



**CIVIL SOCIETY, THE STATE
& ROLES OF NGOS**

by Rajesh Tandon

IDR Reports
Volume 8, Number 3
1991

CIVIL SOCIETY, THE STATE, AND ROLES OF NGOS

by Rajesh Tandon

Rajesh Tandon is the founding Coordinator of the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi. The author thanks Dave Brown, Francisco Vio Grossi, Michael Bratton, Jane Covey, Paul Wangoola, John Gaventa, Martha Farrell, Mark Leach and Rob Hollister for sharing their reflections on a previous draft of this paper.

INTRODUCTION

The decade of the eighties brought development NGOs into the centre of discourse, policy and programming of national and international development institutions and aid agencies. Yet, much of the conceptualization of this phenomenon, both by NGOs themselves and those interested in them, remained inadequate. Note the following trends:

- * New democratic regimes (like the government in Chile) are calling for "dismantling" of NGOs, as state agencies take over.
- * Most donors in Europe and North America look at NGOs as transitory, serving a limited purpose for a limited time; then moving on or dissolving themselves. Support for institution-building of NGOs is rather rare and limited.
- * Political and bureaucratic elites in many countries of the South are setting up NGO-like institutions (or GONGOs) under State and/or Party control with a view to access resources.
- * Bi- and Multi-lateral aid agencies are eager to directly fund NGOs as inexpensive service-delivery mechanisms for diverting resources away from "wasteful" and expensive government agencies.
- * The appeals for institutional pluralism in Eastern Europe as a contribution to democracy gets bogged into private economic enterprise on the one hand, and multiparty politics on the other.

These trends, in debate and practice, seem to be based on a particular view of NGOs and what is their role in the contemporary context. In this paper, these underlying conceptualizations of NGOs and their roles are critiqued and an alternative formulation is presented.

CURRENT APPROACHES

Recent conceptualization of the growing strength, visibility and importance of the NGOs engaged in promoting development have tended to create an impression that NGOs, voluntary organizations and development institutions are essentially representing the third sector. A series of studies, documents and proclamations have resulted in the emerging theorization of the growing importance of the third sector. In this framework,

the Government becomes the first sector and the corporations or the business the

second sector (see e.g., Weisbord, 1975; Douglas, 1983; Van Til, 1988; O'Neill, 1989; etc.).

This conceptualization tends to emphasize the importance of recognizing the contributions of the third sector, composed of voluntary organizations, development institutions, neighborhood groups, citizen's initiatives, etc. in strengthening a variety of democratic practices, values and traditions in the society. Some theorists have even gone to the extent of articulating the pre-eminent role of the actors of the third sector in the emergence and ensuring of democracies in modern nation states (Hyden, 1983; Diamond, et. al., 1989; O'Neill, 1989; Bratton, 1989). While such formulations further demonstrate the significance of NGOs, they inadequately explain the underlying reasons for the same. There is a need for a closer look at this theorization in order to develop a better appreciation of what institutions, associations, networks of this so-called "third" sector do represent in our societies.

The First Sector

The first question is to examine whether the Government, or the State in its modern conceptualization, really represents that primacy--the first sector. Historically, since the second world war, a modern concept of nation-state has been imposed on many newly independent countries of the South. Trying to overcome the heritage of the colonial rule, these countries embraced a concept of State which was alien to their social, cultural and political milieu (Rothchild and Chazan, 1988). However, within the forty years, in many countries of the South, the State has become a dominant actor. It is not only regulating macro, political and global relations but also determining the manner in which the relationships across families, communities and institutions will be managed. This may tend to create an impression that the State is the primary actor in the contemporary societies. However, the reality on the ground is not necessarily so.

The most telling example of this comes from Africa, where the continuous process of erosion of the legitimacy and power of the State can be witnessed in country after country over the last decade. State apparatus has become fragile, incapable of coherent management of national economy and politics and certainly not respected or accepted by the citizens (Hyden, 1983; Diamond et. al. 1989; Rothchild and Chazan, 1988).

