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## **NGO Funding and Policy Bulletin** NGO Sector Analysis Programme

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# 1. CHILD SPONSORSHIP: A FUNDING TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

## *Introduction*

NGO child sponsorship programmes have enjoyed a continuous and rapid growth over the past twenty years. Agencies which run such programmes report a year-on-year increase in both the number of children sponsored and the amounts of money raised (see table 1 below). It has won the support of prominent public figures such as Jacqueline Kennedy and German President Roman Herzog, who sponsored Plan International's one millionth child in 1997 (Plan International, 1998). On the other hand it is a form of funding which has attracted strong public criticism, particularly during the 1980s. In terms of research, there is very little published information available about sponsorship, and virtually no research-based material that deals with child sponsorship and community development (Stephenson 1996). The information that is available falls broadly into three categories:

- 1) **Journalistic exposés** of problems in individual sponsorship agencies and critiques of the impact of sponsorship programmes on recipients and their communities.
- 2) **In-house publications** by sponsoring agencies.
- 3) **Professional literature**, including documentation of specific programme interventions and sections of more general textbooks on the NGO sector.

Given the scarcity of empirical research-based evidence about the impact of child sponsorship on recipient families and communities, as well as on the donor public, the debate on the issue has been informed largely by anecdotal accounts of benefits and drawbacks (Stephenson 1996). This article outlines the different forms of sponsorship programmes and sets out the arguments for and against sponsorship as a tool for community development. It also gives some information about the scale of operations and rate of growth of sponsorship by the main agencies.

## *What is a Child Sponsorship Programme?*

Most of the major sponsorship agencies grew out of the situation in Europe from the 1920s to the '40s, when the Russian Revolution, Spanish Civil War and Second World War resulted in many child refugees and orphans. Child sponsorship began as a humanitarian effort to help fund the care of these children in camps and orphanages (World Vision 1997, Plan International 1998;). Over the years, the focus of larger agencies shifted towards helping children living in poor families, and nowadays many sponsored children live at home with their parents and other siblings, who may or may not also be sponsored (World Vision 1997). Geographically, sponsors are found in the 'developed' countries whilst sponsored children typically live in the 'developing' world. However, in the USA there are sponsored children in the more impoverished communities, including Native American reservations and the remote areas of Appalachia, whilst in the newly industrialised counties such as Taiwan, domestically-funded sponsorship programmes have emerged.

Sponsorship programmes fall broadly into two categories:

1. Programmes which focus on the **individual child** as the recipient of the sponsor's donation.
2. Programmes which use the funds to support **development programmes** based in the community in which the sponsored child lives, to benefit **all children** in the community.

In both types of programme, the sponsor is encouraged to write to the sponsored child, and can expect regular photographs and progress reports from the project staff, as well as some kind of personal response from the child such as letters and drawings. Letters are translated by project staff, often more than once (e.g. Wolof to French to English). Such letters are often censored to remove political comments or requests for extra assistance (Rance et al, April 1989). Even with the most community-based child sponsorship programme, the emphasis is placed on the sponsor's relationship with the individual child, and the difference that their sponsorship will make to that individual.

### ***Sponsorship - Against and For***

In terms of funding sources, child sponsorship forms part of the gift economy.<sup>1</sup> Fowler (1997) makes a distinction between 'hot' and 'cold' money, arguing that 'sustained micro-development needs hot money: assistance which is human and personalised through authentic participation'. Research into charitable giving in the UK has shown that British people rate 'helping children' as highest on the list of causes deserving support.<sup>2</sup> Funding raised through child sponsorship programmes can therefore be seen as hot money, with a great deal of personal emotional involvement on the part of the donor. Can we therefore conclude that child sponsorship is an effective tool of 'sustained micro-development'?

