



The Role of NGOs in Fostering Development and Good Governance at the Local Level in Africa with a Focus on Kenya*

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Abstract

Non-governmental organisations have since the colonial period played a major role in socio-economic development in Africa. This role has increased in the post independence period, especially from the 1980s, following the demonstrated failure of the state all over the continent, as a credible provider of basic needs services to the poor both in the rural and urban slums. As a result, instead of channelling development assistance through the state, some donor agencies have during the last two decades or so, opted to do so through non-state actors – especially the NGOs. The Kenyan experience demonstrates that the NGO sector has since the 1980s emerged as a major player in the design and implementation of projects as well as the actual provision of basic needs services to the disadvantaged groups both in the rural and urban areas. Although they are individually engaged in diverse activities, the Kenyan data suggests that the concentration of their activities is – in the social sector (education, health, general welfare). The operational strategies employed to reach the intended beneficiaries varies between direct and indirect interventions depending on the service to be delivered and the institutional configuration on the ground. Where NGOs have opted for direct linkage with service recipients, their activities have tended to elicit negative response from the state as the latter usually prefers to act as intermediary between non-state actors and the service recipients. The impact of NGOs has varied both in terms of quality and quantity of service provided. The variation assumes both service and areal (i.e. spatial) dimen-

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sions, and the factors accounting for the variation are the stability of funding sources as well as commitment by the founders of the organisations to their missions and objectives. The Kenyan case study demonstrates that the sector has emerged as a major player in the provision of basic needs services.

Résumé

Depuis la période coloniale, les organisations gouvernementales jouent un rôle crucial dans le processus socio-économique en Afrique. Ce rôle s'est renforcé au cours de la période post-indépendance, à partir des années 80, tout particulièrement, après que l'état eût montré son incapacité à fournir des services de base aux populations pauvres vivant dans les bidonvilles rurales et urbaines. Ainsi, au lieu d'acheminer l'aide au développement à travers l'État, certains organismes bailleurs de fonds ont choisi, depuis ces deux dernières décennies, d'avoir recours aux acteurs n'appartenant pas à l'État, particulièrement les ONG. L'expérience kenyane montre que depuis les années 80, le secteur des ONG joue un rôle crucial dans la conception et la mise en œuvre de projets, ainsi que dans la fourniture de besoins de base aux groupes défavorisés, aussi bien dans les zones rurales qu'urbaines. Bien que celles-ci soient engagées individuellement dans diverses activités, les informations collectées au Kenya révèlent que leurs activités se concentrent dans le secteur social (éducation, santé, service social global). Les stratégies opérationnelles destinées à atteindre les populations bénéficiaires, consistent en interventions directes et indirectes, selon le type de service à fournir et la configuration institutionnelle sur le terrain. Lorsque les ONG choisissent d'établir un contact direct avec les populations bénéficiaires, l'État réagit souvent négativement, car ce dernier préfère jouer le rôle d'intermédiaire entre les acteurs non gouvernementaux et les populations bénéficiaires. L'impact des ONG a varié, en ce qui concerne la qualité et la quantité des services fournis aux populations. Cette variation concerne les services fournis et l'aspect territorial; elle s'explique par la stabilité des sources de financement, et l'engagement des fondateurs de ces organisations envers leur mission et leurs objectifs. L'étude de cas kenyane révèle que ce secteur joue aujourd'hui un rôle clé en matière de fourniture de services de base.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present an analysis of the performance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in development and good governance at the local level in Africa with a special focus on Kenya. Although reference is made to the pre-colonial and colonial periods, the accent of the analysis is on the post-independence period. The data on Africa are drawn from secondary sources and the Kenyan data derive from both secondary and 'field' interviews.

A total of twenty-two NGOs and an NGO regulatory body were interviewed for the Kenyan study, and of the NGOs interviewed, twelve identified themselves as local, eight as foreign and two as pan-African. The information

received from these organisations is presented in section III of the paper. A list containing the names of 2040 NGOs, which had registered with the state NGO Co-ordination Bureau by the end of September 2001, was received and data contained therein are also analysed in section III as well.

Although the term NGO remains conceptually elusive, in this paper the writer is mainly concerned with organisations which are not part of the government, which are voluntarily and legally set up to serve the common good, and are not profit oriented.

From information available, it is possible to classify the NGOs operating in Kenya and Africa at large into two broad categories:

- Indigenous NGOs: that is, organisations that have their roots in the country and are predominantly managed by the indigenous people. Their headquarters are mainly in the capital city, with their branches or field offices located in administrative areas where the NGOs in question are engaged in project development and/or provision of services. There are also the indigenous NGOs whose operations are confined to that level. These are the organisations often referred to as Community Based Organisations (CBOs) or People's Organisations (POs) (Semboja and Therkildsen 1995). Good examples of these in the Kenyan case are the so-called Harambee self-help groups and the village-based women's organisations.
- Foreign NGOs: which operate in the country through what are usually referred to as country offices.

The analysis that follows focuses on the activities of both foreign and local NGOs; and where necessary, identifies the functional relationship that exists between them and the community based organisations operating in similar functional areas. In doing so, the writer discusses, even if only briefly, the situation as it has evolved over the years since the colonial period.

The role of NGOs in a historical perspective

Pre-colonial and colonial periods

For a long time, the state remained the major actor in the development and governance process both during the colonial and the post-independence periods in Africa. With the advent of colonialism, the framework which the various African communities had used for purposes of self-governance and for the provision of basic-needs services, were either destroyed or, when adopted, were at once subordinated to the colonial structures. This was much more the case in the area of governance than in the development front. In the latter case, the communities continued to fend for themselves for the better

part of the early phase of colonial rule. The role of the family as a key production and distribution institution continued to be important, supported by a network of kinship ties, which obligated the kinship group to come to the aid of one another in times of need. This was the case among the various African communities until the colonial authorities registered their presence on the ground through the construction of various facilities intended to supplement or complement the efforts of the 'natives' in service provision.

While the colonial state emerged, especially during the later phase of colonial rule, as a partner in service provision both in the urban and the rural areas, new non-state actors had also emerged at that time and did so with overt support of the colonial state. The emergence and influence of religious organisations as providers of basic-needs services began during this period. Throughout the continent, the missionary organisations established institutions through which basic needs services especially health care and education were subsequently provided. The mission centres also became the only centres, excepting the urban and the European-settled areas, where clean drinking water could be found for the better part of the colonial period. The Protestant and Catholic missionary orders played a major role (Wellard and Copestake 1993).

An equally important role the missionaries played was that of humanitarian assistance through the provision of clothing, foodstuffs, and healthcare, especially for orphans and the destitute, who otherwise could not get assistance from the existing kinship networks. In performing these services, the missionary organisations would emerge as the most important non-governmental actors during the colonial period.

And even in the area of governance, there was a very close working relationship between the missionaries and the colonial administration. Apart from playing the pacification role on behalf of the administration, the missionaries played an important role in fostering the emergence and development of various welfare associations formed by the budding elites. In many instances, they did play a containment role on behalf of the colonial administration, as when they would for example take over or influence the leadership of any organisation that was trying to engage itself in manifestly anti-colonial agitation. The Kenyan experience presented in Oyugi (2002) illustrates this point clearly.

Indeed, in the majority of African countries very few non-missionary NGOs had a noticeable presence before independence. Of the twenty-two organisations interviewed in the Kenyan study, only two had been in existence before independence and one of them was a faith-based organisation. Thus, as Copestake observes, prior to independence, in most African countries, the most prominent NGOs emanated from European settler society, missionary

activity and grassroot society organisations, whose major concerns were welfare and religious activities (Copestake 1993). The situation would however change after independence.

Trends in the post-independence period

In most African countries there was a spate of new NGOs around the time of independence. These organisations have continued to grow ever since (Bratton 1989). According to Fowler, NGOs have mushroomed, doubling and tripling their numbers in many countries since the 1980s (Fowler 1991).