Despite signs of a powerful and ever expanding State in many Asian countries, the reality on the ground is also quite different. Large sections of people and many segments of society continue to remain outside the purview of the State. Its policies, agencies and agents have lost legitimacy with large sections of society. Pervasive black market economies and subsistence survival economies are merely an illustration of this disengagement from the State (Rothchild and Chazan, 1988).

The continuous movement between a military dictatorship and a representative form of governance in many countries of Latin America seems to also indicate that the State has not yet acquired the kind of primacy that the theorists provide in their conceptualization of the State as the first sector.

The Second Sector

The second difficulty comes in characterizing the business or the corporate world, or the market economy, as the second sector in our societies.

First of all, many countries in the South, and increasingly countries in the North too, witness informal economies and sectors which are not hooked to the national or international formal economy. We also witness the large presence of self-employed, family economic enterprises and activities, which can hardly be construed as a corporation, or for that matter, conceptualized to share the same dynamics, culture and perspective as the modern corporate world.

Despite wishes to the contrary, the market economy of many countries in the South, and more recently several countries in the North, continues to show severe distortions and imperfections. This generates the problematic of equating economic development with performance of the market. Certainly, the dominant actors in this sector, the corporate institutions, and multi-national corporations, do not necessarily represent the totality of the economic activities carried out in most countries of the South, and increasingly in the countries of the North, too. So, it is difficult to call the "market sector" the second sector. Not only is it problematic to call the State as the first sector, and business as the second, but it is also inadequate to imply "residual" or "left-over" (whatever is not State and not business) as the third sector of NGOs, citizen associations, and neighborhood and community organizations.

In order to understand the role of NGOs, voluntary institutions and associations, citizen's initiatives, neighborhood groups, development organizations, etc. in contemporary society, we need to approach the question of these institutions from a different perspective. We need to understand the relationship between the State and Civil Society in order to situate the role of NGOs and voluntary development organizations in that context. This will help us move beyond the "residual" conceptualization of such institutions.

THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

It is interesting to note that over the last fifty years most theorizing and conceptualization in political science, political economy and sociology has been focused on definitions, re-definitions and re-formulations of the State on the question of governance. This governance has been equated with the functioning of Governments. Very little thinking has been done on the question of Civil Society (Bratton, 1991). This is symptomatic of the growing dominance of the State in defining the paradigms of development and the frameworks of relationships in contemporary societies.

The State also became equated with a geo-political configuration following the second World War. Yet, prior to the second World War, or, even prior to the colonial rule, centuries of culture and communities continued to exist and flourish in different parts of the world without the modern concept of State. What provided the basis for the generation of science, technology, culture, art, music, education, etc. in these communities? Obviously, it was the result of the configuration of Civil Society.

Civil Society

In the contemporary sense, with the pre-eminent dominance of the State and its agencies in many countries of the South, it is very difficult to define Civil Society, unless we make reference to those historical contexts and dimensions of Civil Society. As we see in many African countries, with the withdrawal or the withering away of the State, the rich associational life of the communities provides the basis for survival and growth of individuals, families and communities (Bratton, 1989).

The concept, structure and practice of the modern State appears to be an alien experience for many societies of the South. The colonial rule followed by imposition of the "modern" State resulted in a disconnectedness between people and governance in such societies (Rothchild and Chazan, 1988). Post-colonial ruling elites of these countries then attempted to consolidate State power. But the gap between the State and the people continued. The State was seen as the unifying structure of governance of geographical and political entities called nation-states. The experience of the form of governance in Europe and North America was thus imposed on the countries of the South as a method of ensuring global interlinkages and continued political and economic dominance of the North over the South. The nationalist fervour of newly independent countries of the South reinforced the tendency to concentrate in the State (and its apparatus) all material, institutional and ideological resources.

