

**Whose Public Action?
Analysing Inter-sectoral Collaboration for Service
Delivery**

**Bangladesh Country Review
History of State-NSP relations**

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Table of Contents

Introduction
Methodology
Organisation of the Paper

Section 1- The Context

Contextualising the NGO Activities: The Bangladesh Scenario
State Led Development: Creating Space for NGOs

Economic Context

Achievements in Social and Economic Sectors
Ground Level Reality
Socio-Political Context

Section-2: Key Switches and Changing Focus of NGOs: An Analytical Overview

Problem in Portraying a Time Line of GO-NGO Relations
Pre-Bangladesh Era

Key Switches and Shifting Focus

1970s: Relief and Rehabilitation
1980-1986: Large Scale growth of NGOs and Shift of GO-NGO Collaboration
1987-1988, 1991 and 2000: Role of NGOs in Disaster
1990: Regulatory Framework and Establishment of NGOAB
Are these Rules and Regulations Restrictive?
1991 and Later: Split within the NGO Sector and Tension between GO-NGO
GO-NGOs Mutual Concerns

Section- 3: NGO Activities in Different Regimes

Section- 4: Aid Flows to NGOs

Nature and Trends
Increase in Support to NGOs by DPs
Different Mechanisms of NGO Financing

Section-5: GO-NGO Collaboration at Different Levels

Nature and Type of Relations

Section-6: Typology of NGOs

Section-7: NGOs in Basic Service Provisioning

NGOs in Health Sector
NGOs in Sanitation
NGOs in Primary Education

Section-8: Summary

References

List of people interviewed

Bangladesh Country review

History of State-NSP relations

Introduction

Bangladesh has perhaps one of the largest, active, innovative and best known NGO communities in the world. The evolution of the role of NGOs in development in Bangladesh has its ups and downs, cooperation and conflict, consensus and disagreements with the state. Even so by and large the state has supported the NGO sector creating an enabling environment through the state apparatus. However in recent years the relation between state and NGOs has become tense leading to suspicion regarding the role and real motives of some NGOs. This has led to the formulation and enactment of different rules and regulations by different governments over the last several decades. However, these have not restricted the robust growth of NGOs in Bangladesh.

This paper is written to provide a historical overview of state-NGO relations that have evolved from the independence of Bangladesh to date. In historicising GO-NGO relations, the researcher also brought into focus instances of successful GO-NGO cooperation in health, education, water and sanitation and other sectors.

Methodology

The paper is based on a desk review of published and unpublished materials on the subject and also interviews of persons who are knowledgeable in the NGO sector. The materials reviewed include books, and book chapters, journal articles, research reports both by development partners (DPs - i.e. DFID, World Bank, ADB etc.) and annual reports of different NGOs, activity reports, undated write ups and briefs by NGOs. Fieldwork and interviews conducted during the preparation of NGO case profiles also provided information and insights for the paper.

The term 'non-state service provider' (NSP) may be used to refer to NGOs, the private sector, faith based organisations, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) etc. However, in this paper, the term NSP is used to refer to NGO which are the major actors in 'private sector' provisioning of basic services in Bangladesh. In some parts of this paper I have used NSP and NGO to indicate the same thing. In organising the paper, I have followed the brief for the history papers. All the issues delineated in the outline have been covered in the paper but these are organised in the sequence that I considered most logical.

Organisation of the Paper

Excluding the above introduction, the paper is organised under several section headings. It begins with a description of the context of NGO activities in Bangladesh in Section-1. The key switches and changing focuses of NGO activities have been elaborated and analysed in Section-2. This section contains a comprehensive discussion of the development of NGOs during different time periods; also covered is the regulatory framework enforced by the state in these periods, with judgements about the extent to which these are restrictive and constrain NGO activities. Section-3 contains discussion on NGO activities in different regimes in Bangladesh. The relations between the State, NGO and Development Partners are discussed in Section-4. Section-5 contains illustrations of GO-NGO collaboration at different levels. The author has also suggested a tentative typology of NGOs in Bangladesh in Section- 6. The role of NGOs in basic service provisioning is given in Section-7. The last section-8 contains a summary of the paper.

Section 1: The Context

Contextualizing NGO Activities in Bangladesh

In order to understand the history of State-NSP relations in Bangladesh, it is essential to understand the social, political, economic and cultural contexts in which NSPs emerged as actors in development. Therefore, the paper begins with an introduction and the context of the development of NGOs in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh with a population of 140.5 million in a land area of 56, 000 sq. miles, and a per-capita income of US\$ 440 is considered one of the poorest, most populous, and politically volatile countries of the world (World Bank 2005). In spite of prevailing political turmoil, confrontational politics and frequent occurrences of natural disasters, Bangladesh in recent years has made some impressive achievements on the social and economic fronts. These can be attributed in part to the government's liberal and open policy toward health, education, poverty alleviation, construction of economic and social infrastructure. Indeed Bangladesh could change its image from being a "bottomless basket" to a country with a basket full of achievements and success stories which is now being followed as a model in other developing countries.

The improvements that one notices in education, health, water and sanitation, and poverty alleviation can be explained as the result of "more effective state action and the expansion of service delivery by NGOs" (Sen and Hulme 2006:4). However, one basic question that remains to be resolved is to what extent these successes and achievements will trickle down to the vast multitude of people who are still live below the poverty line and live in the rural, peri-urban and also in certain pockets of the metropolitan areas of the country. The pertinent issues are:

- Have the basic services provided by the state and Non State Providers (NSPs) reached the "poorest of the poor"?
- Do the poor have access to health services, education and other basic services without hindrance?

The contrast between prosperity and poverty, development and under-development is massive and visible. Having made the introductory observations an attempt is made below to elucidate the current economic, political, social, demographic and cultural contexts which contributed to shaping relations between different development actors.

State Led Development: Creating Space for NGOs

Prior to independence, and even in the post independence period, the state has remained as the main actor and catalyst of development, poverty alleviation and basic service provision. The state continued to play its role in deciding and prioritising the nature and type of projects to be undertaken, allocations to be made and also the manner through which projects would be implemented. These policies and programmes have been reflected in the successive five year plans of the country. During these periods the state has been found to perform inadequately in delivering the desired outcomes which were in many cases plagued by bad governance and corruption.

The emphasis on the state's role is an outcome of recognition by politicians, economists and other concerned actors that the market will not always provide a suitable enabling environment to achieve growth and eradicate poverty. However, in recent years the situation has changed other direction and more and more development practitioners, economists and politicians now consider that too much state intervention and bad governance has led to numerous problems and that the state has failed to play its role and deliver the desired output. Governance has become a pivotal issue since the early 1990s in Bangladesh and in other South Asian countries. Currently the argument is for minimum state intervention and a stronger role for the market and private sector. This has also

created space for the emergence of other actors in development. This has created space for market intervention, the rise of the private sector and the emergence of NGOs as important actors in the development process (Farrington et al 1993:1-27).

In Bangladesh the focus on governance, including corruption, by DPs was largely a phenomenon of the 1990s. The DPs are increasingly persuaded that governance failure is central to what they perceive to be poor developmental outcomes in Bangladesh. As a result “the emphasis by Bangladesh’s DP’s on governance grew in intensity throughout the 1990s to the point where such concerns appear to have graduated to the top of the agenda of the Aid Group meeting of 1999 and continued to dominate the discussions at the meeting in Paris in 2000” (Sobhan 2001:79). Over the last several years NSPs have become powerful in the socio-economic and political arenas of Bangladesh having access to numerous villages even in the remote areas, having power to influence election outcomes, maintaining networks of international connections, as well as receiving large amounts of money from different DPs.

Economic Context

Achievements in Social and Economic Sectors

The Bangladesh poverty rate has reduced by 1% per year since 1990. Poverty fell from 60% in 1990 to 50% in 2000. Growth in GDP per head has increased from 1% per annum during the 1970s to 3% since the early 1990s (World Bank 2005:38).

Similarly progress in the social sectors which constitute the Human Development Index (HDI) has shown some encouraging progress. Primary school enrolment for both genders is near universal, and secondary enrolment has more than doubled since independence. There has been a decline in infant and child mortality rates from 140 and 95 respectively in 1972 to about 60 and 30 in 2000. Life expectancy has increased by more than 15 years over this period. A decline in the total fertility rate reduced population growth to 1.5% a year by the mid-1990s (World Bank 2005:1-2). Furthermore, the Human Poverty Index (HPI), which reflects income poverty, illiteracy and health deprivation, has declined dramatically from 61% in 1981-83 to 36% in 2004 (Sen and Hulme 2006:4) .

Ground Level Reality

However, this does not reflect the ground level reality in the rural areas where 74.5% of the population live and derive their livelihood from agriculture and non-farm activities. The findings of a recent study revealed that “around 31% of the rural population suffer from the indignity of chronic poverty - low consumption, hunger, under-nutrition, lack of access to basic health services, illiteracy and other deprivations”.(Sen and Hulme 2006:3)

Furthermore, “about 24% of the total population currently live in extreme income poverty. About 19% of rural households do not have three meals a day. It is further suggested that, although accurate figures are not available for urban areas, 25 to 30 million of the country’s citizens are chronically poor” (Sen and Hulme 2006:3). Achievements in water and sanitation sector are impressive. However, the availability of safe water through tube wells is greatly overshadowed by the discovery of arsenic in 61 out of 64 districts. As a consequence, about 30 million people are being exposed to the risk of arsenic poisoning (NGO Forum, Annual Report 2005: 28).

