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Discussion Paper 7: Exploring relationships between non-state providers and the state in South Asia: Comparison of education cases

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[1] The substance of the evidence in this paper draws on the three country reports, together with the author's fieldnotes. These have been re-analysed for the purposes of this paper, and so any mistakes are the responsibility of the author. Further analysis of interview transcripts and other documentation is still needed. The structure of the paper draws on the framework on the organisation of relationships in 'The Research Approach' paper by Batley (2008); and also takes account of the frameworks reviewed in Teamey (2007).

Acronyms

BMC   Bombay Municipal Corporation
DSS   Doorsteps
FIVDB   Friends in Village Development Bangladesh
NFE   non-formal education
ITA   Idara-Taleem-o-Aagahi
PPC   Public Partnership Cell
SSA   Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

Exploring relationships between non-state providers and the state in South Asia: Comparison of education cases

1. Overview of education NSPs included in the three cases

The NSPs selected for this study include primarily ones associated with NGO/CBO/philanthropic[2] provision to *out-of-school children*. This includes children of primary-school age who are under-served by state system, often identified as 'hard-to-reach' living in remote areas, urban slums etc. In some cases, the education NSPs are involved in supporting the improvement in quality of state schooling through supporting school management, providing teachers and introducing innovative pedagogical approaches, and providing on-going training etc. (often referred to as *school adoption or school improvement*).[3] In practice, many education NGOs, including the ones in this study, engage in different forms of education activities which develop over time, and which they see as an integrated package. As will be seen below, the forms of engagement with government can vary considerably across the different activities that the NGOs undertake.

In India and Pakistan, the selected NGOs are ones involved in both direct non-state provision, indirect state provision through state sub-contracting to the NGOs, as well as support to direct state provision[4] through 'school adoption' (with school adoption being a development from the NGOs own provision in the case of India, while it is a greater focus of the NGO activities in the case of Pakistan).[5] This allows a comparison of the influence on the relationship of different approaches within cases, as well as between them. School adoption is less apparent in Bangladesh more generally, and in the study in this country the focus is on the NGO's direct education provision. NGO provision in Bangladesh and India involves different forms of organisational relationships with government (including contractual) that will be explored.

Geographical coverage of the NGO provision varies. In India, DoorSteps (DSS) does not have ambitions to spread significantly beyond the areas they are currently working, but rather to go more in depth within these areas. It has however expanded its programme in recent years – both in terms of coverage to include additional wards in Mumbai and to neighbouring Pune, as well as to take on new activities within the selected areas to provide a bundle of educational support to the communities. A similar trajectory is apparent with FIVDB in Bangladesh, while ITA in Pakistan has undertaken more geographically widespread activities from the outset (Table 1).

In all three cases, the original founders are still the leaders of the NGOs (so all are in their first generation). Both FIVDB and DSS have been established for some time (1981 and 1988, respectively). While ITA is more recent (1998), it has quickly gained a strong reputation due to

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[2] The cases do not include 'for-profit' private NSPs for reasons explained in Batley's paper. The term 'NGO' is used throughout this paper to identify the selected organisations as a sub-set of NSPs. However, problems with the term NGO are acknowledged, as documented elsewhere.
[3] School adoption is often associated with provision of physical facilities and resources – this is not of interest for our study as it does not involve an on-going relationship with government.
[4] See Joshi and Moore (2004) for classifications.
[5] While DoorSteps claim that activities are inter-related since the school adoption programme arose from recognition of needing to improve the quality of formal schooling which NFE children are mainstreamed into. However, their school adoption programme focuses partly on running grades 1-4 of the English medium part of the school which NFE children do not generally attend (particularly since NFE is taught in Hindi or Marathi).

the existing profile of its founder. In line with a criteria for selecting our cases, all NGOs are recognized in their local areas as being successful in education provision (our intention was not to explore the implications of relationships on education outcomes). ITA has a high profile nationally (as well as regionally within South Asia).

2. Purposes of and influences on public action – from grassroots service provision to policy advocacy

2.1 Government and NGO visions of education public action

The overarching concern of the education MDG and Education for All goals is to ensure all children get access to primary schooling of appropriate quality. In principle, these goals could be achieved regardless of who is providing the education, but in practice most governments, international agencies and international NGOs view provision as a state responsibility on the grounds of education being a right, and having public good elements. Many governments (including the three included in this study) have a constitutional commitment to providing universal (free and compulsory) access to primary schooling with state systems mainly taking responsibility for enrolling children. The view of government's responsibility for provision is also related to ideological and political motives (education's role in forming national identity) which could be argued to be stronger in this sector than the others included in the study (health and sanitation). Some international NGOs are opposed to NGOs getting involved directly in provision, as they consider that this weakens their ability to put pressure on governments to fulfil their responsibility. Even so, in reality there are a multitude of actors involved in providing education to primary school-aged children to meet different forms of demand, and to extend supply where state provision is inadequate.

The stated missions of the NGOs included in this study highlight the way in which they see education as having broader benefits, both to the future of individuals as well as (in the case of FIVDB and ITA) for society more generally. Such human development and rights-based approaches to education are also apparent in government visions (Box 1). FIVDB and DSS share the common view that government should play the main role in education provision, but seek to contribute to this. By contrast, ITA has a broader perspective that different actors play a role in improving the education system (including philanthropists, the private sector, donor agencies, NGO alliances as well as government) and is keen to work with any of these.

Table 1: Comparison of NGOs included in study

	DSS (India)	FIVDB (Bangladesh)	ITA (Pakistan)
Date of establishment	1979/1981 (formally)	1988	1998
Background of founders	Formed by a group of International Voluntary Services (IVS) workers, led by Zahin Ahmad	Co-founders from college of social work: President: Rajini Paranjpe Director: Beena Seth Lashkari (Beena was Rajini's student in the college)	Established by Baela Jamil, a prominent educationalist previously working as government advisor and international consultant (worked with UNESCO and UNICEF)
Original activities/geographical coverage	Based in 3 cluster villages in Sylhet, which were the focus of the IVS programme. Diversified activities with education provision as main focus. Child education programme started in 1985 with 5 primary schools (registered with MOE)	Focus on education, starting with 2 NFE centres in one slum in Mumbai for 50 dalit children.	Focus on education, beginning with school improvement programme
Current activities/geographical coverage	Still mainly based in Sylhet region. Expanded to 112 primary schools (no longer registered with MOE). Continues to undertake diversified activities, but main focus remains education provision.	Expanded to another slum area in Mumbai and to neighbouring Pune, but activities remain localised. Forms of intervention broadened to include support for government school in the slum area, study centres and pre-school. Main focus remains on provision to out-of-school children.	Diverse education projects from different funding sources with a mix of collaboration with government, NGOs and private sector, implemented across different parts of the country.
Funding sources	DFID as main source for child education programme, with limited government (UNICEF) funding	Mainly individuals and family Trusts, corporate and NGO donors. ICICI, one of the largest private banking institutions, is currently a major source of fund. Also receives support from time to time from international agencies like UNICEF and USAID.	Various funding sources for different activities – including: US Dept of Labour, Save the Children UK, Friends of ITA from UK, Education Trust, Plymouth State University, Japan Asian Friendship, Catholic Relief Services, UNESCO, UNICEF; plus corporate donors including show Nestle, ICI, and LCCI, as well as Friends of ITA-UK

Box 1: Stated missions of the education NGOs and government

Bangladesh
Government
Human resource development is at the core of Bangladesh's development efforts and access to quality education is critical to poverty reduction and economic development… Maintaining this commitment to the education sector is imperative in order to achieve Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). [Ministry of Education website]

FIVDB
Aims to establish "A vibrant society based on justice, equity, democracy and environmentally sounds principles" and contribute "towards educational and socio-economic empowerment of disadvantaged women, men and children". [2005 Annual Report]

India
Government (BMC)
The BMC recognises the right of every child for education and hence its principal goal is '…to encourage underprivileged children through various programmes and projects to enroll in a school for education at least up to primary level.' [www.karmayog.com. From Padmaja Nair case study report]

DSS
'An ALARMING number of children amongst the urban poor still remain without an opportunity to receive formal education. Our mission at Door Step School is to bridge this divide, using innovative programs that will bring education to these children and help them make the transition to literacy and a brighter future' [DSS website]

Pakistan
Government
Education is a categorical imperative for individual, social and national development that should enable all individuals to reach their maximum human potential. The system should produce responsible, enlightened citizens to integrate Pakistan in the global framework of human centered economic development [Ministry of Education website]

ITA
'actively pursue standard setting in education as a comprehensive multidimensional learning experience for human evolution and consciousness…and endeavouring to address educational bottlenecks through timely resource mobilization and influencing public policy' [ITA website]

In general, across the three cases, there is an apparent consensus over purposes of public action – namely, that both government and NGOs are committed to ensuring Education for All of acceptable quality (in line with international commitments), with particular concern of reaching out to the poor, vulnerable and marginalised. In reality, national governments are more focused on expanding access to the mass of the population requiring a relatively standardized model of provision, which is unable to cover those with particular needs. It is these groups that NGOs intend to address in particular, and hence the view of seeing their role as complementary to the state, and supporting it in fulfilling its agenda.

ITA's vision extends beyond this, as its mission statement explicitly indicates. Its ambition is to influence public policy, an aspect which differs from the other two NGOs. This has important implications for the development of relationships, as explored further below. Overall, ITA sets

itself a much more ambitious agenda compared with FIVDB and DSS for whom the public action agenda is very much related to local influence within the geographical areas they are working – for Baela Jamil, ITA's public action agenda does not have boundaries:

> 'My future vision is to see ITA as a national and regional player within education at all levels. We will like to see our work and research recognized as legitimate knowledge. We want to be key players in shaping the South Asia Education Forum. We want to see ourselves as key players in education reforms and implementation. In the longer term, I want ITA to lead a new movement in education learning and theory. I want to shift the knowledge generation for education to the third world given that much more exciting work is happening at our end.'

