



*Africa Development*, Vol. XXXI, No. 4, 2006, pp. 73–103

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(ISSN 0850-3907)

## **Interfacing the State and the Voluntary Sector for African Development: Lessons from Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the possibility of forging a complementary role between the state and the voluntary sector as an alternative framework for enhancing African development, given that none of these actors have proved effective on their own. Using a study of community-based organisations (CBOs) – as a component part of the voluntary sector – in Western Kenya, it is argued that though these organisations have been instrumental in providing services that the state has been unable to provide, their effectiveness has been impeded by some deficiencies. It is pointed out that such deficiencies in CBOs should form the basis for bringing back the state in the development process and have it forge synergies with these organisations rather than co-opting them into its machinery, as has been the case in the past.

### **Résumé**

L'objectif de cet article est d'étudier la possibilité de construire un rôle complémentaire entre l'état et le secteur du bénévolat, en guise de cadre alternatif favorable au développement africain, étant donné qu'aucun de ces acteurs n'est parvenu à produire une action efficace, chacun de son côté. Sur la base d'une étude des organisations communautaires (CBO) – en tant que composantes du secteur du bénévolat – à l'Ouest du Kenya, l'auteur affirme que même si ces organisations jouent un rôle clé dans la fourniture de services que l'état est incapable de délivrer, leur efficacité a cependant été ralentie par certaines lacunes. Les lacunes des CBO sont la raison pour laquelle l'état devrait être ramené dans le processus de développement et amené à construire des synergies avec ces organisations, plutôt que de les coopter dans sa machinerie, comme ce fut le cas dans le passé.

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## Introduction

The ongoing search for solutions to the development crisis in Africa has resulted in an ever-growing body of literature, suggesting a variety of prescriptions from different ideological and theoretical perspectives. For instance, whereas prescriptions in the 1950s and 1960s were couched in strands of modernisation theory that blamed the development problem on 'traditionalism' (Kennett 2001: 95) and suggested that the state take a central role to industrialise, educate people and provide social amenities associated with 'modern life' (Hyden 1994: 311; Leys 1996), dependency theory of the 1970s blamed the problem on capitalist accumulation and exploitation that resulted from the rise of 'neo-colonialism' (Frank 1969; Rodney 1972). Although these two theoretical standpoints espoused quite different orientations, the commonality is that both of them argued for 'state-led' development as the way out of the problem (Powell and Geoghegan 2004: 33).

However, the 1980s saw a dramatic shift in development ideology from this 'state-centred' framework to 'market-led' development following the rise of neo-liberalism. The latter school of thought conceptualised development in terms of individual freedom to realise his/her full potential (Sen 1999; Heywood 1998: 57) and argued for safeguarding the individual from social, economic and political constraints that crippled his/her freedom to obtain access to opportunities for self-actualisation. Neo-liberals held that equal opportunities for all would be the basic starting point in safeguarding individual freedom that was now associated with development and went on to argue that such opportunities could best be found in a market economy that was regarded to be more efficient than the state in allocating and distributing resources (Coburn 2003: 28). In a nutshell, neo-liberals argued for self-reliant individuals who take responsibility for their own development needs in a market-oriented society where the state only plays a minimalist regulatory role of providing an 'enabling environment' (Powell and Geoghegan 2004: 33; Heywood 1998: 57).

In the light of this ideology, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) attributed Africa's development crisis to an 'over-grown' state, which had not only stifled individual freedom, but was also corrupt, parasitic and inefficient (Leys 1996: 18). The prescription for this diagnosis was to 'roll back' the state from the development space in favour of private actors to spearhead economic growth at the national level, and voluntary initiatives to provide social services at the local level (Mkandawire and Soludo 1999: 41; Hyden 1994: 312). In other words, the neo-liberal call for the retreat of the state in the development process was viewed not only as a strategy for setting up a market economy, but also as a means of empower-

ing people to take charge of their own development through voluntary initiatives at the local level (Beckman 1992: 85-86).

This thinking witnessed a growing reallocation of development responsibilities to voluntary organisations, with donors bypassing the state to link up with the 'grassroots' through these organisations. This preference for voluntary organisations rather than the state tended to prompt a competition between these two institutions for donor funds and recognition in the delivery of social services. By the early 1990s, the state had steadily been retrenched from the development space. With the state in tow, the voluntary sector was regarded as the prime mover of African development at the local level.

Nevertheless, the development crisis in Africa has persisted or worsened in some countries. This raises questions about the viability of this neo-liberal institutional framework for development on the continent. Can voluntary organisations effectively shoulder development work in Africa? Is the state really redundant in African development? What role should voluntary organisations and the state play to stimulate development on the continent?

The purpose of this paper is to examine the possibility of forging a complementary role between the state and the voluntary sector as an alternative framework for enhancing African development, given that none of these actors have proved effective on their own. Using a study of community-based organisations (CBOs) – as a component part of the voluntary sector – in Western Kenya, it is argued that though these organisations have been instrumental in providing services that the state has been unable to provide, their effectiveness has been impeded by some deficiencies. It is pointed out that such deficiencies in CBOs should form the basis for bringing back the state in the development process and have it forge synergies with these organisations rather than co-opting them into its machinery, as has been the case in the past.

Data on CBOs were collected in a survey of these organisations in the region between 2001 and 2002. Four administrative districts were purposively sampled from the neighbouring Nyanza and Western provinces on the basis of ethnic identities and political affiliation in the region. Thereafter, a systematic sampling technique was used to select eight divisions, sixteen locations and thirty two sub-locations to constitute the area of study. Eighty CBOs were then randomly sampled from five different lists of respective types of these organisations, which had been created in a reconnaissance survey of the area of study. A total of 350 members of these organisations were interviewed using structured questionnaires. In addition, informal discussions were held with government officials and opinion leaders in the area of study. These primary data were supplemented with secondary data from published and unpublished sources.

To pave the way for the analysis of the findings, it would be helpful to clarify the key concepts that inform the discussion.

### **Conceptualising development and the voluntary sector**

The concept 'development' has attracted a variety of definitions in the literature, but they tend to resonate with positive socioeconomic change among people, albeit using different indicators. For instance, whereas economists have used economic growth indicators like per capita income, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) to quantify this change, other social scientists have resorted to non-economic indicators like access to social services and resources for the same purpose (Ghai 1988; Ake 1996; UNDP 2002). This discussion follows the idea of the latter social scientists to define development as the process of improving people's livelihoods and enhancing their capacity for self-reliance in order to reduce absolute poverty (Kingsbury et al., 2004; Purvis and Grainger 2004; Rapley 2002).

