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NGO Roles and Relationships

Partnership Dilemmas for International and Local NGOs (In Kenya)

By

Maina Keengwe
Fiona Percy
Orito Mageka
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Muhamud Sheik Adan

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Maina Keengwe is the Country Director of Intermediate Technology Development Group in Kenya (IT Kenya). He is an economist, and previously worked for the Catholic Relief Service. He has also been a District Officer for the Kenya Government for 8 years.

Until recently **Fiona Percy** was the Programme Manager for the Rural Agriculture and Pastoralist Programme of IT Kenya. She has worked in rural community development and sustainable agriculture with NGOs in Kenya since 1988.

Orito Mageka is the DAH Unit Manager for IT Kenya. He is a veterinary surgeon, and had worked as a vet with the government for 9 years before joining IT.

Muhamud Sheik Adan manages the IT Kenya Pastoralist Project in Marsabit. He has extensive knowledge and experience of working with nomadic pastoralists, and their indigenous institutions. He previously worked with FARM Africa, pioneering their work in Northern Kenya.

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INTRODUCTION

From the time Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)[1] became major players in the field, there have been enormous changes in global attitudes towards development and development aid. Where Northern governments were locked into the East–West cold war with development aid tied to the arms trade and political allegiances, they are now almost universal proponents of globalisation and free markets as the way to improve everyone's livelihoods including the poor. Multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF tie their financial assistance to global market based conditions, enforced by the World Trade Organisation. Governments themselves are losing prominence as the market place takes over in determining development. Africa's debt crisis has led to the withdrawal of state provision, reducing the ability of African governments to address poverty. And despite pledges in the North to increase overseas development aid, this has not been apparent in the last few years.

NGOs were originally founded either to provide relief following crises, or for political struggle, always for the benefit of poor and voiceless communities. Today, the distinction between welfare and rights has blurred. NGOs have recognised that development can only be sustainable when resources are available and communities are aware of their rights to access and control their use sustainably. Poverty alleviation, social welfare, environmental sustainability, and community rights to resources have been used by NGOs to lobby governments to take greater social responsibility. But all these arguments have now been co-opted under the overriding banner of globalisation. Globalisation, it is said, will cater for democracy, freedom, the environment, and poverty alleviation. For example, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) have officially pledged poverty elimination alongside their full support to the globalisation process. Governments and the private sector now publicly endorse all the laudable goals of equitable development – while continuing to concentrate profits, power and resources in the hands of a very few. As the "new world order" continues to result in increased poverty and resource degradation, it continues to justify itself by claiming the very opposite.

On top of this, donors and governments have recognised NGOs (or have been forced to do so by structural adjustment) as effective players in development, and are requesting them to take over the very roles NGOs were advocating governments to improve. They are defining the role of NGOs as the channel for democratisation and social welfare, and are requesting them to take on roles traditionally performed by the state. While greater synergy between NGO and

[1] By NGO we refer to both international and African organisations aiming at development of and/ or relief for poor people in developing countries. See NGO file series 1 for a discussion of definitions.

government stakeholders in development is very welcome, as is the accompanying official aid funding,. placing responsibility for poverty alleviation, service provision and the development of civil society on NGOs is an enormous challenge. It also restricts their ability to determine their own identity, or to continue to challenge accepted norms. As non-political, not-for-profit, humanitarian organisations, dependent on funding from the proponents of "profits before people", how are NGOs to tackle this contradiction in terms?

The identity of NGOs has derived mainly from their aim to improve the livelihoods of poor communities and the provision of alternative options for the development of civil society. They have done this through diverse activities ranging from disaster relief, entrenching dependence through material hand-outs, to facilitating innovation and creativity as well as a high degree of response to community demand. Through the advantages of small-scale operations NGOs have been able to develop close associations with poor and marginalised communities. They have disseminated to the world the incredible wealth and diversity of the existing knowledge and experience of these communities, and have facilitated their voices to be heard. NGOs have championed the need for sustainability – in organisations, the environment, resource management, economies, and development as a whole. Does the current pressure on NGOs to dance to the tune of the donor threaten such diversity, and independent thinking? Are these NGO qualities now becoming redundant?

International NGOs (INGOs) have seen the need for local support and ownership of the development process. At the same time, many African countries are witnessing enormous growth in the number of grass roots and local development institutions. Again with sustainability in mind, attention has turned to building the capacity of local NGOs (LNGOs) to maintain development work more permanently than international NGOs who tend to keep moving on to new areas. Institutional capacity building has become popular with donors also, giving encouragement to partnerships between local and international NGOs. While this is a sincere effort to ensure more sustainable development, questions arise as to its effectiveness, given the disparity in terms of power, recognition, and resources between local and international NGOs. Such collaboration sits uneasily alongside increasing competition between NGOs for funds, and the threats to NGO identity. The positioning of local NGOs at the bottom of this invisible hierarchy in turn increases the external pressures on them.

The current trends of globalisation, the deepening of state-NGO relationships and the threat to the values inherent in traditional NGO work raise several challenges for NGOs and NGO partnerships in development. Should they or can they:

- be donor driven or community (beneficiary) driven?
- enable sustainable development through competing professional NGO services, or collaboration and popular voluntarism?

- alleviate poverty in a world of increasing global competition for resources?

These are major questions which require NGOs to reassess their institutional structure at a fundamental level if they are to act independently from and manage the dynamics of the existing dominant power structures. In the words of Anthony Bebbington (See AGREN ODI Network Paper No 76, July 1997) "NGOs have come to represent institutional forms governed more by external relationships than by relationships within their own societies. In this sense, in their present form, they are institutions that cannot possibly be sustainable"

As NGOs tackle these large questions of identity, what role can they play in capacity building of other instititutions – what capacity is needed at what level and for what purpose?

This booklet explores the dilemmas faced by NGOs in partnership. It explores the relations between international NGOs (INGOs) and local NGOs (LNGOs)/ Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in Kenya. It focuses on the issues of sustainable development and how institutional capacity building by and of NGOs reflects some inherent paradoxes.

Examples of "live events" are given throughout the text, drawn from the experiences of the Rural Agriculture and Pastoralist Programme (RAPP) of Intermediate Technology Development Group, (IT) Kenya, an INGO with its head office in the UK. IT Kenya works with LNGOs, CBOs and local government institutions, facilitating appropriate technology development in a variety of sectors within a framework of organisational development.

The experiences shared here are of the reality and complexity of development project implementation, and so serve to illustrate the dilemmas discussed. They are in no way presented as either great success or failure stories, but rather as a means of assisting readers to relate the issues raised to their own experience.

While no miracle solutions are provided, some suggestions are made towards rethinking the roles and relationships between INGOs, LNGOs, and donors. They point towards the need for deeper, more communicative relationships, through for example:

- NGOs and donors recognising their own needs and responsibilities, as well as the value of what they *receive* from each other.
- NGOs being able to honour their accountability to the communities they serve and influence donors to do the same.
- partnerships between NGOs, particularly between INGOs and LNGOs, being used to explore and address the challenges raised.

Box 1. ***The Rural Agriculture and Pastoralist Programme,(RAPP) IT Kenya***

Intermediate Technology Kenya Mission Statement:

"Intermediate Technology (IT) enables poor people in the South to develop and use technologies and methods which give them more control over their lives and which contribute to the sustainable development of their communities."

RAPP Goal:

"To increase the food security of people in marginal farming and pastoralist areas of Kenya and neighbouring countries, and assist marginal farmers and pastoralists to take greater control over the decisions that affect their lives."

RAPP operates in the Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASAL) of Kenya, identified by most development agencies as the most disadvantaged in the country's development and resource distribution. The programme has developed out of 10 years work in Decentralised Animal Health (DAH) in both pastoralist and marginal farming areas. Field activities take place in Samburu, Turkana and Marsabit (pastoralist areas), and Tharaka Nithi and Kathekani (farming areas). At Programme level, RAPP contributes to national and international policy debates and networking fora to disseminate its experience and influence policy makers in favour of pastoralists' and marginal farmers' rights. In response to increased demand, a DAH Support Unit has been established to provide a technical and information service to organisations requesting assistance and training.

