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**Moral and Practical Challenges to NGO  
Neutrality**

**T**raditional humanitarian principles, such as the neutrality of humanitarian aid, are being undermined within complex humanitarian emergencies and with the rise of the new global world order. This **loss of neutral space** is a result of several overlapping factors. Since the end of the Cold War, Western foreign policy has re-oriented itself to using aid as a means of maintaining stability and stemming the rise of terrorism, and this has increasingly politicised aid. Alongside this merging of foreign policy and humanitarian goals is decreasing security for NGO staff and beneficiaries. Furthermore, many NGOs have decided selectively to abandon the principles of neutrality and non-intervention by actively promoting the idea of militarised humanitarian intervention in cases of genocide.

State agencies, including the military, as well as private development corporations are also becoming increasingly sophisticated in being able to create partnerships with/or co-opt local civilian organisations. Thus, they are usurping the traditional role of humanitarian NGOs as mediators between Western states and local civil society. This usurpation and the sheer magnitude of resources of the military and private development corporations now dwarf

the programmes of humanitarian NGOs, not only in Iraq and Afghanistan but in other low-income countries as well.

In the light of this current political reality, NGOs have begun to re-evaluate the meaning of not taking sides and the utility of preserving neutral space. Although most big international NGOs have agreed to uphold the principle of neutrality as well as other humanitarian principles of independence and impartiality by committing themselves to a code of conduct,<sup>1</sup> the changing political landscape in which NGOs operate continues to pose severe moral and practical challenges to NGOs. In response, NGOs have adopted a variety of different approaches, each with their respective strengths and weaknesses.

**Classicist Approach: Preserve  
Neutrality**

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has maintained the clearest position of classic neutrality that humanitarian action can and should be completely insulated from politics. Not only does the ICRC base its action on the application of established humanitarian law but in order to maintain neutrality has often adopted a position of silence in order to avoid being perceived as partisan.

*Central Asia, Intrac 2004*



In this issue: Barbara Brubacher explores the increasing pressure on the concept of NGO neutrality in humanitarian contexts; Jo Boyden highlights the complexity of humanitarian interventions in Sri Lanka and Brian Pratt reflects on what has changed in Ethiopia twenty years after the famine of the early 1980s.

This ability to exercise the discretion of silence is however criticised as being complicit with inhumane actions. This criticism was expressed recently in an article in *The Guardian* (27th November 2003), which accused a UK NGO of being ‘silenced’ by its American counterparts for criticising the occupying forces in Iraq of breaching the Geneva Convention. Whether or not the NGO in question was ‘silenced’ as alleged, the article demonstrates that silence on humanitarian issues of such importance can create suspicion of a lack of independence and can undermine the credibility of the humanitarian organisation.

### **Solidarity Approach: Abandon Neutrality**

Other organisations acknowledge that all humanitarian aid is by nature political and argue that the need to resolve conflict, the underlying causes of poverty and human rights abuses requires them to take a political stand on key issues. These NGOs, broadly termed ‘solidarists’, take sides and abandon neutrality as well as rejecting consent as a prerequisite for intervention. For those, such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), who advocate a more political humanitarianism, political positions must derive from a conscious decision to employ humanitarian action as an integral part of an international public policy to mitigate life-threatening suffering and protect fundamental human rights in violent conflict.

Many NGOs have adopted a political stance and, to a certain extent, this is as much a way of addressing root causes of conflict and poverty as re-asserting their independence and separate identity from Northern governments. As stated by the Director General of Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA): ‘[NPA] is independent, but it is not neutral and impartial; instead its work is grounded in the idea of solidarity with the people it helps.’

### **Utilitarian Approach: Operational Neutrality**

While many NGOs recognise that their interventions are not neutral, some still subscribe to the belief that operationally, in terms of facilitating actual programming, NGOs must present themselves as neutral actors. In order to maintain the space of neutrality NGOs have gathered together to create voluntary guidelines for operating in conflict zones.<sup>2</sup> As was and is the case in

Sudan, preserving operational neutrality can be crucial to humanitarian access.

### **Redefining Neutrality: The Rights-Based Approach**

Preserving ‘operational neutrality’, however, does not address the root problems underlying the challenges to NGO neutrality. Whilst it allows NGOs the ability to continue operating in certain areas of conflict, the greater questions regarding the political nature and impact of humanitarian programming remain unresolved. Without addressing these challenges to the moral high ground which made the NGO movement so strong in the 1980s, NGOs will continue to lag behind on what is becoming an increasingly state-dominated agenda of humanitarianism.