By livelihood, we refer to people's access to assets that enable them to participate in activities which determine the living gained by the individual or household (Ellis 2000: 10). The range of assets that people require in this regard may be classified into natural, physical, human, social and financial capital. Briefly, natural capital refers to natural resources such as land, water, minerals, animals and trees that yield products used by human beings for their survival. Physical capital includes the assets that result from economic production processes, such as tools, machines, buildings and land improvements. Human capital refers to the educational and health status of individuals, while social capital refers to the interactive networks and associations in which people participate to derive support in their efforts to earn a living. Finally, financial capital includes the stock of cash and credit that can be accessed in order to purchase either production or consumption goods (Ellis 2000: 8). People's access to these assets tends to be mediated by social relations and institutions, some of which take an organisational form like the state, private enterprises or voluntary organisations.

The voluntary sector is defined as a network of organisations that are autonomous and independent from the state and the market - creating the third space after the former and the latter in the formation of society. The organisations in this sector are independent from the state in the sense that they are neither mandated nor run by state institutions, but spring from the everyday lives and activities of communities of interest (Young 2000: 158). These voluntary organisations are also autonomous from the market because they operate on a not-for-profit basis with a mandate of providing development services or advocating around development issues (Michael 2004: 3). Most of them participate in economic activities only as consumers

and fund-raisers. Some of their activities that involve providing goods and services for fees are not organised towards the objectives of making profit and enlarging market shares (Young 2000: 158), but raising the funds required for service provision.

This definition encompasses a variety of organisational forms, but the most salient ones are non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organizations. As already pointed out, this discussion focuses on the latter. By community-based organisations, we refer to voluntary and self-help membership organisations that are endogenous to a community, operating at the level of the group, community or locality with established rules, regulations and procedures for the purpose of benefiting the members themselves or sometimes the wider community (Chitere 1994: 99; Koehn and Ojo 1997: 111-12; UNRISD 2000). In Kenya, the types of CBOs range from community-wide self-help associations with a large membership to small groups of a few individuals within a village. They can be further classified into five types: women's groups; savings and credit associations; welfare associations; youth groups; and communal self-help groups (Wanyama 2001: 57; 2003a: 24; 2003b: 46).

Whereas women's groups are self-help associations formed exclusively by women within a locality to address their interests, welfare associations bring together people of similar kinship ties (lineage, clan or wider ethnic bonds) in order to satisfy socio-cultural interests and the well-being of the members – which sometimes extends to the entire community. These differ from communal self-help groups in the sense that the latter are associations of local people formed through the initiative of leaders or ordinary members of the community in response to the felt need to accomplish a common goal for the good of the locality. The need, and hence the common goal, may be a school, bridge, church, mosque, health centre, and so on. Youth groups, as the name implies, are self-help associations formed exclusively by the young generation within a community to satisfy their interests, especially the need to start income-generating activities in the wake of increasing levels of unemployment among school or college leavers in the country. Then finally are the savings and credit associations. These are informal financial institutions for mobilising savings and lending to members. The associations take two forms of either rotating savings and credit schemes (ROSCA), where members contribute a fixed amount of money and give to one member in periodic turns; or accumulating savings and credit schemes (ASCRA) that mobilise savings into a fixed fund for lending to members or non-members as well as satisfying other financial needs of the members. These CBOs are the smallest organisations that one can find at the grassroots level, which

neo-liberals found most appealing to shoulder the burden of service provision for a variety of reasons that we now turn to.

### **The virtues of voluntary organisations in development**

The rise of neo-liberalism in the 1980s finally confirmed the supremacy of the market over the state and brought to an end the longstanding state versus market debate that had characterised much of the development discourse since the 1960s (Fukuyama 1992; Van de Walle 2003; Powell and Geoghegan 2004). The triumph of the market was consummated with liberal democracy in the political realm, emphasising citizen freedom, respect for human rights and accountability as fundamental ingredients of 'good governance'. With donors linking good governance to development, the voluntary sector entered the conceptual scene as the natural counterpart of privatised markets and liberal democracies (Howell and Pearce 2001: 4). Besides being viewed as vehicles for democratisation, voluntary organisations also came to be considered as the alternative institutions to the state in spearheading development service provision at the local level (Van de Walle 2003: 5). Thus, these organisations were widely presented as the means through which development could be promoted, especially in Africa, for a number of reasons.

It was argued that unlike the state that tended to oversimplify or generalise local complexities in society for the mere sake of governing (Scott 1995: 29), thereby losing a myriad of informal practices, improvisations and forms of local knowledge that enable people to cope with adversities, voluntary organisations operated at the community level and dealt with specific characteristics of local societies. It was correctly observed that peculiar informal practices, innovations and improvisations at the local level in response to livelihood problems were, indeed, the basis of the formation of voluntary organisations. Consequently, these organisations were more in touch with the needs of ordinary people, had knowledge of local conditions and were more responsive to local needs than the state (Uphoff 1993: 619).

In the ensuing acknowledgement of the significance of voluntary organisations in the provision of development services, it was argued that these organisations were more efficient and cost effective than the state because they were smaller, flexible, participatory and less bureaucratic in their operation (Tripp 2003: 133). As participatory organisations, it was argued, voluntary organisations would 'empower' local people to express themselves with regard to their needs; explore possible alternatives for satisfying these needs; choose the most appropriate course of action; mobilise local resources to implement the chosen course of action; and evaluate the contribution of that action to their livelihoods (Blunt and Warren 1996; Koehn and Ojo 1997). It was against this background that these organisations were presented as

effective instruments for reaching the poorest and neediest of society more easily than would be the case with the bureaucratic state (Robinson and White 2001). This thinking actually saw donors prefer channelling their development assistance to the poor through these organisations rather than the state; thereby setting up a competition between these two institutional forms for donor funds in the development process.

Supporters of voluntary organisations in Africa went on to link the resurgence of these organisations to the revival of the cherished traditional society in the wake of the failures of state-directed development initiatives. They argued that the organisations were a manifestation of a return to collective action solutions that had existed in African traditional society for centuries before the 'modern' state displaced, constrained, and distorted them (Tripp 2003: 133). It was anticipated that such mutual aid initiatives would be better than the state in providing for local people's development needs.

More than a decade after this optimism and enthusiasm for voluntary organisations, the actual results in development were, unfortunately, not as clear. The development crisis seemed to persist or even worsen in some situations. This prompted analysts to raise questions about the viability of these organisations. Schmale (1993: 2, 12), for example, correctly observed that their potential had often been overestimated using the few success stories – such as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh – that had been repeated again and again without evidence of their viability in different contexts. In other words, to what extent could the success of voluntary organisations in one region be replicated in a different region?