The technical areas covered in the field sites include setting up DAH services, researching and integrating the use of indigenous knowledge, particularly ethnoveterinary knowledge, participatory technology development of sustainable dryland agricultural methods, seed security, and integrated livestock husbandry. A key element cutting across all the activities is institutional strengthening. Due to its diversity of beneficiaries, RAPP has experience of a diversity of approaches to capacity building with the indigenous, community group and government partners involved in the different activities, according to their organisational development needs. It is hoped that this provides the basis for future sustainability of the work.

RAPP's approach to development is to enable communities and individual pastoralists and farmers to improve their food security and have greater control over their own development. By using participatory methods (for both technical work and development processes, including monitoring impact) within an institutional framework, it is intended that beneficiaries gain the means to manage technology change as well as adopt and adapt new skills.

NGO PARTNERSHIPS

NGO characteristics

Early NGO development work was characterised by small organisations working in specific parts of the world in a close relationship with the target beneficiaries. As NGOs have developed in response to the gaps left by withdrawal of state service provision, and gained a reputation with donors and Southern governments for quality work, they have also expanded. Programmes grow larger, covering larger geographic areas and more technical sectors, needing more people to manage the work. INGOs expanded rapidly in the 1980s when NGO funding reached a peak, and donor conditions were relatively less rigorous. In order to cope, and retain their link with beneficiaries, many INGOs decentralised, setting up regional and/or national offices in their countries of operation.

INGOs have retained their perception of being external to the real development of their beneficiaries, with increasing emphasis on exit strategies. Development is only considered sustainable as long as the INGO can foresee its complete withdrawal. This gives INGOs the freedom to move on to new areas and activities, follow development trends, and maintain an advantage in the competition for funds. The exit strategy concept and the physical distance of INGO head offices from beneficiary communities have allowed some head office staff to consider INGO obligations towards beneficiaries as relatively unimportant. More positively, large INGOs are in a position to promote rights-based agendas at international policy level in response to messages from LNGOs and CBOs around the world, and thus enable them to participate.

LNGOs and CBOs, on the other hand, primarily arise out of local needs and exist to serve particular communities. They generally gain their mandate from the community and then search for the means to implement it. They are usually small organisations based close to their beneficiaries. Many are the inspiration of a single individual putting all his or her energy into "the cause". Others are created or inspired by INGOs working in the area, or new opportunities for access to funds. Most LNGOs aim to work in the INGO model, hoping for equivalent offices, vehicles, salaries and so on in the long run. Some LNGOs are inspired purely by this aspect and have no connection with the original altruistic and humanitarian aims of NGOs. CBOs, the nearest we come to voluntary action for development, tend to be subject to election of personnel and are often funded by the community itself. They represent community or member interests, and enjoy popular support. They are however prone to in-fighting and power struggles and their lack of resources and a broader perspective make them vulnerable to external influences. There are now more local NGOs and CBOs in many African countries than there are international NGOs, with huge variations in intentions, expertise and resources.

Why partnerships?

The current trend towards partnership in development runs alongside the use of participation and involvement of all stakeholders as crucial elements for sustainable development. Partnership aims to be of benefit to the organisations involved, resulting in greater achievements than either would accomplish alone, and implies equality in the relationship between them. As we will see, this may not necessarily be the case. But, as in personal relationships, partnerships have more chance of success when the advantages of the partnership are clear and apparent and when organisations:

- are independent at the start from each other and in what they do
- share similar long term goals or vision/mission
- share similar attitudes to and view of the problem, and how to address it
- have complementary knowledge/skills/resources which when put together, better address the problem and better achieve each one's aims.
- are able and willing to communicate openly

By analysing the reality of NGO partnerships in relation to these characteristics, several problems and dilemmas become apparent.

It is useful to see how LNGOs/CBOs and INGOs have been motivated to enter into partnerships, rather than working alone with communities. As a response to the need for development work to result in greater positive impact on peoples' livelihoods, issues of sustainability have been afloat for over a decade. One approach to this issue is to ensure that sustainable local institutions exist which can continue the work begun by "temporary" international NGOs. This trend has been rapidly endorsed by donors envisaging a future of more efficient funding to small local organisations with low overhead costs. However, although many popular or local organisations exist, they are often young and inexperienced at working as an organisation. They have the advantage of being born out of popular need and are usually well informed about the community they serve. But it is unusual to find a LNGO equipped to take on development work in all its facets in the same way that large INGOs do (field work, proposal and donor report writing, accounting, documentation, networking, research etc).

The international NGO is thus needed to build the capacity of local organisations, despite the fact that it may not be grounded in popular support. Networks of NGOs and provision by international NGOs of an umbrella for local NGOs are needed to help donors decide on the worthiness of the multitudes of applications they receive. Some donors are making partnerships between local and international NGOs a requirement for funding. Others are running their own capacity building programmes direct with local NGOs. International NGOs, including IT Kenya, are now moving away from giving direct assistance to individual community members and communities, towards greater efforts in building the capacity of community groups and local institutions to manage their own development process.

With the new trend towards capacity building, INGOs have an interest in creating partnerships with LNGOs, both to gain a solid presence on the ground, where the work is being done, and to enable them to enter an area, work for a while and then leave the LNGO to continue the work. A strong LNGO is seen as a means towards sustainable development, and reduces the INGO's direct responsibility to the community. Capacity building may take the form of training in project management, proposal writing or business skills; funding of initial capital, salary and overhead costs; or a process of working with the LNGO to identify needs and strengthen its strategic direction and organisational structure. LNGOs may see this interest as both an imposition and a benefit. In their rush to emulate INGOs in order to access the standard of resources and salary they enjoy, and in the absence of alternative ways of working in development, LNGOs can go to great lengths to secure such partnerships. In fact, the more the merrier, even if this means they are committed to conflicting outputs for different organisations! Again, following the examples in development generally, LNGOs see no obligation to inform their donors/ partners of each other, particularly when such donors are providing different forms of assistance.

LNGOs and CBOs are useful to INGOs in providing mechanisms for reaching larger numbers of community members at less cost to themselves. INGOs can learn the details about the communities and their heterogeneity from CBOs without becoming extensively involved. LNGOs and CBOs can implement INGO interventions and sort out local difficulties, leaving the INGO free to document, disseminate, lobby for policy change, network, take the credit for achievements, and then move on elsewhere. This arrangement enables INGOs to achieve sustainable outputs within their time frame, and expand their operations. It also allows them to gloss over flaws in their interventions, or blame them on the LNGO/CBO.

For the LNGO and CBO, partnership with INGOs provides greater access to sources of information, networks, and resources including funds and reputation. LNGO aspirations to be the same as INGOs seem more attainable when a close relation is built with an INGO, and through them, donors and national level government bodies can focus attention on LNGO work. Association with an INGO may be the only means available to access external assistance of any kind. In many cases, the presence of an INGO inspires the formation of CBOs which then look towards the INGO for direction and help. LNGOs are also created by ex-employees of INGOs. These organisations may be less grounded in popular support, but are more "professionally" oriented in development. Association with INGOs is important for these LNGOs to demonstrate their equal ability and status.