The arguments **against** child sponsorship fall into three broad categories:

1. Child sponsorship has a **negative impact** on the child, the child's family and community.
  - Family rifts and community tension can develop when aid agencies arbitrarily single out children or families for special treatment.
  - Parents can feel humiliated and their authority in the family can be undermined.
  - Selection of children or families for sponsorship can reflect the political or religious orientation of the aid agency, and children may be pressurised into religious activities.
  - Sponsorship risks fostering dependence by reminding children that they are the 'poor relation' and must be grateful to their 'rich cousins'.
  - The exchange can be culturally insensitive and confusing for the child, creating unrealistic expectations.
  - By taking their photographs and requiring them to write letters to strangers, children are being exploited for fundraising purposes.
  - Sponsorship does not encourage collective community endeavour; it just leads to advancement for some individuals who may then leave their community to find paid employment elsewhere.
2. Child sponsorship agencies **mislead sponsors** and play on their ignorance of the complexity of development issues:
  - Sponsors can be misled into believing that by contributing a small sum of money each month the life of the sponsored child can be completely transformed.
  - Agencies can give the impression that every penny of the sponsorship will directly benefit the child, when in fact much of the money goes towards administration, and often no money at all goes directly to the child or his/her family.

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<sup>1</sup> See Informed 1999, number 1, December. p2.

<sup>2</sup> CAF 1988, quoted by Norton, M. 1996, *The Worldwide Fundraisers Handbook*.

- Child sponsorship plays on the emotional needs of the sponsor, sacrificing real development education in favour of fundraising goals.
3. Child sponsorship is **cumbersome and expensive to administer**, and so is an inefficient use of agency resources.
- The administrative burden of dealing with high volumes of personal correspondence and the need to provide translation services, photographs and progress reports on each child make sponsorship a cumbersome and expensive option. At least one UK NGO made the decision to phase out its child sponsorship programme in the early
  - 1990s, having decided that the administrative costs did not justify continuation.

'Letters purportedly written by the sponsored children...were often composed by workers for the sponsorship organisations themselves. Many of the children and their families never learned their sponsor's names.... A few never understood they had been sponsored at all.'  
*Chicago Tribune* Special Report, 15 March 1998

Ranged against these arguments are those which seek to **justify and defend** child sponsorship programmes:

1. Sponsorship is a means of **supporting development** work.
  - Sponsorship programmes can benefit entire families and communities, not just the sponsored child, when funds are channelled into community-based development projects.
  - Child sponsorship programmes need not foster dependence. They can be the basis for community-level empowerment as local people organise to manage the programme.
  - Far from being cumbersome and expensive, the programme administration can be entrusted to the local community and become a means of local administrative capacity building.<sup>3</sup>
2. Sponsorship has proved to be a massively **effective fundraising strategy**.
  - Sponsorship is long-term and enables long-term planning: a typical sponsor stays for 10 years.<sup>4</sup>
  - Sponsorship allows independence from official funding bodies, providing flexible money.
  - Sponsorship can provide a feeling of personal involvement, and a sense that one's contribution can make a difference.
3. Sponsorship is a tool of **development education** amongst sponsors.
  - The personal contact between sponsor and the child can give an unique insight into life in a developing country, and can provide a more positive image than those offered by the media.

It should be stated that following the public debate generated during the 1980s by the *New Internationalist* and others, and in 1998 in the USA by the *Chicago Tribune* and *New York Times*, several agencies have refocused their sponsorship programmes. Some have reduced the number of letters which children are required to write, whilst others now use the language of community participation and capacity building, and entrust the running of programmes to the recipient communities themselves. In September 1998, InterAction (the American umbrella organisation for development NGOs) approved a new set of Child Sponsorship Standards relating to issues of

<sup>3</sup> Siddhartha Sahu, 1997, World Vision.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Shaw of ActionAid, speaking at the BOND Forum 'Ensuring the Independence of NGOs in New Funding Environments', December 1999.

honesty, transparency and accountability, including advertising standards, programme monitoring and evaluation, protection of donors and respect for the privacy and dignity of the sponsored families.

### *Continuous Growth in Sponsorship Funding*

Information on the scale of operations and the rate of growth in child sponsorship is sometimes published in sponsoring agencies' annual reports (see Table 1 below). The information available shows that for the larger international sponsoring agencies, there has been a continuous growth in sponsorship income even where overall income may have dropped. As a fundraising tool, sponsorship has been remarkably resilient to the general downward voluntary funding trend during the 1990s, and is gaining in popularity in many countries. For example, Plan International launched 'Foster Parent' programmes in France, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Korea in the 1990s (Plan International 1998). Information about the administration costs involved in running these programmes is difficult to obtain, as they tend to be subsumed into programme expenditure. The real cost of these programmes may therefore be far higher than that shown in official figures (Smillie 1996).