Furthermore, the diversity of voluntary organisations had not been taken into account while enumerating their virtues. Some were indigenous while others had been created from outside the communities or even countries; some had access to outside financial support while others did not (Holmen and Jirstrom 1994: 8). Besides such differences, these organisations also found themselves in varying social, economic and political contexts, with far-reaching implications for their existence and functioning. In short, careful attention had to be paid to the broad question of what type of voluntary organisation could effectively make a contribution to development and in which social, economic and political environment. The survey of CBOs in Western Kenya that forms the basis of this discussion attempted to respond to these questions with a view to generating empirical evidence concerning their contribution to development in the region. The next section of our discussion presents the findings of the survey.

## **Community-Based Organisations and development in Western Kenya**

### **The formation, number and size of CBOs**

The survey data show that community-based organisations in Western Kenya have their origins in socioeconomic scarcity, insecurity and risk that adversely affect local people's livelihoods. However, their formation finds expression in three different initiatives. First are local people's own initiatives, but occasionally as a result of the demonstration effect from outside the membership or community. Second, some external actors respond to situations of scarcity, insecurity and risk in local communities by initiating the formation of CBOs. For instance, NGOs have initiated the formation of some CBOs to be used as delivery mechanisms for their services to the local communities. Third, political actors, including the local elite, capitalise on development problems in local communities to initiate the formation of CBOs, not only to be used to channel development assistance to the communities, but also for use as mechanisms for exercising political control.

In the majority of cases, we found that either people themselves formed the organisations in response to socioeconomic scarcity, insecurity and risks that threatened rural livelihoods or local political actors and the elite worked with local people to form the organisations. It can, therefore, be said that most of the members of CBOs in Western Kenya took the initiative, or participated, in the formation of their organisations.

The registers of CBOs in the Ministry of Gender, Sports and Culture's Department of Social Services in the four districts surveyed indicated that there were over 7,500 CBOs. It should, however, be pointed out that these registers were hardly comprehensive since not all organisations had been registered by the Department. For example, in our survey, 19 per cent of the organisations that we sampled were not registered with the Department. The existence of some of the organisations was only known at the local grassroots level, yet a CBO was reported in each of the 124 villages that we surveyed. The implication is that this figure could as well be an underestimation. Given that the two provinces surveyed have a total of twenty districts, the region is likely to have over 40,000 CBOs. Going by this estimate, it follows that there could be a total of about 300,000 CBOs in Kenya's eight provinces.

The typical CBO in Western Kenya is small in size. Our survey data show that 65 per cent of these organisations have between eight and thirty members while another 20 per cent have between thirty-one and fifty members. The membership of these relatively small organisations cuts across gender,



age, marital status, level of formal education, occupation and levels of income in society. Thus, CBOs bring together people from all walks of life in the rural areas of the region in particular, and Kenya in general. The starting point in the appreciation of the contribution of these relatively small organisations to development in the region is to look at their activities.

### **Activities of CBOs in Western Kenya**

The district registers of CBOs and annual reports of the Department of Social Services in the region show that CBOs are engaged in a wide variety of social and economic activities. They include subsistence crop farming; livestock farming; poultry; small-scale non-farm enterprises; marketing agricultural produce; savings and credit; pottery and handicrafts; primary health care and community pharmacies; bee-keeping; development and management of water sources; manufacture of roofing tiles; construction and maintenance of cattle dips; knitting and tailoring; HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns; medical insurance schemes; bicycle taxi (known locally as *boda-boda*, which literally means 'border to border' transport by bicycle, and was originally coined in Busia town where bicycle operators, for the first time, started ferrying people at this border town to and from the Kenya – Uganda border for a fee); building and equipping schools; running nursery schools and children's homes; among others (Department of Social Services 1999a; 1999b). This is corroborated by our survey data that reveal most of these activities.

It is evident that the activities of CBOs spread across the main economic sectors in the region, namely agriculture and non-farm small-scale enterprises. Even more significantly, some of the activities are intended to address deficiencies in the socioeconomic infrastructure, particularly finance, health, water, education, public transport, housing and agricultural marketing. This can be interpreted to mean that CBOs have largely chosen their activities in response to their members' livelihood challenges and the region's development needs that the state has been unable to meet over the years. The implication is that these organisations are indeed responsive to local people's needs and, therefore, quite relevant and useful in the development process. But what is their actual contribution to the livelihoods of individuals at the household level?

### **Intermediaries in rural livelihoods**

To ascertain the extent to which the activities of CBOs have improved rural livelihoods, respondents were asked to identify the most significant asset that they had obtained through their organisations. Their responses are presented in Table 1, which also provides a pointer to the manner in which the

respective asset was utilised with a view to indicating the form of contribution to members' livelihoods.

**Table 1:** Assets obtained from CBOs by members

Assets to Members	Number	Percentage
Dividends and ROSCA fund for domestic use	80	22.9
Heifer to start dairy farming	38	10.9
Loan to pay school fees	33	9.4
Better farming skills for improved food production	25	7.1
Loan for enterprise working capital	19	5.4
Financial contribution to meet funeral expenses	19	5.4
Access to clean drinking water for better health	18	5.1
Social interaction/sharing information	15	4.2
Public health/domestic hygiene skills for better health	13	3.7
Learned and started pig farming	9	2.6
Improved school classrooms and toilets	8	2.3
Settlement of out-patient medical bills	7	2.0
Cattle dip eradicated ticks	6	1.7
Access to affordable medicine within the community	3	0.9
Assistance to build a house	3	0.9
Learned and started poultry farming	3	0.9
Bought a bicycle to start boda-boda business	1	0.3
None	50	14.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Survey data

Data in Table 1 show that CBOs are most conspicuous in facilitating members' access to financial capital. About half of the respondents (45.1 per cent) obtained access to financial resources in the form of dividends from the activities of these organisations; loans advanced to members; lump sum funds from rotating saving and credit schemes (ROSCA); monetary contributions towards meeting funeral expenses; and settlement of medical expenses. Nevertheless, most of the financial resources so accessed seem to have been utilised for direct consumption rather than engaging in productive activities that could enhance the sustainability of the livelihoods. Thus, of the 45.1 per cent of the respondents who had access to this asset, only 16.8 per cent invested the resources in small-scale enterprises, education of their children and medical services.

This low rate of investing resources in productive activities is reflected in the extent to which members of these organisations access physical assets. Only 16.1 per cent of the respondents reported access to these resources in the form of exotic heifers for dairy farming; construction of classrooms and toilets in primary schools; cattle dips for the eradication of ticks in livestock; assistance to build a house; and purchase of bicycles to participate in bodaboda business. It is, however, significant that these physical assets were essentially utilised to facilitate participation in activities for earning a living.