Poor people still do not have easy access to basic health services. The demand for services is much higher than what is available in this sector. The proportion of births attended by a doctor or skilled midwife is less than 1.5% for the poorest households, compared with 22% for the richest; this equity gap is one of the highest in the world (World Bank 2005:1). Although their access to education has expanded, the question is raised regarding the quality of education and also the number of students who complete their education at all or at a later stage. It is estimated that less than 10% of grade 1 student complete grade 12 (World Bank 2005:1).

Socio-Political Context

Since independence in 1971, Bangladesh has experienced different types of government regime. These are: democratic rule (1971-75), military rule and an attempt to return to democracy (1975-81), military rule (1981-1991) and return to multiparty democracy in 1991. In 1991, a major political party was elected through a general election conducted under a care-taker neutral government. But politics in Bangladesh always remain confrontational, one party distrusting and blaming the other when it fails to win election and get power. Elected parliaments have been made ineffective by continuous boycott of parliamentary session by those who are not in power. As a result a "culture of conflict" has developed where the politics of exclusion dominate rather than the politics of inclusion, affecting the total economy and society.

Opposition is ruthlessly suppressed by those who are in power. Political agitations that take the form of frequent strikes, *hartals* and blockade cause huge loss to the economy. Recently the magnitude of *hartal* and blockade has increased significantly. Sobhan (2002:2) summarises the political scenario in post independence Bangladesh in the following way:

"After a decade of democratic renewal in the 1990s, which succeeded 16 years of cantonment *raj*, our politics is becoming increasingly dysfunctional. The very institutions of democracy - elections, parliament, and political parties show signs of degeneration in their practices. The culture of intolerance that permeates our polity holds the nation hostage to a confrontational style of politics that is gradually making the democratic process unworkable".

Linguistically, culturally, socially Bangladesh is a homogenous country. Although this overwhelming homogeneity may be considered a positive aspect, it also runs the risk of developing a mindset within the majority that tends to marginalize the ethnic and religious minority. There are also issues of equal access to resources which give the people power to develop economically.

People in Bangladesh do not have the freedom to develop themselves according to their choice, and are instead embedded in certain *unfreedoms*. The removal of substantial *unfreedoms* is constitutive of development (Sen 2000). There are five different types of rights and opportunities (i.e. types of freedoms) that help to advance the general capability of a person. These are: political freedoms; economic facilities; social opportunities; transparency guarantees and protective security. These are indeed mutually reinforcing and complementary (Sen 2000:10). These unfreedoms are accentuated by the state which fails to play its neutral and benevolent role in providing succour to the people.

Section-2 Key Switches and Changing Focus of NGOs: An Analytical Overview

Problems in Portraying a Time line of GO-NGO Relations

Any attempt to describe and analyse state-NGO relations over the past four decades risks controversy. This is because different people representing different stakeholders look at the changes from their respective positions. The description and analysis that follows is mindful of the contextual reality and the controversy surrounding it, but nevertheless seeks to identify the key switches and changing focus of NGOs to date.

I will start this section by providing some instance regarding the ways in which different groups view NGOs. For example, a group of left-wing politicians would see the NGOs as "agents of imperialism" who consider the poor, landless and small peasants as "incipient revolutionaries". NGOs by helping them to become self-reliant are in fact contributing to the waning of the revolutionary potential of this segment of the people. On the other hand, some

Islamic religious groups consider NGO activities as anti-Islamic and in 1994 these groups launched a united movement against NGOs terming their activities as “anti-Islamic, anti-people and anti-state” (Weekly Dhaka Courier 17 June 1994). Some even demanded outright banning of all NGO activities in Bangladesh. A general consensus on the appropriate role of NGOs in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh is still lacking in Bangladesh.

An analysis of the growth of NGOs requires a grasp of the political and ideological underpinnings and changes in the local and global scenario which have played a role in the development of NGOs. In Bangladesh, one may locate several key *shifts and changes* in focus in NGO activities and in GO-NGO collaboration in provisioning basic services. These key shifts and changes have been seen as *paradigm shifts* in NGO discourse in Bangladesh.

Pre Bangladesh Era

The history of NGOs in Bangladesh goes back to the colonial past. In the Indian sub continent in general and in the area comprising Bangladesh in particular, educational institutions (schools, colleges, *madrashas* etc.) and prayer houses (mosques and temples, etc.) used to be established as non-profit organisations by the people either individually or in a group. Some religious agencies conducted philanthropic activities which cater to the needs of people irrespective of religion, caste, creed and colour. Alongside these activities there were also numerous non-incorporated bodies like clubs, voluntary associations that provided services like adult literacy, helped in distress during natural disaster and famine, and organized cultural and other extra-curricular activities. (Asian Philanthropy 2006)

The activities of all these organizations were localized, spontaneous and conducted in a non profit and informal way. Indeed these organizations have been embedded within the normal socio-cultural fabric of Bangladesh for a long time. Self-help village level organisations known as *Palli Mangal Samities* (village welfare societies) were found in many districts of the country from the 1930s. These village *samities* were often encouraged by local administrators for a combination of local good works and the building of local patronage relationships (Lewis 2004:306).

The development of voluntary organizations in the pre independence Bangladesh can be looked upon as a spontaneous expression of a group of people where the state did not have any obstructing role. Furthermore, it is pointed out that “the establishment and growth of third sector organisations over the last century and half in the region that is Bangladesh today was promoted by the community value system of people of various faiths, limited governmental obligation in the area of social and community development including education and health, hopes and aspirations ignited by ideas of freedom, democracy, liberty, equality and fraternity, renaissance caused by educational interventions and youthful exuberance and related movements” (Lewis 2004). The later development of NSPs since the 1970s was the outcome of situations created in the aftermath of the liberation war, several natural disasters, and NGOs’ own success in basic service provisioning. I will provide below a historical overview (time line) of GO-NGO relations pointing to key shifts and changes in the evolution of these relations.

Key Switches and Shifting Focuses

1970s: Relief and Rehabilitation

The 1970s can be considered a period of emergence of NGOs in the development landscape of Bangladesh, expanding the focus of NGO services, targeting NGO activities on the poor and the disadvantaged, experimenting with new ideas and programmes, and also consolidating and coordinating NGO activities.

The emergence of NGOs in Bangladesh began only after the devastating cyclone that occurred in 1971 and after the war of liberation. Before independence, few international voluntary organizations such as CARE, CRS and the Society of Friends (Quakers) were working in Bangladesh. Their activities were limited to emergency help and relief work

(Huda 1987:1-9). No Bangladeshi NGO worth mentioning was in sight in this period. Indeed the idea of what is called *Besharkari Unnyan Protishtan* (non-governmental developmental organisation) doing development work was not perceived by people or the government. The state was regarded as the catalyst of development and provider of all services.

In the post independence period, the scenario changed. There was colossal destruction of infrastructure and the economic base during the liberation war. Millions of people were rendered homeless, over two million people took shelter in India and when they returned to liberated Bangladesh they lacked food, shelter, medicine and other essential supports to normal life. The first generation of Bangladeshi NGOs grew in this situation with an orientation to relief and rehabilitation. *Gonoshasthya Kendra (GK)* which was founded during the liberation struggle continued to function after liberation. The *Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)* founded after the liberation war played an important role in the relief and rehabilitation phase. Other NGOs which worked during these initial years of relief and rehabilitation period were *Christian Organisation for Relief and Rehabilitation (CORR)* later known as Caritas and *Christian Commission for the Development of Bangladesh (CCDB)*. During this time NGOs not only provided food, medicines, blankets, cloths, but also provided support to build houses for the homeless, helped to develop physical and social infrastructure and distributed inputs for agricultural rehabilitation.

The activities of a few voluntary organisations created not only a good name for NGOs but also their potentiality to engage themselves in the socioeconomic development of Bangladesh. As time elapsed there was a realisation that the “*distinctive charity-and welfare-orientation*” would not bring long lasting and sustainable succour to the millions of distressed and poor people whose needs went beyond emergency support. Therefore, the NGOs shifted their course of action from a charity-and welfare-orientation to a self-reliant local development orientation (Huda 1987:3). These transformations occurred in several stages that continued up to the 1980s. Two changes are worth mentioning.

First, during the period between 1973 and 1976, NGOs diverted their attention to “developing integrated Community Development Programmes” incorporating a number of basic sectoral activities. These activities include agriculture, fisheries, livestock, health and family planning and education focusing on adult education. This was a period of experimentation and learning from trial and error, leading to the development of goals for the future.

Gradually the number of NGOs proliferated and their activities expanded in different parts of the country. NGO organisers felt the need for a common platform to coordinate their activities and also to act as an agent to collaborate and maintain liaison with government and donors. So in the year 1974, the *Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB)* was established to provide a forum to facilitate exchange of views and experience and to avoid duplication of activities through proper coordination (Huda 1987:3). The establishment of ADAB as a networking organisation of NGOs was significant for three reasons:

- It provided a common forum for the NGOs to meet, discuss, and resolve problems in conducting activities in different parts of Bangladesh.
- It acted as an important player (sometime mediator) in maintaining a congenial atmosphere in GO-NGO relations and also whenever necessary taking up issues related to NGO activities with government.
- Government engaged ADAB in emergency relief and rehabilitation activities at times of natural disaster.

Second is the period from 1976 to 1980 when institutional building for the poor became a major focus of NGOs. This was an outcome of the realisation that removal of structural barriers by building institutions for poor people was a sine quo non for providing not only basic services and for alleviating mass poverty. NGOs initiated a process of providing non-formal education based on the philosophy and methodology of Paulo Freire. The emphasis

was on raising awareness of people, conscientisation through education, and building people's organisations. The initial collaboration worked fairly well and government found NGOs to be a "*useful collaborator*" in attaining national goals in certain key areas. This collaboration indeed depicted a relation of mutual trust and understanding.

