Anatomy of the Bombay NGO sector

Vandana Desai

SUMMARY: *This paper presents the findings of research on the activities, target groups, funding base and linkages of a sample of 67 grassroots NGOs working with the urban poor and on the extent to which their work is subject to internal or external evaluation. The paper demonstrates the diversity of NGO characteristics within one particular Indian city, Bombay[(1)]. The paper highlights certain concerns for the future role of the non-governmental sector, especially in the context of the changing role of the state. As NGOs move in to fill the gap left by the public sector, encouraging rapid growth of expectations, complicating objectives and necessitating trade-offs between the competing demands made on them by other actors, they may be ill-equipped to respond effectively to an expanding role in the urban centre.*

I. INTRODUCTION

THERE HAVE BEEN many case studies and policy oriented papers on the problems and challenges facing NGOs in general. This paper takes a specific city focus, using empirical data to provide an overview of issues in one particular city but with the intention of giving an overall view on how the sector functions as a whole. Data from a cross section of 67 NGOs working with the urban poor of Bombay are used to describe the activities, target groups, funding base and linkages of the NGO sector in one major conurbation in a low income country.

The latest poverty estimates in India for 1993-94 show 320 million, or 36 per cent of the population below the poverty line. There is a great diversity in living conditions within India, for example, 40-50 per cent of Bombay's urban population live in slums although the state of Maharashtra is considered to be already at the level of middle-income countries. Eradication of absolute poverty in India is the principal measure, some might say the ultimate measure, of success of economic reform. It is now widely believed that the main focus of development policy, the elimination of poverty, can only be achieved through effective Indian states that concentrate their efforts less on direct intervention and more on enabling others to be productive. A lack of both government funds and governmental organizational expertise are thought to be reasons for encouraging the expansion of the private NGO sector in development. Most donor funding for NGOs has been stimulated by a sense of frustration with public sector organizations.

1. Since the fieldwork for this paper was undertaken, the state government of Maharashtra has declared that the city should be renamed Mumbai.

2. The absence of any comprehensive directory of such NGOs posed a problem when creating a sampling frame from which a representative sample could be drawn. A list of active NGOs was formulated by drawing information from a wide variety of sources including visits to known NGOs, a review of the past two years of newspapers, research theses, contact with academics, donor agencies and word of mouth. Each NGO identified was then approached and, if willing to cooperate, visited for the purpose of collecting data on activities, target groups, staff, age, structure, sources of funding, linkages and relationships with other NGOs and government agencies with whom they work or collaborate. Information was gathered through a combination of formal questionnaire surveys and key informant and focus group discussions with NGO staff. Willingness to participate was high and discussions with those active in the sector indicated strongly that all possible types of NGOs active in the metropolitan area were covered by the 67 NGOs identified. Preliminary findings were disseminated to NGOs at a workshop which was held in Bombay in September 1994 and a directory of NGOs was prepared and circulated to participants and others. This is available from the author as Desai, V. (1995), *Directory of NGOs in Bombay*, Royal Holloway, University of London.

3. Data on staffing are treated in a separate paper. Data on activi-

II. DATA COLLECTION

THE DATA USED here were collected during six months of field-work in 1994 studying the grassroots NGO sector working in the slum communities of Bombay.[2] This paper describes the data collected on activities, target groups, funding, linkages and evaluation.[3] The term "slum" is used here, as in much of the literature, to denote an area of poor quality housing (usually, but not always, of formal design and construction), deficient maintenance and inadequate infrastructure provision; no derogatory connotation is intended in the term. There is considerable diversity within such settlements in terms of type and quality of housing, extent of provision of infrastructure and services, tenure, site-specific hazards and so on. Conditions in slums are often preferred by inhabitants to those in previous abodes, be they rural or urban, and population densities have increased, often with severe overcrowding and a marked deterioration in living conditions.[4]

The communities in many such settlements, particularly in Bombay, have had to mobilize and resist concerted attempts at removal and "slum clearance". The struggles for recognition of their claims to land and housing rights have often been long and difficult. However, through a combination of changing ideology or perceptions of the advantages of *in situ* improvements, political expediency, adverse publicity and the intervention of international development agencies with funds for upgrading, the shanty towns ultimately avoided the bulldozer and have experienced some improvement. Nonetheless, the inhabitants of many smaller or internationally less well-known slum and squatter settlements have failed to prevent wholesale demolition and removal, and this in India which is supposedly committed to more progressive policies and which has often implemented donor supported self-help schemes in Bombay and elsewhere.

III. ACTIVITIES AND TARGET GROUPS

a. Activities of NGOs

NGOS IN THE survey described themselves as participating in up to 27 specified areas of activity. Table 1 identifies which kinds of services are delivered to the poor by urban NGOs, with prime importance still being given to welfare activities, providing services and creating access. The number of NGOs engaged in a specific activity is not necessarily a reliable indicator of its importance: activities such as vocational training, legal aid, counselling and income generation, though widely practised, are probably made to appear unduly important. Training and strengthening of community organization, gender awareness and increased specialization emerged or became part of the agenda after about 1985. The bottom part of the table highlights new activities such as fostering, waste management, etc. Over the past ten years or so, with changing expectations of NGOs in the international arena, there has been a clear trend among devel-

ties, linkages, funding and staffing are used as the basis for a statistical classification exercise in Desai, V. and I. Preston (1997), "A typology of urban grassroot NGOs: the case of Bombay", CEDAR Research Paper No.21, Department of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London.

4. In reality, there is a far wider range of sub-markets open to at least some of the urban poor in various parts of the city. These encompass squatting, renting and the erection of temporary shelters in peripheral irregular areas; upgrading and site and service schemes (again, either as owners or tenants); rooming; rental for various durations of rooms, beds or simply a sleeping space in market guest houses, brothels, construction sites, pavements, garages and so forth, in addition to conventional public housing.

