

Université catholique de Louvain

Département des sciences de la population  
et du développement

# **Non Governmental Organizations and Development with Reference to the Benelux Countries**

Abey HAILU SENBETA

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Introduction: The Study .....	1
Organization of the Article .....	3
<b>I. Some Key Concepts.....</b>	<b>3</b>
1. Third Sector .....	6
2. Third System.....	7
3. Third Way .....	7
<b>II. Grass-root Organizations .....</b>	<b>9</b>
1. Social Movements .....	9
2. Civil Society .....	11
3. NGOs: What are they? .....	12
4. Classifications: Homogeneity and Heterogeneity of NGOs .....	15
<b>III. NGOs Profile in the Benelux.....</b>	<b>20</b>
i. Netherlands.....	22
ii. Luxembourg.....	25
iii. Belgium .....	29
1. Common Characteristics of NGOs in the Benelux.....	33
1.1. Comparing NGOs in the Benelux .....	34
1.2. The Federations of NGOs in the Benelux.....	36
1.3. Independent and Non-Profit Service Centers .....	38
2. Analyzing NGOs-State Relations .....	40
2.1. Cooperation vs Independence .....	42
2.2. Funding Uncertainties.....	46
3. A Question of Credibility and Accountability of NGOs in the Benelux ..47	
3.1. Accountability vs Autonomy.....	50
3.2. Importance of Policy Influence on NGOs .....	51
3.3. Uncertainty of Outcomes.....	52
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>53</b>



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Abey HAILU SENBETA

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## **Introduction: The Study**

This article grew out of my research program on the *Impact of Aid on Development*. It begins with a brief presentation of various concepts related to NGOs, such as theories of the *Third sector*, *Third System* and *Third Way* as well as different notions and organizational forms to which these concepts are based on, such as *Social Movements*, *Civil Society* and *Non Governmental Organizations*. It is grounded on analyses of archival materials, interviews, and several meetings conducted with responsible persons in Development and Cooperation Departments of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Belgium, Luxembourg and The Netherlands, and with key and front-line workers on development projects. Personalities closely involved in the work of NGOs were also consulted, and annual reports, agendas of meetings, and summaries related to the activities of NGOs working on development projects were reviewed.

To quantify the input and output of NGOs, I sent-out a standardized questionnaire - only to all Luxembourg NGOs - in order to assess the impact, and gain evidence from this sample of how these organizations work today. Some NGOs have answered closed, many of them were silent, and only few

of them were willing to give information on their organizational development, on their relations with other development actors, and financial situation, as well as on their attitude to suggestions for improvements in development policies and programs.

From the perspective of my initial research question, aimed at the identification of the specific contribution of NGOs methods of managing development and public tasks, I may not have found quite what I expected. What has been gained, however, is an insight into the mechanisms of NGOs operation.

This article will give some background on Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that the term varies according to general usage but, the identification of the term NGOs from *Social Movements* (SMs), *Civil Societies* (CSs), *Third Sectors*, *Third Way*, etc ..., in this context will be presented, but will not be a focus of this article. It will be seen that many NGOs share similar overall objectives with *social movements* and *civil society*. In order to expand the discussion, three key areas will therefore be addressed, in order to establish the differences, but also a link, between *civil society*, *social movements* and *NGOs*.

One of the risks of such an attempt to compare the experiences in the Benelux countries and draw general conclusions is that differences within countries are ignored and the complex scenario of State-NGO relations might be oversimplified. Nevertheless it is hoped that the proposed analytical framework . As pointed out in this article, increasing attention will have to be paid in the future to factors determining State-NGOs relations, as an increasing number of NGOs see the need to direct their efforts toward the developing countries.<sup>1</sup> But if the NGOs hope to achieve their goals, then they have to be active and effective in the country or society they target, and this could raise the question as to whether it is possible to build up a strong NGO as an active and effective third sector, and a working civil society in developing countries from outside?<sup>2</sup> What can government/private donor programs achieve with the support of NGO programs? In order to elaborate these and similar arguments, this article will present in its first part a definition of the terms which facilitate the examination of the various effects of NGO programs. This will be followed by a generalized form of presentation and discussion of the material which I acquired during the interviews. I hope that this overview can serve as a background paper for discussions with government officials, development agencies and NGO leaders, about how government institutions can most effectively work with NGOs.

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<sup>1</sup> Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor, (eds), *Global Civil Society 2001*, Oxford University Press 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Carlos Vilas, 'L'heure de la société civile' in *Société civile: lieu des luttes sociales, le point de vue du sud*, Centre Tricontinental Louvain-la-Neuve, L'Harmattan, 1998. p.76.

## Organization of the Article

The article contains three parts, beginning with providing general background on the theories and some key concepts. It is followed by the second part that examines types of loose or soft and also relatively strong forms of grass-root organizations in relation to their success on work as *social movements*, *civil society* and *NGOs*, also explaining the methods and the need of identification and classification, objectives, and the importance of the different grass-roots organizations will be discussed. Part three presents an overview of the activities of NGOs in reference to Luxembourg, The Netherlands and Belgium context, this section draws some key lessons and insights from those studies regarding success factors and makes a general comparisons. The section analyzes some of the questions and key lessons that have emerged from the experience of the NGOs contacted and literatures reviewed. Finally, conclusions are presented that summarize some of the important findings

The theoretical background of the present study focuses on the distinction between *NGOs*, the *third sector*, *civil society* and *social movements*. Often, the terms are simultaneously used in order to refer to societal processes, which are needed to transform society to sustainable development.

This article basically takes the experience gained by organizations (governmental and non governmental) interviewed and also from a review of literatures. The aim is to develop a further plan and deeper understanding of the evolving interpretation of the NGO community by itself that underlies its growth in popularity, while at the same time analyzing its limitations and contradictions and try to illustrate more in the following sections.

### I. Some Key Concepts

Over time, various terms have come to refer to local NGOs, such as *grass-roots organizations*, *community based organizations*, and *civil society organizations*, all of which are in common usage.<sup>3</sup> There is still an ambiguity as to whether these new terms cover organizations that only operate at the local level or also include local branches of national organizations. Grass-roots and community organizations clearly refer solely to the local level, but civil society has connotations at any level within a single country, and indeed, it has become quite common to refer to global civil society as well.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew Clayton, (ed), *NGOs, Civil Society and the State*, Intrac, 1996. pp. 46-49.

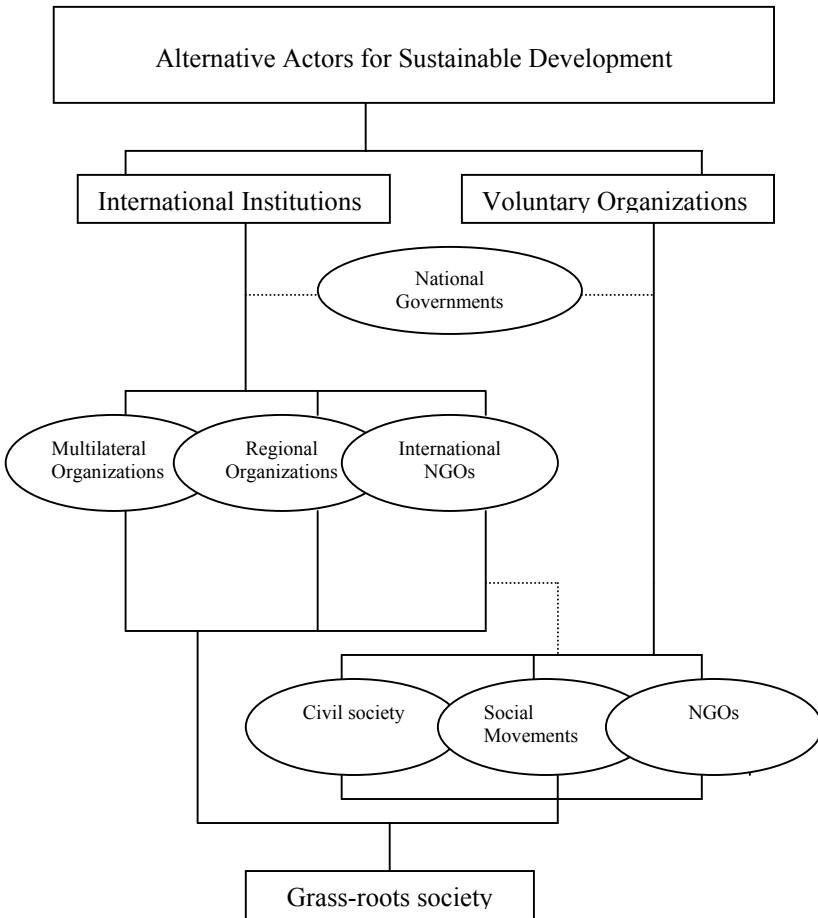
<sup>4</sup> Deborah Eade, Ernst Ligteringen (eds.), *Debating Development: NGOs and the Future*, Oxfam, 2001, p. 27.

Nevertheless, despite all definitional problems, it is essential to employ precise terms with definitional categories, because without such precision our knowledge regarding this sector cannot be improved and analyzed properly. It is important to understand clearly the different purposes of the notions and concepts of: *Third Sector*, *Third System*, *Third Way* and the different portraits of grass-root organizations: *Civil Movements*, *Civil Society*, and *NGOs*. Even more important, one must be aware of the scope and impact of the sectors which will over/underestimate, or even be unable to adequately to distinguish them without a sufficiently detailed understanding and analysis.<sup>5</sup> Although all of the analyses which have been used by various scholars in different literatures have their strengths and weaknesses, as much as the function of the different development actors on which the analysis is based on. In order to have a clear image, this article is going to look for major development actors such as Government, International institutions and Voluntary organizations play significant roles in sustainable development will be considered. They are presented in the following diagram, each development actor mobilizing its resources in a different way. As illustrated the diagram compares two examples of different sectoral set-ups. The right hand side of the diagram corresponds to a society characterized by voluntary initiatives. The left hand side is more typical where government and international institutions dominate. In reality there are many overlaps between development actors. Differences of particular interest have to do with the behavior of people in the organization, the nature of its relationship to each actors, and the way it mobilizes its resources. Before going on to analyze the roles actually played, and which should be played by these development actors, it would be in order to look at the different explanations or analyses given to them

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Edwards, David Hulme (eds.), *Making a Difference: NGOs and Development in a Changing World*, EarthScan, London, 1997. pp. 13-27.

Diagram 1. Relationship between Development Actors



These institutions or organizations are characterized by mixed concepts. International or local, governmental or non governmental, movements for non-profit or for-profit etc., when we look at development issues combined with issues of organizations that fulfill a public task. Whether one prefers the concept of ‘NGO’ ‘non-profit sector’ or ‘civil society’ or whatever, there is a part of the public domain in which certain wide-group of the society associate with this. In that public domain, there are always organizations/institutions that are ‘private initiative’ by origin, but perform public tasks. Within this frame of idea let us see the different concepts/terms referring to these issues.

## 1. Third Sector

The theory of the *third sector* treats the non-profit sector not as an isolated phenomenon floating freely in social space, but as an integral part of a social system whose role and scale is a by-product of a complex set of historical forces.<sup>6</sup> I understand the term *third sector* is to be understood as an organizational term referring to the formal, functionally differentiated and frequently professional non-profit organizations that interact with state and market actors.

The term *third sector* was coined in order to describe the variety of legally private non-profit, welfare oriented and non-state organizations, which belongs neither to the state nor to the market.<sup>7</sup> When investigating the relationship between *third sector*, *market* and *state*, one can find the opinion that third sector organizations are an ‘expression’ or a ‘key element’ of civil society, in which active citizens show their commitment.<sup>8</sup>

Sometimes one also finds the *third sector* as a definition of a grass-root society that encompasses institutions and organizations outside the *market* and *government* spheres, and which is regarded as the third sector. It rather refers to the autonomous force of citizens who organize themselves, and the theory of the third sector concerns the activity of these organizations and their role between the *state* and the *market*.<sup>9</sup> The distinction between third sector and civil society matters in my opinion, especially when their goals are supposed to be supported by a certain program which can also be imposed by sponsors or donors.

When donors fund NGOs, they believe that they support the third sector. In this regard, it seems more advantageous for NGOs to behave as typical rent-seekers as a third sector motivated for donors’ money, than trying to recognize and represent the wishes of the grass-root societies. If such a development is enhanced, it is highly doubtful whether the argument that grass-root societies or any as a third sector support and defend the civil society. Thus one can say that this type of NGO sectors are often dominated by elite-run groups that have only loose ties to the citizens on whose behalf they claim to act, and they depend on sponsors funds for their budgets which

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<sup>6</sup> Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, *Defining the Nonprofit Sector: A Cross-National Analysis*, Manchester University Press, 1997. (This theory, according to the authors, has the potential to explain cross-national variations in the size and structure of the nonprofit sector and integrates the study of the nonprofit sector into the social analysis of societies more generally).

<sup>7</sup> Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, *Defining the Nonprofit Sector: op. cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>8</sup> Badelt Christoph, *Entrepreneurship Theories of the Non-Profit Sector*, *Voluntas*, 8/2 1997 pp. 162-178; 1997a: p. 428; 1997b: p. 380.

<sup>9</sup> Seibel W. and Anheier, H., *Sociological and Political Science Approaches to the Third Sector*. In: Helmut K. Anheier and Wolfgang Seibel (eds.) *The Third Sector: Comparative Studies of Nonprofit Organizations*, Berlin, New York: 1990. pp. 7-20.

they cannot nourish from domestic sources.<sup>10</sup> Such a support rather leads to an empowerment of rent-seeking groups than a support for sustainable development.

## 2. Third System

The third system theory defines politics more than economics, to suit oppressed people's needs and aspirations.<sup>11</sup> The third system theorists attempt to redefine development (or define another development) from the perspective of the people. In the third system people are defined as individuals, of 'world citizens'. As citizens of the world, needs and interests of all oppressed people are considered to be similar, comparable, of equal value, and, therefore, aggregatable. In brief, third system theory is a too-rapid extrapolation of social movements, in particular from national to global decision-making units which are concerned with sustainable development (people, economy and environment). It is a theory with a global focus, and has shaped the dominant view of what grass-root communities are all about.

The third system theory has the potential to overcome the main limitations of Social Movements (SM) theories. Instead of focusing on citizens, third system theory concentrates on people as the link between the global and the local levels. The third system theory comes much closer to what NGOs are about. NGOs are the most typical actors encapsulating this link between global action and the citizens:<sup>12</sup> Through NGOs, citizens have found a means to express themselves on a global level, but the third system theory, beyond expression, is about the participation of citizens in global decision-making. SMs and NGOs function as key actors to get the grass-root societies' voices heard at the local and global level; in the third system theory SMs and NGOs function as global Social Movement Organizations (SMOs), expressing people's needs and interests, and seeking participation in global decision-making.