Thus the *first paradigm shift* occurred in the NGO discourse of development in Bangladesh in the mid 1970s, when the charity and relief orientation of NGOs switched to community development programmes, incorporating some basic services to the poor, and also to institution building.

1980-1986: Large Scale Growth of NGOs and Emergence of GO-NGO Collaboration

There has been a large scale growth of NGOs at local, regional and national levels. NGOs gradually became quite successful in building self-reliant organisations for the rural poor and also in providing some basic services in health, education and family planning. There has been increasing realisation that since NGOs often work in small ways and in limited geographical areas, it is important that their programmes should be extended to larger segments of the population through wider geographic coverage. In order to expand their activities, a few NGOs undertook programmes of collaboration with government and other relevant agencies. This was the beginning of NGOs' attempt to complement the government's efforts in extending benefits to the rural poor. Some initial examples of GO-NGO collaboration were: Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) and Immunisation with BRAC, Food for Works and Agriculture programmes with CARE, agricultural research and extension with RDRS.

The emphasis here is on collaboration with government and the aim is to complement government programmes at a national level. This shows a different type of orientation of NGOs and reflects government's recognition of the importance of NGOs as a development actor. This sets the beginning of relations sometimes marked by trust and success but also in some cases by tension and mistrust. This can be termed the *second paradigm shift*. Later on these initial collaborations were further extended to other sectors including education, health, environment, population, women and youth development, livestock and fisheries, resettlement and disaster management. Government has become increasingly convinced that NGOs are effective in reaching the poor and also happy with the outcome of NGO activities.

In the 1990s and in later years, there has been an increasing involvement of NGOs in several projects. Some national projects gained momentum due to GO-NGO collaboration. Three noteworthy examples in this regard are: the General Education Project (GEP), Integrated Non-formal Education Project (IFEP), and the Fourth Population and Health Project (World Bank 1996:16). Through these projects GO-NGO relations were strengthened and NGOs gained credibility and demonstrated potentiality to work with government.

1987-1988, 1991 and 2000: Role of NGOs in Disaster

Although the origin of NGOs is in relief and rehabilitation activities in the post independent Bangladesh, NGOs also attracted significant attention through their participation in relief and rehabilitation in the aftermath of three devastating floods (1987, 1988 and 2000) and also of the 1991 cyclone. Through their intensive operations NGOs were able to dispel a notion that relief and rehabilitation materials do not reach the poor and that these are misappropriated by officials and public leaders. Indeed through their effective role in disaster, NGOs established their credibility and acceptance by both national government and the international community. Many NGOs prepared detail plans describing the tasks during and after a national disaster. They have always been the first before the government to respond to man-made and natural

There are several manifestations of GO-NGO cooperation in mitigating natural disaster. Details of NGO involvement has been spelled out in a government document known as *Standing Orders on Disasters* (Government of Bangladesh 1999). NGOs are members of

the Disaster Preparedness and Management Committee from union to the national level. Government has emphasised coordination and cooperation between NGOs, government and private organizations in response to disaster. However, NGOs complain of non-cooperation by local officials and political pressure in the distribution of relief. Some NGOs complain that some local political leaders even demand their share of relief so that they themselves can distribute these to the people.

It can be said that NGOs have an excellent relation with government and local level institutions in disaster mitigation and management. GO-NGO collaboration in disaster provides an example that both NGOs and government can work together.

1990: Regulatory Framework and Establishment of NGOAB

Until the 1990s NGOs worked more or less independently without interference, hindrance or any serious regulation from government. NGOs were only required to register under the Societies Registration Act and Social Welfare Registration and Control Ordinance 1961 to act legally. These laws have a colonial legacy and did not demand much oversight of the activities of voluntary organisations. The state's role was "passive" and it maintained a kind of a wait and see policy. However, the 1990s saw a significant proliferation in the number of NGOs. Their role in relief and rehabilitation established their credibility as recipients of foreign funding. NGOs became very popular as development actors at the grassroots and large and small NGOs started to receive foreign grants and support from donors and INGOs. Some NGOs expanded their activities and some even started profitable ventures like departmental stores, printing presses, dairy products, garments, transport, hotels and universities. This led to questions being raised not only by the state but also within civil society about NGOs' real objectives and whose interest they are actually serving. Are they really non profit voluntary organisations?

The state has felt the necessity to bring NGO activities into order and make them accountable and transparent. Indeed it was felt by policy-makers and administrators that NGOs were in danger of becoming a state within a state. The decision was made that NGOs should be guided by *rules and guidelines* formulated by the state.

In Bangladesh non-profit organizations can incorporate under any one or more of the following ordinances/acts. These ordinances define their operational domain and framework for operations.

- Societies Registration Act of 1860 (SRA)
- Social Welfare Registration and Control Ordinance 1961 (SWR)
- Cooperative Societies Ordinance, 1964 (CSO).
- Trust Act of 1882 (TA)
- Companies Act of 1923 (CA)
- The Mussalman Wakf Act, 1923

Besides, societies/associations can be registered with ministries/directorates of Social Welfare, Women and Children Affairs, Health and Family Welfare, Sports and Culture, Youth, Religious Affairs, Education, Labour and Manpower, Commerce, Finance, Environment, Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Local Self Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (Asian Philanthropy 2006).

During the 1980s the government found that NGOs had been receiving large amount of money from different DPs without government knowledge. The government did not know how the funds had been received and spent. There were allegations of misappropriation and mismanagement of funds. So government thought it important to formulate laws to regulate and register non profit organisations receiving funds from DPs, INGOs and other foreign sources. The following two laws were enforced to monitor the inflow of funds to NGOs from external sources.

- Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activity) Regulation Ordinance, 1978 (FDR).

- Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Ordinance, 1982 (FCO)

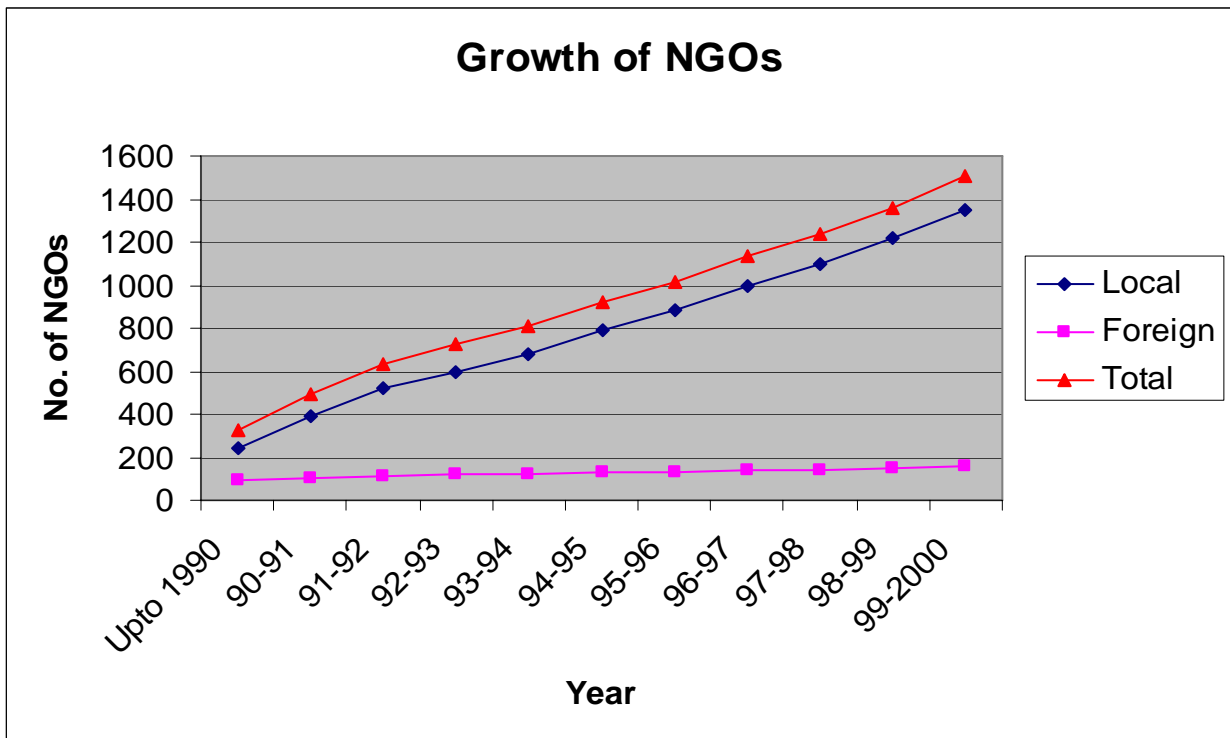
NGOs' view is that these laws have resulted in lengthy bureaucratic procedures, harassment by officials leading to corruption and delaying the release of funds and the implementation of projects. In response to these criticisms, in 1990 the government created the NGO Affairs Bureau under the Prime Minister's Secretariat to eliminate cumbersome bureaucratic procedures and also to provide a *one stop service*. Government considers this as a step towards improving relations with NGOs and to facilitate their activities in the country. NGOs see the rules and regulations stipulated in the act as complicating problems and enhancing delays rather than relieving them. Flaws which are often cited by NGOs are (World Bank 2006:22-23; Ahmad 2000; Ahmad and Morshed 2000):

- The registration of NGOs is valid for five years which has to be renewed with a new application for registration submitted to the Bureau six months prior to the expiry date.
- The Bureau has the power to cancel registration before the NGO can present its case.
- The Bureau has the power not to renew or to cancel registration.
- In undertaking approval of foreign funded projects an NGO has to go through a succession of four stages and needs approval of NGOAB. These are: to register so as to entitle it to receive foreign funds; to obtain prior approval for every project for which funding is sought from a foreign donor; to receive the foreign funds; and to disburse the funds.