Box 2. RAPP's Partners

1. World Neighbours (INGO-INGO formal agreement for mutual benefit)
2. RAPP originally gave animal health technical advice to several projects on the request of World Neighbours. This developed into a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in which World Neighbours (WN) facilitated community and organisational development, and RAPP provided full time technical expertise. The MoU was terminated when WN withdrew support to technical services and RAPP began working directly with community groups.
3. Maragwa Locational Development Committee (INGO initiated partnership – local government institution)
4. RAPP approached the Locational Development Committee (LDC) deliberately to form a partnership with an existing local institution having a development mandate from the government. RAPP assists the LDC to identify, prioritise and address development needs, access required resources (without any funding from RAPP), and facilitate a process of agricultural technology development. The LDC, as the lowest rung of the government district focus for rural development, co-ordinates development activities in the location, takes a lead in hosting local events, and mobilises community groups.
5. Kathekani Mbungo Self Help Group (INGO initiated CBO)
6. Following inputs from several NGOs including RAPP, the Kathekani community formed this CBO to oversee livestock activities in the location including animal health care provision, tsetse fly trapping, and village level livestock husbandry. RAPP provides training, capacity building inputs, and some technical inputs. RAPP also participates in the local network which co-ordinates government, NGO and CBO activities. Kathekani group co-ordinates village level committees, and community based animal health workers; raises funds and manages community contributions for tsetse trapping; and ensures communication between all external inputs related to livestock and community members.
7. Yaa Galbo (INGO- indigenous institution: negotiated partnership)
8. Yaa Galbo are the governing body for part of the Gabra, one of the few tribes retaining a strong traditional structure in pastoralist Northern Kenya. Seeking to work with nomadic groups, RAPP approached all the Yaas and were later invited to start work with the Yaa Galbo, on their terms. A reciprocal relationship has developed enabling the Yaa to access new knowledge and skills in relation to livestock; manage the changing dynamics for pastoralists in Kenya; and communicate and work with other external agents. The Yaa provides the means to reach large numbers of nomadic Gabra within its strong institutional framework, and offers indigenous knowledge and experience in technical, environmental and organisational areas.
9. PISP (INGOs partnering independent LNGO: capacity building and funding)
10. The Yaa Galbo decided they needed an educated and sedentary body to fully represent their needs and priorities at District and national level. PISP (Pastoralist Integrated Support Programme) was then created by the Yaas with help from RAPP, one other INGO, and a Gabra MP. RAPP is on the board of

trustees and now assists PISP mainly with maintaining its links with the Yaas, and giving day to day direction and advice. PISP has attracted several INGO partners, providing start up funds for offices, salaries etc; training of staff and board members; assistance with project design, participatory processes; fund raising and technical assistance in other sectors particularly water supply.

11. DAH Support Unit (INGO created LNGO)

12. The DAH Unit was created by RAPP to manage the many external demands for assistance in animal health. The Unit has no community mandate, but aims to be a national NGO in Kenya providing paid services to clients intending to establish animal health services. Clients may be INGOs, donors or community groups. The Unit is not yet an independent LNGO, but provides all technical and material output and manages the daily operations of the Unit. RAPP provides funds, strategic direction, overall management and advice. A business plan has been developed to operationalise the transition from dependence on RAPP to independent NGO status.

PARTNERSHIP DILEMMAS

The many difficulties arising once partnerships are entered into are discussed below in relation to the larger questions facing NGOs in development.

Donor driven or client driven?

As economic pressures on Northern governments lead to diminishing funds, donors have become both better attuned to development issues, and more rigorous in their decisions on what to fund. Hence NGOs as a whole are under ever increasing pressure to follow donor interest, and donor directed procedures. To overcome the limitations of funds tied to very specific project outputs, NGOs also undertake consultancies and research for donors as a means of raising general funds for the organisation. This has a consequence of further reducing their own self-determination. These choices move away from focusing on accountability to the communities for which NGOs exist, and restrict NGOs' capacity for independent and effective advocacy on their behalf. Without a clear mandate given by communities and based on their needs, what differentiates NGOs from any other stakeholder in development? Many NGOs in Africa find their niche in specific aspects of development, as for example, in their development approach, geographic region of operation, technical sector, particular clientele (schools, street children, women), and so on. This has obvious benefits in building up expertise and a comparative advantage.

But how do INGOs select where to work? How can their expertise be matched with the communities needing them as a priority, and by who? Where INGOs concentrate geographically and run integrated development projects, the challenge is possibly greater: the INGO is responsible for responding to community needs without imposing its own interests, or raising expectations. The INGO's presence alone makes a huge impact at the least on community expectations. Yet the INGO intends to facilitate communities to take responsibility for their own development process and understand that the INGO is not permanently there to stay.

One contradiction becomes clear – INGOs may be transitory, but they are not invisible. While they work with communities, they impact upon them in planned and unplanned ways. Whatever the outcome, INGOs bear some responsibility towards it, yet can use their transitory nature to ignore this and place sole responsibility on communities, while of course taking credit for successes. The pressure from donors for a project approach and exit strategy forces INGOs to ignore the pace that communities can realistically move at, and to think always of what and where next, to ensure renewed donor interest, new funding, and to stay ahead of other competing INGOs.

NGOs are left in the difficult (but potentially powerful) position of being both donor driven and beneficiary (client) driven, while at the same time mediating

between the two. While NGOs derive their existence from their clients' needs, the forces of funding and donor fashions appear to be winning out, leaving NGOs as a tool for implementing donors' wishes, while local clients learn to agree to whatever the external agent brings, in the hope that something useful may result, whether for the community or privately.

Yet INGOs assume that their capacity building work, designed for the purpose of sustainability, will give rise to "permanent" local organisations owned by and responding to community needs. Attractive as this may be, INGOs themselves have done little to demonstrate the viability of permanence. Rather, they have daily experience of the conflict between community needs and donor pressures, and tend towards conforming to the latter. By moving into the realm of capacity building, INGOs have implicitly stated their superiority over LNGOs and claimed their position a step ahead of them in the race for funding. Because LNGOs must gain capacity from INGOs, INGOs can control their access to donors. INGOs and donors are easily able to label LNGOs as credible organisations worthy of support, or the opposite, leaving LNGOs dependent on them in many ways.

LNGOs in transition

LNGOs themselves have little choice but to travel the road set by INGOs and donors if they wish to survive, given the lack of alternative viable forms of existence. They are furthermore disadvantaged by their relative lack of facilities and capacity, and by the expectation that they will remain where they began, sustaining efforts, rather than expanding or changing direction. While INGOs refer to the LNGOs they work with as partners, there is very little equality in this type of skewed partnership. In fact, where the INGO also funds the LNGO, the relationship becomes that of donor and beneficiary, with its dangers of imposing views, and demanding set outputs.

IT Kenya has experienced this dilemma in several ways. In creating a new LNGO from within itself, all the difficulties of transition from dependence to an independent partner have arisen. IT's work in DAH has always been supported through donor funding covering a range of projects, and accessed through the reputation of IT as an INGO. The DAH Unit was created by IT following large demands for support in DAH from both LNGO/CBO and INGO clients. The aim was to build the Unit into an independent local organisation with its own funding and right of existence.

As a LNGO, it would provide DAH support services on a more permanent basis, thus making IT's DAH work become sustainable, while IT on its part would be free to continue in its role of developing new technologies and ways of working with marginalised communities. IT would remain a close partner to the Unit, sharing expertise and information, potentially on a paying basis. However, while it may be possible to operate as a LNGO or consultancy company in its own right, the DAH Unit's background is that of IT; IT are supporting it and building its

capacity; and raising funds under its name, and it is IT which has a reputation for DAH. And at the same time IT are competing with NGOs internationally for the same donor funds the Unit would aim to access.

Box 3. ***Decentralised Animal Health (DAH) Support Unit***

RAPP has developed a range of approaches and training methodologies for DAH, for which the programme has become known widely in Kenya and beyond. The aim of these methods is to facilitate the establishment of community based animal health services which are accessible and affordable to local livestock keepers. The basic model is to *train community selected farmers/pastoralists* to diagnose and treat common livestock diseases as identified by the community. These trainees (paravets or "wasaidizi" in Kenya), are then able to treat their own and other people's animals. A community based drug supply system is also set up such that paravets and livestock owners can more easily access drugs. Reviews and further training are given as needed, and links are established with local vets for referrals, sharing of records and new veterinary developments, and future upgrading of skills. Recently, following intensive research into Ethnoveterinary Knowledge (EVK), traditional healers have also been included as trainers and trainees to assist the integration of EVK into conventional animal health systems.