Dominance of the State

The State, so conceptualized, plays an increasingly dominant role in determining every aspect of existence of the families and the individuals in contemporary societies. The State makes macro-economic policies; it determines law and order; it has taken over functions of education and health care; it focuses on issues of agricultural development; it has performed tasks of industrial development.

In many situations, as the State begins to acquire greater role, it begins to take over economic, political, cultural and social functions which were till then played within Civil Society. It began to regulate markets, fix prices and costs; it began to define incomes; it began to provide employment and jobs; it regulated currencies, money supply, capital, etc.; it took over functions of art, music and culture; it took over education; it took over health care; it began to play an increasingly overpowering and overarching role in contemporary societies.

Consequences

Several consequences occurred with this predominance of the State. The first consequence, which is most evident from the recent experiences of Eastern Europe, is the dismantling of Civil Society. Historically rooted associations, neighborhood organizations, citizen initiatives, voluntary organizations disappeared systematically. They were viewed as "obstacles" to progress, or "enemies" of the State, and were slowly replaced by various agencies and departments of the State intending to perform similar functions.

Struggle for the expansion of colonial rule in countries (like India) was resisted by the associations of Civil Society, be they tribal organizations or citizen groups. Thus, such

formations were seen as "enemies" of the colonial State. With the end of colonial rule, the form of governance established before Independence continued in countries like India. More importantly, the attitudes and perspectives which informed governance during colonial rule continued to define the practice of governance in newly independent countries of the South. These perspectives and attitudes continued to view institutions of Civil Society as "obstacles" to (at best), or enemies of (at worst) the State and its agencies.

Where the power of the State and its reach did not go up to the grass-roots, the associational life of poor, distant rural communities continued to survive and thrive, as can be seen in many countries of the South (in tribal and rural areas and remote mountain regions). This dismantling of the institutions of Civil Society became a hallmark of establishing the dominance and the pre-eminence of the State.

The second consequence of this was de-legitimization or de-recognition of old institutions of Civil Society, which once played similar functions now being performed by the agencies of the State. Thus wherever institutions within Civil Society continued to play the role of providing education or health care or governance, these institutions were questioned and de-legitimized by the newly emerging institutions and actors under the sponsorship of the State. The State in seeking its own legitimisation did not tolerate any other form or basis of legitimisation in society.

In one way or the other, traditional education practices, historically-rooted health care practices within communities, institutions of local self-governance, etc. were de-legitimized and de-recognized, as the State and its agencies began to take over those functions. Undermining their material base and taking over their "jurisdiction" were the two dominant strategies by which the State induced this de-legitimation. In the face of popular resistance to such attempts at de-legitimation of local institutions in many countries of the South, the State attempted to play similar roles under the guise of "voluntary" organizations. Thus in a country like India, many State sponsored voluntary organizations -- GONGOs or Government NGOs as we call them -- emerged in the place of the de-legitimized and de-recognized traditional institutions of Civil Society performing similar functions in the community (PRIA, 1989).

A third consequence of this was to "homogenize" policies, programmes, perspectives and solutions. While institutions of Civil Society responded to the unique social, cultural, political, economic, geographical and ecological milieu of their communities, the State, out of necessity, began to create uniform policies, structures, practices, approaches, officials, etc. This uniformity resulting from a desire for universalization, has led to homogenization of models, approaches, practices, structures and programmes.

One of the major consequences of this homogenization has been the de-recognition, de-legitimization and dismantling of social diversity and pluralism from our societies. Bio-diversity is essential to the survival of the life on this planet; social diversity and pluralism are critical elements in the survival of vibrant societies and communities of human beings (Brown, 1991). Homogenization of educational approaches, homogenization of health programmes, homogenization of economic models, homogenization of dress, language, music, etc., led to a steady decline of social

diversity. This has significantly undermined the capacities of communities and societies to deal with diverse situations and contexts.

