

Negotiating aid: UK funders, NGOs and South African development

South Africa Report

Research team: Lisa Bornstein (principal investigator and principal author), Isaivani Hyman, Annsilla Nyar and Terence Smith, School of Development Studies, University of Natal, Durban

Contact information: BornsteinL@nu.ac.za (Lisa Bornstein) or (Isai's address)

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Part 1: International aid, NGOs and development prospects

1.1. Introduction

Several years ago we started up a correspondence with researchers in London and Oxford. The researchers there, Tina and Jenny, were trying to decipher how NGOs in the United Kingdom were responding to a new way of conducting development work that was being introduced at the behest of the big funders. Among the new approaches was a move towards so-called rational management tools – logical frameworks in project planning, strategic planning, business planning, all linked to extensive monitoring and evaluation systems. The researchers here in South Africa, Lisa, Terence, Annsilla and Isaivani, also had experiences in the NGO world with similar tools and had worked with a variety of different donors and donor relationships. We thus embarked on a joint voyage to track how NGOs in our two countries, and also Uganda, were faring with emerging development tools and relationships.

We had multiple concerns. Our central concern was that these tools seemed peripheral to the real business and challenges of development, but we needed to know more about their use. We wondered how fast these tools and techniques were spreading, and with what effects. Did this focus on planning make projects work better or have more impact on the ground? Were these tools supportive of, antithetical to or neutral vis-à-vis efforts to promote more transformative, participatory and human development orientated practice? Did these tools help generate better (whatever that might mean) relationships between South African NGOs (herein referred to as SA NGOS) and their funders?

While our initial concern was with tools and techniques, we rapidly (re)discovered that donors were requiring (or requesting) a wider range of operational changes in funded NGOs, and in their strategic focus, staff development, gender approaches, financial packaging, and advocacy, among others. We thus broadened our research to look at what precisely funders, especially those in the U.K., were asking of NGOs in South Africa, how NGOs were responding, and what outcomes could be identified for the organisations involved, their relationships, and ultimately the quality and impact of their development programs.

We were fortunate in obtaining funding from two international sources. The Nuffield Foundation in the United Kingdom financed the core of the South African research and co-financed expenses for research meetings jointly attended by the three-country teams. The International Development Research Council (IDRC) in Canada helped with funding for individual research and writing contributions: the research projects conducted by Shelly Dill and Vicki Tallis, the contributions by Alan Kaplan and Carol-Ann Foulis, and related research assistant and direct expenses. Without the support of these institutions, and the patience and flexibility of those directly responsible for “managing the projects”, the research would not have been possible.

Likewise, this research grows out of the stories and information that people working within the field of development were willing to share with us. Their generous contribution of time, information, and contacts has left us with a clear mandate of recounting their experiences – both positive and negative – so that all can learn from them.

This document, then, contains findings from the three years we investigated these questions. We have concluded our interviews with staff in development and donor organizations, our visits to projects, and our review of internal NGO documents. We have met with our fellow researchers in

the U.K. and Uganda, and representatives from the donors and NGOs in the U.K. to report on our findings. We have shared our initial findings with SA NGOs, grantmakers, and donors through workshops and presentations. At this juncture, we invite all concerned with development in South Africa to review our work. In addition we specifically ask those of you directly involved with the research – or in similar relationships with donors, communities and other organisation – to please let us know if we have “got the story right”. If we have misunderstood or have left out key aspects of your NGO’s relationship to others involved in your work, we request that you let us know.

The report is in many ways the compilation of various voices. The research team itself changed over the four years between initially formulating the research and finally completing it; and we invited contributions from several people from NGO support organisations. There are thus contributions to the formal research from different individuals. The methodology employed was one in which we tried to meet with people occupying different roles in organisations – directors, board members, managers, line staff, fieldworkers, and with organisations located at various points along the route from initial – or back – funding for development to the communities identified as the ultimate beneficiaries of that funding, what we call the aid stream or aid chain. This necessarily took us into different terrains. Geographically our research spanned several continents, from the UK and the US to rural and urban communities in South Africa. The research required examining diverse facets of the organisations themselves, finance, management, planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting as well as less well charted areas of relationships, multiple accountabilities, and political advocacy and activism; some of these pushed our knowledge in new and challenging ways. And the research also took us across racial, class and gender divides, and into questions of power relations as they played out in the relationships we set out to study and in the dynamics of the research – and research team – itself.

The report is structured around seven sections. This introductory section lays out the scope of the study and its principal findings for (a) the South African funding recipients and their projects and (b) the UK funders and UK-based NGOs. The second section of the report reviews the changing position of NGOs in South Africa’s post-apartheid transition, wider information on social, political and economic conditions in the country, and, to the extent possible, overall patterns of development funding. This section also introduces the possibility of independent influences of management approaches. The third section summarises results from the first round of interviews conducted in South Africa with local and international NGOs [reorganise?] and presents evidence derived from job advertisements on the changing activities and internal organisation of South African NGOs; the research has not been published previously and is reproduced in full. The fourth section traces four “aid chains” from their origins in the UK, through Northern NGOs to South African organisations and projects to explore how conditions and expectations formulated upstream affect downstream organisations, their staff and their development activities. The fifth section then turns to key issues for the South African organisations – and our research concerns – drawing on information from the 17 SA NGOs involved in the research. The sixth section addresses a distinctive and key set of actors within the South African context, organisations dedicated to NGO training and organisational development. The seventh section, a concluding one, brings together our findings and reflects on the dynamics of race, class, gender and politics.

1.2 Description of the Research Project

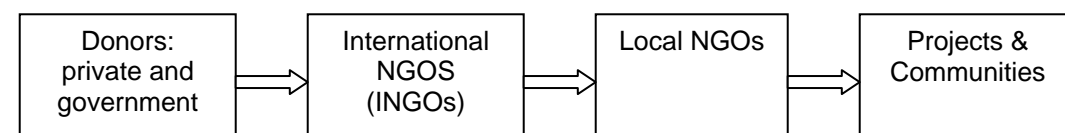
Between 1999 and 2003, an international team¹ undertook research to look at the impact of donors on NGOs in terms of management practices and other conditions attached to funding. The research project explores how the adoption of donor policies and procedures affects the way

¹ The core team is comprised of Tina Wallace and Jenny Chapman from Oxford-Brookes University, [add names for Uganda], Uganda and Lisa Bornstein, Isaivani Hyman, Annsilla Nyar, and Terence Smith, University of Natal. Our many thanks are extended to the staff, affiliates and beneficiaries of the many NGOs with which we met and to the representatives of the donor agencies. We also extend our thanks to the various other researchers/practitioners who provided input into the South African research, Catherine Ogunmefun, Shelly Dill, Carol-Ann Foulis, and Alan Kaplan.

development is understood and addressed by NGOs. Conditions on funding are designed, in part, to increase accountability, effectiveness, and impact through better planning, heightened accountability, and tighter managerial control over development processes. The project investigates the potential contradictions between these practices and the widely claimed objectives of promoting participation and empowerment. There are three case study countries that are the focus of this project: the UK, South Africa and Uganda.

Several definitions are important at the outset. *Donors* is used interchangeably with the term *funders*, referring to all organisations that provide official or private development assistance. We have not addressed corporate sources of development funding, and the defined scope of the research largely excluded non-UK funders for all but the overview sections of the report. *Back donors* refers to the institutional sources of funding, whether government (e.g. DfID) or private (e.g. Princess Diana Fund). *International NGOs* (INGOs) are non-governmental organisations headquartered outside of South Africa, while *UK NGOs* refers to those based in the United Kingdom regardless of whether or not they have *field headquarters (HQs) or offices* based in South Africa. By *South African NGOs* (SA NGOs) we include all non-governmental organisations “headquartered” South African, though not all are formal incorporated or registered. Among these, our focus is on those engaged in development (as opposed to welfare) work. *Conditions or conditionalities* refers to requirements that funding recipients must adhere, regardless of whether they are relevant in pre-finance, project, or post-project phases, and whether they are stated explicitly or not. The *aid chain, stream or flow* refers to the series of organisations and actors involved in the process of moving funds from their initial institutional source to the targeted beneficiaries in the recipient area. A diagram of a simple aid chain is provided below.

Figure 1.1. A simple aid chain



Key research questions

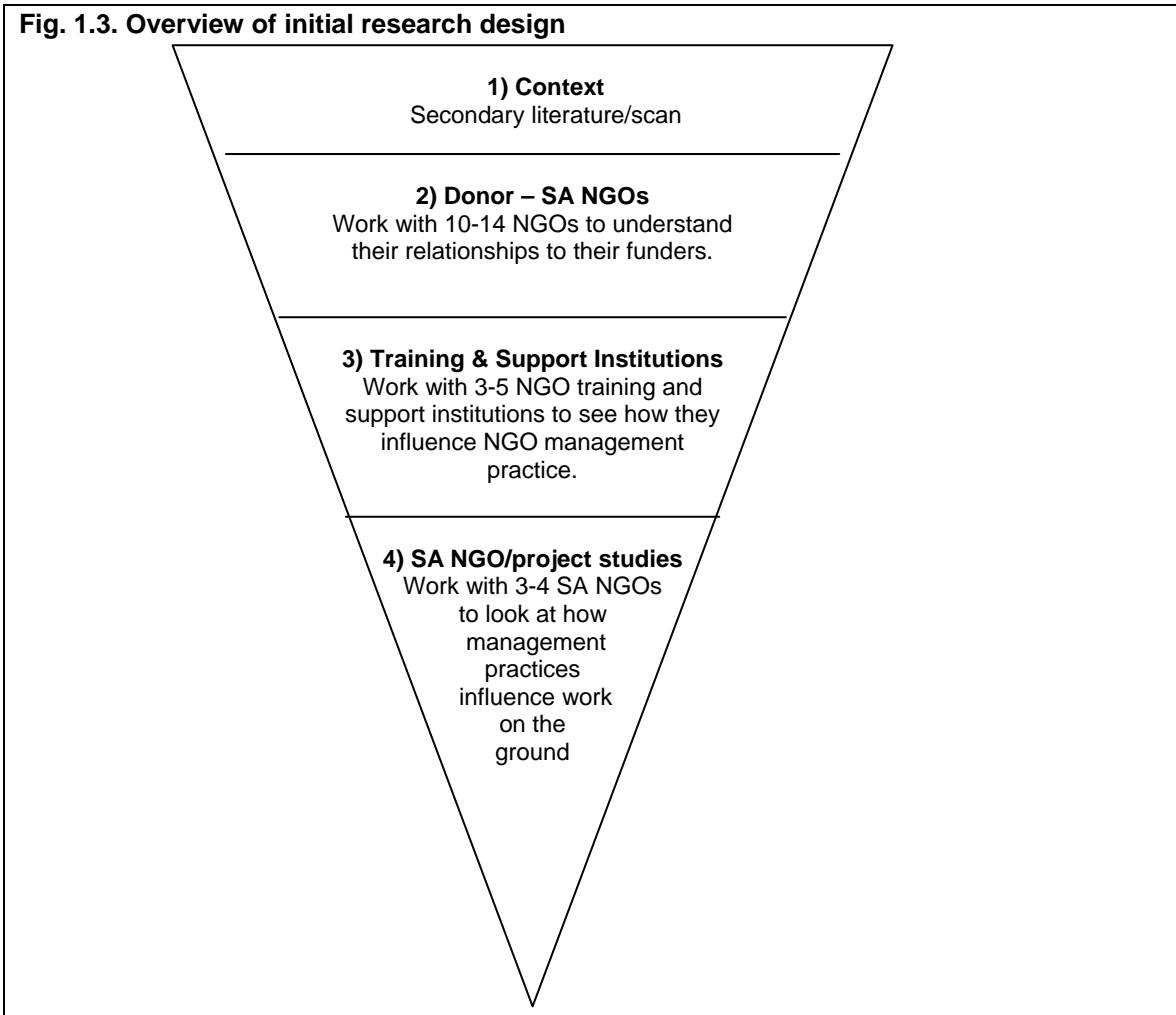
Our central questions focused on uncovering the dynamics of power associated with aid disbursement in order to understand how funding conditions affected the ability of NGOs to perform better on any of these possible criteria: accountability, effectiveness, impact, learning/improvement, participation and empowerment. Specific research questions - many common to the three teams - are listed below:

Fig. 1.2. Specific research questions

- What conditions are associated with the disbursement of funding from donors (institutional, bi-lateral, NGOs)? How far do conditions and requirements influence and direct the work of South African NGOs? How much room is there for manoeuvre?
- How are changes in the policies and procedures of UK NGOs affecting their interactions with their South African counterparts? To what extent are SA NGOS adopting similar rational planning and management tools to those promoted in the UK, and elsewhere? What have been the influences behind patterns of diffusion and adaptation of these tools?
- Do current management approaches enhance the ability of local development actors to promote civil society organisations, community participation, and strong advocacy voices? Do they strengthen the work of SA NGOs to deliver sustainable and poverty-focused development?
- Specifically, have changing patterns, routes and conditions of funding affected the composition and development approaches of the NGO sector in SA? Can clear implications be traced for: SA NGOs' relations to communities; participation and empowerment; efficiency and effectiveness; partnership and local ownership; advocacy and strong civil societies; local knowledge/cross-cultural issues; empowerment; and upward and downward accountability?