## 3. Third Way

The notion of a 'Third way' theory defines economics more than politics, and has been employed by a variety of theoreticians representing a

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<sup>10</sup> Marina Ottaway, Thomas Carothers, (eds), *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*, Carnegie Endowment book, Washington, 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Noreena Hertz, *The Silent Take Over: Global Capitalism and the Death of Democracy*, London, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew Clayton, (ed), *NGOs, Civil Society and the State*, Intrac, 1996. p. 55.

mass of diverse ideas.<sup>13</sup> As some think, *Third Way* is likely to be at the core of political debates over the next decade, just as neo-liberalism was for the previous 25 or more years.<sup>14</sup> *Third Way* combines democratic socio-economic reform and inclusive nationalism with ecological awareness. The synthesis, offers an alternative approach of a new perspective, in contrast to the failed and outdated dogma of past and present systems. The Third Way seeks to go beyond the two hitherto dominant approaches. One is an old-style system, rooted in Keynesian demand-management, interventionist government, the welfare state and egalitarianism. The other is neo-liberalism or market fundamentalism. The neo-liberals believe that markets are always cleverer than governments, and that therefore the scope of government and the state should be reduced to a bare minimum. Neo-liberals are hostile to the welfare state, which they see as crippling productivity by overwhelming the individual's initiative.<sup>15</sup>

*Third Way* is a positive economic and social democratic response to globalization and calls for active government at all levels - global, national and local.<sup>16</sup> *Third Way* looks for dynamic government rather than big government and places a strong emphasis upon reviving public institutions.<sup>17</sup> According to the 'Third way' thinkers, globalization from below is precisely the globalization of *Third Sector* groups and NGOs, which can create a global culture of corporate responsibility, in which the great power of nongovernmental, third sector and consumer groups shifted very fundamentally to corporate responsibility.<sup>18</sup>

In conclusion, an effort to bridge the gap between grass-root practices and relevant academic literature, as far as these concepts are concerned, I perceive that they are more related to the definition of the role of the grass-root societies. The linkage between the theories and practices could open-up new perspectives. Institutional or organizational conditions, such as

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<sup>13</sup> Some authors like Alexander and Skapska, have termed this idea as the 'fourth way' also. What unites them all, though, is a sense that politically, economically, socially and religiously? See for instance Gregory S. Alexander and Grazyna Skapska, (eds), *A Fourth Way?: Privatization, Property, and the Emergence of New Market Economics*, New York, Routledge, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way and Its Critics*, Polity Press, 2000. Recently the term Third Way has been popularized by Anthony Giddens (1998, 1999) and has also been used by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Edwards, *Future Positive: International Co-operation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, EarthScan, London, 1999. p. 39.; see also Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, New York, 2002; François Houtart, François Polet (eds.), *The Other Davos: The Globalization of Resistance to the World Economic System*. Zed Books, London, 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Jean-David Naudet, *L'aide au développement est-elle un instrument de justice?* Sur, *Economie Politique* no 7. pp. 72-75.

<sup>17</sup> Martin Khor, *Globalization and the South: Some Critical Issues*, Third World Network, Malaysia, 2001. p. 4-12.

<sup>18</sup> Anthony Giddens asserts that in an era of globalization, big business cannot simply trample over people's interests, as there is a globalization from below as well.

legal frameworks or (in)formal networks, are thus a crucial factor in development. A better insight into institutional conditions is required to reach new ideas and new opportunities in mobilizing the grass-root society, for instance, development can follow from a better understanding of how existing instruments can be adapted to suit the needs of new ‘unorthodox’ categories of civil or non governmental, but not necessarily anti governmental organizations.

## II. Grass-root Organizations

*Civil society, Social Movements* and *NGOs* are on everyone’s lips, but not everyone means the same thing when they say it. Nor can anyone ‘accurately’ distinguish and define them? Ideas have no ‘essence’ to discover in the absence of common agreement; the meaning of any word or idea is the way people use it. Today, after hundreds of publications and untold public discussions, including scholarly conferences devoted exclusively to these topics, no definition of Social movement, Civil society and NGOs seems to prevail, nor is one likely to do so. Because these terms have become so prominent, writers often wish to claim them for their cause; as a result, definitions of the various concepts often reflect the function one wishes them to perform.<sup>19</sup>

### 1. Social Movements

Some researchers define *Social Movements* (SMs) as a ‘collective attempt to bring about a social change’ or as ‘collective enterprises to establish a new order of life’, and others think that ‘the absolute and relative deprivation’ of people in the world is the main cause for precipitating social movements. However, informal or formal organization and orientation to change as the other necessary ingredients for developing SMs. As defined in the Encyclopedia Britannica, *Social Movement* is a ‘loosely organized but sustained campaign in support of a social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society’s structure or values. SMs are all essentially collective, they result from the more or less spontaneous, coming together of people whose relationships are not defined by rules and procedures but who merely share a common outlook on society.’

<sup>20</sup> Collective behavior in crowds, panics and other elementary forms are of

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<sup>19</sup> Charles F. Bahmueller and John. J. Patrick, (eds), *Practices of Education for Democratic Citizenship*, Civnet: Journal, Center for Civic Education. 1998.

<sup>20</sup> François Houtart, François Polet (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 78-112.

brief duration or episodic, and are guided largely by impulse. A SM is not a political movement, it is a policy-driven movement. This also applies to other related movements, like those confronting issues of poverty or health, etc.

The recent anti-World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, then in Washington, Porto-Alegre, Italy, Johannesburg ... etc., reflect the free-flowing of social movement action, where, in a seemingly organic way, many social movement organizations came together. United in a call to be heard by a global institution that they perceive to be behaving in unacceptable ways, these groups were part of a global network of protest.<sup>21</sup> Utilizing many NGOs in their networks, particularly in developing countries where the negative impact of the WTO, World Bank, IMF and other international institutions is greatest, mobilization was very effective and was noted with surprise by lobbyists who have had long-term negotiations and dialogue with the various international organizations particularly with WTO and the Club of the richest countries<sup>22</sup>.

The story of Social Movements (SMs) is continuously unfolding. Several SMs have taken place in the past, are taking place now, and many more such movements will be active in the future.<sup>23</sup> Similarly the theoretical frameworks put forward to explain the SM phenomenon have changed over time, and would change with the times. When people's responses and struggles are linked together to reinforce a protest action at regional or national level establishing cross-border linkages, or operate at international level, they become SMs with the help of international NGOs.<sup>24</sup>

Although social movements refer to the set of institutions such as *Non Governmental Organizations, Voluntary or Non-Profit Organizations*, of course one can observe that there has been a sharp distinction between the literature on social movements and on non-profit organizations. Recent studies on social movements, civil society, and NGOs are providing opportunities to look at different phenomena from a multi-disciplinary perspective.

A social movement is defined more by its impact than by its structure, and an observable characteristic of social movements is that they don't have a formal overall structure. Social movements function to mobilize groups, communities, organizations and individuals in action or protest toward their goals. Human rights, environment, peace, workers' rights,

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<sup>21</sup> Graham Hancock, *Lords of Poverty: The Power, the Prestige, and Corruption of the International Aid Business*, New York, 1989. see also Joseph E. Stiglitz, *op. cit.*, Noam Chomsky, *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order*, New York 1999.

<sup>22</sup> Noreena Hertz, *The Silent Take Over: Global Capitalism and the Death of Democracy*, London, 2001. p. 80, see also, *The Economist* various publications.

<sup>23</sup> Pedro Vuskovic, *Pour une alternative d'integration sociale interne*, in Centre Tricontinental, Louvain-la-Neuve Alternatives Sud: à la recherche d'alternatives un autre monde est-il possible, L'Harmattan, 2001. p. 67.

<sup>24</sup> François Houtart, François Polet (eds.), *The Other Davos: op. cit.*, pp. 63-68.

women's rights and minorities rights are the essence of social movements and the motivational causes for much of the work of many international NGOs.<sup>25</sup> Social movements can be defined by their objectives, and have played a vital role in putting these causes firmly on the global agenda through the mobilization of support nationally and transnationally.<sup>26</sup> It is a 'moral' or 'ethical' motivation rather than an institutionally political or ideological one. This does not mean that their actions are not manifestly political in nature but that they are separate from institutional, state-based or party politics.<sup>27</sup>

Social movements are less about the mobilization of ideologies than the formation of identification, with goals and proposed changes in prevailing values. Like NGOs which rely extensively on voluntarism and public support, social movements are 'shaped by the need to act transnationally and internationally' and to contribute to the shaping of globalization as we currently understand it.<sup>28</sup>

## 2. Civil Society

Civil society is the realm of organized social life that is open, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules in a particular nation. It is distinct from the form of 'NGOs' and 'SMs' in general in that it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, preferences, and ideas, to exchange information, to achieve collective goals, to make demands on the state, to improve the structure and functioning of the state, and to hold state officials accountable. It has many definitions, many researchers exclude familial, religious, and other activities from the notion of civil society. They also warn that we should not see civil society as necessarily an adversary of the state, locked in a 'zero-sum struggle', although it was civil society organizations that led the opposition to communist states in the 1980s in Eastern Europe. Thus, civil society can also join the state to some degree in establishing and consolidating new democracies.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Centre Tricontinental, Louvain-la-Neuve, *Alternatives Sud: À la recherche d'alternatives un autre monde est-il possible*, L'Harmattan, 2001. pp. 193-197.

<sup>26</sup> John Farrington, Anthony Bebbington, Kate Wellard, David J. Lewis, *Reluctant Partners? Overseas Development Institute*, London, 1993. p. 20.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Edwards, *Future Positive*, *op. cit.* pp. 173-180.

<sup>28</sup> Kate Nash, *Contemporary Political Sociology: Globalization, Politics, and Power* Blackwell Publishing, 2000. p. 101.

<sup>29</sup> Larry Diamond, *Civil Society and Democratic Development: Why the Public Matters*, Presented originally to the University of Iowa Lecture Series *Democratization: Does the Public Matter?* April, 1997.

Civil society denotes a domain parallel but separate from the state, a definition which can hold for the third sector to some extent too. But civil society as a concept is harder to grasp since it denotes the values of citizens, which motivate them to play an active role at a local and a global level.<sup>30</sup> ‘Civil society is historically an evolved form of society that presupposes the existence of a space in which individuals and their associations compete with each other in the pursuit of their values’.<sup>31</sup> Civil society is considered to help in ‘building the habits of co-operation, solidarity, public felling and respect for legitimate authority’. Individuals, their desires and their activities are the constituting elements of civil society.<sup>32</sup> It does not rely so much on organizations or associations such as SMs, rather it is a union of citizens in which the citizens can express their opinions independently from the state sector.<sup>33</sup>

Civil society can be a cohesive force against the fragmentation of modern life. Associations draw individuals out of themselves into potentially ambitious social contact, providing avenues of involvement with direct interest and purpose and building networks of trust. Civil society can also positively affect isolated groups, peacefully integrating ethnic and other minorities into society without losing of their identity. The socializing forums and networks of civil society are not a magic solution for conditions of alienation but they can prevent some social problems, and they have the capacity to ameliorate and in some cases to restore better social conditions. Although the idea of civil society is subject to debate, it has a generally accepted core of entering the roles of the autonomous, self-organizing associations of society.

### 3. NGOs: What are they?

The term ‘NGO’ is used as a common denominator, a collective term, for all organizations, particularly within the aid channel, that are, in the civil society or a social movement, institutionally separated from the state apparatus, and are non-profit-organizations. NGOs are referred to as not for-profit, non-profit, or voluntary organizations, all generally referring to the same group of institutions. Some scholars and researchers also refer to this

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<sup>30</sup> Centre Tricontinental Louvain-la-Neuve, *Société civile: lieu des luttes sociales, le point de vue du sud*, L’Harmattan, 1998. pp. 5-8.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew Clayton, (ed), *NGOs, Civil Society and the State*, Intrac, 1996. p. 39.

<sup>32</sup> David Hulme and Michael Edwards, (eds), *NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort?*, Macmillan Press in association with Save the Children, London, 1997. pp. 23-26.

<sup>33</sup> Challenges of the Transformation of Global Economy, in *Development & International Cooperation*, Volume IX, Number 16, CICD, Slovenia, June 1993. pp. 35-37.

group of organizations as the third sector or civil society.<sup>34</sup> This sector constitutes a diverse group of formal organizations that are self-governing and non-profit, have some degree of voluntarism, and are expected to produce a public benefit.<sup>35</sup>

Some researchers suggest that the concept of Non Governmental Organization is overall a wrong concept. NGO says what it is *not*, but does not say what it *is*. It distinguishes itself from a government organization, but does not characterize its real purpose or status in the society. And they propose a different notion of this type of organizations, they even think that many of the NGOs would prefer to be called a *Private Voluntary Organization* (PVO), a *Private Development Organization* (PDO), a *Civil Society Organization* (CDO), a *Community Based Organization* (CBO), an *Environment and Development Organization* (EDO) etc. Also, to some researchers the acronym, 'NGO', seems to serve as shorthand for a '*New Great Organization*' and to others it appears to refer to '*Never Good Organization*'.<sup>36</sup>

Usually, such views and debates utilize a set of broad terminological phrases that imply certain shared assumptions about NGOs and their role in society. Key terms such as 'participatory development,' 'efficiency,' 'self sustainability,' 'democratization,' and 'reaching the poorest of the poor' are used continuously as if everyone was in agreement about their merits. While these terms have been occasionally questioned, generally this has taken the form of 'how' and 'which' organization.<sup>37</sup> The structures of NGOs vary considerably. They can be global hierarchies, with either a relatively strong central authority, or a more sort of loose federal arrangement. Alternatively, they may be based in a single country and operate locally and Internationally/transnationally. In some literature, NGOs are characterized and evaluated in quite different ways.

The boundaries of the definition of NGOs can sometimes be blurred: some NGOs may in practice be closely identified with a political party; many NGOs generate income from commercial activities, notably consultancy contracts or sales of publications.<sup>38</sup> A small number of NGOs may be

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<sup>34</sup> Katz S. N., *Where did the Serious Study of Philanthropy Come From?* Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 28(1), University of Washington, 1999, pp. 74-82.

<sup>35</sup> Kramer R M., *Nonprofit Organizations in the 21st Century: Will Sector Matter?* Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, Nonprofit Sector Research Fund, Working Paper Series, 1998, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Graham Hancock, *op. cit.*, see also Joseph E. Stiglitz, *op. cit.*, Mark B. Ginsburg, *NGOs: What's In An Acronym?* in *Are NGOs Overrated?* Volume 1, Number 1/November 15, 1998.

<sup>37</sup> Elliot Charles, *Some Aspects of Relations Between the North and South in the NGO Sector*, in *World Development*, 15:supp: 1987, pp. 57-68.