A flipside of ITA's broad agenda is that, unlike DSS and FIVDB, the NGO shows more limited concern for addressing the education needs of its targeted communities in a sustainable way. This is an issue that government officials have picked up on and criticised ITA for in districts in which it has been operating particular projects for which funding is coming to an end. In such cases, DSS and FIVDB would have been actively seeking funding to continue to a next stage within targeted communities (with criticisms more likely to be raised in terms of concern that there is continued dependence on NGO support as a result of their activities in these areas, rather them having a clear exit strategy). Both DSS and FIVDB have a much more modest agenda of advocacy, neither seeing this as their main role. As one of the founders of DSS noted: 'NGOs' job is to demonstrate efficient strategies and methods and not to take over from the State' – rather she saw their activities as complementary to the state, and needing to work within the state system. She saw that this both has direct effects on improving education immediately (whereas advocacy has a long time lag which means a generation of children would already have missed out), and also that their provision is itself advocacy, by providing evidence of what can work. The other founder had a slightly different view of seeing their role also as making sure the state system works properly. However, the main investment of her time with government officials was aimed at gaining support for DSS provision and leverage resources from the state to get more children into school, rather than towards a planned and conscious strategy of advocacy (as apparent with ITA).

2.2 Influence of organization structures on approaches towards public action

The different types of organizations (very large, relatively inflexible and bureaucratic government structures versus small and relatively flexible NGOs) influence the type of provision that they are able to offer, and their ability to respond to changing needs of the population. For example, in the India case, given the large (and expanding) migrant, multilingual population, the BMC has recently responded to demands for provision of education in English medium schools (a demand that is currently mainly being met by the private sector). In recognition of its inability to cope with this alone, the BMC is hoping to work with NGOs. DSS has chosen to stay outside of this, as it does not fit clearly with its own public action agenda. Rather, it has responded to the large, migrant, multilingual population by focusing attention on particular slum areas (along the ports), as well as starting schools on pavements and parks, either in the open or in buses ('Schools on Wheels'). In contrast to the municipal government, it is focusing on two local languages (Marathi and Hindi). Thus, on the one hand, the government and NGO appear to be using different strategies to address the population challenges. On the other hand, it is likely that they are each reaching different parts of this population, as child labourers cleaning fish at the ports, for example, will not be able to attend the government schools given the timing of the school day (regardless of whether they would be choosing to learn in a particular language).

Project Coordinators of DSS were of the opinion that although the State was also focusing on the goal of ensuring every child could go to school, they were not making the same efforts as the NGOs:

> 'They do not have the kind of commitment, attachment, and attitude like us; nor do they undertake such meticulous planning to implement the programme like we do. We go to the dirtiest slums and work with the dirtiest children. But the government officials are not so particular.' (Project, Coordinators, DSS)

The counter-argument to this presented by the Deputy Commissioner of the BMC is that they have to cater to millions of children, which does not allow them to operate in such a flexible manner as NGOs working on a very small scale. It is, thus, partly the scale that each of them operate that differentiates their approach to public action.

In principle, NGOs are allowed to provide education as long as they do not compete with government schooling – they are seen as (and see themselves as) complementary to government's provision, not in competition with it. In Bangladesh, FIVDB (and other NGO) schools have to be set up at least one kilometre away from a government school on land donated by the community. However, many are still in quite close vicinity to a government school, with criticisms by some government officials that they do not really reach out to the difficult areas – a criticism also made by a government official of ITA's provision:

> 'The point is also that schools adopted by NGOs in cities like Lahore are not those in the more difficult areas. The NGOs keep presenting videos and pictures to donors to get money from them. But it is not so remarkable to get results in a city like Lahore– everything is available, books etc.'

2.3 Influence of leadership styles on public action agenda

The variations in public action agenda of the different NGOs is closely related to the different leadership styles. In Pakistan, the leader (Baela Jamil) has the view that the technical expertise that she has developed from previous experience of working for international agencies and as an advisor to government, that led her to establish an NGO, is of particular importance in influencing the state system:

> 'Our strength is the technical expertise, which I have acquired over many years after working in three different countries. It is this technical expertise that make the government listen to us. I feel rather than working independently we should use these expertise to improve the state system. We conceive of ourselves as service delivery organization, which is aiming to become the biggest service provider to the government education sector. We have recently trained 1400 government teachers.'

Her technical expertise, together with ability to network within appropriate government circles, allows her to win respect of government officials, which in turn enables her to make inputs into government discussions on financing mechanisms and development of district education plans, for example. Moreover, she invests time in working together with other major NGOs, and sees ITA as taking a lead in developing a South Asia network of NGOs.

The founder of FIVDB also has a strong reputation as an educational professional in Bangladesh. He is less dominant within the NGO than in the other two cases, and also has a low key approach towards 'marketing' the NGO's activities with government and funders. FIVDB places a lot of emphasis on teamwork, with sharing of responsibilities apparent through the work of a Senior Management Team. This is the only case where it is apparent that there is a succession strategy, with a younger member of staff being groomed to take over the leadership role (and already having a considerable amount of responsibility). At the same time, the current leader of FIVDB has not had ambitions to scale up its activities significantly, nor to invest in an

external image, an issue that some members of staff find frustrating as they feel the NGO is not achieving its full potential. In this case, less emphasis is placed on networking with government officials – where it occurs, this is as part of the process of their provision rather than as a proactive strategy. FIVDB is a member of the NGO education network, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), a very high profile advocacy organization within Bangladesh. FIVDB sees CAMPE as fulfilling the role of working closely with government to influence policy, rather than seeing this as something that it has to get actively involved in itself.

The co-founders of DSS have a strong professional background in social work. In terms of leadership style, the older (and former teacher of the other) exudes an air of quiet confidence and experience, while the younger founding member is dynamic, even somewhat frenetic, at the same time as being very good natured and personable. Both personalities are ones that gain the respect of government officials, with the latter more directly engaged with them through her own initiatives.

2.4 Recognition of NGO activities in government plans

In all three cases, activities of the selected NGOs are designed to contribute towards government policies and objectives. However, there are variations of the way in which NGO activities are recognized in government education plans. In India and Pakistan, education plans recognise that NGOs can help government in achieving its objectives. This provides a framework for establishing a relationship with the state, although does not have a direct influence over it. Formal recognition of NGO activities is apparent over several decades in India. Under the current national education plan (SSA), NGO activities are recognized within the 'Alternative and Innovative Education' strand. In Pakistan, recognition has occurred more recently as part of a donor-driven policy approach, and there are expectations that funding of NGO programmes will be reliant on international (and other, non-government) sources.

By contrast, in Bangladesh, there is silence about NGO provision in recent education planning documents and the 1990 Education Act. This is ironic given the renown of locally-developed NGO education provision. Reasons given by some government officials for its invisibility in education plans are related to the view that primary schooling is the responsibility of the state, with concerns raised about NGOs motives and accountability, as well as different views about the processes of public action (relating to government reservations about teaching methods adopted by NGOs). Importantly, the size and influence of the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) means that it does not want NGOs to curtail its control over education (including over new schools, teacher recruitment, curriculum design etc). Provided NGOs are not seen as being part of an overarching system of provision, they do not provide a direct threat to the DPE's role.

However, in Bangladesh there is a unit within the Ministry of Education for contracting NGOs. The recently established Bureau for Non-formal Education (replacing the former Department for Non-Formal Education[6]) is responsible for contracting NGOs under programmes funded by agencies which have to work through government (the Hard-to-Reach programme through which FIVDB is contracted is funded by UNICEF, for example). As a part of the establishment of the Bureau for Non-Formal Education, a policy document has been written which states 'the

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[6] Under the Department for NFE, concerns were raised about the way in which NGOs were appointed, with claims of 'briefcase' NGOs being established (see Chowdhury and Rose, 2004; Miwa). As a result the DNFE became defunct (although continued to administer some adult education programmes). This has been re-formed as a Bureau for Non-formal Education, with attempts to put in place processes to tighten the allocation of funds.

government will facilitate the development and implementation of a coordinated sub sector programme with support from GOs, NGOs, and broader civil society including DPs [development partners].' However, it is not apparent that its remit goes beyond relations with those NGOs involved in programmes through a surbordinated contractual relationship.

2.5 Influence of funding on public action (or vice versa?)

In terms of funding[7], both ITA and DSS draw on a range of resources – including philanthropy, corporate social responsibility as well as international agencies (Table 1). The latter is particularly important for ITA which is involved in large USAID programmes, as well as ones associated with child labour for the US Department of Labor. International agency funding is however, insignificant for DSS which draws more on locally-based funding resources, as well as having access to some government funds through contracts within the government's 'Alternative and Innovative Education' programme within its overarching education plan (SSA). Aspects of FIVDB's education work addressed in this study has been mainly dependent on DFID in recent years although, as discussed below, like DSS it has diversified into taking on government contracts (drawing on UNICEF funding). An important reason for this diversification is realization that DFID funding may not be sustained, and so the need for alternative sources to ensure the continuation of its education programme (with DFID actively encouraging FIVDB to develop a strategic plan as a means of identifying new funding sources). DSS does not have problems getting funds for its work – rather, given its reputation, funders seek them out. As such, funders become involved in supporting DSS's vision (which they choose to support) and do not tend to try and influence it.

Both DSS and ITA receive funding from the corporate sector. In the case of ITA, Baela Jamil notes that:

> 'We are increasingly engaging with them [the corporate sector] to mobilize funds. We must remember that in our culture there is a strong sense of social responsibility where those who have resources feel the pressure to share some of their wealth with the bigger community for individual satisfaction as well as social status. Also, with the changing corporate rules under WTO, corporation and medium scale businesses have to invest in social responsibility. Even here we feel that the corporate sector is more willing to come forward if the services are geared towards improving the state education system.'