Human capital is equally important in rural livelihoods considering that individual development is the most important resource in a livelihood. Table 1 shows that 15.2 per cent of the respondents were able to improve their health and skills to command higher incomes. This is reflected in the form of better farming skills for improved food production; public health awareness and better skills to enhance hygienic practices in the household; skills in pig and poultry farming; and access to medicine within the community at affordable prices.

Natural capital and social capital were the least accessed assets by our respondents. Only 5.1 per cent of the respondents obtained access to natural capital through their organisations in the form of clean drinking water. Similarly, only 4.2 per cent of the respondents recognised social capital as a 'benefit'. These respondents valued social interaction facilitated by CBOs for the sharing and exchange of information regarding their livelihoods; learning how to tolerate each other in the community; and most importantly, developing trust in each other. Interestingly, most of these respondents viewed social interaction not as a means of networking to obtain support in their endeavour to improve livelihoods, but as a way of avoiding idleness by 'doing something'.

On the whole, it is evident that a total of 85.7 per cent of the respondents at least obtained access to an asset for improving their livelihoods. But how significant are these assets in the members' livelihoods? Put differently, how do members value the contribution of such assets to solving their household socioeconomic problems? To ascertain how members valued the contribution of CBOs to their livelihoods, we sought to understand if resources obtained from these organisations had helped to solve at least one of the most pressing socioeconomic problems in their households. Consequently, we asked the respondents to identify the main socioeconomic problem in their households, followed by how their organisations had helped to address them.

A wide variety of problems were mentioned, including the high cost of living in the midst of low incomes (48 per cent); inability to pay school fees (17.1 per cent); poor housing (8 per cent); unemployment (5.7 per cent); inability to meet medical expenses (5.7 per cent); food shortages and malnutrition (5.1 per cent); lack of good utensils and furniture (3.4 per cent); lack

of clean water nearby (1.4 per cent); among others. A summary of the solutions to these problems that were derived from CBOs is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** CBO Solutions to Household Socioeconomic Problems

Solution	Number	Percentage
Provision of credit	121	34.6
Organisation's activities a source of income	62	17.7
Medicine/cereals at low prices	15	4.3
Harambee fund raiser to assist	9	2.6
Made clean water available	7	2.0
Paid out-patient medical bills	5	1.4
Trained members in better farming skills	5	1.4
Counselled members with domestic disputes	4	1.1
Assisted to offset funeral expenses	2	0.6
Milk as a food supplement	2	0.6
Marketing members' milk and eggs	1	0.3
Public health/hygiene awareness	1	0.3
None	116	33.1
TOTAL	350	100

Source: Survey data

Whereas the solutions to individual household socioeconomic problems contained in Table 2 have a direct bearing on the assets accessed by the households through CBOs (see Table 1), a major difference between the two tables is in the frequency distributions. Though 85.7 per cent of the respondents reported to have accessed some assets through their organisations, only 69.9 per cent acknowledged that such assets helped to address the main socioeconomic problem in the household. In other words, one would have expected all 85.7 per cent of the respondents who obtained access to assets for improving their livelihoods to report that the assets had helped them to address their main socioeconomic problem, but only for this percentage to fall to a total of 66.9. Similarly, one would have expected only 14.3 per cent of the respondents who did not access any asset through their organisations (see Table 1) to report that they never obtained a solution to their main socioeconomic problem, but this percentage rose to 33.1 (see Table 2).

This can be interpreted to mean that some of the respondents (18.7 per cent) who did not find solutions to their household socioeconomic problems had actually accessed some resources through the activities of their organisations. However, such resources are likely to have been either inadequate or irrelevant relative to the main household socioeconomic problem at hand. This is a pointer to the possibility that the assets acquired through CBOs may not be sufficient or relevant to address some of the glaring household socioeconomic problems. Consequently, CBOs in Western Kenya may be making only a modest contribution to the improvement of the livelihoods of 33.1 per cent of the households. However, it is significant that the majority of the households have found the assets accessed through these organisations useful and probably adequate to address at least the major socioeconomic problem at hand.

It is also important to note the diversity with which the assets accessed through CBOs are put to use. A cross-tabulation between the main socioeconomic problem and the respective solution obtained from the organisations shows that different households use a given asset to address quite different problems. For instance, credit from CBOs was used by various households to solve problems of subsistence shortfalls; school fees; poor housing; and unemployment (in which case credit was used to start, or boost working capital for small-scale non-farm enterprises). Similarly, income from the activities of CBOs was used to address the problems of subsistence demands; unemployment; school fees; and medical expenses. Conversely, four different types of solutions were offered by CBOs to the problem of high and recurrent medical expenses. These were selling medicine within local communities at reduced prices; public health and hygienic practice awareness campaigns to prevent diseases; medical insurance schemes to meet outpatient treatment expenses; and clean water for prevention of water-borne diseases. This diversity is significant for sustainable livelihoods because it promotes greater flexibility by allowing more possibilities for substitution between opportunities that are in decline and those that are expanding their contribution to rural livelihoods (Ellis 2000: 235). In the process, households are likely to find at least a solution to their emerging livelihood problems from the diverse activities of their organisation. It is in this regard that the contribution of CBOs to development at the local level should be appreciated.

### **Problems encountered by CBOs in Western Kenya**

It is evident that these organisations have attempted to cover most of the issues in the economic activities and the socioeconomic infrastructure, but not without some problems. During the interviews, we asked our respond-

ents to identify the main problem they perceived to be affecting their organisation in carrying out their activities. A summary of their responses is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Problems Affecting CBOs in Western Kenya

Main Problem	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of funds & external assistance	195	55.7
Delay in remitting & defaulting on contributions	41	11.7
Embezzlement of funds by leaders	27	7.7
Unpredictable and unreliable rainfall	19	5.3
Lack of motivation/morale to participate	16	4.6
Competition from similar business ventures	14	3.9
Lack of transport facilities & poor roads	13	3.7
Lack of entrepreneurial/technical skills	7	2.0
Internal squabbles among members	6	1.7
Poor animal breeds and husbandry	5	1.3
Lack of proper operating premises	3	1.0
Illiteracy among members	3	1.0
High borehole maintenance cost	1	0.3
TOTAL	350	100

Source: Field data

The problems appearing in Table 3 clearly show that the lack of adequate resources to finance the provision of services is the most outstanding problem facing the majority of CBOs in the region. But the fact that some of the organisations tend to link the inadequacy of resources to the lack of external assistance could be a pointer to the prevalence of a dependency syndrome. It may be interpreted to mean that most of the CBOs in Western Kenya expect or rely on external assistance to finance their activities and when such assistance is not forthcoming or is not adequate, then that constitutes a problem. The implication is that most of the CBOs initiate activities that they cannot afford to finance on their own with a view to looking out for donations and other forms of external assistance like *harambee* (Kiswahili for pulling together according to one's ability in order to accomplish the task)

fund-raisers, grants, revolving credit schemes and material support to sustain them.