<sup>38</sup> For instance in Belgium the *National Centre for Cooperation and Development* (CNCD), in Wallonia, and *Nationaal Centrum voor Ontwikkelingssamen Werking* (NCOS) in Flemish Federation, ASTI, in Luxembourg also organizes for various associations a cultural event

associated with violent political protests. Nevertheless, an NGO is never constituted as a government bureaucracy, a party, a company, a criminal organization or a guerrilla group. Thus, an NGO is defined as an independent voluntary association of people acting together on a continuous basis for some common purpose, other than achieving government office, making money or illegal activities.<sup>39</sup> Many diverse types of bodies are now described as being NGOs. As in the case of SMs and Civil Societies, there is no generally accepted definition of an NGO and the term carries different connotations in different circumstances. Nevertheless there are some common fundamental features.

The term, ‘non-governmental organization’ or NGO, came into public usage in 1945 because of the need for the UN to differentiate in its Charter between participation rights for intergovernmental specialized agencies and those for international private organizations. At the UN, virtually all types of private bodies can be recognized as NGOs. They only have to be independent from government control, not seeking to challenge governments either as a political party, or otherwise, be non-criminal and be non-profit-making.<sup>40</sup>

The term non-governmental organization or NGO was not common before the UN was formed. When 132 international ‘NGOs’ decided to co-operate with each other in 1910, they did so under the label, the Union of International Associations. The League of Nations officially referred to its ‘liaison with private organizations’, while many of these bodies at that time called themselves international institutes, international unions or simply international organizations. The first draft of the UN Charter did not make any mention of maintaining co-operation with private bodies. A variety of groups, mainly but not solely from the USA, lobbied to rectify this at the San Francisco conference, which established the UN in 1945. Not only did they succeed in introducing a provision for strengthening and formalizing the relations with private organizations previously maintained by the League, they also greatly enhanced the UN’s role in economic and social issues and upgraded the status of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to a ‘principal organ’ of the UN. To clarify matters, new terminology was introduced to cover ECOSOC’s relationship with two types of international

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every year for fund raising activities by selling different goods, ATOL, and COTA do consultancy, contracts and CETRI sells publications at a marginal profits.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Willetts, *What is a Non-Governmental Organization?* UNESCO Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems Section 1 Institutional and Infrastructure Resource Issues. 4 January 2002.

<sup>40</sup> Peter Willetts, *What is a Non-Governmental Organization?* UNESCO Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems Section 1 Institutional and Infrastructure Resource Issues. 4 January 2002. see also P. Willetts (ed.), *The Conscience of the World’. The Influence of Non-Governmental Organizations in the UN System*, Washington: Brookings Institution and London, 1996.

organizations.<sup>41</sup> Under *Article 70*, ‘specialized agencies, established by intergovernmental agreement could ‘participate without a vote in its deliberations’, while under *Article 71* ‘non-governmental organizations’ could have ‘suitable arrangements for consultation’. Thus, ‘specialized agencies’ and ‘NGOs’ became technical UN jargon. Unlike much UN jargon, the term, NGO passed into popular usage, particularly from the early 1970s onwards.<sup>42</sup>

Since then NGOs have long been a key force in society throughout the world. Comprised of groups of people who come together voluntarily, their activities and services are very broad and diverse.<sup>43</sup> Many Northern NGOs began as providers of disaster relief or services unavailable to poor populations in Southern countries. For example, OXFAM, Child sponsorship organizations, such as Save the Children, PLAN International, and World Vision, grew out of concerns for the impoverished communities. Their resources come from private donors and governments, and have been used to serve beneficiaries directly or through Southern NGOs.<sup>44</sup>

NGOs are widely dependent on the voluntary commitments of staff and private donors and in recent years have become increasingly visible and active in various sectors of social life.<sup>45</sup> There is a rapid growth in NGO numbers accompanied in many countries by a trend toward expansion in the size and number of projects.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, NGOs have received greater attention in government and international organization reports and policy documents, as well as in scholarly literature.

#### 4. Classifications: Homogeneity and Heterogeneity of NGOs

For many people the boundaries between different types of NGOs are vague. The only way to explore this important and influential sector with its extraordinary breadth of activities and services is by using a system to

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<sup>41</sup> The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations, which are concerned with matters within its competence. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and, where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned. (UN Charter, Article 71: Arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations).

<sup>42</sup> Peter Willetts, *op. cit.*

<sup>43</sup> Daniel Corsino, *La part des ONG dans la coopération internationale*, in Centre Tricontinental Louvain-la-Neuve, *Les ONG: instruments du néo-libéralisme ou alternatives populaires? le point de vue du sud*, L’Harmattan, 1998. pp. 45-48.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Edwards, David Hulme (eds.), *Making a Difference: NGOs and Development in a Changing World*, EarthScan, London, 1997. pp. 153-156.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Edwards, David Hulme (eds.), *NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort?* Macmillan in association with Save the Children, 1997.

<sup>46</sup> Lewis, David (ed.), *International Perspectives on Voluntary Action: Reshaping the Third Sector*, London: Earthscan, 1999.

group organizations or establishments into a smaller number of manageable categories with similar characteristics. Several such classification systems have been developed to define the sector and help the research and policy community in their analyses.<sup>47</sup>

NGOs constitute a heterogeneous set of institutions, and not just because of the different sectors in which they work: gender, racial/ethnic, development, environment, etc. but also by social characteristics of their participants.<sup>48</sup> They include: (1) grass-roots operations linked to social movements aimed at challenging and transforming unequal social structures; (2) nonprofit businesses run by 'professionals' that provide work and income opportunities for the disadvantaged in an effort to incorporate them in extant of social and economic arrangements, and (3) some NGOs are locally-based institutions that operate on a budget derived from the resources of those involved, while others are international entities with sizable budgets built from grants and contracts from government and/or international organizations (e.g., development banks, UN agencies, and foundations).<sup>49</sup>

As various scholars focus on different aspects of NGOs, different schemes of classification emerge and there is no single - standard typology of NGOs. Many attempts at categorization direct attention to the objective of their activities. The social institution in or through which social change is to be brought about provides other basis for categorizing of NGOs as religious, economic, educational, and the like. Most development scholars distinguish six categories of NGOs (relief and welfare agencies, technical innovation organizations, public service contractors, popular development organizations, grass-roots development organizations and advocacy groups and networks). This sort of classification does not, of course, differentiate between the functions, ownership and scale of operations.<sup>50</sup>

All these facts show that there is a need for classification systems that can accommodate the extreme heterogeneity of NGOs.<sup>51</sup> In order to analyze the type of NGOs, their character, and role, and to capture the importance of global trends and relations, it is necessary to establish more general classification systems. Comparative studies cannot be carried out without the development of appropriate and precise conceptual tools, among

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<sup>47</sup> This process of defining a nonprofit organization cuts through the divergent tax codes and regulations of governments so that similar groups of organizations can be compared with good methodology.

<sup>48</sup> See for instance, Nelly P. Stromquist and Karen Monkman, (eds), *Globalization and Education: Integration and Contestation Across Cultures*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.

<sup>49</sup> Mark B. Ginsburg, NGOs: *What's In An Acronym?* in *Are NGOs Overrated?* Volume 1, Number 1/November 15, 1998.

<sup>50</sup> Clark 1991, pp. 34-5.

<sup>51</sup> Terje Tvedt, *Angels of Mercy or Development Diplomats? NGOs and Foreign Aid*, Oxford, 1998. pp. 24-26, 35.

them a way of handling the heterogeneity of organizations and their relations to other actors in a systematic way. The NGOs cannot be seen here as one class of organization based on the definition of NGOs given above.

One needs to look for criteria that enable different people to put similar organizations and their activities in the same category irrespective of time and place. This need makes it possible to classify NGOs in accordance to their activities. As a result of this need, the *International Classification of Non-profit Organizations* (ICNPO) was developed because of the great range of so-called third sector organizations in different countries, and one of the greatest contributions of ICNPO is a series of criteria which must be applied to an establishment prior to classification.<sup>52</sup> Since classifications can be described as the system of languages used in communication about phenomena and are used all the time, consciously or conventionally, unclear thoughts on this issue will lead to unclear research and unclear policies.<sup>53</sup>

The ICNPO system put forward by Salamon and Anheier proposes a compromise between the level of detail that might be ideal for national work and the level feasible for comparative work, and argues that it does so while 'achieving a significant degree of organizing power'.<sup>54</sup> ICNPO focuses on economic activities, and uses 'economic activity' as the key for selection. The unit of analysis is the 'establishment' rather than the enterprise or organization, the reason being that an organization might run a number of establishments each of which might have its own economic activity. There are 12 major activity groups, including a catch-all category: 'Not elsewhere classified'. There is no attempt at standardization at the level of activities, because of the great diversity of the nonprofit sector in the different areas.

The use of ICNPO common codes (covering types of NGOs activities that are common through different types of organizations, such as income generating projects, research, etc.), does not necessarily indicate that the organizations are widely dispersed. Many categories are close, with good matches between education, health, religion, etc. The most significant differences appear in human services, where ICNPO splits service clubs, and housing and development from one to another country. On the other side, the classification made by *Union of International Associations* (UIA) differs significantly from this classification, as it is mainly a category of size instead of type. The UIA has been collecting, publishing and disseminating information on international nonprofit organizations since its creation in 1910, as its central activity.<sup>55</sup> This has been further developed to cover

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<sup>52</sup> Salamon and Anheier 1996 by the team of scholars working on the Johns Hopkins University Comparative Non-profit Sector Project.

<sup>53</sup> Terje Tvedt, *op. cit.*

<sup>54</sup> Salamon and Anheier, *op. cit.*,

<sup>55</sup> Founded 1 June 1907, Brussels, as Central Office of International Associations, by Henri La Fontaine (Nobel Peace Prize 1913) and Paul Otlet, Secretary-General of the then International Institute of Bibliography which subsequently became the International

information on their international meetings, their problems, and their strategies. The Union of International Associations is obviously not the only body faced with the problem of classifying international organization activities.

There is a lack of attention to the non-economic aspects of the sector, as any classification system that uses only inputs and outputs measured in economic terms misses the non-economic-based activities and services. This research considers the ICNPO as the best system for identifying and separating these types of non-economic activities, providing the most detail and recognition of the wide range of the sector. ICNPO has the best focus on the economic basis for the organizations but fails to differentiate clearly between the organizations with other goals. ICNPO is different from the UIA classification system by providing the necessary detail and is fully describes the contributions of the NGO sector.

Another classification system is, *International Standard Industrial Classification's* (ISIC) its definition excludes organizations that receive half of their funds from governments. Thus it excludes the great majority of NGOs involved in aid.<sup>56</sup> The system is -further based on a notion of uniformity which the NGO actors in the aid channel do not possess. Moreover, it has no place for the 'empowering' and advocacy NGOs which have recently grown in importance within the development aid field, for the great and growing number of projects aiming at institution-building and organizational support. Not all the categories are split into meaningful sub-categories, and there are some catch-all categories which are not sensitive to what are crucial differences in the aid context. The system does not provide what is wanted or needed in a particular situation, or by a particular group of people for the emergence of development NGOs working across sectors and in some cases running whole districts. Nor does it include emergency work, which is becoming increasingly important for many NGOs in the aid channel.

Another, also much used, classification system, General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities (NACE), also excludes organizations that receive a significant amount of money from governments.<sup>57</sup> Non-profit organizations are by definition restricted to certain categories of service. Tourist information and a number of other activities which are somewhat irrelevant in a development NGO context are included. This system also leaves out important types of development NGOs, especially grass-root organization, which are subsumed under other community services.

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Federation for Information and Documentation (FID), and with which UIA activities were closely associated. Became a federation, under the present name, at the 1st World Congress of International Organizations (Brussels, 1910).

<sup>56</sup> Deborah Eade, Ernst Ligteringen (eds.), *Debating Development: NGOs and the Future*, Oxfam, 2001, p. 292.

<sup>57</sup> Salamon and Anheier, *op. cit.*, 1996, pp. 56-59.

*National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities* (NTEE) is a very rich classification system, divided into 26 major groups, each of them sub-divided into 17 common activities and up to 80 additional activities specific to the groups.<sup>58</sup> As Salamon and Anheier remark: ‘combinatorial richness is purchased at a considerable price in terms of economy. The differentiation of organizational types is so fine that it becomes difficult to make the distinctions called for’.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore the organizations are categorized on two bases at once; the ‘product or field in which the entity is engaged’ and ‘what they do in that field’.<sup>60</sup>

All these systems emphasize above all the source of income as much as the field of activities, and is the approach taken by the UN *System of National Accounts* (SNA) which regards an organization that receives more than 50 per cent of its income from government as part of the government.<sup>61</sup> According to UN (SNA) definitions, the majority of NGOs, for example, and most development NGOs in developing countries, because they receive funds from bilateral donors even though channeled through Northern NGOs, will not be recognized as NGOs at all, but rather as government institutions.<sup>62</sup> Nor is such a definition particularly relevant, since many of the organizations that have mushroomed recently will not meet the criteria.

Do any of these classifications have much practical application? It is my view that Classification is a tool for identification, which broadly covers, and facilitates the handling of various activities, carried on by Civil Societies and NGOs. It is likely to be appropriate for most analyses of the NGOs and for discussion of policies. I do believe that, these classifications are designed to facilitate, where this is necessary and appropriate, for consultation with academics, Governments, NGOs, Industries, etc. for planning future work. As we can see the facts in reality, if the above classification systems have to work, then the NGOs would have to be unclassified, since most of them are active in a variety of fields. Of course most International organizations and big NGOs working at the international level are becoming more specialized organizations focusing on particular fields in which the classification above can be implemented very simply.

When NGOs become institutionalized, they have to be described in terms of organizational forms or categories. How, then can one make a strict classification of the NGOs which have flourished in the last few decades in the Benelux countries? In the Benelux as elsewhere, the most common organizational structure of NGO is the voluntary association, a grouping of citizens who came together by reason of identity of interest to pursue a

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* p. 133.

<sup>62</sup> Terje Tvedt, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

common objective. There are various types of voluntary associations ranging from the localized, informal, and apolitical (in principle) on the one hand to national, legally-registered, policy advocacy organizations on the other, built upon norms and networks.

Below are some essential profiles of NGOs and elaborate in the following part, their relationship with the state, other donors and beneficiaries.

### III. NGOs Profile in the Benelux

Benelux is a treaty among Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg.<sup>63</sup> It arose out of a customs convention signed in 1944, they were early pioneers in economic integration, forming the Belgium Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU) in 1922, followed after World War II by The Netherlands. The union was established to promote free movement of workers, capital, goods, services in the Benelux region and coordinates their policy in economic, financial, and social fields. All three countries were also founding members of what has become the European Union (EU), which has implemented these same reforms. Benelux was the first entirely free international labour market, but its goal of merging the fiscal and monetary systems of the three countries was only largely fulfilled within the EU. This historically significant step of harmonizing the social, economic and political activities of the three countries makes it particularly interesting to compare on a limited scale, the profiles and activities of the NGOs in their geographical area.