- Can NGOs and donors hear the voices of local women and men and community based organisations? What are the mechanisms? How do these voices fit with the dominant paradigms of strategic planning, project management cycles and measurable impact indicators?
- To what other pressures for change are SA NGOs responding? How do these interact with externally imposed agendas?
- What development visions, approaches and organisational approaches have emerged from SA specialist organisations and from SA projects? Is there evidence of learning – locally and internationally - from such experiences and voices? What channels appear useful to such learning processes?

These research questions provided the foundation for our research design and work. The overall design of the research is represented by an inverted triangle, with efforts in each country to provide an overall scan of the NGO sector and the context in which they work, and deep research of links between UK NGOs, the local NGOs they fund, and their projects (Figure 1.3).



The research methods employed included interviews, focus groups, documentation scans, literature reviews, surveys, and field visits. A more detailed description of the research methodology is provided in appendix 1 and Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1 Research components and data sources

Research component	Principal information sources	Data sources/Organisations involved
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Scan	John Hopkins study of civil society CORE/IDASA study of NGO sector Interviews with international NGOs in SA Job advertisement study	Representative samples for entire country 213 NGOs + 21 workshops 15 + participants in 3 workshops All 409 advertised development jobs in a national paper for 3 selected years
UK NGO-SA NGO relations	Interviews with UK NGOs in the UK and SA Interviews/fieldwork with SA NGOs	[add number] NGOs 17 SA NGOs
Case studies	Interviews/documentation/fieldwork/visits with SA NGOs	9 organisations funded by 5 international NGOs (DFID funding)
Support organisations	Interviews/fieldwork/visits with SA NGOs Written contributions	Four organisations Representatives of two organisations

In exploring the above questions, we have organised our report around a few methodological approaches and themes. One concern was to make sure that the links down the aid chain were carefully traced, such that requirements, expectations, understandings and responses could be documented at different organisational levels. Secondly, dynamics around funding from donors are among the many pressures addressed by SA NGOs; thus also needed was an understanding of the changing national conditions for NGOs and the way that donor pressures reinforced, ran in parallel to, or rendered less important other forces for change. Thirdly, UK donors are not among the most important sources of funding in the wider NGO sector in South Africa and we thus were interested in cross-checking how the experience of SA NGOs with UK-based counterparts compared to their experience with other funders. And finally, we found that specific issues addressed by SA NGOs could be best explored by drawing on the breadth of our information – rather than on the specific aid chain relationship; such issues include emerging partnerships between donors and NGOs, the use of new management tools (such as logical frameworks and strategic planning) and their impact on development work on the ground, and the influence of donors in such areas as gender, advocacy, HIV/AIDS, and training.

The remainder of the introduction summarises the key findings emerging out of our research.

1.3 Donors, NGOs and development in South Africa

There are five related points that we highlight here from the research. They are further developed in subsequent parts of the report. Some of the key findings are: increasingly restricted funding accompanied by expanded donor conditions; a system rooted in uneven relationships that reinforces false claims, suppressed critique and fear in recipient NGOs; the adoption of structures, systems, policies and procedures that are peripheral, or even detrimental, to the real aims of development work; the enduring importance of personal judgements and relationships to funding and project management decisions, for better or worse; and challenging examples of organisations that have tried to place self-defined values and politics – not donor imposed conditions – at the centre of their development approach.. The findings from the South African research suggest important parallels with the features of institutional donors relationships with UK-based NGOs, described in the subsequent section.

- 1) The overall funding available to SA NGOs is decreasing, is funnelled through government, and/or is directed to a new select group of recipient NGOs. As a consequence the NGO sector is becoming more fragmented, with highly professionalized and internationalised large organisations succeeding in accessing foreign funds while smaller, more grassroots-oriented and less formalised organisations cannot.
- 2) Donors increasingly dictate the terms SA NGOs must satisfy to access international funding. There is clear evidence that management practices are being transferred to SA NGOs through conditions associated with funding. However, expected improvements in NGO management and developmental impacts cannot be linked tightly, if at all, to such practices. Many respondents found the requirements a distraction to their real work,

confusing, redundant, or destructive. The logic of participation, project implementation, and long-term developmental improvements did not mesh well with the packaging of funding and logic of many of the new conditions.

- 3) There are distinct responses to such funding conditions:
 - In a few instances, SA NGOs have contested the donor requirements, suggested improvements, and, in several cases, insisted on new ways of operating. There are clear examples of SA organisations learning from each other outside of donor structured frameworks, and a few examples of Northern organisations willing to learn from South African ones.
 - Many SA NGOs are willing to accede to donor demands and are extremely concerned to demonstrate their effectiveness.
 - Other SA NGOs others agree to the terms but do not follow them, either because they do not have the capacity or because the requirements do not make sense to them.

Pernicious effects associated with the latter two paths (b and c) include a disjuncture between on-the-ground activities and what is packaged and produced for funders, exaggerated claims of progress or impact, and an interest in maintaining secrecy rather than transparency, with resulting negative effects on learning. While in some cases donor conditions have pushed SA NGOs into self-described improvements, these are the exception.

- 4) While some donor conditions relate to better management in SA, others arise out of concerns to raise the profile and cost-effectiveness of the UK funders. Such organisational concerns and constraints, as well as other pressures on the funding organisations, are rarely communicated to the SA NGOs. Expectations that SA NGOs can move into high-profile areas, engage in advocacy and policy influence, and provide good “photo-ops” for UK fundraising are problematic for many recipients. While many organisations, in both countries, work to overcome the inherent inequality of the funding relationship and build partnerships, weak communication of organisational constraints, UK program managers who acted like “they knew best”, and unexplored differing expectations puts the basis for partnerships into question.
- 5) Personal ties and reflexive practice rather than formulaic management and programming approaches appear to underlie the more successful examples of funding, partnerships, and – less clearly – development impacts. Yet at the same time, there is false dichotomy between personalised and more objective, strategic approaches to programming. Throughout all our research, issues of gender, race, and class intersected with the funding and oversight management processes. There were no funding processes that did not have a personal component.

1.4 Donors and NGOs in the UK²

[note this is my summary/reworking of the UK team’s findings based on your earlier report – if I’ve missed an important point from your country report or mis-stated your findings, please correct!]

Although this report focuses on findings from the South African portion of the research, a brief overview of the UK findings are provided first. The UK portion of the research had among its objectives the aim of detailing how back donor requirements affected UK NGOs. UK NGOs are important intermediaries in the flow of aid from initial sources to South African organisations and

² Initial findings contained in a report by Tina Wallace (Project Leader) of Oxford Brookes University entitled “Trends in UK NGOs: A Research Note”, January 2003

communities; an understanding of the ways in which UK NGOs are constrained, or have their “hands tied”, is essential to the analysis of how they transmit or not conditions to their South African counterparts. These findings thus highlight (a) parallels in the experience of NGOs here and there and (b) links between the policies and requirements of the large institutional donors and the conditions imposed on South African development NGOs.

The UK based research team, Tina Wallace and Jenny Chapman, interviewed various UK donors (including the British Government’s Department for International Development (DfID), the European Union, the Community Fund, Comic Relief and small foundations such as Nuffield and Barings) and over 15 UK NGOs of different sizes and purposes. Some of the UK NGOs, in turn, are donors to NGOs in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

There are four related points arising from the research that we present here. First, the overall funding available to UK NGOs is decreasing. Second, despite the diminishing funds, donors have increasing influence over UK NGOs with respect to all aspects of development practice. To access restricted funding, UK NGOs are willing to accede to donor demands and are extremely concerned to demonstrate their effectiveness. Yet this is difficult to do. As a result, the third point, a number of pernicious effects are emerging in the NGOs, including exaggerated claims of impact, reluctance to challenge the donor requirements, and, as in South Africa, interest in maintaining secrecy rather than transparency. These various trends combine to produce an environment in which, our fourth point, donor demands, regardless of their positive or negative impacts, are transferred uncritically onto those organisations funded by UK NGOs. Further details on these four observations are provided below.

Funds available to UK NGOs are diminishing; small & medium-sized NGOs are negatively affected

Several factors are contributing to the decline in funding available to UK NGOs. One central feature is a change in the way that DfID and the EU fund development work. Their funding for contract work in specific countries is increasing; however this funding is accessed through tenders and is only open to large NGOs with incomes of over £15 million per annum. Rather than rely on NGOs, DfID has increasingly shifted to government-to-government funding. The Civil Society Challenge Fund is now the only DfID source of project funding for NGOs. Available monies through this fund are more limited than in the larger Joint Funding Scheme that it replaced, and the new fund emphasises advocacy and a rights’ approach to development, excluding many agencies deemed to be only doing basic service delivery.

Meanwhile, in addition to moving towards tender-based contract work, the EU has adopted policies that restrict NGO access to grants. In 2000-2001 many UK NGOs suddenly found themselves without funding when the EU, citing a shortage of funding, ceased new grants. Although the EU has since resumed its programme, it now operates via a rolling series of bids around themes determined by the EU. These bids are advertised with little advance warning throughout the year, the timeline for applying is short, and the bids are complex. The new process favours large NGOs or coalitions of NGOs since many previously funded NGOs lack the staff to track opportunities and prepare bids, or work outside of the designated themes.

While changes in DfID and EU policies result in constraints on their funds for NGOs, alternative sources have also become more restricted. Two important sources of funding for UK NGOs – the national lottery and the private foundations – have suffered their own revenue losses. For example, the volume of lottery funding, now known as the Community Fund, has fallen significantly because of the declining popularity of the lottery itself in the UK. Private foundations, small donor trust funds, and NGO capital reserves have all suffered from the fall in stock market values in recent years. The only alternative source of funding for many small and medium sized NGOs is Comic Relief, which has experienced an increase in its funds.

Donor Influence over UK NGOs is increasing

In parallel to the reduced volume of funding available to UK NGOs, there are increasing requirements for accessing funds. Mentioned above are requirements on NGO size and thematic focus for tenders and grants via DfID and EU. There are other areas in which donor demands have expanded. DFID requires logframes for all Civil Society Challenge funding, and contracts are tightly regulated and defined. Strategic plans, policies around gender, advocacy and conflict, detailed reporting, tight and difficult-to-change budgets, and retrospective funding now are all part of most DFID funding packages. Although the EU has always been a bureaucratic and relatively inflexible funder, over the years the Community Fund increased its conditions for funding and the application form expanded. As the Community Fund and, increasingly, Comic Relief rely on external assessors there is a tendency to focus on quantitative issues that can be checked rather than the more difficult qualitative issues.

The reduction in alternative sources of funding, whether from private foundations and trusts or NGO capital reserves, has contributed to heightened donor influence over UK NGOs. The foundations are often more responsive to NGO requests and more prepared to take risks than other donors, and falling foundation funding and NGO reserves remove important sources of flexible non-targeted funding. In the absence of these flexible funds, NGOs must attempt to comply with the requirements of the larger donors. Indeed, as funding becomes tighter, competition increases. Competition appears to exacerbate some of the existing deficiencies and problems in the NGO sector in the UK, and allows donors to increasingly set the agenda and place conditions on those receiving funding.