Are these Rules and Regulations Restrictive?

The laws, rules and regulations that were enforced to make NGOs transparent and accountable to the state cannot be considered as restrictive. In all these and in the role of NGOAB, there is no attempt to restrict the registration of new NGOs or their activities, and nor was this their effect. Since 1990, the number of indigenous NGOs increased from 395 to 1223 in 1999/2000, an increase of 309% and during the same period the number of INGOs increased from 99 to 147, an increase of 148%, as shown in the following figure.

The level of grants and aid to NGOs has also increased significantly, from US\$ 106.6 million in 1990-91 to US\$ 310 in 2003/4, an increase of 190%. During the same period NGOs' share of total aid to Bangladesh increased from US\$ 180.0 million to 379.4 million, an increase of 111%. (World Bank 2006). During the last two decades NGOs have also expanded their range of activities and their programme areas. They are undertaking numerous activities ranging from the social to the economic and from human rights to governance and political advocacy. This is indicative of the robust growth of the NGOs sector which appears not to have been limited by the various supervision and control mechanisms enforced by government.



Some NGOs see the emergence of NGOAB as a mixed blessing; others see it as restrictive and regulatory. However, the crux of the issue is that the freedom to conduct activities should not be always interpreted as an unrestricted freedom. It is important to bear in mind that NGOs are operating within the framework of the state which is the supreme legal authority. Laws, rules and by-laws are not necessarily regulatory, indeed some of these may create a conducive situation for and promote NGO activity, or make them more disciplined and transparent to the public at large. A law ensuring accountability and transparency may look regulatory but cannot be considered restrictive on the freedom of NGOs.

1991 and Later: Splits within the NGO Sector and Tensions between NGOs and Government

Politically, NGOs have maintained a distance from mainstream political activities and isolated themselves from what Lewis calls “elements of wider society” (Lewis 2004). The period from 1991 onwards shows a tendency on the part of a section of NGOs to get themselves involved under the banner of “non party politics” (Karim 2003). The NGO sector itself became divided over the allegation of the politicisation of ADAB, the apex body of NGOs in Bangladesh. Several NGOs took a position in the movement against President Ershad. Later on ADAB’s role created uproar within ADAB and its leadership which leading to a split in its leadership and the expulsion and counter expulsion of the ADAB chairperson. This leadership crisis ultimately ended after the take over of the democratically elected government in 1991. The factionalism, feuding and distrust that developed within ADAB have remained as a dark chapter in the history of NGOs in Bangladesh.

ADAB’s role as a coordinating agency of development organisations again became controversial when a Democracy Awareness Education Programme was spearheaded by ADAB immediately before the national elections of June 1996 (see Ashman 1997 for a detailed discussion). This programme was conducted by 15,000 trainers of ADAB chapter members across the whole country, contributing to an impressive voter turn-out of 74%. The voter education programme remains controversial and questionable among some ADAB members, civil society actors and politicians due to its involvement with the national political process (Ashman 1997:33). Some members felt that ADAB was shifting its main mandate from development advocacy to political advocacy. There were dissenting voices

within ADAB but these went unheeded and the Executive Committee of ADAB took decision to support the voter education programme.

Examination of the evolution of ADAB's activities until the crisis of 1996 and also later in 2001 show that ADAB was gradually taking a stand in influencing policies and decisions which are looked upon by many as "political". Between 1990 and 1996 some activities which apparently look non-political carried considerable political implications which affected the NGO sector significantly and made the sector controversial. Some examples which lend support to this contention are given below (Ashman 1997:35):

"In 1990, ADAB has joined in the democracy movement to oust Ershad; in 1991-92, it had joined a civil society movement to protest the awarding of citizenship to war criminals; in 1992, it had resisted the government attempts to withdraw its registration; in 1994 it had helped to organise nation-wide popular participation in developing the government's environment policy; and in 1996, It had assisted grassroots people's organisation to hold a mass rally and convention at Manik Mia Avenue in Dhaka which was attended by about 200,000 grassroots people. Through these and other actions, ADAB became a major actor in the national political arena. By 1996, it had grown into powerful bargaining agent for NGOs and their grassroots constituencies".

After the fall of Ershad moves were made by some NGOs to take part in the monitoring of the parliamentary elections and this again drew widespread suspicion: What kind of constituency did NGOs represent? Were they there to offer vote banks or campaign funds to their chosen candidates? (White 1992:1). In some parts of the country, NGO members contested the local level elections and were supported either directly or indirectly by the NGOs concerned (Hashemi 1990). This created a great deal of suspicion which brought NGOs into direct confrontation with the local power structure.

The activities of NGOs under the banner of "non-party politics" (Karim 2000) have a subtle political colour, and by organising these activities under the banner of ADAB it has emerged as a strong force in political advocacy. The question has been raised: what is non-party politics? Whose interest is this kind of politics serving? In 1996, the political party with which ADAB had a close relationship won the general election. There is a widespread view that the relationship between ADAB and the winning party forged during the election process is very risky for NGOs, and that it threatens their (NGOs) fundamental independence from the regime in power. In this view, independence has been the basis of NGOs' collective success in meeting poor people's need since the country's liberation (Ashman 1997:37) So ADAB failed to play an independent role as the coordinating body of Development Agencies of Bangladesh and emerged as a partisan and controversial body with far reaching implications.

More recently, after the 2001 election, the pendulum swung the other way when the four party quasi rightist party led by BNP was elected to the government in a landslide victory. During the period preceding the election, some of ADAB's influential members took a position which was secular, pro-liberation, pro-democratic and anti-fundamentalist which was indeed the enunciated policy of the party which lost the election. During the 2001 election ADAB repeated the same policies of voter education, distributing around 40 crores taka to its partner NGOs to encourage voters to vote for pro-liberation minded, honest and secular candidates. This kind of political position angered a good number of rightist pro-Islamic political parties.

After the election of 2001 specific allegations were raised against certain NGOs for supporting one particular political party. In her first speech to the nation the Prime Minister directly accused certain NGOs of going beyond their mandate, and becoming agents of certain political parties. She emphasised the need to review the work of NGOs and also to bring them into discipline. A High Level Ministerial Committee with several senior ministers and NGO leaders, and with the Local Government and Rural Development and

Cooperatives as Chairperson, was formed to look after the matter and propose necessary measures to be undertaken to regulate the activities of NGOs. At the same time intelligence agencies of the government also started investigating the allegations against NGOs.

Government banned the activities of 12 NGOs including Proshika and also blocked any release of fund by NGOAB. Some ADAB members led by BRAC, who disagreed with ADAB's role in the election process and other issues, wanted to revise and refocus ADAB's role in the greater interest of the NGO community. The main contentious issues were to clarify what was political and what was the role of NGOs in development. Significant differences surfaced. One group mainly led by ADAB (i.e. Proshika) argued for an alliance with pro-liberation forces, for an active role in the democratic movement, and also for taking an anti-fundamentalist stance. This group can be seen as the hardliners.

Another group led by BRAC took a moderate position that emphasised that NGOs should not be involved in politics. Their primary areas of concern should be development, poverty alleviation, women's empowerment, education and health etc. Intense negotiations, dialogue and discussion ensued to keep these two groups together in the interest of the people and of NGOs. In spite of discussions attempting to bridge the gap no consensus could be reached and ultimately the group led by BRAC withdrew from ADAB and formed a separate apex body known as the *Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh (FNHB)*, which seeks to distance them from Proshika's perceived involvement in politics (World Bank 2006:36). On the government front, draft legislation was also prepared by the Ministerial Committee to strengthen controls over NGOs but this has not yet to be discussed in Parliament and in civil society forums.

NGOs emphasize self help, conscientization grassroots social mobilization and empowerment. Through these activities NGOs have indeed mobilized people from the grassroots in ways which look non-political but have significant and far-reaching political implications. Karim (2000:92) argues that Proshika through its social mobilization activities has occupied the "rhetoric of non-party politics" and brought the organization of the poor into grass-roots political mobilization both at the local and national levels (Karim 2000:92). The root cause of mistrust and to some extent rivalry can be listed as follows (Box1):

Box 1: Causes of Mistrust and Rivalry between GO-NGO

- NGOs have gradually emerged as strong actors in both political and socio-economic spheres undermining the state's role and authority.
- NGOs receive large amounts of foreign funds and this creates competition for limited resources between state and NGOs.
- DPs are in favour of implementing many development programmes through NGOs.
- NGOs' involvement in local level elections and in electioneering and also in national politics has created suspicion and mistrust about NGOs' long run motives.
- NGOs' involvement in business (superstores, printing presses, hotels, transport, education, real estate, finance and banking) has raised questions in the mind of common people as well as within the state apparatus.

The scenario described above has several implications for NGO-state relations. Any type of policy or programme of NGOs' apex coordinating body which gives an impression that NGOs are partisan to one side or another of politics make them vulnerable in a situation of confrontational politics. Any involvement in party politics in the name of non party politics jeopardises NGOs fundamental independence from the regime in power. This significantly influences the GO-NSP relations. Although there may be collaboration and partnership, behind this collaboration there is lack of trust which may damage the environment for implementing programmes of basic service provisioning. Thus, the *third paradigm shift*

occurred when NGOs focused their activities on political advocacy in the disguise of non-party politics.