Is the current debate over the rights-based approach an attempt to clarify the issue of neutrality and to create greater objectivity and clarity in how NGOs operate and by what criteria? One of the purposes of the rights-based approach is to preserve a ‘classical’ interpretation of neutrality and impartiality by developing objective standards that can be applied impartially. However, unlike UN agencies and the ICRC which base their actions on international humanitarian law, NGOs are struggling to determine the basis for the rights on which they work and have yet to adopt a credible process of developing the law as it currently stands. NGOs are not always clear about what they mean; do they refer to rights as ideas which may eventually become rights? Or do they take existing legal frameworks such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as their basis?

### **Conclusion**

The political nature of humanitarian aid, coupled with the new context of insecurity, militarisation, privatisation and the merging of developmental and security aims, has created dilemmas that will plague NGOs’ humanitarian programming for years. How NGOs adapt themselves and make the decision whether to abandon or adapt humanitarian principles will be a crucial factor in the future positioning of NGOs within the emerging system of global governance.

This edition of *ontrac* explores the challenges to NGO neutrality in the changing global context. Jo Boyden writes about the Sri Lankan experience of

politically-contested humanitarian aid within an internal conflict. Reflecting twenty years on from the Ethiopian famine with its international response, Brian Pratt outlines the ongoing role of humanitarian aid organisations and assesses what has changed. John Beauclerk highlights the way in which Bosnian civil society continues to reflect social divides, and Charlie Buxton analyses the impact of the ‘War on Terror’ on civil society response in the Central Asia region. *ontrac* will continue to monitor this debate in the context of changing geo-politics over the coming months.

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### **Notes and References**

1. See Sphere Project *Principles of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes*. See also the ‘Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards’ from the Sphere Project and the People in Aid Code (available online at [www.peopleinaid.org](http://www.peopleinaid.org)).
  2. These initiatives have included the *Providence Principles* in 1993 formulated at the Humanitarianism and War Project at Brown University, the 1994 *Mohonk Criteria for Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies* and the 1994 *International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements Code of Conduct*.
- Duffield, M. (2001) *Global Governance and the New Wars*. New York: Zed Books.
- Slim, H. (2003) ‘Humanitarianism with Borders? NGOs, Belligerent Military Forces and Humanitarian Action.’ Paper for the ICVA Conference on NGOs in a *Changing World Order: Dilemmas and Challenges* (available online at [www.jha.ac/articles/a118.htm](http://www.jha.ac/articles/a118.htm))
- Plattner, D. 1996 ‘ICRC Neutrality and Neutrality in Humanitarian Assistance,’ In *International Review of the Red Cross*, no. 311, 30 April.

### **Further Information**

People in Aid, an international network which aims to promote good practice in the management and support of aid personnel, has recently published two handbooks: *Understanding HR in the Humanitarian Sector* and *Enhancing Quality in HR Management in the Humanitarian Sector*. The former includes material on the changing nature of conflict and of the humanitarian sector, including the implications of recent conflicts such as Afghanistan and Iraq and relations with the military. Visit their website [www.peopleinaid.org](http://www.peopleinaid.org) or email [info@peopleinaid.org](mailto:info@peopleinaid.org)

# The Crisis of Humanitarian Neutrality in Sri Lanka

In the present political and security climate, the twin humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality are being challenged as never before. While for many agencies they remain sacrosanct, it is evident that they are becoming increasingly difficult to operationalise in practice. More fundamentally, even though impartiality is generally regarded as crucial, some argue that remaining neutral to the atrocities of war is morally repugnant, for silence can be tantamount to passive complicity.

Although sporadic and of low intensity, the war in Sri Lanka between the majority Sinhala and minority Tamil populations has involved considerable brutality, suffering and loss and has produced many ethical and moral dilemmas for the humanitarian community. The sensitivities associated with humanitarian intervention have been much exacerbated in this case by the fact that the conflict is internal and aid has been mediated by a government that is both a party to the hostilities and protective of its sovereignty.