This becomes more evident when we look at data in Table 4 on how these organisations finance the implementation of their activities. The table contains a summary of responses to the question of the main source of funds for implementing the main activity of the organisation.

**Table 4:** Main source of funds for implementing the main activities of CBOs

Source of Funds	Number	Percentage
Donations /grants	152	43.6
Members' contributions	107	30.7
NGO revolving funds/loans	40	11.4
Harambee fund-raisers	39	11.1
Income from business/labour	12	3.3
Total	350	100

Source: Survey data

Clearly, most of the activities of CBOs, including savings and credit schemes that have a long tradition of relying on internally generated resources, have been carried out using a substantial proportion of external resources. Indeed, of the seventeen activities in which the sampled CBOs were engaged, only seven had been implemented without external assistance, namely medical insurance schemes; marketing dairy produce; bicycle transport; provision of farm labour; breeding pigs; horticulture; and subsistence crop farming. This implies that about 60 per cent of the activities of CBOs in the region are carried out using a substantial proportion of resources obtained from outside the membership of the organisations. The main sources of external resources for these organisations include NGOs, government programmes and/or departments, harambee fund raisers and political leaders.

The NGOs that were specifically identified here include CARE-Kenya, Mazingira Institute, Family Health International, Heifer Project International Kenya, Bernard van Leer Foundation, Rural Outreach Programme (ROP), International Youth Exchange Organisation of Japan, and African Medical Research Foundation (AMREF). Mumias Outgrowers Company (MOCO) and Kenchic Ltd. are the private companies that extended credit facilities to these organisations. The government-funded programmes were the Kenya-Finland Livestock Development Programme, Kenya-Finland Co-operation

(KEFINCO) Water Programme, the National Women Development Fund and the National Youth Development Fund. It should be explained here that the last two were actually Funds established through mammoth harambee fundraisers organised by the state and presided over by the President as political campaign tools for patronising all women and youth groups in the whole country in the run-up to the 1997 general elections. In any case, most of the donor programmes and organisations were reportedly linked to CBO recipients through some political initiatives. Thus, patronage forms the basis for linking donors to CBOs for development support in the region and probably the whole of Kenya.

Despite this assistance from outside the membership of the organisations, it is surprising that 'lack of external assistance' continues to be cited as the main problem facing the organisations. One interpretation for this is that a dependency syndrome seems to have crept into most of the CBOs. This probably explains why organisations that are originally formed around the virtues of mutual trust and mutual aid are reportedly under the leadership of untrustworthy leaders who embezzle funds (see Table 3). This is likely to be happening because most of the funds are not actually contributed by the members themselves, but 'handed out' to the organisations. As one respondent argued in one of our informal interviews in Butere division, the availability of external donations, particularly those through the initiative of politicians, might have created the impression that the funds are 'free' resources available for plunder by those who can get access to them. This kind of attitude among the leadership could be responsible for other organisational and management problems listed in Table 3, like embezzlement of funds; defaulting on repayment of loans and irregular contributions by members; lack of morale to participate in the activities of the organisations; and internal squabbles among members.

On the whole, the problems listed in Table 3 have adversely affected the effectiveness of CBOs in service delivery to the local people in the region. These deficiencies present a major challenge to the neo-liberal notion of voluntary organisations as a panacea to the development crisis in Africa. This is not to say that these organisations have nothing to offer in the search for solutions to the development problem, but they certainly cannot be effective in their current status and operation. Some of the problems that they face, like duplication of services and activities; lack of entrepreneurial and technical skills; and poor roads and transport networks requires that they forge synergies with the state to overcome them. To explore this point, we now turn to the nature of the relationship between the state and CBOs in Kenya.



### **The Kenyan state and CBOs in the development process**

The point has already been made that patronage forms the basic framework for linking CBOs to donors and, by extension, the political realm. This form of interaction between politics (read the state) and CBOs in Kenya can be traced to Mzee Jomo Kenyatta's effort to address two main challenges that faced him at independence, namely developing the new nation and consolidating his power in the midst of a diffuse political environment. Responding to the high expectations for economic development in the midst of limited resources at the state's disposal, Kenyatta urged Kenyans to participate in harambee to mobilise local resources to supplement state provision for rural development. This harambee call was instrumental in institutionalising self-help initiatives that were part of traditional society into formal CBOs that henceforth became significant actors in the development process.

With CBOs helping to address the challenge of development, Kenyatta also went on to use these organisations to consolidate his authority in the political realm. By 1964, he had successfully established a unitary one-party political system using a combination of 'carrots and sticks' to woo members of the opposition Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) to join the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU), thereby introducing the politics of patronage in Kenya (Barkan 1994: 11). To strengthen his grip on local politics, Kenyatta introduced the notion of 'constituency service' for members, as well as aspiring members, of Parliament. It defined the role of aspiring and incumbent MPs as that of assisting self-help (read CBO) projects in their constituencies in order to legitimise 'practical politics' as opposed to the 'empty ideological and programmatic politics' that surrounded the capitalism versus socialism debate of the mid-1960s. Hence, the worth of a politician was to be measured in terms of CBO projects he/she initiated in the constituency (Okumu and Holmquist 1984: 54).

At the same time, Kenyatta encouraged local people to demand assistance towards completion of their self-help projects from their political representatives. For its part, the government pledged to assist completed self-help projects start or improve provision of services by, for example, posting staff to schools, health centres and dispensaries or donating the required equipment. The net result of these arrangements was to increase local pressure on politicians to help complete or start self-help projects in order to benefit from government assistance. Moreover, CBOs embraced the notion that they 'had the right' to be assisted by politicians to start or complete their projects.

As it turned out, CBOs would support political leaders during the semi-competitive regular elections in exchange for the assistance that such leaders had accorded the development projects of their organisations. In the

process, CBOs became major centres of electoral politics. Politicians jostled for space in the activities of these organisations, not out of their concern for local development, but in the quest to remain 'politically relevant'. Others made frantic efforts to join, or remain part of, Kenyatta's 'inner circle' in order to obtain resources to contribute to CBO self-help projects in their constituencies. Subsequently, CBOs became political levers with which local politicians edged into national alliances. They also became vehicles for the articulation of patron-client networks at the local level that were critical for exercising political control in the governance process (Barkan and Holmquist 1989: 360; Kanyinga 1995: 74).