The failure of African governments on the political and socio-economic fronts must be regarded as a major reason for the proliferation of NGOs. Indeed, the growing stature of NGOs in development is related to the decline of the state as the dominant development actor in Africa. There has been a paradigmatic shift since the 1970s in the attitudes of the donors and development policy-makers, away from the state-centred development models towards more participatory bottom-up approaches (Farrington 1993). As a result, the role of NGOs in the development of third world nations and not just in Africa has grown precipitously. Today there are 5,000 international NGOs based in developing countries that work with over 20,000 local NGOs in developing countries (Picciotto 1996). A large percentage of these are in Africa.

A cursory survey of some African countries reveals a steady growth of the NGO sector. In the Central African Republic (CAR) for example, three periods of NGO emergence have been identified:

- From the 1960s through to the beginning of the 1970s (church supported development structures).
- The 1980s, where the economic crisis and aggravation of social problems produced a new generation of NGOs based on the principle that the government cannot do everything.
- The beginning of the 1990s, which was affected by three major features: the permanent economic crisis; the new context of political liberalisation; and UN interventions. The majority of present day NGOs owe their existence to this period (Charancle 1996).

In the Congo, certain developments in the polity influenced the growth of the sector, including the establishment of legal status for associations in 1989, the holding of a national conference in June 1991, where one had to be a member of an organisation to participate, and the holding of international summits and conferences, which opened the way to diversification. These

developments were also a reflection of the inherent economic crisis. (Charanle 1996).

In yet another country – Egypt – civil society (incorporating the NGOs) has grown during the last two decades in response to the growing needs of the country and the political and economic trends towards democratisation and economic liberalisation (Kandil 1999). This can be seen from the fact that in 1976 about 7,500 associations were registered, with the number rising to 22,000 (including 17,000 NGOs) by 1996 with a total membership of about 10 million (Beshasa 1999).

Separate studies by Moyo et al (2000), and Wellard and Copestake (1993) demonstrate that before independence in Zimbabwe, the most prominent NGOs were staffed by the white settlers and missionaries. Independence triggered an increase with many NGOs opening offices in Zimbabwe. Tremendous growth has also been reported in Tunisia, where the number of registered NGOs changed from 1,886 in 1988 to 5,186 in 1991 (Marzouk 1996).

Similarly in Ghana, there has been tremendous growth of the sector, after independence (Fowler et al 1991; Ayee 2002 and Annorbath-Sarpei 1991). One study estimates that while there were only 10 registered NGOs in 1960, by 1991 they stood at 350 (cited in Wellard and Copestake 1993).

The phenomenal growth of the NGO sector in the post-independence period referred above was not the rule everywhere in Africa. NGO growth was less significant in the case of those countries which until recently were ruled by ideologically/socially oriented parties (Tanzania, Zambia, Ethiopia etc. before 1990s). The NGOs which existed before the 1990s in those countries, operated under very strict state control (see e.g. Duffield 1994 in Ethiopia).

However, since the end of the Cold War, such regimes have ceased to exist; and in the meantime bilateral and multilateral donor agencies have been pursuing a 'new policy agenda' which gives renewed prominence to the role of NGOs and GROs in poverty alleviation, social welfare and the development of civil society (Robinson 1993). This has led one observer (Salamon 1993) to claim that a veritable 'association revolution' now seems underway at the global level that may constitute as significant a social and political development of the latter 20th century as the rise of the nation state was in the latter 19th century.

Explaining the growth of the sector in Kenya

According to available data, Kenya recorded a good growth rate (averaging 6.7 percent per annum) accompanied by some tangible development during the first decade of independence (i.e. roughly up to the middle of 1970s) (Republic of Kenya 1970). But following the oil crisis of that period which directly affected the flow and direction of financial resources, the country

embarked on a downward development trend. By the late 1970s, the country was already facing a development crisis on many fronts. One such important front was food. By 1980 the food situation had developed into a major crisis occasioning the formation of long queues both in rural and urban areas for access to the little that was available in the shops.

The diversion of scarce resources to meet food import requirements together with importation of oil at inflated prices occasioned by the crisis in the Middle East (following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war) deprived the state of money both for development investment and for the provision of services in the existing facilities. As the interview data presented below indicate, this was the same period during which a number of humanitarian organisations either began to operate in the country; or for those which were already in the country, intensified their operations in support of the efforts by the state. World Vision, for example, began to be more visible in the country during this period by providing the badly needed humanitarian assistance among other services.

It is also during the same period that a number of developmental NGOs already operating in the country intensified their activities. In fact, with steady decline in government support for construction of development projects and decline in qualitative and quantitative provision of services, the NGO sector emerged during this period as a major player, especially in the provision of services. NGOs gave special attention to the groups perceived to be inadequately catered for by the state such as the urban poor, orphans, those in need of soft loans for a variety of productive activities, etc (Fowler 1995).

Indeed, there has been tremendous growth in the number of NGOs operating in the country since independence (besides the CBOs). An earlier estimate put them at 291 in 1988 (Fowler 1995). Another source put them at between 400 and 600 in 1989, of which 100 were international (Ng'ethe 1991), and by November 2001, according to an official of the National NGO Council, which is the umbrella organisation for NGOs operating in the country, there were a total of 2039 registered NGOs (personal communication). The NGO Co-ordination Bureau, which is a government body, formed in 1991 to co-ordinate the activities of NGOs in the country, put the figure at 2,220 by December 2001 (personal interview). If the figures quoted above are correct, then there has been a tremendous growth in the sector and that may explain why the government has been jittery about the uncoordinated activities of the NGO sector recently.

The proliferation of NGOs in the recent years can also be attributed to the attitude of the bilateral and multilateral donors. Especially since the mid 1980s these donors seem to have decided to channel a good percentage of development assistance to the country through non-state actors. Indeed, there

are those who argue, as Cross does, that the growth of the NGO sector could be attributed to the perception by both the leftists and rightists in the global system, of the NGOs as a sector through which they can promote their agenda (Cross 1997). Cross further contends that because of the greater power that donors have over these organisations, NGOs represent a convenient avenue for asserting donor influence as opposed to the risks and difficulties of dealing with governmental agencies.

The awareness of the favour that NGOs found in donors' eyes obviously provided an opportunity for all kinds of NGOs to spring up. Secondly, the leaning towards NGOs also coincided with the crisis in governance and the consequent agitation for democratisation of the body politic, which eventually led to the emergence of a number of civil society organisations and other traditional NGOs agitating for openness in the way the government conducted its activities. This development had to be seen within the broader context of the donor pressure for 'good governance' in economic management and the opening up of the political space for fair competition.

Taking their cue from these developments, a number of local (i.e. indigenous) NGOs, especially the church ones – the National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCCK), the Catholic Peace and Justice Commission, etc. – began to adopt a critical posture vis-à-vis perceived state excesses against the citizens. Other people would also pick courage, as a result of which many organisations would emerge to champion various pro-democracy causes. Organisations such as the Citizens' Coalition for Constitutional Change (4Cs), League of Women Voters, ECONNEWS, etc. emerged during this period.

As it happens, the advocacy organisations that emerged from the late 1980s to the present have been responsible for putting a great deal of pressure on the state to allow the citizens directly or indirectly to have more say in the way they are governed. It is this movement for good governance, and that fact that most of its funding does come from foreign donor sources, that has largely been responsible for the discomfort of the state that is referred to above. The donor organisations supporting pro-democratisation movements have often been accused of undermining the authority of the state. And such organisations have had their operational areas circumscribed and their freedom of operation curtailed. This is exemplified by the frequency with which the state, through the Provincial Administration (a para-political department of the government with its own security responsible for maintenance of law and order in the localities), has interfered with civic education seminars organised by pro-democracy NGOs such as 4Cs.

On the whole, however, it cannot be denied that a combination of donor intervention and the agitation by locally based NGOs/civil society

organisations has been largely responsible for making Kenya a relatively more open society than it was in the period before the 1990s.

In the interview data presented below the perception of the NGOs regarding their role in development and governance is presented and analysed with a view to demonstrating the role such organisations are playing in Kenya, as is indeed the case throughout Africa.