Many generous and committed individuals have turned their groups into an association of NGOs because of failure, in some cases, or the inadequate role of government agencies and international institutions in producing sustainable improvements in the lives of poor people.<sup>64</sup> Even when development activities have produced improvements in national economic indicators in developing countries, these improvements have too often failed to reduce the level of poverty for the very poor. Worse, the positive results of many initially successful development projects have proved to be unsustainable; they remain dependent on continuing infusions of scarce external resources.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica.

<sup>64</sup> Deborah Eade, Ernst Ligteringen (eds.), *Debating Development: NGOs and the Future*, Oxfam, 2001, pp. 15-17.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Edwards, *Future Positive: International Co-operation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, EarthScan, London, 1999, pp. 62-69, see also J. Stgeletz.

In the Benelux, as is the case everywhere the origin of NGOs came out of these concerns. However most NGOs and the projects they initiate typically start small. Even when successful they usually remain rather small, especially when compared to the scale of the challenges of poverty that exist in the countries where they are active or operate. As a result, the expansion of the NGOs impact beyond the local level has become an important issue on the agenda committed to sustainable development.<sup>66</sup>

Most NGOs have focused on the problems of Southern countries, some have become increasingly sensitive to global interdependence and the role of their government in cooperation and development problem-solving.<sup>67</sup> They feel concerned that many of the most difficult development problems cannot be solved by action in the South alone.<sup>68</sup> Those NGOs with key contacts with southern regions are positioned to foster better international understanding and cooperation if they recognize the importance of more joint action at the international level.<sup>69</sup>

If things are done well, people, whether beneficiaries or interested, outsiders will ask for more. Governments the EU and other donors are convinced of the importance of the NGOs work, because they typically opt for wider rather than narrower impact. NGO staffs are always on the lookout for new challenges and development opportunities, and government agencies who increasingly seek to promote NGOs as supplements, or alternatives, are more than eager to fund NGOs they consider successful. There is an escalating demand for NGOs services as an alternative to the role of the government.<sup>70</sup> At the same time there is an intense competition for funds among NGOs together with a growing acknowledgment of the role of voluntary leadership.<sup>71</sup>

NGOs are making critical contributions in development because they have demonstrated a comparative advantage over government agencies and other development actors in reaching the very poor, encouraging local participation in project design and implementation, responding flexibly to local needs, and building local human and organizational capacities for problem-solving at the grass-roots level.<sup>72</sup> However, to expand their catalytic

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<sup>66</sup> Deborah Eade, Ernst Ligteringen (eds.), *Debating Development: NGOs and the Future*, Oxfam, 2001, pp. 211-212.

<sup>67</sup> Jean Godrey, *De la croissance au développement: à la recherche d'indicateurs alternatifs, in Futuribles analyse et prospective*, Paris, décembre 2002-numéro 281. p. 39.

<sup>68</sup> Seyoum Y. Hameso, *Development, State and Society, Theories and Practices in the Contemporary Africa*, New York, 2001. pp. 38-44.

<sup>69</sup> Michael Edwards, David Hulme (eds.), *op. cit* pp. 139-142.

<sup>70</sup> Tiina Kontinen, *The Activity Theoretical Approach for Studying NGOs in the Process of Development*, Institute of Development Studies, University of Helsinki, Working Paper 3/99. p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Naoki Suzuki, *Inside NGOs: Learning to Manage Conflicts between Headquarters and the Field Offices*, Intermediate Technology Publications, 1998. pp. 107-113.

<sup>72</sup> Bernard J. Lecomte, *L'aide par projet: Limites et alternatives*, OCDE, 1986. p. 13.

role in development, NGOs must also expand their perspectives and capacities.<sup>73</sup>

NGOs are struggling to have their causes recognized and to engender support from both the public and their government institutions.<sup>74</sup> This is applicable to NGOs participating in developing countries particularly chosen by their government as target countries. NGOs which direct their resources toward developing nations recognize the lack of infrastructure and resources in developing countries that are more readily available in developed countries and this in itself is a motivation for many of their activities. These NGOs are seeking to identify with wider goals and objectives, pursued by their activities, campaigns and community service which are linked through their networks.<sup>75</sup> But how are they doing it?

### **i. Netherlands**

The Netherlands was among the first countries responding to a resolution of the United Nations to increase support for overseas development assistance<sup>76</sup>. In 1970, the *National Commissie Voorlichting en Bewustwording Ontwikkelings-samenwerking* (National Commission for Development Education, or NCO) was created with a mandate to increase public attention to development issues.<sup>77</sup> The NGO scene in the Netherlands in some respects is different from Belgium and Luxembourg, as in addition to a regular program of project support for a wide variety of NGOs, the government has developed a special co-financing arrangement with six major non-governmental institutions.<sup>78</sup> The six Co-Financing Organizations (CFOs), which dominate government-NGOs relations, are: CORDAID (Netherlands), the Dutch Catholic development organization which joins the forces of *Bilance*, *Memisa*, *Mensen in Nood* (Caritas Netherlands) and *Vastenactie* (Dutch Bishops' Lenten Campaign); ICCO (Protestant – Interchurch Organization for Development Co-operation), HIVOS (Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries); NOVIB (Netherlands

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<sup>73</sup> L. David Brown, *Nongovernmental Organizations as Development Catalysts*, IDR Reports, volume 9, Number 1, 1992.

<sup>74</sup> Deborah Eade, Ernst Ligteringen (eds.), *Debating Development: NGOs and the Future*, Oxfam, 2001, p.11.

<sup>75</sup> Michael Edwards, David Hulme (eds.), *Making a Difference: NGOs and Development in a Changing World*, EarthScan, London, 1997. pp. 177-179.

<sup>76</sup> Paul Hoebink and Fons van der Velden, *From volunteerism to professionalism: Technical Assistance of the Netherlands in a change*, Paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> EADI General Conference 'EU Enlargement in a Changing World: Challenges for Development Cooperation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Ljubljana, 19-21 September 2002.

<sup>77</sup> Ian Smillien Henny Helmich, (eds), *Non Governmental Organisations and Governments: Stakeholders for Development*, OECD, Paris, 1993. p. 205.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid* p. 197.

Organization for International Development Co-operation - non-denominational); Terre des Hommes, which works for the rights of the children and promotes equitable development without racial, religious, cultural or gender-based discrimination; and Plan International, which is an organization dedicated to work for children and their families within communities in 45 countries in the world. It's a child-focused, co-financing non-profit development organization aiding deprived children in developing countries. There is also an organization called (NCDO), *Nationale Commissie voor Internationale Samenwerking en Duurzame Ontwikkeling*/The National Commission for International Co-operation and sustainable development, it's not mainly working on public awareness locally/in The Netherlands, it organizes a series of 'National Sustainability Debates', explicitly linking sustainability, and finances and it initiates but does not fund projects in developing countries.

The formal funding relationship between the government and the six Co-Financing Organizations (CFOs) dates back to 1965. From 1980 up until now, this became known as the Co-Financing Program (CFP). The CFP is renewable every four years and conditions are formulated in a Program Financing Agreement. The six Co-financing Organizations as they are known now relate to the government on a largely self-managed, four years program grant basis. The government also supports a number of larger Southern NGOs directly, and has engaged for more than 300 national and local NGOs of varying size and background in the delivery of bilateral program assistance.<sup>79</sup>

The evolution of the six co-financing organizations produced mixed findings. It called for greater professionalism and more variety in programming, and on the impact of the local NGOs achievements. The broad successes of NGOs have been in increasing the access of the poor to more resources, to more government services, to greater involvement in development processes and to improved policy influence.

In the 1960s, the church-linked NGOs called for an increase in government support for NGO development activities. Thousands of Dutch Catholic and Protestant missionaries were active in developing countries and the effectiveness of their small-scale development assistance was becoming increasingly recognized.

In the period preceding the start of the Co-Financing Program (CFP) in 1965, the Catholic and Protestant NGOs organized themselves into 'umbrella' CFPs in order to enter into an official relationship with the government. The Protestant *Nederlandse Zendingsraad* (Netherlands Missionary Council) and the *Stichting Oecumenische Huip* (SOH - Dutch

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<sup>79</sup> The Netherlands, Development Co-operation Review, DAC Journal volume 2, No. 3, OECD, 2001.

Interchurch Aid) played important roles in the foundation of ICCO in 1964.<sup>80</sup> ICCO represents a large number of Protestant organizations and functions as the Protestant channel for CFP funds.

Cordaid was founded towards the end of 1999 following the merger of three Roman Catholic development organizations: Memisa, Mensen in Nood (Caritas Netherlands) and Bilance (formerly Vastenactie and Cebemo - an organization of the Central Mission Board – it was restructured in 1969 as an independent organization for the purpose of handling funds from the CFP for Catholic organizations).<sup>81</sup> Both Cordaid and ICCO mediate for their constituent NGOs in obtaining additional government funds for activities, and both co-finance projects supported by their constituent organizations.

The CFOs have created a body for liaison with the government, the Co-financing Consultative Body (GOM), on a rotating basis to coordinate and divide the funds received. The GOM meets on a monthly basis to discuss matters of policy coordination and the co-ordination of overseas programs. In addition, it organizes seminars and staff training. The CFPs report to the government on an annual basis on their use of government funds.

Before the introduction of the new CFP in 1980, each co-financed project had to be approved individually by government authorities. The CFP now allows for independent program management by the CFPs, which later report on their use of funds retrospectively, on an annual basis. Responsibility for auditing and policy control lies with the CFPs, although their projects are, as a rule, executed by partner NGOs in developing countries.

As compared to Belgium and Luxembourg, the growing fact in The Netherlands is the image used in increasingly successful NGOs fund-raising campaigns. Most NGOs subscribe to the Code of Conduct of the European Commission NGOs Liaison Committee which proscribes NGOs from using images of people only as victims of externally induced distress. The Code stresses the use of more balanced pictures of the capacities, resources and work of people in developing countries. In practice, however, many campaigns still emphasize famine and emergency pictures.

Public opinion in the Netherlands is demonstrably committed to the search for poverty alleviation. However, public expectation of positive change has strongly declined since 1983.<sup>82</sup> It is believed that people feel increasingly powerless in face of enormous problems, and they have reacted to media attention about misery in the South. A public opinion survey showed, however, that problems are believed to be much greater than they

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<sup>80</sup> Netherlands Development Assistance 1998-2000, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>81</sup> See for instance, Cordaid, various publications.

<sup>82</sup> Netherlands Development *op. cit.*,

are.<sup>83</sup> It showed that identification of the South with famine, poverty, war, conflicts, and endless misery is strong, and most Dutch people have the impression that half the people of the South are victims of famine.

Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and Personnel Service Overseas (PSO), are the only two big NGOs involved in sending experts and volunteers overseas: SNV is also active in the execution of more than 30 large projects of the Dutch bilateral program, and works as a private consultant in subcontracting for third parties, such as the European Commission and the World Bank. PSO is actually an umbrella organization of 30 NGOs, the majority of which are involved in assigning volunteer development workers to Southern partner organizations. PSO sends out approximately 400 development workers per year.<sup>84</sup>

## ii. Luxembourg

Luxembourg as compared to Belgium and The Netherlands does not have a wide and a long history in its overseas development assistance. Even though some NGOs were formed back in the 60s, their role was not so significant. This is related to the size, as well as the position of the country during the period of colonialism. Luxembourg government overseas development assistance started in the second half of the 1980s. Since then Luxembourg has moved towards much more comprehensive, strategic approaches in its development and cooperation program. The focus is on promoting sustainable economic and social development in developing countries, especially in the most disadvantaged ones, and on giving support to them in creating a coherent policy of sustainable development. The assistance concentrates on reducing poverty, environmental protection and gender equality.<sup>85</sup>

The government commitment is high among the OECD countries following Denmark (1.06 per cent), The Netherlands (0.84 per cent), Sweden (0.80 per cent), Norway (0.80 per cent), (see Table 1). Since the mid-1980s net official development assistance grew steadily at a significant rate, and in 2001 stood at 0.82 per cent of GNI, while further rises are planned by 2005 to reach 1 per cent of GNI.<sup>86</sup> As we can see from Table 1, the general ODA/GNI ratio is in stark contrast to the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent adopted by all OECD countries: where most of them remain far below the UN target

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> Paul Hoebink and Fons van der Velden, *op. cit.*,

<sup>85</sup> More details on this has been presented to the Luxembourg Parliament by Charles Goerens, Ministre de la Coopération et de l'action humanitaire, Déclaration sur la politique de coopération au développement et d'action humanitaire du Luxembourg, 12 February 2003, Luxembourg.

<sup>86</sup> Rapport Annuel 2001, La coopération Luxembourgeoise au développement, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères

as established by the General Assembly in 1970 and reaffirmed at the Earth Summit in June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and by the Millennium Summit in New York. Since then, only a handful of countries have achieved the goal. Belgium, together with other countries, has not exceeded even the average country effort of 0.39 percent of GNI.<sup>87</sup>

Funding of the Ministry for the development project work of NGOs is oriented towards the short term support of certain partners, and the activities of many NGOs are characterized by the use of certain instruments, by non-partisan cooperation with certain types of actors and by a program approach. The advantages of such an approach are that it seems to be less interventionist and is based on a replicable analysis of the development environment and that it defines clear objectives and time frames. The choice of the respective partners is also based on their technical efficiency, values, and convictions, as well as their respective relations with the local/national authorities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the Institutional Framework and is politically responsible for Development and cooperation.<sup>88</sup>

There are approximately 80 NGOs in Luxembourg. About 13 per cent of the total development assistance is channeled through 76 NGOs that are accredited by the Government and are allowed to draw from the Cooperation and Development Fund (FCD). In 2002, the accredited 76 NGOs received 19,573,991.86 EUR from the Development and Co-operation Fund (FCD). The Ministry's FCD, also covers NGOs administrative expenses related to the development programs and projects.

Funding by the Ministry of the NGOs programs and projects is primarily by means of *co-financing* and *Framework-Agreement (Accord-cadre)*.

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<sup>87</sup> As you can see from Tables 1 and 3, the U.S. gives only 0.11 per cent of its GNI for ODA, Japan 0.23 per cent, Germany 0.27 per cent.

<sup>88</sup> Rapport Annuel, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, du Commerce Extérieur et de la Coopération, *La Coopération Luxembourgeoise*, 1996.