There are associated negative consequences: exaggerated claims, silenced critique, and secrecy

Associated with the reduced funding and expanded conditions is the rise in NGO policies and practices to demonstrate effectiveness. One spin off is the mushrooming of claims that UK NGOs make about what they can do with relatively small amounts of money. They strive to meet the ever growing demands of donors that they are able to do hands-on work and advocacy, to make linkages and network, to build organisations, to promote partnerships, to be innovative, and to work with the private and public sectors. And there is an upward spiral of claims in order to secure funding. Reporting then becomes a process of proving these myriad claims were met.

Another effect is the adoption of donor tools, again uncritically. While UK NGO staff may voice concerns privately about the impact of many of these tools, they have been publicly embraced. Indeed they are often at the heart of the training and capacity building programmes undertaken by UK NGOs in the south. Because they need the funding, UK NGOs' critiques of donor conditions remain largely unvoiced.

Indeed, one of the most alarming consequences is the fear and secrecy which seems to pervade the entire 'aid system'. The hallmark of doing research with UK NGOs is the requests for confidentiality. Respondents do not wish to damage the NGO's image with either their donors or the wider public by sharing openly issues of failure and problems. The secrecy means that failures, successes, risks and solutions are not discussed.

UK NGOs transfer donor demands onto the "southern" organisations they fund

The conditions that donors place on UK NGOs are passed down to their partner organisations. Increasingly NGOs and CBOs wanting funding in South Africa and Uganda are expected to conform to a set of structures, systems, policies and procedures set in the UK (or other donor countries). Detailed donor demands for reporting are passed down to the next level, as are the onerous budgeting requirements. What is true for the majority of UK NGOs in relation to their donors then becomes true at the next level when they become the donors passing on these demands to the "southern" organisations with which they work.

The risks are many. Tools and procedures may distort the funded organisations and divert staff away from working responsively with local people; this in turn risks the commitment to sustainability through real participation, local ownership and changes to inequalities that keep so many poor. The many conditions may force the Africa-based NGOs to resemble their donor NGOs and each other, squeezing out the diversity and range of possibilities in civil societies in different cultures and contexts. Fear rooted in financial dependence may impede learning and challenges to the new structures and procedures may remain unvoiced.

Discussions with UK NGOs and donors suggest that many of these risks are already the reality. For example, UK NGO representatives note that questions raised by southern partners about these pressures to conform to externally set criteria are often not passed back to donors. Evaluations or learning that raise real questions about the emerging way of working and NGOs' ability to meet all their claims, or which highlight real weaknesses in organisational processes or development work, are not shared.

The remainder of the report explores the evidence from South Africa on the changes in NGO development and management approaches, the impact of funders (especially those in the UK), and the outcomes for SA NGOS, their relationships and their developmental impacts.

Part 2. South African NGOs in Transition

2.1. Introduction

South Africa has a large and well-established NGO sector that played a key role in supporting the struggle against apartheid and in the country's transition to non-racial political democracy. However, in the transition period of the 1990s, and particularly after 1994, the South African NGO sector as a whole had to adapt to a very different environment, one in which both the identity and survival of many NGOs has been challenged.

Key factors underlying the NGO transition relate first and foremost to the turbulence and uncertainty of the domestic environment in which they operate. The end of apartheid has been accompanied by equally important shifts in economic and political spheres, a triple transition (Bratton and Landsberg, add) that has required multiple changes simultaneously. The direction of economic change has been less pro-poor than many hoped, with an emphasis on growth sidelining the immediate post 1994 focus on redistribution. NGOs have had to redefine their own identity, not as anti-apartheid or welfarist organisations, but now in developmental terms and vis-à-vis a government ostensible allied with them in their developmental objectives. Access to public funds and integration into government programmes, exposure to global markets, changeable exchange rates, and new policy priorities, and both continued and emerging social needs (e.g. poverty, landlessness, HIV/AIDs) provide the backdrop to the repositioning undertaken by South African NGOs over the last decade.

International trends in NGO practice and donor priorities also shape the environment for local NGOs. The new language of development (World Bank, 1997; DFID, 1999) with its emphasis on good governance, an expanded role for a strengthened civil society, partnership with the South, and local ownership of development projects places new demands on both public and non-profit organisations in recipient countries. Moreover, new development practices and procedures are becoming routine among northern donors and NGOs, who often require the adoption of these procedures by their Southern partners. In South Africa, donors have additional region-specific concerns, which range from working with anti-apartheid organisations to introduce accountability and transparency, building capacity in the newly legitimate government, pursuing developmental agendas at national and regional-levels, and (re-)establishing commercial links to the country.

Against this background, it is important to examine the ways in which South African NGOs are managing organisational and operational changes. At the outset of the research, we recognised that changes in management practices might allow local NGOs to survive as organisations in the turbulent and uncertain environment in which they now existed. Donors, and new funding relations, could be a factor propelling specific management and organisational changes within NGOs; they could equally act as impediments, countering changes – for better or worse - that the new environment motivated. At the time, there was little information on the spread of the new management practises or recent donor impacts on NGO project/programme management. Also unknown were their implications for NGOs' traditional mission to service and empower poor and marginalised groups. The project intended to fill this important gap

There are three separate pieces that make up analysis of South African NGOs in transition. The first is a summary of diverse literature examining the developmental challenges facing South African NGOs, studies on the composition and character of South Africa's "third sector", and, to the extent possible, information on the flow of aid; an early version of this material was published in *OD Debate* (Smith, 2001) and the journal *Public Administration and Development* (Bornstein, 2003), though the material presented here is substantially different. The second piece is based on our scan of international NGOs funding projects in South Africa (Smith and Bornstein, 2001), summarised and updated for this report. The third is a study of job advertisements for development organisations, used to confirm trends derived from the literature, our surveys and our interviews, and to direct attention to the perceived NGO needs for particular staff competencies.

2.2. NGOs and development challenges; constraints and opportunities

Ten years into the ANC's governing of South Africa, there is growing reflection on the nature and extent of change. While the formal apartheid system has ended, new sources of injustice have emerged, often against the wishes of those designing new policies and implementing new programs. Much of the literature on the South African NGO sector is becoming increasingly politicised. It is worthwhile to explore the multiple challenges faced by South Africans, and SA NGOs over the last decade, and to recognise the difficulties of the endeavours, the constraints rooted domestically, and those arising out of the interplay of donor-recipient relations.

South African NGOs confronted numerous challenges in the transition from apartheid. A widely-touted challenge in the immediate post-apartheid period was a crisis of identity for the NGO sector (Habib and Taylor, 1999; Interfund, xxx; **Development update articles**). Prior to 1994, many NGOs defined themselves by the struggle for political and social justice and focused their activities on providing vital legal, welfare and developmental services to oppressed communities (Kotze, 1999:172). However, in the post-1994 period, established identities and roles as anti-apartheid organisations become less relevant (Habib and Taylor, 1999). NGOs struggled to create new identities, to establish a relationship with a democratic government at national and local levels, and to redefine their relationships to the wider community.

A second challenge for local NGOs was the dramatic changes in donor funding since 1994, as international donors first shifted their financial support away from civil society organisations to the newly democratic government, and subsequently defined new priorities and requirements into which many SA NGOs did not fit. Many organisations were forced to scale down, and some closed entirely. Government funds, expected to flow to civil society organisations, did not (see Smith, 2001, Development Update 2003 on NDA). Others organisations expanded their operations, consolidating partnerships with international funders, entering new sectoral and geographic areas, and investing in new or enhanced "human resources". At the same time, some directors and senior staff entered government, the so-called "brain drain" for the sector in the immediate post-apartheid period (Smith, 2001; **Interfund, 1998**), with consequent challenges for leadership in NGOs. Research presented at the end of Part 2 provides evidence of the scale of the leadership gap. Other areas of skill shortages emerged, particularly around project management, finance, proposal writing and reporting, and around thematic areas of donor and national attention: gender, the environment, advocacy, and HIV/AIDs, and more recently renewed attention to poverty.

A third challenge facing South African NGOs is the continued, and in many cases, deepening hardship of most South Africans, as discussed below. The South African government's adherence to a broadly neo-liberal growth-oriented economic policy has perplexed, troubled and outraged many observers (within and outside South Africa). While there have been areas of delivery to the poor on a massive scale (rural electrification, water systems, housing), there are also indications that: (a) major issues of poverty, employment and livelihoods are not sufficiently addressed, (b) the HIV/AIDS pandemic has been attacked too late and with inadequate leadership, and (c) new forms of involuntary fragmentation and inequality are emerging to replace those of the apartheid era (cf. Bond, 1999, 2000; Harrison et al, 2003; Pieterse, 2003). The absolute need to better address poverty, to provide avenues for people to engage with the state and with each other, and to transform the persistent structural inequalities into a more just, sustainable, and equitable system are a dominant pressure on local NGOs.

Organisations are struggling with how to best address the needs of the South African poor. It may require that the NGOs forge stronger relationships with local communities and develop new ways of engaging with public and private actors. It may require new skills for some organisations – around many of the thematic areas highlighted by donors, or in other cases a better way of accessing resources. We would further suggest that in almost all cases, NGOs will need a true willingness – and intent – to grapple with what have been termed "wicked problems", problems

that involve multiple stakeholder with different values, interests and understanding, where simple technical solutions are difficult to devise and impossible to implement, and where situations are changeable and outcomes often unpredictable (Webber and Rittel, 1968).

The fourth challenge to be outlined here is in many ways an outcome of the prior ones. The NGO sector itself is increasingly fragmented, with indications that professionalized formal NGOs are consolidated their operations and access to funding (governmental and international), but not necessarily reaching those most in need (Bornstein, 2001, 2003). These are the organisations that are addressed, for the most part, in this research project. However recent studies, especially the South African-managed John Hopkins Study of Civil Society in South Africa (Russell and Swilling, 2002), suggest that there are over 52,000 community-based organisations that are informally organised and, as such, rarely access international resources, relying on local finance, volunteerism, networking and self-help. There are also clear political, racial, gender, and ethnic divides fracturing the sector. This has most recently obvious around the reflections on “ten years after”, in which there have debates over the ANC’s impact, on the level and extent of progress since 1994. Tolerance for critique has not been a strong-point of the ANC leadership (add source?), and NGO staff that become vocal critics are risking their organisations access to public funds, contracts and approvals. [and SANGOCO debates, protests around Summit?]

A fifth challenge, and the last one to be outlined here, relates to learning. While much of our research suggests that South African NGOs are conforming to donor pressures in ways that compromise their activities, befuddle their staff and beneficiaries, and result in inefficiencies, distortions, and fear, we also document important innovations and successes. We are convinced that there are many other successes that we have missed, either because they were not recounted or because we explored relations among a defined set of funders and counterparts down the aid chain. A key challenge for the sector is to foster learning and value-based action, what Allan Kaplan later in the report refers to as intent and authenticity, in those engaged in development work and integrate such principles into development organisations.

Poverty & development in South Africa

Although much is written about the developmental challenges facing South Africa, we here wish to highlight only three developmental dilemmas that we see as particularly crucial for the country: persistent inequality; insufficient employment; and HIV/AIDs.

Persistent inequality, with race and place of residence still important factors underlying patterns of wealth and poverty, is a crucial challenge for government and citizens alike. Ten years after the end of apartheid, GINI coefficients – one of the most used indices of inequality within a country – remain consistently high. Despite reductions in racial discrimination, three-quarters of the top income decile are still white and 90% of those in bottom 6 deciles are black (Natrass & Swilling in Pieterse; May, 1999). Twenty-three percent of the population Between 40 and 50 percent of the population is poor, by whatever measure is used (May, 1999:48). Gender inequality is also increasing and conditions for women, especially black rural women, show little if any improvement (Albertyn & Hassim, 2004; Bharat, et al 2001; May 1999). Improved provision of healthcare, housing and water systems is, apparently, offset by the ravages of lack of monetary income, gender-based violence, and HIV/AIDs. Overall development indicators are shown in Table 2.1.

