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**Prioritizing Institutional
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A New Role For NGO Centres
For Study And Development**

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PRIORITIZING INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A NEW ROLE FOR NGO CENTRES FOR STUDY AND DEVELOPMENT

Alan Fowler

Introduction

There is a proliferation of conferences, books and articles examining the notion of a new international order.¹ Development specialists engage in this debate by arguing what this idea ought to mean for the eradication of still endemic poverty in the South.² But, like many development concepts before it- empowerment, participation, transformation, sustainability - it is difficult to identify unambiguous positions on the intriguing but indistinct prospect of global restructuring because the idea means many things to many people (Guardian, 1991). The purpose of this article is not, however, to find unity in existing views but to examine one feature of new world thinking - the increasingly important role of Third Sector organisations (Etzioni, 1971; Ouchi, 1980) in achieving sustainable and equitable world development.³ Specifically, it reviews how non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs),⁴ as one segment of the Third Sector, are giving substance to the realization that they must become a stronger force in a new global order (Korten, 1990).

A number of factors inform current thinking about a new world system and the challenges these pose for NGDOs. It is argued that to adequately respond to the challenges ahead NGDOs must actively work on their self-development, and this article elaborates on three organisational areas that NGDOs must tackle if they are to structurally influence global affairs to the benefit of the poor and the world's future generations. The critical issues facing NGDOs revolve around their identity, performance and relations.

From this context, the third part of the article outlines four new initiatives of NGDOs aimed at creating centres for study and development of themselves. The agendas of these centres result from NGDOs' reflecting on their own needs and view of reality. It is expected that the activities of these and other centres will be important in the evolution of the NGDO movement in this decade and the next century.

A New World Order

Whether spurred by the dramatic political changes in eastern Europe, or the ecological demise of the planet, or the stimulus of a fresh century around the corner, the concept of a new global order permeates today's international agenda. While there may be no agreed outline of what this new future might be, certain themes recur in analyses of what the driving forces are. Without attempting to be exhaustive, the following are features of new world thinking that are believed to be of particular significance for NGDOs (USAID, 1990).

Interdependence

Be it due to the globalization of the marketplace, or improved communications, or the inter-linkages of the ecosystem, less and less of the world is untouched by the actions of another. Isolation, retreat, withdrawal from global systems are not practical options or possible strategic policy choices in the future. The converse is that it will be less easy to ignore the interests of others in making one's own decisions. NGDOs have advantages in responding to such a situation because they are often simultaneously involved, for example, with remote rural communities in the South and influential populations in the North. NGDOs are in a strong position to inform the latter in ways that benefit the marginalised by highlighting the implications of choices that, at first sight, extend no further than the North's own political or economic realm.

Sovereignty

The dominance of sovereignty as determinant for inter-country relations and behaviour is expected to wane as the consequences of interdependence take their toll. As shown by greater cooperation in the United Nations and in regional economic cooperation (for example, the European Economic Community, the African Preferential Trade Area, the Association of South East Asian States), national boundaries and mind-sets are already seen as impediments for solving problems that require urgent joint global or regional action, such as countering global warming. NGDOs do not have sovereignty barriers to surmount in their relations and alliances, giving them comparative advantages over governments, not just at the local level (Fowler, 1988), but also internationally.⁵ This enables them to develop effective global relationships around specific issues unencumbered by the protocols and complex interests that reduce inter-governmental competence.

Democratisation

While democratic rule may become the global norm, internal pressures must provide the eventual foundations for political reform. The majority population linked through their grassroots organisations (GROs) will be an insistent force seeking to change the prevailing political order in their favour. For, undemocratic governments are unlikely to democratize on their own accord simply due to international sanction. Many observers contend that NGDOs have an important role to play in democratisation because they can strengthen civil society (Hyden, 1983; Hyden, 1990; Berg, 1987; Frantz, 1987; Timberlake, 1985; Durning, 1989; Wim, 1989). For example, the World Bank (1988) expects NGDOs to foster democratic change in Africa when it states that NGOs:

"[as] Intermediaries have an important role to play; they can create links both upward and downward in society and voice local concerns... In doing this they can bring a broader spectrum of ideas and values to bear on policy making. They can also exert pressure on public officials for better performance and greater accountability" (emphasis added).

By fostering horizontal and vertical linkages between GROs, NGDOs can help in the formation of people's movements that may become a countervailing force to autocratic regimes.