A parallel trend of this homogenization within the countries is the growing homogenization internationally, as the Governments continue to be linked to each other internationally. In this last decade of the 20th century, we are witnessing a phenomenon that growing internationalization of economies and the linkages across the Governments is resulting in the growing homogenization of culture and the destruction of social diversity in art, music, education, health-care, economic development, agriculture, textile, pottery etc. etc.

Fourth, the ordinary citizens began to be viewed as, and become, mere "consumers." Instead of continuing their role as citizens, with engagement in governance and community life, with being actors in and producers of culture, economy, society, people became mere "consumers" of culture, products and policies. The active citizen was socialized into a passive consumer and lost the civic and political role of citizenship. The State bureaucracy then treats citizens as "clients," passively receiving development produced by the State.

A fifth consequence of the growing dominance of the State has been the growing power of the bureaucracy. Official structures, procedures, mechanisms, institutions and officials themselves begin to acquire a life of their own beyond the political perspective of the ruling elite. The power of the bureaucracy to control, to regulate, and to be rigid has been variously experienced and numerous documented over the last fifty years (Hyden, 1983). It is interesting that the government bureaucracy functions in almost the same way, be it America, or the Soviet Union or India or Nigeria. This results in the preeminent and dominating role of the bureaucracy, which evolves it's own interest of perpetuation and maintenance of the status - quo. In countries of the South, with high unemployment rates, public bureaucracy becomes an avenue for economic mobility and in many cases the only possible jobs that are available. As a result, getting into public bureaucracy and remaining there becomes the major dream of large numbers of people in contemporary societies, thereby further strengthening its perpetuation.

Over a period of time, bureaucrats defy their political masters, as well as control, regulate, ignore and ridicule the public they are expected to serve. Public bureaucracy acquires a life, a culture, a continuity and an inertia of its own; most of all, it lacks accountability, flexibility, responsiveness and a commitment for collective good. This is perhaps as valid for India as it is for the U.S.A. (see recent report of Kettering Foundation, 1991).

WHY THE STATE DOMINANCE?

So the question really is: Why did the State become so powerful? And why do various theories and conceptualizations of State intervention continue to be so popular?

Firstly, it is important to recognize that the growth of modern capitalism and market economy has always relied heavily on interventions of the State. It is a myth that market economy and modern capitalism means "no" State intervention. Macro policies and external relationships need to be managed by the State in a manner which creates conditions for the rise of capitalist economy. A strong State is therefore needed for the

close nexus between the State and the corporate world in a contemporary context (Miliband, 1969). National interest then gets equated with the interests of the State and its ruling forces. The interests of the masses (and subordinate classes) have to take a subsidiary position within this national interest.

Secondly, most proponents of State intervention and the dominant role of the State argued for the use of a "public" instrument to deal with the problems of the newly independent societies forty-fifty years ago.

The question of poverty; the question of inequality and access to and control over resources, the question of inequality in terms of education and health care, income, consumption, shelter; the question of oppression and marginalization all needed to be dealt with through a "public" instrument, which had the legitimacy of the entire populace. The material resources and coercive apparatus were thus controlled by the State to promote such "public" good. The State, in the form of a Parliamentary Democracy in some cases, and the preeminence of a single party in some other cases, was seen as the vehicle to bring about social and economic equality, development and growth.

After fifty years of State intervention in a country like India, it is not clear whether that inequality has increased, decreased or remained the same. It is also not clear whether the State has been able to play the role it was intended to - that of bringing common public good to largest number of masses.

Many countries adopted a single party rule after independence. In the absence of space for dissent, or an alternative point of view, for a different formulation of reality and it's underlying causes, for varied perspectives on a desirable future, no single party, even if it is the Marxist party, can continue to represent aspirations of all the people over a period of time.

The situation becomes all the more difficult in Parliamentary democratic form of governance where the leadership is to be expected to play a role for the common public good. Yet in these forms of governance as well, the State represents a confluence of political and economic interests which need not necessarily represent the interests of the poor and the marginalized (and rarely do).

