

**COMPLEMENTARITY FRAGMENTATION AND/OR QUICK FIX:
EXTERNAL NGO'S AND CRISIS COPING
IN RELIEF/BASIC SERVICES**

By Reginald Herbold Green

On a cloth untrue
With a twisted cue
And elliptical billiard balls.

- Gilbert & Sullivan

Probable, possible my black hen
She lays eggs in the relative when
She doesn't lay eggs in the positive now
Because she's unable to postulate low.

Anon

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I.

COMPLEXITIES AND CONUNDRUMS

NO UNIFORMITY

- Host Government Perspectives
 - ✓ Domestic Social Sector
 - ✓ External NGO's (generally, specifically)
 - ✓ Over Time
 - ✓ Interactions
- External NGO's
 - ✓ General Humanitarian
 - ✓ Social Sector Oriented Developmental
 - ✓ Donor Channels

- ✓ Crusading Fundamentalists (including Evangelical Christian/neo-Christian/Muslim/Syndico Anarchist)
- Donor Attitudes to (external) NGO's
 - ✓ Useful Sub-contractors
 - ✓ Pluralist Penetrators
 - ✓ Civil Society Builders

DONOR ATTITUDES - DOMESTIC NGO'S/SOCIAL SECTOR

- ✓ Mixed
- ✓ Style/Transparency/Accountability

RELATIONSHIPS USUALLY 'LOVE/HATE'

("We cannot live without NGO's now. But as they now are we cannot live with them very long".)

A GLOSSARY?

- External NGO
- Domestic Branch Global NGO (e.g. Red Cross, Red Crescent)
- External 'Relatives' (especially Church sector)
- Domestic Professional Partnership Styled as NGO
- Domestic Regional Strategic Pressure Group
- Domestic Social Sector Bodies (local to national, e.g. church, mosque, co-op, women's, trade union)
- Peoples Action Groups

- Peoples Support Groups (Few African NGO's are on North-western model and fewer of significant substance/broad base. This category is better represented in Asia e.g. Philippines, India.)

PERCEPTIONS/RELATIONS - SOME ASPECTS

- External NGO's very like External Governments (Financial, Personnel, Audience imbalance even greater when they work with domestic bodies below national governmental scale)
- Style often as Insensitive/Triumphalist as Governments/International Institutions
- Relationship to Home Governments Opaque and/or Confusing
- Upsurge in Numbers/Scale Leading to Backlash
 - ✓ Inherent Problems Communication/Coordination
 - ✓ Near Inevitable Fragmentation
 - ✓ Significant Perceived National (including social sector) Erosion/Corrosion
- Linked in Perception to Disasters
 - ✓ Little differentiation UN-External Government-NGO roles in responses perceived as unsatisfactory
 - ✓ Stark contrast NGO standards equipment, supplies and domestic govt. or social sector ones and of NGO (esp. expatriate) staff welfare and domestic non govt. or govt. staff let alone displaced persons.

("We used to look for vultures wheeling in sky and hyenas circling in the bush to find where death had come. Now we scan the sky for whipping aerials and the bush for the circling white 4 by 4's of the agencies and NGO's.")

Issue Not Fairness/Accuracy

but Rather

What Ways to Tackle Which Problems - including Perceptions

II.

THE NGO EXPLOSION: 1980-1996

OPERATIONAL VISTAS: PRE AND POST 1980

- **Pre 1980**

- small, own finance, few staff/structures
- quasi amateur
- links to local government, own projects
- some links domestic social sector
- perceived as complementary to state service provision
- spasmodic coordination attempts (govt's. - social sectors - NGO's, e.g. Council in Tanzania)
- clashes, e.g. Ruvuma Development Association in Tanzania (unexamined enthusiasm to vehement criticism of foreign teleguiding)

- **1980's/90's**

- larger
- professional staff/structures
- largely state financed
- to relief (from development)
- self perceived as parallel to or replacement for state
- with exceptions (especially Christian linked ones, e.g. Christian Aid/CAFOD/AMREF) competitive with domestic social sector, e.g. Mozambique, Tanzania
- much less effective govt.-NGO (or even govt./donor-NGO) coordination

- **Save the Peoples/Erode the States** (e.g. Ethiopia/Sudan) - as donor policy intermediated via NGO's
 - workable (and conceivably desirable in extreme cases e.g. Mengistu's Ethiopia) but what to do when state changes
 - and unintentional (?) copying when no overt desire to undermine state (Mozambique)

III.

EXTERNAL NGO'S ACCOUNTABILITY, HOST CAPACITY

ACCOUNTABLE TO WHOM/WHERE?

- Official Donor Financiers
- Staff/Board Consciences
- Home Membership
- External States
- " (Host) Clients
- " Communities
- " Social Sector

(Descending order of **actual** accountability? Inevitably so?)

e.g. if an NGO believe all Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics, Muslims and Secular States are damned how **can** it be accountable to domestic social sector bodies 95% of those faiths, and/or to centre left secular state how can it engage in a framework?

e.g. if another NGO believes in syndico anarchism and the inherent evil of states of parametric goals and division of labour, e.g. Mozambique health?