Heterogeneity

Until the eighties, thinking about the world has been informed by simple divides - North-South or East-West - that sufficiently reflected Western political and economic reality to make them a worthwhile shorthand for crudely determining relations and behaviour. For example, aid to regimes with poor human rights records in Africa - Malawi, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, Zaire - was justified by their pro-Western stance during the period of superpower competition. This era has virtually disappeared, with Northern politicians and donors now openly calling for political reform. Salient differences - cultural, social, economic - between and within continents, regions and countries will have to be increasingly acknowledged. International action must be tailored to particular situations. The days of universal prescriptions are over. NGDOs, with their inherent pluralism, are better placed than bureaucracies to recognise and act within an increasingly heterogeneous world order.

Roles

Finally, the roles of the state in relation to society are now very much open to debate. Beyond the regulation and enforcement of social order and defence, the further responsibilities of the state are being actively disputed. Implicitly, and often explicitly, the character of NGDOs and the origins of their resources are open to question as well.⁶ While role divisions will remain a source of tension between major sectoral actors, their resolution in any instance will contribute incrementally to the overall evolution of an important segment of the Third Sector, NGDOs. Hence, the division of functions between NGDOs, the state and private enterprise in any one country or situation will have consequences for the NGDO movement overall. To become a third force rather than co-opted or prematurely spent force within the Third Sector requires that NGDOs evolve a common strategic view of their mission within and for society, providing the founding rationale for the roles that this requires and disallows.⁷

What do all these changes mean for an expanding NGDO community?

NGDO Self-Development

Spurred by greater allocations of official aid, the number of northern NGDOs has increased by fifty percent in the last nine years (OECD, 1990).⁸ Increasing aid to NGDOs is accompanied by explicit donor expectations of their function and performance. This trend is giving rise to critical self-appraisals within the NGDO community about their social, political and developmental role as well as their effectiveness as agents of poverty alleviation. Analysis of publications dealing with NGDO action and development suggests that three organisational issues are pivotal to their evolution and ability to respond to global change (Drabek, 1987; Brown and Covey, 1987; Brown and Korten, 1989; Bratton, 1989, 1990; Tandon, 1989; Korten, 1990; Fowler 1991b; ICVA, 1987-1991). These are factors of identity, relationships and performance.

Identity

One strength of the NGDO community is its diversity. However, pluriformity is simultaneously a weakness when attempting to coalesce NGDO energies, for example when taking up a joint position on issues such as debt and human rights. In situations of rapid growth in number and size, the identity of NGDOs can be influenced by short-term considerations, say funding

opportunities. This may have undesirable consequences in the longer term.⁹ While there is no blue-print for the creation and running of NGDOs, organisation analysis and observation of practice indicate that identity should be most strongly influenced by four factors: vision, theory, ownership and leadership.

Vision and Theory. A guiding image of a desired future society and analysis of how to achieve it is the hub around which value-driven organisations such as NGDOs revolve.¹⁰ From vision and theory flow an NGDO's mission, priorities, objectives, methods, staff motivation and the source of energy that binds the organisation together. This latter point is crucial because NGDOs are critically dependent on the external environment in their work and "import" many characteristics of and contradictions between those they deal with - southern clients, northern constituency, funders, legislators and the like (Brown and Covey, 1987). Managing internal diversity is a significant challenge for NGDOs, and a well articulated vision, theory and values are needed to hold the organisation together and ensure coherence in its direction.

Importantly, vision and paradigms are not static. In effective NGDOs the guiding image and method are constantly informed by learning from experience gained through evaluations, studies, conferences, exchanges and the like. The learning-process approach to organisational functioning is key to maintaining NGDO relevance (Korten, 1980). This is a decisive issue because, unlike governments which levy taxes from citizens and private enterprise which has to sell goods to customers, the clients of NGDOs - the poor of the South - do not provide the resources needed by the organisation in order for it to function. In such a situation it is easy for institutional interests to prevail, reducing the relevance of NGDOs' actions to the reality of the poor (Fowler, 1989).

Finally, the NGDO perspective of the world should embody their intrinsic attributes, i.e., it must not be just a reaction to the positions of government or business. The source of this vision should be a reflection on action - the distinctive characteristic of NGDO learning. And, to be on a par with First and Second Sectors, articulations of Third Sector thinking must go beyond broad generalisations. They must embody credible alternatives, rooted in a reality that has been critically analysed by NGDOs themselves in their own terms.

Ownership. The "owners" of NGDOs, such as the governing board or membership should embody and exemplify the values that the organisation stands for. This is not always the case because owners either have too little time or are appointed as symbolic figures with limited substantive insight or involvement. And, membership organisations may be dominated by activist segments of the whole that hijack the NGDO to further their own agendas. Be that as it may, those with ownership responsibilities should provide a significant contribution to identity that must not be undervalued or lost sight of. Maintaining strong, appropriate, ownership is one vital element in discharging accountability, both formally and morally. And in its turn accountability is a requirement for legitimacy.