It has always been necessary and appropriate for humanitarian agencies to treat with the various military bodies in Sri Lanka in order to secure access to and support for civilians. Nevertheless, this has undermined aid neutrality to the point where humanitarian assistance has at times been politically implicated and contested. The operational context for humanitarian measures has been highly charged and humanitarian need has often been deliberately created by the warring parties as an adjunct to their politico-military strategies. For example, the government-imposed embargoes (which at one time covered 48 items) affecting areas under the control of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) included a number of goods that were of no military importance whatsoever, yet essential to health and nutrition. In this way, a mechanism that

was framed as vital in the curtailment of armed violence has in practice significantly raised morbidity and mortality among civilians.

Moreover, political actors in Sri Lanka have long played a direct role in humanitarian provision, currying favour with chosen sections of the population through selective distribution of relief. This has had highly detrimental outcomes in terms of civilian perception, since it is widely recognised that official measures that are portrayed as humanitarian assistance and civilian protection are often in reality the means to serve political or military interests.

In the eyes of large numbers of civilians in Sri Lanka, the humanitarian community has become deeply unpopular and partial. This is despite more than two decades of humanitarian engagement with civilian populations, efforts to maintain equity in the distribution of relief and recent moves towards more consultative and participatory modes of aid delivery. Sinhalese populations living in areas affected by the conflict have complained that they consistently receive less aid than Tamils, while Tamils have their own concerns about humanitarian intervention. Tamil civilians in government-controlled areas were long subjected to a draconian political regime that was perceived as infringing a range of civil rights and liberties.

Most profoundly affected were those living in government camps for internally displaced people (IDPs) run in collaboration with international aid agencies. The government alleged that the camps ensured protection and allowed humanitarian actors to provide services to displaced persons in a co-ordinated manner, but conditions were often very poor and there were allegations that the camps were intended primarily as a shield against LTTE attacks. Recent moves to

resettle these displaced populations have been similarly criticised for allocating land in strategic and highly vulnerable positions that would be liable to shelling were fighting to resume.

The situation is no better in LTTE-controlled areas, where the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO), which is administered by the LTTE's political wing, wields inordinate power over humanitarian agencies. Indeed, LTTE interference has been such that prior to the recent ceasefire, many agencies retreated altogether to government-controlled and grey areas. In other cases, wary of supporting the political entrepreneurship and aggrandisement of the LTTE, funds have been moved out of physical relief and rehabilitation and into social measures. But this has merely created a perception among civilians that aid is being diverted improperly by aid agencies into expensive office accommodation, vehicles, computers and salaries for their own staff. To complicate matters further, the LTTE claims legitimacy as the sole political representative of the Tamil people and yet is not accepted as such by all Tamil civilians, many of whom have experienced the oppressive burdens of informal taxation and forced recruitment under its rule. This leaves humanitarian actors negotiating with a political authority that is feared and reviled in some quarters.

Recent denouncements by the humanitarian community of LTTE abductions and forced recruitment of children represent an encouraging move against passive complicity with violations. However, because they effectively mastermind humanitarian aid, the government and LTTE fundamentally distort the relationship between agencies and aid recipients in Sri Lanka, often making a mockery of the practical application of the principle of neutrality.

**Written by Jo Boyden,**  
Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford

## INTRAC People

We said goodbye at the end of July to Natasha Thurlow after three and a half years with INTRAC and wish her all the very best. In August we also said goodbye to our Finance Assistant Carol Beaumont after two and a half years. Both Tasha and Carol will be greatly missed.

We are pleased to welcome some new colleagues: Frances Rubin is working as our Consultancies Manager and Rebecca Wrigley is now Programme Manager for the Praxis Programme. Abi Laing has joined us as temporary Administrator, whilst Tania Little has taken on the role of Office Administrator.

Our volunteers continue to give us wonderful support and we have sadly had to say goodbye to Camilla Mitchell, Tom Davis, Assunta Nicolini and Helen Blenkharn. We welcome Dustin Hutchinson who has been working on a project for his dissertation with us over the summer and Gina Borbas who is researching a Roma project.

**Shelagh Windsor-Richards, Office Manager, INTRAC.** Email: [s.windsor-richards@intrac.org](mailto:s.windsor-richards@intrac.org)

Welcome to Capacity Building News No. 17. In this edition, Mia Sorgenfrei provides an update on INTRAC's Praxis Programme, which aims to build capacity for capacity building.