This highlights an interesting convergence in funding that she identifies as being associated with local culture together with an international trend. For ITA, the key issue is that corporate funding provides an additional/alternative source of resources, even though this generally has strings attached as the corporate sector is keen for its contributions to be visibly identifiable (eg in terms of a school building, or physical resources in a school) that it can attach its name to. Even so, the corporate sector appears more interested in supporting state schooling, rather than private or NGO provision. For example, during a visit to a sugar factory which supported aspects of ITA's school improvement programme (through the building of classrooms in particular), it was apparent that the benefactor was not even aware that NGOs are also engaged in provision directly (and was not familiar with their 'non-formal education' activities).

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[7] It is extremely difficult to get accurate information on funding sources and amounts for NGOs. While there is some officially-reported data (eg for FIVDB), this is not broken down by type of activity. In addition, there are sometimes wide differences between how funding is officially categorised and what is observed in terms of main funders – particularly where there is a desire of not wanting to appear dependent on international agencies.

In general, for DSS and FIVDB, the NGO's vision influences its funding sources rather than the other way around. By contrast, for ITA, acceptance of diverse funding sources results in the organisation lacking ideological clarity in its vision and purpose (other than in terms of its overall agenda of influencing government policy). As such, ITA is engaged in a range of activities ranging from strengthening government provision through school improvement programmes through to supporting a major voucher scheme enabling the expansion of private schooling.

2.6 Debates over terminology for public action agenda

While stated visions of NGOs and government appear compatible, underlying tensions are evident, as debates over terminology that is commonly used to describe NGO activities highlight. The term 'non-formal education' has become closely associated with the form of provision that NGOs are involved in (as opposed to 'formal' state, or private, provision) (see Rose 2007). Even though some evidence suggests provision by NGOs can be of better quality than state provision, the term non-formal education has become associated with second-rate provision given its focus is on catering to the most marginalised. For this reason, in Bangladesh, NGOs do not want their programmes to be associated with the term NFE, but rather want it to be seen as part of an overarching system of provision. In many cases, NGOs adapt provision with the aim of making it more flexible to local conditions, and also organise it in a shorter cycle. FIVDB's schooling differs from this (and from other NGO provision in Bangladesh) as it has always offered a full five-year cycle, in line with government schools, and is more akin to the formal school structure. FIVDB calls its own provision (funded independently of government) the 'child education programme' which, according to them, takes place in 'non-registered primary schools'. However, government officials interviewed view NGO provision generally as not equivalent to 'full primary schools' (ie ones conducting the full 1-5 cycle, with adequate classrooms and teachers who follow the national curriculum).

Baela Jamil of ITA articulated some of the concerns over terminology which mirror those portrayed in international debates (in which she frequently participates). In line with ITA's overall mission of influencing public policy, this is an area about which she has been advising government:

> 'Our vision is that basic education is really a continuum where formal and non-formal are not opposed to each other but form a continuum. We feel both are government responsibility and our role should be to support the government rather than rival it. I have long been arguing for challenging the whole concept of non-formal. I feel it is a very western classification, which has been imposed on our system of education. We do not have such rigid divides. However, the term is prevailing because there are a lot of groups with vested interests in non-formal education. What we are now doing is to argue with the government to remove this distinction between formal and non-formal and to make the budgets between the two transferable. Currently, there are separate budgets for the formal and non-formal schooling system, which means that funds are often wasted even if they can be used in the non-formal schools, as the budgets are non-transferable. I have been briefing the secretary education, Punjab Government to table this policy paper'.

Similar tensions over terminology are apparent where NGOs are involved in supporting government provision. In some contexts these have become known as 'school adoption' programmes. However, in Mumbai, the term 'school adoption' has been dropped from government plans as this was being seen by some government officials and NGOs as complete NGO take-over of a school akin to privatisation which became very contentious.

3. Evolving forms of engagement between NGOs and government

Within all the education cases, a variety of relationships with government are apparent – in part depending on aspects of their activities (and whether these receive direct funding from government) as well as changing over time. As much literature has documented, international agencies are often a key influence of the motives of NGOs shaping the public action agenda. Given that evidence on the donor-NGO relationship is readily available, the analysis in this paper deliberately does not focus directly on this, while recognising that international agencies (particularly when involved in direct funding of NGOs) can be a central conditioning factor in shaping NGO-government relationships. Even so, there are other dynamics in the relationship which go beyond the influence of donors, which are considered in more detail here.

3.1 Shaping of the relationship: NGO investment in cooperative relational contracts

All of the education NGOs included in the study started out by developing relationships with government outside of formal, subordinated or mutual contracts. This has involved investment of energy and time which has led to the possibility of engaging in formal contractual arrangements in the Bangladesh and India cases, as discussed below. For ITA, the relationship between the founder and government began before the NGO was established and was itself a motivation for the formation of the NGO.

Even without formally-written agreements, from their inception the NGOs have inevitably engaged with government in a variety of ways. In all three cases, the NGO leaders have invested in building cooperative forms of engagement with government officials, although they recognize that at times this has been time-consuming and frustrating. However, they have been keen to avoid confrontation in order to ensure their organization develops a strong reputation in the long-run. This is important where, for example, NGOs are dependent on government for access to resources such as textbooks, and also want to ensure the possibility of graduates from their centres entering government schools (see Section 3.3). Investing time and energy in building a reputation could be considered to be particularly crucial for education, given the nature of provision which is necessarily long-term and on-going.

For ITA in particular, investing time in the relationship is key to the organisation's aim of influencing government policy. In this case, a cooperative relationship with government had already been developed through Baela Jamil's high-level technical expertise. A key motivation for establishing the NGO was for her to have policy influence that is longer-lasting than her former politically-linked government advisor roles, and to have a more direct influence on change in the country than possible through international UN posts held previously. There is an explicit ethos within the organization that staff will not offend or be rude to government officials, and to follow the normal channels. However, they are expected to cultivate their own relationships with government officials, and Baela Jamil only intervenes if they are unable to get things done through working with the relevant official. From discussions with local staff, such situations clearly do arise where they are unable to resolve difficulties. Given Baela Jamil's nationwide reputation, she is able to address these problems successfully. Moreover, her contact with local government officials is an important aspect of developing the profile of the NGO.

In India, DSS was able to influence government policy to support its own activities as a result of developing a cooperative relationship with government officials. Through negotiations with the BMC it was able to persuade them to do away with the mandatory requirement of a birth certificate for admission to municipal schools, which was a key deterrent for children living in the

slums who were born at home or had migrated from other states and hence did not possess a valid birth certificate. After prolonged and intense negotiations, the BMC apparently passed an order allowing admissions without birth certificates. With its usual modesty, DSS does not claim exclusive credit for this success, but recognizes the importance of collective action with other NGOs:

> '…we do not know if this was due to our influence alone and if we can claim the credit. Actually we were often part of joint meetings with other NGOs and the BMC where these issues were discussed, so we may have contributed in some way.'

In this example, DSS is not concerned about promoting its own image (which is more important to ITA) but happy provided it achieves the desired result of enabling children to go to school.

3.2 Motivation of government to invest in informal relationships with NGOs

Government officials have less interest (or time) in investing in building an on-going relationship with particular NGOs – the initiative for this invariably originates from NGOs. The main motivation of governments in engaging in a relationship with the NGOs is associated with the resources that they are seen to attract, which can help to support government moves towards achieving its goals. This is most strongly articulated in the case of Pakistan, where the 'private public partnership' agenda is most explicit in government policy (with a strong influence by donors apparent). For example, a senior Ministry of Education offical noted:

> 'We in the education ministry have long believed in it [engaging with civil society]. The public-private partnership in education that is being internationally encouraged today was adopted in Pakistan from early 1980s. During the socialist government in the 1970s, the government nationalised private and voluntary schools. However, this resulted in deterioration of these schools. Therefore, from late seventies, there was a realisation that private sector and civil society has to be involved in delivery of education as the state cannot meet these objectives on its own.'

In all three cases, regardless of the prominence of NGO activities within a government policy framework, government officials appeared not to have a positive image of them in general, antagonised by a general attitude by NGOs of seeing the government as not working effectively, together with a view that NGOs are not honest or accountable to government/citizens, and try to wield too much power. Their frustration arises in part from the lack of control that the ministry of education has over NGO activities, which are not required to report on their activities to them. As such accountability with government is only apparent with respect to the acquisition of external funds, for which NGOs have to register to enable them to operate. In addition, government officials see NGOs as frequently pursuing activities for which they are able to obtain such external resources (and so following the international agenda) rather than defining an agenda that emerges from civil society that it seeks to represent. In Pakistan, a senior government official noted:

> 'Why does civil society not regulate crime and corruption rather than provide NFE? – Because there is no money in it! Look at what donors did in '79 – they gave money to madrassahs. Now Pakistan and the rest of the world is facing the music! If the govt were strong, it would say that it doesn't need their money. If we don't check civil society, we will face another Somalia. NGO voices are becoming very strong because they are not run by poor people. Why does civil society want to take on service delivery? What are their ethics?'

Even so, government officials across the three countries recognized variability across NGOs often noting that the selected NGOs are different to the general image, and are more

trustworthy. The status of these NGOs with government is apparent by the ways in which they have been called upon to take part in discussions to shape more formal state-NGO relationships – in Bangladesh for the design of contractual arrangements for the Hard-to-Reach programme, in India in the development of the PPC, and in Pakistan more generally in advising on areas of policy.