Government-NGO Mutual Concerns

From this discussion of GO-NGO relations several areas of concern and tensions can be identified. These are summarized in Box 2.

Box- 2 Government-NGOs Mutual Concerns

What government thinks of NGOs:

- Lack accountability.
- Practice insufficient inter-NGO coordination leading to overlapping and unnecessary spending.
- Spend too much money on their operations.
- Rely too much on foreign funds.
- Charge high interest on credit.
- Have an insignificant impact..
- Their success stories get unduly positive coverage in the local and international media.
- Contract DPs without the knowledge of government.
- Undertake programmes which are sensitive and have political implications.
- Get involved in political activities in the name of non-party politics.

What NGOs thinks of government:

- It is rigid, bureaucratic and tries to over-regulate NGO activities.
- Unnecessarily requires prior approval for foreign funded projects.
- Lacks appreciation of the differences in approach and style of NGOs' project management.
- Does not differentiate between NGOs with a proven record of performance and less-committed NGOs.
- Does not differentiate between politically biased and unbiased NGOs.
- Harasses NGOs due to their claimed political activity.
- Has different mission and vision from government.
- By comparison with government, NGOs are poor, environmentally friendly and work in the remote areas of the country.

Sources: World Bank 2006, Asian Development Bank 1993, and Author's own work

Section 3- NGO Activities under Different Regimes

In this section, I will discuss how the activities of NGOs have evolved in Bangladesh under different regimes. As already indicated, on the whole, they have evolved without any significant hindrance and resistance from the state. This is in spite of the fact that state has enforced ordinances and laws which look restrictive but in reality did not obstruct the development of NGOs in Bangladesh. There has been robust growth of NGOs with a visible and positive impact on the economy and society of Bangladesh. It is difficult to concisely represent the growth of NGOs within a time line which sometime overlaps. However an attempt is made below to briefly describe the growth of NGOs in different periods of Bangladesh history starting from the pre-colonial period up to the present - see Box 3.

Box 3: NGO Activities in Different Regimes

Periods	Regime	Growth of NGOs
Colonial Period	British Rule	Voluntary, Philanthropic and Informal in Nature: Activities were centred on Christian missionary organisations and Hindu and Muslim philanthropy. Many schools, colleges, orphanages and religious schools were established through individual effort. No organised and clear cut trend.
1947-1971	East Pakistan	Service-Oriented but Charitable Approach: Christian Missionary and other Voluntary Organisations focused on poverty reduction in communities that included religious, ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups. Some NGOs and charitable organisations provided relief in the aftermath of the 1970 cyclone.
1972-1975	Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (the Awami League)	Emergence of NGOs with Expanding Focus: Post independence Bangladesh: Activities of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Roles of INGOs became visible. Developmental roles of NGOs in agriculture and rural development; Establishment of ADAB in 1974
1976-1981	Ziaur Rahman (Military Rule and the BNP)	Large scale growth of NGO sector at Local, Regional and National levels; Expanding activities by NGOs: micro credit gradually grew; service delivery became an important orientation with activities in the health and education sectors becoming important. Growing interest of donors in funding NGOs; <i>Foreign Donation (Voluntary Activity) Regulation Ordinance, 1978 (FDR)</i> enforced. Conscientisation approach, and early social mobilisation, relief work, flood and disaster management programmes, cyclone shelters. GO-NGO collaboration operates in limited areas, such as, agriculture, immunisation, family planning and social forestry.
1982-1990	Hussein Md. Ershad (Military Rule and the Jatiyo Party)	NGOs' Role in Political Advocacy and Social Transformation: Expansion of micro-credit continues; focus on human rights, social reform, land rights, health and population, nutrition, training, poultry and livestock. Anti-autocratic stand by some NGOs. Important role in the formulation of drug policy. Differences within NGO sector over its role in political issues began to emerge. Split in ADAB; <i>Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Ordinance, 1982 (FCO)</i> promulgated; establishment of NGOAB as one stop service to NGOs.
1990-1996	Begum Khaleda Zia	Professionalism and Credibility of NGOs Established:

	(BNP)	Expanding role of NGOs in poverty alleviation, in formal and non formal education. Involvement of NGOs in business. Corporate approach within NGOs began to emerge; social mobilization and advocacy oriented NGOs gradually became popular among donors. GO-NGO cooperation grew; continuation of voter education and election monitoring. Role after the 1991 cyclone.
1996-2001	Sheikh Hasina (Awami League)	Growing Tension regarding NGOs' Role in Political Advocacy and Social Mobilisation: Interest in governance; political advocacy heightened; agitation for democracy; voter education and election monitoring. Continuation of previous activities, some new activities include minority rights issues, legal aid, public interest litigation, policy advocacy around budget. Focus on basic service provision in health, education and water and sanitation. GO-NGO partnership. Emergence of contracting out to NGOs for service provision.
2001-2005	Begum Khaleda Zia (BNP)	Split in the NGO Community: Controversy over political advocacy; voter education and political role of NGOs; split in NGO community; blacklisting of some NGOs; Ministerial Committee to review NGOs' role in the 2001 general election and for more regulations; establishment of new apex body (FNB). ADAB became almost non-operative. New service developments e.g. water supply and sanitation, fragmentation of NGO community, new ultra-poor approaches.

Source: Based on DFID 2005:16, expanded by the author

It can be discerned from the above table that NGOs have grown under different regimes since independence. Generally, the policy environment has been favourable, but NGOs have split over the issue of politicization.

Section-4: Aid Flow to NGOs

Nature and Trends

Most NGOs depend on foreign grants and aid. In the early years of post independence Bangladesh in the 1970s, aid flows to NGOs from DPs and INGOs were limited and selective but it increased significantly when the country faced natural disasters. NGOs began to receive a large amount of funds from DPs and INGOs to provide health services, education, and poverty alleviation for the disadvantaged and poor segments of the community. NGOs gradually showed their potentiality in education, health and poverty alleviation through innovative approaches. In many instances NGOs have outperformed government in reaching the hitherto unreachable sections of the population. The scenario is succinctly stated as follows (Stiles 2002:836):

“NGOs by virtue of their relatively independent character, their non-profit status, and their links to poor communities that they have generally served well, offer donors a relatively safe and convenient means of avoiding both the public and private sectors and all their dangers. NGOs are treated as an entry point to a burgeoning civil society which donors help to shape”.

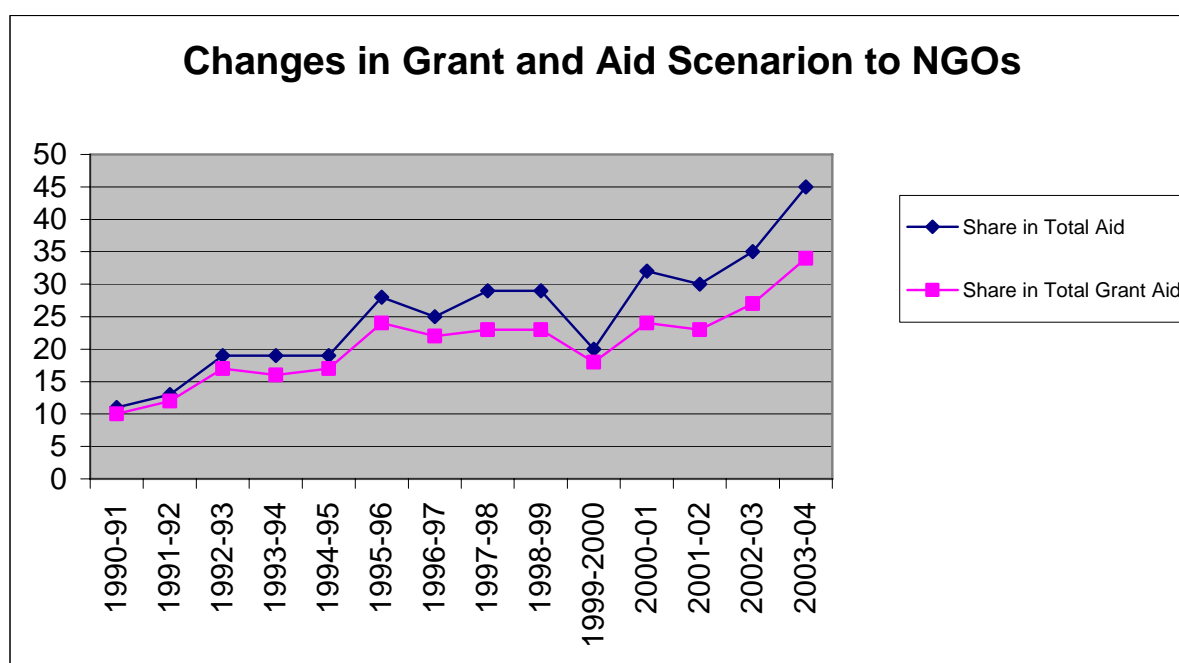
The good work and the credibility of NGOs helped them to attract assistance from different external sources. Assistance to NGOs originates from four sources: bilateral assistance comes mostly from the rich Northern countries; multilateral assistance from different UNO agencies such as, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICIF, and also from the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the European Union. International NGOs have a significant

presence in Bangladesh providing both humanitarian and development funds to local NGOs. Moreover, foundations and trust funds such as Aga Khan Foundation, Ford Foundation etc. also provide funds to NGOs for their activities in Bangladesh.