The classic example is the issue of land reforms in India. The national and state governments passed progressive legislation in support of land reforms twenty years ago. Yet, very little of that has been implemented to date; largely because of the absence of "political will" resulting from the confluence of political and economic interests likely to be hurt if land reforms were implemented.

The current concern with the "absence of political will" is a clear example of the fact that the State need not necessarily act in common collective interest, which serves the "public good" for all. The State can serve some interests more than others and these are the powerful, organized political and economic interests which control it.

CIVIL SOCIETY

The notion of Civil Society needs to be introduced here. What is Civil Society? The references to the construct of Civil Society have varied in the theory of politics and governance (Bratton, 1991). Historically, Civil Society was the arena for organizing governance, material activities, and intellectual, moral and cultural aspects of communities. However, with the presence of the modern State, (in whatever form) in the contemporary context, it is difficult to understand Civil Society without a simultaneous reference to the State. Bratton (1991) describes the State-Civil Society dynamic in the contemporary context as a Ying-Yang metaphor. Viewed in such a way, and following the Gramscian perspective, the State can be seen to represent the "politics of domination," as Civil Society represents the "politics of consent." Thus, the State and Civil Society are both simultaneously needed to complete the process of governance of society. The State represents the structures of governance and Civil Society creates the values and normative framework for governance.

Society is thus comprised of three elements (Bratton, 1991): (a) material base of resources for productive utilization; (b) institutional base of associations, groups, and initiatives for conducting the affairs of Civil Society; and (c) ideological base of values, norms and ideals that provide the legitimacy for governance. Thus, institutions of Civil Society -- family, clan, community, neighborhood associations, productive enterprises, service mechanisms -- historically utilized the material resources of Civil Society in pursuit of its ideals and values.

The dominance of the State has significantly stripped the material base of Civil Society. In some instances, the State has taken over the material base (like all land, forest and water is State "property"); in some others, it has facilitated the growth of concentration of ownership of and control over the material base in a few private hands. As discussed earlier, the State has, with destruction of the material base of Civil Society, also destroyed or delegitimized the institutional base of Civil Society. And the State has continuously attempted to appropriate the ideological base from Civil Society. As "alien" State, it's public functions in many countries of the South did not become rooted in the moral and ideological base of Civil Society, but remained cut-off or disconnected from it. The Gramscian notion of "hegemony" is rooted in Civil Society. Yet, the State and the ruling elites, attempt to control the intellectual base of Civil Society, along with its material base in order to perpetuate their hegemony over Civil Society. In Western capitalist societies, such ideological hegemony of the State and existing ruling order is attempted to be established through private mechanisms of media, education and culture. The single party Marxist States attempted it through public institutions and propaganda. The countries of the South seem to be using a combination of both (State control over TV/Radio and privatised education, for example). It is this process which constricts citizenship and restricts the participation of people in governance of their communities and lives. The State and its ruling/controlling elites become supreme; Civil Society becomes subservient to, dominated and ruled by the State and ruling elites.

NEW RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Recent events in Eastern Europe, developments in Ethiopia (and much of Africa), new

democratic governments in Latin America and associations for democratic space in several countries of Asia, are reflections of the pressures towards the need for renegotiating the balance of relationship between the State and Civil Society.

In various studies of democracy across the world, it has been documented again and again, that the greatest threat to democratic functioning has been the dominance of the State over the institutions of Civil Society (Diamond et. al. 1989). Wherever democracy has been threatened or derailed, wherever fascist and authoritarian tendencies (including military dictatorships) have taken over, it has been a consequence of the "supremacy" of the State over Civil Society and the dismantling of the institutions of Civil Society built over a period of history. Seen in this context, therefore, the relationship between the State and Civil Society needs to be re-formulated. The foregoing analysis tends to suggest three significant ways in which this relationship needs to be re-formulated.