RAPP's role has been to develop this model with variations according to circumstances, and implement it in relatively small locations. The DAH service itself is provided by the paravets, supported by their communities, local authorities, veterinary department of the ministry of agriculture, or other development agencies. Hence neither RAPP itself, nor the DAH Unit aim to *provide DAH services*, but rather, facilitate a process approach to their establishment.

Similar projects are being undertaken around Kenya and other countries as a result of the model's success, including some *implemented by government*. Enquiries to RAPP and demands for assistance in setting up DAH projects became greater than the capacity of IT to respond. As DAH had become a mature technology, proven successful in the field, RAPP was keen to move on to newly arising issues within and outside of DAH affecting the communities it serves. The programme needed to find a way to release capacity for these new directions while continuing to disseminate the successes of DAH, using them to influence government policy on service provision, and meeting the demands of other development agencies for DAH services.

These efforts to disseminate a decade's work in Decentralised Animal Health, have resulted in IT Kenya building up an independent, local NGO (the DAH Support Unit) which aims to provide sustainable services within the region. The Unit is responsible for the provision of training, training materials, research and advice on DAH services to other interested parties; data base establishment; information dissemination and advocacy in favour of the DAH approach. This then enables RAPP to continue in the development of new technologies and methodologies in the area of both livestock as a whole and agriculture.

Although there is no doubt that demand from the grass roots is as high as ever for DAH, how feasible is it to find donors and paying *clients to cover the costs of* a LNGO indefinitely? Can the Unit find resources to serve its end users (marginalised communities) directly? Should the DAH Unit find ways of

diversifying what it has on offer, and its sources of funding to ensure its own future? Will this then contradict IT's original aim, and compete with IT's ongoing "cutting edge" work in DAH? While the Unit remains within IT, how will it gain independent credibility and ensure future contracts? Does IT have the particular capacity and skills which the DAH Unit needs to grow into maturity, especially if this involves a structure more like a consultancy firm?

Just as the teenage years are difficult for parents and teenager, the transition from dependence on IT to independence is proving more complex than envisaged. While IT aims to support the transition and the new independent Unit, it has also made a large investment and wishes this to be well utilised. Despite its flexibility, IT has of course imposed its wishes on the Unit, by being the originator and initial donor. In such a close association, the Unit is under pressure to conform. Funds are accompanied by set targets including the date by which the Unit will have its own physical and human resources.

But to succeed, IT and the Unit must be able to recognise when the dependent stage is over and then manage the changing dynamics of the relationship demanded by the transition to independence, and later on, interdependence. Issues of ownership and control must be acknowledged, and clarity is required between sharing of content and expertise vis a vis management procedures.

Again, IT is an NGO in its own right, dependent on donor support. Its ability to build the capacity of the Unit depends on whether it can convince donors to support the process. So while intentions for the Unit are sound, the need for financial support and the requirements that accompany accessing it, affect the ability of either side to respond to development needs in the community, and distort the partnership. What has become clear, is that the Unit requires more substantial funds to run than it can access through charging fees for its services, especially if it is to retain its focus on poor communities. Also when independent, it will either remain very close to its parent IT (with IT members in its board), or take off in its own direction in relation to potential donors. If the Unit does become an independent LNGO eventually, it will have little choice but to continue emulating the INGO model from which it was born.

Sustainable development: professional NGO services, or popular voluntarism?

Conventionally NGOs are "not for profit". This essentially means that funds always need to be sought from other sectors of society, a situation which enables these sources to have great influence over NGO operations. It rarely implies that NGOs are involved in voluntary work. (See also NGO Series No 1). On the other hand, international NGOs are often large professional organisations, requiring large amounts of resources and overhead costs, and dependent (sustainably?) on scarce charitable funding. Management and fund raising expenditure to facilitate this may be considerable. This situation, while at times insecure, is not seen by the INGO as non-sustainable. It is assumed that one way or another, adequate funds

will always be found as long as there is sufficient flexibility or dynamism within the NGO to respond to changing development needs and donor fashions, and/or to move their operations geographically. In fact, with today's pressure to conform to the production and efficiency criteria of business and governments, NGOs are seeking to prove their professionalism in those terms. They are no longer so concerned with proving their unique identity and contribution to development.

While the assets of an INGO (offices, vehicles, computers etc) are tangible and visible, determining whether large NGOs are effective in improving livelihoods is a difficult task, particularly as they have not until recently been required to prove their impact. It should not come as a surprise that LNGOs and CBOs are more impressed with INGO assets than their achievements in community development NGOs have been criticised for having an impact only on a very small scale and at a high cost–benefit ratio. The durability of this impact is also questionable. It cannot be denied that INGOs have addressed many issues relating to poor communities, and raised national or international interest in them. It is also possible to have a great impact on the lives of poor people without producing visible and tangible evidence. (Conversely, we also know that development "white elephants" in the form of inappropriate physical inputs and structures can have relatively little impact on people's lives). To overcome this, NGOs are now making efforts to enable communities themselves to monitor the impact of projects in relation to changes in livelihoods.

Under donor pressure, INGOs are competing for funds and using the language of business to demonstrate accountability, efficiency and impact. Conversely, INGO capacity building work usually focuses on strengthening the ability of local NGOs and CBOs to function with a minimum of resources, sometimes depending on voluntary contributions from community members. Collaboration and permanence as opposed to competition and flexibility are promoted. This directly contradicts the model of mobility, discrete projects and exit strategies which has provided INGOs with a sustainable existence. The very success of the latter impedes the development of new organisational models based on long term permanence and continued responsibility towards a specific community.

Yet INGOs have come to see local level organisation as a crucial element for sustainable development, and will endeavour to create this if it does not already exist. Most valuable development approaches use community organisation as an underlying principle for successful and sustainable intervention, and as the foundation for community empowerment. In some cases, a local institutional structure is created by an NGO which duplicates an existing one. In Kenya, the decentralised government District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) aims to respond to community needs through a hierarchy of representative development committees from village up to district level. These committees have been used as an entry point by INGOs for supporting sustainable village or community level organisations. The model has also been used to create a parallel system of

committees focusing on the INGO interests, and avoiding the "politics" of the official system. As will be discussed later, the communities in Kathekani found themselves spending all their time in INGO inspired committee meetings and overlapping DFRD development committees.

The creation of LNGOs and CBOs by INGOs has a number of implications. For example, the relationship is hardly one of partnership, but more that of parent to child. CBOs are seen as inferior to INGOs, which effectively take on the role of parent. These CBOs are at least initially dependent on INGOs for their existence, direction and activities. INGOs, whether intentionally or not, provide CBOs with an organisational model they may not expect the CBO to emulate. By creating a CBO, the INGO has already assumed it has the required experience and capacity to support the development of the CBO to adulthood. But this parental responsibility is not necessarily recognised by the INGO. The accountability of the INGO is rarely questioned, while that of the CBO is under constant scrutiny. INGOs do not expect to be challenged by CBOs. If they are, their reputation and status enable the INGO to retain their position of power, and the choice over whether or not the partnership continues.

CBOs are torn between their intended community empowerment and development objectives and their lack of expertise and access to funding. On top of this, in aspiring to reach a similar status and compete with INGOs, CBOs do feel a sense of injustice and resentment towards their greater powers and resources. This hinders the open collaboration required for useful partnerships. Until recognition is given to professional and voluntary services working in differing but equally effective ways to achieve development objectives, partnerships will remain skewed.