Table 1. Net Official Development Assistance (ODA) from DAC Countries to Developing Countries and Multilateral Organizations Net disbursements at current prices and exchange rates

	\$ million					Per cent of GNI								
	1984-85 average	1989-90 average <sup>a</sup>	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	1984-85 average	1989-90 average <sup>a</sup>	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Australia	763	987	1 074	1 061	960	982	987	0.47	0.36	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.27
Austria	215	338	557	527	456	527	423	0.33	0.24	0.24	0.26	0.22	0.26	0.23
Belgium	443	796	913	764	883	760	820	0.56	0.46	0.34	0.31	0.35	0.30	0.36
Canada	1 628	2 395	1 795	2 045	1 707	1 706	1 744	0.50	0.44	0.32	0.34	0.30	0.28	0.25
Denmark	444	1 054	1 772	1 637	1 704	1 733	1 664	0.83	0.94	1.04	0.97	0.99	1.01	1.06
Finland	194	776	408	379	396	416	371	0.38	0.64	0.34	0.33	0.32	0.33	0.31
France	3 080	6 483	7 451	6 307	5 742	5 639	4 105	0.62	0.60	0.48	0.45	0.40	0.39	0.32
Germany	2 862	5 634	7 601	5 857	5 581	5 515	5 030	0.46	0.42	0.32	0.28	0.26	0.26	0.27
Greece	..	..	184	173	179	194	226	..	..	0.15	0.14	0.15	0.15	0.20
Ireland	37	53	179	187	199	245	235	0.23	0.16	0.31	0.31	0.30	0.31	0.30
Italy	1 115	3 504	2 416	1 266	2 278	1 806	1 376	0.27	0.36	0.20	0.11	0.20	0.15	0.13
Japan	4 058	9 017	9 439	9 358	10 640	15 323	13 508	0.31	0.31	0.20	0.21	0.27	0.34	0.28
Luxembourg	8	22	82	95	112	119	127	0.16	0.20	0.44	0.55	0.65	0.66	0.71
Netherlands	1 202	2 316	3 246	2 947	3 042	3 134	3 135	0.97	0.93	0.81	0.81	0.80	0.79	0.84
New Zealand	54	91	122	154	130	134	113	0.25	0.22	0.21	0.26	0.27	0.27	0.25
Norway	557	1 061	1 311	1 306	1 321	1 370	1 264	1.02	1.11	0.84	0.85	0.90	0.90	0.80
Portugal	9	126	218	250	259	276	271	0.05	0.24	0.21	0.25	0.24	0.26	0.26
Spain	152	753	1 251	1 234	1 376	1 363	1 195	0.09	0.17	0.22	0.24	0.24	0.23	0.22
Sweden	791	1 903	1 999	1 731	1 573	1 630	1 799	0.83	0.93	0.84	0.79	0.72	0.70	0.80
Switzerland	294	654	1 026	911	898	984	890	0.30	0.31	0.34	0.34	0.32	0.35	0.34
UK	1 480	2 612	3 199	3 433	3 864	3 426	4 501	0.33	0.29	0.27	0.26	0.27	0.24	0.32
United States	9 057	9 536	9 377	6 878	8 786	9 145	9 955	0.24	0.18	0.12	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.10
<b>TOTAL DAC</b>	<b>28 443</b>	<b>49 345</b>	<b>55 622</b>	<b>48 497</b>	<b>52 084</b>	<b>56 428</b>	<b>53 737</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>0.32</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>0.24</b>	<b>0.22</b>
<i>of which:</i>														
EU Members	12 032	26 371	31 476	26 785	27 641	26 784	25 277	0.45	0.45	0.37	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32
Average country effort								0.44	0.45	0.39	0.38	0.39	0.39	0.39

Source: OECD, <sup>a</sup> Including debt forgiveness of non-ODA claims in 1990, except for total DAC.

In *co-financing* programs the participation of the Ministry varies between 66,67 and 75 percent of the total cost of the project, according to whether the activity of the NGO is implemented in the target country of the Luxembourg development and co-operation program

Funding in the form of a *Framework Agreements* is a more strategically oriented system of funding than a co-financing system, it's an agreement between the eligible NGOs and the Ministry on a clearly defined annual program of the NGOs. Funding by the Ministry on the basis of *Framework Agreements* covered up to 85 percent of the project budget. As of 2002 there have been 12 *Framework Agreements*.<sup>89</sup>

In January 1996 Luxembourg adopted a Law,<sup>90</sup> which defines clear guidelines of *the need for integrated approaches*. It was only since then that the establishment of the NGOs in Luxembourg and the terms of reference for their engagements are defined by law. In the cooperation and development efforts, the co-financing procedures and professionalization are topics of discussion between the Government and the NGOs. Consultative meetings with government representatives take place once in every two months. An umbrella organization, the '*Cercle de Coopération des ONG de Développement du Luxembourg*', was created to represent the main NGOs in their contacts with the Government and the European Union, as well as to encourage contacts among its members.

The *Cercle de Coopération des ONG de Développement du Luxembourg* (ONGD) has been in existence since 1982, and was made an ASBL (non-profit-making organization) in 1993. It currently brings together 64 NGOs out of 76 NGOs accredited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The *Cercle de Coopération des ONG de Développement du Luxembourg* has become the federation of NGOs in Luxembourg, consulted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and is thus closely associated with the drawing up of a number of pieces of legislation, such as the conditions for funding projects, with very friendly and sometimes intense involvement over the last few years in the drafting of the new rules and procedures on cooperation for development. Even though some points of disagreement remain, in particular on the co-funding for development, the Luxembourg NGOs have excellent relations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The highest body of the *Cercle de Coopération des ONG de Développement du Luxembourg* is a General Assembly. From the existing 64 NGOs represented in the ONGD a ten-members committee is elected, half of which is renewable each year, with them a mandate to represent the members

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<sup>89</sup> Rapport Annuel, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, du Commerce Extérieur et de la Coopération, *La Coopération Luxembourgeoise*, 2002.

<sup>90</sup> La 'coopération au développement', loi grand-ducale du 6 juin 1996', La 'coopération au développement', règlement grand-ducal du 19 juin 1996.

and to deal with all relevant matters. The General Assembly also elects two delegates for the Liaison Committee General Assembly and two delegates for the Working Groups. A full and part-time permanent workers have been recruited to coordinate the work which increases year by year. The committee meets once a month with agendas which have been dominated in the past few years by the drafting of the procedures on cooperation towards co-financing of development projects.

Training courses are offered to member NGOs, the training is geared towards activating the role of NGOs members and enhancing the management and teamwork. The training, which mainly targets NGOs board members, covers many topics: the present condition of the management boards and the beneficiaries, the planning role of the board, its internal organizational structure, communications within and the decision-making process. It also tackles the supervisory and assessment role of the board and introduces new suggestions to improve and enhance the role of board members.

Of course, size, age, cooperation levels and focus areas all tend to correlate with success of an NGO. However at what level could the NGO training helps to create better balance in terms of the skills required to run a healthy, sustainable and effective organization. In this regard, the objective of the *Cercle de Coopération* in providing the training is to look at capacity building including, partnership development, grants programs, technical assistance, information and research, and legal reform-awareness activities.

In the process of the training, the desire for specific topics differs from NGO to NGO, since the Luxembourg NGOs are, in fact, fairly diversified in terms of range of activities. However there is a common core in the training courses for all types of NGOs which could be listed as strategic planning, management of volunteers, networking, team building, project presentation skills, project management and proposal writing. These all are perceived as very useful by the NGOs. Such training should also be extended by introducing a program of debates regarding what development might take in years to come, and the corresponding role of NGOs. I think, this missing dimension makes the NGOs less fit to promote the emergence of a strong movement in society at large. This is a result of the lack of involvement of Luxembourg NGOs in the wider Global and European issues which they perceive as a distinctive from their main concerns. In this they differ from their counterparts in Belgium and The Netherlands.

### **iii. Belgium**

In Belgium, development co-operation is a federal competence. Overseas Development Assistance, as in the case of Luxembourg and The Netherlands, is essentially carried out by the Department of Development and

Co-operation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry provides funding of 60 to 70 percent of the NGOs budget for their development projects. Coordination between the Ministry and NGOs is ensured by regular consultations in the interdepartmental working group on development co-operation consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the NGOs. The NGOs, as in The Netherlands and Luxembourg, are represented by their federal platform called mainly *Acodev* and *Copragam*.

*Acodev* (French- and German-speaking Federation of Development Cooperation Organizations) was created in 1963 and more recently became a union of French and German-speaking NGOs federation.<sup>91</sup> The Federation consists of 93 members, and out of these 88 NGOs are active members and 5 adherents. On the other side there is *Coprogram* (Flemish Federation of Development Cooperation) which is the federation of Flemish non-governmental organizations for development cooperation in Belgium, consist of 65 members.<sup>92</sup> Both federations, *Acodev* and *Coprogram*, defend the interests of their members in their relations with the Belgian federal and the local authorities, try to improve the quality of their member NGOs activities, provide technical guides, and negotiate on administrative aspects with local and federal government.

*Acodev* and *Coprogram* are two separate associations, but in practice they consult each other frequently.<sup>93</sup> Both federations consist of a general assembly, a management board and a secretariat. The Fields of activities of the federations comply with the government criteria, the government recognizes these federations as intermediates of individual/groups of NGOs for facilitating the work between the member NGOs and with the federal government. *Acodev* and *Coprogram* offer to their members services in staff management, legal assistance, collection and distribution of information, technical assistance, methodology, ... etc. and a platform for the establishment and support of projects in collaboration with local partners in the South.

There are also the *National Centre for Cooperation and Development* (CNCD), a coordination of French and German speaking Non Governmental Organizations, and the *Nationaal Centrum voor Ontwikkelingssamen Werking* (NCOS) the Flemish Federation. Both organizations are working to cooperate on development with developing countries through social-cultural and economic projects and youth programs in solidarity and partnership.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Gregor Stangherlin, *Les organisations non gouvernementales de coopération au développment*, CRISP, courrier hebdomadaire no, 1714-1715, Bruxelles, 2001.

<sup>92</sup> Pierre Grega, *Analyse de l'évolution récente de la coopération au développement de la Belgique: Eléments pour un débat sur la 'De-fédéralisation' de la coopération au développement*, version 2.2, 2001, Bruxelles.

<sup>93</sup> *Acodev, le courrier*, various publications.

<sup>94</sup> Pierre Grega, *op. cit.*, see also, Gregor Stangherlin, *op. cit.*,

Even though they incorporate NGOs belonging to this respective federations, their role as a platform is not the same as that of *Acodev* or *Copragram*. They mainly work on organizing campaigns and fund raising, and this makes them different from *Acodev* and *Copragram*. What is interesting is that they have typical activities to support the NGOs who are in their platform. The history of these organizations goes back to November 11<sup>th</sup> 1966 at 11 am, when thousands of volunteers took to the streets of Belgium to draw attention to the ‘Third World’ and collect money to help the needy. That’s how 11.11.11 started. From that day on, every November 11 is the highlight of their financial and political campaign.

Since then the 11.11.11 campaign is widely respected and is the largest pluralistic and joint action in Flanders and also, since the federation in the Walloon. CNCD, the Coalition of the French-speaking North-South Movement in Belgium, also uses the name of 11.11.11 in their campaign. When it was started in 1966, Belgium was not yet a Federal country, but now almost all organizations have split according to their mother tongue (Flemish or French).

The main objectives of CNCD and NCOS coordination are the following:

- The annual organization of a fund-raising campaign, called ‘operation 11.11.11’, in favor of specifically selected projects submitted by member NGOs
- Lobbying towards political and private actors, as well as by Belgium at a European level, concerning any matter related to international cooperation
- The implementation of education campaigns designed to raise public awareness in favor of international solidarity.

In principle CNCD/NCOS as a coordinator do not directly finance projects in the beneficiary countries but eventually co-finance projects presented by member NGOs. Nevertheless, the CNCD/NCOS has an autonomous program called ‘Small Projects Fund’, which is an autonomous program that allows NGOs or local associations from any continent to submit a development project.

One of the original features about the Belgian NGOs federation is that the NGOs that have been created and federated are operating more or less the way the Belgium is federated. Thus this factor relates to the social and political configuration in the country. The nature of the role of government and the type of democracy could also explain the character of the many NGOs in mutual relationships. So the Flemish Region and the Flemish Community have combined their respective NGOs, but on the other hand, the Walloon Region and the French and German Community have retained

separate NGOs federations. The NGOs which are members of these federations are independent organizations that draw up their own programs and develop their own initiatives. However, the federations provide to their members significant advantages in their activities.

Both federations are recognized by DGIC which is now called DGDC.<sup>95</sup> Belgian cooperation has undergone considerable reform in recent years.<sup>96</sup> The implementation of the cooperation reform was presented in the activity report of 1999, and which led among other things to the replacement of the old DGIC with the DGDC. Following the establishment of the DGDC in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a number of cooperation officials have been appointed to Belgian embassies located in the partner countries.

The Directorate-General for Development Cooperation consults with the NGOs through the federations on the strong and weak points of the regulations and procedures, as well as overseas development assistance policy and implementations. This exercise started within the context of the discussions which seem, among other things, to target collaboration with the NGOs. As a result of the experience that the DGDC has accumulated over time in the operation of the program, it has also supplemented its field knowledge acquired by regularly dispatching staff members to the partner countries. The collaboration of the Ministry with the NGOs can be seen in the form of additional administrative simplification, better distribution of the workload, the introduction of uniform strategy, specially adapted tools and methods, and higher quality standards for NGOs activities. It is evident that there has indeed been a large amount of progress in the area of professionalisation of NGOs. However for some NGOs it may also be a challenge to devise new program in the years to come that will meet the standards and criteria applicable. The policy dialogue that gives concrete form to the relationship between DGDC and the NGOs will no doubt play a greater role in the effort to achieve the ongoing quality improvements.

The Ministry is the main financial source for almost all NGOs, in budgetary terms, for the first time in years there has been no decrease in resources expended on NGO development aid workers: BEF 699 million (Euro 17,327,757) as compared with BEF 696 million (Euro 17,253,389) in 1999.<sup>97</sup> In 2000, the original budget drawn up for co-financing NGOs activities was BEF 3,490 million (Euro 87,25 million), or approximately BEF 90 million (Euro 2.25) million more than in 1999. This increase was in the same order of magnitude as the budgetary increases for NGOs cooperation

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<sup>95</sup> The Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIC) since 20 December 2002 is called DGDC, Directorate-General for Development Cooperation.

<sup>96</sup> Rapport Annuel 2000, Direction Générale de la Coopération Internationale (DGCI), Ministère des Affaires Étrangères

<sup>97</sup> 1 EUR = 40.3399 BEF 1 BEF = 0.0247894 EUR.

that have been implemented since 1997.<sup>98</sup> The number of NGOs development aid workers recruited by the NGOs on the basis of the new system has increased significantly. Since 1 January 1998, the NGOs development aid workers are directly recruited, paid and managed by the NGOs themselves, who receive the necessary financial resources for the annual financing. The previous system of selection and remuneration of NGOs development aid workers by the government administration ceased to exist since 30 June 2001.