Leadership. NGDOs are often the creations of a charismatic leader or small strongly ideologically motivated groups. At the beginning, therefore, leaders are the personification of vision as well as the organisation's initial owners. This situation should change over the longer term to avoid overdependence on individualism. Because the personal style of leaders often

dominates NGDO behaviour, the way that the relationship develops between the leader, the staff and the (eventual) formal owners of the organisation determines the probability of achieving continuity by balancing charisma with institutional consolidation. Where the owners become themselves owned by the founder leadership problems tend to arise in both organisational continuity and ability to adapt to changing environments (Drucker, 1990). The transition to different patterns and structures of leadership is a common area of difficulty and sometimes conflict within NGDOs: an issue that must be consciously addressed (Leach, 1989).

In addition to the above concerns, leadership problems are arising due to the rapid growth of official aid to NGDOs. The increase in number and size of NGDOs in different regions due to the increase in funds available is occurring at a greater rate than the ability of the sector to "form" capable leaders and senior cadres. This is creating an urgent need for a more systematic development of competent NGDO leadership.

Relationships

By their very nature NGDOs are critically dependent on their external relations. A number of relations dominate: those towards clients, towards other NGDOs and towards other sectors, especially the state but increasingly towards commercial enterprise. In the first instance, however, the strength of the Third Sector will depend on the nature of the relations operating between organisations within it. Their impact nationally and internationally depends in turn on the way they interact with other sectors.

Intra-sector relations. The key words being used to describe how relations should globally develop between NGDOs are "partnerships" and "alliances" (Fowler, 1991b). These can be instigated South-South, North-North, South-North and North-South (ICVA, 1988).¹² In most cases, the challenge is to identify and collaborate with others who are sufficiently like-minded to allow both (a) mutual support and learning to improve practices and (b) the exploitation of complementarity (Leger, 1990). In the first instance, for example, NGDOs experienced in a particular intervention type – credit, primary health care, environmental protection, communication – can actively share their experience with others. In the second case, Southern NGDOs working with rural GROs could, for example, combine efforts with southern urban or Northern NGDOs specializing in advocacy or communication to promote the interests of their clients in their respective policy arenas. The strength and influence of the Third Sector in world development will depend to a significant degree on the demonstrated benefits for the poor resulting from NGDO partnerships, alliances and realisation of complementarity.

One important relational issue that is still the subject of much NGDO debate is an appropriate South-North division of labour.¹³ While there is no agreed formula for what this might be, the broad principle should be to build on the respective strengths of Northern and Southern NGDOs and their positions within the global power structure. This will probably see operational development work and local policy advocacy being undertaken by Southern NGDOs. Northern counterpart roles are likely to change towards (a) greater professionalism in providing institutional support to Southern NGDOs and their activities, (b) greater development education work, (c) paying more attention to linking Northern people's organisations to those in the South, and (d) concentrating on policy development and lobbying directed at influencing official aid

agencies and international economic bodies located in the North. An increase in collaborative South-North pressure-group activities can be expected, most likely on specific issues (Clark, 1991).

Relations with other sectors. The desired relation between NGDOs and other sectors, specifically with governments, is an ongoing and important issue, being accentuated by the change of institutional roles implicit to structural adjustment lending. In the context of Britain, for example, it can be argued that the original role of NGOs as charities was (and for many still is) to tidy-up the loose welfare ends of the capitalist state and make good the social shortcomings of the market.¹⁴ They were certainly not originally created or given tax advantages in order to challenge or change the premises of the political and economic structures that made state welfarism necessary (Whitaker, 1970).¹⁵ Today, NGDOs are being officially financed with the expectation that they will do globally what they have been doing domestically (OECD, 1988) – a welfare service role which NGDOs do not simply accept, arguing that their experience should influence public policies.

There is no straightforward answer to how the roles of the state and NGDOs should be divided because governments vary and contexts dictate the posture that NGDOs should take towards them. A meeting of NGDOs in India concluded, for example, that democratic governments can present NGDOs with greater difficulty in determining their position and role than do autocratic regimes (Tandon, 1989). This notwithstanding, there are a number of rules of thumb to guide NGDOs in assessing the type of conditions they need in order to relate to governments.