NGO'S AS AGENDA SETTERS

- Host Country - by criticism, partner choice (or rejection of all domestic partners), by interaction
- Home Country - issue raising/pushing issues especially debt/hunger/trade/environment/gender/human rights (albeit last cluster largely in bodies with limited field service operations)
- Global - human rights/humanitarian military intervention

- In whose name? With what accountability to whom?
- Limited (uneven) interaction host social sectors and/or governments on issues even when general thrust welcome
- Problem legally apolitical bodies pushing military intervention and other hidden political value loaded proposals - often with unclear (or negligible?) analysis

NGO'S AS DONOR IDEOLOGICAL INSTRUMENTS

- **Shrink the State**
 - but still provide services
- **Build Pluralism**
 - but unclear external NGO does build domestic pluralism in host
- **Fill Short Run Gaps**
 - after that what next? How can it participate in state led e.g. health sector - parameter setting/operational coordination?

HOST CAPACITY

- Short Term **in** Country Gains
- Resource Diversion From
 - ✓ Host State
 - ✓ Host Country Social Sector
- Long Term Capacity Implications
 - ✓ Fragmentation - Operational
 - ✓ " - Parameter Setting
 - ✓ " - Reporting/Coordination

- ✓ Competitive Parallelism (among NGO's - or even different national branches of some NGO - as well as with state, domestic social sector)
- ✓ Unit Costs (apparently 10:1 external NGO's/Ministry of Health in Mozambique)
- A quick fix of crack cocaine to 'cure' a migraine headache?

IV.

WHERE NOW?

NO SIMPLE ANSWERS

- NGO's not all the same (beloved **and** hated in Rwanda, Kagera and Mozambique - parallels and paradoxes)
- Prancing pro-consul image based on own self image as paladins plus threat general to use leverage with donor ('holy blackmail?'). Is latter a bluff? If so, who is to call it?
- External NGO's as service providers contracted by domestic social sector institutions (external funds to latter)? (works in some cases now for religious NGO's)
- Genuine joint programming especially at local govt. level? (e.g. Action Aid in Mozambique)
- How do we get there from here? What first steps?

V.

SOME STRATEGIC ISSUES

A WHAT PATTERNS OF WHICH SERVICES?

- Universal Basic Services?
- Selective Value Added Services (e.g. Universities)?
- Special Group/Person Services - e.g. street and other dislocated children, abused women?
- Emergency (One Off and/or Repetitive) Coping and/or Vulnerability Reduction?

By Whom?

- Centralised Public Sector System?
- Local Government Operation/National Frame?
- Centralised Domestic Social Sector?
- Local Level Social Sector?
- External NGO's/Specialised Agencies?
- Funders?

B PLURALISM, DOMESTIC PEOPLE AND EXTERNAL NGO'S

- Participation and/or Dissent
- Joint Ventures and/or Separatism
- Transparency
- Accountability/Cross Accountability

C HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS/POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

- In 'complex emergencies' there are - and can be - **no neutrals** (even if desire to be)
- What does "non-politicisation" mean?
- Can being contextually relevant (including politically informed) be separated, in practice, from having a political project?

e.g. **Feed Hungry People in Zaire**

- a. Refugees? All including those 'in arms'?
- b. Displaced and/or Other Food Short Zairis?
- c. Armies - ex-Rwanda/Interahamwe? Committee for Defence of Democracy (Burundian Parallel)? Insurgents? Mobutu Forces? If **not** - how avoid men with guns 'collecting'/'levying' food? If **Yes** and **No** is this not a politics/military agenda? (In respect to Namibia clearly it was *de facto* policy to feed SWAPO's army in Angola.)

Help Hungry Organise Themselves

- a. Meaning What?
- b. Without reference to coercion?
- c. Without reference to political projects of organisers (e.g. IH, CDD)?

Secure Air Bases for Safe Distribution

- a. With Consent *de jure* or *de facto* local authorities?
- b. By Force "if necessary"? (When necessary? Why?)
- c. Who else may use? (*De Facto* local authorities/'Commercial' - meaning what?/Reinvading Forces, e.g. Mobutu's to Goma-Bukavu-Uvira?)

Encourage Refugee Return/Avoid Refoslevent

- a. How practice both? What contextual situations force 'voluntary' return? Prevent opting for return?
- b. What of home country perspective if says "Can't Cope"?

- c. With what reintegration support and human protection by whom and how funded?

Can these 'humanitarian' headlines be sensible (or even life saving) without political (or politically informed) answers to sub-questions?

D HOW CAN NGO'S PARTICIPATE RESPONSIBLY IN POLITICAL ASPECTS

e.g. How well do they perceive position of other actors. In Mozambique external NGO's - except ICRC - much more negative to providing food for civilians in Renamo controlled areas than State but apparently believed reverse.

(And if they have weak perceptions and no responsible way to speak/act on inherently political issues, then how can they say anything much in 'complex emergency' contexts?)

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