On the other hand, these organisations were literally 'captured' by the state as the culture of dependency steadily crept in. As has already been alluded to, some of the organisations started projects without any vision of how they would be completed, but expected or hoped that political leaders would find a way of assisting them by either obtaining state resources; organising harambee fund raisers; or linking them to donor organisations (like NGOs) for support. Where such assistance was not forthcoming, the projects stalled; the effect of which was to reduce the enthusiasm of participating in similar endeavours, especially in the economically poor regions that ironically also lacked good clientelist connections to the state at the time (Oyugi 2002: 114). Thus, the politics of patronage and the resultant culture of dependency in CBOs would start to adversely affect the sustainability of the projects of most of these organisations.

In 1978, Moi took charge of the country following the demise of Kenyatta and coined the *Nyayo* (Kiswahili for 'footsteps') slogan to express continuity with his predecessor's policies. Subsequently, CBOs remained at the centre of the patron-client networks that continued to link the state to society. But unlike during the Kenyatta era where these organisations enjoyed relative autonomy to link up with any political leader and mobilise resources as long as they played into the clientelist networks that sustained the political system, Moi sought to consolidate his power by bringing all CBOs under his direct and personal control. This was necessary partly due to the imperatives of dismantling the Kenyatta state in order to redistribute development resources and services away from Central province to benefit his clients in Rift Valley province (Barkan 1994: 24; Muigai 1995).

The first step in his effort to patronise CBOs for the said purpose was the directive that all CBOs be registered by the Department of Social Services in the then Ministry of Culture and Social Services. This step would help to monitor the formation, activities and regional distribution of these organisations in the country. Secondly, the Provincial Administration was assigned

the duty of regulating the fundraising activities of these organisations, which politicians could use to build their independent political power bases, as had been the case during the Kenyatta era. All harambee fund-raisers, especially those where politicians would participate, had to be authorised by the Provincial Administration. The end result of this provision was that those CBOs perceived to be outside the president's patronage, or those that associated with politicians who did not toe the political line of the moment, were not allowed to conduct harambee. Indeed, efforts were made to isolate or de-link such CBOs from any form of external assistance to implement their projects.

In addition, the organisation of harambee for local self-help projects changed towards an effort to directly involve the president himself. The new framework was to organise large-scale fund-raisers for similar projects within an administrative area – like a division or district – presided over by the president himself or powerful ministers sanctioned by his office. The amount collected from the mammoth fund-raiser would then be shared out among the participating CBOs in proportion to their contribution (Barkan 1992: 186). Subsequently, CBOs that wished to benefit from harambee and state development resources had to participate in the larger fund-raisers and, by extension, become appendages of the patron-client networks that linked Moi to the locality.

Since these organisations were already accustomed to the idea of being assisted to implement their projects, and those that played into the new political rules were actually getting such assistance, most of the CBOs chose to be part of state patronage. This only served to enhance dependency among these organisations. With the repressive political environment, some of them went out to identify with the political elite 'in favour' at the moment, not only to obtain assistance, but also to survive. Nevertheless, some CBOs continued to operate from outside state patronage, but such organisations tended to be monitored and intimidated by local political clients of the state, with the result that some of them would remain dormant most of the time.

Thus, for the better part of the Moi era, CBOs ceased to be autonomous self-reliant development organisations for mobilising local resources to initiate durable livelihood activities. Rather, they assumed the role of mobilising support for politicians who were 'loyal' to the chief patron in exchange for development resources to implement their projects. This political environment enhanced the dependency of 'loyal CBOs' since they would, in one way or the other, get assistance as a result of their political affiliation.

The advent of multiparty politics in the early 1990s promised to end the politics of patronage, but in vain. Nevertheless, the form and content of patronage in the different regions of the country slightly changed relative to their political affiliation. Whereas its structure remained centralised and

coercive in the pro-government (then KANU) strongholds, where people at the local level were linked to the political elite or the president through patron-client networks oiled by state resources, patronage in the opposition strongholds may be described as 'decentralised' in the sense that state patronage was withdrawn, paving way for the emergence of new 'opposition' patrons in these regions. The emergent patrons did not necessarily link up the locality to the centre of state power. Rather, such patrons became the leading political figureheads of the regions and local political elites strove to establish allegiance to them for the purpose of winning elections.

For instance, in Nyanza province Oginga Odinga had established himself as the doyen of the opposition as well as the political patron of the region, and all Luo politicians wished to be identified with him if they were to win in elections. Nevertheless, Odinga's patronage did not entail absolute conformity of opinions and total loyalty to him as was the case with Kenyatta's and Moi's patronage. All that a politician needed was Odinga's approval to contest an electoral seat. When Odinga passed away in 1993, his son Raila Odinga became the patron of the Luo. But Raila's patronage was even further decentralised in the sense that he did not (and does not) directly control local politics. He only approved of local politicians who sought his patronage (for the sake of winning elections) on the basis of their personal popularity at the local level. Thus, the 'scaling-down' of the centralised state-sponsored patronage in Nyanza province served to decentralise the development space and also to stimulate competition in forging political alliances at the local level. This left local politicians with a free hand to build their political clout at the local level and use such clout to seek the patron's approval as a seal of their membership in the clique of Luo leaders.

This form of patronage in opposition strongholds saw politicians at the local level strive to patronise CBOs in order to build linkages to the people at the grassroots. We found a number of examples in the survey. In Awasi location of Nyando district, a councillor and a local political activist were reported to be instrumental in the formation of youth groups as a way of mobilising the youth to support their political cause. In Miwani division, a parliamentary aspirant, who allegedly won the nomination of the opposition National Development Party (NDP) for Muhoroni constituency during the 1997 general elections but was turned down at the party's headquarters in Nairobi, was reportedly engaged in several harambee fund-raisers for women's groups to revive his parliamentary ambition long before the 2002 general elections were called. By virtue of the popularity that he gained at the local level through these fund-raisers, he was accepted by the patron (Raila Odinga) and was eventually elected the Member of Parliament for Muhoroni when

the elections were held in December 2002. Similar patterns obtained in Siaya district.

In contrast, the centralised and monolithic form of patronage remained the norm in Western province that was largely pro-government. Accordingly, the role of MPs, councillors and local political activists was to build coalitions of all CBOs in their respective areas as a demonstration of their power to the president, who would then reward them with patronage resources in return for local support. For instance, in Funyula division of Busia district, the local MP initiated the formation of large coalitions of women's groups at the sub-locational, locational and divisional levels, to which all local women's groups at the respective levels in the constituency were affiliated. The divisional women's group, known as Sirindiro, was the largest, for it brought together all the sub-locational and locational women's groups. All affiliate groups were required to pay contributions towards the construction of a shopping complex as an income-generating venture, with the promise that there would be other benefits from the initiative. The effort was, however, meant for the MP to patronise all women's groups in the constituency in order to exercise political control and demonstrate to the president his political power. The MP for Butere in Butere-Mumias district took similar initiatives when he formed Butesero self-help group to operate a public service bus project and encouraged all CBOs in Butere and Khwisero divisions to buy shares in the organisation, promising that more benefits awaited the groups that joined the initiative.