First, there must be a legislative framework which assures sufficient NGDO autonomy of action. Second, a forum should exist for NGDO-government dialogue on issues of public policy. Third, when negotiating funding this must not (a) negatively impact on the NGDOs own decision-making processes, (b) erode their comparative advantages, or (c) distort their accountability to constituency and clients (Hellinger, 1987; ICVA, 1985; Fowler, 1991b). Further, in choosing a position NGDOs should ask themselves if they are functioning as alternatives, complementers or substitutes for the government. Finally, the dependency question should be raised. In other words NGDOs must not only judge if they are being compromised by government relations and official aid but must also ask themselves what strategies for eventual self-reliance do they have as a counterweight (Vincent and Campbell, 1989).

As NGDOs build up experience and knowledge on what legislation facilitates or impedes their autonomy, how to work alongside governments, what conditions to negotiate with official aid agencies and so on, they need to systematically share their insights with others. It is not just a question of avoiding reinventing the wheel but one of ensuring that divide and rule strategies of some governments and donors are countered.¹⁶

Performance

Contrary to traditional ideas about assessing NGDOs, the guiding standard for evaluating their contribution to development is not the nobility of their intentions but their performance in relation to the poor. Here is the yardstick for their legitimacy and right to exist. Until fairly recently there was a tangible suspicion within the NGDO community that pressure to become

more professional implied that they become more cold, calculating and 'business-like' in their approach.¹⁷ This stance is changing and NGDOs are now seriously concerned about the effectiveness of their management and the stewardship of their resources.¹⁸

However, in seeking assistance to improve their effectiveness, NGDOs are worried about the suitability of the organisational and human resource development skills and practices on offer. And, when they look around they are often disappointed to find that the amount and variety of appropriate resources - institutions, documentation, technical support - are nowhere near what is needed. Currently, there is a severe shortage of resources required to improve NGDO performance in relevant ways. For example, while European NGDOs disburse some 2-3 billion dollars annually, outside of some religious organisations, there is nowhere on the continent specifically skilled at improving their performance or training their staff. This unsatisfactory situation obviously reduces the ability of NGDOs to take up the challenges connected with a greater role in a new world order and responsibilities to the poor.

A necessary complement to greater organisational effectiveness is the relevance of what NGDOs actually do in trying to improve the lot of the poor. Relevance can be judged in two ways, firstly, by the appropriateness of intervention choices to the context and needs of the selected community or group. This requires the right information and the ability to tailor interventions to specific situations. Second is what could be termed the quality of an intervention. By quality is meant obtaining the optimal combination of development products and processes. In other words, correctly operationalising the fact that tangible benefits must be realised in appropriate ways if they are to be sustainable. Study after study shows that "authentic" participation, rather than pseudo participation (a form of co-optation) is a vital component for realizing a high quality (Oakley, 1991).¹⁹ A pressing demand on NGDOs is to structure and manage themselves for quality development. Figure 1 summarizes these issues.

NGDO Centres for Study and Development

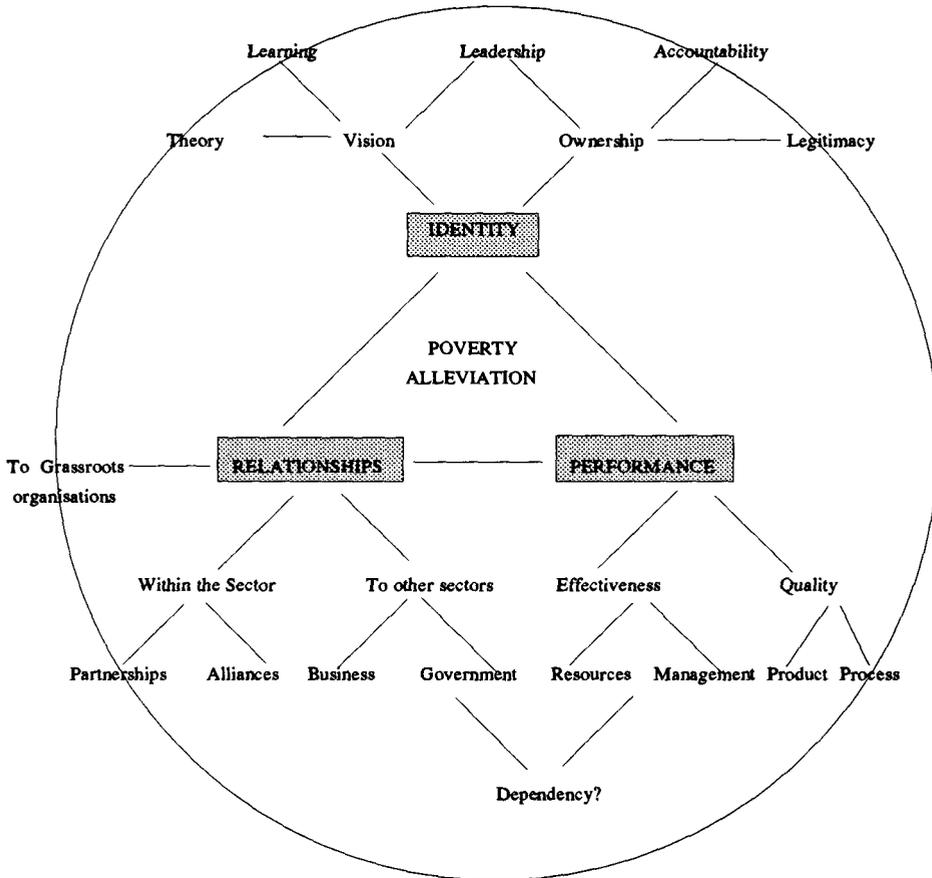
NGDOs recognise and are addressing many of the issues detailed previously in a number of ways. For example a recent conference, organised by Save the Children Fund and Manchester University in January 1992, addressed the issue of Scaling Up NGDO impact. More strategically, a number of initiatives are arising from within the NGDO community designed to tackle the problems arising from the growth of the Third Sector by establishing specialist institutions for this purpose. The rest of this article reviews four such initiatives known to the author and draws conclusions from them.²⁰