opment NGOs away from direct involvement in service provision towards a concern for the broader processes of development - a concern for "people" rather than "projects" and therefore for training, awareness-raising, community mobilization, formation of community organizations, capacity-building and institutional development. Table 1 strongly indicates that the NGO sector is very diverse and dispersed, with much duplication of activities.
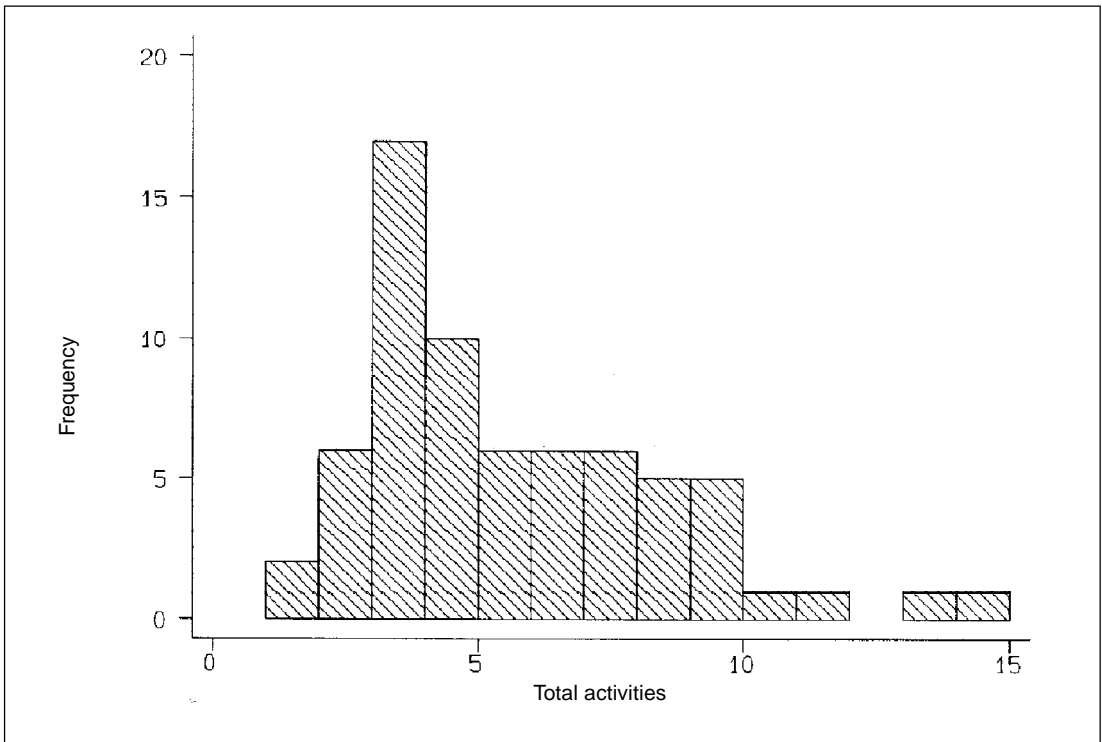
Table 1: Number of NGOs Engaged in Different Activities

Names of activities	Total number of NGOs	% of NGOs
Health	35	52
Education	34	51
Other training	32	48
Vocational training	25	37
Counselling	19	28
Child care and crèches	18	27
Riot relief	16	24
Credit	14	21
AIDS related	14	21
Income generation	13	19
Legal aid	13	19
Research and documentation	12	18
Drugs related	11	16
Food and shelter	11	16
Housing	10	15
Slum infrastructure	10	15
Sponsorship	10	15
Youth programme	9	13
Street theatre	8	12
Funding	7	10
Community organization	6	9
Employment bureau	5	7
Women's centre	4	6
Gender awareness	3	4
Adoption and fostering	3	4
Waste management	2	3
Identity cards	1	1
All activities	**67**	**100**

Few NGOs are engaged in only one of the designated activities, the majority being involved in about three and the median number being four (see Figure 1). There are some extreme cases, with four NGOs engaging in ten or more activities, and older NGOs tending to engage in more. Slum dwellers are demanding an increasing range of activities from established NGOs to address their multiple problems, and there is also greater expectation that NGOs which have settled in one particular area should address emerging problems and issues of slum dwellers. Most NGOs reported that they have to compromise their long-term objectives by fulfilling short-term expectations. For example, Apnalaya, an NGO dealing with community organization, had to suspend or dismantle its main community development activities in order to divert resources to riot relief and communal har-

mony programmes after the communal riots of 1992-93. For many NGOs, the obvious strategy for increasing their impact is to expand projects or programmes that are judged to be successful, or that are expected or demanded by beneficiaries. This will give them stability/security and legitimacy in the sector. Can NGOs increase access by the urban poor to public sector resources? Expansion raises difficulties, particularly in terms of organizational restructuring.

Figure 1: Number of NGOs by Number of Activities

Many small NGOs have rapid *ad hoc* growth and expansion which forces them into development roles (such as policy advocacy), that may *not* be a suitable expression of their own capacity or identity (see the section below on linkages). This influences their mandates, encourages them to diversify into various activities and may lead NGOs into competition with other NGOs. NGOs' ability to react quickly and adapt to local requirements could be undermined as the scale of operations is increased. More distance may be introduced between the NGO and the people with whom it works. It was found that large NGOs were involved more in service delivery programmes, trying to provide access to resources such as primary health care and education - of NGOs with below median staff size, 32 per cent are involved in education and 34 per cent with health as against 68 per cent and 66 per cent, respectively of those with above median staff size. Larger NGOs also have fewer professional,

5. See Paul, S. and A.Israel (1991), "Non-governmental organisations and the World Bank: an overview" in Paul, S. and A. Israel (editors) (1991), *Non-Governmental Organisations and the World Bank: Cooperation for Development,* World Bank, Washington DC.

and more para-professional, staff[5] - those with below median staff size have 59 per cent professional and 21 per cent para-professional staff as opposed to those with above median staff size who have 27 per cent and 53 per cent, respectively. All this has severe implications in terms of the different systems that could be adopted for evaluation and there is also the problem of cross-fertilization.

Many NGOs catering to children are involved in non-formal education and pre-primary child care. These activities aim to be both a preparation for primary education and a support service for girls who attend school and for working mothers, to relieve them of child care responsibilities. However, NGOs have been able to provide only a limited crèche service in a few slums. Increased convergence and coordination with primary school locations and timings is required to make pre-school schemes more effective. Non-formal education, designed to meet the needs of children in poor areas as well as street children who have considerable work responsibilities, is more flexible than a formal system and it is the most rapidly expanding sector of education in Bombay. One of the major concerns regarding non-formal education, however, is that it will turn out to be a second rate form of education for poor girls and boys, entrenching educational inequalities by allowing the formal system to ignore these pupils. Non-formal sector schools do not follow a standard curriculum and some NGOs are trying to recruit local women to train as teachers for these schools (training courses are run by Apnalaya and TISS). Professional support is needed to bring about professionalism and commitment among existing teaching personnel.