## Praxis News: Reflecting on Year One

The Praxis Programme has completed its first programme year, and it has been a good start. We have established the **Catalyst Group** which provides us with international perspectives on NGO needs for capacity building, as well as the challenges for capacity building practitioners engaged in NGO support provision. The next Catalyst Group meeting is to take place in Cape Town from 13th to 15th October 2004, and we are looking forward to receiving new inspiration from the members as well as reactions to the programme activities during the first year.

The Praxis Series has been launched, including the Praxis Guides, the Praxis Papers, and the web-based Praxis Notes, covering topics such as monitoring and evaluation in practice, NGO capacity building and cross-cultural management, as well as capacity building from a French perspective. We have organised Praxis workshops on organisational learning and cross-cultural capacity building, and preparations are underway for the workshop on Francophone approaches to capacity building. We have succeeded in keeping the Praxis audience informed through regular updates, both in **ontrac** and on the Praxis web pages. Finally, we have completed the first version of the directory on civil society support providers worldwide which is now accessible from the website.

We thank former Programme Director, John Hailey, for his leadership and strategic guidance in setting up the programme framework during the first year, and welcome Programme Manager, Rebecca Wrigley, who has taken on the challenge of bringing Praxis into a new programme year.

### Ongoing Research and New Publications

The past few months have been characterised by intensive research activity by programme staff and commissioned

consultants, and several publications financed by Praxis have been finalised. The following new publications are now available from INTRAC:

- *Measuring Success: Issues in Performance Measurement*, by John Hailey and Mia Sorgenfrei.
- *Capacity Building from a French Perspective* (Praxis Paper 1), by Mia Sorgenfrei.
- *Putting Policy into Practice*, by Esther Mebrahtu.

In addition, PraxisNote 5, *Mayan Organisation and Management* by Felix Alvarado, can now be downloaded from the Praxis web pages.

Current research undertaken by Praxis staff includes *Creativity and Innovation in Capacity Building*, a review by Charlotte Hursey, who welcomes contributions from practitioners in the field, and *Crucial Issues for Capacity Building Providers*, an analysis of INTRAC consultancies by Mia Sorgenfrei which will provide background material for an international workshop for capacity building practitioners on the same topic next year. Furthermore, Assunta Nicolini, our Italian volunteer, has prepared a paper on capacity building in the Italian context. Commissioned research from Bruce Britton on organisational learning and Terry Jackson on cross-cultural management and NGO capacity building is ongoing. While Bruce Britton is preparing a contribution to the Praxis Series based on his findings, Terry Jackson, who conducted field research in South Africa from May to mid-June, is currently analysing the collected data.

### Recent and Future Workshops

As a first effort to introduce cross-cultural mainstreaming into NGO capacity building, Praxis organised an internal workshop for INTRAC staff, facilitated by Terry Jackson and Training and Capacity

Building Director, Brenda Lipson, to explore the topic from various angles. It is hoped that this initiative will gradually lead to exchanges with practitioners from other NGOs in the North and the South on how to develop competencies in cross-cultural analysis and inter-cultural communication skills to improve the effectiveness of development activities.

Although there has been great interest both from North and South in the area of organisational learning, we had to postpone the Organisational Learning Workshop in June. We have now decided to wait for the final outcome of Bruce Britton's research and feed his findings into a subsequent workshop towards the end of the year. Currently, we are putting our energy into organising the seminar in Paris from 14th to 16th September which is the first of its kind to bring together practitioners from the Francophone context in the North and the South. We plan to produce a seminar report which will be available from the Praxis web pages in English and French.

*Praxis seeks to integrate research and practice in the field of organisational capacity building. The Praxis Programme is based on a continuous cycle of research, action and learning. We therefore welcome suggestions and contributions from organisational capacity building practitioners worldwide, from humanitarian organisations as well as development NGOs, to help guide our work and ensure that we are responsive to the challenges which practitioners face in the field.*

### Written by Mia Sorgenfrei

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To visit the Praxis web pages go to <http://www.intrac.org> and click on Praxis Programme.

end of *capacity building news*

# Central Asia: Intrigue, Neutrality and Inter-dependent Development

Central Asia, on the historic borderland of great states and empires, is no newcomer to political intrigue or great-power rivalry. In the 1990s the international oil companies rushed into the region to take advantage of the confused and rapid post-Soviet privatisation process. Now, in the early twenty-first century the USA, Britain and others are concerned to protect their investments against, among other things, religious radicalism spilling over from Afghanistan and Iraq.