Participation and partners

NGOs are the main proponents of participatory development in which communities (the NGO beneficiaries) are asked to determine their own development needs, then develop and implement solutions. Participation, in a variety of much discussed forms, has become a requirement for sustainable development. Projects designed by the end user should answer a real need, and beneficiaries who are involved in the identification, design, and implementation of projects are more likely to maintain the results. Given the long (invisible) hierarchy from donor to INGO or LNGO, to CBO, to community member, and the ever present need for tangible results in a set timeframe, is it realistic to expect community members to determine and control their own development process? An NGO that aims to support such efforts fully finds that donor requirements, and sometimes the more donor-driven activities of other NGOs in the same area, create constant obstacles. It would be a remarkable achievement for any organisation to have the capacity to respond fully to all the real needs of a community.

Community members themselves make their own impressions of NGOs, which may bear little resemblance to an NGO's expressed purpose. NGOs create expectations to which community members tailor .their messages and contributions, and which the NGO may not live up to. Community members have learnt that singing the donor's song carries potential benefits and in this case it is the NGO which is perceived as the donor. It is a hard task to build up sufficient trust and clarity for the community and NGO to communicate truthfully and in understanding. This is where the need for creative partnerships is perhaps strongest.

In one RAPP (IT Kenya) project in Kathekani, a dry, resource poor area, community members were well organised and exposed to a variety of development agents. Many INGOs were attracted to the area because of this, and the ease of access from the main road. The INGOs made successful efforts to collaborate with each other and with the local administration, aiming to avoid duplication of activities by different INGOs. Participation is the key method for all the INGOs, a trend set in the area by the first to arrive, who established development committees to oversee implementation. Much has been achieved in alleviating needs, for example in water supply, animal health services, and food stores, all of which are run by CBOs or committees. However, community needs are still plentiful and therefore INGO activities continue unabated.

Despite the good collaboration of the INGOs, it became clear that the community were overloaded with administration of projects, for many of which the benefits were yet to be realised. As the first INGOs had set up committees at every level, the community had accepted that this was the way in which projects must be run. Projects would always be a potential source of gain to individuals or groups. New projects, being participatory, required the community to decide how to run their project, meaning that yet more committees were formed. Since they did a good job, certain individuals were chosen again and again as the leaders, spending more and more of their time in meetings. Finally, the INGOs and community realised the need for a higher level of organisational structure to avoid surplus committees and duplication of effort, and aim to integrate project work. The result: yet another committee to oversee the process!

During this time, RAPP learnt the extent to which the community viewed NGOs as an indirect source of funding, accepting the need for NGOs to follow the donors leads, and then accepting that their slice of the donor pie would only be gained through following the NGO lead. Despite all the years of participatory development, the community did not believe NGOs would respond to their real needs, and felt they could gain more by silently assessing each NGO for what it could offer them as individuals, and acting accordingly. To these CBOs, the relationship between them and INGOs was based on playing a development game from the start! Until INGOs and CBOs understand the validity of each others

perspectives and are able to discuss them, the donor will continue to conduct the game.

Participation does have positive results when partners share similar goals and where CBOs are clear about their role in the process – which implies that NGOs also accept responsibility for the impact their presence has on the community. To illustrate, Maragwa is an isolated location in a semi-arid farming area of Kenya, long neglected by government and NGOs. RAPP chose to work there due to its relative poverty and tendency to drought, yet coupled with potential resources especially in livestock. RAPP aimed to initiate an open ended participatory development process with the existing official government institution, the Location Development Committee (LDC) as a partner, at the same time building the LDC's capacity to sustain development efforts responsive to community needs. RAPP was aware that its technical capacity in this case was in agriculture and livestock, and aimed to assist the LDC to access other NGOs or bilateral projects to implement activities in other priority technical areas. However, in order to avoid imposition of RAPP's interests, this was not made clear to the LDC at the start. Being unfamiliar with "process" as opposed to "hand-out" development, the community resented working with an organisation which asked much of them but did not appear to offer anything tangible in return. The LDC could only participate fully, and allow the project to take off, when IT did make clear why it was there, what it could offer the community directly and indirectly, and why it was using the participatory process they had resented. The time and patience required during this process has however paid off through the resulting relationship of trust and open communication.

In this project, IT had later on to justify to the donors why no tangible agriculture work was done in the first year, while a strong partnership was being built. While participation and a process approach are recognised as useful, the contradictions between this and the project output or logical framework approach is apparently less clear to donors.

NGO Collaboration and Networking

NGOs spend more time and effort in communication with their donors, most often based outside the country, and the communities they assist, than with each other. This has hindered NGOs from collaborating together. Communication channels are generally vertical with NGOs and even NGO networks looking towards either their communities or external donors for direction. As discussed in NGO series No 2, duplication of efforts, secrecy and competition are common features, which can and do cause conflict within beneficiary communities. Sharing of information across NGOs is often ad hoc and depends on personal interest or motivation, or is "owned" by a specific NGO. Donors and international policy debates set the agenda for conferences which NGOs attend without questioning how they may fit with national needs and policy trends, policy influence or indeed with the next

externally determined conference. In fact, participation in these events by senior NGO staff is often given priority over more mundane field work with beneficiaries, as noted in No 2 of this series. In contrast, Northern based INGOs have gained credibility and power from short and long term collaboration for international advocacy and development of a rights-based agenda. This provides a much needed counterforce to the promotion of globalisation and its tendency to increased poverty as mentioned earlier. Again such partnerships are based on relative equality of resources.

Working direct with communities, or going to the field, as NGO staff say, carries low status, and is the easiest to sacrifice. There is always a reason to do so: roads are impassable; community members have not been organised; the donor requires a report urgently; attending a conference will have more impact, and so on. Field workers themselves are usually the lowest paid staff with least access to facilities such as vehicles. Although NGOs exist because of the needs of their beneficiaries, they can give the impression that this is of the least importance. Senior NGO staff are caught between the demands of office pressures and field realities. They may quickly forget or do not know the rigours of daily life for the rural poor. Tensions between them and field staff are consequently common. Whether or not field staff provide the NGO with information, or participate in decision making, final decisions over strategic direction and resource allocation are normally made by senior staff.

When NGOs develop partnerships these hidden priorities and hierarchies can lead to conflicts, particularly when INGOs search for LNGO partners to take greater responsibility for field work.

In Marsabit, RAPP helped the traditional governing institution, the Yaas, to set up a LNGO to represent their needs to government and INGOs, while they continued their complex nomadic lifestyle. The Yaas travel over large areas of Nothern Kenya according to grazing and water needs, and cultural factors. (See Box) Their decisions on where to be do not consider the needs of NGOs or where their vehicles may pass. Yet as external factors impinge on their livelihoods, the Yaas also recognise their need for information about, and contact with, trends and changes in Kenya as a whole.

The LNGO, Pastoralist Integrated Support Programme (PISP) has members of the Yaas, local elders and some INGO staff on its board, and educated Gabra were recruited to run it. PISP was to take its mandate from the Yaas and maintain regular communication with them. RAPP and one other INGO worked with the Yaas to establish PISP to the point of registration as a LNGO, with initial office facilities shared with RAPP in Marsabit. While RAPP staff assisted PISP in maintaining contact with the Yaas, the other INGO helped them formulate operational strategies and funding proposals, and continues to coordinate external links.

Within a short period, other INGOs and donors learnt about PISP and realised the benefits of supporting a LNGO which had local staff and direct links to the nomadic pastoralists in Northern Kenya. By working with PISP, an INGO could make a positive impact on the lives of nomadic pastoralists without the trouble of establishing direct links themselves. Being a young LNGO in the process of establishing its own identity and methods of working, PISP was offered a variety of support measures from several INGOs. Most of these involved capacity building either through funds for capital and salaries, or training in project management skills. Although welcome, the INGOs also put pressure on PISP to conform to their ways of working, assuming that it could not know better, and that giving support also implied some control over PISP. The INGOs approached PISP direct without communicating with each other or with RAPP and the other original INGO.