## 1. Common Characteristics of NGOs in the Benelux

As in most other countries, statistics on the NGOs of their number and size as a whole simply were not kept. The most effective way to distinguish the role, size, activities, etc. between these countries and the NGOs is to obtain precise data on a range of different variables. The number and size of the projects, number of full-time employees, the number of members and the funding of the annual budget, give measures of the images of any NGO. Opinion on recognition of and support for an NGO or its goals, give measures of its strength. There are also more determinant variables, such as the professional skill, knowledge and experience of the personnel that matter for both operational and campaigning purposes.

However, even if there is a lack of this information, these NGOs, despite their slight differences they share the basic notion of an organizational universe distinct from *state* and *market*. However these organizations share a common awareness of belonging to the same sector, a sense of communality growing in spite of some small differences. As explained in the previous pages, most of them are guided/aided by the federations/Circle, some time referred to as umbrella organizations of NGOs which work closely with the government. The right to form Non governmental organizations is clearly defined by law in these countries and the concept of serving the developing nations is widely known.

It is usually and rather spontaneously assumed that the impact of NGOs on development is essentially a matter of size. NGOs by becoming larger organizations, managing larger budgets and reaching more people, is certainly one possible way to expand impact. Some NGOs have also chosen other paths to achieve their goals, and some of these paths can exist without organizations becoming larger, but by creating a net-work for a better influence.

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<sup>98</sup> DGIC Rapport Annuel 2000.

## 1.1. Comparing NGOs in the Benelux

As for this research there is not much to say about how each of the three countries' NGOs for common use could provide a different portrait of the NGOs sector. The best way for comparison in the Benelux countries is not only to look at the figures but to understand their strengths and weaknesses, in terms of their size, professionalism, number of projects they perform, as well as their contributions across economic and social systems.<sup>99</sup>

It is difficult to break these NGOs into sectorial groups as they cover several areas, and also change their priorities, extend their coverage and rise to new challenges.<sup>100</sup> The various types of NGOs that have emerged are compared based on their approaches, functions, and deliveries. Since most of them encompass more than one area, its difficult to make a strict distinction, however, they could be grouped into the following broad categories:

- NGOs with social mobilization
- NGOs offering micro-credit
- NGOs offering sectoral deliveries (such as health and sanitation, education, Natural resources management and awareness raising)
- Science based policy research NGOs, and
- Networking and advocacy organization.

Looking at the nature, orientation, focus, size ... etc, one may distinguish different types and levels of activities, and some NGOs often change the balance of the activities they pursue.<sup>101</sup> The measure of distinction between these NGOs, rather than the above five classifications is the distinction between similar operational and campaign NGOs. This may be interpreted as the choice between small-scale change achieved directly through projects, and large-scale change promoted indirectly.<sup>102</sup> In reality, the distinctions are not as sharp as the labels suggest. Operational NGOs often move into campaigning when projects regularly face similar problems and the impact of the projects seems to be insufficient.<sup>103</sup> All the development and environment operational NGOs now run some regular campaigns, at least

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<sup>99</sup> As it is presented in Table 2, one can't see a correlation of the data between column 2, 3 and 4 or 5. Particularly what has to be checked/define within this statistics is that, not the number by itself but what they all are about and how they are functioning.

<sup>100</sup> Alan Fowler, *Striking a Balance: A Guide to Enhancing the Effectiveness of Non-Governmental Organizations in International Development*, Earthscan, London, 2000. pp. 6-12.

<sup>101</sup> Michael Edwards, David Hulme (eds.), *Making a Difference: NGOs and Development in a Changing World*, EarthScan, London, 1997. pp. 118-126.

<sup>102</sup> Peter Willetts, *op. cit.*

<sup>103</sup> Michael Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-73.

by supporting campaigning networks.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, campaigning NGOs often feel they cannot ignore the immediate practical problems of people in their policy domain.

Table 2: Comparing Countries ODA disbursement and NGOs.

Country	Population (in mil.) in 2000	ODA as % GNI in 2000	Number of NGOs	NGOs per 100,000 inhabitants	Government share of ODA through NGOs (95/96)	GNI per Capita (USD)
Belgium	10.3	0.36	≈ 300	≈ 3	0.31	24.540
Luxembourg	0.4384	0.71	≈ 80	≈ 18	12.5	42.060
The Netherlands	15.9	0.84	≈ 300	≈ 2	9.20	24.040

Source: UNDP, OECD, see also Table 1 and 3.

In general there are five key issues which are being addressed through NGO engagement: Development, Population, Environment, Minority Rights and Human Rights. For many NGOs these issues are foremost on their agendas, and many of their activities seek to address more than one of these issues,<sup>105</sup> there for NGOs in the role they play share similarities in:

- In the 'moral' or 'ethical' drive and proposed outcomes for their activities.
- Of support and links to grass-roots NGOs or organizations.
- In targeting grass-root societies more than targeting the state.

To achieve these targets, the governments of these three countries have legal provisions for the establishment of NGOs, but they have no provisions for classifying them. The common legal approach defines and classifies a non-profit organization or an NGO according to what the law of a country prescribes it to be.

Registration procedures have been, and still are, of such widely varying efficiency and coverage within the same country over time that it is difficult to use such formal criteria. In other cases some NGOs do not bother or do not want to register. They are a part of the NGO channel, but not a part

<sup>104</sup> Naoki Suzuki, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-86.

<sup>105</sup> Richard Falk, *A new Europe in the Changing Global System: A Critique*, Oxford: Polity Press, 1999. p. 97.

of this sector which benefits from government funding, as it is formally defined. Analytically, it is also very important to grasp the point that in these countries the development NGOs differ, especially in terms of size, budget, type or professionalism, international orientation or dependence, ideology and rhetoric, legal standing, etc.<sup>106</sup>

Most of the NGOs which are active in relief and rehabilitation program, development projects, refugee support, migration, have concluded that their future strategy as must take into account the converging issues of environmental deterioration, population growth, and poverty reduction.<sup>107</sup>

## 1.2. The Federations of NGOs in the Benelux

Establishing bodies/platforms for coordination in the NGOs sectors means building a relationship, strengthening the NGOs capacity and improving the regulatory framework governing the domain. The initiative for coordination in this form took place in Luxembourg through *Cercle de Coopération des ONG de Développement du Luxembourg* (ONGD), in Belgium *Acodev* and *Copragram*, in The Netherlands the six federations Cordaid, ICCO, HIVOS, NOVIB, Terre des Hommes, and Plannederland/Plan International. In these federations, one may also say that three different dimensions have formed the fundamental basis for the federations:

- a) 'community of interests' or 'shared values' (Netherlands),
- b) national (Luxembourg),
- c) 'ethnic' and 'values/interests', (Belgium).

The federations/platforms recommendations for their respective member NGOs are extensive. They rang from instruments to ensure an evolving relationship, to options for enhancing the financial capacity and resources of the NGOs as a means of revising the legislative, institutional, administrative and funding regulatory framework. It is important to continue to strengthen the federation systems, which capture the development and dynamics between NGOs and the State, NGOs and Society at large, and NGOs and other donor communities.<sup>108</sup> The Federations' recommendations for an accord to guide and developing a relationship within NGOs and the governments is growing stronger, and although they consider models for beneficiary societies in the developing countries along the lines of their

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<sup>106</sup> Terje Tvedt, *op.cit.*

<sup>107</sup> Deborah Eade, Ernst Ligteringen (eds.), *Debating Development: NGOs and the Future*, Oxfam, 2001.

<sup>108</sup> Michael Edwards, David Hulme (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 57.

activities, they suggest the models be further discussed or developed through broader consultations.

The consultation sets out the guiding principles for a renewed relationship. These principles includes the notions of:<sup>109</sup>

- recognizing the interdependence of the governments and NGOs, and the need for cooperation to advance development.
- acknowledging the NGOs vital role in building - or - advocating policy change, engaging citizens in a flexible and innovative way, while respecting their autonomy and accountability to their constituencies.
- recognizing the need for a sustained and open dialogue between the NGOs, varied consultation processes within the NGOs and the government as a part of decision-making, sharing information, and collaboration.
- recognizing the need to collaborate in the definition and implementation of priorities and the benefit of strategic alliances and innovation and criticism,

After such consultations and appropriate decision is reached in making a strategic policy, it is the Ministers of Cooperation and development who take political responsibility for the development and cooperation policy and present the reports to their governments and Parliaments.

In general, the federations as a platform search for a better model to balance the need for public confidence in their respective countries with a supportive and enabling environment provided by the governments and other supporting agencies. The federations regulations outline changes required in the regulatory framework such as an updated definition on the role of NGOs, public access to information about the NGOs, a transparent registration process, changes in rules and related activities. The Federations, even though they are also NGOs by definition are semi-autonomous. In essence, they are advisory bodies, and a quasi-consultative bodies like a bridge between NGOs, as well as between NGOs and the government in playing the role as a mediator, in making recommendations on difficult NGOs registration cases, offering policy advice, and helping NGOs to comply with regulations and other relevant issues. The federations harmonize the recommendations by building a better relationship for NGOs to foster the relationship between and within the NGOs and government.

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<sup>109</sup> Terje Tvedt, *Angels of Mercy or Development Diplomats? NGOs and Foreign Aid*, Oxford, 1998. p. 21.

### 1.3. Independent and Non-Profit Service Centers

The Independent and Non-Profit Service Centers are also NGOs by nature but have no direct engagement in developing certain projects whether social, economic, and environmental or any other. The Centres support and improve the NGOs activities by promoting public understanding of cooperation and development, and by helping NGOs succeed in raising funds and development projects cycle. These Centres collect, organize, and communicate information on their respective countries; conduct and facilitate research on trends in the development projects; provide education and training; ensures public access to information and services through their Web-sites and electronic publications, libraries, learning centres, supports the national network by cooperation in the field, and conduct research on development issues. They are like leading authorities on development project issues related to NGOs, and are dedicated to serving NGOs and their donors particularly the government, in researching, advising the policymakers, and informing the general public.

In this regard, these centers are playing a significant role in the technical performance of NGOs during the project cycle and providing opinion, advice and evaluation on development issues to their government.<sup>110</sup> One can easily identify such centers in these countries,<sup>111</sup> for instance, in Belgium, *Information services and Knowledge management in International Co-operation* (ATOL), one of the activities of this center is on evaluations in the (Belgian) NGO sector, managed under the auspices of Coprogram, the Flemish federation of NGOs. The other one is *Le Collectif d'échanges pour la Technologie Appropriée* (COTA) which functions in the frame-work of *Acodev*; COTA, the same as ATOL, provides services in the fields of documentation, information, and support to development organizations in both North and South. COTA has developed a number of support and technical communication services, the most important of which are consultancy, question-answer services, commercial documentation services, and publications. Of course, both COTAs and ATOLs duties are not limited within the boarder of their federations, they also work for other national, regional or any other organizations who provide them contracts for certain projects that are professionally, or in another active way, involved in development co-operation and North/South relations.

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<sup>110</sup> Niels Hermes and Robert Lensink, (eds), *Changing the Conditions for Development Aid: A new Paradigm*, Frank Cass Publishers, UK, 2001. pp. 66-70.

<sup>111</sup> Such centers in The Netherlands do not exist as an independent NGOs as they are in Belgium and Luxembourg. The duty of the centers as explained for Belgium and Luxembourg basically is done by co-financing NGOs themselves. As they are very big, and funded NGOs are accountable for them, they have their own department doing the duties of Non-Profit Service Centers.

The other similar center is called *Centre Tricontinental* (CETRI) established in 1976, which is a documentation centre and also periodically publishes books which is mainly focusing on the issues of North/South relations, calls on the people of the South to have a broad choice of opinions and of analyses originating from the South. As compared to COTA and ATOL, CETRI is more focused on mobilizing people from the south and not engaged in performing evaluation of NGOs activities. The equivalent one in Luxembourg is *Bureau d'assistance Technique* (BAT), operational since July 2001, and is an independent and non-profit service center which provide assistance to individual NGOs in Luxembourg. BAT is operating on a small-scale level but provides similar services to NGOs in Luxembourg as ATOL or COTA do in Belgium. In addition to this, there is also another activity carried out by *Service Education Nord-Sud* (SENS)<sup>112</sup>, mainly working as a documentation, education and training services provider on issues of development and cooperation. The principal activities of SENS are raising awareness in the national level on issues related to cooperation and development.

These Centres also conduct evaluations and publish them for public use, prepare guides, make research reports, and publish books on NGOs and their activities in development projects. All these Centres libraries have trained staff to help the users, and maintain a selection of books and periodicals relating to development issues. The Centres offer a variety of training and educational seminars. Each of the Centres also has workshops and events calendars, conferences, and workshops that provide technical assistance defined as operational or management assistance to NGOs. It includes fundraising assistance, budgeting and financial planning, program planning, legal advice, and other supports to management.

Regarding the applicability of the methods as a preliminary small-scale extension program is a training program given to various NGOs. At first it is addressed mainly to the extension workers in the field. These agents were trained by specialized agents at local level, who had received a vocational training program on, let say soil degradation, land management, soil conservation techniques etc., followed by step-by-step extension approach and monitoring and evaluation. These training programs are developed and executed by the project leaders staff.

In most of the NGOs the applicability methods used are that the extension workers have two types of training sessions. During technical training sessions they get acquainted with the management guide and learn some techniques and the methodological training sessions structured according to the local communities approach. The training sessions are

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<sup>112</sup> SENS is administered by the Board of management composed of representatives from *Cercle de Coopération des ONG de Développement du Luxembourg* and various Ministries.

directly linked to practice. During all training sessions, theoretical and practical learning techniques are combined.

For all training sessions, booklets and other supportive documents are provided. The co-ordination of the training programs is assured by the centres training sections. The trained extension workers become the trainers of the local community at a group or individual level.

The implementation of training control measures has been encouraged by a set of incentives by organizing annually a 'project day' in various places, during which experiences are exchanged, films were shown and the best performing NGOs and community are rewarded. It is evident that there are clear capacity differences in the number of trainings, projects and extension results.

There are a few things the Centres cannot do for NGOs and/or for the others. As independent information providers and research centres, they do not make grants. However, they direct interested parties to resources that will help them in their endeavors, They assist in locating appropriate resources, and also serve as consultants on project development, to make referrals, or arrange for specific grant makers.

## 2. Analyzing NGOs-State Relations

The most difficult question about the independence of NGOs is whether or not they come under governmental influence. Governments do at times try to influence the NGOs community at least in a particular field, by especially funded or technically establishing NGOs that promote their policies.<sup>113</sup> This has been recognized by quite common use of the acronym GONGO, to label a government-organized NGO, and there is sometimes a widespread objection from some NGOs that government funding leads to government control.<sup>114</sup>

For instance, the financial resources committed in 1996 by Luxembourg was about 12.5, Netherlands 9.2 and Belgium only 0.3 percent of official development assistance from the governments (see Table three),

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<sup>113</sup> John Farrington and Anthony Bebbington with Kate Wellard and David J. Lewis, *Reluctant Partners?* Overseas Development Institute, London, 1993. p. 22 see also Terje Tvedt, *Angels of Mercy or Development Diplomats?* NGOs and Foreign Aid, Oxford, 1998. pp. 16-17.