Presentation of interview data

Interviews were conducted with twenty-two NGOs between April and May 2001 and with the NGO Co-ordination Bureau (the regulatory body) in December 2001. The NGOs were chosen from a list of registered NGOs in the country. A deliberate selection method was employed that ensured that different types of NGOs were included in the study. Particular attention was given to NGOs engaged in development (i.e. those that provide tangible services to local communities) as well as those primarily engaged in advocacy, whether politically oriented or not. The choice of who was interviewed was influenced by the willingness and availability of people in NGOs to be interviewed. As it turned out, of the twenty-two organisations interviewed, eight identified themselves with advocacy; nine with development; and five claimed they were involved in both.

Of the organisations included in the study, two identified themselves as pan-African, meaning their activities are found all over Africa where interested groups have incorporated local chapters. Eight identified themselves as foreign, which means that the Kenyan office is regarded as a country office of a metropolitan-based organisation. World Vision and Action Aid, for example, fall into this category. The remaining twelve identified themselves as local, meaning that they are locally incorporated and operate only within the country.

It is important to point out that those NGOs that regard themselves as being engaged in advocacy are issue-oriented organisations pursuing or promoting a particular value or cause and, therefore, they tend to be more inclusive in terms of who their target groups are, except where the organisation has an exclusive gender focus, e.g. International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) or League of Women Voters. Under the broad rubric of development are included those NGOs that are engaged in the development, management and provision of tangible services to local communities such as water, healthcare, capacity building, etc. They are also involved in the dissemination of values and skills, which are necessary in the implementation of the projects they support and the provision of the services they deliver.

Except for two organisations, all the NGOs studied were either formed in the country during the post-independence period or, in the case of foreign-based NGOs, began operating in the country after independence. The

exceptions referred to are the Christian Health Association of Kenya (CHAK) formed in 1930 under a different name (i.e. Protestant Churches Medical Association, PCMA), and Pathfinder International, which began operating in 1957. Out of the eight organisations that are involved in advocacy, 50 per cent were formed in the period after the mid 1980s when agitation for an open political environment began in earnest; which may explain why most of them are engaged in manifestly political activities and/or political empowerment as in the case of gender based organisations such as the League of Women Voters.

Areas of functional operation

With regard to functional areas of operation, six emerged in terms of frequency of mention from the interviews as follows: Advocacy – 15; Capacity building – 15; Health – 9; Education – 5; Water – 4; Humanitarian intervention – 4. (The figures refer to the frequency of mention and not to the number of organisations exclusively providing the service.) It is important to note that even those organisations that are engaged in purely developmental activities are also quick to add that, more often than not, they are also involved in advocacy, as for example when trying to influence policy-making in their operational areas.

From the responses received, and in relation to the functional areas of operation, it appears that both the local and foreign NGOs perform overlapping functions (or complementary roles?). For example, in the area of capacity building, the responses from foreign and local NGOs suggest that this is a function that is shared equally – almost on a fifty-fifty basis. In the area of humanitarian assistance 67 percent of the service providers are local NGOs. In the area of education, local organisations comprise 40 percent of the service providers, whereas in the health and water sectors, they comprise 44 percent and 50 percent, respectively, of the service providers. Even in the area of advocacy, although the local NGOs seem to be more involved than foreign ones, the responses indicate that up to 34 percent of NGOs involved in advocacy are foreign NGOs.

Apart from the field interview data, the writer also analysed the data from the NGO Co-ordination Bureau for purposes of comparison. Any organisation registered with the Bureau is, among other requirements, supposed to indicate its area(s) of functional operation. From the Bureau data most organisations have indicated more than one area of functional operation, which means a particular given functional area can be mentioned by several organisations if not all. A frequency count was made and the following main areas emerged as the ones, which were indicated by the 2040 organisations, as their areas of operation. These are: Health – 814; Education – 758; Welfare – 752;

Environment – 437; Relief – 290; Informal sector – 264; Water – 263; Multi-sectoral activities – 260; Population – 121; Agriculture – 35; Not recorded – 85; Others – 192. It is clear that the major areas of functional operation are health, education, welfare, and environmental matters.

Advocacy was mentioned only five times and capacity building nineteen times in the NGO Co-ordination Bureau data. Both of them account for only 0.6 per cent. An explanation may be advanced. First, in normal circumstances only very few NGOs would readily identify advocacy as their main area of operation in the registration form, which is to suggest that their actual intended activities may be camouflaged under different activities. And in the case of capacity building it is possible that it could be subsumed under other functional activities such as education. Furthermore, in an interview situation people are most likely to explain what they actually do as opposed to what they are supposed to do.

What emerges from the two sources is that health and education are the two most important tangible functional activities. And the frequency of mention of the two services from the sources of data used is also very close.

Perhaps the information yielded by the data would have been more comparable were a more scientific method employed in the collection of the 'field' data. For the needs of this study, purposive sampling technique was used in order to include in the sample a large enough number of organisations engaged in development and in advocacy. The choice of this method was influenced by the need to build a database that would assist in addressing the key question in the study, namely, what roles do NGOs play in governance and development?

Studies on Zimbabwe present data not too dissimilar to the Kenyan situation. In regard to education, it is stated that 10 percent of all NGOs in that country are involved in this sector carrying out mainly direct literacy activity on the ground or research. 'Advocacy NGOs' account for more than 30 percent of the entire total, mainly focused on Women and Gender issues. A further 3 percent are concerned with child and human rights issues. On the humanitarian front, 15 percent of Zimbabwe NGOs are concerned with supporting communities in dire straits due to the agricultural upheaval. As a direct result, 30 percent of the NGOs are specifically concerned with agriculture and food security (Moyo et al 2000). In the developing countries generally, and in many African countries, the perception of NGOs as service providers is quite well established.

Operation by geographical areas

There is evidence that Kenya is well covered by the activities of NGOs. Of course, there are some areas that are over-represented. The reason appears to

be that in choosing where they go or from where they will operate, NGOs are sometimes influenced by parochial factors. This is to say that where the founders of an NGO happen to come from one area of the country, one would obviously expect a conspicuous presence of that NGO in the area where the person behind it comes from. This is so, for example, in the case of Partnership for Productivity Foundation (PfP) which was originally founded in Western Kenya in 1959 and has most of its activities in the area; although it has extended its activities to other provinces more recently.

Indeed, a closer examination of the operational areas reveals that most of the NGOs engaged in the implementation of development projects are rural oriented, although their operational headquarters, as would be expected, are usually located in key urban areas if not in Nairobi. This is critical for purposes of linking up with potential donors, most of whom are urban-based, and especially Nairobi-based.

There is also evidence which suggests that where developmental NGOs undertake activities in the urban areas, more often than not the NGOs involved happen to be foreign. These are the ones that are, for instance, often involved in the development of urban slums. A good example here is Action Aid, which besides operating in twenty-two districts in Kenya, is also involved in slum renewal in one area in Kariobangi, Nairobi.

Another important factor that influences the choice of operational area is patronage politics. A number of NGOs have patrons who usually set the operational agenda in terms of where to operate as well as the scope of operation. This, plus the fact that NGOs' activities are rarely coordinated, is responsible for the concentration of NGOs in some areas and their thinness or absence in others.

In the responses received during the interview, there was recurrent mention of Nyanza and Western Kenya (the latter is generally assumed to include Nyanza and Western provinces) as operational areas. Indeed there have been a lot of NGO activities in recent years in these two provinces, which also happen to be some of the poorer ones in the country. But a number of organisations claim nonetheless to be operating throughout the country. What is evident from the responses is that virtually all organisations whose primary objective is the mobilisation of the people behind a given cause (e.g. advocacy) are mainly urban-based, a typical example being the Citizens' Coalition for Constitutional Change (4Cs). However, there are exceptions, for example, the Greenbelt Movement, which although based in Nairobi, engages in activities that require it to have field outposts away from urban areas. Their presence is in this respect conspicuously felt in the Aberdare Mountains water catchment region, Western highlands, Lake Victoria water catchment Region

and the Coast Region. This is not to downplay its conspicuous presence in Nairobi and its environs where over the years it has courageously confronted the state over environmental degradation occasioned by rampant excision of the forest around Nairobi City.