<b>Table 1: Total Income from Child Sponsorship/ Number of children.</b>										
<b>Year:</b>		<b>1991</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>
<b>Agency</b>										
((a) = Total Income From Sponsorship. (b) = Number of children registered with sponsorship schemes.)										
CCF (GB)	(a)			£2,377,584	£2,509,943	£2,642,784	£2,658,901	£2,832,017	£2,998,841	£3,165,827
	(b)	16,069	17,776	18,251	17,384	17,281	17,500	19,100	20,950	21,600
Compassion International	(a)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	(b)			180,000			200,000		250,000	260,000
Plan International	(a)	\$144,874,272	\$159,257,761					\$251,347,000	\$249,077,000	\$260,002,000
	(b)	619,622	662,830	680,000				1,091,081**	1,155,573**	1,200,000**
World Vision (UK)	(a)	£3,880,000	£3,990,000	£3,850,000	£4,941,000	£6,130,000*	£7,490,000* (£5,002,000*)	£7,667,000*	£8,970,000*	£10,377,000*
	(b)				28,000	35,000	41,000	49,000	56,000	59,000
(* these figures include funds raised from other committed giving schemes.)										
(** these figures include children supported but not yet assigned to sponsors)										

### *Impact*

As mentioned above, there is very little published empirical evidence concerning the impact of child sponsorship programmes. What exists are largely case studies from the sponsoring agencies themselves, as well as anecdotal accounts of individual sponsors' experiences. Some agencies report positive conclusions from market research surveys about levels of awareness of development issues. For example, market research conducted for ActionAid showed that sponsors understood the importance of the community, not just the individual child, and the need for long-term development.<sup>5</sup>

Agencies may feel that the long-term funding stability offered by sponsorship programmes outweighs any possible restrictive or negative impacts. However they have attracted criticism from some for focusing too much on images and programmes that 'sell' (Smillie 1996). One study

<sup>5</sup> Margaret Shaw of Action Aid, see note 4 above.

suggests that child sponsorship mechanisms can distort community-based development processes and hamper an NGO's ability to adapt its strategy in response to global trends. (Stephenson 1997). He suggests **as further areas for research:**

- the influences of child sponsorship programmes on attitudinal changes in children, families and communities;
- how sponsorship programmes affect donors and their families.

### ***Conclusion***

This article has looked at the nature of child sponsorship programmes and has set out the main arguments for and against sponsorship as a funding source for development. These arguments focus on the effects of sponsorship programmes on the recipient community, on the level of understanding and motivations of the donors, and on the costs involved in running such programmes. Sponsoring agencies have addressed internally the issues raised by public debate. However, whilst sponsorship is a growing phenomenon capable of raising large amounts of relatively stable longer-term funding, little empirical research-based evidence is available concerning its impact. There is a need for further research both on the impact of sponsorship mechanisms on sponsored children and their communities, and on the role of sponsorship programmes in shaping the level of awareness and understanding of development issues among sponsors.

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## 2. UPDATE ON OFFICIAL FUNDING TRENDS IN EUROPE

### DENMARK

**Official Assistance:** Denmark remains at the top of the DAC league. Its contribution of 0.99% of GNP to aid in 1998 represented an amount of US\$320 per capita, compared to the DAC average of US\$60. The building-up of a new Facility for Environment, Peace and Stability (FEPS) indicates that there is a prospect of further increases in aid volumes, testifying to strong public support for development assistance.

**Top 5 country recipients:** Tanzania, Uganda, Bangladesh, India and Mozambique.

**Contributions to NGOs:** US\$7 million of ODA was channelled through NGOs in 1998, the same amount as in the previous year, but down from US\$9 million in 1996. In many cases the government funds 100% of NGO project costs, as well as contributing to overheads.

**Policy Update:** Bilateral Aid not channelled through NGOs is concentrated in 20 countries, of which 18 are 'low income' and 12 are 'least developed' countries, reflecting a strong orientation towards poverty reduction. Aid in each recipient country is concentrated on a limited number of sectors, and in the poorest parts of those countries. A mid-term evaluation of Denmark's strategy of shifting from project assistance to sector programmes showed that while implementation is on track, the building-up of sector programmes is a slower process than expected.