Accountability

The State and it's agencies, institutions and structures need to be accountable to Civil Society. This has several implications. The accountability implies rootedness of the State, it's institutions and practices, in the culture, morality, values and norms of Civil Society. Alien forms of State apparatus and practices, policies and programs, will result in weakening these roots. Alien models of governance will ensure continued absence of accountability. The capabilities of Civil Society, it's institutions and actors need to match the requirements of governance if that rootedness and accountability has to be ensured.

The second dimension of this accountability are the mechanisms of critiquing, questioning, debating and rejecting policies, programs, approaches and decisions of the State, it's agencies, agents, and officials.

Civil Society is "supreme", not the State. Thus any rules, policies and procedures that the State construes need to be examined by Civil Society. In order for Civil Society to develop informed opinion and build a public judgement on it, it needs to have access to information; the process of formulating those policies, laws, rules and procedures needs to be an open and public process; and mechanisms for arriving at public judgment need to be strengthened.

In both these respects of ensuring accountability of the State to Civil Society, the institutions of Civil Society are critical. It is in this sense that NGO's, voluntary associations, citizens initiatives, neighborhood groups, all become critical in ensuring that the State becomes accountable to Civil Society, and not vice-versa.

Mediation

It is important to recognize that the State represents macro, aggregated, cumulated formations and structures in a country. As a result, State policies, agencies, officials

operate at a level far more macro than the level of the family.

The relation between the State, it's agencies and officials and that of the family needs to be mediated in a manner that maintains the balance between the State and Civil Society. The contemporary reality is that the State is so powerful, so controlling, so mighty in the face of an individual family, that it can do anything it likes and get away with that. For the power balancing between the family and the State to occur, mediating institutions are needed in Civil Society.

Studies have indicated that neighborhood associations, churches, voluntary organizations etc., have acted as mediating structures between the individual family and government institutions (Berger and Neuhaus, 1977). It is in this sense that State power which tends to be totalitarian and coercive can be balanced with mediating institutions of Civil Society. NGOs, voluntary development organizations, and community associations thus become the institutions of Civil Society, ensuring this mediation between the family and the State; and ensuring the balance of power between the totalitarian tendencies of State power with the countervailing power of Civil Society.

"Public" Redefined

For a balanced relationship between the State and Civil Society, it is necessary to redefine the meaning of the public and the private. Current conceptualizations have resulted in a definition that equates "private" with what goes on inside a family (more so within a nuclear family) and "public" with what concerns the government. Thus there is no space left for Civil Society. The space is either private for the family; or the space is public - for the government. We need to re-formulate our understanding of what is public and what is private.

First, it is important to recognize that everything that is private is not necessarily left to the whims and fancies of individual families. Private opinions become the basis for evolving a public position and the question of privacy is a relative issue within the broader framework of a community. The norms, practices, values, preferences of Civil Society provide the backdrop in which privacy and private arena within the family are defined.

Similarly, everything that is of public interest, everything that is of interest beyond private, everything that concerns the public arena and public good, does not automatically become a concern for the State or its agencies. In fact, Civil Society itself is a public formulation. Before the rise of the modern State, institutions of Civil Society governed the "public arena."

So everything that is of public interest, everything that requires public concern, everything that requires public intervention need not be defined, controlled or monopolized by the State or its agencies (Berger and Neuhaus, 1977). By recognizing that "public" concerns Civil Society, the State can create enabling mechanisms and conditions for Civil Society to "manage" public affairs within communities. This will ensure pluralism; this will ensure a particular response to particular needs and situations (as opposed to uniform and homogenous strategies to diverse conditions and situations). This will ensure that local needs, aspirations, requirements, conditions can influence

local solutions, approaches and practices. This is the meaning of pluralism; this is the meaning of particular and specific response as opposed to uniform or homogenous strategy. This is the essential meaning of democracy.

Democratic institutions essentially imply institutions of Civil Society, which are capable of governing public concerns, without dependence on, or abdication to, the State and its agencies. It is in this sense that the State needs to "pull back." It does not mean that the State provision of services in health, education, etc. should be completely dismantled. It means that the State responsibility for the provision of those services needs to be re-defined. The State's responsibility is not necessarily to render those services on its own, but to foster conditions and mechanisms that are conducive to enabling to the institutions of Civil Society to meet the specific needs of their communities. The State becomes an enabler, and not a provider. The institutions of Civil Society are strengthened to ensure provision of services.