PISP soon discovered the difficulties of refusing or accepting assistance. Once funds were given, the donor INGOs began to make demands on PISP's strategy and time, using their own standards of performance. The INGOs assumed (rightly) that PISP lacked capacity as a new LNGO, but went on to assume that they also lacked a knowledge of the Yaas and could not be trusted to spend funds wisely. The donor INGOs were themselves under pressure to produce results for their donor and placed demands which were unreasonable given the nature of pastoralist lifestyles. If these were not met, PISP were to blame as incompetent and even less trustworthy! PISP is left in the same position as low status field workers and caught up in the donor-INGO-LNGO-CBO hierarchy. It looked likely that the Yaa members who originated the idea of PISP would become alienated from it, and PISP would no longer be able to work with the Yaas at their pace because of the demands of the donor.

In addition, PISP entered into effectively conflicting agreements with the various INGOs who expected PISP to relate to their requirements above all others. PISP were blamed for this duplicity, and found themselves the focus of cross-INGO conflict. The fact that the INGOs had not made efforts to tell or ask each other what they were doing was overlooked. This was partly due to hidden INGO agendas to take sole credit for PISP successes. Far from being supported in building its capacity, the possibility for PISP to develop its own identity in relation to the Yaas became more and more unlikely.

Following these negative experiences, and led by the original supporting INGO, attempts were made for all parties to communicate with each other about their involvement with PISP. They have now recognised their role in creating conflict, and collaboration between them is beginning among individual staff members, though this is not an organisational requirement. RAPP and PISP staff in Marsabit are now communicating openly with the one main donor. The PISP board has been instrumental in ensuring active links with the Yaas. PISP work is

finding a positive balance for responding to the Yaas and utilising external experience and resources.

Box 4. *Marsabit Pastoralist Project*

The Gabra ethnic group retain a strong traditional nomadic culture and institutional structure in which 5 governing councils (*Yaas*) take responsibility for and determine the equitable resource use and social/cultural activities of the community in the Northeast of Kenya, bordering with Ethiopia. Pastoralist families follow decisions made by the Yaa. Reliance on camels and small stock; high mobility; monitoring of pastures, herd movements and water sources; together with wealth distribution and dividing herds during disasters, have enabled the Gabra to survive in extremely harsh arid conditions. RAPP began work with pastoralists in Northern Kenya through its expertise in animal health. In Marsabit, initial activities aimed at strengthening Gabra institutions and their ability to cope with drought.

Initial surveys of the area by RAPP were met with the response that IT should wait to be called by the Yaas in case they were needed. Of the 5 Yaas, only the Yaa Galbo sent word for IT to come back, so the project began collaboration with them, initially establishing a relationship and discussing possible areas of work. The project now operates in partnership with the Yaas who determine and control almost all project activities, and are able to ensure equitable distribution of benefits. The Yaa Galbo priorities were animal health, water and livestock marketing. RAPP decided to address animal health first, studying disease prevalence and ethnoveterinary knowledge, training herders, and establishing community controlled drug stores. Since then, RAPP has moved into wider livestock and environment activities and found another INGO to address water issues.

Initial work emphasised understanding the Gabra way of life, their rich social, cultural and spiritual traditions and coping strategies. Capacity building work began by establishing a mutually respectful relationship in which the Yaas' customs were adhered to when visiting them, and included not visiting unless requested. The area of institutional support required by the Yaa, expressed as a priority in a PRA in 1996, was to have a voice and be heard not only within Gabra society but with external agents also. In response to this, the Yaa were assisted to attend and gain membership of the district development committee and camel forum meetings. These meetings provide the Yaa members attending with opportunities for involvement in making decisions relevant to the needs of nomadic pastoralists and their livestock. Without Yaa members present, nomadic pastoralists had no voice in these fora.

With the other INGO, the Yaa were also helped to link up with other groups in the District and form a local NGO, PISP, with the mandate to represent all ethnic groups in promoting development for nomadic pastoralists. PISP has as it's board of trustees, representatives of two Yaas, local leaders in Marsabit, and Rendille, Boran and Somali members. It employs an educated Gabra to address expressed priority needs and represent nomadic pastoralists in District and National Fora. IT now plays a role in ensuring that PISP retains it's links with and responds to the needs of the nomadic pastoralists, in the face of external pressures. The other INGO have trained the board in leadership, communication, and project planning and management skills.

Partnerships goals

Partnerships are sought by NGOs for many reasons, but a key factor is to enable them achieve their own goal better. In an equal partnership, each organisation recognises specific gaps that could be filled by the other. In the formal agreement which IT and World Neighbours shared for some years, both organisations aimed to improve the livelihoods of the community through participatory methods. World Neighbours lacked the technical expertise needed to assist the community's livestock needs, and IT were searching for an integrated project within which its technical focus on animal health could fit. Both organisations were well established INGOs from the start. This type of relationship differs greatly from that between them and the CBOs with which the project worked.

When capacity building is the initial goal of a partnership, the relationship is by definition one of dependency at the start. The INGO, like a donor, invests time, funds and skills in the selected CBO/LNGO partner. Effectively the LNGO becomes a beneficiary, receiving valuable goods, rather than a partner in development. The INGO may have chosen to work with the LNGO because of its initiative and close relations with the community, or any number of other positive attributes. Once the LNGO accepts to link with the INGO, these attributes are not valued as highly as the funding and training support given by the INGO. What the INGO offers as capacity builder is superior, while it's needs for the partnership with the LNGO are left unstated. INGOs will go to great lengths to ignore the responsibility involved in this dependent type of partnership, and their own needs for the relationship. INGOs focus their projects around community needs and priorities. They are also clear about what they expect the LNGO/CBO to do, and it's obligations towards the INGO. But they rarely acknowledge that NGOs (both INGO and LNGO) themselves also have needs as organisations. The humanitarian, not-for-profit NGO ethic contributes to an attitude of invisibility and of serving the other.

Ideally, partners negotiate their terms from the start, on the basis of what each partner needs, and what each can offer the other. When NGOs are entangled in attitudes of superiority and denial, it is barely possible to gain this clarity. When there is disparity in the funds available to each partner it is even more difficult to avoid a distorted relationship. Undercurrents of confusion, mistaken expectations and disappointment soon affect the partnership.

As mentioned earlier, when RAPP began work with the LDC in Maragwa, RAPP's role and responsibilities in the partnership were not made clear. The LDC were facilitated to begin a development process, using participatory methods, but were kept in the dark regarding why RAPP was there, why they were interested in working with the LDC, and what their overall purpose was in doing so. With no shared goal to discuss, the LDC had no basis for negotiating a partnership. As the lowest rung of the DFRD, the LDC are answerable both to the community and the

government. RAPP wished to strengthen the former, which potentially conflicts with the latter. When the LDC became reluctant to cooperate and failed to meet RAPP's expectations, RAPP became even more convinced about the LDC's lack of capacity! A period of conflict ensued, following which RAPP made its own position clear, stating why it was in Maragwa with the LDC, what assistance it could offer the location, and what it could not do. The LDC and IT were then able to re-negotiate their partnership on a more equal basis. Conflict and re-negotiation have been features of the project since, but in this case, the real needs of the community have been expressed, and a relationship of trust and sharing has been created.

In capacity building partnerships, the INGO helps the LNGO to develop as an organisation in order to then implement development work with community members. The partnership must be dynamic for the LNGO to grow, and to move from initial dependence on the INGO to independence and later interdependence with other NGOs on equal terms. Every organisation's development is unique in its particular combination of history, goals, people involved, processes followed, resources and needs, which change over time.