Relational contractual processes are apparent across the different activities of the NGOs, and also across different time spans. Given the NGOs selected are based on the premise of seeing engagement with government as being a key aspect of their approach (for different reasons), investing in on-going relationships continue to be a strong feature even where the NGO becomes involved in mutual and subordinated contracts with government. However, as greater degrees of formality result in NGOs becoming more subordinate to government, government becomes more interested in taking control, which in turn influences the nature of the informal relations that have developed. These issues are explored in more detail below.

3.3 Direct NGO provision funded from and accountability to non-government (international and local) sources: No written rules for NGO-government relationship

Where funding is independent of government, and NGOs are not reliant on government for other resources (for example do not need to access government school buildings either for their own programmes, or to provide support to government provision), NGO education provision often operates in parallel with government with no formal written agreement. This is most apparent in the case of Bangladesh where most of FIVDB's provision is independent of government, and NGO provision is not explicitly mentioned in government education plans. In general, FIVDB has developed a positive, cooperative relationship with government. However, uncertainties in arrangements can lead to confusion on both sides, which become particularly apparent when policies change that affect the education system more generally. A reason for FIVDB's activities becoming more intertwined with government is due to their shift in emphasis towards ensuring that graduates from its schools can be 'mainstreamed' into government secondary schools, a move that is also apparent in India, and has become associated with NGO provision more generally in recent years (see Rose, 2007). In Bangladesh, there is now a desire for their students to take the scholarship examination, and the new end of primary cycle examination to allow admission to government secondary school. This move means that FIVDB needs to ensure that its students follow the government curriculum and so have access to government textbooks, aligning FIVDB activities closer to government (Box 2).

Box 2: Development of NGO-government relations with unwritten rules: Experience of mainstreaming children into government schools

Bangladesh
Although FIVDB offers a full cycle of primary schooling, graduates from CEP cannot take the scholarship exam for secondary schooling. While they can take the secondary school entry exam, they will not be able to get financial support for it which makes it extremely difficult for FIVDB children from poor families to attend secondary school. This is a key area of concern for FIVDB and one they say they have taken up with government.

The shift that is currently happening towards introducing a class 5 (end of primary school) exam could make things more problematic if this is used for selection to secondary schools since FIVDB schools are not formally approved by the Ministry. In a pilot stage of the class 5 exam, BRAC applied for approval for its students to take the class 5 exam which was granted. However, no other NGOs have this permission. The government officer mentioned that it was up to the NGOs to take initiative in getting this permission and told FIVDB this when they came to ask about it. FIVDB however indicated that they found about it only once it was too late. BRAC, which has a different type of relationship with government than FIVDB and others, did not coordinate with other NGOs, or inform them of the process required. This highlights a problem identified both by government and FIVDB, namely that NGOs do not coordinate amongst themselves.

Since 2005, government has started giving NCTB (government) textbooks to NGOs who follow the government curriculum. According to the circular, these would be made available to NGOs who have 'government approval'. This gives rise to confusion, as the District office asks FIVDB if it has such approval which it does not (other than through the NGO Affairs Bureau). So far, this has not caused a problem, in part because CAMPE (who campaigned for textbooks to be made available to NGOs) has been acting as an intermediary in the distribution of books. However, there appears to be some nervousness on the part of FIVDB about this, given the lack of clarity about the process and so the possibility for the informal rules to change. The government officer indicated that requesting NCTB books is the main time when FIVDB comes to the government office, and is the only time that they can officially go to visit the NGO schools (to check whether what is included in the request is correct). Despite these potential difficulties, FIVDB has so far been able to get access to government textbooks, with delays similar to those that would face government schools. When FIVDB staff raised these various issues at the district level, they commented that government officials sometimes treated them in a derogatory way, seeing them as 'scheduled caste'.
Source: Author's fieldnotes (April, 2007)

India
By 1992 DSS had sufficiently established its credibility with the school to engage in quarterly meetings with all the language medium principals and teachers to '…crosscheck the regularity and performance of the children in the school.' (DSS Annual Report, 1992-93). The BMC now conducts exams for the DSS children in 3 subjects –Maths, Hindi and General Knowledge-over a period of 3 days and an assessment marksheet is issued similar to the one issued to children in government schools. This provides '…credibility to the certificate awarded to the children after the final evaluation' (DSS Annual Report 1996-97). In addition, DSS graduates are allowed to sit for entrance examinations to secondary school and on gaining the appropriate level get admission into the BMC schools. However, this process involves investment of time for DSS, which has a dedicated member of staff assigned to organizing mainstreaming of children into government exams and schools. DSS reported that NGOs face problems because there is a shortage in the supply of mark-sheets or at times even the teachers refuse to sign on the mark sheets since the child is not from that school or has not been taught by the concerned teacher. This partly arises because teachers are concerned that admitting these children will create difficulties in their classes, and so make more work for them. In addition, while permission to allow the children to appear for exams has to be taken every year in December, the children, who were often from migrant families, were not available during the scheduled time for the exams. DSS has been trying to negotiate for more flexibility in the exam schedule and trying to convince the BMC to allow the children to ideally appear for the exam in

February every year so that they start attending the mainstream school immediately after in March. This minimizes the risk of the children disappearing in the interim period if the exams are taken much earlier as currently occurs. But DSS has persevered and the school cooperates because, according to the Director, '… we do all the work including fetching the writing paper and sealed question papers from the ward or appropriate office of the BMC'. DSS reported that the process of obtaining permission for the exams has become smoother over the years only because they themselves have become familiar with it.

Source: Padmaja Nair case study report

As the examples in Box 2 illustrate, even where NGOs and government do not have a formal contractual relationship, there are various ways in which they need to interact – in particular for the NGO to access government resources and systems (textbooks, scholarship examinations etc.). In these circumstances, the lack of written rules can lead to a situation where government officials can exert control over the NGO. The success of the NGOs in negotiating these issues depends on their closeness to government. In the case of FIVDB, it would appear that while they have developed a cooperative relationship with government through recognition of the quality of their provision, the NGO's desire to keep a low key with government, and not use their role to get involved directly in policy advocacy, means that the government has been able to dominate in some circumstances.

From the government perspective, the lack of written guidelines within a hierarchical government structure makes it difficult for district officials to liaise with NGOs even in circumstances find it desirable to do so. District government officials in Bangladesh noted that relations were therefore mainly 'personal' rather than formal. It was mentioned that, in order for district officers to visit NGO schools when they are invited (eg for sports days and other events) they are unable to do so in an official capacity without getting permission from 'higher authorities'. The district government officials gave examples of where they have been willing to take initiative in liaising with NGOs, and have attended NGO activities in an informal (not government) capacity when invited, suggesting that they do have an interest in doing so. A reason for this could be that attendance at such events has a certain status. However, the bureaucratic processes in having to seek permission from the administrative cadre are cited as a disincentive for them, and create inertia on their part. This appears to be in part due to frustrations that they have to take orders from those who have less experience of education than them (noting particularly the split between the administrative cadre at the higher/central level who are 'floating birds' between different ministries, and professional education cadre at lower levels). Neither FIVDB nor government officials were able to refer to written documentation that outlines procedures for district officials interacting with NGOs. One government official suggesting that the situation might have arisen as a result of officials being verbally told or discouraged from attending NGO events, and that attendance is an 'unofficial relation' with the NGO which is nothing to do with government. A reason for this put forward by the government official was that there are numerous NGOs in the country, some of whom engage in controversial activities. The attendance of a government official gives the impression that the programme is legitimate and has government endorsement whereas, in reality, the motives of some NGOs may be problematic. The difficulties that arise can, therefore, be attributed to the lack of a system for NGOs to register locally. This would provide a marker that they had fulfilled conditions, allowing NGOs such as FIVDB to be seen as 'legitimate' in the eyes of the government.

In a more general atmosphere of hostility of the Bangladeshi government towards NGOs (as evident from the lack of recognition of their contribution within education plans), it is apparent that FIVDB's investment in developing a long-term relationship built on trust has been important in ensuring in having a generally cooperative relationship with government officials in the

absence of any written rules. However, the experience of both FIVDB and government has led both sides to suggest the need for formal guidelines to clarify the ways in which they liaise and, from FIVDB's perspective, ensure they have a right to access books, entry for their students to government examinations etc rather than having to rely on informal approaches to addressing these issues each time the situation arises. Both sides also indicated the importance for guidelines to include the need for NGOs to coordinate amongst themselves. A key stumbling block in moving forward on such guidelines (which both sides have raised for some time) is a decision over who should take the lead in preparing these. One district government official said that it should be the responsibility of the NGOs, or part of an inter-ministerial dialogue (since education cuts across different ministries). Alternatively the NGO Affairs Bureau was seen as playing this role (although, from our previous work, it was apparent that it would not have the capacity to do so as it was already over-stretched – see Delay et al, 2004). On the other hand, NGO officials saw it as the responsibility of the government, particularly of the Directorate of Primary Education. In FIVDB's view, the initiative needs to come from the government in order to indicate their recognition and endorsement of NGO provision of education which is not currently visible.

Unlike ITA, FIVDB's main interest is not in influencing government policy, and attempts to do so tend not to be particularly successful. For example, FIVDB has a very good reputation for its teaching and learning approach (using active-learning). In Sylhet, when asked if they have tried to influence government provision to adopt this approach, NGO staff indicated that they tried to organise workshops. However, government officials said they could not attend (for reasons given above related to the need for permission), although some would go in their own informal capacity. FIVDB organised visits to their schools so government officials could observe and had sessions showing them the approach. The workshop ends by asking government officials how they think the approach could be adopted in government schools. The most common response is that it would be difficult to use it given the over-crowded classrooms in government schools, whereas FIVDB classes are limited to 30 pupils. This response is understandable given the conditions of government schools, and perhaps surprising that the training does not appear to take account of this, and is an indication of FIVDB's limited focus on trying to influence government policy.