Key areas of NGO activity concerning women included economic support and services, health and family planning (there being a lack of provision for women's general health needs), increasing emphasis on the provision of water and sanitation (perceived as women's priorities), legal issues and training. Many NGOs have made attempts at income generation projects, especially with women. These have concentrated on typically female skills such as *papad*-making, sewing, pickle-making etc., which are now seen by many NGOs as limited in impact. **In fact, they may increase women's workload for little return.** Many NGOs reported in interviews that they could not compete with larger commercial enterprises in keeping costs down and also that they had problems with marketing. Often, such programmes have failed to assess market demand or provide adequate market access and thus lack economic viability, especially in Bombay where there is a lot of small informal sector activity. Many NGOs reported the view that provision of credit in itself is insufficient to stimulate long-term sustainable self-employment without other supports, market demand and market access. It may be necessary to consider more interventionist measures which would offer a niche in the market or minimal guarantee of market access.

HIV/AIDS has only recently become a prominent health issue in India. Unregulated blood banks and the widespread use of unsterilized needles in primary health care centres are thought

6. In 1992, the National AIDS Control Programme was established under the Ministry of Health, with a budget of Rs. 2,800 million (US$ 100 million) over the five-year period of the Eighth Plan (1992-1997). The major component of this was to be funded by a World Bank loan. The main activities of the AIDS Control Programme are to be advertising, condom promotion and the provision of hospital equipment. This represents 15 per cent of the total health budget in the Eighth Plan period; only malaria control receives more, at 19 per cent.

to be major routes of HIV transmission in India, as well as unprotected sexual intercourse with multiple partners. Some NGOs are working with sex workers (singled out as a major high risk group) while some offer health education and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. There is considerable concern in the Indian NGO sector about the extent of resources being channelled into AIDS control at the expense of other communicable diseases - now feared to be on the rise - or other broader health priorities.[6]

b. Target Groups of NGOs

All sampled NGOs work in ways intended to benefit the urban poor but some concentrate on activities targeted at more specific groups of beneficiaries. The urban poor may be differentiated into urban women, street children, youths, etc., and some NGOs aim to work with specific groups such as sex workers, domestic workers, pavement dwellers and street children whilst others do not have any particular targeting strategy. Table 2 sets out specific target groups, as indicated by the NGOs, and shows that many NGOs have multiple beneficiaries and many seem to work with vulnerable women and children. Most of the NGOs focusing on women are involved in the provision of services (as mentioned in the above section on activities) rather than with a wider emphasis on gender relations (awareness-raising and empowerment). Their activities with women in projects implicitly accepted and worked within the existing role of women and sought, within that framework, to relieve women's burdens.
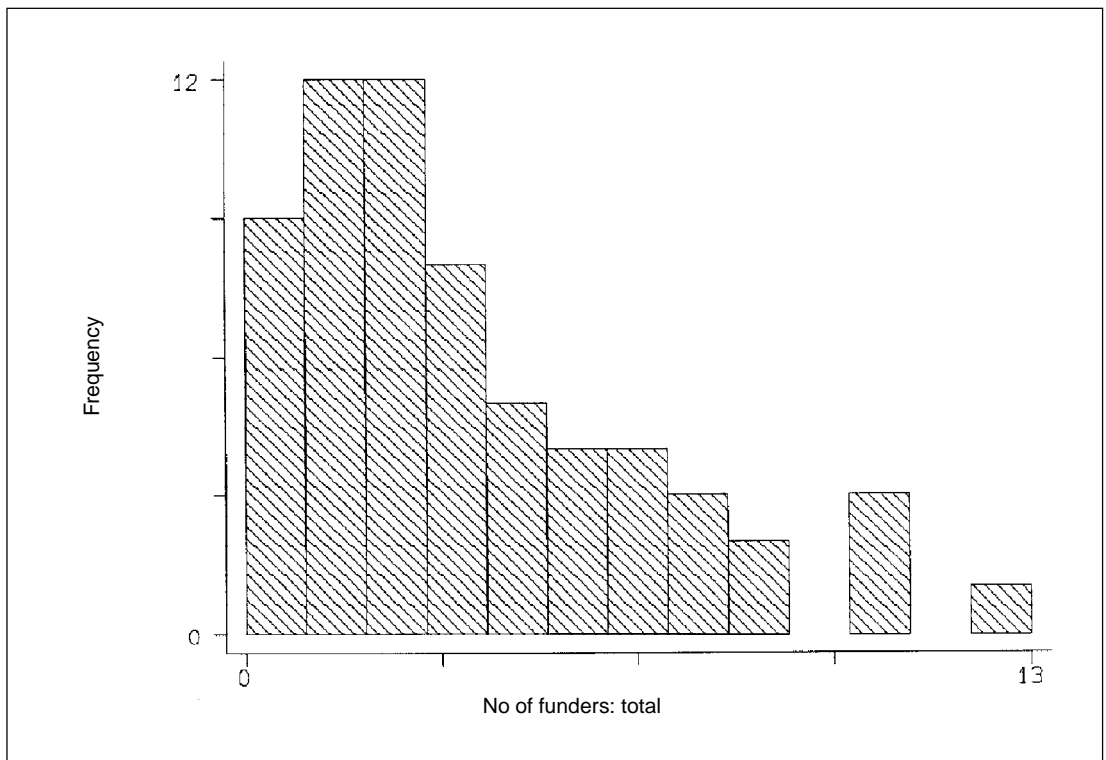
Table 2: Main and Subsidiary Target Groups

Target group	NGOs with this as *any* sort of target group		NGOs with this as *main* target group	
	No	%	No	%
Children / women	22	33	18	27
Street children	14	21	7	10
Women	10	15	5	7
Drug addicts	5	7	3	4
Sex workers	5	7	1	1
Youth	4	6	1	1
Tribal peoples	4	6		
Aged poor	2	3		
Disabled	2	3		
Alcoholics	2	3		
AIDS	1	1	1	1
Gays and lesbians	1	1	1	1
Illiterates	1	1	1	1
Single parents	1	1		
Disaster victims	1	1		
Industrial workers	1	1		
Muslims	1	1		
Catholics	1	1	1	1
Quarry workers	1	1		

IV. FUNDING AND EVALUATION OF NGOS

a. Funding

AS THERE IS great sensitivity about declaring NGO funding sources, the questions regarding financial matters were kept very broad (except for the question on the budget for the last financial year) and it was left open to responding NGOs to decide how transparent they wanted to be; hence there is a question of reliability. Some NGOs have included all previous sources of funding whilst some did not provide any data at all. Most NGOs reported multiple external sources (as shown in Figure 2) and the median number of sources per NGO is two. Both the number of activities and, particularly, total staff seem to correlate with the number of funding sources. The NGOs with a small number of sources are more recent and are more specialized in their target groups and activities. Older NGOs also tend to have larger budgets.