A closer examination of operational areas of NGOs interviewed reveals that in the majority of cases, operational areas tend to be areas that are regarded to be relatively poor, which may explain why there is little reference to activities in Central Kenya and some parts of the Rift Valley province. But the shift seems to be a recent development.

To put the issue of geographical area of operation in a better perspective, the data obtained from the NGO Bureau are also presented below. It is a requirement that an NGO applying for registration indicates the geographical area(s) where it intends to operate. The information was analysed in this regard, firstly on a district-by-district basis and later aggregated the data on provincial basis. The district data is provided as Appendix II and does show quite clearly that of the twenty-seven districts with a frequency mention of at least one percent, up to thirteen are in the Rift Valley, which makes 48 percent, with Nyanza following with four districts, which makes 15 percent, with North Eastern and Central getting one mention at the bottom end, which makes 4 percent. The data show the Rift Valley as the province with the greatest concentration of NGO activities followed by Nyanza, Nairobi, Eastern, Western, Coast, Central, and North Eastern in that order, according to information provided by the individual NGOs in the registration forms. The data from the NGOs interviews and the Bureau does confirm that in fact there are more NGO activities in the western part of Kenya (Rift Valley, Nyanza and Western provinces) than in other areas of the country (with Nairobi being a special case).

Indeed one could explain the greater representation in the Rift Valley Province in particular, partly by the fact that it has some of the most deprived areas in the country (i.e. arid and semi-arid areas especially in the southern and northern areas) and at the same time it has some of the richest districts with well connected power brokers who are in position to influence the flow of services to their areas. The richest districts are to be found in the central part of Rift Valley.

Elsewhere on the continent, it has been observed that the scenario is not much different. In Zambia, the majority of NGOs are said to be urban-based with the concentration in Lusaka. In Ghana, during the early 1950s, NGOs were mainly based in the urban centres but with independence in 1957 there has been a sharp increase of NGOs activity in the rural areas over the years. On the other hand, a study in Nigeria found that unlike elsewhere on the continent,

the leading international NGOs had given Nigeria a wide berth, the reason being the perception that Nigeria has enough resources to go it alone. As a result, the organisations that have a presence in the country and especially in the indigenous rural areas are the CBOs (Adejumobi and Seteolu 2002).

Table 1: NGO representation per province

Province	Frequency
Rift Valley	1,078
Nyanza	593
Nairobi	514
Western	481
Eastern	469
Countrywide	453
Coast	304
Central	216
North Eastern	168
Not recorded	96
Others (vague)	46
Others (outside Kenya)	34
Total Frequency of Mention	4,452

In Namibia, before independence, NGO activity was restricted to the urban areas mainly located in the south of that country because of the struggle for independence where the northern region of the country being the stronghold of the freedom movement was avoided by NGOs for fear that their activities might be misconstrued as support for the liberation struggle (Totemeyer 2002). And in Zimbabwe, there are more NGOs operating in the rural areas today than in the urban areas (Moyo et al. 2000); while in South Africa their presence is more conspicuous in the poor urban areas.

Beneficiaries of the development efforts

There is considerable debate whether NGOs really target and reach the poorest segments. There seems to be a push for breadth rather than depth. In the worst cases, NGOs may be benefiting those who pretend to speak for the disadvantaged, but in reality they misappropriate funds intended for worthy causes (Stromquist 1998). The Kenyan study presented below attempts to

critically examine who actually benefits from NGO activities wherever they may be operating.

Of the twenty-two organisations interviewed, there are those whose activities are functionally specific and therefore target a particular given group in society. This is the case for example of the Federation of Women Lawyers and League of Women Voters. On the other hand, there are those that target particular geographical areas and are therefore more exclusive in a geographical sense. The best example here is Northern Aid whose activities target only six districts spread across Northern Kenya namely Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Moyale, Marsabit, and Isiolo.

There are also organisations that seem to be concerned mainly with income generation for the relatively disadvantaged members of the society. Examples here include Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC) which mainly targets small-scale entrepreneurs and the labour sector in general; Tropical Institute of Community Health and Development (TICH) whose core business is training of local business people who have taken the initiative to improve their own welfare. On the whole, most of the activities of NGOs seem to be directed mainly to local communities; and who actually benefits from their services is determined by what the organisation regards as its core function. In practice, most NGOs adopt the so-called community development approach according to which project activities are area-directed rather than directed to individuals. The general assumption underlying this approach is that those who actually need the service will always come forward upon knowing that a service is available. In order to ensure that indeed that is the case, some NGOs do establish an operational relationship with community based organisations (CBOs) that are supposed to know the nature and character of the need existing in a given area.

The organisations whose core function is to sensitise the masses about their constitutional rights and constitutionalism in general, as is the case with Citizens' Coalition for Constitutional Change, have tended in their initial stages to direct their activities to the urban areas and to rural elites. Only later have their activities involved the local communities usually through networking with community based organisations of similar shades and opinions. In a more direct way, the activities of these organisations have also targeted crucial but relevant institutions in the society i.e. relevant government organisations, or professional groups such as the Law Society. As is the nature of most organisations, a number of NGOs that were started to serve mainly narrowly defined objectives have over the years extended the scope of their activities and have, in the process, become more inclusive. This has for example been the case with African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) which in its formative years focused its activities exclusively on

women groups but which in the recent years has extended its activities to include men as well.

Reported impact of project activities

Edwards and Hulme (1992) state that the NGO sector experiences several bottlenecks that hinder the sector's ability to be more effective. Such limitations include: limited capacity for research; poor networking with other NGOs; absence of representativeness and accountability mechanisms within themselves; and weak links with the wider policy areas, resulting in their effects being small and localised. In a similar study, Bourne and Seager (2000) identify more or less the same limitations. As indicated above, what projects actually are implemented in a given area by NGOs is influenced both by the mandate and perception of the NGO and only occasionally by the demonstrated need on the ground; for as Mutiso points out, not many NGOs solicit community preferences on development (Mutiso 1985:65), preferring instead to do what they believe is good for the people. Below, an assessment is made of the performance of the NGOs included in the study with respect to what they have reportedly achieved in the various functional areas of their operation.

One of the basic needs, which is always in great scarcity especially in rural Kenya, is clean drinking water. This is the case regardless of the rainfall pattern in the country. But regarding the availability of water per se, the situation is much more serious in arid and semi-arid areas of the country. And it is in these areas that some NGOs have been actively engaged in addressing the problem. One such organisation, Northern Aid, has been very active in the provision of water in the northern part of the country, one of the most arid regions in the country. As a result of these activities, water sources have been established around settlement areas, bringing them much closer to the communities. This has had the impact of reducing time spent looking for and fetching water, and the pastoral communities now spend the time saved to engage in income generating activities.

Elsewhere, another NGO, Network for Water and Sanitation International (NETWAS), has reportedly succeeded in training several government and NGO officials in the most cost effective methods of water harnessing and sanitation in otherwise very harsh environments such as the drier parts of Machakos district. Another indirect benefit of the availability of water within reach of families is that female children hitherto involved in long distance water fetching can now find time to concentrate on schooling.

Another area where NGO activities have had a positive impact is the health sector. A number of NGOs have over the years been involved in the provision of this basic need, for example, the Christian Health Association

of Kenya (CHAK). It has been engaged in making available cheap medical facilities to needy communities throughout the country. A similar role is also played by Medical Assistance Programme International (MAP), though MAP's strategy is different in that it offers medicine to community based organisations on the assumption that the latter know better who the most vulnerable in society are. And more recently World Vision has also been playing an important role in this sector through the provision of free medicine to the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH), which in turn has enabled the two institutions (MoH and KNH) to provide subsidised or free healthcare to those who are unable to meet the cost.