For DSS in India, as Box 2 indicates, relations with government evolved over time – initially there was not much need for contact as DSS was running its own centres using its own curriculum. However, contact was needed as the first round of students graduated from DSS, and so the NGO sought to find them places in the local government school. At that point, DSS interaction was informal, at a local school level, and limited to active facilitator between parents and the school in helping them to gain admission for their children. This was then followed up to track their performance in school. As the need to engage with government officials evolved, the Director of DSS had to invest time in identifying relevant individuals and develop their trust as she was not already known to them. The visibility of DSS's provision locally has allowed it to develop a strong reputation with the BMC for being a credible organization working with slum and street children. Over time, this has led to closer involvement of the BMC who, since 1997 (as a result of the efforts of DSS in initiating dialogue with the BMC). While DSS has generally successfully maneuvered a cooperative relationship with government by starting at a very local level and moving upwards, it admits that there can be problems at times where teachers are against NGO intervention for they feel that this is an unnecessary interference (particularly where it increases their workload). The President of DSS was however, convinced that while at the individual level the government staff understood the ethos of NGO interventions it is at the system level that gaps exist, and that individuals, rather than institutions, appear to matter in the government.

3.4 NGO support to direct government provision: towards mutual contracts

    Joint ventures

Activities of NGOs associated with support to government education provision are often organised in terms of 'mutual contracts' with government, where they each have separate funding sources and are undertaking complementary forms of provision within a common vision of public agenda (in terms of improving the quality of education to those in school). These activities usually involve a more formalised joint venture arrangement with government. These are presented in the form of an MOU outlining the roles and responsibilities of government and the NGO in delivering education within a government primary school. As they are intended to be 'joint' ventures, a question arises of who draws up the MOU and how this is negotiated.

In Pakistan, in the initial MOUs developed by the government for the school improvement programmes, ITA was asked to give money to build a wall and take care of the infrastructure rather than provide facilitation and professional support. The government did not want the NGO to interference with their teachers especially with their hiring and firing. However, as a member of senior management team highlights, 'ITA didn't see its role as fixing light bulbs and letting govt off the hook' so they negotiated with the government for over six months before the first MOU was finalized, allowing ITA to play a role in actual delivery of education within the school. ITA now prepares the initial draft of MOUs based on the activities it intends to undertake, rather than this coming from government. It has developed a process of developing this arrangement, as described in Box 3. As is apparent, this model requires ITA to liaise with government officials from the level of teachers, through to district, provincial and federal levels. It is also evident here that ITA is leading the relationship as is providing resources and inputs to the government system. ITA takes pride in its ability to draw up the MOU and the formal letters of agreement with government, and that it was the first NGO to initiate the preparation of these. Through doing this, it considers that it has helped to build the capacity of district government who did not know how to draw these up. The leader is clear about her motives for drawing up formal arrangements:

        'I wanted the understanding to be formal. Sahee has a lot of problems in its work
        because it did not have formal relationship. Also we had to have formal agreement
        especially because we are giving technical support as a partner. In our case, we have to
        enter the government schools and we have to work through the teachers who are
        government employees so we simply cannot start the work without formal permission
        from the government. Thus, the MOU is very important for us. This way both us and they
        have some pressure for accountability.'

As district government officers were not initially familiar with MOUs, they were not willing to sign them resulting in a long, drawn-out process as the MOU had to be sent up to the provincial level. Delays have not been due to disagreements about what is included in the MOU but rather slow progression through the different tiers of government, and reluctance on the part of government officials to take responsibility as they were unsure of the legal implications. As such, a compromise is made with the MOUs expressing expectations on the part of government as being 'provisional', thus not clear how this would hold them to account. Now that government officials have become more familiar with the documents, the process is no longer as time-consuming. ITA could only cite one occasion where it considered taking legal action when a local official was not allowing them to implement the programme even though the MOU had been signed. ITA initially planned to sue him in court but then withdrew, given that it would waste organizational energy and also spoil ITA's reputation within the government circles. This again highlights ITA's approach of getting its demands met by the government through negotiation and

skilful manipulation, rather than confrontation which it recognizes as being counterproductive to its aims.

Box 3: ITA processes for developing an MOU

Phase 1: In the first phase, ITA identifies the schools that require attention and getting an orientation about them. From this very step direct contact starts with the officials within the Ministry of Education. ITA has to obtain a list of potential schools for partnership from the government school directorate; explain to the officials the purpose of the project; and arrange with the department officials a joint introductory and observational visit to potential schools. This visit is followed by a detailed visit to fill out the Needs Assessment Form with the help of the Head teacher and staff of the school.

Phase 2: The second phase starts with signing of a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Education about adopting the chosen school. An integral part of the initial work is to hold sessions with teachers and students on Hopes, Fears, Expectations and Desires about the partnership. At the same time, during this phase a survey of the community is conducted to identify partners within the community. This is followed by formation of a School Management Committee/ School Council. One nominee from the Department of Education is required to attend the monthly meeting of the Council.

Phase 3: In the third phase a School Development Plan is finalized with input from all the staff and the School Management Committee members. The Plan implementation begins and is monitored on regular basis.

Phase 4: The final phase consists of developing an exit strategy for ITA over a period of 2-3 years. In this respect efforts are made to get enhanced resource mobilization from regular Department of Education budget, making the government regularize any extra teachers appointed by ITA as part of its School Development Plan, and introducing income generation activity at the school.

Source: Masooda Bano case study report

The government has been generally compliant with the MOUs drawn up by ITA. It is apparent that the initiatives for the relationship are taken by ITA, which government is asked to approve with little evidence of government officials identifying a need to which ITA responds, or for them to identify areas together. However, the government is not reliant on ITA or its resources for its survival, and where it feels the NGO is stepping on its toes in terms of areas of responsibility could draw a line with what it is willing to accept. Up until now, such a situation has not become apparent, perhaps partly because Baela Jamil has her ear close to the ground with government and is able to work within its agenda. ITA is able to get government input at points that can facilitate its work, without engaging in a deeper relationship which would involve government in the project development and planning – a point that does not go unnoticed by government officials. As one executive district official noted:

> 'We were not involved in the development or design of the programme. We were asked to participate in various functions but our feedback was never sought or actively incorporated in the operations. The thing is that when you have already bought the ticket you have to follow the set route. Since they develop the project before they come to us they have no space to accommodate changes... I asked them that they should work with us closely to develop the syllabus and also get us to take exam of the children in their

literacy centres as they had been doing this on their own. But, so far this has not been done.'

In general, government officials, particularly at lower levels of the system, are willing to accept this arrangement in part due to the benefits that ITA brings at no cost to them, as one district official noted:

'They ITA staff keep a lot of contact with us. Whatever they want to do they get it passed by us. They give us a lot of opportunities for training. From us they only demand human resource commitment. They do not create any financial burden on us'

In addition, they can see the positive results from their projects, which are professionally-run – noting that ITA's activities are more visible than the 100s of other NGOs. This visibility is partly made possible by the field visits that ITA arranges for government officials, which are clearly highly appreciated. However, there is variability in government views, with one district official being very critical – indicating that ITA does not coordinate much with them or keep them well-informed. He also noted that ITA was avoiding getting involved in government initiatives (Citizen Community Boards which provide matching funds from government for NGO proposals), but rather were doing their own thing. There also appears to be greater resistance by senior government officials who are more sceptical about the benefits that ITA's work brings – this could in part be due to their distance from it, and so are putting forward a view about NGO activities in general.

A move towards government exerting control over 'mutual' contractual arrangements has become apparent in Mumbai. In this case, the development of a joint venture with government has evolved from the reputation that DSS has gained through its own provision. This led to DSS working directly to support a local government school. Similar to other NGOs, DSS initially liaised directly with community development officers to get permission for its involvement in the school. For example, it had to obtain permission from the school authorities to organize competitions and school excursions. The process of obtaining permission required an application to the school indicating the nature of the activity proposed as well as the fact that the expenses would be met by the NGO. Thereafter the application was forwarded by the Head Teacher to the community development officer who obtained a formal approval from the AO. While the AO was the final authority, the success of the process was largely dependent on the NGOs relationship with the community development officer, who could pressurize the Head Teachers as well as influence the AO. While schools do not appear to have much say in whether NGOs provide them with support, or the type of support that is provided, they appear generally content with the work of the NGO inasmuch as they do not 'interfere' with what their work (and do not create more work for them). This arrangement worked well for NGOs like DSS which have developed a close working relationship with government officers at a local level.

Over the past year, the deputy municipal commissioner has reacted to the local arrangements between NGOs and community development officers, as he feels that the BMC is losing control (with complaints that there are a large number of NGOs working in an uncoordinated way, with some being disruptive to schools). In order for the BMC to exert more control over NGO activities, a Public Partnership Cell (PPC) was established in November 2006, under the guidance of the Deputy Municipal Commissioner. With the establishment of the PPC, the Education Department was re-organised as a 'single line structure with a unity of command with a single window system' facilitating an interface with NGOs and the corporate bodies wanting to participate in programmes of this kind. The PPC is expected to manage certain aspects of non-government initiatives, including coordination with NGOs involved in school improvement programmes (but not direct NGO provision, which is coordinated in another part of the

government), corporate and individuals and function as the public information and dissemination wing of the Education Department, including to respond to media requests.

The announcement of the establishment of the PPC raised concerns amongst some NGOs who saw it as an attempt by the BMC to clamp down on their activities, with the BMC seeing the role of NGOs as a provider of resources rather than acknowledging their expertise and grassroots experience. The PPC could potentially change NGO-state relations is by making communications more centralised (through a one-stop window approach), and moving away from more locally-based relations between community development officers and NGOs. The danger that is raised by some NGOs is that the process will become more bureaucratic and time-consuming (as NGOs are already experiencing – although the school year has started, they haven't received official permission to run their programmes although well-known ones such as DSS have got verbal agreement). The potential advantage however is that there will be less overlap of NGO activities which potentially take up a lot of time for government schools, as well as eliminating irresponsible NGOs. The Director of DSS was initially critical of the PPC initiative:

> 'I want the government to take up the ownership. It is not our job to run the schools. The current DMC [deputy municipal commissioner] said that the BMC should be responsible for the education of the children and I tend to agree with him. However I am really upset with his attitude towards the NGOs. He seems to believe that the NGOs are dispensable and are only creating a nuisance.'