<sup>114</sup> X-Y NGO Netherlands is a very good example in this case. XminY, is a non governmental organization independent of any funding from The Netherlands government, churches or other institutions, it's completely free to determine their own course and political position. Sometimes also funding controversial projects where other organizations feel uncomfortable, they try to make maximum use of their independence by raising their fund and receive income from their members and the public.

and up to 75-80 percent of NGO budget for development projects in most cases was co-financed by governments.

Table 3: Overseas development aid distributed through NGOs

	Net official development assistance (ODA) disbursed Total (US \$m)	ODA as % of GNP	Share of ODA through NGOs (%)	Ranking by % of GNP	Ranking by % disbursed through NGOs
	1997	1997	1995/96	1997	1995/96
Australia	1 061	0.27	0.6	10	13
Austria	527	0.26	0.5	11	14
Belgium	764	0.31	0.3	9	15
Canada	2 045	0.34	8.5	7	4
Denmark	1 637	0.97	0.5	1	14
Finland	379	0.33	0.7	8	12
France	6 307	0.45	0.2	6	16
Germany	5 857	0.28	2.6	10	7
Greece	173	0.14	n.a	n.a	n.a
Ireland	187	0.31	0.1	9	17
Italy	1 266	0.11	1	15	10
Japan	9 358	0.21	2.1	14	8
Luxembourg	95	0.55	12.5	5	1
Netherlands	2 947	0.81	9.2	3	2
New Zealand	154	0.26	2	11	9
Norway	1 306	0.85	n.a	2	n.a
Portugal	250	0.25	0.25	12	11
Spain	1 234	0.24	n.a	13	n.a
Sweden	1 731	0.79	6	4	5
Switzerland	911	0.34	5.8	7	6
United Kingdom	3 433	0.26	2	11	9
United States	6 878	0.09	8.6	16	3
<b>TOTAL</b>					
<b>DAC of</b>					
<i>which:</i>	<b>48 497</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>3.4</b>		
EU Members	26 785	0.33			

Source: Frances Pinter, *Funding Global Civil Society Organisations*, in Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius, and Mary Kaldor (eds), *Global Civil Society 2001*, Oxford University Press, 2001. Data source, UNDP 2000.

It is difficult to calculate the value of NGOs volunteer resources, especially since they mobilize community resources in their own country's and in Southern countries that are difficult to quantify. In the field of human rights, it would damage NGOs for such a perception to arise. For instance, Amnesty International has strict rules that it will not accept direct government funding for normal activities. On the other hand, development and humanitarian relief NGOs need substantial resources,<sup>115</sup> to run their operational programs, so most of them readily accept government funds.

The emphasis on the relationship are the concerns about dependency itself, and whether over-reliance on governments may affect the ways that NGOs operate.<sup>116</sup> The issue goes beyond the simple question of whether NGOs may 'sell out' to the governments to consider whether the administrative procedures and requirements of government funding may in themselves have an adverse effect on the effectiveness of local NGOs in representing the poor, and considers the question of who such NGOs are ultimately accountable to: the poor whom they serve or the donors that fund their service activities.<sup>117</sup>

Nominally NGOs may appear to be independent, when they design their own programs, but government influence can arise indirectly if the program is designed to make it more likely that government grants or contracts will be forthcoming. On the other hand, confident and experienced NGOs can appeal for funding for new approaches which cause government officials to re-assess their development cooperation policy.<sup>118</sup>

## 2.1. Cooperation vs Independence

In recent years, government development assistance has been increasingly interested in cooperating with NGOs. For example, NGOs participation in new projects from year to year increased progressively. Also the expanding role of NGOs has been recognized by international agencies including the Club of Rome and the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD. Most of the NGOs are associated with governments in a variety of ways. For example, some are indirectly created by government to serve a

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<sup>115</sup> Peter Willetts, *op. cit.*

<sup>116</sup> L. David Brown and Archana Kalegaonkar, *Support Organizations and the Evolution of the NGO Sector*, in *Non Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Arnova Publication, Volume 31, Number 2 June 2002, pp. 234-235.

<sup>117</sup> Deborah Eade, Ernst Ligteringen (eds.), *Debating Development: NGOs and the Future*, Oxfam, 2001, p. 16.

<sup>118</sup> Daniel Corsino, *La part des ONG dans la coopération internationale*, in Centre Tricontinental Louvain-la-Neuve, *Les ONG: instruments du néo-libéralisme ou alternatives populaires? le point de vue du sud*, L'Harmattan, 1998, p. 65.

specific community need, they may be former government agencies, they may contract with government to assume a function formerly delivered by a government department or agency, or they may apply for government funding to deliver a needed service.

However, it is very important to give special attention to the hard and difficult environment in which NGOs are working. NGOs with a long existence and independent funding basis might be the most isolated from government rule or guidance, because each type of organization wants to establish some degree of independence and ability to set its own goals and define its own activities. On the other side, governments could distance themselves from a service by handing it over or recognizing the expertise of NGOs in delivering development programs.<sup>119</sup> In an ideal relationship, the appropriate balance between collaboration and independence from each other will obtain, allowing that this balance will shift for each party. An imbalance in the relationship may confirm fears in the NGOs that these relationships will result in confrontation rather than cooperation.<sup>120</sup>

Sometimes, governments could be portrayed as omnipotent in relationships with the NGOs because they tend to be dominant financially.<sup>121</sup> This can bring three risks for the state: first, government choice of services may be limited by the range of NGOs in the field able to take on the particular function; second, the costs of monitoring may limit government's ability to hold NGOs accountable; third, contracting out with NGOs may reduce the government's credibility and visibility with the public and thus affecting their public support.<sup>122</sup> But on the other hand, when a government department lacks expertise or technical knowledge, it may become beholden to the NGOs with the resources and information to drive a policy agenda forward. Similarly, if NGOs have wide public support, then they may be able to influence the priorities and policy agenda of a weaker or smaller government department. As the NGOs sector becomes more identifiable, its

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<sup>119</sup> Bernard J. Lecomte, *L'aide par projet: Limites et alternatives*, OCDE, 1986. p. 75. see also, John Farrington and Anthony Bebbington with Kate Wellard and David J. Lewis, *Reluctant Partners? Overseas Development Institute*, London, 1993. 44-51.

<sup>120</sup> Salamon 1999, pp. 346-356. In his analysis of the impact of partnering with government on NGOs autonomy, Salamon acknowledges the fears of NGOs that they will become the agents of governments and lose effectiveness as public advocates. However, he cites Kramer and Ullman to suggest that government support of third sector agencies may stimulate this role rather than reducing it by politicizing and providing them with the tools, access and knowledge to be even more effective advocates.

<sup>121</sup> Josephine Rekart, *Public Funds, Private Provision: The Role of the Voluntary Sector*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1993. pp. 148-151.

<sup>122</sup> Salamon 1999, pp. 358-360.

actors, particularly NGOs platform/federations, can contribute to mainstreaming its issues on the policy agenda.<sup>123</sup>

NGOs that promote changes in development awareness, problem-solving, etc., in their own countries also run some risks. Governments and some donors may prefer development activities that are not too close to home; so governments sometimes regard policy influence activities as grounds for revoking their status; or the public may not be receptive to development innovations that are ‘not invented here.’<sup>124</sup> Despite these risks, many NGOs are exploring ways to play larger roles in part because of counterpart NGOs in the South who ask, ‘Why aren’t you doing something in your country to reduce poverty in the South?’ and ‘How can you help change your own public policy that currently has a negative impact in our country?’.

And so, government departments and NGOs may therefore be wary partners or collaborators when they join forces to deliver services or develop policy. As there is extensive cooperation among governments and NGOs, there are also some tensions which could affect the ability of the two parts to work together more productively and to define and achieve common goals. Often, NGOs fear that entering into partnership with governments will erode their independence. In some circumstances, this should not be the case if the NGO chooses to adopt self-sustainable measures such as engaging in economic activities and other alternative sources of funding to ‘develop their own resources’, or by collecting fees from members, raising funds and donations.

It has become more popular with the governments that NGOs have adapted to the goals of cooperation and development Ministries, rather than Ministries adapting to NGOs. This process is not necessarily a question of opportunism, but one of economic realities from the perspective of NGOs. As NGOs have grown and become more professionalized, meaning that they require a constant inflow of funds to pay monthly salaries and office expenses, they have had to adapt their projects to meet the criteria of the donors who are able to do this.

This perspective on the issue of NGO-State relations on the question of relative autonomy of NGOs is where most of the debate in the field lies.<sup>125</sup> Given that NGOs are generally regulated and to some extent supervised by the state, then a lot of questions could revolve around the issue of whether

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<sup>123</sup> Jeremy Kendall, ‘*The mainstreaming of the third sector into public policy in England in the late 1990s: Whys and wherefores.*’ Civil Society Working Paper 2, London School of Economics, January 2000.

<sup>124</sup> Daniel Corsino, *La part des ONG dans la coopération internationale*, in Centre Tricontinental Louvain-la-Neuve, *Les ONG: instruments du néo-libéralisme ou alternatives populaires? le point de vue du sud*, L’Harmattan, 1998. pp. 55-56.

<sup>125</sup> Benno Ndulu, Nicolas van de Walle (eds), *Agenda for Africa’s Economic Renewal*, Transaction Publishers, London, 1996. pp. 198-200.

this is good (in terms of preventing corruption in NGOs or improving coordination between the government and NGOs) or bad (in terms of implying state control and limits on NGO activities).

It is appropriate to mention that constraints on the collaboration means also a competition among the NGOs for public recognition; concern for attainment of measurable outcomes in a time-limited project; community based agency legitimacy; and a clash of vision and targets with the professional community regarding competencies necessary to do community work is a major constraint in the process of collaboration. Every NGO expects public recognition as much as any other institution for their efforts, and when this does not happen serious problems of trust emerges, because none of the NGOs wants to diminish any autonomy they have.

This partly forced, partly voluntary and entirely complex relationship between the government and NGOs has been characterized by cooperation but also by tensions between governments and the NGOs.<sup>126</sup> Different expectations, objectives and mandates held by government and NGOs not only in cooperation but also have frustrated collaborative efforts between the two sectors. Two cross-currents of tensions should be particularly notable in the government and NGOs relation case:

- First, there is a conflict between government demands for accountability and organizational concerns over autonomy and responsiveness to NGOs.<sup>127</sup>
- Second, NGOs may be worried about prospects of any agreement with the government, and government departments and agencies may be worried about the possibility of being captured by the NGOs.

Obviously the degree of tension between the state and NGOs vary from one department or organization and their relationship to another. While the challenges of catalyzing inter-sectoral cooperation are substantial, the rewards of successful cooperation may be very impressive. Some opinions regarding cooperation by NGOs and governments in these countries indicate that cooperation produces creative solutions to difficult problems and sometimes increases the capacity of local grass-roots organizations and indigenous NGOs.

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<sup>126</sup> Gidron Benjamin, Ralph Kramer and Lester Salamon, 'Government and the Third Sector in Comparative Perspective: Allies or Adversaries?' in Benjamin Gidron, Ralph Kramer and Lester Salamon (eds), *Government and the Third Sector: Emerging Relationships in Welfare States*, San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1992, pp. 1-30.

<sup>127</sup> Michael Edwards, *Future Positive: International Co-operation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, EarthScan, London, 1999. p. 209.

## 2.2. Funding Uncertainties

At a global level the decline in governments' social spending during the decade of the 1990s created a tense environment of funding uncertainty among NGOs. However the experience in the Benelux countries has a different situation, despite Belgium's poor levels of performance in overseas development assistance a strong donor commitment remain active in The Netherlands and Luxembourg in overseas development assistance and share of government ODA through NGOs. (see table 2). For example, each funding source has its own short time line; regulations, reporting and evaluation requirements; and expected outcomes are considered in the following stages of funding. When these program-funding streams are cut-back, then staff positions and activities on each of the grants funded could suffer. This causes constant funding uncertainty and results in 1) inability to plan programs in most cases beyond one year, and 2) unevenness in delivering services that require continuity and time-sensitive interventions, 3) a product for the local community that deviated from what was promised in the original grant proposal, and 4) a need for constant grant to sustain the implementation of frontline programs.

NGOs raise money on the basis of donor trust, a trust that is based on the long-range implications for any NGO that finds itself the subject of efficiency. For the NGOs, long-term implications include difficulties raising money, loss of board members who want to disassociate themselves and save their individual good names in times of uncertainty, and calls for greater accountability by citizens and government. Participation of NGOs for funds in the partnership with anyone involves a high engagement of time by their members, and in return the members want equal public recognition as a reward for such engagements to avoid uncertainty.<sup>128</sup>

When it comes to specific NGOs, operational NGOs have to mobilize resources more than campaigning NGOs in the form of financial donations, materials or volunteer labor, in order to sustain their projects and programs.<sup>129</sup> This process may require quite complex organization, for instance, opening charity shops with volunteer staffs, provide at a nominal rent and selling donated goods...etc., can support the activities. In this regard, more in The Netherlands and a little less in Belgium students in their vacations or during a break in their education provide labor for projects. Finance obtained from grants or contracts, from governments, foundations or

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<sup>128</sup> Elizabeth A. Mulroy, and S. Shay, *Motivation and Reward in Nonprofit Interorganizational Collaboration in Low Income Neighborhoods Administration in Social Work*, 22(4), 1998, pp. 1-18.

<sup>129</sup> Alan Fowler, *Striking a Balance: A Guide to Enhancing the Effectiveness of Non-Governmental Organizations in International Development*, Earthscan, London, 2000. p. 129.

companies, require time and expertise spent on planning, preparing applications, budgeting, accounting and reporting. Major fund-raising events require skills in advertising, media relations and motivating supporters. Thus, operational NGOs need to possess efficient management and organization skills, in addition to the operational staff in the field. Campaigning NGOs will carry out much the same functions, but with a different balance between them. Fund-raising is still necessary but on a smaller scale, and it can serve the symbolic function of strengthening the donors' identification with the cause. Persuading people to donate their time is necessary, but, in addition to a small number of people giving a great deal of time, it is also necessary to be able to mobilize large numbers for brief periods.