In the area of education, only a few (10 percent) of the NGOs studied seem to be involved. This is understandable considering that historically the providers of education in the country have been the state and the religious organisations. It is only recently that the private sector has emerged as the third major provider of education, especially in the urban areas. Therefore, the few NGOs (apart from the religious organisations) that engage in the provision of educational facilities do so very selectively as is the case, for example, with Northern Aid whose activities in the recent years have targeted nomadic communities by providing school boarding facilities. The African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) and Action Aid have focused their activities on home based day care, thus providing accessible and affordable early childhood education and care for children under six years in selected needy districts. ANPPCAN is active in Siaya district (Nyanza Province) and Kiambu district (Central Province) while Action Aid is active in Samburu (Rift Valley province), Malindi (Coast Province) and Siaya.

Humanitarian intervention is yet another important function performed by some of the NGOs interviewed. The activities in this area mainly involve the provision of relief food to save lives in drought stricken areas and/or in the case of crop failure. Two of the organisations interviewed, namely Northern Aid and World Vision, are involved in the exercise. In this regard, it is also worth mentioning that this is an area (i.e. humanitarian intervention) in which a number of organisations not interviewed are involved; for example, World Food Programme (WFP) is, of course, the leading provider of relief food in Kenya in drought-stricken areas almost on a permanent basis, and a number of organisations such as UNICEF do from time to time intervene in situations of emergency, e.g. where there is a mysterious outbreak of disease.

The other area of intervention by the organisations interviewed is the rehabilitation of street children. One of the organisations interviewed, Entrepreneurship Development Centre, is directly involved in this service. This intervention involves the establishment of rehabilitation centres and/or

feeding centres for street children especially in the major urban areas, notably Nairobi.

As indicated above one of the areas mentioned by fifteen out of the twenty-two NGOs interviewed is capacity building. Capacity building involves a number of activities: providing technical advice, research and consultancy, direct training programmes, functional training, youth development programmes, computer education for informal sector workers, and various training programmes linked to skill improvement in various operational areas.

Of course it is difficult to quantify success in this area beyond simply indicating the extent and scope of the activity itself as indicated above. There are, however, a few organisations that have reportedly achieved some success on the ground in this area. One organisation (PfP), for example, claims to have trained 10,250 farmers in various technical skills since its inception in 1969 – that is approximately 350 farmers trained per year.

Since no visits were made to some of the facilities where the beneficiaries of the various training programmes receive services, it is not possible to assess the actual impact of the various capacity building efforts made as indicated above. What is important to say, however, is that capacity building has emerged as a major concern of NGOs, and that in their various ways the organisations interviewed are doing what is within their individual capacities.

Another major activity that most of the NGOs studied engage in is advocacy. As a function, advocacy manifests itself in several ways. First, there is a focus on awareness creation over an issue as by means such as civic education. Second, there is the lobbying (campaign) for support of the issue with stakeholders; and where no action is forthcoming on the basis of lobbying, the third stage of advocacy is usually mass mobilisation for action in order to dramatise the seriousness of the issue. Mass mobilisation is also used to put the issue on the action agenda when lobbying and negotiation fail.

The organisations involved in advocacy are of various types. There are those with a limited agenda, that is those with restricted sectional concerns, as for example of the League of Women Voters, FIDA, FEMNET, etc. There are those whose issues are of concern to the society in general, for example, the Greenbelt Movement and its environmental conservation campaign, 4Cs and its concern for a people driven constitutional order, etc. Most of the organisations that are engaged in advocacy actually emerged in the post-independence period and particularly since the resurrection of multipartyism in the country (1992). Prior to this period, the operational area of advocacy NGOs was generally restricted through harassment by state law enforcement agencies. And even presently, the government is still very suspicious of NGOs that it considers to have political inclinations.

A close examination indicates a number of recorded successes in the area of advocacy in the last few years. The Federations of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and League of Women Voters have succeeded in putting the gender issue on the 'political agenda'. The Greenbelt Movement has similarly succeeded in creating environmental awareness and in some cases in moving the state to reverse some unpopular decisions with implications for environmental degradation. Its fight to prevent environmental degradation around the city of Nairobi is widely known and acclaimed. A case in point is its mobilisation of Nairobi residents in the late 1980s to resist the excision of a large part of Uhuru Park (the famous and only major recreation park in the city centre) for allocation to 'developers' of a high-rise building. And currently, it is engaged in a major (media) campaign to rally Kenyans against a Government decision to excise/de-gazette parts of major forests for settling squatters and general development.

In addition, there are organisations which regard themselves largely as developmental in terms of their core functions, but which on closer examination of their activities are found also to be playing a major role in the area of advocacy. This they do through strategies intended to influence policy making in their operational areas. NETWAS, for example, indicated that it had made a significant contribution to the Water Rights Bill, while ITDG successfully lobbied for the review of building laws.

Although some respondents identified advocacy as their major preoccupation, it is also important to point out that all NGOs regardless of their stated core functions are in practice involved in development directly or indirectly. Those which have been, for example, referred to as advocacy NGOs are involved in establishing an environment in which people become aware of factors inhibiting their development and therefore their well being. To that extent, therefore, they are engaged in development endeavours however indirectly that may be. Of the twenty-two organisations surveyed nine preferred to identify themselves with development activities. These organisations are involved in the development of facilities used in provision of basic-needs services. These include health centres, training centres and the construction of water sources such as boreholes, protected springs, wells, etc. Those engaged in entrepreneurial development (e.g. Action Aid) are involved in providing financial resources for onward lending at concessionary rates to prospective small-scale entrepreneurs. In the agriculture sector, assistance has been given in the form of farm inputs (e.g. PfP). The same organisation is also involved in soil conservation and afforestation, food production and storage techniques, and irrigated agriculture. ITDG is similarly involved.

In the field of education there are at least three NGOs in the sample that have been directly involved in what can be characterised as educational development. For example, Northern Aid has built a full boarding school (Wargadud Primary School), ANPPCAN has built 120 home-based day care centres and Action Aid has two projects: strengthening primary education and early childhood development.

The lessons from experience in other African countries are similar. In Uganda for example most of the NGOs operating in the field of development, target specific areas and population groups (Namara 2002). To repeat, development is an inclusive undertaking, therefore, what has been said under it here is simply an abstraction from a wider spectrum, which is already presented in the preceding sections.

Modes/Methods used in the course of service provision

The method or approach that an organisation uses in its project support or service delivery is determined by a number of factors. Some of the factors are germane to the mode of operation of the individual organisations as outlined in their operative rules. On the other hand, others are inherent in the laws that have been enacted by the state to govern the operation of non-state actors in development. And there is of course also the local development situation to consider. With regard to this point, whether or not an NGO directly or indirectly participates in service provision or project management at the grassroots level would depend on whether or not there are Community Based Organisation (CBOs) which are engaged in similar activities and, more importantly whether the potential recipients or beneficiaries of the project are generally supportive or not of the actions being undertaken.

Of the organisations studied, fifteen provided succinct information on their mode of operation on the ground. From that information, two different modes of operation emerged. First, there are organisations that are directly involved with the local people in whatever services they are providing, alone or with other actors on the ground who are also involved in similar endeavours. More often than not, these are organisations with capacity to hire and deploy their own staff in areas where they have project activities and/or services to provide. And in the majority of cases the personnel are nationals even in projects that are under the control of foreign management. A few examples illustrate the point. One local NGO, Christian Partners Development Agency (CPDA), is directly positioned on the ground but at the same time relies on the local District Development Committees (DDCs) to legitimise its operation. It also relies on social development officers and community based organisations to initiate and maintain its projects. The other organisations that fall into this category are Northern Aid, Entrepreneurship Development

Centre (EDC), Community Initiative Support Services (CISS), and Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG). All of them have a presence in the project areas and often use it to liaise with the relevant government departments and in some cases, even call on the relevant government departments to evaluate their performance e.g. EDC.

But the mode of operation of advocacy organisations, even when direct, presents some variations. The mode of operation may rely on popular mobilisation. This they do through a network of facilitators. A good example here is the Citizens' Coalition for Constitutional Change (4Cs). However, there are some which rely on volunteers, mainly members of the organisation, who are usually mobilised whenever there is an issue to propagate or a cause around which there is a need to arouse people. Two organisations, FIDA and FEMNET, often use this approach.