Figure 2: Number of NGOs by Number of Funding Sources

7. Most Northern NGOs finance projects from their headquarters or regional offices, often channelling funds through partner organizations in the South with whom special relationships are frequently developed.

Some NGOs enjoy a high level of international funding whilst others are much more dependent upon domestic resources (see Tables 3 and 4). Foreign NGOs which dominate the funding sources include, for instance, the Aga Khan Foundation, Action Aid, Oxfam and Save the Children,[7] and many different foreign NGOs, rather than one particular foreign NGO, fund many Bom-

bay NGOs. Some NGOs are not aware of foreign funding and some are reluctant to approach foreign funders as they believe a lot of funds are available in Bombay and prefer to depend on the domestic sources or perhaps develop corporate funding where an NGO either acquires a large endowment fund or builds up a large endowment through extensive fund-raising and lives on the interest of such capital.

Table 3: Sources of Funding

Foreign	Number of organizations	Percentage
NGOs	40	68
Official	15	25
Churches	6	10
Multinational company	3	5
Indian	Number of organizations	Percentage
Official	23	39
NGOs	13	22
Churches	9	15
Trust	8	14
Companies	5	8

Numberof NGOs: 59
* Figures need not add up to 100 per cent because NGOs may receive from more than one source.

Table 4: Funding Source by Age of Organization

Funding source	Founded earlier than 1980		Founded later than 1980		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Domestic only	6	25.0	8	25.0	14
Foreign only	3	12.5	6	18.8	9
Both	15	62.5	18	56.2	33
Total/percentage	24	57.1	32	42.9	56

There is also a small number of official funding sources and, of the Indian sources, these are the largest. However, many NGOs indicated that they had difficulty in accessing government funds - there appear to be long delays in receiving funds, making this source very unreliable. Besides, a lot of paperwork is involved, proving a very time-consuming activity to secure very little money. This makes some NGOs reluctant to pursue government funds. Even then, there are new sources such as the Indian multinational companies which are funding NGO activities though mostly in the health and education sector, e.g. Hindustan Lever, Tatas, or Birla.

Overall domestic funding comprises a small proportion of the total, with two-thirds having some foreign funding and most NGOs having a combination of some domestic and some foreign funding. The NGOs which have only foreign funding are those

8. The Foreign Contribution Regulation Act of 1985 stipulates a set of legal requirements which compels all Indian NGOs, charitable, political and commercial, to seek permission of the Indian government to become eligible for receiving funds from abroad. In addition, they are obliged to submit regular accounts to the government on a bi-annual basis, documenting the amounts received, the source of the funds and the way in which these are spent. Conditions or grounds on which the FCR can be rejected by the home ministry are: prejudices against a friendly nation; conviction of a criminal act; being anti-national; not being in the national interest. In 1987, some 11,000 NGOs were registered with the Home Ministry, entitling them to receive foreign funding for development activities.

9. SOSVA tries to nurture new NGOs, helping with experience and skills they lack in their early years, as well as assisting existing agencies to expand their operations. They also aim to provide training programmes in fund-raising, project proposal writing, accounting, budgetary control, taxation and charity commission matters, public relations, management of information systems; and to publish books to guide NGOs. Initially funded by Ford Foundation, SOSVA was later funded by state and central government grants and the USAID. It is the first organization of its kind in India.

10. See Desai, V. and M.Howes (1995), "Accountability and participation: a case study from Bombay" in Edwards, M. and D.Hulme (editors) (1995), *NGO Performance and Accountability,* Earthscan/ Kumarian Press, London.

which are recently established and cannot apply for government funds unless they have been functioning for three years (see Table 4). There is also a strict FCR regulation[8] and, since 1985, it is proving increasingly difficult to acquire permits to receive foreign funds. Many NGOs feel that this should be liberalized. NGOs whose budgets are greater than Rs 2.5 million, i.e. approximately UK£ 50,000 at the 1994 exchange rate, fall into a separate category and undergo stricter scrutiny every year by independent auditors.   Much of the foreign official funding goes directly to central government departments or state government departments which allocate funds to certain priority areas of development e.g. Ministry of Welfare. These then allocate funds to particular NGOs, hence there are many indirect ways of channelling foreign funds to NGOs which the latter may not be aware of. Some donors have already channelled substantial funds through government to create projects in which NGOs have mutually agreed roles, e.g. the World Bank and UNICEF.

In the past few years, many support organizations have emerged, for example the Society for Service to Voluntary Agencies (SOSVA).[9] Many NGOs admitted that SOSVA is a very supportive NGO and was of great help in the preparation of project proposals to secure funding. Similarly, there are other support organizations such as Avehi which help NGOs to produce video films of their activities in order to disseminate their work to a wider audience and formulate good public relations strategies which may even lead to fund-raising. This is of prime importance in order to increase domestic support. Bombay as a city has a very vibrant economy, especially with the onset of a liberalization policy and being home to many multinational companies. This, and the growing tendency towards receiving legacies, has led to a surge in building corporate funds among NGOs, as a long-term strategy and also as a means of subsidizing work for which they do not gain funds.

Another source of funding is the user charges which NGOs apply to their beneficiaries to sustain old activities. Unfortunately, NGOs do not typically account for the user charges collected in their budget nor provide information on what proportion of their expenditure is covered by these charges, which sometimes can be quite substantial. User charges help NGOs when they go into deficit from time to time.

It would be worth looking at NGOs which are not funded by international donors as against those that are with respect to several of the questions that have been raised - both the positive and negative aspects. What is also not clear is what the impacts are on NGO programming, performance, legitimacy and accountability.[10]

The criticism levelled by many NGOs at government and donors is that they are unwilling to support the long-term objectives, the slow careful work and the gradual (and often non-quantifiable) results which characterize successful local institutional development. Current donor claims about a commitment to institutional development are inconsistent with the short-term, output-oriented project methodologies they utilize.

b. Evaluation

Until recently, there has been little pressure from donor agencies on grassroots NGOs to produce more disciplined evaluations. Most contributors have an implicit faith in the "NGO approach" which they do not want questioned. This era may be passing, however, as NGOs are emerging as significant players on the development stage and as an increasing share of their funding derives from official sources. NGOs will be increasingly challenged to say why they are confident about the approaches they adopt, yet they tend to commission few objective evaluations. In this sample, only 18 had undergone external evaluation while 49 reported internal evaluation. These evaluations are rarely published and are usually kept confidential, even within the NGO.