The four are: the El Taller initiative begun in 1988; an NGDO Study and Development Centre for eastern and southern Africa, also initiated in 1988; a Centre for Dialogue on Peace and Humanitarian Issues in the Horn of Africa to be set up this year; and an International NGDO Training and Research Centre based in Europe.

El Taller

Meaning "the Workshop" in Spanish, El Taller is a foundation with a small international secretariat located in the south of Spain. The foundation is a temporary vehicle for the definition and creation of an NGDO study and meeting centre with a global perspective.

Figure 1 Issues in NGDO Self Development



¹ While significant relations are indicated, most of the factors shown are inter-related. For example, NGDOs have important relationships with the poor; organisational learning derives, in part, from evaluating performance. The complexity of linkages not shown diagrammatically is discussed in the text.

Three consultations - one held in Spain, one in Thailand and the third held in Santiago de Chile - were designed to involve NGDO leaders from all continents in decision-making about the centre. This participatory process defined El Taller's ownership and management structure, criteria for membership, location, financing, educational approach and programme of activities. The majority of participants have been from countries of the South. El Taller's overall mission is to better enable, predominantly but not exclusively, Southern NGDOs to pursue empowerment policies benefiting the disadvantaged in their societies (El Taller, 1990).

One stress in El Taller is the requirement that the educational approach adopted for its work must enable NGDO staff to reflect on their actions in order to apply their learning from this experience in action again. This condition, common to the other initiatives described later, is a distinctive feature of how NGDOs see the way forward in their evolution; differentiating itself from normal academic approaches.

At the time of writing, El Taller plans to (a) develop educational programmes for NGDO management staff; (b) undertake workshops and short courses at its headquarters and different locations throughout the world on five important topics for NGDOs - environment, gender, peace, human rights, communications - using specialists from within NGDOs on different continents wherever possible; (c) promote exchange programmes between NGDOs South-South; (d) create a documentation system and promote research on the basis of NGDO needs.

The centre will be located in Tunisia, starting its operations in late 1992. To share its experiences and inform the NGDO community of its progress, El Taller is already producing a regular newsletter entitled *Banyan* and a journal entitled *Reflexion*.²¹

NGDO Study and Development Centre for eastern and southern Africa (MWENGO)

This initiative is an outcome of a meeting between leaders of African NGDOs organised by the NGDO Management Network for eastern and southern Africa (NGOMESA) in Botswana in May 1989. The participants identified the need for a facility in the region to spearhead the development of local NGDOs, not just as implementers of projects but as a distinct, recognised sector in their societies. To ensure full participation of the NGDO community in identifying needs and designing such a resource, over the course of a year a consultant led a country-by-country survey under the guidance of a Task Force appointed by the Botswana gathering. Some fourteen hundred individuals and institutions in the region were interviewed.²²

The consultant's analysis, presented at a meeting of NGDO leaders in June 1991, identifies two major areas of NGDO development needs one emphasising improvement in performance, the other stressing the necessity to strengthen NGDO identity. The priority of some NGDOs to improve their impact emerges in the view that such a centre should provide services such as technical assistance, information exchange, assist in identifying strategies for organisational sustainability, evaluation and so on. On the other hand, a number of respondents want a regional centre to function as a 'think tank' that analyses and questions emerging trends, examines relations between NGDOs and governments and NGDOs and donors and, generally, fosters the growth of NGDOs as an integral part of civil society, not simply as a link in the aid chain. The development of new NGDO leadership is also seen as a critical role in this. The June consultation decided for the latter focus. Named *Mwalekeo wa NGO* (the *NGO Vision*), the centre will be located in Harare and a detailed programme of activity is now in preparation along the lines featuring the priorities noted above.