However, her attitude mellowed over time, partly for strategic reasons for maintaining a smooth relationship with government, as noted below.

Consultations with established NGOs set up by the deputy commissioner in the development of the PPC has led to recognition of the different roles that NGOs play in supporting schools, and adapting the documentation accordingly. Thus, while the government can appear rigid (and, in the eyes of some NGOs, unreasonable), it is clearly possible for NGOs which have investing in building a relationship to have an influence to their advantage (Box 4). In this case, the building of a network amongst some NGOs allowed them to strengthen their voice and influence the government.

In the course of the negotiations the Mumbai leader of DSS, by her own admission, has strategically decided to remain 'neutral' – while she has some reservations about the PPC, she has wanted to use the proposed structure to her advantage, and does not want to get on the wrong side of the District Commissioner as this could create difficulties for the activities of DSS.

Overall, in practice, the MOUs drawn up are vague, and do not provide a clear basis for holding either side to account. In both India and Pakistan where MOUs for school improvement programmes have been drawn up by government, these have in some instances been a cause for tension as the government has sought to control the activities of NGOs within their schools. Their concern has been to extract resources from NGOs (eg learning materials, chairs and desks, fans etc) while resisting direct involvement of the NGOs in the teaching and learning process which they see as undermining their provision. Moreover, the MOUs developed by government are more explicit about expectations on the part of the NGO than on roles and responsibilities of government. Even so, given the trust that both of these NGOs have developed, they have been able to win the case for involvement on their terms.

Box 4: NGO networking to influence government policy towards relationships

Following an initial meeting of NGOs organized by the BMC to announce the establishment of the PPC, a group of established NGOs set up a forum to give respond to the proposal for a PPC. The initial reaction of many NGOs was that they were opposed to the proposal, or had strong reservations about. The group sent a letter to the Deputy Commissioner, to which he appears to have responded constructively. As a result of this initiative, he invited some NGO leaders (including DSS) to join the PPC group in developing the policy document. Some NGO leaders, who were initially sceptical about the PPC establishment, are impressed with the BMC deputy commissioner's vision and receptiveness, and welcome his initiative. Now that the policy document outlines responsibilities of both NGOs and government more clearly, they think this will make it easier for NGOs to work together with government. Other NGOs remain against the initiative, and take issue with those NGOs who are supporting it. In their view, the school adoption programme is leading to NGOs becoming involved in a form of privatisation of education, which they are against. This appears to be a reaction to the proposal for full take over by NGOs of management of government schools which was in the draft PPC policy paper (on the suggestion of a small group of NGOs) but has been taken out – in part due to opposition of other NGOs, and because the Deputy Commissioner was also not in favour of it. The split amongst the NGOs has therefore allowed government to exclude aspects of the policy that it did not agree with at the same time as appearing receptive to NGOs. Those NGOs which are critical of the PPC have distanced themselves from the discussions. Sadly, during the course of these developments, leader of the NGO who was coordinating the group died. This left a vacuum which it seems nobody has been able/tried to fill. Discussions therefore reached a stalemate, as the NGOs are waiting for the PPC to communicate with them to arrange another meeting and let them know about next steps, while the Deputy Commissioner commented that he was waiting for the NGOs to get in touch. This could partly let him off the hook of moving forward without consulting with NGOs, if he wants to.

Source: Author's fieldnotes

Overall, it is apparent from these examples that genuine mutuality is not apparent – either the NGO takes control of the process with government involvement where necessary to facilitate its work; or government takes control. The former does not require significant compromise over the public action agenda of government, as the NGO activities are not sufficiently significant to be a threat to government (as illustrated in the ITA example). However, where government does feel a threat and so takes over control, this can result in an attempt to curtail the NGO's public action agenda as government starts to stipulate what it is willing to accept from the NGO (for example, with an attempt to narrow down NGO involvement to contribution of resources in initial stages of the PPC). Even so, where trust and networks with both government and NGOs have been established, there are ways for NGOs to negotiate within this.

Co-production

While, in principle, NGOs aim to involve communities in provision (including through school committees, for example), in practice this involvement is nominal and does not have an impact on shaping the provision, or its objectives. As such, the mutual contracts do not clearly involve communities/clients in a co-production relationship.

In reality, the objectives of the NGO and local communities can clash, as occurred in the case of Bangladesh. In principle, the community is involved in managing the school, although in reality

this is undertaken by FIVDB staff. Serious tensions emerged between local culture/religious beliefs and provision which led to conflict with the community (Box 5). Moreover, to the extent that communities are involved, this can be in the form of one-off contributions (eg provision of land for the school in the case of Bangladesh) rather than as an on-going relationship).

Box 5: Community resistance to NGO provision

There were severe and sometimes violent resistance from a section of public on the content of teaching materials. For example, *rob dhan katea* (Rob harvests rice) in one book, and *robber ma dhan banea* (Rob's mother husks paddy) in another book. People became furious since *Rob* is one of the 99 names of God. They objected to the portrayal of God and His mother doing this kind of work. People burnt FIVDB offices and fieldworkers were thrown out of the peoples' houses. People started resisting FIVDB activities.

This was really critical time in FIVDB's history. FIVDB's senior staff held several meetings with the main Imam of famous Kudrutullah Mosque. Ultimately FIVDB was able to convince the religious leaders that they did not do this with any malicious motive to hurt the sentiment of the Muslims rather it is a mistake. During the meeting the religious leaders suggested that FIVDB should prefix a first name so that it is not equated with God's name. This was a serious local issue that FIVDB had to handle carefully and sensitively.

Source: Bangladesh case study report (Nurul Alam, 2007)

In the case of Pakistan, in principle the community is seen to be important in delivering ITA projects but not in shaping its philosophy, or in designing the MOU. The leader is aware of the limits to community participation and that finding ways to interact directly with government is likely to be more productive, as well as having broader benefits:

> 'I feel that we need to come out of this myth of community participation. In our experience, the community is also not very cooperative and forthcoming. Often the space provided for the school is very small and dull. Also, very soon community members start making demands. We therefore have always been keen to establish our non-formal schools in the government school buildings. This way our children also get to benefit from a proper school building. This also improves their self-esteem. At the same time, any investment that we make in improving the school facilities also benefit the government school children coming in the morning shift.'

She also notes the difficulties in bringing the community together if they were to be involved in the development of the MOU, which would require a lot of investment in time and energy.

In India, given DSS's very localized activities, a key aspect of its work is aimed at ensuring a highly-visible physical presence within the community. This is apparent from visits to the slums, where people greeted the founder warmly by name, and she knew the name of individual children within the DSS centres. DSS also aims to involve community members in motivating children to go to school, and monitoring the NGO activities. However, there are again limitations to the community's actual involvement in 'co-production' in reality.

In general, the experience of community participation apparent with these NGOs differs from Ostrom's framework for co-production (1996), which implies that the resources (including time) of community members would be valued, using this to construct production function analysis to determine the relative inputs of different actors. In these cases (as in many education activities, both government and non-government), community involvement is seen to be beneficial to

ensure local ownership etc. (as well as to extract resources), but contributions are not given a value. It is also not the case that communities are jointly involved in the design of the programmes, nor do they specify the activities that they would want to engage in within these.

3.5 Indirect state provision through sub-contracting to NGOs: Subordinated contracts

Where NGOs are providing education directly to children, the government sees this as supplementing its own provision. In some cases, it provides financial support to NGOs for this through 'subordinated contracts' (often drawing on external resources which are channeled through government). Even so, this form of indirect state provision comprises a small proportion of the NGO's funding and, in reality, the NGO has a choice about whether to engage through a formal relationship of this kind. Where they are engaging in these contracts, the NGOs are not dependent on them which provides the NGO with some power to decide whether to follow all of the conditions in the contract fully – if non-compliance led to termination of the contract, this would not have a significant effect on their overall activities. In any case, the government is unlikely to terminate the contract, since enforcement is problematic in practice, and it is reliant on the NGOs which have an established reputation in reaching certain parts of the population. However, NGOs are also cautious about getting into tense negotiations as this could jeopardise the trust that they have built up for its activities more generally (which provided them with the opportunity to take on these forms of contracts in the first place).

In the case of Bangladesh, given the reputation it has developed through unwritten agreements, the NGO (together with four others) was invited to participate in discussions over designing the new organisational arrangements in the government for contracting UNICEF-funded non-formal education programme for 'Hard-to-Reach' children to NGOs (which they are now involved in). An important outcome of these discussions was the design of a process to ensure amore transparent approach to selecting NGOs based on 18 eligibility criteria, which had been identified as a problem in previous experience of government contracting (see Delay et al, 2004). These criteria explicitly mention the need for NGOs to have at least five years experience after registration of working in a relevant field, such that only NGOs like FIVDB who have already developed a reputation would be eligible. An aspect of the consultations also was to involve UNICEF together with government in the process of selecting NGOs etc, such that NGOs were now accountable to both the government and UNICEF.