Second, there is indirect involvement through proxies. In this category are organisations that rely either on other NGOs or CBOs once their initiated projects have 'taken off'. Whatever units they might have in the field are used as support and co-ordination units due to the thinness of staff. The mode of operation of Pathfinder International, World Vision and Action Aid are good illustrations of this. A case in point is the mode of operation of World Vision, which does encourage the setting up of elective management committees at community level, which it then empowers to take up the running of projects on its behalf. Of late it has been moving towards supporting partner community based organisations in the project choices, and in so doing, they have been steadily moving away from direct involvement. In this category too are organisations that are mainly involved in advisory/technical back up to projects already being implemented. Some of the examples here include NETWAS and MAP.

Similar modes of operation by NGOs are also found in other African countries, for example in Uganda, the Uganda Rural Development and Training Programme, an NGO operating out of Western Uganda, utilises the village level approach which involves collective involvement of community members in their own development. URDT works with over 20 villages and each village develops a Village Action Plan (VAP) which is incorporated in the URDT action plan (Namara 2002).

In Zimbabwe, initiatives by NGOs and Church organisations with strong community roots include the Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT) which engages in AIDS support, education and counseling and offers home based care to people with AIDS in the Masvingo area. Another NGO is the AIDS Counseling Trust (ACT). This is engaged in developing appropriate AIDS training materials and courses to care providers in counseling and patient care. ACT also provides direct counseling and support services to persons

and families affected by HIV/AIDS and promotes the establishment of self-help groups by persons with HIV/AIDS (Moyo et al. 2000).

Relationship with government ministries

Edwards and Hulme (1992:16) argue that 'traditionally, most NGOs have been suspicious of governments, their relationships varying between benign neglect and outright hostility'. Two suggested factors controlling the nature of relations between NGOs and the state are regime type, and function served by the NGO. Cross (1997) asks, with regard to state-NGO relationships, whether NGOs should be competitors or partners with the state, that is, whether NGOs should maintain their distance so as to attain autonomy, or to work hand-in-hand with the state projects.

Indeed, the mode of operation of NGOs in the field has been a major bone of contention between these organisations and the state. In Kenya, the government has tended to take the view that whatever assistance these organisations might want to offer ought to be channelled through the relevant government ministries. To that end, the government now requires all NGOs to channel their project proposals through the relevant District Development Committees (DDCs) before they can be allowed to operate on the ground. This requirement has been a source of friction between the government and the NGOs. Most NGOs feel that the requirement has the effect of delaying the implementation of projects since the meetings of DDCs are infrequent and the NGOs also do not have control over when they receive the funds that they commit to various uses. Furthermore, there is usually pressure from the donors to commit funds once they are received, which makes it difficult for the recipients to have the use of the funds processed through the DDCs. In addition, there are those NGOs that respond to emergency situations, and this requires that they act in good time to save the situation. Here, again, processing the action through the DDCs just will not work. The matter is further compounded by the fact that in some districts DDCs meet very rarely.

However, the evidence available suggests that the NGOs have managed to find an 'exit option' which involves working closely with departmental heads who then act as their link to the relevant authorities that might be interested to know what they do on the ground. But, as would be expected, there are some NGOs that feel that there should be no need to have their activities sanctioned by the government since, in their own perception, the government is least interested in development programmes for the poor. In the majority of cases, these are the well-connected NGOs, who have powerful patrons capable of shielding them from any harassment by state agents.

Of the twenty-two organisations interviewed, fifteen claimed to have cordial relations with the government and which had resulted in consultations,

joint programming and co-ordination of project management with the relevant government agencies. This is corroborated by similar studies which have been done in the Agro-forestry sector in Siaya, Machakos, Siaya and Kisii, and also on the activities of KENGO and Mazingira Institute in the same section (Achieng' and Wellard 1995). These studies reported that there had been a lot of co-operation between the NGOs and CBOs on the one hand and the government departments on the other, in all the districts studied. In Siaya for instance, the study by Achieng et al., established that the NGOs operating in the agricultural sector had established links with the governments' Agricultural and Forestry department extension workers and other projects operating in the area, as a result of which NGOs received technical support from the ministerial staff as they in turn provided a badly needed resource: transport for the government staff. James Kaluli's study of Machakos also found that there had been collaboration between the NGOs and government ministries, which yielded benefits for both parties. And in his study of Rural Afforestation in Machakos, Siaya and Kisii, Mung'ala (1995) established that there had been co-operation between the NGOs and the forest extension service division of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and that this manifested itself also at regional and grassroots levels in various activities related to forestry development such as research, seed collection, handling, storage and distribution, land use etc. Arum's (1995) study on KENGO though a little critical in that it reported some difficulty in establishing trust and a cordial working relationship between KENGO and the relevant government department, Forestry, nonetheless found there had been concerted efforts to establish links with other actors in the sector. And finally the work by Buck covering the period 1980-91, established that the NGOs had played catalytic roles in bridging the gulf between government agencies and the beneficiaries, and that the collaboration between the NGOs and other service providers in forestry development (such as ICRAF, KEFRI and the Forestry Department) had led to the co-operation in the design and implementation of the projects.

From the evidence available, therefore, it appears that by and large there has been sufficient co-operation between the NGOs and the relevant government ministries engaged in project development and service provision at the local level. However, the relationship has not been completely rosy or without some hiccups. There is however evidence to suggest that there have been areas of friction from time to time, largely arising from differences over project location and financial management.

Then there are two organisations that characterise their relationship with the state as basically hostile. These are 4Cs and CPDA. According to the latter, their relationship has been hostile because of the alternative leadership

approach they propagate. Of course this kind of approach cannot go well with the Provincial Administration who have a distaste for any organisation that tries to establish itself as an alternative locus of influence. That may also explain the hostility of the state towards 4Cs since its mode of operation, too, tends to ignore the established authority structures.

A third group made up of five organisations – NGO council, ECONews AFRICA, EDC, League of Women Voters and Greenbelt Movement – report that the relationship with the government is characterised by ups and downs. When they are operating in some areas, there is some co-operation from the state, the next time they are in a different area, which the government regards as ‘sensitive’, then all of a sudden there is a change of attitude. The case in point is the experience of EDC, which for some time has been trying to act as mediators in the conflict between the Pokot and the Marakwet (in north Rift Valley Province) as a way of pacifying the situation, thereby enabling them to carry out their development mandate. Naturally the government has looked on this as an attempt to undermine its authority over what it regards as a ‘sensitive’ security issue. And the mobilisation approach adopted by 4Cs and its objective of challenging the existing laws has tended to put the state on the defensive and naturally has attracted negative reaction from the state. This is true also of the activities of the League of Women Voters, particularly regarding their manifestly political activities in search of women candidates for various elective positions. On the whole, however, where a government ministry or department realises that an NGO is in a position to strengthen its hand in the discharge of its responsibilities, the co-operation has usually been forthcoming.

Elsewhere, Maipose's (Maipose 2002) study in Zambia found that the major source of conflict between the state and civil society organisations tended to be the divergence of opinion on what role the organisations should play. A similar study in Ghana (Ayee 2002) concluded that governments are inclined to monitor NGOs more in fear of political competition rather than a genuine concern for the level of on-the-ground accountability of the NGOs in their regions of activity. Ayee adds that the relationship (between NGO and state) was better at the local level than the national level.

Governments in general will on their own attempt to avoid duplication of efforts and therefore in many cases would rely on NGOs to carry out their projects effectively. However, should there be a lack of professionalism and accountability leading to the stalling of projects that had been given the government nod and even physical support, the latent friction usually becomes overt.

In Tanzania, the period before the liberalisation of the economy was characterised by good working relationship between the NGOs and the state, but during the post liberalisation period, which has witnessed the proliferation of NGOs in the country, the government has been trying to put in place an effective machinery to control the activities of these organisations (Munishi 2002).