### IRELAND

**Official Assistance:** Between 1992 and 1999, Ireland's aid contribution in relation to its GNP increased from 0.16% to 0.35% - the highest growth rate for the period of all DAC countries. In 1999 it stood at IR£178 million, and there is political approval for further increases up to 0.45% of the country's growing GNP by 2002.

**Top 5 country recipients:** Ethiopia, Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda and Lesotho.

**Contributions to NGOs:** According to figures published by DAC, official Irish contributions to NGOs stood at US\$ 3m in 1998. However, Irish government figures show disbursements through its co-financing programme for 1998 as IR£6.4m:

*Co-financing to NGOs 1998*

*Main Scheme: IR£ 2.9m*

*Block grants to four large NGOs: IR£ 2.3m*

*In-country micro-projects scheme: IR£1.2m*

Total funding through NGOs, including emergency humanitarian assistance and funding through the Agency for Personal Service Overseas (APSO) stood at IR£20.742 million.

**Policy Update:** Irish Aid is concentrated on six LDCs in sub-Saharan Africa. In 1999, 48% of aid expenditure was allocated to LDCs, a figure which is double the donor average. Support for programmes to strengthen governance and human rights are seen as essential, and there has been a move towards a thematic and sectoral approach. New structures have been introduced in relation to implementation and monitoring and evaluation of programmes, along with new project approval mechanisms. Consultations are taking place on Ireland's goal of integrating the partnership approach into its development co-operation programmes, and there has been a move away from long-term external technical assistance towards an emphasis on local capacity building.

## NETHERLANDS

**Official Assistance:** The Netherlands contributed 0.8% of GNP to ODA in 1998. The country's five quantified spending targets were met: 20% of the budget was spent on aid to basic social services in developing countries; 4% on reproductive healthcare, 0.1% of GNP on international environmental policy, 50 million Dutch guilders (US\$25m) on preservation of tropical rainforests, and at least 0.25% of GNP on the least developed countries. Projections for 1999 and 2000 show ODA as 0.81% and 0.8% of GNP respectively.

**Top 5 country recipients:** In 1997-8 these were: Netherland Antilles, India, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tanzania and Bolivia. Dutch government figures show no aid budget for Netherland Antilles for 2000.

**Contributions to NGOs:** Official contributions to NGOs totalled US\$311 million in 1998, up from US\$267 million in 1997.

**Policy Update:** Poverty Reduction is the main objective of the Netherlands development policy. In future the number of countries with which it maintains bilateral relations on a government-to-government basis will be reduced to 19. The selection process will be based on three criteria: degree of poverty, quality of socio-economic policy and quality of governance. More emphasis will be placed on monitoring of results, rather than input targets. The Netherlands is moving from project to programme support, with the eventual goal of macro or sectoral budget support. Earlier this year, the Netherlands government attracted criticism over plans to finance its 'Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) commitments through its ODA budget, thus diverting development co-operation resources to meet the cost of its obligation to tackle greenhouse gas emissions.

## NORWAY

**Official Assistance:** At 0.91% of GNP, Norway's contribution to ODA in 1998 was the second highest for the DAC countries.

**Top 5 country recipients:** Mozambique, Tanzania, Palestine, Zambia and Bosnia.

**Contributions to NGOs:** In 1998, NORAD channelled almost a quarter of its total ODA through NGOs - 1,184 million Norwegian Krone.

**Policy Update:** Norway's approach to development assistance is 'three-pronged': to help foster economic growth, to contribute to social development programmes, and to target aid on vulnerable groups. In May 1999 the Minister for International Development issued a major policy statement reiterating a commitment to poverty reduction as the foundation for the aid programme. However, a DAC peer review in October 1999 found that the operational approaches and budget allocations for poverty reduction should be further strengthened. Norway is keen to concentrate its bilateral assistance in twelve priority countries: nevertheless, aid continues to be more geographically disbursed due to the conflicting demand of humanitarian and political priorities. Thus, in 1998 humanitarian assistance was given to over 70 countries, and NORAD is supporting long-term development activities in more than 100 countries.

## SWEDEN

**Official Assistance:** The previous decrease in the volume of Swedish ODA appears to have been halted as the fiscal situation in Sweden has improved. The ODA budget for 2000 will increase by US\$150 m, and the ratio of ODA to GNP is expected to reach 0.80% (compared to 0.72% in 1998).