DPs do not give equal assistance to NGO financing. Among the multilaterals, the World Bank tops the list and the leading bilateral donors are DFID, CIDA, SIDA and EU which provide funds to NGOs in varying amounts. Before deciding to provide fund to NGOs, bilateral donors consider their country policies and programmes and also to what extent this is going to help the recipient country. For example, in order to be eligible for SIDA's support NGOs must fulfil five development assistance goals: economic growth, economic and social equality, economic and political independence, democratic development and environmental quality (Lewis and Sobhan 1999).

Increased Support to NGOs by Development Partners

The extent of support has fluctuated from year to year but there has been a perceptible increase in aid flows to NGOs from multilateral, bilateral and INGOs since the 1990s (See World Bank 2006: 42-56). Grants to NGOs have increased from US\$ 106.6 million (11.4% of the total) in 1990-91 to US\$ 310.00 million (45% of the total) in 2003-04. Similarly, during the same period total aid to NGOs has risen from US\$ 180 million (10.5% of total ODA) to 379.4 million (34.1% of total ODA). In percentage terms during this period support to NGOs increased by 190% of all grants and 111% of all aid (data from World Bank 2006).



IDA, which is a major provider of foreign assistance, channelled 14% of its assistance to the NGO sector via different government departments and ministries.. DFID channels 29% and CIDA 20% directly to NGOs. The EU spends up to 40% of its resources in Bangladesh through NGOs (World Bank 2006:43) A major portion of external assistance to NGOs comes through government agencies. On average 20% of the external assistance to NGOs is disbursed through government agencies. The funds received by NGOs are usually part of large projects that provide funding to both government and NGOs.

In recent years, there has been a large infusion of multilateral resources to micro finance and a number of large multi donor projects in education and health. A breakdown by sectors reveals that NGOs currently receive 31% of total project funds in health, 12% in education and 12% in micro finance (World Bank 2006:42). Although a precise breakdown is difficult to make other significant sectors and programmes for which NGOs receive fund

include agricultural extension, forestry, fisheries etc., social safety net programmes, social development and advocacy (World Bank 2006: 42; World Bank 1996:10-11). The major part of donor assistance goes to large NGOs leading to their disproportionate growth. Indeed 10 big NGOs together received about 60% of foreign assistance to NGOs in 1992, increasing to 70% in 1994 and now estimated at over 85% (DFID 2000:2; DFID2005)

Mechanisms of NGO Financing

There are various mechanisms of donor support to NGOs. With respect to each NGO recipient, aid comes through adhoc project grants, longer term programme grants, and long term institutional funding via consortia (Stiles 2002:838). An important development in the mechanism of donor support to NGOs is the formation of donor consortia for the large NGOs like BRAC, Proshika, Nizera Kori, Samata and others. These donor consortia sit once or twice a year to discuss and decide their aid commitment. Other mechanisms of donor funding of NGOs are as follows (World Bank 2006: 44-48):

- The simplest form of funding consists of project funding to provide specific services. In case of large projects which require large funds, donors involve large NGOs and donor liaison offices provide an interface between the donor and NGO. This leads to better management, lower transaction costs, better understanding and harmonisation.
- Direct support is also provided to certain NGOs based on “a shared vision of change”. This support is provided to large NGOs like Proshika, Nizera Kori, Samata, quasi government organisation like Palli Karma Shayak Foundation (PKSF) and Palli Daridro Bimochan Foundation (PDBF).
- Donors have created a number of “wholesale vehicles” for managing pools of money for smaller NGOs (World Bank 2006:44). An international NGO or consulting firm can act as donor agent to provide funds to smaller NGOs for projects in which the objectives are set by the donor.

NGOs also received funds from donors which are routed mostly through a particular line agency. The partnership and contracting arrangements for social service provision has both merits and demerits. For example, PKSF, an autonomous non profit apex body in micro finance, offers a number of lessons about how to design a successful partnership between, donors, NGOs and government. A bad case was contracting to NGOs for NFE through the Directorate of Non-formal Education established in 1995. There were widespread allegations of wrong selection of NGOs, mismanagement, corruption, weak supervision and monitoring which ultimately led to the shut down of the department in 2003. The following Box-4 gives an idea about the different sources of funds for NGOs in Bangladesh.

Box 4: Different Source of NGO Financing		
Internal Source	External Sources	
	Local	Foreign

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fees collected from members (e.g. interest on credit) • Service charges (e.g. for training) • Sale of publications • Transfer from commercial ventures • Other (e.g. earnings from investments and endowment funds) • Donations 	<p>GOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct allocation • project partnership, subcontract or subvention mechanism • PKSF to small NGOs <p>Private</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donations from public • Donation from businesses <p>Credit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borrowing from commercial banks • Bank funds for on lending to NGOs 	<p>Through ERD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-and multilateral aid agencies <p>Through NGOAB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-and multilateral agencies • International NGOs • Foreign private donations <p>Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offshore NGO funding • Offshore funding for NGO Training • Contract research • Embassy discretionary funds
Source: World Bank 1996:43.		

There is a donor coordination group known as the “Local Consultative Group” (LCG) comprising both multilateral and bilateral donors. There are about 24 sub-groups of LCG which cover sectoral and cross-cutting issues. Different BDPs chair LCG meetings. The LCG has regular consultations with the different line ministries of the Government of Bangladesh.

Finally it should be pointed out that DPs and INGOs in Bangladesh operate within the rules and regulations set by the Government of Bangladesh. Therefore, any funds coming from the outside are routed through the government following the mechanism stated above. The aid modalities and the dynamics of relations have changed overtime but assistance to NGOs has been increasing which confirms the importance of NGO as actors in the socioeconomic advancement of Bangladesh.

Section-5: GO-NGO Collaboration at Different Levels

Nature and Type of Relations

The evolution of GO-NGO relations, areas of collaborations, tensions, and reasons for such tensions have been discussed in Section-3. Although there were ups and downs in various periods and regimes, by and large Government-NGO relations have been quite steady since 1990s, with an increasing reliance of government on basic service provision by NGOs. Although these relations have not always been smooth and beyond controversy, the fact remains that NGOs are big player in poverty alleviation, education, water and sanitation, nutrition, immunization, family planning, TB and leprosy education, livestock and fisheries. In recent years government has been incorporating NGOs into various committees with other line ministries from union to the national levels and sharing and learning from the experience of NGOs in different sectors. This reflects government's acknowledgment that NGOs are important actors in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh.

From a list procured from a NGO, it has been found that at local levels (i.e. Upazila and district) NGOs are members of 17 different committees and at the national levels they are members of 7 committees. In all these committees the NGOs sit with government officials. We indicate below (Box-5) the nature and type of relations and the names of committees of which NGOs are members at different levels.

Box 5: NGOs' Membership of Committees

from National to the Upazila Levels

Level	Nature of Relations	Comments
National	<p>NGOAB oversees the activities of NGOs</p> <p>NGOs are members of the National Disaster Management Council, Inter-ministerial Disaster Management Coordination Committee PRSP Implementation Committee, and IEC Technical Committee etc.</p> <p>ADAB and FNB maintain liaison with government.</p>	<p>During the times of emergency, and also in formulating different policies and programmes NGOs are consulted. NGOs are active partners in the formulation and implementation of Water and Sanitation strategy, Tuberculosis and Leprosy control programme.</p>
District	<p>There is a District Development Committee (DDC) which is presided over by the DC who is the Chief Executive Officer of the district. DCs hold monthly meeting with NGOs attended by local NGO representatives; representatives from ADAB and FNB attend the DDC. The meeting focuses on simple information sharing to dissemination of government policy, regulations etc. NGOs provide reports on their activities to DC. In addition to DDC the NGOs are also members of the following committees in the district:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ District NGO Coordination Committee. ▪ District Institutional (educational) Coordination Committee. ▪ District Agriculture Development Committee. ▪ District Agriculture Extension and Planning Committee. ▪ District Seed and Fertilizer Monitoring Committee. <p>The role of networks at district level is valued whether in the name of ADAB, FNB or independently.</p> <p>Information, policy and regulations etc. are all disseminated in a top down manner by both Government and Big NGOs.</p> <p>NGOs' cooperation is sought during disasters but otherwise the exchange is not proactive on either side.</p> <p>Coordination of NGO activities is emphasised to avoid overlapping and duplication.</p> <p>Local NGOs utilize their networks for support but big NGOs look to their own managers in Dhaka.</p>	<p>These are routine meetings and to some extent ritualistic. Monthly meetings are all reported to be very formal and communication is one way and top down. In the district level committees apart from NGO representatives different district level government officials from line departments attend. For example, in the District Institutional (educational) Committee DC, all UNOs of the districts, heads of educational institutions, teachers' representatives, NGO representatives and UP chairmen attend. In the district NGO coordination meeting all UNOs, NGO representatives, all government departmental heads, Pourshova Chairmen and elites attend. The purpose of such meetings is to share and report to DC and other relevant departments on respective NGO activities, plan and impact.</p> <p>The NGOs consider the meeting with DC important because NGOs are required to obtain certificates from DC for NGOAB's release of funds.</p> <p>DC's role is critical for NGOs who are working on land rights.</p> <p>The DC is accessible but for some NGOs it is difficult to obtain certificates required by NGOAB for project approval or release of funds especially for advocacy and</p>

		other activities with no direct output for the district.
Upazila	<p>NGO activities are coordinated and recognised through a number of committees that are formed at the Upazila level. These committees are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Upazila Development Coordination Committee. ▪ Upazila NGO Coordination Committee ▪ Upazila Watsan Committee. ▪ Upazila Disaster Management Committee. ▪ Upazila VGF committee. ▪ Upazila Land Reform Committee. <p>There are many other committees where provision has been made for NGOs' presence.</p> <p>In all these committees Upazila offices of different line ministries are represented. The meetings of these committees are not held regularly. NGOs normally work according to their own programme objectives and policies.</p>	<p>Upazila meetings are also formal and ritualistic.</p> <p>Some UNOs conduct meeting when needed and some have joint programmes with NGOs but only real contact over contract work (food for work and other 'civil works').</p> <p>UNOs have little contact with Big NGOs who like the UNO have their own mechanism of reporting to Dhaka.</p> <p>UDCC meetings are held every month; sometimes NGOs are asked to give presentations on their activities.</p> <p>Local NGOs utilize networks for support but big NGOs look to their own managers in Dhaka.</p>
Union Parishad	<p>Union Parishad is the grass root elected local level institutions. NGOs normally maintain good relations with UP members and Chairmen.</p> <p>UP chairmen are also members of the Upazila Development Committee. So NGOs keep the UP informed about different activities.</p>	<p>NGOs community contact is normally ensured through UPs.</p> <p>Community involvement is critical for the success of NFPE, sanitation and health programmes.</p> <p>UP chairmen and members are also used there is a loan defaulter or they need support for a specific project.</p>

Source: Based on DFID 2005:68, but revised and updated by the author

Section-6: Typology of NGOs

This section suggests a typology of NGOs in the light of the evolution of NGOs in Bangladesh. (see Figure below). This is a tentative typology which could be extended and revised.