Some NGOs did not report themselves as having gone through any evaluation. Those which did all have foreign funding, usually in the form of long-term grants, with the exception of CORO. This is mainly because foreign funders are asking NGOs to undergo evaluation and are constantly monitoring individual projects which they fund rather than the entire NGO itself. An important question pertaining to evaluation is whether donor demands for precise objectives, measurable outcomes and impact indicators improve NGO effectiveness or do they limit NGOs' willingness to take on participatory and high risk approaches? Small NGOs do not have the staff and funding resources for evaluation whilst some use academics from social work colleges who do evaluation and advisory work.
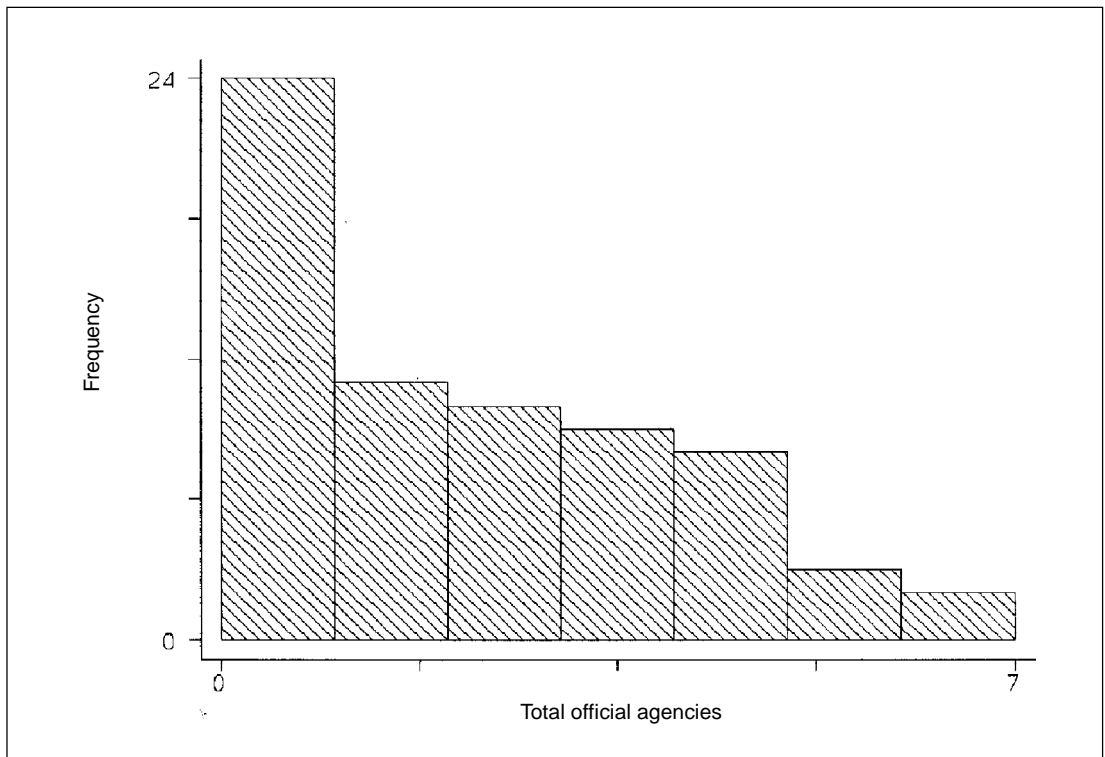
Because of the diversity of funding bodies, NGOs have to follow diverse types of evaluation and accountability procedures. Many NGOs complained about the increase in administrative tasks and the costs entailed by excessive bureaucracy in functioning and procedures. This is a particularly major issue for small NGOs (the majority of the sample) and was seen by some as a reason preventing them from expanding their scale of operation.

V. LINKAGES OF NGOS

a. Government

FIGURE 3 SHOWS the frequency of contact between NGOs and official agencies. Most NGOs (mainly those which are related to welfare activities) have linkages with municipal departments although interaction with state and central government departments seems less prevalent. The authorities are viewed as somewhat hierarchical and unresponsive to the needs of slum dwellers and they remain autocratic in their functioning.

NGOs tend to initiate links with government agencies when they come up against particular problems (such as input delivery or legal rights) or when they identify a "gap" in government services either in terms of inefficient provision of services or the exclusion of particular sections of the population (e.g. poor ur-

Figure 3: Number of NGOs by Number of Agencies with which NGO is in contact

ban women within slums). My experience is that most interaction is initiated by NGOs, who seek to draw government resources into their programmes in order to influence government projects, strategy or policy to relieve constraints faced by the urban poor. There are issues of access to land and security of tenure which have brought NGOs into conflict with governments whose interests the NGOs believe remain linked to those of local élites - SPARC,[11] for instance, has faced this issue with regard to its work with pavement dwellers, as has Niwara Hakk Sureksha Samiti[12] with regard to the issues of rehabilitation of slum dwellers evicted from south Bombay to north Bombay.

Linkages with government agencies/departments, whether achieved or still at the formative stage, are highly diverse in this context. The number of initiatives undertaken by government is much smaller, reflecting perhaps some uncertainty over how relations with NGOs might best be taken forward, where government departments in the past have been faced with demands by NGOs which challenge policy or strategy decisions, or even their legitimacy. Having said that, in the last few years, the number of initiatives undertaken by government agencies towards NGOs in urban development has been on the increase, perhaps due to pressure from external agencies such as the World Bank under the good government agenda.

The types of activities which these official bodies have conventionally supported, and the hierarchical structures which

11. SPARC (Society for Promotion of Area Resource Committees) is a well-known innovative housing NGO formed in 1984, working with various groups among the urban poor (women, slum and pavement dwellers, street children and drug addicts). SPARC has worked first to create an information base about each group and then with local community organizations in order to support the struggle for a just allocation of resources and free access to resources for the poor.

12. Niwara Hakk Sureksha Samiti has been working on housing issues of slum dwellers and has actively advocated access to housing for the urban poor in various situations.

have evolved to administer them, embody a view of development as an essentially linear and predictable enterprise. This is at variance with the far more contingent and unpredictable "open system" world perceived and inhabited by NGOs. Imposed systems of accountability deriving from "linear" world views, with targets and sanctions to be imposed in the event of non-achievement, reinforce other pressures for NGOs to transform themselves into routine service providers, reducing, in the process, their capacity to explore new ideas or tackle the more deepseated and intractable problems of institutional development.