**Top 5 country recipients:** Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, Vietnam and Ethiopia.

**Contributions to NGOs:** US\$108 million was channelled through NGOs in 1998 - a decline of US\$1 million from 1997.

**Policy Update:** SIDA is implementing action plans in four areas: poverty reduction, sustainable development, gender equality, and democracy, human rights and conflict resolution. A new strategy for the Middle East was prepared in 1999. Sweden has launched a project entitled "Development Finance 2000" to promote financial arrangements which produce equitable burden sharing among multilateral donors.

## UNITED KINGDOM

**Official Assistance:** There is a commitment to increase ODA to 0.3% of GNP by 2001 (from the 1998 figure of 0.27%). The aid budget for 2003-04 has been set at £3.6 billion, or 0.33% of GNP, which represents a 53% increase in real terms over the figure for 1997-8.

**Top 5 country recipients:** India, Guyana, Tanzania, Zambia and Uganda.

**Contributions to NGOs:** Official contributions to NGOs increased sharply in 1998 to US\$111 million from US\$76 million in 1997 (source: DAC Development Co-operation Report. The amount channelled through NGOs quoted by DfID is much higher: £182m in 1998-9, of which £24m was humanitarian assistance).

**Policy Update:** In line with the British government's commitment to poverty-eradication, bilateral aid is now more explicitly concentrated on low-income countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. A series of country strategy papers are being published, setting out the results of DfID's assessment of countries against set criteria for partnership. The UK government is giving greater emphasis to coherence in all aspects of policy affecting developing countries.

## EUROPEAN UNION

**Official Assistance:** The total external relations budget for 2000 is 4,790 billion Euros, which represents 5.1% of the total Community budget. There are plans for a 72.6% increase in funding allocation for the Western Balkans for 2001, with part of this funding increase being met through cuts elsewhere in the EU foreign assistance budgets. The Commission has proposed breaching the Financial Perspectives Ceilings in 2001 to fund 5.5 billion Euros in the Balkans over the period 2000 - 2006.

**Top 5 country recipients:** Poland, Czech Rep., Morocco, Egypt, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
(*N.B. Poland and Czech Rep. are funded from Overseas Assistance, not strictly ODA*).

**Contributions to NGOs:** The EU Budget for NGO co-financing in the year 2000 remains at its 1999 level of 196 million euros. For 2001, proposed budget changes may see the NGO Co-financing line merged with that for 'decentralised co-operation', sharing a proposed budget of 191 million euros.

**Policy Update:** Discussions are underway to try to rationalise the development co-operation budget by limiting the number of budget lines through a thematic regrouping which may see the merging or discontinuation of several budget lines. INTRAC has been closely involved in an independent evaluation of the B7-6000 NGO Co-financing budget line which is nearing completion.

The Commission's *Communication on Development Policy*, issued in April, contains an explicit commitment to poverty reduction. This paper will be adopted at the 10th November Dev. Council, and is currently the subject of ongoing lobbying, debate and consultation. NGOs have called for a stronger commitment to policy coherence, and have expressed reservations about the lack of any strategy for achieving poverty reduction or targets for measuring progress, and the assumed linkage between trade and poverty reduction. The paper contains an explicit statement that development assistance will take account of political priorities.

The initiative on the European Commission's relationship with NGOs, *Building a Stronger Partnership*, has been overshadowed by Commissioner Patten's *Proposals for Reform of External Relations*. These reforms are designed to improve the efficiency and reputation of EC aid, and will have a major impact on the EC's performance and role as a donor. However, the proposals treat Development Assistance as a tool for achieving political objectives, and they are considered to undermine the poverty focus set out in the statement on development policy.

The Communication of the Commission on Development Policy can be viewed at the Europa website: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/document/dev\\_policy\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/document/dev_policy_en.htm). Click on Follow-Up to read the document.

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### 3. UPDATE ON THE POVERTY REDUCTION DEBATE

#### Any Progress?

The latest report from Paris 21 (Paris21.org 2000) shows that regionally, **only** East Asia is on course to achieving the Poverty Reduction Targets by 2015. South America's progress is hampered by unequal economic growth, whilst prospects are pessimistic in most of Africa.