Population (millions) (2001)	43.2
Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (US\$) (2001)	2,900
Life expectancy at birth (years)	48
	(2000)
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	63
	(2000)
Child malnutrition (% of children under 5)	9%

	(1995+)
Illiteracy (% adults 15+) (2001)	14%
Total debt/Gross Domestic Product (2001)	21.2%

Sources: OECD, World Bank³

Note: Year data collected noted in brackets

Insufficient employment. Unemployment and underemployment are persistent features of the South African economy. Although the end of apartheid should have signalled an opportunity for previously excluded groups to enter new fields and occupations, formal job growth has not accompanied labour market expansion. Since 1994 an estimated half million formal jobs have been lost. Unemployment is estimated at 36%, with higher levels experienced by poorly educated, blacks, women, youth and rural residents.

Industry, in line with recommendations emanating from government and international consultant reports to enhance industrial competitiveness through increases labour market had restructuring in ways that have shifted the types of jobs available: from formal to informal, union to non-union, and full-time to part-time or intermittent. The skills mix demanded and the location of work have similarly changed, with rural and unskilled workers most excluded, though trained workers also encounter difficulties in obtaining secure employment. For rural residents, access to land remains a problem but so are insufficient opportunities for more than subsistence agriculture. (Marais, 2001; Padayachee and Mitchie, 1999 [check date]; Nel et al, 2000)

HIV/AIDs and attendant impacts. By the end of 2001, South Africa was the country with the highest number of HIV positive residents, 4.74 million people, in the world. One in nine South Africans was HIV positive, with a little over half (56 percent) women and most (xx percent) of working ages. Rates of infection have continued to rise, and mortality is expected to lower over national life expectancy from xx in 1990 to xx by 20xx. The impacts of the pandemic are widespread, with the most immediate and direct effects on those who are ill and dying, their immediate family members and dependents. Older women, called in to care for the ill or for orphaned children, are also directly affected, as are other community structures, the health care system, and other economic and social spheres. By 2010, an estimated 600,000 people are expected to have died prematurely due to AIDS (Metropolitan life), and in some sectors – such as education – expected losses of trained individuals are modelled to have ripple effects throughout the economy and society.

By most accounts, the South African government, with President Mbeki at the lead, has offered contradictory and ineffective leadership in combating the pandemic, questioning the links between HIV and AIDs and refusing to authorise the use of drugs treatment for HIV positive individuals. Policy debates over HIV/AIDs have galvanised civil society organisations, of which the most prominent is TAC or Treatment Action Campaign. TACs efforts to highlight the potential of treating AIDs, allowing those with the syndrome to survive longer, has resulted in international campaigns to provide low-cost drugs to poor countries, and national campaigns and court cases to force government hospitals to provide AZT to pregnant women and newborns. Many other organisations (e.g. the National AIDS Co-ordinating Committee of South Africa (NACOSA⁴), and individuals, including medical staff, have reoriented their work to address to needs of HIV/AIDs-affected populations, and in doing to have run counter to government policy and rhetoric. While the South African government now supports limited access to AZT and the purchase of low-cost drugs, the debates – and the official policies – reduced trust in the government and have proved a litmus test for government legitimacy.

³ The data in this table was sourced from country summaries available at www1.oecd.org/dac/htm/aid-recipients.htm and www.worldbank.org/afr/ (accessed 28 May 2003).

⁴ Some NGOs actively began addressing HIV/AIDs in the early 1990s (e.g. the National AIDS Co-ordinating Committee of South Africa (NACOSA)). Ironically several such organisations halted their programmes, including the Children's HIV/AIDs Model Programme and the HIV/AIDs programme of the National Progressive Primary Health Care Network, after 1994 when international donors started funding government instead of NGOs (Budlender, 1999).

While these are three key aspects of poverty and development patterns in South Africa, there are also institutional changes – within and outside of the government – that affect the way in which these challenges are addressed. The reform of the State following 1994 is designed to “bring government to the people.” The Constitution makes local government the key actor in promoting local development, linking residents’ aspirations with the programs, finance, and expertise to bring them to life. Decentralisation, more participatory and developmental approaches within government, and greater attention to the potential of linkages to NGOs, the private sector and other governmental divisions are parts of the institutional reforms (Bornstein, 2000). Yet numerous studies suggest that such key elements of these new governance approaches fall short of their aims, continuing to feed into patterns of local elite’ dominance, to neglect alternative views and interest (such as those of women), and to create expectations that the institutions involved cannot meet (Bornstein, 2000; McEwan, 2003; Parnell, xxxx; add more from IDP literature).

[cut paragraph?] Implications for civil society organisations of the depth of the challenges and the government’s responses are disputed. There are three broad perspectives on the place of South African civil society organisations in relation to developmental progress over the past decade. Some assume that people will join together to address the problems of poverty, inequalities, and limited economic opportunities, and in doing link to similar initiatives directed by the State and, to a lesser extent, the private sector; Pieterse (1994) notes that this assumption of cooperative and complementary roles underlies most government policy-making. A second perspective, articulated by such critics as Patrick Bond, Ben Fine, [add others], identifies a key role for civil society – whether in mass movements or formal organisation – in contesting the government’s abandonment of a broad redistributive and transformatory agenda for a neo-liberal one. Whether through union action, street marches, service boycotts (refusing to pay for services), or direct efforts to influence policy (e.g. through research or direct action), civil society may find itself in opposition to the government. A third perspective, overlapping with both the above, tries to differentiate competing relations to government and highlight the tensions and contradictions that emerge given a dominant mindset of seeing relations dualistically, as either “with” or “against” the State (cf. Habib and Taylor, 1999).

Need to add information from Russell & Swilling and IDASA study)

Foreign aid, poverty and development in South Africa

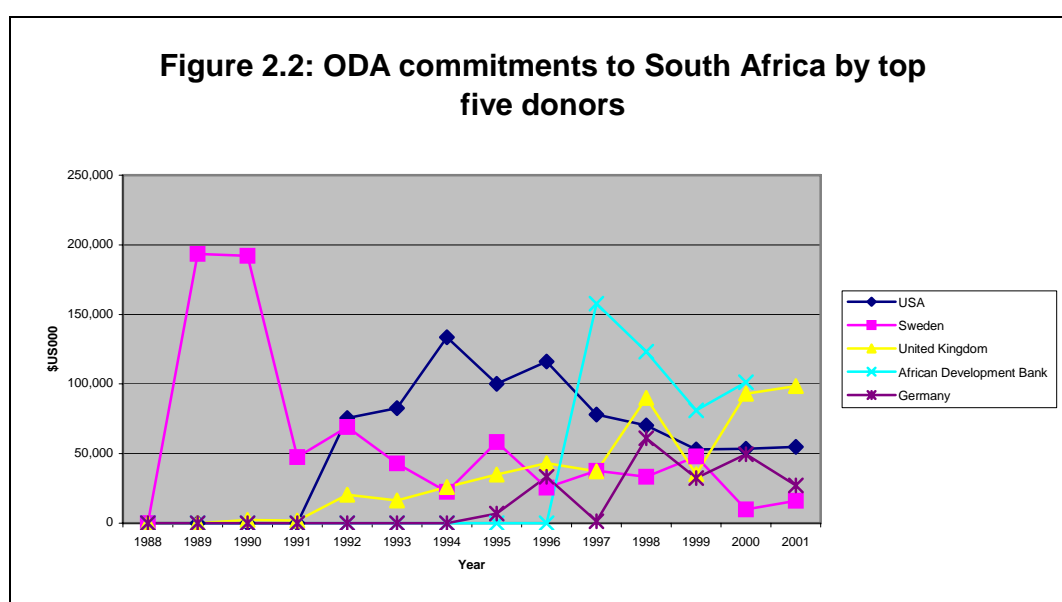
[Tina and Jenny, should I cut the ODA material? it is very general, not at all like the diagrams you have]

International funds are an important component of the country’s efforts to address poverty and inequality. Funds arrive in multiple forms (grants, loans, etc.), from different sources (multilateral agencies such as those of the United Nations, bi-lateral sources, private companies, and private charities), and with a variety of terms (e.g. prior conditions to be met, time frame, usage). In all cases, tracing actual quantities of money transferred is surprisingly difficult. Data on official development assistance (ODA), which one would expect would be relatively easy to detail, are presented in Table 2.2 below to demonstrate (a) the general scale of foreign aid flowing into South Africa, and (b) the impossibility of confirming what arrives. Data on foreign direct investment (FDI) are provided for comparative purposes and show that FDI flows into the country are more than twice that of ODA.

Net ODA (US\$ million) (2001)	428
Bilateral share (gross ODA) (2001)	75%
Net ODA/GNI (2001)	0.4%
ODA per capita (US\$)	9.9
Foreign Direct Investment (US\$ million)	961 (2000)

Peart and Crothers analysis of official ODA to South Africa confirms overall impressions of trends in the volume and sectoral focus of aid to the country. In response to the transition to democratic government, there were substantial increases in commitments of ODA to South Africa in the second half of the 1990s. As the term of the Mandela-led government came to an end in 1999, commitment reduced significantly with some recovery since then. About 73 percent of South Africa's ODA is offered in the form of grants, 23.5 percent in the form of technical assistance; of the total, about 14 percent is dedicated to investment in infrastructure.

Five donors account for almost 70 percent of South Africa's ODA commitments in recent years: the USA (19.7% of the total), Sweden (19.2%), the United Kingdom (12.0%), the African Development Bank (11.1%) and Germany (5.1%) (Peart and Crothers, 2003). Some, such as Sweden, played a prominent role during the years of anti-apartheid struggle and have since much reduced the volume of ODA. In terms of the sectoral distribution of ODA, Peart and Crothers note that a large proportion of ODA commitments (59.2%) have been directed at social sectors, particularly government, civil society and education.



Source: Peart and Crothers, 2003

Official development assistance (ODA) figures are usually based on pledged contributions from one government to another. Although useful in providing an indication of the volume of aid arriving in a single country and in tracking trends in overall assistance, all such figures should be treated with great caution, for several reasons. First, they are reported in terms of the cost to the donor, not their value to the recipient. Second actual disbursements may diverge greatly from official commitment, and third, what is considered as development assistance is highly fluid (e.g. how is tied aid or technical assistance included) (Peart and Crothers, 2003).

Information on private flows of development aid is extremely difficult to find, and differ from one source to the next (Sogge, 1999). For aid flowing through non-governmental organisations or private charities, there is no central accounting of either committed funds or those spent in country; funds flowing through government agencies to NGOs can be tracked to a certain extent but much funding passes outside of government channels. In addition, available data are prone to difficulties similar to those arising with ODA. There are also indications that private flows of development aid derive from a wider range of geographic sources.

Important to note, nonetheless, is that aid tends to fluctuate for any particular donor with direct implications for the sectors, organisations, and projects they directly support. Since donors do try to coordinate in such a way as to avoid overlap, reductions in funding – or increases – may lead

to short-term changes for the agencies and organisations they fund. Patterns of change in ODA as depicted can also mask other processes, such as the substitution of one channel of funding for another, or issues of fungibility (in which ODA can lead not to an expansion of a particular sector, but the transfer of government funds to other areas not covered by ODA).

[?] Add Interfund information on overall private flow [dated and contradicted by other sources], also info from IDASA study.

2.3 Management practices as an independent source of change

A starting point of the research was that while flows of money are important, there may be less visible sources of influence on the way that development organisations function. The research by Wallace et. al. (1997) into the project and programme management practices of UK NGOs identified a clear trend towards the use of standardised management procedures across the UK NGO sector. In particular, they identified three new management practices that are used increasingly by UK NGOs across the broad spectrum of development work - Log Frame Analysis (LFA) and related rational planning tools, strategic planning, and evaluation. The reasons for the increased use of these new management practices are attributed to direct pressure from donors for greater accountability and transparency, as well as to the push coming from UK NGOs themselves to "go for growth" (Wallace, 1997:36). Other work by Wallace has explored the rise of gender, environment, and sustainability requirements within organisations and in the funding of development projects/programmes. Gender and environment are important areas for investigation since past research suggests that they are handled quite differently in programme planning than in project implementation (cf. Goetz, 1997, 2002; Kepe, 1997; Leach, et. al., 1997).