One way of categorising NGOs is by their location and size. An important feature of NGOs in Bangladesh is the existence of a large number of small and regional NGOs side by side with large national NGOs that cover the country.

Local NGOs are small. They normally operate in one Upazila comprising several Unions and villages. They have small budgets and conduct their activities subject to the availability of funds. Typically, they undertake activities relating to literacy, income generation through credit programmes, poultry, kitchen gardening, afforestation etc. Some local organizations are also engaged in socio-cultural activities. There are no exact figures about the number of local NGOs and voluntary organizations, but "There are an estimated 2,000 development NGOs in Bangladesh. Most NGOs in Bangladesh are small, and have limited managerial and staff

capacity. For instance, in a sample of 720 NGOs, 90% had programs in less than 5 out of 64 districts" (World Bank 2006:ii).

Regional NGOs are medium sized and operate in a limited area comprising several Upazilas in a few districts. They receive funds from various DPs and INGOs and also act as partners of large national NGOs: for example more than 200 small NGOs work as partners in the BRAC Education Support Programme. Some examples of regional NGOs are, Village Education and Resource Center (VERC), Gono Unnyan Prochesta (GUP), Gono Kallyan Trust (GKT), Association of Community Development (ACD), Ashriyan and Uddipan. There are many examples of regional NGOs becoming national NGOs, extending their programmes to several districts and a large number of Upazilas. Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Songha (TMSS), Buro Tangail and Gonoshyssatra Kendra (GK) fall into this category. Regional NGOs tend to be stable and by and large have regular sources of fund.

National NGOs are large and work in almost all districts of Bangladesh. They get large amounts of money from a number of donors. Some national NGOs are supported by donor consortia who mobilize funds for different activities. Currently a group of 10 large Bangladesh NGOs dominates the NGO scene in Bangladesh. These include BRAC, ASA, Proshika, RDRS, CARITAS, TMSS, CCDB, Buro Tangail, HEED, FIVDB and Nizera Kori. (see DFID 2000 and 2005 for a detailed account of these NGOs).

International NGOs (INGOs) mostly derive their resources from their country of origin. The NGO Affairs Bureau identified 147 registered foreign NGOs in Bangladesh in 2000 (Siddiqui 2002:412).

Since 1990s the group of larger NGOs has grown disproportionately and receives much of the foreign assistance. Together they accounted for over 60% of foreign assistance in 1992; this increased to 70% in 1994 and to over 85% in 2000 (DFID 2000:2). It is important to mention here that the main focus of some regional and large national NGOs (ASA, Buro Tangail, and TMSS) is micro credit. The regional and local NGOs have been working side by side with the national NGOs in various parts of the country. From functional and development perspectives there are several explicit and implicit implications of the existence of large, regional and small NGOs in Bangladesh. These can be summarized as follows (see Alam 1994 and 2000):

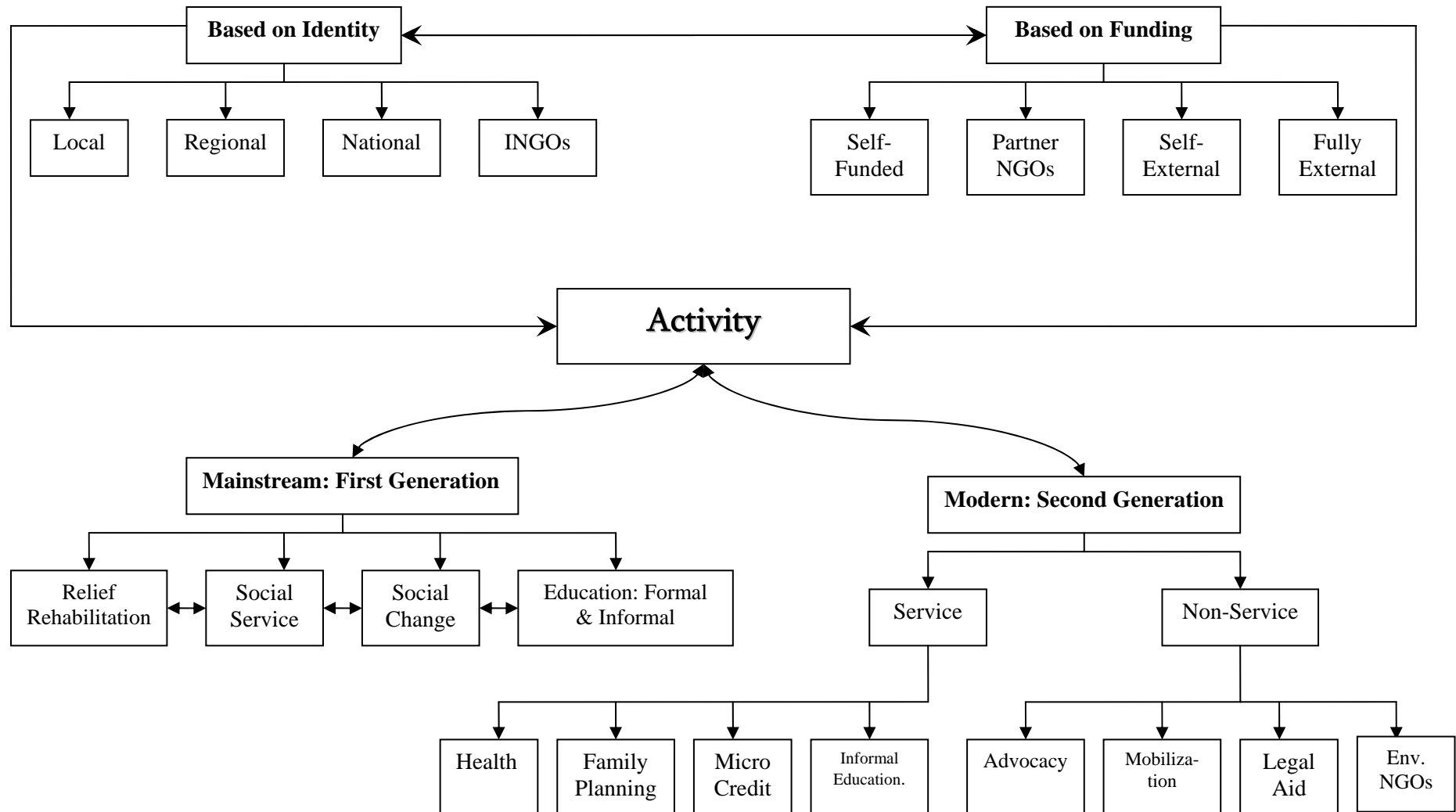
- Since local NGOs are working in their local communities sometime tensions develop when national NGOs target local areas and populations.
- There is an impression among the local NGOs that the national NGOs deliberately ignore the locals and hardly consult them before they decide to undertake programmes in an area. Some local NGOs consider their own area as their natural and legal operating niche.
- Local NGOs are no match for large national NGOs which have more resources, manpower and influence. A large segment of local NGOs feel that the national NGOs create expectations among people which damage the locals capacity for survival.
- The declining sources of funds both locally and internationally have plunged the local NGOs into financial problems, while, even in such a scenario, a few big NGOs have access to donor funds and are expanding their programmes rapidly. Local NGOs consider themselves to be disadvantaged.

An important advantage of local NGOs is that they work in their own locality, have more contact and rapport with the local people, and can survive onslaughts from any quarter.

Based on their funding, NGOs can be categorised between those that are fully self funded, fully external funded, or partially self and partially externally funded. There are NGOs that are funded locally by big NGOs; BRAC's Education Support Programme is one such example. Based on their activity, the following diagram divides NGOs between first generation mainstream NGOs and the others which I have called modern second

generation NGOs. The second generation NGOs are both service and non-service oriented. The diagram shows how different types of NGOs fall into these categories

TYPOLOGY OF NGOS



Section-7: NSPs in Basic Service Provision

NGOs in Bangladesh are involved in numerous activities from basic service provision to advocacy, human rights and governance. NGOs are quite successful in many of these areas and are known for their innovative approaches. There follows a brief overview on the role of NSPs in education, health and sanitation – the sectors that are the focus of our study.