#### Efforts of Donor Agencies

The DAC has stated that its member countries could do more to ensure **policy consistency**. In its Scoping survey (DAC-OECD 1999) it found confusion over how multi-dimensional approaches to poverty can be operationalised, and over the meaning of 'pro-poor' growth. The survey found progress by member agencies, but shortcomings in their organisational culture and capacities. Perhaps most importantly, they found that 'the overall incentive structure ...is not specifically designed to encourage staff to make poverty reduction their overriding priority in practice'. They found a general **lack of operationally - relevant guidelines**, a virtual **absence of training** for agency staff on poverty reduction, and a **lack of relevant skills** within the official agencies. Only a minority of agencies use marker systems for monitoring programme effectiveness or unambiguously require a poverty reduction focus in Country Assistance Strategy documents.

The DAC's guidelines for donor agencies on best practice to foster effective poverty reduction should be completed by June 2001.

#### PRSPs and Civil Society Participation

Despite the rhetoric of participation, the scope for Civil Society and NGO involvement in drawing up country Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) so far has been limited by the short time-frames allowed for the consultation/participation process. CSOs have been excluded from consideration of macro-economic and structural questions, and governments often prepare the PRSP in draft form prior to participation of CSOs - thus restricting them to a reactive rather than proactive role. There appears to be a real risk that the PRSP process will be hijacked by the need to conform to a liberalising IMF/World Bank macroeconomic agenda as a condition for continued funding or debt relief.

#### Conclusions

Some agencies appear to be moving towards translating the rhetoric of poverty reduction into concrete policies and practices. However, resource commitments and capacities within agencies lag behind policy statements, and governments have still to address the issue of policy coherence towards the developing world. While the definition of such terms as 'pro-poor growth' remain hazy and the participation of Civil Society actors in donor policy formulation is restricted, there is still some way to go before poverty reduction becomes part of mainstream thinking in the international financial institutions.

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## 4. NEWS FROM CONFERENCES AND WORKING GROUPS

### ***Organising NGO Advocacy - Research Findings and Discussion***

***NCVO, London 8<sup>th</sup> May***

At this meeting, three presentations were made on NGO Advocacy drawing out organisational implications. Further details of Alan Hudson's NGOs' Advocacy Research Findings can be viewed at: <http://www.alanhudson.plus.com/NGOs.html>

#### **1. Organising NGOs' International Advocacy Research Project**

Alan Hudson, Open University

This research project looked at the advocacy work of a range of UK-based development NGOs (see *Informed No. 2*). The findings indicate how the NGOs viewed Advocacy.

#### ***What is NGO Advocacy?***

The core meaning of advocacy is defined by NGOs as influencing policy-makers to change policies in ways that influence the poor. A process of re-labelling and formalising advocacy is taking place, related to questions of scaling up and rethinking Northern NGO roles. NGOs referred to the benefit of an *issue focus*; the choice of issues is important in order to bring in other themes. NGOs identified a huge range of targets, and the EU was seen as 'under-advocated'. Some NGOs had a standard set of targets, rather than defining particular objectives before setting targets.

#### ***Organisational Questions***

Advocacy was seen as secondary to operational work and poorly understood. Within organisations there is considerable debate about where advocacy should be placed within the organisation: should it be linked to programmes, marketing and funding, policy or campaigns? Finances are crucial to shaping NGO advocacy: balanced funding results in freedom to undertake advocacy. The research did not, however, reach a clear conclusion on the link between organisational structures and the effectiveness of advocacy.

#### ***NGO Identity and Niches***

The research highlighted the active construction of NGO identity, with a keenness to add value. There is considerable co-operation between NGOs with lots of networks, umbrella groups and individual linkages. This maximises the strengths of different NGOs in campaigns and adds collective weight. However, there is also the problem of too many networks and not enough time. Size and resource differentials were felt to be a problem amongst small NGOs, who did not feel able to shape the agenda as equals.

#### ***NGOs in International Perspective***

Relations with Southern partners were seen as essential, but the links between programmes and advocacy are weak, particularly on macro issues. NGOs did recognise the dangers of extractive research. On the question of representation, advocacy was not usually initiated by Southern partners, and most NGOs did not claim to directly represent Southern NGOs; some even avoided the term advocacy on behalf of others. The capacity building of NGO advocacy in the South was seen as important.