Thus, whereas patronage in the opposition-dominated Nyanza Province consisted of politicians striving to identify with the local people through CBOs, the state-led patronage saw politicians simply dangle resources to attract CBOs into their fold as a demonstration of their power at the local level, and support for the president at the national level. It is in this regard that the content of the two variants of patronage differed. In the latter case, development resources were made available to the client CBOs by the state in exchange for political support while in the former, CBOs delivered local politicians to the regional patron in return for the resources contributed by the respective politician to the organisations. Moreover, CBOs in opposition areas identified with the regional patron, not only on the basis of the resources that they received, but also on the basis of other considerations such as ethnicity, demonstrated leadership ability and social standing.

It is in this regard that CBOs in Nyanza reclaimed their autonomy to seek assistance from leaders of any political persuasion and regained some influence over politicians, with the result that some of them were reporting their determination to successfully complete their projects with or without exter-

nal assistance. On the other hand, CBOs in Western province, where state patronage prevailed by virtue of being a pro-government region, continued to expect external assistance to implement their projects to the extent that those that did not receive such support tended to be mostly inactive or dormant.

The Moi era eventually came to a close on 30 December 2002 when the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) under Mwai Kibaki took the leadership of the country. Though the structure of government under President Kibaki has so far remained the same – centralised with the president as the focal point and with enhanced determination to maintain the status quo by circumventing the constitutional review process – the approach to the exercise of power is relatively different. Unlike his predecessor who strode the political scene like a colossus, Kibaki has adopted a *laissez-faire* form of administration. As much as this style has seen the president criticised for being indecisive on key national issues and subsequently labelled ‘hands- and head-off’, he has given his ministers room to run their ministries without interference from above, as was the case in the past regime (Masime and Kibara 2003: 23). Similarly, there is remarkable freedom of expression relative to the Moi or even Kenyatta era.

Although the impact of this relatively free political space on the activities of CBOs is not yet clear, it should be mentioned that the NARC government has already embarked on measures that may reduce the politics of patronage in these organisations. For instance, the Economic Crimes and Public Officers Ethics Act of 2003 bars political leaders and public servants from presiding over harambee fund-raisers. This may serve to minimise corruption, but it will also reduce the prominence of CBOs as centres for political patronage. Moreover, the government is considering outlawing harambee altogether on account of its politicisation and abuse. If this happens, it could adversely affect CBOs that genuinely lack the capacity to mobilise adequate resources for their activities, but it will certainly rein in the culture of dependency in these organisations. At the moment, the extent to which the liberal political environment and the legal measures instituted by NARC will contain patronage and the vice of dependency in CBOs remains to be seen.

### **Towards interfacing the state and CBOs in development**

Although the state generally achieved commendable economic growth rates that translated into improved living conditions for the majority of the people during the first decade of Kenya’s independence, this performance could not be sustained thereafter, resulting in a downward trend in the development process (Republic of Kenya 2002). The persistent poor economic performance worsened the poverty situation over the years. The number of people living in poverty, for example, rose from 48 per cent of the population in

1990 to 56 per cent in 2001. The deterioration in the standard of living is well demonstrated by key social indicators, particularly over the last two decades: illiteracy rates increased while life expectancy and child mortality worsened. Inaccessibility to health services, partly due to affordability, was also made worse by the upsurge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Government of Kenya 2003). As the main development actor since independence, the state was correctly faulted for this development crisis.

It should be emphasised here that besides the inability of the state to provide social services to the people, it has not been in touch with the actual needs of the people. This clearly came out in the relatively participatory consultations that led to the preparation of the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) for the period 2001–2004. The few local people who had a chance to contribute their views appreciated the rare opportunity the government had given them to express their concerns for the first time and went on to enumerate a wide range of needs that the state had ignored over the years, to the extent that they were at a loss to prioritise them (Republic of Kenya 2001). The implication is that the state has been in contact with the people, not in pursuit of development goals per se, but mostly for purposes of exercising power and control. This has clearly been demonstrated in its interaction with CBOs: its intention has been to co-opt them into its political machine for exercising power.

As has already been alluded to, local people have responded to the resultant lack of services by forming CBOs to satisfy their needs. There is evidence in our study of these organisations that they have been instrumental in providing services that the state has been unable to provide. For instance, their innovativeness has seen them start local medical insurance schemes, albeit in a small way, to enable their members to afford health services. Similarly, saving and credit schemes have been a major source of financial services for meeting a variety of needs at the local level. CBOs have also been useful in the development of entrepreneurship as well as the provision of other social services like water (see Tables 1 and 2).

But like the state, CBOs have not been so effective in service provision despite the advantages that they enjoy over the state insofar as delivery of development services is concerned. This was attributed to a number of factors that have already been presented in this discussion (see Table 3). The extent to which the level of poverty in Kenya has been increasing is testament to the failure of both the state and the voluntary organisations to independently and adequately respond to the development crisis in the country. It is against this background that interfacing these two actors may make a

contribution to the development process. The pertinent question is: How can synergies be forged between the state and CBOs in Kenya?

Of the two institutions, it is apparent that CBOs have established a better infrastructure for service provision at the local level than the state. CBOs are found among the local people and operate at the lowest level of society where the individual is to be found. For this reason, the state ought to complement these organisations in the development process by addressing the problems that they have encountered. Thus, the problems that CBOs have faced in their effort to satisfy the needs of the local people should form the basis for the state to forge synergies with them in the development process.

Our survey data show that the lack of adequate resources is a key problem in CBOs. Although some organisations might have cited this problem due to their dependency on outside assistance, other organisations were genuine in this regard. The state could respond to this problem by providing supplementary resources to those organisations that genuinely need them to run specific activities. But the resources must be provided on the basis of what the organisation has raised on its own and for what specific service, rather than the common practice of giving hand-outs to CBOs to satisfy clientelist goals. Thus, state resources must build on what the organisation has achieved in order to cut out those CBOs that start activities as a way of soliciting external resources that are immediately shared out by members for personal use. For instance in 1997, several women's and youth groups were formed just to get a share of the National Women's Development Fund and the National Youth Development Fund. Most of these groups were dissolved after sharing the money that they received from the Funds (Wanyama 2003a: 205). It is this rent-seeking behaviour that must be discouraged in CBOs.