The indication from interviews with both NGOs and bureaucrats as well as from my own experience throughout the fieldwork is that the formal mechanisms for creating mutually agreed partnerships rarely exist. It is clear that far less thought has gone into the practical aspects of creating linkages. Many of the documented collaborations have been on an *ad hoc* basis, formed from local, spontaneous action or from higher-level contacts achieved around the efforts of key personalities (such as the Coordination Committee for Vulnerable Children, a UNICEF aided effort for street children). In general, less attention is paid to the question of building trust and informal alliances, to sharing decision-making or to the political questions of process management.[13] A general criticism voiced by government department officials was that NGOs generally do not try to identify from their work what might be generalizable beyond the confines of their immediate beneficiaries. NGOs rarely address the wider structural and policy factors which ultimately influence the environment in which they operate. External funding agencies have played an important role in many of the NGO initiatives, such as the World Bank funded projects Health Management in Leprosy Control and the Slum Upgradation Programme. This has been part of a wider and explicit objective of facilitating productive NGO-government partnerships.

A further difficulty has been that of ensuring adequate coordination between various government departments and their overlapping functions, especially between state and municipal levels. A lack of continuity among senior staff in government departments - Indian Administrative Service personnel are moved every two years - not only contributes to coordination problems among departments but also costs NGOs time and effort to re-establish their credentials and familiarize new staff with key issues. It is also believed that senior staff/high officials recognize the advantages of working with NGOs and understand the issues involved in such collaboration better than lower level staff, e.g. municipal ward offices. There exists also some continuing government restrictions on access to details of future policies, programmes and projects which also hinders coordination.

Many NGOs interact with government at more than one level. NGOs that are vocal in their advocacy of urban reform (such as land tenureship and low-income housing) see little prospect of functional collaboration with government, a view which government reciprocates. Some specialization of roles may therefore be anticipated between those NGOs whose areas of concern al-

13. See Bebbington, A.J. and J. Farrington (1992), "The scope for NGO-government interactions in agricultural technology development: an international overview", *Agricultural Research and Extension Network*, Network Paper No.33, ODI, London.

low the possibility of collaborative, incorporative or informative links with government (e.g. Nehru Rojgar Yojana, health, education), and those whose more overt political activism rules it out (e.g. pavement dwellers and encroachment of land).

b. Support Organizations and Colleges

There has been an increase in the number of training programmes by specialist institutes and educational bodies which cater explicitly to those wishing to work in the NGO sector. These organizations offer the critical support necessary to build up, encourage and strengthen NGOs to increase their impact and effectiveness in the sector. Help is offered in procedural matters, legal matters, licensing, registration, formalities involving governmental machinery, obtaining land and office space, raising resources, training staff, public relations and use of media, financial management and accounting, for example the Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy (CAP) and SOSVA, as mentioned earlier. Meanwhile, there are other organizations which help with advertising and video film-making (e.g. Avehi, Astha) on issues of concern to NGOs, building up information systems and networks. All these organizations are private, self-funded commercial sector organizations which believe in cross-subsidizing the issues that concern the NGO sector. All this, in turn, has led to the creation of growing numbers of newly qualified personnel who either attempt to secure positions in existing organizations or set up their own agency for which they then try to secure funding from government sources or from abroad (leading to many conflicts and rivalries in the sector).

Table 5: NGO Links with Support Organizations and Colleges

Number of links with support organizations	Number of links with colleges				Total
	0	1	2	3	
0	31	15	2	3	51
1	4	2	3	2	11
2	2	1	0	0	3
3	0	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	1	1
5	0	0	1	0	1
Total	**37**	**18**	**6**	**6**	**67**

The number of NGOs participating in support organizations and colleges is shown in Table 5. In the past, most NGOs had linkages with social work colleges such as Nirmala Niketan and Tata Institute of Social Science (established in 1936) - they placed students with NGOs and the staff played an advisory and evaluative role - but now colleges with non-social work backgrounds have also become important . This is probably because the NGO sector is looking now for more expertise besides social work (e.g. gender issues, nutrition, recreation, appropriate technology). This is reflected, for example, in linkages with SNDT Col-

lege and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT). SNDT College has more emphasis on women and children while Shramik Vidyapeeth provides vocational training and skills development for acquiring employment; many NGOs send their beneficiaries to Shramik Vidyapeeth. The questions to address here are what role can the social work college perform in the future and can the colleges provide more expertise in the changing environment and with the high demands made by the NGOs.
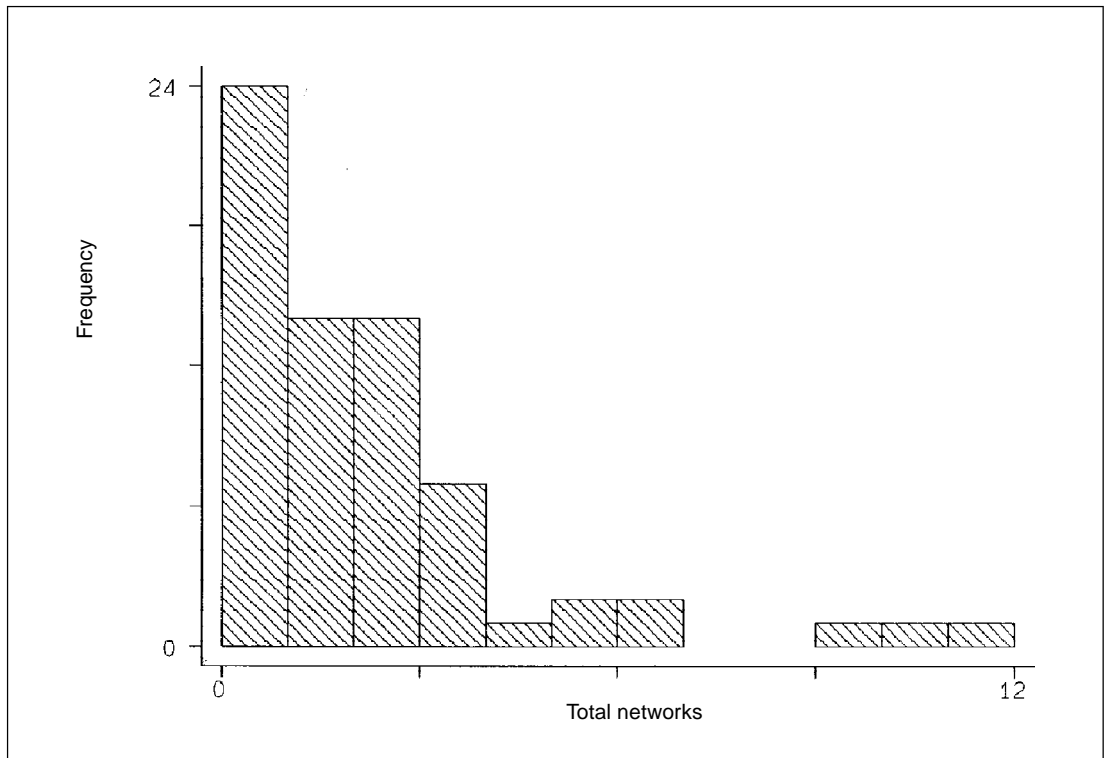
As explained earlier, funding from private/domestic sources is on the increase. This access to funding is the result mainly of support organizations helping NGOs become media and market friendly to the outside world. Despite this expressed NGO fundraising need, there is no organization or consultancy group in Bombay which caters to it, unlike in Western countries.