External donors may not impose heavy administrative burdens, but supporters still have to be supplied with information on an efficient regular basis. Major events will aim to attract favorable publicity rather than raise funds.<sup>130</sup> This can be the case for uncertainty in that when the funding motivates the NGOs to develop programs and activities, they have to match the funding ideas of sponsors or donors. Consequently, the funded NGOs have more motivation to adapt the programs of the donors than to their constituents, the people.<sup>131</sup>

### **3. A Question of Credibility and Accountability of NGOs in the Benelux**

One may ask if there is a need to review the role of NGOs? In the question of accountability, NGOs can be distinguished from other organizational types in regard to the focus of responsibility. The limitation is that the identification of NGO misdeeds concerns above all in their internal operations and/or the behavior of the Board and/or paid staff.<sup>132</sup> There are no recorded and publicly open and documented cases of NGOs wrongdoing that concern the misuse of public funds (e.g., funds received from government grants or contracts); these were excluded from the analysis in this article, because these cases are of a different nature and the consequences are generally confined to the relationship itself. The necessity of follow-up concerning such case/events should be more accessible in regard to the public or taxpayers.

The evaluation of NGOs accountability cases, or as some prefer to call findings of wrongdoing show a broad range of process. The mismanagement involved in cases of project failure, wrongdoing or even

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<sup>130</sup> Peter Willetts, *op. cit.*

<sup>131</sup> Benno Ndulu, Nicolas van de Walle (eds), *Agenda for Africa's Economic Renewal*, Transaction Publishers, London, 1996. pp. 96- 99.

<sup>132</sup> See for instance Graham Hancock, *op. cit.*

theft, are sensitive cases which determine the credibility or reliability of NGOs, and may even determine on the existence of the NGO concerned. If there are no check-up and evaluation programs this allows the misdeeds to go on for years without detection.<sup>133</sup> The cases of accountability also reveal that the lack of appropriate oversight methods promotes the failure to maintain accountability mechanisms. For instance, symptoms of NGOs board failures could suggest failure to supervise operations, improper delegation by responsible individuals, neglect of assets, failure to ask the right questions, lack of turnover of board members, failure to institute internal controls, absence of checks and balances in procedures and practices; and isolation of board members from staff, programs and beneficiaries.

The board is the policymaking body and its members assume responsibility and the duty to act for the good of others. Standards are headed to which leaders of NGOs are required to exercise reasonable and ordinary care in the performance of their duties, exhibiting honesty and good faith. Board members share collective responsibility for the programming aspects of the NGOs performance. Boards are charged with overseeing and scrutinizing all aspects of the operations of the NGOs.<sup>134</sup> A board which fails in its function of both determining policy and evaluating achievement in support of those policies is negligent in performing its mandated functions. Should that occur, board members risk not only personal accountability, but also their reputations as competent and responsible leaders.

The growth of NGOs as a sector within the development sphere has understandably led to its share of common identity, but is not necessarily consistent from country to country. NGOs share in common the fact that many, if not most, suffer from malfunctions in their structure. As it is observed during this research, board members need to take their job seriously and work hard on it. Too often, Board members view their duties as simply voluntary and emotional. Attendance at meetings may be inconsistent, and lack of preparation for meetings may be even more common. Some members and observers honestly confirm that meetings sometimes turn into social events, or that talks are not to the pint.

It cannot be assumed that NGOs boards do not understand their roles or are adequately prepared to assume and carry them out. Since they are based on volunteer leadership, or because of the lack of professionalism and training, the fact remains that many NGOs boards are not trying hard enough to invest in their own development. Good intentions and high ideals alone however, are not enough.

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<sup>133</sup> Terje Tvedt, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>134</sup> Gelman, S. R., *Roles, Responsibilities, and Liabilities of Agency Boards*, in M. Genic, M.W. Krause, and M. Seltzer (Eds.), *Community Residences for Persons with Developmental Disabilities: Here to Stay*, 1988, Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes, pp.57-68.

Most of the NGOs in the Benelux have already experienced the awareness that can accrue from NGO inefficiency in terms of loss of contributions, loss of status, and organizational disorder. Even with more serious internal controls, NGOs are unlikely, themselves, to institutionalize adequate public accountability. Some mixture of watchdog agencies, government oversight, and internal NGO procedures is probably the most feasible route to increase accountability and avoid financial and questionable professional and ethical practices. For countries in which the NGOs are at an earlier stage of development, in most cases in Luxembourg, the notion of NGOs accountability to the public is not yet well-established. The majority of NGOs do not as yet evidence a commitment to the concept of accountability and, in general, their boards are not meeting the basic roles and responsibilities essential for effective management.<sup>135</sup>

The NGOs can ill afford the consequences of public scandal. To avoid this, governments should take action on the basis of the regulations and by providing independent watchdog agencies this may well become more necessarily to be aware of their oversight.<sup>136</sup> Because NGOs provide good works this does not mean they need not be accountable to anybody, including the donors who support their work. Although some may argue with the conclusion that government must be the higher authority to whom nonprofits are accountable, their reasoning for the need for oversight cannot be faulted: The public has a right to know about NGOs behavior and to demand a high degree of accountability. Part of the problem, of course, is that the deformed status of NGOs makes them more susceptible than other types of organizations to public disillusionment.<sup>137</sup>

To operate and grow, NGOs need funds. Funds must entail plans and proposals that must meet with the goals of donors (government/private). NGOs and donors both must be accountable for and justify their expenses to their respective constituencies. The government, for its part, must demonstrate concern for its population, while attempting to safeguard its own prerogatives in a time of budget and priorities changes.

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<sup>135</sup> This is a view developed from the various interviews I conducted in Brussels, Luxembourg and The Netherlands, some of the staff members opinion provided lead to such a conclusion.

<sup>136</sup> Eisenberg, P., *Why Charities Think they Can Regulate Themselves*. Chronicle of Philanthropy, 2000b, May 4, pp. 45-47, (He argues that the economic and social status achieved by nonprofit organizations have resulted in a self-righteous attitude).

<sup>137</sup> Salamon 1995, p. 15, has commented on the myth of the pure virtue within the nonprofit sector and a certain romanticism about its inherent purity, about its distinctive virtues.

### 3.1. Accountability vs Autonomy

One of the tensions in the relationship between the NGOs and governments or any donors concerns the balance between accountability and autonomy. Autonomy and accountability may become oppositional forces, which complicate effective relations between the two parts. If governments are to justify to the public their exercising control over NGOs for the delivery of services and program, then they must provide some assurance that the NGOs will be more efficient and that quality of the service will not decline. As government funding to NGOs increases, its obvious that governments impose greater measures of accountability. Thus, while governments might be attracted by the flexibility enjoyed by NGOs in delivery services, they will require certain operational elements to remain standard such as financial management and accounting practices, key program objectives, forms of program evaluation, and policy goals such as development issues, environmental protections, and respect for human rights.<sup>138</sup>

Another question is whether NGOs can be accountable to the poor at all if they are funded by donors. Accountability implies that an accounting is made to those who fund specific activities. In this case, NGOs have to provide evidence to donors that the funding they received was used according to the donor guidelines compared to the unclear prospective of ‘accounting’ to beneficiaries. For instance, in profit-making firms/companies, accountability to customers is provided by the market place itself, if customers aren’t happy, they simply don’t buy the product. But in the NGOs sector those who ‘buy’ (pay for) the product only consume reports, while the services which the NGOs provide are apparently used by the poor/beneficiaries. The poor do not have an ability to force an ‘accounting’ on the NGOs, nor do they have any legal or economic standing to do so since they do not actually pay for it. The tendency, therefore, is for NGOs to focus their attention on their legal obligations to the donors and their moral obligations to their beneficiaries.<sup>139</sup>

The concern for accountability in the NGOs is for two main reasons related to autonomy of operation. Many NGOs have operated with a ‘private’ mentality and resist pressures for transparency.<sup>140</sup> Second, the added degrees of reporting result is becoming more bureaucratized and losing a degree of

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<sup>138</sup> Michael Edwards, Future Positive *op.cit.* pp. 144-156, see also, Hernando de Soto, *Mystery of Capital: Why capitalism triumphs in the west and fails everywhere else*, Transworld Publisher, UK, 2000. pp. 12-15.

<sup>139</sup> See for instance, John C. Cross, Development NGOs, the State and Neo-Liberalism: Competition, Partnership or Co-conspiracy, (Published in *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual AUC Research Conference*. Office of Graduate Studies and Research, The American University in Cairo,) July, 1997.

<sup>140</sup> Lester M. Salamon and Helmut K. Anheier, *The Emerging Nonprofit Sector: An Overview*, Manchester University Press, 1996, p. 126.

flexibility, informality and internal control over operations as well as distancing the organization from its members or beneficiaries.<sup>141</sup>

NGOs help and advocate on behalf of and increase the organizational capacity of the poor, provide services more efficiently, flexibly and innovatively than the public sector. But in practice, the larger NGOs grow the less accountable they are to beneficiaries and the more accountable they are to the donors who allow them to grow.<sup>142</sup> The more dependent they become on outside funding and particularly government, official or international aid, the less are able they to take on a role that might be seen as critical to the national government. The more 'professional' they become, the more they depend on outside funding and the less likely they are to be innovative and flexible in dealing with local problems.<sup>143</sup>

### 3.2. Importance of Policy Influence on NGOs

In the Benelux countries NGOs and other grass-roots groups working on equitable and sustainable development have grown in scope and number, to overcome problems of development, population and environmental degradation. NGOs have supported traditionally marginalized communities in their efforts to improve the economic, social, environmental conditions under which people live.<sup>144</sup> As organizations representing and serving grass-roots groups have gained experience and credibility in development and environmental work, many are adding formal policy influence to their agendas in their own countries and executing projects in developing countries.

One can ask, what have NGOs often small, technically inadequate, dependent on the voluntary commitments of staff and government or private

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<sup>141</sup> Naoki Suzuki, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-20.

<sup>142</sup> Marina Ottaway, Thomas Carothers, *op.cit.*

<sup>143</sup> Michael Edwards and David Hulme, *Too Close for Comfort? The Impact of Official Aid on Nongovernmental Organizations*, World Development, 1996, 24:6:961-73.

<sup>144</sup> Turning to the international context, the rise of transnational civil society linked across borders on issue-based advocacy networks as an important development. Are the few well-documented cases passing phenomena, or are they indications of genuinely powerful networks that are here to stay and develop? And what do the recent WTO, IMF, and World Bank protests tell us about the strengths and weaknesses of these actors? The Seattle, Genoa, Johannesburg and every year in Porto-Alegre, .... protests were both a positive and negative development for transnational civil society. While the peaceful elements of the movement opened up space for discussion on the problems of globalization, the more aggressive and violent strains of the protests have made governments more defensive about civil society involvement across a range of issues. The protests did reveal some key insights into the working of the international system. They demonstrated the vulnerability to public opinion of seemingly impenetrable global institutions; they displayed the tremendous mobilization capacity of transnational networks; and they signaled the weakness of unilateralism masked with multilateralism and few state-to-state relations in the globalized world.

donors have to offer? Of course NGOs are making critical contributions to developing countries because they have demonstrated a comparative advantage over government agencies and other International development actors in reaching the very poor, encouraging local participation in project design and implementation, responding flexibly to local needs, and building local human and organizational capacities for problem-solving at the grass-roots level. However, to expand their catalytic role in development, they must also expand their perspectives and capacities.

In the face of such challenges, these non governmental organizations have identified several interrelated policy goals. They include the need to change government policies, use grass-roots experiences and innovations as the basis for improved policies, and strengthen local capacities and structures for a better public participation. NGOs working more in building sustainable development institutional arrangements and inter-sectoral cooperation among NGOs, governments, grass-roots groups, and other private donors, will foster more policy influence between and development partners to create more awareness and action on development issues.

An emphasis on local capacity can mobilize resources from the grass-roots. Building local capacity and fostering cooperation can generate more information and resources for solving complex problems of development and can strengthen the institutional relationships needed to sustain changes over time. Creating linkages to public and policy makers can generate more resources and better policies to support development, as well as encourage the exchange of innovations beneficial for development problems.

### 3.3. Uncertainty of Outcomes

One of the major problem is a difficulty in finding 'good' NGOs to support in the South. To be certain on the results particularly those NGOs must identify other effective NGOs in the countries they carry out their programs, whatever those programs may be. Some findings and reports show that finding good NGOs is difficult, in part because they do not have the needed organizational and human resources.<sup>145</sup> One of the reasons is that the NGOs in the South are also typically undertaken by many of political appointees not interested in local development. They may identify NGOs by political influence or willingness to pay for recommendations, rather than capacity to carry out the development projects in the grass-root society. They also have difficulty identifying effective local NGOs on an ongoing basis. It

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<sup>145</sup> Benno Ndulu, Nicolas van de Walle (eds.), *Agenda for Africa's Economic Renewal*, Transaction Publishers, London, 1996. p. 103.

is not surprising that some program performance is disappointing when appropriate NGOs cannot be found.

In other cases, NGOs with appropriate capacities have been alienated by bad past experiences. Sometimes politicians gained control of resources through influence over State Boards; sometimes staff extorted payments from NGOs before accepting their applications; sometimes bogus NGOs acquired funds to carry out programs that existed largely on paper. In these cases inability to identify good NGOs, to support their activities, and then to hold them realistically accountable sabotages the goals.

## **Conclusion**

Just as international conventions have focused on obtaining poverty eradication commitments from governments, Non governmental organizations have also adopted their own approaches to participate in and monitor the debate in the international arena, and to highlight the inconsistency in the strategies of the international community. During the past decade or so, more and more observers have questioned the impact of traditional development cooperation activities. Among the main aspects at which criticism have been leveled are the high cost and questionable effectiveness of expatriate technical assistance, the proliferation of uncoordinated projects, the high administrative costs, the lack of local ownership, cost and time overruns, and the disappointing record of sustainability over the last decades.

Various policies have been launched since the mid-1990s to address these problems and new mechanisms are now being tested, such as Poverty Reduction Strategy, Comprehensive Development Frameworks, Sector-Wide Approaches etc. More proposals for reforms are likely to emerge over the next years in the light of the rapidly changing agendas in development co-operations and the increasing need to focus on income disparities and poverty alleviation. The promising move to bring macro and micro programming more closely together will also force donors to review their approaches and their capacities for managing them.

It is very important to give a special attention to the hard and difficult environment in which NGOs are working. Some say that bilateral aid should go to NGOs which are generally more open and efficient than governments. The NGOs are much more important to the governments as well. Even most International development agencies now have hundreds of NGO partners. The main reason for the recent boom in NGOs is that Governments finance them and they are virtually becoming contractors/subcontractors to governments. Governments prefer to pass aid

through NGOs because it is cheaper, more efficient, and more readily accessible than direct official aid. However, governments sometimes use this as a way of shirking their responsibilities.

Governments also find NGOs an important source of information as they bring back reports of what is happening in different regions. Often the information the NGOs gather is unavailable from other sources, such as provided by human rights NGOs. While this is useful, governments may sometimes exploit NGOs, particularly those working in the midst of conflict, by using them as a cover for searching out what is going on. Some NGOs take over as a diplomatic function, such as negotiating ceasefires, preventing and ending conflicts, restricting arms flow. In performing such tasks NGOs must take care not to act as ‘instruments of government foreign policy.’

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