Centre for Dialogue on Humanitarian, Peace and Development Issues (CDHPDI)

NGDOs often function within and respond to the consequences of armed conflict. And, while armed conflict is a global phenomenon, Africa and especially countries of the Horn of Africa – Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan – have not really known peace since their independence some thirty years ago. The tragic consequences of continued conflict – loss of civilian life, displacement, famine, ecological degradation, squandered resources and long term debilitation of vulnerable groups in the population – are situations normally responded to by international NGDOs throughout the world. But the role of indigenous NGDOs in (civil) war situations is more complex because they may be able to contribute to a resolution of the conflict.

The centre, initiated by a group of African activists and scholars will probably be located in Addis Ababa. It will explore and exploit alternative strategies for conflict resolution that are not available to official agencies and governments. Principles underlying the initiative are founded on the belief that (a) greater awareness of the adverse impacts of war, (b) pressure on combatants to respect a minimum humanitarian code for treatment of civilians, (c) promotion of confidence building measures between parties, and (d) involvement of a broader cross-section of society, especially, influential and respected individuals, are all needed and can be actively pursued by NGDOs.²³

The founders foresee a number of inter-related programmes which, while focusing on conflict resolution within the region, will also have relevance for other areas of the world. The preliminary programmes are: (1) research on the impact of conflict on development, including studies contributing to a "discipline of peace" and development of innovative conflict resolution methods; (2) dialogue and exchange, with activities to broaden the debate on conflict issues; (3) a training programme aimed at strengthening the skills of potential peace makers and those involved in conflict areas; (4) a public education programme including a specialist documentation unit; and (5) a grants programme to stimulate creative thinking in support of the other programmes. Overall, the purpose is to advance and strengthen the NGDO contribution to conflict resolution.

The International NGDO Training and Research Centre - Europe (INTRAC)

In common with the institutions described previously, this initiative is a response to a number of issues raised in the discussion on NGDO self-development. First, it is intended that the centre will provide a resource that predominantly, but by no means exclusively, helps professionalise the staff of Northern NGDOs and aid agencies.²⁴ At present there is no facility providing appropriate resources for the human resource development needs of Northern NGDOs' staff as programmers, intervenors, donors, lobbyists, advocacy specialists or public educators. The training of most northern NGDO personnel is often unsystematic, weak or effectively non-existent. On-the-job training is the most usual approach, but by default rather than design. Development studies courses at universities are sometimes used but do not correspond well with the reality of NGDO work or values. The centre plans to operate core programmes focusing on NGDO organisational development, performance assessment, policy development and

provision of support services. Additional flexible courses on sectoral or other topics are envisaged. INTRAC envisages an organisation structure that will involve southern NGOs in programme definition and training, so ensuring relevance to their situation.

Another objective of the centre is to undertake research on policy issues of importance to NGOs in order to develop and propose well thought through alternative development models. The demonstrated failure of current development approaches to significantly improve the situation of the poor and the prospect of irreversible environmental damage due to the way natural resources are presently used, calls out for alternatives that NGOs are experimenting with. NGO achievements and experiences need to be properly evaluated and the lessons distilled, translated and injected into the policy arena. The centre would contribute to this. Finally, the centre is intended to actively support the development of similar initiatives in the South through programme collaboration and other appropriate means.

Conclusions

It is argued that probable changes in the global order offer particular opportunities for NGOs to realise a number of their comparative advantages in the quest for a more equitable and just world. Taking up a more significant role, will, however involve not just a scaling up of NGO impacts at the micro level but also the technical and managerial ability to influence public policies (Bratton, 1990). The capability to combine micro-action and macro-influence, singly and in alliance with others, will be a sign of NGO professionalism in the years to come. This paper seeks to show how NGOs are furthering their own institutional development in order to build such competence.

Table 1 summarizes the planned activities of the four international centres in relation to the three major issues of NGO self-development discussed earlier in this paper. It shows both variety and similarity in priorities, foci and scope of activity between the centres which have significant potential for complementarity. There is relatively little overlap given the differences in primary constituencies to be served. Unifying this diversity is the fact that they are all new initiatives from within the NGO community: an expression of the growing priority for appropriate organisational self-development that cannot be satisfied by existing institutions.