For civil society in the region, this presents a serious challenge. Religion is a significant factor in all five countries, despite the fact that all are secular and seemingly determined to stay so. The influence of the majority Muslim religion varies greatly; on the one hand, at the official level, it bolsters the traditionalist cultural and social policies of the new 'nation-building project' in all five Central Asian countries. At the other end of the spectrum are the young members of Hizb al-Tahrir who get arrested while giving out leaflets in the bazaar. But religious groups exist in a kind of isolation from the rest of civil society. A recent report on community organisations in Uzbekistan noted that religious groups' confessional and self-contained nature, with their strong hierarchy, place them apart. It is difficult for civil society, which even in the case of NGOs lacks fully representative national organisations, to make a common response on such complex and potentially divisive issues as the 'War on Terror'.

In Tajikistan for example, the post-civil war settlement in 1997 brought the Islamic Renaissance Party into a coalition at the central government level. In many Tajik villages, the reality is that the mosque is at one end, whilst NGOs compete at the opposite end. INTRAC partner and local analyst Kiomeddin Davlatov comments:

'The effect of US and Russian policy in the region, and how civil society deals with it, is a very complex issue. The NGO sector within civil society

was indeed initiated by the USA, grant-funded, trained, developed and given the focus of their activities. Over the past 10 years US influence has resulted in more than 1,400 NGOs in Tajikistan.'

He lists the positive effects of this Western influence as including 'new knowledge gained on the basics of civil society, employment opportunities created at a time of deep economic crisis, exchange of international experience, humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation of the social infrastructure, and the creation of an alternative social assistance mechanism to government structures.'

However, mediating the Western hegemony are a number of perceived weaknesses. Kiomeddin notes: 'a prevalence of foreign over local authority, dependence of local NGOs on donors' likes and dislikes, a lack of co-ordination between different programmes; and the danger of social conflict caused by insensitive handling of issues like gender.' And NGOs are only one source of new ideas; at the level of the individual citizen other opportunities may be just as significant, for example the chance of studying for higher education in Russia, or of taking a pilgrimage to Mecca.

As perceived by international NGOs and civil society generally in the West, the 'crisis of neutrality' means: do doubters or dissidents have to sign up to the 'War on Terror', with the attendant concerns about human rights abuses and questionable alliances overseas? In Central Asia, human rights NGOs are starting to appeal to Western agencies against their own governments, in the name of religious groups campaigning against the War on Iraq and Western influences. The majority of NGOs are slowly building up a more constructive relationship with national and local government, whilst still not being weaned from dependence on the foreign donor. Time is still needed for civil society to develop its roles.

In Uzbekistan, continued Western aid to an authoritarian regime is now thrown into question by a succession of human rights

complaints. Local analyst Tanzilya Salimjanova comments on the wider effects:

'This War has begun to threaten the whole process of democratisation in Uzbekistan. The regime took the chance to crack down on human rights activists, religious groups, NGOs and international organisations, arguing that the measures against terrorism require unpopular moves. For example, a new bank instruction issued in February 2004 has the aim of preventing "money laundering" through grants. Now all grant agreements require the approval of a commission created under the Central Bank of Uzbekistan, and the number of bank branches with the right to work with grant monies is strictly limited. In May a new draft law further strengthened controls and limited the economic freedom of NGOs and businesses. It could even push some NGOs to work on a cash only basis, because bank procedures have become so complicated.'

Thus, the 'War on Terror' has had unfortunate consequences in the region. It would be a great shame if one of these were a reduction in support to civil society just as it is beginning to find its independent voice and role in social and community development. Tanzilya's comments are a matter for concern: 'In general we have seen no evident rise in financial support for local NGOs from the side of international organisations. NGOs have only experienced the strengthening of government control over public activities.'

**Written by Charles Buxton (ICAP Programme Manager) with Kiomeddin Davlatov (Tajikistan) and Tanzilya Salimjanova (Uzbekistan)**  
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## References

Reports referred to are by FACT Tashkent on CBOs in Uzbekistan, by Human Rights Watch and International Crisis Group for Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

## countryfocus The Ethiopian Famine: Twenty Years On

I recall the news in 1973 of a massive famine in Ethiopia which brought down the imperial regime, because it was argued that the government of Haile Selassie had tried to cover up the extent of the problem only to be thwarted by media leaks to the world. Then in 1984, rather than cover up the latest famine, the media were engaged across the country covering many aspects of the relief operations. The then Prime Minister Mengistu, despite a track record of almost Stalinist zeal, was seen endlessly on camera. At the time, many NGOs experienced a massive increase in income whilst many other new NGOs were born out of the Ethiopian famine.