This does not imply de-centralization, because de-centralization then means that institutions of the government and the State continue to play similar roles at the local level as well. This implies a re-definition of the "public" --all that is public need not be the exclusive preserve of the government. In fact, it is Civil Society which should be responsible for governing public arenas, with the State playing enabling and supporting roles. It is in this sense that voluntary institutions, NGOs, neighborhood groups and citizen initiatives need to strengthen the capacities of Civil Society to govern the public arena.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NGOS

The foregoing analysis suggests several implications for NGOs and other voluntary associations and groups. In this section, implications for the roles and functions of development NGOs (and voluntary development organizations) are explored more specifically.

Conceptual

The reformulation of Civil Society-State relationship puts primacy on strengthening Civil Society. NGOs are one set of institutions within Civil Society. They are, therefore, part of the public domain of governance by Civil Society. This implies that NGOs need to be seen as public institutions, of Civil Society, engaged in the process of strengthening Civil Society in its relationship vis-a-vis the State and the ruling elites.

This conceptualization then challenges the growing trend of equating voluntary development NGOs with the private sector (the World Bank, Reagan-Bush-Thatcher "isms" all look at NGOs as part of the private sector). It questions the American label of NGOs as PVOs ("Private Voluntary Organizations"). It further challenges the restrictive economic notion of NGOs as exemplified by labels like "non-profits." It explodes the myth of moral superiority of the State over NGOs as represented in the public-private dichotomy of Governmental and Non-Governmental. It opens up the question of political and ideological dimensions of NGOs, and not merely their techno-managerial capabilities (as propounded by many; see James, 1989). Conceptually, therefore, NGOs are located in Civil Society which is supreme vis-a-vis the State and the

ruling elites. This can then clarify contemporary confusion related to the nature of the relationship between NGOs and Government, and between NGOs and the private sector.

Strategic

Strengthening Civil Society in contemporary context implies strengthening its material, institutional and ideological bases. It further implies new approaches to governance and politics. It implies strengthening "citizenship." The development NGOs can play strategic roles in this context through their programmes and activities. They can (as many do already) address the issue of recovering the material base of Civil Society through greater access to and control over the resources by the local communities and people's organizations. They can facilitate the process of generating informed public judgement and of becoming active citizenry. Interventions aimed at strengthening the capacity of its own, and other, institutions of Civil Society, to critique the existing development paradigm and to evolve an alternative people-centered, community-based, citizen-governed development paradigm can be useful in this regard. Facilitating increased citizen access to and engagement with public policy issues can help to alter the practice of governance.

The role of NGOs in strengthening Civil Society to regain and retain hegemony over the State and private enterprise is another critical strategic function. Challenging the continuous attempts to control the minds of people, expanding and systematizing popular knowledge, expanding social control over education and science, strengthening mechanisms for democratisation of knowledge, promoting philosophical and normative debate around issues of public concern, encouraging civic articulation of parameters of governance, facilitating promotion of ideas related to social distribution of power and accountability of the State to Civil Society, etc. are some of the strategic roles that development NGOs can (and sometimes do) play in support of strengthening the ideological base of Civil Society. Civil Society needs to be enabled to articulate its framework and values of unity within diversity - a task that NGOs can facilitate. NGOs can strengthen the practice of citizenship by encouraging the people to view themselves as producers of culture, ideas and values.

Another strategic consideration in this context is the need for strengthening international linkages across civil societies - an "international Civil Society." This becomes particularly important in light of growing international connectedness between private capital (as clearly represented by multinationals) and State apparatus (as in many regional and global structures of intergovernmental institutions). In the contemporary context, the issue of governance and hegemony has international dimensions as well. The challenge to the power of multinational corporations and "the new world (governmental) order" (as explained by President Bush of U.S.A.) necessitates strengthening international linkages across Civil Societies. Development

NGOs, through their existing networks and associations, may now be strategically positioned to facilitate those linkages.