Analysis of these initiatives suggests that the needs of NGO self-development could be realised more cost-effectively through the creation of one super-centre. Such a view would be typical of the economic assumptions of economies of scale associated with the existing world order. But such a move would be inappropriate for realising the "value-added" that NGOs bring to a world that is restructuring. By its very nature, the NGO sector is plural. That is one of its strengths, and its source of innovation and important contribution to development in the next century. It would not be in keeping with the character and comparative advantages of NGOs to monopolize their self-development within one over-arching institution.

Yet, while not unified by a super centre, to gain substantial impact NGOs must work towards coherence in the role they wish to play in a restructuring world. The critical role choices for NGOs seem to lie along a spectrum lying between functioning as satisfiers of the micro-shortcomings of globally sponsored corporate capitalism and acting as advocates for distributive

justice and sustainable stewardship of the world's resources. Without a shared vision and theory of their contribution to world development along such a continuum the likelihood of the Third Sector remaining a peripheral actor in world affairs is very real.

The effectiveness of these new institutions will, in large measure, depend on their use by the NGDO community. This will require to NGDOs to appreciate and prioritise their own institutional development, which is much more than just training. One step towards doing so would be for NGDOs to include allocations for self-development in their organisational budgets

Table 1 . NGDO Self-Development Issues and the International Centres					
NGDO Self-Development Issues		El Taller	MWENGO	CDHPDI	INTRAC
IDENTITY					
	NGDO sectoral analysis	**	***	*	****
	Policy/theory development	***	***	***	****
	Learning	*	*	**	**
	Advocacy/lobbying	**	*	***	****
	Leadership development	****	****	**	****
	Accountability and ownership	**	****		**
IMPROVE PERFORMANCE					
	NGDO management and organisation development	**	**		****
	Professionalize staff	****	**	**	****
	Improving interventions	****	*	*	**
	Evaluation	*	*	***	****
RELATIONSHIPS					
	Partnership building N-S	***	**		*
	Alliance building S-S	****	**	**	*
	Government NGDO	**	****	****	**
	Joint Advocacy	***	*	***	***

Notes:

1. The number of asterisks indicate what appears to be the relative significance of the issue for the centre concerned; the greater the number of asterisks the greater the importance.
2. El Taller = The NGDO Workshop - presently in Spain.
 MWENGO = NGDO Study and Development Centre for eastern and southern Africa.
 CDHPDI = Centre for Dialogue on Humanitarian, Peace and Development Issues, Horn of Africa
 INTRAC = International NGDO Training and Research Centre, Europe.

and in project proposals. If they function properly, the new centres will offer a more appropriate supply of institutional development services, including training, than is currently available from universities and a number of public sector bodies which are re-orienting themselves towards NGOs because that's where official aid is being allocated in greater amounts.

In parallel, donors need to be more open to the institutional needs and complexities of the NGDO sector. This calls for more strategic funding based on the acceptance that institutional development is a long-term process, for which training is not an adequate substitute. The quality of what NGOs deliver in the projects that are still the major mode of delivery depends on their capabilities as organisations. Too few official donors are prepared to support an NGDO's self-development as such, relying on others to do so. But these others are not around in sufficient numbers or with adequate resources. As a consequence, when possible NGDOs use bits of project funds to work on their own improvement in a piecemeal fashion, which has little continuity and is not cost-effective.

Donors need to develop a judicious mix of funding to supply and demand. Resources to establish these new centres should be balanced by funds enabling NGDOs to determine the demand by shopping around for what they want. Such a dual strategy makes available the services that are critically needed but reduces the likelihood that the centres themselves buy what they want to supply. NGDOs, as clients, should be able to determine their needs and express this by hiring the services they want.

The new centres are potentially important allies for research organisations interested in work that is relevant to the poor. Dissemination of useful findings and techniques can be undertaken as a joint venture, capitalising on the comparative advantages of each institution. In my view, we are moving into an era where strategic alliances of like-minded organisations within and outside of the NGDO community will be increasingly necessary in order to tackle global problems.

The four centres reviewed above, as well as many others both existing and to come, can be regarded as building blocks of an institutional development structure for NGDOs that is rapidly being put into place. The challenge, however, will be to exploit the complementarities of these and other initiatives. A first step in this direction could be the creation of an association of NGDO support organisations where strategies for development of the sector are shared. Loose in its initial phase, an association could evolve into a systemic linkage between centres to exploit their individual capabilities – not a super-centre but a consciously chosen pattern of mutually supportive relations that in the long term will bring one part of the Third Sector on par with governments and business in a new global order.