The research on UK NGOs suggested that their adoption of new procedures affects their development work and relationships with beneficiaries. These techniques may make NGOs more bureaucratic and hierarchical, and the language and culture of these management tools may not be appropriate or easily understood by staff and partners in the South. Equally important, Wallace et. al. (1997) argued that the use of management techniques such as LFA, strategic planning and evaluation by UK NGOs fundamentally contradicts the people-oriented, bottom-up approach to development to which many development organisations, especially NGOs, are now striving, an argument echoed by diverse researchers (Abraham, 2003; Eade, 2000; Earle, 2003; Gasper, 1997; Howes, 1992; Hulme, 1995; Wallace *et al.*, 1997; Wallace, 1997; and Wield, 2000).

Many of the issues identified with regard to standardised development management in the UK NGO research are likely to be relevant to the South African NGO sector. Many of the conditions that prompted the use of tools such as strategic management, LFA and increased evaluation among UK NGOs are not entirely dissimilar to those experienced in South Africa. These include pressure from donors, a review by NGOs of their mandates and missions, and the concern by many NGOs to identify development niches in which they have particular strengths (Wallace, 1997:40). However, one important difference between UK and South African NGOs is that the shift among UK NGOs towards the use of these new management tools was prompted in large part by the need to manage the rapid growth that took place in the NGO sector since the mid-1980s. In South Africa, however, the opposite is true; with the squeeze on the resources available to NGOs since 1994, many NGOs have been forced to dramatically scale-down their operations and to focus on more specific areas of development. Changes in management practices are therefore more likely to be a response to pressures from international donors and the need for local NGOs to become leaner and more focused on core activities.

Add conclusion to part 2.⁵

⁵ In terms of the organisational management practices of local NGOs, financial and organisational sustainability strategies and programme elements, such as poverty, community participation,

Part 3. Overall trends in NGO management in South Africa

3.1 Introduction

This part of the report paints an overall picture of the project and organisational management practices and procedures South African NGOs are using, together with some preliminary indications of why they do so. The aims are to: document the extent to which NGO management trends identified in the international literature also describe South African NGOs; deepen understanding of possible factors behind South African NGO practices and procedures, and to explore the perspectives of representatives of international and South African organisations on these issues.

Information is derived from three separate studies: a preparatory set of interviews with representatives of a range of South African NGOs (only a few of which participated in later research phases or had UK funding links); interviews with directors and senior staff of international NGOs working in South Africa; and a study of advertisements for development jobs in a national paper.

The focus is on specific tools, namely strategic planning, logical framework analysis (and allied project cycle management approaches), and monitoring systems. It is also on the underlying relationships of power and partnerships, though at this stage respondents' comments are not probed or recounted in full (see part 4-7 of the report). As with other sections of the report, we keep the identities of all respondents and their organisations confidential except where the material is part of the public record (e.g. published interviews with NGO directors or job advertisements); mention in such cases does not mean that the individual or organisation participated in the research.

Material from the advertisement study permits, as well, a broader focus on organisational changes, at least as they relate to staffing. Specific competency areas, sectoral areas, or management tools are often mentioned in job advertisements. Though the study is based on a sample of three years, some trends can be inferred and associations hypothesized, to be explored further in the in-depth analysis. Specific attention is also paid to how South African NGOs are using these techniques, and the extent to which these standardised techniques are compatible with bottom-up planning and community participation.

3.2 Documenting management & organisational trends

Much of the following material is drawn from previously released research reports (Smith and Bornstein, 2001) available from the authors. As such, key findings are summarised on, first, our initial scan of South African NGOs and second, our interviews with international NGOs. As these interviews were conducted in the early phases of our research, we focused on selected funding relations – power and partnerships – and selected management issues, funding patterns and the spread of rational management tools. Our selection of respondents was initially based on a

gender and the environment, will be examined. The broader literature on NGOs in South Africa suggests that NGOs are narrowing their operational focus, and becoming either more commercial in their relations to government and beneficiaries; some NGOs are becoming more adversarial towards the ANC government. There were important exceptions, even in the small sample, of organisations that continued to define themselves primarily in terms of their processes at the community level.

random sample of organisations listed in the PRODDER directory of NGOs in South Africa; our respondents include only those who were willing to be interviewed within the initial sample. At this phase of the research we were concerned that not all respondents be linked to UK funding sources, a criterion that was not problematic.

SA NGOs: initial scan and interviews

Surprisingly little research in South Africa had looked at local NGO management practices. For this reason, in 1999 (check date) the School of Development Studies (SODS) at the University of Natal undertook a preparatory study of management practices in a sample of local development organisations. The research involved a questionnaire and interviews with the directors of fourteen development organisations based in KwaZulu-Natal. The organisations were of different sizes and involved in a wide range of development work, from basic service delivery, democracy education, rural and urban development to skills training. The questionnaire and interviews covered issues relating to the use of project management techniques (logframe analysis (LFA), strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation), organisational management (such as financial and organisational sustainability strategies), and organisational focus (such as approaches to poverty, community participation, gender and the environment). Questions about the influence of donors on the use by local NGOs of certain project and organisational management techniques were also included. Key findings of this research were that:

- The majority of South African development organisations interviewed are using new project and organisational management tools such as logframe analysis, ZOPP and strategic planning. Many systematically monitor and evaluate their programmes.
- Respondents mentioned donors as a motivating factor in their use of logframes, which some donors required for funding proposals. Respondents did not systematically attribute their use of other management techniques or the adoption of particular programme elements to the influence of donors.
- Based on self-reporting, most NGOs consider themselves to be particularly strong in community participation, and relatively weak or not focused on gender and the environment.
- Respondents saw the development sector as becoming increasingly professional, accountable, and commercial. They highlighted the competitive funding environment, increasing government reliance on contracting, and donor requirements as the underlying causes for such transformations.

Financial and organisational sustainability are important concerns for South African NGOs. The decrease in donor funding in the mid-1990s pushed NGOs to become more business-like in their approach to organisational management and to development work. This is manifest in a clear trend towards the adoption of income-generating activities such as consulting, contracting for government work, and the introduction of user fees for services delivered to communities. Reflecting the commercial orientation, non-profit corporations (sector 21 corporations) was preferred as an alternative to a non-governmental organisational structure for some development work (the SODS sample included two sector 21 corporations).

This preliminary research provided useful insight into what management procedures local NGOs are using and, to a lesser extent, why they are using them

INGOs in South Africa

These initial interviews were supplemented by interviews with international NGOs (INGOs) working in South Africa. Representatives of a total of 17 organisations were interviewed in South Africa, with parallel interviews held in the UK with staff from five of the organisations. Key findings of this research with the international NGOs revolve around management tools and techniques; finance; strategic focus; and partnership. Summary results are detailed for each area.

Management tools and techniques:

- Most of the INGOs surveyed are using some form of logframe for project management, although some agencies use this tool far more extensively than others.
- All of the organisations have some system for monitoring and evaluation (M&E). A number of the respondents mentioned that they are currently revising and improving their M&E procedures.
- most of the respondents said that the large institutional donors (especially DFID, the EU and USAID) had extremely difficult reporting and other management requirements that impacted negatively on their work.
- A number of the organisations have recently undergone, or are currently undergoing, extensive strategic planning exercises

Strategic focus and finance:

- There are a number of common strategic themes around which most of the international organisations interviewed are organising their work in South Africa. These themes include HIV/AIDS, gender and advocacy.
- Based on strategic planning processes, many of the INGOs refocused their work in South Africa around particular themes and/or geographical areas.
- There appeared to be a trend towards increasingly restricted and retrospective funding for the the international NGOs, changes pushed by their back donors (especially DfiD around retrospective or invoice-based funding). Respondents noted that their donors are increasingly demanding that projects and programmes be co-financed.
- The INGOs tended to focus on capacity building and technical support instead of direct funding to “bricks and mortar” projects implemented by local NGOs.

Partnerships:

- The language of “partnerships” is pervasive amongst INGOs in South Africa.
- Partnerships between INGOs and South African NGOs have become more structured and formal in recent years.
- Most of the INGO respondents claimed that their head offices do not exert a significant negative influence on them in terms of management requirements.
- The respondents did not think that they in turn imposed extensive or unreasonable management requirements on the local NGOs they work with (apart from basic reporting and accountability measures). They did, however, admit that their application and reporting requirements for local NGOs have generally become more formal and complex in recent years.

These initial studies are the backdrop for the in-depth research we conducted around specific aid chains, organisations, and themes. Issues of power and influence introduced in these initial interviews were then explored further as we began to talk with a variety of people within a particular organisation and to make more direct links – in our research approach – between funding organisations, and their conditions, expectation, and procedures, and those of recipients.

Expand?

While the initial studies of 17 INGOs and 14 local organisations were followed by in-depth research around specific issues and inter-organisational relationships, as described in subsequent chapters, we were concerned to expand our understanding beyond the initial small samples. The IDASA/CORE study and the Johns Hopkins study of South African Civil Society (JHSACS) were likely to produce valuable information on the overall structure and orientation of the sector, as indeed they did. We thus, in parallel, designed and carried out research to check on whether our initial findings could be generalized to the wider South African NGO sector. We did not seek to duplicate the IDASA/CORE and JHSACS studies with their survey of many NGO directors or detailed census of organisations present in selected communities. We sought a method of gaining insight into management and organisational changes occurring around and

after political transitions for the broad range of NGOs spread throughout the country. Our approach was a study of job advertisements, as is described below.

3.3. Tracking Changing NGO practices through their Job Advertisements

Researched and prepared by: Catherine Ogunmefun, Isaivani Hyman and Lisa Bornstein

The transition to democracy in the early 1990s in South Africa significantly affected the NGO sector. Many NGOs had to re-examine their roles and undergo a reorientation to survive in uncertain times. A major source of this crisis was a shift in foreign funding from the NGOs (as was the trend in the apartheid era) to the democratic government. NGOs then had to seek new avenues for funding. In addition, for those anti-apartheid NGOs, transition meant that they no longer positioned themselves as 'antigovernment organisations'; they had to redefine their role vis-à-vis others (Habib and Rupert, 1999).

NGOs had to compete for limited funds and become more donor-oriented to hang on to the funds already allocated to them. For some, this meant changing the focus of their activities and/or their management practices.

In order to examine some of these changes and possible donor influences, this project scans and analyzes NGO job advertisements. This mini project is part of a broader project that examines donor-recipient relationships and their influence on management practices of NGOs in South Africa. Within this broader project, case studies of NGOs and their donors have highlighted some broad trends. The purpose of the job advertisement project is to confirm some of these findings.

Methodology

The data collection process involved scanning job advertisements from a leading South African newspaper called the *Mail and Guardian* (formerly known as the Weekly Mail). The *Mail and Guardian* is a weekly newspaper that has a large advertisement section containing job vacancies within the development NGO sector. In order to examine the changes over the period of a decade, three years were selected, that is, 1992 (to represent the early transition to democracy), 1996 (transition to democracy) and 2000 (post-transition). Each edition of this newspaper during the aforementioned three years was scanned for development job advertisements. There were more than 300 relevant job adverts listing 409 positions.

The next phase of the project was the data sorting, coding and capturing. All the job advertisements were numbered according to the job titles or positions listed within. In several cases, one job advertisement would list more than one job vacancy. Some of the types of job titles contained in the advertisements included Director, Project Manager, Field Worker and Fundraiser. Next, the job descriptions, specific skills and experience required were highlighted and coded. This information was categorized as "Project Management Tools", "Focus Areas" and "Skills". The category "Project Management Tools" noted the type of proficiency required by the job in such management tools as Logical Framework Analysis (LFA), Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), Strategic Planning, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Project Cycle Management. The category "Focus Areas" highlighted the special issues or focus of the organization's work such as gender, environment, advocacy, participation, religion, sustainability, poverty, HIV/AIDS and human rights. Lastly, the category "Skills" was narrowed to include a few areas of expertise which the job advertisement required such as fundraising, income-generation, financial management, proposal/report writing, budgets, marketing and policy development. Once the data was sorted and coded, SPSS was used for the data capturing.

Limitations of the study

Some limitations of this study and its methodology are as follows:

- The data could be considered a representative sample of all the NGO job advertisements for that period by established NGOs. However, since only one newspaper was the source and advertisements in the *Mail and Guardian* are more costly than in regional newspapers, the sample may not reflect well the job requirements of smaller, less established, or regionally-focused NGOs.