Institutional

The strengthening of the institutional base of Civil Society requires simultaneous

emphasis on material and ideological bases. Yet, as contemporary manifestations of one set of institutions of Civil Society, development NGOs themselves need a stronger institutional base. The capacities for engaging in various programmes and activities suggested in the previous section need to be institutionalized in NGOs and other formations of Civil Society (PRIA/IDR, 1990). Instead of getting bogged down with the "supposedly" temporary and transitory nature of their existence, development NGOs need to strengthen their institutional capacities to perform the strategic roles described before.

This raises the question about the need for elaborating mechanisms for ensuring accountability of NGOs to Civil Society. It necessitates focusing current concern for NGO accountability away from governmental mechanisms to mechanisms governed by Civil Society. It also opens up issues related to the material base of NGO institutions themselves. Strategies to strengthen the presently fragile and weak material base of most development NGOs need to be evolved within this framework.

Finally, development NGOs can help strengthen (or rebuild) institutional mechanisms within Civil Society to provide for services to families and communities. As the State shifts its role from "provider" of services to "enabler," there is a risk towards "privatisation" of services (like education, healthcare, etc.). While resisting the current pressures for and temptations of becoming service-providers themselves, development NGOs can help contribute to the strengthening of institutional arrangements within Civil Society for "public" provision of such services.

CONCLUSION

The reformulation presented in this paper may seem to imply a "tall order" for development NGOs. Yet, the contemporary global reality makes demands on the community of development NGOs to work towards this challenge. The regional and national contexts vary considerably in terms of the relationship between Civil Society and the State, as well as the nature and strength of development NGOs. Therefore, specific strategies and their particular manifestation may vary considerably across countries and regions. Yet, it is an inescapable challenge!

REFERENCES

- Bratton, Michael (1989) "Beyond the State: Civil Society and Associational Life in Africa," World Politics. Vol XLI, No. 3.
- Bratton, Michael (1991) "Theoretical Issues: Evolution of the Concept of Civil Society," (forthcoming).
- Brown, L. David (1991) "Participatory Action Research for Social Change," forthcoming.
- Berger, Peter L. and Richard J. Neuhaus (1977) To Empower People: The Role of Mediating Structures in Public Policy.
- Diamond, Larry, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset (Eds.) (1989) Democracy in Developing Countries (Volume III:Asia). Boulder, CO: Lynne Reiner Publishers.
- Douglas, James (1983) Why Charity? The Case for a Third Sector, Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Gramsci, Antonio (1988) Antonio Gramsci Reader. (Edited by David Forgacs) New York: Shocker Books.
- Hyden, Goran (1983) No Shortcuts to Progress, Los Angeles: UCLA.
- James, Estelle (1989) The Non-Profit Sector in International Perspective. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kettering Foundation (1991) Citizens and Politics, prepared by The Harwood Group, Dayton, Ohio.
- Miliband, Ralph (1969) The State in Capitalist Society, London: Camelot Press.
- O'Neill, Michael (1989) The Third America, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- PRIA (1989) Source of Life or Kiss of Death: NGO-Government Relations, New Delhi: Society for Participatory Research in Asia.
- PRIA/IDR (1990) Strengthening the Grass-Roots: The Nature and Role of Support Organizations, New Delhi: Society for Participatory Research in Asia.
- Rothchild, Donald and Naomi Chazan (1988) The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa, Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Van Til, Jon (1988) Mapping the Third Sector, Washington, D.C.: The Foundation Center.
- Weisbord, Burton (1975) "Toward a Theory of the Voluntary Nonprofit Sector in a Three-Sector Economy," E. Phelps (ed.), in Altruism, Morality, and Economic Theory, New York:Russell Sage Foundation.