Notes

1. A recent global conference with the evolution of the world's structure had the theme "One World or Several: Elements of a New Era", organised by the Society of International Development in Amsterdam from 5-10 May 1991.
2. 'The South' refers to countries that are recipients of international development assistance funding; the 'North' being member countries of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
3. The Third Sector is composed of organisations whose primary purposes are driven by values rather than by profit, as with businesses (the Second sector), or regulation and control, as with governments (the First Sector).
4. For historical reasons the term non-governmental organisation (NGO) has become synonymous for a sub-category of Third Sector organisations whose value-purposes derive from a vision of future society as less iniquitous and unjust. NGO goals are typically directed at the relief and eradication of poverty and unnecessary human suffering, objectives which increasingly push them to promote structural changes benefiting the poor, underprivileged, oppressed and marginalised in any society. Where the society in question is in the South one can talk of non-governmental development organisations or NGDOs. For the purpose of this article, NGDOs will be taken to be international and African service-providing organisations. The term grass roots organisations (GROs) will be used to signify the myriad of formal and informal community level organisations found throughout the world.
5. NGDOs have already proven this potential internationally during their action against illegal chemical dumping in West Africa.
6. For example, the funding base for NGDOs has changed in the last decade with the growth of private finance is being overtaken by official aid which now constitutes 35 % of NGDO disbursements (OECD, 1987; Clarke, 1991).
7. Although often lacking in specifics, the search for a common sense of mission is alive within many NGDOs. For a reactive African statement see the NGDO declaration to the UN Special Session on Africa; Also see *Africa Recovery*, No. 4., United Nations Department of Information, New York, 1986. For one articulation of their mission by Asian NGDOs see "An Alliance of Hope: The Minimata Declaration", Philippines Rural Reconstruction Movement, August, 1989, mimeo.
8. The justification for greater aid to NGDOs arises from current macro-economic assumptions about institutional comparative advantage that inform structural adjustment policies being promoted by the World Bank and supported by bi-lateral donors.
9. For an examination of the problems arising from rapid NGDO growth based on official aid see Fowler, 1990.
10. Some observers, like Tim Brodhead of the Canadian Council of International Cooperation, stress that NGDOs must have a theory of development to be legitimate organisations in this field.)Personal communication.)

11. The sixties, seventies and part of the eighties saw a basic antagonistic position of NGOs to commercial enterprise. NGO actions against Nestle's baby milk powder is but one example. However, the NGO aversion to profit making is being tempered by the realisation that the involvement of the poor in income-generating activity is one important sustainable way for them to improve their situation. The position of NGOs with regard to profit-making is now much more nuanced, their key question being "who benefits from profit and how?".
12. The International Council for Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) has developed a set of policy guidelines for relations between Northern and Southern NGOs. To my knowledge, no similar guidelines exist as yet for South-South relations.
13. See the special 1987 volume of World Development edited by Anne Gordon Drabek for a number of papers addressing the issue of North-South relations.
14. I am grateful to Alison van Rooy of Lincoln College, Oxford for these observations.
15. The terms of tax exemption for Foundations in America which specifically preclude providing funds for political activity and the recent (May 1991) report of the British Charity Commissioners on OXFAM's public education campaign for maintaining sanctions against South Africa illustrate the limits set by the state on development NGO action (Smith, 1991).
16. Donors and governments are not monolithic and this can be used to NGO advantage. For example, when successful conditions for collaboration with one department have been negotiated they can be used as leverage towards another.
17. Part of the NGO reaction was in response to the sort of demands and conditions attached to the increasing amounts of official aid available to the sector.
18. The NGO Management Newsletter produced quarterly by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies since April 1986 provides valuable information on the trend in management ideas and experiences thought to be relevant to NGOs.
19. "Authentic" participation is the term used by Peter Oakley (1991) for non-co-optive participation in development projects, derived from recent extensive study of practical participation experiences.
20. These four are cited because they are known personally to me. However, there are undoubtedly others that could be included. For example, a number of national initiatives to create support organisations for NGOs are under way, such as the NGO Management Centre spear-headed by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and the NGO Resource and Development Centre in South Africa.
21. Banyan is name for the fig tree, the El Taller symbol a place providing shade for meeting and reflection.
22. Draft Needs Assessment Study for a Regional NGO Centre in Eastern and Southern Africa, by Demeke Getachew. Personal communication.
23. Information Note of the Inter-Africa Group and personal communication from Abdul Mohammed, group convenor.

24. This would include staff of official aid agencies who have to deal with NGDOs in the North or the South. (Personal communication from Dr. Brian Pratt.)

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