### ***Legitimacy Across Borders?***

Legitimacy was seen as an important issue, with questions about Northern NGO legitimacy coming from governments and Southern partners. The role for Northern NGOs was seen as translating concerns to a Northern audience, speaking their language and using access to decision-makers. The role was also seen to include consulting with Southern partners, though few had formally consulted their partners. The one NGO that had consulted found that the Southern partners were not concerned about the Northern NGO's role *per se*, but about how the process of advocacy was carried out.

### ***Accountability, Evaluation and Organisation***

In general there was weak accountability for advocacy campaigns and weak evaluation of advocacy work. Few NGOs were involved in social audits or stakeholder analysis. There were also few members of Southern NGOs on the Boards of the Northern NGOs. There was a lack of clarity about accountability; evaluating advocacy was generally undertaken for learning from practice, not for accountability. Evaluation of advocacy rarely assessed actual impact.

There are in fact some innovative methods for systematic qualitative evaluation, such as the importance of mapping the process of advocacy and monitoring the level of engagement with and response from the targets. Different levels of advocacy lead to different sorts of indicators. CIIR, Oxfam and ActionAid have experience of evaluating advocacy. Evaluation points to the importance of having clear goals. The difficulties of evaluating advocacy were recognised, particularly the problems of multiple objectives, attribution, timescale and lengthy chains.

## **2. NGOs and Enhancing Organisational Profile in Advocacy**

Andy Atkins, Tearfund

### ***Advocacy: Policy Versus Profile***

Advocacy for profile means undertaking advocacy with a view in whole or in part to raising an organisation's profile with the public and policy-makers. Advocacy unavoidably raises profile with policy-makers, and profile with the public also promotes support from public; both are necessary for success. To some extent profile is unavoidable, and it helps to achieve advocacy objectives.

### ***Limits to the Profile Motive***

However, the profile motive **skews the selection of issues**. Some issues are not chosen even if they are important to the poor. The profile motive may also **undermine policy impact**, e.g. media people advertise an issue and undermine delicate negotiations. On the other hand, does the profile motive act as a counter-balance to distortions in relations with policy-makers?

The profile motive also **impedes NGO collaboration**, and therefore policy impact. For example, in a coalition one organisation may decide to go alone to get profile and jeopardise the joint work. The fear of profile may, conversely, lead to hidden advocacy, which questions legitimacy in relation to supporters. There is a need to **adjudicate** between the policy and profile motives. Who should adjudicate? This often takes place amongst individuals rather than a formal process of consultation and legitimacy with supporters and partners.

### **3. The Monitoring and Evaluation of Advocacy Work**

Ros David and Amboka Wameyo, ActionAid

#### ***Overview***

1. Different types of advocacy work in different contexts require different types of assessment.
2. Monitoring and evaluation tools have generally been developed from project work and so there is a need to broaden horizons when it comes to evaluating advocacy.
3. It is important to be clear about values of organisation in order to have ways of assessing it.
4. Participatory methodologies can be used for evaluating advocacy.

#### ***Advocacy is Changing***

- Debate is increasingly global, spanning many countries and organisations.
- Organisations are increasingly specialised.
- Initiatives overlap rather than being discrete.

#### ***Impact Assessment of Advocacy***

Long-term impact in advocacy is about changing policy and impact on peoples' lives. This relates to the effectiveness of civil society organisation to hold decision makers to account. Approaches to Impact Assessment will be different according to different contexts:

- Open face of power - know who decision-maker is
- Closed face of power - unclear who decision-maker is
- Hidden face of power - for example changing a thought process such as racism.

In some contexts, particularly in relation to local policy, client groups can be involved in assessing policy change and testing assumptions about who was influenced at a particular time. Where there is no specific client group, for example on the issue of world debt, a proxy client group could be involved. ActionAid has been using participatory approaches to assessing advocacy. This has included the participatory development of indicators of advocacy and participatory monitoring of advocacy work. For example, a community in Orissa, India was involved in defining indicators of what an empowered community would be. The community itself developed the indicators, and separate indicators were set by different groups within the community (based on gender and age).