But, as BBC reporter Michael Burke asked in a recent television programme, what has changed twenty years later? The country he visited had changed government again since the famine. Burke seemed to come to the disheartening conclusion that not a great deal has changed, except that possibly the current government cares more than the previous regime.

Many of the present Ethiopian and Eritrean leaders were in effect supported whilst in opposition by international NGO food and other assistance. They have repaid this support with a deep suspicion of NGOs generally. As for the NGO community: what have we learnt from the past twenty years? The population of Ethiopia has

nearly doubled, and it is estimated that almost 8 million people are still dependent on food aid annually. HIV/AIDS and other poverty-related problems have not abated, and Ethiopia is still at the bottom of most poverty indices. The nature of the highly centralised state has changed little from the days of the Empire, except that now the same ethnic group no longer dominates. The concept of the state still seems to be embedded in centralised control and minimal space for non-state actors. It can be argued that the Ethiopian example undermines the case for state-centred development, given that there has been so little progress economically and socially despite good will.

The existence of civil society at community level is despite – not because of – state and other assistance. For example the strength of informal associations (such as burial and credit societies) seems to be more evidence of the resilience of the population than the efforts of either the state or other development actors. Furthermore, despite huge international NGO (INGO) presence over the years in Ethiopia, a large proportion of INGO activity is still tied to regular relief programmes rather than long-term development. There is evidence of alternative experiences, which have built on the strengths and capacities locally, but these are unfortunately small compared to the needs of the sixty million people.

Historically one of the problems was that Ethiopia played the Cold War game, alternating between Western and Soviet support, neither side wishing seriously to challenge the dominant state-centred view of development. What is even more unfortunate is that this statism is still barely being challenged because official donors are more worried about instability in Ethiopia than they are about obtaining a genuinely democratic and participatory form of development. The position of Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa with the collapsed state of Somalia on one side and civil war-wracked Sudan on the other is perhaps enough to persuade donors that stability is more important than development. Possibly this is why there has been so little change twenty years after the country became a centre of relief and development activity. Meanwhile the official agencies are again stressing their support for the state through budgetary support and other programmes. It remains to be seen whether the government adoption of new policies of decentralisation and civil society support will this time be fruitful.

**Written by Brian Pratt**  
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## Preventing Conflict in the Balkans: The Role of Civil Society Organisations

When multi-ethnic states fail as dramatically as in Yugoslavia, the first casualty is the acquired habit of peaceful co-existence. Yet once open hostilities are brought to an end, the task of repairing the fabric of local communities is the most difficult of all reconstruction challenges. Civil society is expected to play a crucial role in rebuilding social capital but it often labours against insurmountable difficulties. Where the international community imposes peace, as in the Balkans, there are many ways of pursuing the aims of war through other means. Nationalist leaders can use the political process to foil the most elaborate constitutional settlements. For

example, the new state of Bosnia's bewildering array of ethnic governments at sub-state levels were designed to accommodate the former combatants but in practice satisfy none of them.

Reconciliation – often considered the domain of non-state actors at the local level – also rings hollow when its methods and the resources for their application depend on international donors. This is especially true where new states formed along ethnic lines conspire with their populations to prevent the course of international justice. In the Balkans one ethnic group's war heroes can be another's war criminals. It took the Serb part of the Bosnian state nine years to acknowledge

its part in the massacre of Bosniac civilians in Srebrenica (1995), and it has still refused to surrender the responsible political and military commanders to the war crimes tribunal at The Hague.

In such circumstances it is little surprise that civic actors frequently operate more or less exclusively within their own ethnic constituencies. This neutralises their effectiveness as agents of inter-ethnic reconciliation. However, where civil society organisations have succeeded in demonstrating real non-partisan qualities, their impact has been impressive. The Macedonian Centre for International Co-operation (MCIC) is a case in point.