c. Networks

14. The term "networking" is open to a wide range of interpretations. Here, it is defined loosely as interaction among a group of institutions in order to realize anticipated benefits for themselves or for their clients. Useful definitions of research networks are pro-

NGOs establish fora where ideas are exchanged among themselves and/or between NGOs and government agencies.[14] These networks generally have a mandate to represent NGO interests to government. However, their performance in these tasks is uneven, and few would argue that they are capable of representing NGO interests adequately on specific issues at local or even national level. As the number of NGOs grows, a pressing need is emerging for organizations mandated to liaise among

Figure 4: Number of NGOs by Number of Networks in which NGO Participates

vided by Plucknett, D.L., N.J.H. Smith and S. Ozgediz (1990), *Networking in International Agricultural Research*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York and London.

NGOs, and between NGOs and government, in order to prevent duplication of effort and undesirable types and levels of competition between them.

Figure 4 shows the level of participation in such networks and its significance depends on what networks mean to different NGOs. Some think of networks as exchanging premises, or making other NGOs aware of their protests or training programmes, while for others they allow interaction on issues relating to their beneficiaries and form more of a campaign. The largest networks deal with issues surrounding children, housing and communal harmony (because of the riots that took place in Bombay in December 1992 and January 1993). Very few collaborate for lobbying purposes or for policy advocacy when dealing with official agencies, and there are more linkages based on campaigning issues. Hence, larger NGOs tend to network on a larger scale and dominate, while small and specialized NGOs are least likely to participate in networks. Very few collaborate on projects or programmes although most NGOs network in crisis situations - e.g. slum evictions, riots (during the riots, NGOs were in the forefront of providing relief and collecting information in order to acquire help from government and compensation for affected people.) Some work relatively effectively with each other while others adopt a more isolated posture, and some enjoy a much closer relationship with government than others.

However, these high levels of interaction between NGOs appear exceptional. In contrast, the high density of NGOs in Bombay, for instance, has led to overlapping activities and few successful efforts to liaise among NGOs on specific issues. Some authors[15] have raised concerns that a lack of coordination among NGOs, and inadequate liaison between "service" NGOs and grassroots organizations, is conflictual and a waste of resources.[16] Data reveal that NGO networking is more geographically localized and thematically focused than efforts by national-level NGOs. More city based attempts at liaison are evident and, perhaps for that reason, appear to have been more successful. With others, operating at both national and international levels, the distinction between objective investigation and advocacy tends to become blurred.

15. See Edwards, M. and D. Hulme (editors) (1995), *NGO Performance and Accountability*, Earthscan/Kumarian Press, London.

16. See Bebbington, A.J. and G.Thiele with P.Davies, M. Prager and H. Riveros (1993), *Non-Governmental Organizations and the State in Latin America*, Routledge, London and New York.

NGOs' approach to dissemination tends to be strongly issue-oriented. In practice, this means that their work tends to be of a strongly applied type, producing results relevant to local issues, perhaps at the expense of identifying, for instance, how widely applicable the results might be. The criticism raised by NGOs is that they rarely have available the amounts and continuity of funding necessary for long-term investigation (and may have to change their focus as their donors change).

NGOs can seek to build the capacities of slum institutions such as the National Slum Dwellers Federation to deal with official bodies or they can choose to perform this function by themselves. They can approach government on an individual basis to have certain decisions implemented or they can work in a more consolidated fashion with others to achieve more fundamental changes in the way in which the system as a whole operates. But it appears that NGOs often have to engage, from a

17. See Yap, K.S. (1982), *Leases, Land and Local Leaders, and Analysis of a Squatter Settlement Upgrading Programme in Karachi*, Free University, Amsterdam; also Yap, K.S. (1983), "Access to resources as a form of participation" in UNCHS (1983), *Community Participation for Improving Human Settlements*, pages 54-59, Nairobi.

much earlier stage in their development, in such "relational" work (for which they may not have adequate experience), and where even comparatively routine service delivery frequently has to be combined with aspects of management of the wider environment.[17] As the number of NGOs operational at field level increases, the need for institutionalized means of communication (and, where appropriate, coordination) among NGOs, and between NGOs and government, becomes all the more urgent.

Collaboration increases the likelihood of sustainable reforms although there is a danger that projects successful elsewhere are replicated in inappropriate contexts. Competition between NGOs to maintain a high profile in the sector can lead NGOs to work in isolation rather than in collaboration with each other.

Collaboration with other NGOs may generate information flows which may enhance monitoring of the environment and impact on government authorities by maintaining pressure and negotiations. The important questions in this context are, under what circumstances, in what ways and with what degree of success have individual NGOs collaborated among themselves in the provision of services?

VI. CONCLUSION

FROM THE EVIDENT diversity in NGO characteristics described above, a number of questions arise. How effectively have NGOs worked with external actors, and does the diversity of their activities and policy advocacy pose problems of coordination? How are slum dwellers currently organized and what role have NGOs played in community mobilization? Which groups have enjoyed access to the different types of services which NGOs have provided and to what extent do these correspond to the perceived needs of slum dwellers? How, and according to what criteria, has the pattern of activities evolved over time? How can the effectiveness of urban NGOs be monitored? Last, but most important, is the glowing image realistic? Can NGOs deliver all that is expected from them?