NGOs in the Health Sector

From the mid 1970s the activities of NGOs in the fields of health and family planning began to expand. Their activities were directed towards promotive, preventative, curative, and rehabilitative health care and also towards the promotion of family planning services. Some NGOs (e.g. GK) have implemented their own, independent programmes while many others are collaborating with government in strengthening as well as in implementing government programmes. Government-NGO collaboration increased in the 1970s and 1980s on national programmes relating to tuberculosis, leprosy, immunization, family planning and nutrition (Mercer et al. 2004:187). Indeed, the NSPs have significant roles in providing health care services to the poor. For example, in 2003, 88% of households seeking health care went to NSPs while another survey undertaken in 2001 found that 82% of the sampled households received treatment from NSPs (DFID 2004:24). The comparative advantages of NSPs over government, as these are claimed in the literature, can be summarised as follows (Box-6):

Box 6: NSPs in Health Service Delivery

- NGOs have a base at grassroots level and have better knowledge of the community;
- NGOs has network all over the country to serve all segments of the population.
- NGOs have a large number of *karmis* with access to the fur flung areas of the country;
- NGOs have developed good expertise in the delivery of PHC and also in certain other areas which include TB, leprosy, immunization, family planning etc.
- NGOs are innovative in linking health services with credit and other services.
- NGOs are effective in training, developing BCC and IEC materials which have an impact on health service provision.
- NGOs are relatively efficient in the utilisation of funds.
- NGOs are more innovative in ensuring participation, gender equality and accountability.
- NGOs' health service provision is less bureaucratic and efficient.
- NGO services are affordable and within reach of the poor.

Source: Compiled from literature review

During the mid 1990s, development partners have become increasingly interested to involve NSPs in providing basic health services. There has been an increasing attempt to involve NSPs in policy dialogue, programme formulation and implementation. There have been instances where NSPs, and civil society more generally, have participated in policy discussion and formulation of HPSP, HIV/AIDS policy and UPHCP. NGOs have also played an important role in the formulation of the National Drug Policy in the early 1990s and also in the National Health Policy (DFID 2004:25).

The involvement of NGOs in the implementation of large donor funded health projects has shown a significant increase in recent years. The HPSP, HNSP, UPHCP, HIV/AIDS prevention and Care and Tuberculosis Control are a few major examples of these projects, where special project mechanisms were created for the involvement of NGOs in the implementation process. DFID's (2004) report describes the NSPs' performance in the health sector as follows (DFID 2004:43):

“The NGO sector has grown considerably over the last decade and is taking on an increasingly important role in health care provision. It has many advantages over the public sector, including the willingness to serve in remote areas, and ability to target and reach the poor, facilitate community participation in health

care planning and management, and address health needs of special client groups, such as sex workers and men who have sex with men”.

NGOs in Sanitation

NSPs played an important role in the formulation of the first National Sanitation Strategy (NSS) which was launched by the Local Government Division (LGD) of the Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives in 2005. This brought sanitation, which was so long an overlooked public policy issue, to the centre-stage of both the public health and the development arenas. The process of preparing and finalising the National Sanitation Strategy 2005 was a long and arduous one, involving many different stakeholders at the macro level. The NSS is an outcome of advocacy, lobbying, persuasion, policy dialogue and consultation between NGOs, donors, government officials, academicians and members of civil society. WaterAid Bangladesh (WAB) played a leading role in this process by organizing different activities and financial support, and also in the publication of the strategy (Discussion based on WaterAid documentation and advice).

WAB facilitated a participatory process to analyse sector issues in the PRSP. This involved all key sector actors including government (DPHE, DWSA, LGD), international NGOs (CARE, Asia Arsenic Network, HEED), donors (World Bank, DANIDA, DFID, CIDA), UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO), partners and grassroot communities. WAB's activities have four main components: building a national platform on sanitation and hygiene issues; persuading government to host a regional meeting on sanitation; promoting a national sanitation campaign and developing a *National Sanitation Strategy*. WAB played a leading role in mobilising various stakeholders and provided both financial and logistic assistance in making the National Sanitation Policy a reality. The government was quite quick to respond to the recommendations of NSTF and NSS is seen as a successful example of GO-NGO collaboration.

Bangladeshi NGOs have also gained a worldwide reputation for innovative community based experiments in water and sanitation, education, mainstreaming women in development through micro credit and land rights for vulnerable people. Some of these innovative experiments have led to the development of models which are now being experimented with in many countries of the world.

The Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) model that has been developed in Bangladesh is emerging as an example in South Asia. CLTS was developed by a few NGOs (especially VERC) and established methods that are participatory, community-friendly, cost effective and adapted to the needs of local communities. Many NGOs in Bangladesh are implementing CLTS and the NGO forum which is the apex organisation of water and sanitation in Bangladesh is promoting CLTS through its partner NGOs (PNGOs). It has also become the object of study by researchers and international organizations (Kar 2003; Allan 2003; WSP; World Bank 2005).

NGOs in Primary Education

Recently NGO have become important actors in the education sector. Although at the initial stage their activities were limited to adult literacy, NFE and primary education, in recent years the private sector (including NGOs) has become dominant not only in primary education but also in secondary, college and university education. Indeed a kind of a revolution is taking place through the explosion of the number of English medium schools and private universities (of which there are 54). The private sector in Bangladesh has created its own space and emerged as a vibrant actor in the education sector.

Many NGOs are involved in education. Approximately 700 NGOs are enlisted to the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), the umbrella organization for the education NGOs set up in 1991. These NGOs are involved in adult education, child education services, pre-primary education, NFE and primary education. Some NGOs are also involved in providing support services such as teacher training, curriculum and materials development.

NSPs are best known for their non-formal primary education programme in Bangladesh and also internationally. A new trend is emerging within the existing NFPE model (Interview with Enamul Hoque),

Programme Manager CAMPE). A good number of NGOs are currently using materials produced by the National Curriculum and Text Board (NCTB) in their schools. For example, in class I, non-formal primary schools use NCTB materials produced for the same class; and so on for classes II and III. In this way NGOs follow the government curriculum and the materials produced by NCTB to facilitate the transfer of their pupils to secondary schools. According to CAMPE, NFPE is still important and common in NGO provision of education. Many NGOs that are involved in education do not get books from NCTB, but have to rely on books and materials produced by large NGOs like BRAC, DAM, Proshika and FIBDB. It is estimated that around 8% of all currently enrolled primary students are in NGO schools. Out of 1.5 million children enrolled in NGO schools, 1.2 million alone are enrolled in BRAC's network of around 35,000 non-formal primary schools (World Bank 2006:29).

The NFPE programme of NGOs is implemented in three main ways. 1) directly by individual NGOs, 2) as a contractor of government, and 3) as a partner of large NGOs, such as BRAC's ESP. All these three types of implementation process are prevalent in Bangladesh. However, types 2 and 3 are most common. Some NGOs in Bangladesh implement their own education programme from their own revenue. These are mainly small programmes that mostly use curriculum and materials developed by large NGOs. .

One of the major challenges of NGOs working in the NFPE programme is mainstreaming children within government provision in both primary and secondary schools. This has remained an overarching issue in NGO provision of basic education. The World Bank (2006:31) stated that

“coordination between government and NGO education programmes in primary education remains weak. NGO schools are not formally recognized in official statistics on primary education. Since the closure of the Department of Non-Formal Education, there has been no mechanism to coordinate government-NGO activities.”

In interviews for this research the Executive Directors and Directors of several NGOs mentioned that mainstreaming of NGO school children was a serious problem but all of them also mentioned that they had taken care of the problem locally through their own initiative and influence. The number of students seeking admission in the government primary schools far exceeds the seats available in those schools

Section-8: Summary

From this review it can be concluded that NGOs in Bangladesh have emerged as significant players in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. There has been robust growth both in the number of NGOs as well as in their activities in the last three decades. The key shifts and changes in focus in NGO activities and in GO-NGO collaboration can be seen as paradigm shifts in NGO discourse in Bangladesh.

- The first paradigm shift occurred in the mid 1970s, when the charity and relief orientation of NGOs switched to community development programmes incorporating some basic services to the poor and also a new emphasis on institution building.
- The second shift began to emerge as government gradually recognised the importance of NGOs as development actors. Government has become convinced of NGOs potentiality in reaching the poor. This sets the beginning of relations marked often by but also, in some cases, tension and mistrust. GO-NGO collaboration extended to many sectors including education, health, environment, population, women and youth development, livestock and fisheries, resettlement and disaster management.
- The third paradigm shift occurred when some NGOs focused their activities on political advocacy in the disguise of non-party politics, though they also continued to work in various spheres of socio-economic development. NGO involvement in political movements, voter education, and elections has damaged their non-partisan standing. This has created feud and factionalism within the NGO sector that led to divisions within ADAB and the creation of FNAB.

The historical overview of the GO-NGO relationship showed that government has not always been enthusiastic about NGO involvement. However, it has been argued in the paper that the laws and regulations which were enforced by the government are not generally restrictive, but rather help to make the NGOs disciplined and transparent to the general public. In all these there is no attempt to restrict the registration of new NGOs or their activities.

Another important finding of the paper is that there has been increasing GO-NGO collaboration in various projects, and especially in basic service provision of education, health and sanitation. There is also an indication of increasing reliance of government on NGOs in various economic development projects. Government has been incorporating NGOs into various committees with other line ministries from union to the national levels and sharing and learning from the experience of NGOs in different sectors. This indeed reflects government's acknowledgment that NGOs are important actors in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. This is in spite of the fact that there are hidden tensions and mistrust in these relations, arising from important differences in the mindset and roles of government and NGOs.

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