In 1999 and 2001, on the two occasions in which the former Yugoslav republic came closest to civil war as a result of events in neighbouring Kosovo/a, MCIC established its credentials as a competent and even-handed provider of emergency assistance, despite intense pressures on staff from their various communities. Moreover it campaigned vigorously against violence as a means of resolving political difference and in 2001 succeeded in negotiating humanitarian assistance for blockaded communities across front lines which were beyond the reach of the International Red Cross. MCIC's bold actions and strident,

non-partisan protests created a legitimate space for all citizens, whatever their ethnicity, to insist on a negotiated solution. Single constituency civic organisations joined the blockade-breaking convoys, sending a powerful message to would-be combatants.

MCIC's case demonstrates the value of conflict prevention over reconciliation in the ethnic fall-out of failing states. The organisation owes its success primarily to its origins, which brought together leading civic actors from various ethnic backgrounds, and secondly to long-term

hands-off support from an ecumenical network: the World Council of Churches. The foresight of WCC members ensured that a national level organisation, imbued with civic values of tolerance and plurality, was ready when crisis struck. Similar visions are much in need for the unmet challenge of reconciliation between Balkan communities.

**Written by John Beauclerk**

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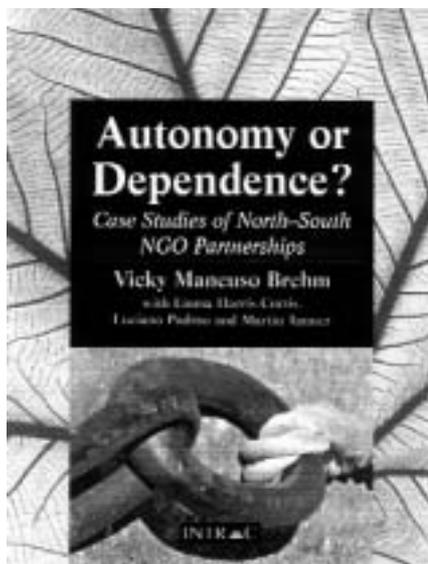
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## INTRAC Publications

### Available Now

#### **Autonomy or Dependence? Case Studies of North-South NGO Partnerships**

*Vicky Mancuso Brehm with Emma Harris-Curtis, Luciano Padrão and Martin Tanner*



This book explores the concept and practice of 'partnership' between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the North and South. It assesses the factors that are critical in ensuring that North-South NGO partnerships contribute to increased autonomy for the organisations involved. Based on a rigorous four-year study, the book draws together the perspectives of a group of European NGOs in Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and the UK and compares these with the experiences of a

selection of their partners in Brazil, Cambodia and Tanzania. The findings highlight the diverse and complex nature of inter-organisational partnerships. The authors look ahead to how partnerships are changing as networks and alliances of Northern and Southern civil society organisations join together to work on common issues.

*August 2004 ISBN 1-897748-74-4*

#### **Capacity Building from a French Perspective**

*Mia Sorgenfrei*

This paper depicts how French NGOs perceive the notion of capacity building, and how they apply the concept in practice. It provides a synthesis of current capacity building needs, trends and challenges in France and in the South. Capacity building is perceived by French NGOs as an Anglophone concept. However, NGOs have had little exposure to Anglophone approaches to capacity building, and there is scope for more exchange in the future.

*Praxis Paper 1, July 2004 ISBN 1-897748-85-X*

#### **Measuring Success? Issues in Performance Management**

*John Hailey and Mia Sorgenfrei*

Funding constraints, calls for accountability and concerns about quality and effectiveness have led to demands on NGOs for more sophisticated performance

measurement strategies. This paper charts how performance measurement systems have undergone similar evolutions in the public, private and non-profit sectors. The authors flag up key issues for practitioners such as how to choose appropriate approaches, how to apply them in a culturally sensitive way, how to ensure stakeholder participation and how to mobilise adequate resources.

*OPS44, June 2004 ISBN 1-897748-84-1*

### Coming Soon

#### **Creativity and Constraint: Grass-roots Monitoring and Evaluation in the International Aid Arena**

*Lucy Earle (ed.)*

*NGOMPS 18, October 2004 ISBN 1-897748-81-7*

#### **Briefing Papers Series**

INTRAC will be re-launching the Briefing Papers, made available as PDFs on the publications section of our website. These papers are helpful short summaries of larger INTRAC publications and are designed to draw out practical lessons for busy practitioners. (See [http://www.intrac.org/Intrac/INTRACPublications\\_en.html](http://www.intrac.org/Intrac/INTRACPublications_en.html))

**For further information about INTRAC's publications please visit our website: [http://www.intrac.org/Intrac/INTRACPublications\\_en.html](http://www.intrac.org/Intrac/INTRACPublications_en.html) or e-mail [s.windsor-richards@intrac.org](mailto:s.windsor-richards@intrac.org) to request a brochure.**

# INTRAC Training

from October 2004 to January 2005.