- The three years selected for analysis represent periods in South Africa's transition. No information was gathered on NGO employment requirements for intervening years and no effort was made to identify anomalies, turning points, or longer term trajectories in the trends identified.
- There were not enough cases within some categories, which therefore limited the statistical analysis that could be done.

Data Analysis

Table 1 below lists all NGOs with advertisement placed in two or three of the sampled years. The NGOs with advertisements in a single year are too numerous to reproduce here. Acronyms and organisations are listed in the endnotes.ⁱ

ORGANISATION	YEAR			Total
	1992	1996	2000	
AFRA	5	1		6
AIDS foundation	1		1	2
Alexandra Clinic	4	2		6
BESG	3	2	1	6
Black Sash	1	4	2	7
CASE	1	2	2	5
CBDP	4	1		5
CCATC	1	1		2
CRIC	3	1		4
DAG		5	2	7
EDT	1	1		2
ESP	2	2		4
GAP		1	5	6
HRC		4	1	5
IDASA	3	3	1	7
IDRC		3	2	5
IMMSA	4	1		5
Mvula Trust		2	3	5
NLC	5	3		8
NLP	1	4		5
NPPHCH	4	1		5
Operation Hunger	2	4		6
OXFAM	1	1		2
Peoples Dialogue		1	1	2
POWA		2	1	3
Rape Crisis		2	1	3
RSS		1	2	3
SACC	2	1		3
SCAT		2	2	4
SCLC	1	1		2
TRAC	1		1	2
Triangle Project		1	1	2
USAID		4	4	8
USN		2	2	4
VSO		1	3	4
WUS	1	1		2

Although the list excludes organisations with adverts in only one of the three years, the partial list above provides interesting information on the overall diversity of organisations looking for staff. Most of these organisations listed in Table 1 are local NGOs; only four are international organisations (IDRC, OXFAM, USAID and VSO). Only four NGOs, all local, advertised in all three years. The four international organisations mentioned advertised in two of the three years, as did the other local NGOs listed above.

From the table, it is observed that there were more advertisements in 1996, which is the period of transition to democracy. This provides evidence to confirm reports of a “leadership” and staffing crisis experienced in the NGO sector, in which many workers were lost to the government and private institutions (Habib, and Taylor, 1999); NGOs placed advertisements in the M&G in order to recruit replacement staff.

Most of the NGOs listed above focus their operations on rural development. Some have other specific areas of specialization, such as dispute resolution, AIDS prevention, education, democracy, land and women’s rights and urban development. Most of these entities are non-governmental though not exclusively (e.g. USAID); there are also diverse organisational forms represented, with the majority established as non-governmental development organisations and others as Section 21 corporations, trusts and community-based organisations (CBOs). Only one religious NGO placed advertisements in two of the three years.

Types of positions advertised in the three years

The types of positions advertised in the M&G in the three years are shown in Table 2 and Figure 1 below.

Table 2 lists the types of positions for which NGOs advertised in 1992, 1996 and 2000. The data show that the post of Director had the most advertisements in 1996 followed by that of Programme Co-ordinator in 1996 and 2000. The majority of advertisements are for senior positions. For the three years studied, the overall number of advertisements for the posts of Director and Programme Co-ordinator were 73 and 72 respectively. These advertisements reflect the need for new leadership in the sector. It also suggests that NGOs look nationally (and indeed sometimes internationally) to fill their senior posts while relying on more locally-based networks for less senior positions.

Other positions greatly in demand are those related to project management, research, administrative support, and training or facilitation. The table depicts heightened demand for professional specialists, however there is no clear concentrated demand in a single specialist area; the category encompasses a range of skills, from information to engineering and social work, and is better grouped with the gender, advocacy, and media specialists to suggest increased specialization and professionalisation. Indeed, there are surprisingly few jobs listed in the areas of gender, advocacy, fundraising (development officer) or media given the emphasis placed on these skills and competencies by the UK based organisations and the South African NGO directors

Positions	YEAR			Total
	1992	1996	2000	
Director	15	36	22	73
Programme Co-ordinator	22	25	25	72
Project Manager	19	11	17	47
Field Worker	6	6		12
Finance Manager	2	5	3	10

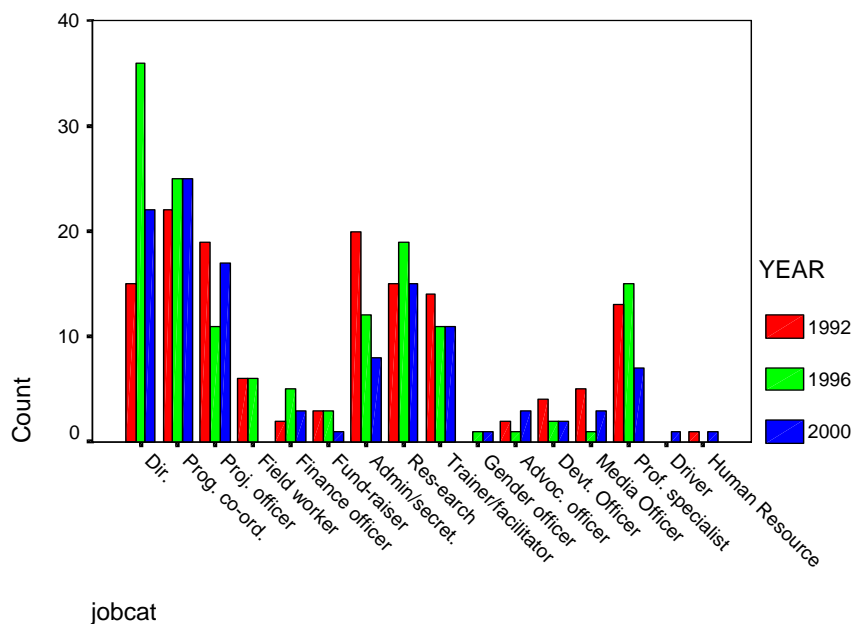
Fund-raiser	3	3	1	7
Admin/Secret	20	12	8	40
Researcher	15	19	15	49
Trainer/ Facilitator	14	11	11	36
Gender officer		1	1	2
Advocacy officer	2	1	3	6
Development officer	4	2	2	8
Media specialist	5	1	3	9
Professional specialist	13	15	7	35
Driver			1	1
Human Resources	1		1	2
Total	141	148	120	409

Figure 1 charts changes in job advertised over the three years for the specified job types. The only clear trend is the 1996 peak in demand for directors; the number of adverts for Director increased from 15 in 1992 to 36 in 1996 and later declined slightly to 22 in 2000. For Programme Co-ordinator, there was a slight increase from 22 in 1992 to 25 in both 1996 and 2000. Such an increase is not inconsistent with needs arising from the departure of senior staff – the so-called internal ‘brain drain’ – as skilled personnel moved into the public sector to assist the new post-apartheid government; senior staff may also have moved into private institutions, for a variety of reasons.⁶ Nonetheless the limited number of jobs advertised at this level suggests that leadership changes may be overstated in the literature, that organisations are seeking senior management internally (from existing staff), or, less likely, that organisations are using networks other than the national media to advertise their positions (more probable that they use the national media and other networks).

For several job categories, an increase in demand is observable for 1996. These are positions that could have been affected by the post-apartheid brain drain and the overall funding crisis within the sector. For example, when finance officer and fundraiser are grouped together, we see an increase in 1996 (but not when they are separated). Yet there were only a few advertisements for such positions, surprising given the decline in funding in the sector during that period.

Figure 2.2: Types of positions advertised in 1992, 1996 and 2000

⁶ Interviews with NGO staff and other key informants suggested multiple reasons for the departure of senior staff from NGOs. The draw of the ANC government and the possibility of influencing policy formulation from the inside was one important reason cited, and one mentioned by multiple informants. Some respondents also mentioned that gender and racial dynamics shifted in the post-apartheid period, and that white women – who had headed organisations prior to 1992 – felt that the organisations could be better represented or should be run by non-whites; this was mentioned by both men and women, black and white. Lower ranking staff also mentioned that some leaders left NGOs for more lucrative positions in the State or the private sector, propelled by both opportunities and the dearth of funding for NGOs. *[make sure that this is in the body of the report]*



There is concentrated demand in one job category – that of researchers – that we find entirely unexpected. Recent attention to research capacity within the NGO sector in South Africa is apparently arising out of real needs for researchers, though their specific role is not clear. Advertisements for researchers suggest that organisations are trying to better document their impact, and also the dynamics of the problems that they seek to address. Research contributes to improved program design and proposals, and thereby to the organisation’s efforts to obtain domestic and international funding. Research may also mask a number of other occupational functions, such as fundraising, donor relations, monitoring & evaluation, training, fieldwork, and advocacy.

Also surprising is the absence of demand in some categories. For example, in 2000, there were no advertisements placed for fieldworkers. This absence might be due to a change in terminology, the inclusion of such activities within other posts that entail fieldwork e.g. researcher or project manager, or – more worrisome – a redirection of NGO efforts away from direct activities in the field.

Examining possible longer-term trends over the period, no clear pattern emerges (chi-square tests found no significant change in the types of jobs advertised over the period).ⁱⁱ There were a total of 409 positions advertised over the three years. The job advertisements increased from 141 in 1992 to 148 in 1996, and later decline to 120 in 2000. Possible explanations for the decline include: the reported staff lost to NGOs in 1994-1996 may have been replaced with more long-term employees (conferring stability on the sector), reduced development activities and funding between 1996 and 2000 that translated into fewer jobs on offer, and tighter NGO finances against more costly advertising resulting in fewer advertisements in the *Mail and Guardian*.

Management Tools, Focus Areas and Skills

The scan of the advertisements did reveal shifts in the management tools, focus areas and skills that some NGOs required consistent with the hypotheses (and results) of the wider study.

Management tools

Table 3 summarises the management tools mentioned in the advertisements; demand for management tools increased over these three years. For instance, the demand for Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) and Project Cycle Management increased from 82 in 1992 to 146 in 2000. The demand for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) increased from 24 in 1992 to 72 in 2000.

In 1992, the demand for tools such as strategic planning and business planning grew from 14 to, in 2000, 82 positions. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) also rose from 4 in 1992 to 16 in 2000.

Table 3: Management Tools

TOOLS	YEAR		
	1992	1996	2000
LFA/ Project Cycle Mgmt	82	110	146
M&E	24	50	72
Strategic & business planning	14	60	82
PRA & other participatory skills	4	14	16
TOTAL	124	234	316

The dramatic rise in advertisements for staff skilled in project management, logical frameworks, monitoring & evaluation, strategic planning and business planning confirms the rapid expansion of these rational management systems and practices, and suggests that development organisations in South Africa recognised both their need for and shortage of staff skilled in these areas. The relatively modest demand for participatory skills is particularly striking in comparison.

Focus Areas

Table 4 shows the focus areas mentioned in the jobs advertised in the three years. An increase in demand for most focus areas is apparent, suggesting that NGOs prefer newly hired staff to arrive with some experience in specific areas, a sign of increasing specialisation and expertise. Demand for staff in the areas of gender, the environment, human rights and advocacy all increased dramatically between 1992 and 1996, and for all but the latter, jumped again in 2000; this reflects many of the primary themes and language used in international circles over the same period (gender after the Beijing conference, the environment after the Rio conference, the growing interest in right-based approaches, etc.). Demand for staff with a focus on HIV/AIDs, poverty or sustainability jumped most from 1996 to 2000, probably reflecting growing concerns in civil society to refocus national attention on HIV/AIDs, poverty and long term sustainable development.

Table 4: Focus Areas

FOCUS AREAS	YEAR		
	1992	1996	2000
Gender	4	16	20
Environment	0	14	26
Advocacy	4	20	18
Participation	4	18	4
Religion	2	8	2
Sustainability	0	0	8
Poverty	2	0	6
HIV/AIDs	10	4	18
Human Rights	0	14	22
TOTAL	26	94	124

The exceptions to the wider trend are surprising; job advertisements mentioning religion or participation show a clear peak in 1996 with a subsequent decline in 2000. Reasons behind the changes are unclear. There may be fewer development jobs in religious organisations (other NGOs may be taking on earlier functions), religious organisations may be using other channels for advertising posts, or explicit mention of faith-based hiring criteria may be excluded from job advertisements in newspapers (though clear on web pages and in the hiring process). Causes for the dramatic shifts in the demand for staff skilled in participation (moving from 4 in 1992 to 18 in 1996 and back to 4 in 2000) are also hypothetical. While the pattern of demand may reflect a change in terminology – with a poverty focus becoming synonymous with a participatory

approach – it could equally be explained by one of the principal hypotheses of the wider research, namely that rational planning approaches mesh poorly, and supplant, participatory ones.