While this involvement had significant benefits for FIVDB, they reported that these discussions did not give them the opportunity to have an input into the design of the contract (which was written by a Bangladeshi who used to work for an NGO). FIVDB staff indicated that they could see some problems with the contract, most notably the salary of supervisors and amount that could be spent on rent for centres that were considered too low. However, they knew that there was no room for negotiation over this. When difficulties were later raised about this, government officials said that they saw the contract before signing it and could have raised it then, or chosen not to sign. They also said that the contract was drawn up by 'one of them' as it was written by a former NGO person. While the contract is very rigid, FIVDB has tried to make adaptations through implementation (and sought verbal agreement from UNICEF and project officials). For example, in order to increase the salary of supervisors, it has tried to reduce the amount spent on rent partly by using premises in a two-shift system. Government officials have however not allowed this, referring them to the contract. They were able to assert control over the NGO by withholding the release of money for the centres. As such, the written document in this case did serve as a means to enforce the terms of the contract.

While NGO faced problems when it broke the terms of the contract, the government was able to do this with little consequence for them (Box 6). FIVDB did not have the same leverage over government for the clauses it broke. It did not consider exerting legal pressure (perhaps knowing that this would both be time-consuming and expensive, as well as highly questionable whether it could win a case against government). However, it did consider withdrawal from the contract.

Box 6: Implications of government violation of a subordinated contract

From the inception government started violating the terms of the contract. According to the terms of the contract NGOs were supposed to procure teaching materials and other items following procurement guidelines developed jointly by the government and UNICEF. Later in a meeting convened by PD the responsibility for procurement was given to UNICEF. NGO officials consider this as reflection of lack of trust (*asthahinota*) of NGOs by government officials. However, officials in the Bureau for Non-formal Education both at Dhaka and Sylhet expressed their ignorance regarding the existence of such provision in the contract. According to them all the procurements are supposed to be made by UNICEF Programme Officer (PO) as per terms of the contract, even mentioning that NGOs were never involved in the procurement not even in the first phase. On the contrary one of the NGOs involved in the first phase indicated that NGOs procured all the materials at that time. FIVDB field staff commented that they do not get supplies regularly and the quality of materials supplied by UNICEF is not good. Blackboards are not fit for long use and the storage trunk is made of low quality materials, with the locking mechanism breaking after a few uses.

In addition, within government there have been tensions between the Assistant Director (AD) and Programme Officer (PO - specially recruited to be in charge of the HTR programme). According to the contract, the PO is supposed to have the responsibility for the implementation of the project. However, the AD has become involved because the programme he is supposed to be responsible for (post-literacy) has not yet started. He has therefore been given responsibility for monitoring activities on the HTR programme. However, he has exceeded this mandate and, along with the PO become involved in recruitment of supervisors. This has given rise to problems in the AD and PO favouring different candidates for the posts. In addition, there have been confusions in accountability, with supervisors supposed to be responsible to FIVDB for example in being granted leave, whereas they have been going directly to the PO or AD (whoever's side they are on) meaning that FIVDB has not been informed. FIVDB has raised this problem both locally with the AD, referring him to the contract which specifies that the PO is supposed to be responsible. The AD suggested to FIVDB when approached that they should write to the Ministry to suggest he is transferred (clearly realising he would have more power than them, so this would not happen).

Source: Nurul Alam case study report, p42-44; author's fieldnotes

On the one hand, the difficulties indicated in Box 6 resulted in the NGO considering exiting the contractual relationship. This would have been possible since FIVDB is not entirely dependent on the government funding. On the other hand, the NGO was very keen to try and resolve the difficulties and invested a lot of time in this – clearly the trust that had already been built for both sides played an important role, and the NGO was keen not to damage the investment it had made. However, it is apparent that investment in developing a relationship built on trust did not lead to self-enforcement of the contract (as might be expected according to relational contractual arrangements).

It is apparent that the NGO carefully considered its options and strategies to pursue, and decided to follow the path that would not cause antagonism. They even appointed one of the members of staff to focus on resolving the difficulties that had arisen with government. Since the government has control of the budget, and has little to lose if the provision is halted, the need for a strategy on its part is less apparent. When FIVDB did become critical (of the AD and PO), government officials have retaliated by setting up an enquiry committee into FIVDB's activities, claiming that they have violated the contract in terms of rental agreements they have made. Such an outcome potentially has detrimental implications for FIVDB's activities, and it is clearly in their interest to try and resolve the problems amicably, even if this means compromise on its part. From the government's perspective, in general there is less cost to them if the contractual relationship fails. However, local officials are aware of the influence that FIVDB has in the area, resulting in some caution on their part.

In India, DSS has also entered into subordinated contracts with government to run non-formal education centres under the *Mahatma Phule* programme. Similar to Bangladesh, the contract defines the nature of centres to be opened and the funding norms and rules to be followed by the NGO. The agreement was formally signed by the Director of DSS and the AO of the concerned ward on behalf of the Assistant Commissioner, BMC. This is a different process to gaining agreement for DSS's support to government schools, and requires DSS staff to liaise with a different set of government officials. The first part of the contractual agreement indicates the criteria for locating the centres, the minimum and maximum size of the center, the prescribed hours of teaching per day and the number days per month to be allocated for classes and counseling as well as the profile of the volunteer to be hired for the centre. The payment of the volunteer's honorarium is made on the basis of the number of students per centre, a cumbersome clause as the number of students is very flexible in the slums centres. DSS reported that the calculation of payments is so tedious, that while some NGOs are forced to fudge the accounts, others like them are reluctant even to enter into such a contractual arrangement. As with Bangladesh, stipulations about paying staff are again an area of tension between the NGO and government.

Another set of critical clauses in the contract concern the management of funds. While separate accounts for the project are to be maintained, DSS has to submit regular physical and financial statements and money is to be released on the basis of these statements. The responsibilities of the BMC have been defined as the regular release of funds and the stopping the funding arrangements in case of a breach of contract. DSS on the on the other hand is expected to run the centres as indicated and complete the curriculum in the stipulated time of two years. DSS is also expected to '…receive and follow the instructions/orders suggestions given by the supervisory staff of Education Department and give information about the progress of the educational program from time to time.' DSS indicated that it finds it difficult to keep pace with the procedural and reporting requirements under *Mahatma Pule*. While reporting is lengthy and time consuming, funds are not only a problem in terms of delays but are also inadequate. Out of a total of an amazingly low amount of Rs, 800 per child per year, only Rs. 600 actually comes to the organisation as the rest is deducted for books, teaching material and training which the BMC is supposed to provide. The reality however is that this part of the contract is never adequately fulfilled by the municipal corporation and the money too comes in after long delays. Most of the allocation is then earmarked for teacher salaries, allowing very little for running costs.

The President of DSS stated that the funding support given by the state was 'unreasonable', rigid and cumbersome. As the NFE centers witness a considerable amount of fluctuation in the number of children, it becomes tiresome for the NGO to keep track of the amount to be

requisitioned from the corporation on the basis of number of children per month. DSS itself has been able to overcome the low funding issues because it has other sources of funds and is able to give higher salaries to the teachers from its own resources. The stated reason that DSS chooses to access State funds inspite of its unattractiveness is the strong conviction that it is the right of the NGOs and the children for whom they work to access available government funds. Even so, given the small amount of money involved and 'more headaches', the Director of DSS has successfully applied for funds under the SSA government scheme which provides double the resources per student (although this again took two and a half years of negotiation, requiring frequent visits and correspondence with government officials). Through these interactions, it has also been able to adapt aspects of the agreement from those stipulated, for example to exclude the midday meal component (and use resources for other purposes).

A question from the experiences discussed above that arises is why established NGOs such as DSS and FIVDB, which have sources of funding independent of government allowing them relative freedom over the organization of their service delivery, become engaged in contracts with government given that this places them in a subordinated relationship with government, which was not the case through joint mutual arrangements. NGOs have different strategies and motivations for doing this. In the cases studied here, the NGO has a choice of whether to do so, and will only choose this if the government programme is in line with their organisation's objectives. For FIVDB, they reported their motivation for involvement in government contracts to ensure the organisation does not put all eggs in one basket, so employment is secure for staff, particularly with uncertainty about the future of DFID funding. It is noteworthy that BRAC, as the largest and most influential NGO in this form of provision (with some of its own resources through business ventures), has chosen not to engage with the Hard-to-Reach programme contracted through government. Similarly, in Pakistan, larger NGOs have avoided getting involved in subordinated contracts with government for non-formal education programmes, given the restrictions that this places on their activities.

Another reason for FIVDB's involvement is that it wants to appear to cooperate with government, as this has implications for other aspects of its activities. Moreover, while FIVDB has engaged with the programme, it is also apparent that the relationship is not entirely a 'subordinated' one, as FIVDB has been able to revise aspects of the written agreement according to what it sees as feasible and desirable. However, given FIVDB's heavy reliance on DFID for its education programme, and resources committed only until end of December 2007 (without an indication of whether it would continue beyond that), government resources could become more crucial. In such a situation of resource dependence and uncertainty, it is possible that the NGO may have to compromise some of its principles that are the basis of its public action agenda in order to survive. In this situation, the NGO has become a 'reluctant partner' in engaging in a formally subordinated relationship with government. Moreover, the current policy dialogue within the education sector is to move towards a framework for 'public-private partnerships (similar to the approach in Pakistan) in the context of discussions over the education sector-wide approach which, in principle, should incorporate activities and funding of all actors. Experience of working with government in the Hard-to-Reach programme could allow FIVDB to build a relationship with BNFE for future contracts within this framework, but means it has to tread carefully over the areas which have given rise to potential conflict, with the NGO having to compromise on what it sees as the most appropriate way to deliver education with the funds available.

While the programme areas specifically explored in Pakistan do not include ones in which ITA is involved in subordinated contractual arrangements with government, it does engage in this kind of relationship over some its other projects. These have not been the main focus of ITA's

attention, although there is recognition that they could become increasingly important with changing aid modalities towards direct budgetary support, as highlighted by Baela Jamil:

> We must remember that now government has the largest amount of funds. Within the shift toward direct budgetary support, the big donors are increasingly channeling more funds through the government. Under this system the NGOs are required to get the funds through the state rather than getting them directly from the donor agencies. So, the state is going to have increasingly large amounts of development funds at its disposal. Also, the government's own revenues are increasing through introduction of more extensive taxation system. So, it is foolish not to engage with the government.