## **Train the Trainer, 4th to 6th October 2004, London UK**

Development staff are increasingly called upon to deliver presentations and training. This course introduces participants to participative learning techniques, and the effective way to plan an event. Participants will have an opportunity to run an interactive training session and to receive useful feedback.

## **New! Rights-Based Approaches to Development, 13th to 15th October 2004, London UK**

This course aims to give an in depth overview of the concepts and methodologies of the rights-based approach to development. The shift to rights-based approaches implies that people's full rights set out in international law are upheld and respected. It is still open to question how far this move represents an important step, which will significantly change the lives of the poor, or is simply a change of rhetoric.

## **New! Gender Planning in Development: What does it mean and how do we do it? 18th to 20th October 2004, London UK**

Development planners and NGOs are becoming increasingly committed to incorporating a gender perspective into their work. This course explores concepts and approaches to gender, and how to operationalise these into effective development practice.

## **Monitoring and Evaluating Social Change, 27th to 29th October 2004, London UK**

Planning for social change recognises that this process cannot be predetermined but is rather a facilitated negotiation between the various stakeholders. This course considers the implications for monitoring and evaluation of working with flexible programmes which focus on changing relationships and contexts.

## **Effective Management for Development, 1st to 5th November 2004, Oxford UK**

This course aims to develop and improve the management capabilities of NGO staff and development workers. It will also help them gain an awareness of the impact of their management style, develop greater insight into their leadership role, and increase their confidence in being able to facilitate organisational change.

## **Civil Society Strengthening, 15th to 19th November 2004, Oxford UK**

The aim of this course is to explore the practice and theory behind programmes designed to strengthen civil society. It will look at how to understand and analyse civil society in different contexts, as well as how different approaches and theories of civil society can determine the nature of programmes and their outcomes.

## **Developing Partnerships, 22nd to 24th November 2004, London UK**

Relationships between NGOs based in different parts of the world have become a key part of international development processes. The aim of this course is to examine the nature and quality of relationships and how they impact on development. The context within which partnerships occur is a dynamic and fluid one, and power balances and expectations are constantly changing.

## **Strategy Development, 12th to 14th January 2005, London UK**

NGOs are constantly having to make difficult choices when faced with the massive scale of poverty and distress, compounded by the limited resources in the non-profit sector. This and the nature of NGO work require strategic thinking and action. Strategic thinking is a dynamic process, which should be responsive to changing circumstances.

## **Supporting Southern Advocacy, 19th to 21st January 2005, London UK**

Advocacy is an important part of development programming, as NGOs in the South and East are increasingly looking to develop their advocacy strategies and capacity and as staff of Northern NGOs and donor organisations are involved with supporting the advocacy programmes of their Southern partners.

## **Managing Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation, 24th to 28th January 2005, Oxford UK**

Donors' demands for greater accountability, together with our own need to learn from and build on our own experiences have led to rapid developments within the field of monitoring and evaluation. This course looks at the growing importance of participatory methods and the limitations of more traditional linear, cause and effect interpretation.

Discounted fees can be obtained if you apply eight weeks before the course start date. **For complete listings of all courses running until March 2005, please visit [www.intrac.org](http://www.intrac.org) or email [info@intrac.org](mailto:info@intrac.org).**

**ontrac** ontrac is the newsletter of INTRAC (the International NGO Training and Research Centre). It is published three times a year. The contents of the newsletter may be freely reproduced and translated, providing the source is acknowledged. INTRAC wishes to thank the following organisations for their contributions towards the production of **ontrac**: Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, Cordaid, DanChurchAid, MS Denmark, Novib, Save the Children Norway, Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children UK and South Research.

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ISSN 1476-1327

Editor: Vicky Brehm, Researcher, INTRAC

Design: Sophie Johnson, Colophon Media

Printing and Distribution: Warwick Printing Ltd.

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