Specific Skill Areas

Mail & Guardian advertisements were also grouped according to the specific skills mentioned (see Table 5). For the three years analysed, 1992, 1996 and 2000, an increase in the demand for skills such as proposal/ report writing, budgeting, marketing and policy development is apparent. There were many openings for staff with proposal and report writing skills: 118 posts in 1996 and 116 in 2000; this provides support for interview material documenting the staff time dedicated to such activities. There was high demand for staff skilled in finance (such as fundraising, income generation and financial management) in 1996 with 148 advertisements mentioning such qualifications. There was less demand in this area in 2000. Such numbers mask an important feature of the 1996 advertisements: given the financial difficulties of many NGOs during that period, advertisements called for multi-skilled individuals, with financial and sectoral or management expertise. The overall number of jobs was only slightly higher than in 1992 and 2000 (see table 1), however the rise in those skilled in project management and finance increased greatly; much of these were the senior staff who were expected to have multiple competencies. In addition, the organisations wanted sector-specialised employees who had many skills, thereby reducing the number of staff needed and saving on wage costs; this could be considered as a coping strategy during the crisis period. (No assessment is made of the last category in Table 5, a residual one, since the skills lists are too disparate to consider as a group. Budgeting should probably be regrouped with financial management, and policy development either excluded or kept separately.)

Table 5: Skills

SKILLS	YEAR		
	1992	1996	2000
Fund-raising/ Financial mgmt Income generation	74	148	106
Proposal/Report Writing	56	118	116
Budgeting/Marketing/Policy Development	38	58	78
TOTAL	168	324	300

Other job characteristics

Next to be examined include the following: the salary scale, timeframe of jobs and other observations made from the advertisements. Table 6 lists the numbers of posts advertised at what would be considered a high annual salary, over R150,000 per year. This salary scale is addressed because it provides an indication of whether development organisations are paying top money, nearly on par with the private sector, for qualified people and because it is the one where salaries are listed (salary ranges were only detailed for 36 positions, of which about half can clearly be considered highly remunerated).

Table 6: Top salaries (per annum) and positions advertised by the NGOs

Salary scale and positions advertised	Number of positions
Director	4
Programme Coordinator	9
Researcher	2
Professional specialist	1
Trainer	1

Of the positions listed in Table 6, those associated with the highest salaries (above R200,000/year) were for employment within international governmental entities (DfID and USAID)

Table 7 shows the time frame of the jobs advertised by the NGOs. NGOs specified the duration of only 50 of the jobs advertised. There is a concentration of short-term positions, lasting one year or less (23 positions). There is a second grouping of positions associated with projects and their cycles, in which employment is offered for two to three years (21 positions). There are relatively few jobs with a fixed term of more than three years (5 positions). While most of the jobs offer renewable contracts, such renewal is contingent on securing continued project funding, as well as more standard performance assessments.

Duration of jobs	Number of Jobs
Less than 1 year	12
1 year	11
1 – 2 years	1
2 years	11
2 – 3 years	2
3 years	8
3 – 4 years	3
4 years	2
Total	50

Other conditions mentioned in the advertisements are the number of years of experience wanted and benefits attached to the jobs advertised. On average the NGOs request three years of prior work in the field, relatively little. Most of the advertisements offer the following benefits: a 13th cheque, medical aid, and contributions to a pension fund. Most NGOs highlight their compliance with national laws as affirmative action employers. Familiarity with South African NGO sector is one of the prerequisites mentioned by some of the NGOs.

Selling the organisation

One other observation is that in the 1996 and 2000 advertisements, NGOs gave more in-depth details about their organisations. Better fit between job seekers and the existing organisational mission, values and cultures trickled into the advertisements. Some organisations changed the tone of their advertisements, and their search strategies, a shift especially apparent in the international organisations. USAID’s advertisements are illustrative and are reproduced below. (Or See appendix X):

Figure 1. US AID job advert, May 1996

May 1996

USAID/SOUTH AFRICA, AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER requests expressions of interest from qualified candidates for the positions of
PARTICIPANT TRAINING OFFICER
(ref: USAID-125) R83 430 - R135 900 pa

As a recognized expert in participant training, the incumbent is responsible for planning, evaluation and service functions in support of participant training activities. He/She gives advice, makes recommendations, consults with senior host government officials across ministries to determine the types of training needed, and develops a training strategy and a five year plan.

QUALIFICATIONS: A Masters degree.

Source: Mail and Guardian, Vol 12

Figure 2. US AID job advert, May 2000

May 2000

USAID/SOUTH AFRICA an equal opportunity employer in Pretoria, requests expressions of interest from qualified candidates for the following position:

Team Leader: Basic Education
Personal Services Contract (Ref. PSC-007)

The United States Government represented by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), on behalf of its Education Team requires a highly experienced and dynamic professional to manage its basic education program, the team's largest portfolio of activities. USAID provides assistance to the South African Government and Non-Governmental Organisations to support the improvement of basic education primarily in four focus provinces.

USAID is seeking a Team Leader to manage the work of an exceptionally talented six-person basic education team. The Team Leader will be responsible for providing strategic guidance to the team, engaging partners and stakeholders in designing activities and reviewing progress, organising, coordination and supervising basic education team members to manage activities and achieve established results and monitoring and evaluating activity impact. USAID's basic education program is in the developmental stages and thus offers challenging and rewarding career opportunities.

A Master's degree... (Mail and Guardian, 2000, Volume 16)

The 1996 advertisement details those qualifications and attributes required of the applicant; no information on the project or the employer is provided. In the 2000 advertisement, the job is presented within the overall strategy and operations of USAID, and aside from the differences in the particular position, greater attention to processes, job satisfaction, and job fit are apparent. Similar changes are evident in many of the job advertisements.

Conclusion of the advertisement study

The analysis of advertisements of development jobs listed for three years (1992, 1996, and 2000) in a prominent national South African newspaper confirms many of the wider trends anecdotally reported in the South African NGO sector. Key findings of direct relevance to our wider study include the following:

- South African development organisations needed leadership (directors, programme managers) positions filled in the immediate post-apartheid period. New organisations, major changes in the mission and identity of organisations, and the loss of skilled leaders to government policy departments was reflected in the number of positions advertised in 1996.
- Demand for people with skills in rational planning techniques increases dramatically over the three years studied. This has been paralleled by a decrease in demand for staff with participatory skills or explicitly engaged in fieldwork.
- As reflected in the advertisements, there is a strong need for staff skilled in proposal writing, reporting, financial management and fund-raising.
- Demand for staff with specialised sectoral expertise increases, though at lower numbers than with managerial, fundraising and financial skills. The specific mix of qualifications varies by organisation and year. The most recent (2000) advertisements show growing demand for staff experienced in gender, environment, advocacy, human rights and HIV/AIDS.
- Project cycles affect staffing in at least some organisations, with a growing concentration of short-term positions of less than one year, and of two-three years (project-based).
- There are shifts in the tone of advertisements that suggest that organisations are trying to improve their employee search strategies by providing more information on the employing organisation, likely sources of job satisfaction, and potential for a “good fit.”

3.4 Conclusions to part 3

Endnotes

Part 4. Chains of influence

The main aim of part 4 of the report is to explore the power dynamics embedded in or operative in the aid chain.

Specific questions include examining the reasons behind the use by South African NGOs of the development techniques and approaches documented above. In particular, the aid chain studies explore whether the main impetus for the use of specific procedures and techniques is coming from northern donors, or whether factors specific to the South African political transition, and the resulting environment in which NGOs find themselves, are more important.

Secondly, our concern is to qualify the nature of influence from the north – is the adoption of specific management practices a result of coercive demands placed upon unequal South African partners? Or is the influence indirect and driven, for example, by local interest in what are perceived as improved practices? Are Southern partners able to reject donor conditions that are either unworkable in South Africa or incompatible with the organisation's self-defined mission?

Certainly, both donor pressure and internal factors have played a role in shaping development management in the South African NGO sector. However, the South African case appears to provide some interesting anomalies. For example, South African NGOs have traditionally been, and continue to be, heavily dependent on donor funding. However, our preliminary investigations suggested that many local NGOs do not perceive donors as having had a major influence on the new management procedures they have adopted. We hypothesised at the outset that one explanation for such a finding was that NGO respondents might be less than completely open about their relationships with donors and that in-depth interviews with NGO staff would uncover other dimensions of donor-NGO relationships in South Africa; that indeed proved to be the case.

However, those other dimensions suggested that donor relationships with recipient NGOs were not always instances of successful imposition of requirements and demands. Rather we found that donors influenced only selected management practices of local NGOs, that imposition led to unexpected ways of using the new systems, far from the reality of project implementation or the stated "advantages" of the new procedures, and finally, that there interesting and important examples of both South African and UK organisations that challenged prevailing wisdoms, and worked flexibly, responsively, and seemingly effectively. Other observers have noted that even in contesting such top-down conditions – for example with respect to information systems and reporting – NGOs inadvertently reproduce the biases of the dominant system. [fix]

Five aid chains are presented. In three cases, the international NGOs have played a key role in defining a new and improved development approach that has then been transferred to field offices and/or partners in South and Southern Africa. All three of the improved approaches respond to concerns about failures of earlier approaches around specific issues of importance to the INGO – sustainability, gender equity, social justice – and to procedural weakness such non-participatory or non-integrative approaches.

The other two case studies represent efforts to do development better within the existing framework. [add more]

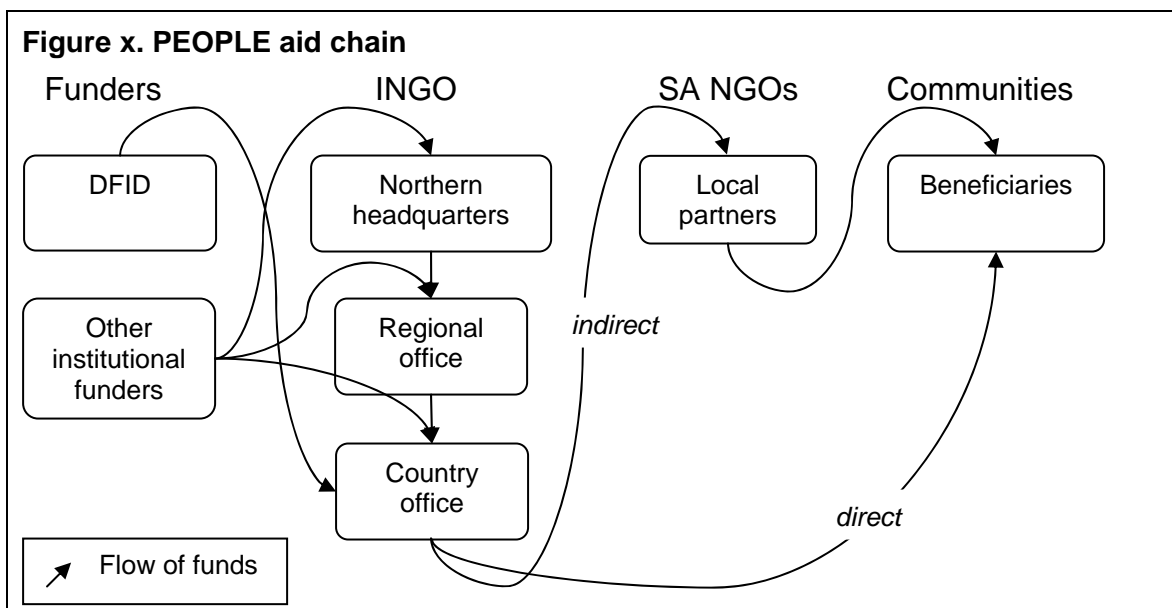
The five case studies suggest that simple models of coercion and transfer of are only part of the story, and even then only in some cases. [fix]

The five studies here also represent the work of three different groups of researchers, though all were supervised by Lisa Bornstein. The first case study, which looks at efforts to introduce a sustainable livelihoods approach, was carried out by Shelly Dill, as part of her Master's degree. Vicki Tallis researched and prepared the second case study, which examines gender policies and gender mainstreaming; the section here is a summary of a longer chapter from her stellar doctoral work, and is based on her long and in-depth association with these organisations as a

consultant and researcher. Carol-Ann Foulis carried out the initial field research and writing of the third case study, which examines gender and advocacy; follow-up research and writing was by Annsilla Nyar, Lisa Bornstein, and Tina Wallace. Isaivani Hyman took the lead on researching and writing the last two case studies, with input – towards research and writing – from the rest of the core research team.