#### ***Links back to North***

Action Aid's advocacy work is becoming more led by issues generated in countries where Action Aid is working. Whilst the majority of issues are dealt with at the local level, links are made where issues have ramifications at national or international level. The more local the issues, the more people can be involved in monitoring; conversely, this is less so with international issues.

#### ***Conclusions on Northern NGO Advocacy***

1. The role of Northern NGOs will become increasingly complex as Southern NGOs align themselves in different ways with national delegations at international fora: contradictions and debate will grow.
2. As people increasingly find their own solutions and there are questions about what help and facilitation is needed from outside, Northern NGOs who are able to live with and adapt to complexity and engage in dialogue and negotiation will fare better.

## 5. REVIEWS OF PUBLICATIONS AND SYNTHESIS OF CURRENT NGO DEBATES

The NGO Sector Analysis programme aims to monitor policy debates amongst development NGOs. Reviewing the current literature related to NGOs is an important part of this process. This section of the bulletin is designed to provide summaries of recent publications, drawing out discussion points and reflection on NGO debates.

***‘NGOs - Mediators of Sustainability/Intermediaries in Transition?’ by A. Bebbington***  
(in *Mediating Sustainability: Growing Policy from the Grassroots*. Blauert, J. and Zadek, S. (eds), Kumarian Press, Connecticut, 1998)

Changes in the rural political economy of the Andes region are causing NGOs to rethink their relationship to the market and to the state, and triggering uncertainties about the role of NGOs in development. The resulting institutional changes among NGOs offer the possibility of re-rooting civil society institutions into their own societies, and removing the distortions which arise from the incentives and agendas fostered by foreign aid.

This is Anthony Bebbington’s central argument in an informative article in which he gives an account of the challenges facing NGOs, outlines the crises - of identity, legitimacy and sustainability - in which they find themselves, and identifies three emerging forms of response as the NGOs attempt to identify new roles and structures which will enable them to continue to exist. The first such response is to transform themselves into a form of development consultancy, essentially subcontractors for governments and donor agencies; another is to adopt the role of social enterprise, engaging in the marketplace either to generate a profit, or to support poor people to improve their access to markets, or in the provision of service inputs. A third response is a ‘return to the roots’, playing the role of innovator from a strong basis in the popular sectors - a role which requires the ability to facilitate creative relationships between the state, popular organisations and society.

The author argues that the present crises, though painful, will clarify the roles of NGOs and lead to the recomposition of a more sustainable NGO sector, and that those which follow the first two paths outlined will ultimately cease to be NGOs in the historical sense of the term.

***‘The Effectiveness of NGO Campaigning: Lessons from Practice’ by J. Chapman and T. Fisher***  
(in *Development in Practice*, Volume 10, no. 2. Edited by D Eade, Oxfam, Oxford 2000)

This article examines the issues of the effectiveness, impact and relevance of NGO campaigning using evidence from two long-running campaigns: the promotion of breastfeeding in Ghana and the campaign against the use of child labour in the Indian carpet industry. The findings highlight the importance of flexibility and co-operation between organisations working at different levels - local, national and international - and reveal the limitations on the effectiveness of Northern NGO campaigning and advocacy work in the absence of micro-level project work and grassroots mobilisation.

The authors found that achieving results takes time, and that moving along the timeline involves a variety of actions at local, national or international levels, which necessitates the involvement of a number of collaborating organisations. They look at the advantages and disadvantages of different structures of collaboration and at the possible consequences of different bases of legitimacy. The authors found that campaigns pass through phases in which the focus may shift considerably, being at times narrow, to achieve a clear message, or very broad, to reflect the true complexity of the issue. They discovered that specific individuals can play a crucial role in campaigning work, but also that mobilisation at the grass roots is essential for sustained results. Once a change in policy or law is achieved, long-term project work and monitoring are required to ensure continued implementation and change at the grassroots.

### ***About informed NGO Funding and Policy Bulletin***

The aim of this bulletin is to monitor NGO funding and policy trends and to analyse the significance of the trends, in order to inform decision-making within NGOs. The bulletin is produced as part of INTRAC's NGO Sector Analysis programme which has been running since 1995. The programme operates with the active participation of 10 European NGOs, hence the focus of the bulletin is primarily, though not exclusively, on funding and policy trends affecting European-based development NGOs. The update on funding trends includes short profiles of the six countries represented in the programme.

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