The Kibaki government has established a national development fund that could be ideal in supplementing the resource base of CBOs for effective delivery of services at the local level. This is the Constituencies Development Fund (CDF) that was set up through an Act of Parliament in 2003. An amount of money equal to 2.5 per cent of all ordinary government revenue collected in every financial year is paid into the Fund, which is then distributed equally to all parliamentary constituencies in the country to be spent on various development projects (Republic of Kenya 2004). Unfortunately, the Act vests in the relevant MP the power to constitute the Constituency Development Committee that administers the Fund at the constituency level as well as the power to determine which projects are to be funded. These powers have seen many MPs misuse the funds in various constituencies in the country. Ideally, the CDF could be channelled through selected CBOs that are viable in the provision of specific services.



The provision of supplementary resources by the state could also help to address the problem of duplication of activities and services in these organisations. We have noted that some CBOs have incurred losses in their businesses due to this problem. This occurs not only due to the lack of entrepreneurial skills, but also due to the lack of resources to invest in alternative activities that may require more capital than members can raise. The pegging of state resources to the type of services delivered by CBOs in every region may stimulate the diversification of activities and services by these organisations. In addition, the duplication of activities could be curbed through the registration of these organisations by the state. This has been going on since the 1980s, but the intention, as already noted, was to control and patronise the organisations instead of regulating their activities with a view to encouraging the diversification of service provision at the local level. The latter should be the sole purpose of registering CBOs by the state.

The other problems that CBOs have encountered include the poor roads and transport facilities and the lack of skills. Arguably, the cost of road maintenance is beyond the capital outlay of most CBOs. In the survey, we inquired about members' actual contribution to the financing of the activities of their organisations, which accounted for just 30.7 per cent of the resources. We established that their contributions were in the form of regular financial contributions (68.9 per cent); materials (19.7 per cent) and labour (11.4 per cent). However, the rate of financial contributions tended to be relatively low as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Rate of monthly financial contributions

Monthly Contribution (Kshs.)	Number	Percentage
Less than 50	135	38.5
51–100	70	20.0
101–200	38	10.9
201–300	31	8.9
301–500	12	3.3
501–1,500	16	4.6
Over 1,500	5	1.4
None	43	12.4
TOTAL	350	100

Source: Survey data

The reason why the rates were relatively low was to make the contribution affordable to the generally poor members of most of these organisations. At the time of the survey, one US dollar was equivalent to 75 Kenya shillings. Consequently, the data in Table 5 show that each member in more than half (58.5 per cent) of these organisations contributed up to just over one US dollar in a month. Given that the organisations are mostly small in size, the implication is that only small amounts of funds could be mobilised from contributions. For instance, the smallest organisation of eight members would raise just about eight US dollars per month, while the medium-size organisation of about thirty members would raise thirty US dollars in a month.

Clearly, these are not the resources to be committed to road maintenance if these organisations are to render any other service to the members or the community. This role must be played by the state. The state is also better placed to train members of these organisations in various fields, including business management; community health; home economics and hygiene; and crop farming and animal husbandry. It is with these skills that CBOs will be more effective in service delivery.

Above all, it is the politics of patronage that seems to be responsible for the better part of the problems that confound CBOs. It has been highlighted that patronage has largely contributed to the dependency syndrome in these organisations, which has not only discouraged efficient mobilisation of local resources for development, but has also enabled the embezzlement of funds by leaders who enjoy the protection of patrons. This has, in turn, demoralised some of the members from actively participating in the activities of the organisations. The way out of this predicament is to institutionalise governance rather than personalising it as has been the case in Kenya since independence. Kenyans expressed their desire for institutional politics in 2002 when they overwhelmingly voted for a conglomeration of political parties that coalesced in the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) that sent KANU out of power for the first time ever. The vote was not in favour of any personality, but the institutions that made up NARC.

Nevertheless, if cabinet and senior civil service appointments are anything to go by, the politics of patronage is still alive. The appointments seem to be Kibaki's reward to his loyal supporters from Central Kenya and his Democratic Party that is now part of NARC. Rather than discarding KANU's recruitment ethics that disregarded professionalism and merit as the criteria, Kibaki is increasingly using cronyism, ethnic balancing and patronage as the guiding principles for significant senior appointments. Old and retired civil servants have been recycled and given key government jobs; some of whom do not have the requisite qualifications (Masime and Kibara 2003: 13). If this patronage persists, it is likely to adversely affect the democratic political

environment that CBOs might have started to enjoy. Thus, the institutionalisation of democracy is the most viable way by which the state can provide CBOs with what neo-liberals have termed an 'enabling environment' for their effective contribution to development. Such an environment may also help to check the predatory instincts of the state, which have seen it co-opt CBOs into its political mechanism for maximising the exercise of power.

### **Conclusion**

This discussion has attempted to examine the effect of the institutional dichotomy between the state and voluntary organisations, as propagated by neo-liberalism, on African development. The purpose has been to establish the possibility of forging a complementary role between the state and the voluntary sector as an alternative framework for enhancing African development, given that none of these actors has proved effective on their own. Using a case study of CBOs in Western Kenya, it has been illustrated that voluntary organisations have the potential to contribute to the development process given their innovativeness, flexibility and local outreach in service provision. It is in this regard that these organisations have been able to provide some of the services that the state has been unable to deliver to the local population. However, these organisations have not been very effective in service delivery due to deficiencies such as the paucity of resources; the dependency syndrome perpetrated by the politics of patronage; the duplication of activities and services; and the lack of technical skills.

It has also been argued that the inability of the state to effectively contribute to the development process requires that it exploits the deficiencies in voluntary organisations as the basis for complementing or strengthening them in service delivery. Recognising that this can be a delicate endeavour in view of the predatory nature of the state, some balancing acts have been suggested. Among these include the division of roles between the state and voluntary organisations in a complementary manner. Accordingly, the state should take over capital-intensive development activities (such as maintenance of infrastructure) as a way of providing an enabling environment for voluntary organisations to deliver services and also provide training services to these organisations to enhance their skills in development work. While encouraging voluntary organisations to mobilise their own resources to carry out their activities, the state ought to give supplementary resources only to those organisations that genuinely lack resources to diversify service provision in order to minimise the dependency syndrome. The state could also minimise the duplication of services by regulating the establishment of activities in

these organisations as opposed to the common practice of co-opting them into its political control network.

Nevertheless, the Kenyan example implies that this division of roles may hold better in a democratic political environment than under personal rule and authoritarian regimes. For instance, we observed that CBOs in the relatively liberal opposition regions were looking inward to carry out their activities while those in the pro-government areas continued to look out for assistance to get going and were subject to the directives of political entrepreneurs. The challenge in Africa, therefore, is to institutionalise democratic governance to enable the state and voluntary organisations to play their respective complementary roles in the development process.

Contrary to neo-liberal assumptions, it is clear from this discussion that the state is not redundant in the development process. Similarly, voluntary organisations themselves do not constitute a panacea to the problem of African development. This paper, therefore, submits that the future of African development lies in forging a complementary role between the state and the voluntary sector.

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