A package or blueprint approach to capacity building, which does not recognise this, restricts the possibility of tailoring interventions to needs, and enabling the LNGO to manage its own development. If the LNGO aim is to replicate the INGO model, this in itself poses a potential conflict of interest for the INGO. If LNGOs reach a position of greater equality, they will also be a greater competitor in the search for funds and projects. In this case, INGOs are also required to let go of the LNGO and allow it to move ahead alone, when the LNGO is ready for this. The INGO may not be prepared to relinquish control over the process and stop its capacity building activities at that time, and may find it difficult to relate to the LNGO in a new way. The LNGO may also enjoy the status quo of the dependent capacity building relationship.

WHICH WAY FORWARD?

Poverty alleviation as a shared goal

NGOs have always aimed for a people-centred and humanitarian approach to development. But despite their continued focus on improving livelihoods for the poor, poverty continues to increase worldwide and opportunities for the poor are decreasing. Liberalised markets, competition for resources, and the global economy all seem to conspire to widen the gap between rich and poor. Following the greater donor interest in NGO performance, rigorous evidence of positive impact on the lives of poor people as a result of NGO work has not been easy to find.

While poverty alleviation is the key NGO agenda, all the other actors and the source of funds for NGO work are implementing actions and policies that make it almost impossible to fulfill. It is uncertain whether NGOs (or governments) have the capacity to be effective in poverty alleviation and service provision on a large-scale when political will is firmly on the globalisation band wagon. NGOs are very much alone in this task despite monetary support. Their efforts may not be supported by the communities they serve any more than those of Southern governments or the private sector, all of whom are affected by the forces of the cash economy.

With such large questions about the feasibility of the wider shared goal of NGO work, there would appear to be great potential in NGOs working together, assuming that it is still endorsed as a worthy goal. In the 1998 People's Summit in Birmingham, collaboration between over 15 UK based INGOs led to the mobilisation of 70,000 participants and petitions signed by people all over the world, forcing international acknowledgement of poverty caused by world debt. Short term partnerships have succeeded in influencing policy at international level on a variety of subjects.

Sharing a larger goal enables more open and equal discussion of the roles and relationships of each partner aimed at achieving results outside the organisations. Partners can begin to appreciate each others contributions to the goal, and learn from valuing each others perspective as real and valid. Needs for capacity and organisational development which become apparent in the process can be tackled in this context. Since global experience has shown that competition for resources results in increased poverty and environmental degradation, NGOs must find ways of practising at all levels, the collaboration and focus on needs and resources which they preach at community level.

Organisation development can be used as a framework, in a flexible and innovative way to enable organisations to understand the processes involved in capacity building. Such a framework enables NGOs to tailor their activities to organisational needs for development at whichever level is required at that time, rather than emulating INGOs or following donor demands.

INGOs in Kenya have founded an informal Interagency Group to facilitate genuine dialogue around NGO partnerships and capacity building. It aims to provide a space in which INGOs can freely share their experiences and concerns in order to improve their capacity building practice. The Group formed out of recognition that there was a growing body of valuable knowledge on capacity building among members which could be mutually beneficial. Group activities do depend on donor support, but maintain their focus on sharing organisational development practice according to internal group agendas. Donors and LNGOs/CBOs are deliberately excluded from the group. Instead, separate activities have been organised for them to also discuss the real issues they face as development organisations.

By retaining its informal peer group status and ability to listen openly to experience, the Interagency Group activities have had several positive results:

- Member INGOs are communicating together about their work and their partners
- INGOs are more aware of each others' areas of expertise and weaknesses, bringing conflicts and duplication with partner LNGO/CBOs into the open
- Members are gaining greater depth of insight into organisational development processes which enable them to tailor their capacity building practice to individual partner's needs
- Through these insights and willingness to share, other important factors affecting partnerships are being addressed, with the aim of incorporating them into future practice. These include facing internal assumptions and hidden agendas; issues around power, integrity, accountability and personal gain; and wider issues reflecting the social and political environment.
- LNGOs/CBOs have access to the same reflective learning process and an opportunity to discuss their particular needs with each other, giving rise to similar networking benefits as for INGOs. INGOs are learning more about LNGO/CBO perspectives of INGOs from the outcome of this process.
- INGOs and LNGOs have the opportunity to discuss development and capacity building dilemmas openly with donors based in Kenya, in an attempt to influence them towards greater real support to community led

development. Donors are encouraged to appreciate that although givers of funds, they also receive a great deal in return.

- Interested donors in Kenya also have an opportunity to discuss capacity building issues from their perspective as donors.

The work of this group suggests that the dilemmas faced in NGO partnerships can be used as lessons to help shape new and productive ways of working together. The approach to capacity building of understanding the situation and treating organisational development as a dynamic process, gives partners the opportunity to develop at their own pace and maintain their identity. It gives a framework within which potential new models can develop, recognising the heterogeneity of CBOs, LNGOs and INGOs. CBOs and NGOs begin to recognise that the power/status hierarchy from donor to CBO only exists when money and products are valued above all else. When the social, technical, and environmental work of community members, CBOs or NGOs becomes valued equally, the hierarchy disappears. The approach encourages equal and open dialogue between peer organisations, removing the need for competition and therefore allowing for more focus on real results at community level, both positive and negative. This counterbalances the vertical communication channels between donor-NGO-CBO.

Through more equitable NGO relationships, opportunities also arise for collaboration and change divergent from the global pressures of "profits before people". Reducing the hierarchies within NGO relationships will reduce the power structures which keep the poor in poverty. When NGOs identify and value their inherent difference from the private and public sector, they will be able to again champion the importance of social and environmental values. The challenge will be to enable donors to recognise their role in facilitating development effectively. Donors who do not listen to feedback from NGOs in a responsive manner reduce the chances of success of all parties.

IN CONCLUSION

This booklet has touched on just a few of the dilemmas and paradoxes which NGOs have experienced in their relationships with each other in Kenya. It has observed the contradiction between global intentions to reduce poverty while in practice globalisation trends benefit the rich, and poverty is on the increase. NGOs are responding more to donor pressures, becoming less free to respond to community needs as competition for resources increases. INGOs are taking on larger programmes of work, substituting government services, and losing their direct connection with communities. NGOs are losing their unique identity, separate from the public and private sectors, and in doing so, becoming confused as to what their own roles should be.

Partnerships among NGOs have gained popularity through their advantages of achieving greater and more sustained and integrated results than when NGOs

operate alone. They can provide complementary skills and knowledge, working together towards a shared overall goal related to the livelihoods of their beneficiaries. When partners enter into agreement from a position of independence, open communication, sharing similar attitudes to the problem and how it should be addressed, the advantages of partnership are clear to all. In reality, this level of clarity and equality is extremely rare, and is not supported by the current competitive trends in development.

Partnerships between NGOs are struggling under the wider pressures affecting them individually. NGOs are also under pressure to form partnerships and networks as donors have recognised their value and begun to impose this as a criterion for funding.

Many INGO-LNGO partnerships are in fact operating as donor-NGO relationships within a hierarchical structure, which primarily benefits the INGO. INGOs value the transitory nature of their discrete projects. But they assume LNGOs and CBOs to be permanent and sustainable in relation to specific communities. LNGOs and CBOs have little choice but to follow the organisational model of INGOs but with the disadvantage of fewer and less access to resources. They hope both to emulate INGO standards and are resentful that they do not, resulting in little incentive to operate independently or in a completely different way.

NGOs use participatory methods to ensure all stakeholders can have greater input to and control over the development process. But when an NGO fails to recognise its visibility and impact in a development situation, it denies its partners the information they need to negotiate an equal partnership. NGOs also promote networks for information exchange and collaboration. But such networks tend to focus upwards to the originator or donor rather than sideways among peer groups. Un-noticed or hidden internal NGO priorities and agendas cause conflicts when they spill over into partnerships. Organisational capacity building has become popular and all organisations can benefit from external assistance as they develop. But when capacity building becomes the goal of a partnership, the dynamics in the relations between partners can become less free. Allowing the LNGO its independence on reaching maturity becomes difficult for the capacity builder who must then look for work elsewhere. It is difficult for the LNGO to freely develop its own identity and then independence and interdependence when capacity building also involves funding.