In Namibia the government has laid down policy guidelines on the functioning of NGOs through the National Planning Commission. Like elsewhere there is a level of mistrust on the government side fuelled by the belief that the level of funding of NGOs is not commensurate with the results of their activities on the ground (Totemeyer 2002). Studies on CAR, Gabon, the Congo indicate the existence of an easy relationship between the state and the NGO (Charanle 1996).

In general one could say that the relationship between the state and those organisations that engage in advocacy of human rights related issues has fluctuated from bad to worse. The Kenyan study, presented above is only illustrative. Which leads to the question; how can the relationship between the state and the NGOs be improved? Bench and Lipietz (1998) list the factors that could lead to a successful relationship with the state as: common objectives and strategies in a particular intervention; agreement on the means of achieving the objectives; and a shared commitment to principles of mutuality, respect, cooperation and collaboration. Contributing towards the same end, Campwell (1997) argues that donors have the ability to smooth out differences between the state and non-state actors. This is because both the NGO and the government are dependent on the donor for aid resources and secondly, that the donors have relationships with both parties. Another way of addressing this issue is through improving flow of information between NGOs and governments through the funding of coordination bodies for joint NGO-government meetings.

Funding

Bratton (1990) and others have pointed out that while popular support and self-financing provide the basis for legitimacy; official (state) funding erodes legitimacy. A broader question can be asked, whether NGOs can be accountable to the poor at all if they are funded by donors, as Van der Heijden (1987:106) says, quoting a traditional African proverb: 'if you have your hand in another man's pockets, you must move when he moves'. In the final analysis, whether the presence of NGOs makes any impact or not on local level development would tend to depend on the financial resources at their disposal. From the interviews, it is quite evident that practically all NGOs receive assistance from foreign donors in one form or another. Fifty percent

of the organisations interviewed receive their financial support exclusively from donor sources. About 41 percent, reported receiving money from both foreign and local sources, and the remaining 9 percent were rather reluctant to reveal their sources, with one senior interviewee admitting that she did not have full knowledge about her organisation's financial sources. For the organisations that claim to be partly sourcing their finances locally, the sources which recurred throughout the interviews were: fees and consultancies for services rendered, annual membership contributions for those organisations which recruit members, individual donors, sale of literature, training programmes, conferences and seminars, and in the case of one organisation (FIDA) a few locally-based corporations.

From the foregoing, therefore, it becomes very clear that the NGO sector is largely dependent on donor financing. One author identified some of the major sources of NGO funding as USAID, UNICEF, UNHCR, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and Oxfam, and the 'smaller' sources as overseas churches and related charitable organs (Ngethe 1991). But how much money is involved or actually changes hands is regarded as top secret by NGO managers, be they foreign or local. It is this lack of transparency about financial flows that has enabled the managers of NGOs, most of whom are also the founders of the NGOs in the case of local ones, to run these organisations as though they were personal fiefdoms. Therefore it is difficult to tell what proportion of the funds that are remitted from abroad does actually end up in supporting service provision at the local level. In fact, a number of NGOs are regarded as outlets for self-employment for those who establish them. In the circumstances it is very unlikely that preference will be given to project support over personal monetary interests.

With regard to the activities of the advocacy NGOs, the fact that they get support from foreign sources has been a major source of friction with the government which perceives that support in terms of an attempt by foreigners to undermine state integrity and 'stability'. Hence the accusation levelled against such organisations that they are 'agents of foreign masters bent on destabilising the state'.

Of the organisations that claim to receive part of their money from internal sources, five of them are engaged in advocacy and therefore receive money from local individuals who perceive the success of these organisations as being beneficial to them. Indeed, those which are more politically oriented, seem to receive such support from those that are likely to benefit from their political support.

The experience elsewhere in Africa suggests that most NGOs are still dependent on donor funding. In Zambia, for example, the sources of funding are largely foreign, leading to the fear that there is a development of a new

type of aid dependency. Studies by Maipose on Zambia, Namara on Uganda, Totemeyer on Namibia (in Oyugi 2002) all point to similar experiences; so too does the Moyo et al (2000) study of Zimbabwe. On the whole many writers and researchers on the subject point out that with the possible exception of South Africa the NGO sector on the continent is weak and dependent on support from international agencies (Bratton 1989, Edwards 1999).

Influence on good governance

Good governance is responsive governance. Its hallmarks are: the rule of law; a fair and efficient system of justice; broad popular involvement in political, social and economic processes; the capacity to manage development; and accountability and transparency in the management of public affairs (Oyugi 2001 esp. pp. iii–xix). If indeed these are the major ingredients of good governance, then the question that arises is what roles have NGOs and CBOs played in influencing government positions on these issues?

The discussion begins by focusing on whether NGOs have or have no influence on the government on matters relating to project management. In this regard, the analysis specifically seeks to find out whether the NGOs studied have had influence on policy choices, project choices and project design.

It is generally believed that Kenya is one of the most open countries in Africa as far as interest group intervention in policy making is concerned. One of the most influential interest groups in the policy making process in the area of development is the donor community, both bilateral and multilateral. And if we consider that it is the same donors that finance the activities of the NGOs, which are actively involved in the development process, then one cannot help concluding that by extension developmental NGOs too have a lot of influence on policy choices in their respective areas of operation. To the extent that NGOs, whether indigenous or foreign, receive financial support from outside Kenya, they are in many respects the instruments that those who finance them use to further their agenda. It is common knowledge that NGOs from the 'North' do receive considerable financial support from their respective governments, either directly or indirectly, and are therefore bound to operate according to the values and stipulations of the financing authorities. In a recent study, Shaw (1990), for example observed: 'by the late 1980s, development NGOs in the North raised over \$3 billion from private sources and received a further \$1.5 billion from Northern governments, which altogether accounted for 15 per cent of all official foreign aid'.

Indeed, quite a number of organisations interviewed claimed that they have had a lot of influence on government policy choices in their respective areas of operation. Most of the organisations mentioned specific areas in

which they have influenced government policies, and some of them indicated that they had gone as far as establishing mechanisms through which they monitor the policy making process in government with a view to identifying the appropriate point of intervention. In the water sector, for example, the NGOs operating in this sector e.g. ITDG and NETWAS have established relationships with the relevant government agencies responsible for this sector in such a way that in the process of formulating water development policies they are often invited to the relevant meetings where policy related matters are discussed. It is through this kind of relationship that NETWAS, for example, is credited with influencing the government policy on the choice of the appropriate technology in water supply as reflected in the Water Rights Bill currently in parliament. Evidence is also available, though skeletal, to indicate that NGOs have also played some role in influencing the choice of project design. This is exemplified by the government's adoption of micro-electric schemes which ITDG have been experimenting with in the construction of small dams in, for example, Chuka in Meru (Eastern Province) and Kerugoya in Kirinyaga (Central Province).

In the health sector, a number of organisations work closely with the Ministry of Health (MoH). Indeed a number of organisations have been co-opted as members of health sectoral working committees, which committees are responsible for the initial identification of policies that find expression in the national development plan. Action Aid, for example, is an active participant in the policy formulation process. The presence of NGOs has also been felt in certain operational areas like testing of new and innovative health reform ideas, which Engender Health (formerly AVSC) does from time to time.

As far as education is concerned, some NGOs have played a major role in influencing not only the policy choices but also in determining the location or siting of specific projects. This is illustrated by the activities of Northern Aid in its operational districts in Northern Kenya where it has influenced the siting of schools in areas with greatest need.

Through capacity building efforts, a number of government officers have benefited from training courses designed and delivered by NGOs. NGOs have also influenced, through capacity building, the adoption and promotion of appropriate technology (e.g. ITDG), or the setting up of the Media Practitioners and Model Community Media Task Force (e.g. ECONEWS). Therefore, in many respects one could say that NGOs have played some role in influencing the management of development programmes by influencing government policy choice, choice of project type as well as design. But how much of this has been achieved varies from one sector to another depending

on the type of NGO that is involved. If at the same time an NGO is the financier of the project its influence has been more extensive.