An obvious question raised by "successful" NGO based activities is whether they can be replicated on a larger scale by government or other NGOs. Questions about the role of government are important in this context, where the density of NGOs is high, especially in the context of public sector reforms that have swept through India since the adoption of the structural adjustment programme in 1991. Reducing or diluting the state's role cannot be the end of the story. Low and middle-income countries have often embarked on state withdrawal without much regard to local circumstances and institutional conditions. The diversity of NGOs and institutional conditions created by governments in the South makes the development of the market and working with the private sector (such as NGOs) in the provision of goods and services arguably more complex and less amenable to standard solutions with inadequate consideration of the sustainability of reforms. In Bombay, for example, even if the combined efforts of all the NGOs working in the city are

taken together, it is unlikely that more than 20 per cent of the urban poor will be reached because not all slums have NGOs working in them. This would assume that these efforts are in some way compatible or coordinated, which of course most are not. While this could be seen as an indication of NGO potential, some kind of relationship between government and NGOs is needed if poverty issues are to be addressed on a comprehensive, country-wide or city-wide basis.

There is a major question about the capacity of governments to administer the new roles assigned to them under structural adjustment. Public administration has itself become more difficult, especially when managing different service operators (e.g. NGOs and other private agencies) and in developing an overall strategy. These different forms of administration are all necessary but they impose conflicting pressure on politicians and officials promoting interactive policy-making.

Overall, it is clear that no single donor strategy will be adequate for the multiplicity of NGO types and for actual or potential NGO-government interactions. Donor support for service contracts is likely to increase but care needs to be taken to avoid drawing the more catalytic NGOs excessively into such contracts, thus undermining their innovative capacity. Other donors may wish to encourage government organizations to increase their awareness of NGOs' needs and their responsiveness to NGO initiatives by supporting joint NGO-government projects and programmes (such as those involving the World Bank and UNICEF in India).

One of the problems here is that NGOs find themselves in the middle of a dynamic debate in which the relationships between theory and practice are often weak and the relationships between actions and outcome are uncertain. The fear, at least among NGOs, is that it is the official donors who make policy and the NGOs who implement it whilst the governments of the South are mere onlookers. Does this mean that the new policy agenda promotes NGOs for their performance or does it promote NGOs because this strengthens the case against the state?

At a deeper level, there are worries about the long-term impact of NGO service provision on the sustainability of national health and education systems (rather than programmes) and access to quality services for all. Robinson[18] has pointed out that large, influential and well-funded NGOs may be able to "...concentrate resources in regions and sectors that might not be most important for national development", with a "patchwork quilt" of services of varying quality emerging without any overview of overall needs. There are echoes here of debates about the public/private mix in social services in countries such as the UK and USA. The evidence from these debates suggests that such fears may be well founded, with unequal access being a serious concern.[19]

Participatory development and policy advocacy place very different institutional demands on NGOs. There is a conflict between engagement with external agencies and encouragement of participation. NGOs engaged in policy advocacy may find the process of dealing with other actors very demanding, distract-

18. Robinson, M., (1991), "Evaluating the impact of NGOs in rural poverty alleviation: India country study", Working Paper No.49, Overseas Development Institute, London; also Robinson, M. (1993), *Governance, Democracy and Conditionality: NGOs and the new policy agenda,* Overseas Development Institute, London.

19. Desai, V. and R. Imrie (1998), "The new managerialism in local governance: North/South dimensions", *Third World Quarterly* (in press).

ing their attention from the community and making them less sensitive to local needs. The result may be that energy drains away at the grassroots level rather than being generated and focused in the fashion that was intended. Indeed, NGOs may come under strong pressure to "exploit" their beneficiaries by using their position as (self-selected) spokespersons for the latter as a resource in the struggle with other actors. NGOs must constantly ask themselves where their real strengths and weaknesses lie, in order to find ways of improving their performance and to remain confident about the approach they are pursuing. This is particularly important in an age where official aid agencies are offering large sums of money for collaborating with NGOs on projects defined by the former. This is also particularly important with the World Bank now emphasizing "market-friendly" intervention and "good governance", the importance of socially inclusive modes of governance beyond the market involving democratization, decentralization of decision-making, the preservation of collective solidarities and an emphasis on inter-institutional dialogue. The new mode, or what some are calling the "third way", is premised upon consensus-seeking, collaboration and communication between diverse and disparate actors at interconnecting spatial levels.

It is now accepted that NGOs have two main functions to perform - service delivery and policy advocacy. However, the emphasis on work in these areas varies. Where a larger share of funds comes from the state (as a donor for particular projects), advocacy work receives a low priority. (This is also seen in Northern European state funded NGOs).

NGOs in Bombay (and Southern NGOs in general) tend to spend far more time, and devote far more resources, to promoting individual and discrete interventions than to analyzing the broader policy issues which have a bearing on their mostly micro-level, poverty-alleviating interventions, and to seeking to influence government policies which have a direct bearing on the lives and incomes of poor people. There is, thus, often substantial scope for NGOs in the South to lobby governments to influence policies and the legal framework in order to make them operate more in favour of the poor and marginalized rather than the more affluent beneficiaries of the prevailing social, political and economic system.

To enhance their ability to undertake these types of activities, Southern NGOs need funds both to analyze where the gaps are and where the potential exists to pursue more widespread lobbying exercises for the poor, and to provide a local capability to undertake such activities. There is clearly scope for Northern NGOs to fund such initiatives and to share their expertise in campaigning with their Southern partners. Northern NGOs often have a greater ability to raise certain issues, especially those related to human and land rights and democracy, than do Southern NGOs, whose staff tend to be more vulnerable to intimidation.

But even beyond these more sensitive issues, which ripple over into politics and challenge the entrenched positions of various national and regional interest groups, relationships between

NGOs and governments in the South are likely to face increased pressure for change. As this happens, it is understandable that governments will want not only to coordinate their development efforts but also to increase their ability to monitor, control and restrict their operations.

If thus restricted, the NGO movement is likely to remain relatively stagnant and marginal or might even wither. This would clearly have serious effects not only on actual and potential NGO interventions but also upon far wider attempts to foster self-reliance and nurture community based activities. Most NGOs would argue that if they are stifled, the potential for development for the poor dies as well.

Bringing in resources from outside that otherwise would not have been available can often be a major cause of jealousies across and between communities. To the extent that these jealousies exist, it will be increasingly difficult for NGOs to continue to create "islands of development", and increasingly necessary to harmonize their development efforts with those of government and other agencies working in the same locality.