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Relations between
government and NGOs
in service delivery

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Series of research projects

1. Changing role of government in service delivery – 1995-2001

- Can government perform post-liberalization roles?

2. Non-state providers - 2004-05

- Can governments collaborate with NSPs?

3. Non-governmental public action - 2006-08

- Whose priorities predominate in govt/NGO relations?

4. Faith-based service providers –2006-08

- How may authority be challenged through welfare services?

5. Engagement with NSP in fragile states – 2009-10

Focus of study

- Governments' relations with non state providers of services
- NSPs = NGOs, VOs, CBOs, FBOs, and '*for-profit*' organizations
- Primary education/health, basic sanitation
- Field research: Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, *Nigeria, Malawi, South Africa*
- http://www.idd.bham.ac.uk/research/Service_Providers.shtml

The NGPA research in South Asia

- How do 'partnerships' operate?
 - Focus on relationship of NGOs with government
 - Different means and ends of public action
 - NGOs that directly support government services
- Is collaboration possible without loss of NGPA?
- Question assumptions: partnership or subordination

NGOs?

- Common meaning in S. Asia: donor-funded, salaried, not voluntary
- Our meaning:
“Formally structured organizations, not part of government, that claim a philanthropic, non-profit purpose”
- Includes multiple types, roles, funding, services....

The idea of 'partnership' in service provision

- Post-colonial assertion of universal provision
- But NSP grew in response to failure
- 1980s: donor funding of NGO provision
 - Neo-liberalism and SAL
- Mid-1990s: call for 'partnership' through donor funding and international policies
- Organizational archetype:
 - Wide acceptance in principle
 - Rivalry and mistrust in practice

Literature on partnership

1. Comparative advantage? Complementarity
 - NGOs: Innovation, flexibility, close to poor?
2. Typologies of relationships
 - Often descriptive not analytic
 - Partnership = mutuality and retention of organizational identity vs. contract and cooptation (Brinkerhoff)
3. Too close for comfort? Hulme and Edwards 1997
 - Power imbalance, agency and isomorphism
4. Relations not static - shifting and unstable (Najam)
 - Interaction of parties with interests and strategies

Research perspective: constrained choice

- Org. actors adapt to their institutional environment: norms, laws, rules, policies
 - Tendency to isomorphism or differentiation?
 - Change comes from changes in environment
- Actors are agents: exploiting the rules, shaping them, adapting to them or finding other environments
- Strategic choices are affected by
 - Path dependency - established values/practices
 - Resource dependency – control of resources and authority

Research argument

Institutions, organizations and agency

- Government and NGOs have organizational and policy commitments
- These are influenced by conditioning factors: general and specific to policy arenas
- The rules of the particular relationship affect actors' capacity to assert their commitments
- Actors employ strategies to shape and play the rules
- Perceptions, goals, organizational forms and identities may change as a result of the interaction.

Stages of research

India, Pakistan and Bangladesh

Locating case studies in a wider framework

1. History of govt/NGO relations,
2. Study of 3 sector programme areas
3. In-depth case studies
4. Return to levels 1 and 2 to test broader relevance of case findings

Programme areas

- Education: Improvement of government primary schools by NGOs, and NGO provision for 'hard to reach' children
- Health: Management of government basic health units by NGOs
- Sanitation: Collaboration of NGOs with government in community sanitation programmes

Findings: Subordination of NGOs?

Yes but no

- Increased formalization of agreements
- Most agreements are formally vertical

Do these subordinate NGOs?

Yes, sometimes – UPHCP Bangladesh

- Parallel sectors being pushed into ‘partnership’
- + Policy to contract out PHC, funded by donors through government
- + Classical, formal contracts and competitive tendering – rigid application
- NGOs’ options: Adapt, avoid or partially engage

Findings: NGOs do influence policy and practice

- ❑ Orangi Pilot Project: resists ADB investment and promotes component sharing
- ❑ Karuna Trust: 'makes' state/national policy for contracting primary health centres
- ❑ FIVDB: Part of national campaign for policy on community sanitation
- ❑ Door Step School: influences practice for hard to reach children
- ❑ Shelter Associates: increases responsiveness of local government to slum communities

NGOs' strategies: exploit, shape, adapt, avoid

Explanation 1: Structural conditions

Country and policy contexts differ: levels of centralism, donor influence, govt support for NGOs, elite networks.

More NGO influence and more durable relations where:

- Policy is less directed by donors
- Relationships more locally negotiated
- Agreements are mutual, NGO independently funded
- Agreements have strong informal, relational element
- Agreements evolve from informal contacts not from competitive tendering

Explanation 2: NGOs' strategies to manage resource dependence

Dependence: Policy authority and financial control

Broad strategies

- Adapt as a defensive strategy or by choice
- Shape and exploit the relationship, using role as knowledge brokers, selling new approaches to collaboration
- Avoid dependence by reliance on own resources or on multiple funders, and asserting own terms

Explanation 3: Cultivating status as ‘insider’

To win trust, defend relationship, achieve influence

- Base influence on technical skills, proximity to community and funders, awareness of international discourse
- Avoid open confrontation, cultivate relations, give credit – ‘following the normal channels and avoiding offence’
- Use insider understanding of rules and constraints to explain and influence change, without forcing open concession
- Employ soft lobbying versus hard advocacy: voice *with* loyalty.