In these cases, it is not so much an issue of the different actors taking on different (mutually-supportive) responsibilities within a contractual arrangement, but rather that the control of the 'principal' in enforcing its written contract is limited, allowing for flexible interpretation and some contractual discretion by both sides.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, it is apparent that there is unsurprisingly no blueprint for NGO-state relations that emerges from these cases. Variations are apparent, depending in part on the form of public action chosen by the NGO, and shaped by their approach to developing relationships with government. From the perspective of government, there are differences across the three countries of the extent to which NGO activities are formally recognized in its plans. While this can be important to provide an enabling environment for NGO activities, it has limited influence on their day-to-day business.

4.1 Whose agenda prevails?

As discussed, the NGOs vary in terms of whether they view their public action primarily for the purposes of service delivery (FIVDB and DSS) or policy advocacy (ITA). In all three cases, as the organization matures and their relationship with government develops, they start to diversify their activities and funding sources. For FIVDB and DSS, this diversification has remained largely within the focus of the original programme. The agenda of FIVDB and DSS has been relatively stable over time, with sustained commitment to their own provision to disadvantaged children. For DSS, for example, they have extended to other related activities, such as supporting the government school in the area that they work in. As these organizations have developed, it also appears that they become increasingly inter-dependent with government – requiring more strategic cooperation by both 'partners'. By contrast, ITA has very quickly diversified its activities. In this case, working with government to influence policy is an explicit part of the NGO's public action agenda.

In all three cases, the NGOs engage successfully with government officials to get what they need and can benefit from, as well as to influence policy where desired, but they do not look for input/joint ownership with government.

4.2 Influence of funding on public action, or of public action on funding?

For FIVDB and DSS, particular funding sources have not shaped or determined their activities significantly (rather they have been able to select funding sources to suit their activities). There are some concerns with sustainability for FIVDB, which has resulted in them taking on government funding in recent years. However, the activities associated with these contracts remains within the remit of what they see as the purposes of their public action. Where the public

action agenda of DSS and FIVDB has changed, this is mainly due to building on experience within the NGO, rather than as a result of any influence from government. In the case of India, for example, increased contact with the municipal school system occurred initially informally in order to allow children, has led to extending their activities and brought them in more direct contact with government. This has resulted in some attempt to influence government through its activities, although this remains marginal to its core objectives of supporting its own provision.

By contrast, ITA's activities are very much driven by external funding sources which results in a very broad agenda, depending on what funding is available for (and includes working with the private sector as well as government). In none of these cases is it apparent that NGO activities have significantly influenced the government public action agenda. However, in the case of Pakistan, ITA explicitly uses its influence in involvement in education provision to become engaged in government policy dialogue so, in this way, does affect the government agenda.

4.3 Investing in cooperative relational contracts: Key to developing formal agreements

The NGOs included in the study all have a generally cooperative relationship with government which they have been keen to invest in, and gain benefits from. This approach is partly due to the selection of the cases, given the criteria to include NGOs which are recognised to be successful – part of this success is due to the relationship that has been built with government. It is apparent that such a relationship requires a lot of investment in terms of time (and sometimes patience) on the part of NGOs, particularly their leaders. Investing in a relationship with government is a strategy adopted by the NGOs (explicitly for ITA). In all three cases, the NGOs have been able to negotiate a relationship which in general allows them to pursue their public action agenda without too much intrusion or interference from government. There are some variations across the NGOs whether the aim is to gain the trust of government for their own provision (DSS and FIVDB) or for policy advocacy (ITA) which affects the type and intensity of relationship they seek to foster.

The extent of written documentation determining the formality of the relationship with government depends on the type of NGO activity which in turn is associated with how closely aligned the type of activity is with government provision. For DSS and FIVDB in particular, the evolution of activities have moved from ones that would not require close alignment with government in the early stages of the NGO activity and so not needing written agreements, to ones that use government facilities or funds which require MOUs and subordinated contracts, respectively. The building of trust and a reputation for being a legitimate education provider, allowing them to gain the respect of local government officials, has been key to enabling them to become involved in a formal relationship. Since the reputation of the leader of ITA preceded the establishment of the NGO, in this case it has moved more quickly into a formal relationship. In all three cases, the NGOs show sensitivity towards ways of working with government and, in their different ways, see this as important to supporting their own vision of public action.

4.4 Professionalism and networking of leaders influential for choice of public action, and cooperative relationships with government

The leadership style has an important influence over the nature of the relationship that is built with government, and the form of public action that is pursued. This, in turn, is influenced by the policy environment which is in part an indication of the way in which NGOs are viewed by government (particularly at the centre). The combination of low key leadership style, NGO's motivation for public action and policy environment in Bangladesh results in what the Executive Director of FIVDB termed an 'ambivalent' relationship. In this case, the NGO engages with

government as requires, but does not invest significant energies in developing networks with government as a matter of course. In terms of networking with other NGOs, FIVDB is a core member of CAMPE, but sees CAMPE as responsible for taking on the coordinating advocacy role with government rather than something it has to get involved in directly. In India, the nature and quality of DSS's work as well as its attitude of avoiding confrontation as far as possible has led the officials in BMC to term it as a 'good organisation'. Here, the co-founders have different approaches to networking with government – the younger and more energetic Director in Mumbai has built up contacts with relevant individuals who she has identified through perseverance. The older and more experienced President in Pune is more concerned about investing time in supporting the children directly. In Pakistan, the founder's technical and professional expertise is key to the establishment of the NGO in the first place. Its activities centre around her relationship with government in terms of influencing policy. In addition, she plays a core role in building networks with NGOs, not just in Pakistan but South Asia more generally.

It is apparent that the different leadership styles is an important influence on the form of public action that the NGO chooses to pursue, and the success of the NGO in achieving their different objectives through diverse ways of engaging with government officials.

4.5 Levels and intensity of NGO-government interactions: dependent on form of public action/degree of formality of relationship

In all three cases, the NGO is the instigator of engagement with government, with interactions occurring at different levels of the education system. From the government perspective, this is firstly because NGO provision is a very small part of their overall education provision, so officials do not have time to devote to developing relationships (nor the interest in doing so – if the NGO fails in its provision, government is not responsible for this nor does it have a significant impact overall given its small scale). Secondly, government officials are constrained by the inflexible, bureaucratic environment in which they work (in part necessarily so due to the scale of their activities), which make it more difficult for them to engage in developing informal, on-going relationships.

The extension of education activities that has occurred within all three NGOs over time has resulted in greater and more complex relations with different layers of government. For FIVDB and DSS interaction is mainly at a local level, moving upwards where this is needed to overcome obstacles. By contrast, while ITA's interaction is also multifaceted, the focus of attention is more on the higher levels of government. In all cases, the intensity and frequency of interactions differ according to the particular activity. Under subordinated contracts in Bangladesh and India, interactions are mostly formal, primarily related to the release of funds and can give rise to tensions which are least easy to resolve. On the other hand more intense and frequent interaction occurs through school support programmes (in Mumbai and Pakistan), where NGOs work directly with government providers. MOUs developed for these activities potentially allow for fluidity and flexibility, with an on-going re-negotiating of relationship. They require trust on both parts and so more likely to develop once a relationship has been established and the reputation of the NGO has already been built.

Whilst direct NGO provision which occurs independently of government does not have the same degree of intensity, there are various areas where NGOs need to/want to interact with government to facilitate their work (as indicated in the discussion above in relation to mainstreaming children into government schools, for example). As noted, this requires NGOs to

invest in building a cooperative relationship with government (and schools) in the absence of written rules.

4.6 Conditions to minimise possibilities of conflict: NGO strategies to manipulate relationship

While government officials made some attempts to control NGOs, seeing its role as being responsible for education, in reality the NGOs were able to use strategies to manipulate the relationship to their own advantage. This is particularly apparent where there are no written agreements, or relatively loose agreements in the form of an MOU (especially where the NGO is in a position to design the MOU, as in the case of Pakistan). Even though NGOs continue to adopt strategies when engaged in formal, subordinated contracts, these can be less successful, and government shows greater concern about using its financial control to keep the NGOs in check.

Inevitably, there are some instances of conflict that arise, usually when something changes or new occurs (for example, a change in government policy, or implementing a new NGO programme). However, the NGOs manage this carefully and, while the leadership styles vary, their professionalism is key to successful negotiations. From the perspective of the government officials, the extent of the NGO provision is very small relative to their coverage. As such, they do not feel threatened by the NGO, provided they stay within their own remit of reaching out to those that is difficult for the government to incorporate in its provision.

4.7 Changing aid modalities: Future prospects of moving towards more formalized arrangements?

Debates about different forms of relationship between NGOs and government in education are high on the agenda in all three countries. As noted, PPPs are already explicitly part of the policy framework in Pakistan. Both here and in Bangladesh, there is awareness that the nature of relationships with government could change, with them becoming more closely aligned as a result of changes in international agency support. Where there is a move towards direct budgetary support, NGOs may not be able to rely as much on their unwritten, cooperative relationships. From the experiences noted here with formal, subordinated contracts, questions arise about how a move further towards these would influence forms of public action. This has not been an area of concern in India, where not only have NGO activities been more visible in government plans for some time, but also the NGO is less dependent on international resources.

International agencies which are simultaneously moving towards direct budgetary support at the same time as advocating for PPPs will need to consider carefully the influence of these changes on the relationships between NGOs and government and how this in turn could affect the forms of public action they are able/willing to undertake.

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Appendix

Figure 1: Who controls formal rules of the relationship?