There are certainly many more dilemmas that are not discussed here, but perhaps those illustrated will inspire readers to reflect on their own practice and partnerships in a new way. By exploring the various roles and relationships between different NGOs (and also donors), it is possible to discover otherwise hidden insights and contradictions. Some of the reasons for NGO success and failure are then revealed. Once such contradictions and dilemmas are discovered,

NGOs can gain the incentive and power to work on their resolution. They can start addressing issues of power, accountability, open communication, and organisational development processes within their own NGO *and* between partners in development. They can recognise their own needs as an organisation and the responsibilities they carry in the development work they engage in. NGOs can then become more able to work together, in partnerships and networks, towards addressing the more fundamental development issues which NGOs came into existence to tackle – poverty, inequality, and injustice among disadvantaged communities.

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NGO/CBO PROJECT WATCH

Two local Kenyan NGOs have been chosen as examples of innovative organisations aiming for sustainable development.

1. Sustainable Agriculture Community Development Programme (SACDEP – Kenya)

SACDEP began in 1991 providing training and extension in sustainable agriculture to farmers in the Eastern and Central Provinces of Kenya. It aims to improve farmers' household livelihoods through economically viable, environmentally sound, socially just and culturally acceptable agricultural practices for food production and income generation.

Programme Objectives

1. Assist small farmers utilise existing available resources through training in organic farming skills and use of low cost organic inputs.
2. Provide training and workshop facilities for all those concerned with sustainable agriculture.
3. Facilitate the establishment of a market outlet of organic farm products and advocate fair trade between producers and consumers.

Activities and Achievements

- *Direct partnership sector*

Training and extension activities focus around a long term direct partnership with farming communities. Initially facilitated by donor support to an integrated dairy goat, water tank and home garden project, this activity has expanded to communities in 6 divisions, and covers all aspects of agriculture, livestock and appropriate technology. SACDEP provides some supporting inputs to facilitate farmers in implementing the skills taught. Farmers' groups control their distribution and cost sharing aspects.

- *Scheduled courses sector*

SACDEP organises and conducts demand-driven training courses for other institutions at farmer and project staff level. SACDEP has initiated several national workshops for extensionists to exchange experiences and gain deeper understanding of sustainable agriculture extension. Foreseeing future fund raising difficulties, SACDEP has constructed a conference centre and demonstration gardens on its 3.5acre office site, enabling it to offer residential workshops and courses. SACDEP also hosts international and national students on practical attachment to SACDEP.

- *Outreach Collaboration/Networking sector*

SACDEP views collaboration and networking as an essential component of its sustainable agriculture outreach, staff development and funding base. Often

following on from Sector 2 above, collaboration has led to the provision of support and training services to other institutions, primarily INGOs, on a more regular and occasionally, long term basis.

SACDEP is Kenya's host organisation for PELUM, a regional association promoting participatory ecological land use management. PELUM members in Kenya have had access to a variety of skills relating to project management, monitoring, capacity building and technical agriculture areas through SACDEP's coordination. SACDEP has also entered into collaboration with technical and impact-oriented research projects in an aim to contribute to the debate over the real value of organic farming.

- *Administration Support sector*

Future plans

SACDEP's success lies in its partnership approach to farming communities, with staff attached to specific communities over a long period. Its wide variety of supporting activities, not least the building up of its resource base in view of possible future funding shortfalls, enable a degree of autonomy of activities. Links with the European organic farming movement have also enabled SACDEP's work be known outside of Kenya.

SACDEP will continue to expand its work at community level, with a new specific focus on farmers in arid and semi-arid lands who are recognised as being increasingly marginalised.

Contact

Address: SACDEP – Kenya
P. O. Box 1134
Thika, Kenya
Tel: 254-151-30541
Fax: 254-151-30055
Contact person: J. Ngugi Mutura, Programme Manager

2. Resources Oriented Development Initiatives (RODI)

RODI is a new Kenyan LNGO which has developed from a previous CBO, OFOP, supported by Oxfam (GB)'s partnership support programme since 1989. RODI recognises the links between poverty, crime and imprisonment, and believes improved food security can help to reduce them. It works with Kenyan prisons, CBOs, and policy making institutions to provide prisoners with rehabilitation while in prison and support once they return to their communities. RODI, through CBOs, facilitates the wider community access skills learnt by prisoners after their return, thereby providing ongoing support to ex-prisoners and disseminating skills for improved food security more widely.

RODI objectives

To enhance food security and reduce poverty among the rural poor in Kenya, through rehabilitation of prisoners, and skills training to prisoners and their home community, in community organisation, organic farming methods, and appropriate technology.

Activities

- Rehabilitation of 500 prisoners in 20 prisons, including counselling, relevant skills training and employment opportunities.
- Awareness raising and training of prison officers in poverty alleviation, social justice, crime, rehabilitation, reducing recidivism, and the use of skills training in implementing income generating activities for prisons themselves.
- Identification and mobilisation of resources in both penal institutions and the prisoners' home areas.
- Support to partner CBOs to follow up returned prisoners and conduct training to farmers on practical skills for increased food security.
- Support to partner CBOs to conduct research at farm level to assess the impact of organic farming practices on food security.
- Building of a non-confrontational working relationship with penal institutions, law enforcers, the judiciary, and the wider society to influence rehabilitation policy. This includes providing trained ex-prisoners with certificates and requesting government departments, NGOs, employers and community members to participate in further rehabilitation.

Future Plans

As a new LNGO, much of the above section is yet to be implemented. Oxfam (GB) are supporting RODI for one year while it becomes fully established. RODI will take over, from Oxfam, the support of the 9 CBOs involved directly, and will raise funds as an independent LNGO. The future of the project depends largely on good, non-confrontational working relations with the various stakeholders, particularly prison and judicial authorities.

Contact

Address:	RODI P. O. Box 70051 Ngong Road Nairobi, Kenya
Tel:	254-2-715568
Contact person:	Eliud Ngunjiri

Readers' reaction welcome

Reactions or comments to the issues raised in this essay are welcome from readers.
Such contributions are likely to be published under a section titled *"Reader's Comments"* in future editions if:

- **They focus in a precise and clear manner on one or more specific issues raised in the essay**
- **They do not exceed ten (10) lines in typewritten format**

All readers' contribution should be sent to the attention of
Bolaji Ogunseye
either at IIED London
or
at ISPEC in Cotonou using either of the addresses on the back cover of the publication.

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African NGO Networks

African NGO Networks Programme

The **African NGO Networks Programme of IIED** supports capacity development of NGO networks, grassroot associations and federations in Africa. The programme strategy involves undertaking collaborative initiative with local, national and regional network structures. Where it does not exist, the programme encourages coalition - building among individual groups and networks, thereby facilitating a collective, institutional response to common challenges. The underlying aim is to enhance NGO relevance and 'client-responsiveness' to communities, people's organisations and grassroot development efforts.

The programme aims to assist in enhancing NGO knowledge of sustainable development issues and challenges, and strengthen their institutional capacity to respond. It also works to facilitate a positive NGO engagement and influence with governments and other key actors in African development.

Currently based in Cotonou, Republic of Benin, in West Africa, the programme also provides occasional support services to NGOs, networks and grassroot associations in a number of operational areas. These include documentational support (small-scale publication of basic working materials, French to English translation of programme documents, brochures, small reports, etc), review of, and input to NGO programme designs and strategies, project and programme evaluations. When feasible, it helps to facilitate NGO workshops and seminars.

International Institute for Environment and Development
3 Endsleigh Street
London
WC1H 0DD
Tel: (+44 171) 388 2117
Fax: (+44 171) 388 2826
E-mail: mailbox @iied. Org

ISPEC 01 BP 1236
Tel: (229) 33 06 39
Fax: (229) 33 15 06
E-mail: ispec@bow,intnet. bj