vi ønsker å invitere organisasjoner og presse til presentasjonsmøte

torsdag 6. april 1995 i Håndverkeren, 3 etg. kl. 10.30 - 15.00

Foreløpig program for møtet blir som følger:

10.30- 10.40 Åpning

Spesialråd Knut Vollebæk

10.40 - 11.40 Fattigdomsorientering og folkelig deltakelse - hva oppnår de frivillige organisasjonene? Noen evalueringserfaringer.

Innleder : Forsker Roger C. Riddell, Overseas Development Institute, London og forsker Terje Tvedt
Kommentarer: Forsker Sigrun Møgedal
Diskusjon

11.40 - 12.40 Nøytrale, politiserende eller profesjonelle operatører? Hva er veien framover for de frivillige organisasjonene?

Innleder: Forsker Terje Tvedt
Kommentarer: Professor Lafferty; Redaktør Nils Morten Udgaard
Diskusjon

12.40 - 13.00 KAFFE/ TE PAUSE

13.00 - 14. 00 Felles interesser og verdisyn mellom organisasjoner i nord og sør- er et likeverdig partnerskap mulig? Hvordan bygge det opp?

Innleder: Kontorsjef Kikkan Haugen, NORAD
Kommentar: Generalsekretær Tor B. Jørgensen, NMS

Postadresse:	Kontoradresse:	Telefon:	Teleks:	Telefaks:	Telegram:
Postboks 8114 DEP. 0032 Oslo	7. juni plassen/ Victoria Terrasse 0251 Oslo	22 34 36 00	71004 NOREG N	22 34 95 80 22 34 95 81	NOREG, Oslo

14.00 - 14.30 Hvilket behov for kunnskap/forskning eksisterer når det gjelder frivillige organisasjoners sør-relasjoner?

Innleder: Forsker Roger C. Riddell,
Kommentar: Forsker Terje Tvedt

14.45 Oppsummering og avslutning

Spesialråd Knut Vollebæk

Vi gjør for ordens skyld oppmerksom på at Roger C. Riddell har ledet de nylig gjennomførte evalueringene av både SIDAs og FINNIDAs støtte til frivillige organisasjoner.

Påmelding til seminaret skjer til Utenriksdepartementet, Programavdelingen ,ved førstesekretær Aase Hutchinson, l. 3925 innen tirsdag 4.april. Rapportutkastet kan også bestilles herfra.

Vi ønsker vel møtt.

For Bistandsministeren

Randi K. Bendiksen
Ekspedisjonssjef

Erik Berg

"regi"

REGISTRERING - PRESENTASJONSMØTE

NAVN	ORGANISASJON
Jens M. Strandheim	Blå Kors Norge
Torger Dahl	Det Kgl. Selskap for Norges Vel
Bjørg Flugsrud	Norges Bondekvinnelag
Svein Harald Johansen	Norges Speiderforbund
Arild Abrahamsen	Lions
Egil Magne Hovdenak	Kvekerhjelpen
Kjersti Berre	Redd Barna
Aina Bergstrøm	Redd Barna
Peter Wood	Redd Barna
Steinar Nilsen	Afghanistankomiteen
Dag Bårnes	Caritas
T. Skallerud	Care
Terje Watterdal	Blindeforbundet
Nils Chr. Faarlund	Norsk Misjonsråds Bistandsnemnd
Finn Namseth	SOS Barnebyer
Nils Tore Andersen	Den norske Misjonsallianse
Jens Stangeland	Norsk Misjonsråds Bistandsnemnd
Randi Tasserud	NORAD
Karin Sundsbø	NORAD
Anne Lise Sukke	NORAD
Kikkan Haugen	NORAD
Elin Eikeland	NORAD
Elsbeth Tronstad	NORAD
Erik Evang	Lions
Per Næsheim	Adventistsamfunnet
Hilde Spiro	ORT - NORGE
Brynjulf Mugaas	Norges Røde Kors
Lafferty Ureham	Alternativ Framtid (panel)
Inger Marit Nygard	Frelsesarmeen
Jorun Mæhlum	UD
Helge Bjørklund	Pinsevennenes Ytremisjon
Lena Richter	NFPU
Tore Øverhaug	
Terje Dalseng	UD
Kashina From	
Irene Venås Holthe	Norsk Folkehjelp
Ellinor Brenna	Flyktningerådet
Marit Sørvald	Flyktningerådet
Oddvar Espegren	Strømmestiftelsen
Stein Erik Kruse	Diakonhjemmets Intern. Senter (DIS)
Anne Veiteberg	LNU
Lissen Bruce	Norges Handikap Forbund
Marianne Ziesler	Norges Handikap Forbund

Jannick Lundbæk	student
Arild Hanish	Norsk Baptistsamfunn
Harald Lundquist	FBS
Mette Klaumann	LHL
Tor B. Jørgensen	(panel)
Svanhild Nedregård	NORAD
Sverre Valldal	Norges Ungdomslag
Birger Helland	Norsk Luthersk Misjonssamband
Ingar Boe	Santalmisjonen
Kari Øyen	Norsk Fredskorps Samband
Anne Li Ashola	Norsk Lærarlag
Betsy Heen	Norsk Lærarlag
Kari Tjernet	Norsk Folkehjelp
Aslak Lesland	AOF
Yngvild Bergrav Hansen	SAIH
Kjetil Aano	NMS
Jon Brynjar Skaara	Aftenposten
Jens Petter Kjemperud	UD
Tom Hunstad	UD
Jan Erik Beckensten	Frikirkerådets ulandsinformasjon
Ivar Evensen	Diakonhjemmets Internasj. Senter DIS
Ketil Ringstad	Fellesrådet for Afrika
Kjetil Gulliksen	Care
Atlesommerfelt	Kirkens Nødhjelp
Anette Haug	Norges Forskningsråd
Stein Støa	Flyktningerådet
Eva Grinde	Flyktningerådet
Ove Narvesen	Flyktningerådet
Nils M. Udgaard	Aftenposten
Knut Vollebæk	UD
Erik Berg	UD
Ingvild Belle	UD
Terje Tvedt	Universitetet i Bergen
Sigrun Møgedal	Diakonhjemmets Internasj. Senter, DIS
William Lafferty	
Roger Riddell,	ODI
Nils Haugstveit	UD
Jan Dybfest	UD
Randi Bendiksen	UD