However, with regard to their role in bringing about good governance in the politico-administrative sphere, they have had to contend with the mistrust of their intentions by the state. The decision to create a bureau (NGO Coordinating Bureau) in the Office of the Vice-President and Ministry of Home Affairs was intended to create a machinery through which the government could monitor their activities. The manifestly politicised Provincial Administration has also been reminded from time to time by the relevant authorities of the need to monitor the activities of both international and local NGOs operating in their respective areas. The main target of this pronouncement has been those NGOs that seem to work closely with the more 'politically' oriented civil society organisations. On the whole, however, it could be said that such organisations would not have managed on their own without financial support from international donors. In that respect, therefore, one cannot help concluding that in the field of political liberalisation the NGOs have made an impression too. In particular, NGOs have been actively involved in the ongoing debate and process of constitutional reforms. A significant number of commissioners sitting in the Constitutional Review Commission of Kenya have been fronted/nominated by NGOs.

However, the NGO sector itself is not without its shortcomings. Many NGOs are considered 'oligarchies' whose paths are determined by the founder's and directors' perception of a community's needs. As Wellard and Copestake concluded in their study, 'few NGOs (have) either formal, democratic systems for choosing office bearers, or transparent mechanisms for canvassing grassroots opinion' (Wellard and Copestake 1993). In the Kenyan case, nepotism is a widespread practice among NGOs. A case in point is the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK), which has been associated with nepotism in the determination of its office bearers. It has experienced crises from time to time in its internal management as leaders try to manipulate the process of electing office-bearers. At one point (1988-1996), all three top officers of the organisation were close blood relations (*Presence magazine* 1996).

On the issue of accountability, NGOs are viewed as focusing their attention on their legal obligations to the donors rather than their moral obligations to their client-groups (Cross 1997). This is so because the poor do not have the ability to force 'accountability' on NGOs, nor do they have the legal or economic standing to do so since they do not, in the majority of cases, pay for the services they receive. There are thus a number of NGOs involved in the misappropriation of funds, although this is difficult to trace. And some interviewees expressed the now common view that some NGOs only exist to

go round the world looking for funding. Others have left incomplete projects behind but still go on to write glowing proposals for new areas to attract more funds. The names of two Nairobi-based NGOs involved in this practice were given to the writer during the interviews. Indeed one writer has observed that PVOs/NGOs are too secretive about their operations and has suggested that they need clearly to state the resources they control and on what and where they use them (Mutiso 1985). According to the ideology of IMF/World Bank, what Mutiso suggests is an important attribute of good governance in economic sense.

Concluding summary

Non-Governmental Organisations have been key partners in the development process in Kenya since the colonial period. Over the years their number has increased tremendously and this has been accompanied by the diversification of their functions. However, their activities essentially parallel and complement those of the state (see e.g. Fowler 1995; Tandon 2000).

Today, the sector is made up of indigenous and non-indigenous organisations with complementary and often overlapping roles and functions. In the post-independence period, their role has been felt especially in arid and semi-arid districts of the country where the state's service provision has been wanting due to a variety of factors. But when one considers basic services as a whole, the NGO sector is a micro-actor compared to the state (Kanyinga 1995).

Their tendency to bypass state machinery in the performance of their roles has tended to attract suspicion from the state, which in the more recent years has tried to subject their activities to bureaucratic controls. Friction has been experienced, especially where the state has viewed the activities of a given NGO as manifestly political.

Evidence gathered in the interviews with personnel from twenty two organizations engaged in either development and/or advocacy suggest the following situations:

- (a) Although their functions are highly diversified, most of them operate in the areas of advocacy, capacity building, health, water and humanitarian intervention.
- (b) Their activities are spread throughout the country but concentration in some areas has been reported.
- (c) The beneficiaries served are sometimes other organisations operating at the grassroots level, while in some cases services are provided directly to communities.
- (d) The impact of NGOs has been felt especially in times of national crisis as when they provide food relief in food-starved areas or when there is famine.

In general though, their complementary role has increasingly been felt in many service sectors as state capacity to deliver has dwindled over the years against a background of rising demand and shrinking resources.

- (e) The mode of operation of some organisations – that is by relating directly with the beneficiaries in service provision instead of through the relevant state agencies – has been a source of friction. Nonetheless, the spirit of co-existence has emerged, even though uneasy at times.
- (f) The relative operational autonomy that the NGO sector enjoys lies mainly in its financial self-sufficiency. A close examination of financial sources suggest that almost all NGOs rely on sources outside the country; which also explains why the state is sometimes jittery about their conduct.
- (g) More recently, the pro-democratisation NGOs have played an important role in forcing the state to relax its hitherto authoritarian character in the conduct of public affairs.

The situation, which the foregoing observations reveal, is that the role of NGOs in both development and governance is bound to increase with time in Kenya. The Kenyan experience is not unique. The experiences of the African countries cited in this study indicate that while the NGO sector is playing a major role in both governance and development at the local level in Africa, the sector is still faced with many challenges, which must still be overcome.

Appendix I

List of NGOs interviewed in Kenya

1. Northern Aid [developmental]
2. Partnership for Productivity Foundation (PfP) [developmental]
3. Christian Partners Development Agency (CPDA) [development]
4. Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC) [development]
5. Community Initiative Support Services (CISS) [developmental]
6. Tropical Institute of Community Health and Development in Africa (TICH) [development]
7. Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) [development]
8. Christian Health Association of Kenya (CHAK) [development]
9. Network for Water and Sanitation International (NETWAS) [developmental]
10. African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) [development]
11. Action Aid [development]

12. World Vision Kenya [development]
13. Pathfinder International [advocacy]
14. Citizens' Coalition for Constitutional Change (4Cs) [advocacy]
15. African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) [advocacy]
16. National NGO Council [advocacy and development]
17. League of Women Voters [advocacy]
18. Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) [advocacy]
19. Engender Health (formerly AVSC) International [advocacy]
20. Greenbelt Movement [development and advocacy]
21. ECONews AFRICA [advocacy]
22. Medical Assistance Programme International (MAP) [advocacy and development]
23. NGO Coordination Bureau [Regulatory body].

Appendix II: NGO areas of operation

Areas of geographical operation

Provinces	Frequency	Provinces	Frequency
Countrywide	453	Rift Valley	
Nairobi	507	Kajiado	111
Other areas in Nairobi	7	Nakuru	108
	Total 514	Turkana	107
Nyanza		Baringo	80
Kisumu	147	Narok	73
Siaya	72	Bomet	70
Homa Bay	69	Kericho	59
Nyanza (general)	51	Samburu	55
Kisii	46	Uasin Gishu	54
Suba	37	Rift Valley (general)	53
Migori	37	West Pokot	47
Rachuonyo	35	Trans Mara	45
Nyamira	26	Nandi	45
Nyando	20	Trans Nzoia	45
Kuria	19	Laikipia	44
Bondo	17	Marakwet	24

Areas of geographical operation (continued)

Provinces	Frequency	Provinces	Frequency
Gucha	17	Koibatek	22
	Total 593	Bureti	19
Eastern		Keiyo	17
Kitui	91		Total 1,078
Machakos	71	Western	
Makueni	64	Kakamega	100
Mwingi	62	Busia	88
Embu	42	Bungoma	77
Meru	42	Vihiga	77
Isiolo	34	Western (general)	32
Marsabit	26	Mt. Elgon	27
Eastern (general)	20	Lugari	24
Mbeere	17	Butere	23
	Total 469	Teso	18
Coast		Mumias	15
Mombasa	80		Total 481
Kilifi	47	Central	
Kwale	45	Kiambu	51
Coast (general)	40	Kirinyaga	33
Tana River	40	Central (general)	32
Taita-Taveta	24	Muranga	31
Lamu	16	Thika	29
Malindi	12	Nyandarua	27
	Total 304	Maragua	13
North Eastern			Total 216
Garissa	53		
Mandera	35		
North Eastern (general)	34		
Wajir	32		
Moyale	14		
	Total 168		

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