Aid chain 1: promoting livelihood programming. Shelly Dill and Lisa Bornstein

This case study examines the formulation and spread of a particular development approach, here entitled livelihood programming (LP), from the headquarter level in the North to country offices in South Africa and partner organizations. The aid chain is complex: DFID funding, UK NGOs, international NGOs based outside the UK, INGOs based in South Africa and South African NGOs and CBOs. The involvement of international NGOs based outside the UK is somewhat atypical of the organisations studied.



Empirical research for this case study was carried out by Shelly Dill, with analysis and write-up by Shelly Dill and Lisa Bornstein. Following a three-month internship with the livelihood unit in the organisation’s headquarters, Shelly Dill conducted field research with the organisation’s regional and South Africa offices, and with various partner organizations throughout South Africa. Personal work experience, key informant interviews, surveys and on-site observation were sources of information. At each site, core and field staff were interviewed or surveyed. In total, 16 personal interviews and 24 surveys were carried out during 2001.

PEOPLE and livelihood programming

During the last decade PEOPLE introduced a new model to development that attempted to marry rational management and planning techniques with a people-centred approach to household security. Although there was initial disagreement within PEOPLE over the LP framework, during the early 1990s staff at headquarters refined the LP approach and by the mid-1990s, the organisation had officially adopted LP as its programming framework. The implementation of LP brought about a re-vamping of PEOPLE headquarters in the north and a heavy push on country offices in the south to incorporate or even superimpose LP in their programs. PEOPLE is thus an excellent organization in which to study the transfer of development concepts and procedures.

PEOPLE's LP approach draws on and expands the entitlement approaches to household food security formulated by Amartya Sen and others. Secure households are those able to acquire adequate food, health, shelter, minimal levels of income, basic education and community participation. According to those in PEOPLE's international offices, such a focus has the potential to dramatically reform and improve past approaches by the organisation.

The LP framework is PEOPLE's attempt to address the pitfalls of past development projects. The objectives of PEOPLE's LP model are numerous. LP is based on a people centred development approach, which attempts to involve the community and its stakeholders. Operationally, the approach is to discern community needs and desires prior to project design. The community is to take an active role in the design process. A holistic, integrated and flexible framework rather than a preset sector focus is meant to encourage NGOs to respond to the pressing needs of beneficiaries, and to avoid focusing only on those sectors where they have the most expertise.

A stated goal of the LP approach is to improve the organisation's ability to target the poorest and most vulnerable households in a community. Senior respondents in the organisation explained that by examining a community and a household's overall livelihood, a program can be more comprehensive in scope. Additionally, they hoped that with the use of LP and by working with partners they could better coordinate projects in similar geographic areas and avoid repetition. Finally, the respondents and program documents suggested that the use of LP throughout the project cycle would lead to increased levels of monitoring and evaluation, which would in turn allow PEOPLE to successfully demonstrate its results in the field and increase the efficiency level of its programs.

However, while the promise of LP is clear, research in South Africa suggests many of the past pitfalls still plague current project operations. Moreover, there are new problems emerging that an LP approach, at least as currently employed, is unlikely to resolve. Some of these difficulties could be remedied, or at least moderated, if greater attention was paid to the dynamics of LP diffusion and implementation. Other problems, as the evidence below suggests, will require a more fundamental reassessment of the existing aid system and the unequal 'partnerships' fostered therein.

Livelihood programming: A single jewel or a faceted surface?

Our analysis of the LP framework started with the recognition that although LP was presented as an integrated approach, in practice there are three distinct ways in which the framework is used and understood. LP can be understood as a participatory methodology, a management strategy, a project cycle tool, or as a combination of these. Analysing LP in several contexts exposes the myth that LP is simply an integrated 'programmatic framework'. Additionally, it helps to address one of the major questions of this research: whether rational management techniques and people centred approaches can be merged successfully in practice.

LP is used by NGOs as a framework to combine flexible learning approaches with management based tools. Understanding LP as a participatory methodology links it to a people-centred approach whereas viewing LP as a management strategy or a project cycle tool aligns the framework with a management-based philosophy. Therefore, it is necessary to probe the ways LP is used and how each way is received and understood in the field. By doing this systematically, both the 'success' of PEOPLE's LP programming and the tension inherent in merging people centred development approaches with management-based strategies can be observed.

Additionally, examining LP in relation to donors and to direct versus indirect partner implementation reveals how the framework is transferred from organization to organization, the rationale behind the transfer and whether or not the transfer of programming ideology is successful. Ultimately, the different ways LP is understood, used and transferred is bound within the dynamics of the aid chain. Therefore, the overarching goal is to examine the aid chain system using PEOPLE's LP programming framework from a headquarter level in the north to its use in South Africa.

Livelihood programming as a participatory methodology

LP is a programming framework not a methodology. LP uses different methodologies to gather information needed for design of a project. However, the field research shows that some South African program and field staff understand LP only as a package of participatory techniques. Overall, employees make little distinction between LP as a framework for understanding households and their livelihoods, and as a set of tools for collecting information from the community. These misunderstandings of LP mean that what the staff actually understands and engages in is participatory rapid appraisal (PRA) under the guise of LP.

One reason for this confusion is that while most staff received some type of training on LP, they describe this training as making LP more perplexing. Competent LP training takes a commitment of time and expertise that many senior staff find difficult to provide. The deepest understanding of LP seems to come from the regional office and one or two top members of the country office. Most national employees lack understanding of PEOPLE's overall LP initiative; there are thus few individuals who can act as trainers and even then, the limited time dedicated to training is not accompanied by any follow-up. Staff trained in LP find it used only for limited purposes or not at all. Initial community assessments, easily equated with PRA, were seemingly the major learning outcome of the training and the only element of the participatory framework used consistently. Additionally, while PRA is a valuable set of techniques, it also represents the reduction of a broad framework for community involvement in all aspects of the project's conception, implementation, outcomes and assessment to a much more circumscribed and mechanistic approach to participatory inputs and human development.

Livelihood programming as a Management Strategy

LP can also be understood as a management strategy, a way of encouraging coherence across the dispersed offices, projects and partners linked to PEOPLE and its funding. Adoption of LP as the international programming approach to be introduced in all country offices and with all partners implies a unified vision of an organisation that may not be echoed or understood in country offices, partner organisations or recipient communities.

There are dangers inherent in any major overhaul of management initiated from headquarters, even while such reforms have the potential to greatly improve effectiveness and efficiency. One danger is that, as Goldsmith (1996: 1431) writes, "The methods of strategic management are supposed to encourage creative problem-solving, but the methods can also become ends in themselves, to the disregard of what they are supposed to accomplish". There is also the danger that in the absence of substantive inputs from country, field and project level staff, new management approaches will be perceived as an effort by Northern development experts to transmit their own vision of development to the south (C.f. Moseley-Williams, 1994: 78).

In the case of PEOPLE, by advocating for LP, headquarters can encourage inclusion of key elements within programs and maintain greater control over their country office activities. Acceptance for the LP approach may have been mixed for this reason. The field research revealed that in general, employees feel that the LP framework has been a top down process. Original purveyors of LP argue that LP was developed in the field, even in Southern Africa, and was then negotiated to the top. However, regardless of the origin of LP within PEOPLE, the sentiment of country office staff affects the way LP is implemented. Only a small number of staff said they personally feel ownership over LP. While there are those within PEOPLE that truly believe in the approach, there are others who do not support the LP framework. Of those that are critical of LP, many believe the framework is inflexible, ineffective and fails to reach the poorest. Some staff members commented that LP appears to be operational in theory but in the field it is often unable to deliver upon its claims of improvement. They cite the lack of finances, time, community commitment and adequate staff capacity as key constraints at different sites.

To some, LP is a programming framework that headquarters can put on paper to discuss how it has improved its programming. However, in reality, the success in the field is less than clear.

LP as a Project Cycle Tool

Finally, LP can be viewed as a project cycle tool. Breaking LP down into elements, as in the program or project cycle, is common in PEOPLE rhetoric. The LP approach, while incorporating participatory perspectives and attention to multiple determinants of household security, relies heavily on project cycles management techniques and objectives- or result-based programming. Once a potential project concept is identified it should be formulated in a way in which there is direct coherence between inputs and outcomes, with clear stages, milestones and targets that can be monitored and assessed.

Employees are introduced to LP as an approach that you can and should use throughout the project. However, the research found that in many programs, LP is used in the field for an initial assessment and then is neglected. Staff at PEOPLE's South African country office involved in training in partner organizations found this to be a repeated problem, a challenge also acknowledged in several internal assessments and training materials. One such document states that while some attempts to superimpose a livelihoods approach over existing programs were successful "in many other cases this resulted in extensive information gathering and analytical exercises which overwhelmed staff with data, but resulted in little real change in actual project implementation" (source kept anonymous).

Likewise, although theoretically there should be little difficulty in introducing LP into an on-going project – and many senior and field staff advocate for such a practice – the research found that this is rarely done. LP claims to have improved monitoring and evaluating within the project cycle are similarly not fully supported by the field research; monitoring did not consistently cover specified elements of the projects and problems within the project were not always addressed in a timely manner. (Such findings suggest that there are problems with expectations of comprehensive coverage, the on-going relevance of all project elements, and the possibility of intervening quickly and solving all emerging problems.)

Some PEOPLE employees identify the linear service delivery approach of the project cycle as an impediment to adoption of the framework. Howes (1992: 381) explains this automatic process, "The proper management of inputs then sets in motion a linear sequence of causes and effects, which leads automatically to the intended impacts". Understanding LP in rigid project cycle terms sets the framework at odds with its claims of flexibility, community-involvement and a learning-oriented approach.

As the introduction of LP at the beginning of a project is both time-consuming and costly, ideally there should be (a) integration of the new approach throughout the program, which is not occurring, and/or (b) distinct benefits from those initial inputs. Looking at the former option, we can ask, why isn't LP used after the initial community assessment, pre-design phase? Looking at the latter option, we can ask: How effective is LP when it is only used in initial phases of the project cycle?

By analysing different interpretations of LP, a clear tension emerges. These varied ways of understanding LP send mixed messages to staff. Individuals become confused about LP's purpose and meaning, and therefore unwilling to adopt LP. Fundamentally, LP, as it is designed, fails to achieve all it claims because the ideologies and tools within the framework counteract one another. Regarding the experimentation of using rational management tools in the context of participatory and learning approaches, PEOPLE's experience with the LP programmatic framework shows that this fused process has led to insufficient success in the field.

Aid chain 2. Promoting gender mainstreaming. Case study research and writing by Vicki Tallis

This case study explores the influence of a donor organisation operating in South Africa on understanding of, and action around, gender inequality and its role in increasing vulnerability to and the impact of HIV/AIDS. There are many international donors funding HIV/AIDS in South Africa; this case study focuses on the aid chain associated with the HIV/AIDS Gender Link Programme (GLP) [pseudonym], which aims, amongst other things, to support the integration of

gender into the work of partner organisations. The programme was selected because of the reputation of the organisations involved, their experience with gender programming, and the personal experiences of the researcher, which resulted in a particular understanding of the agencies that make up the aid chain to which GLP is linked, in-depth knowledge and experience of the gender processes adopted and facilitated by GLP, and a willingness by those interviewed to be open and transparent in their reflections.

The background and structure of the GLP is presented to highlight the seven levels of the aid chain. The role of donors is explored with a focus on who is pushing the gendered agenda. Finally GLP's approach to integrating gender - "gender mainstreaming" - is discussed in relation to two key challenges: the use and meaning of the terms "gender" and "mainstream" and whether organisations have the capacity to integrate gender in the technical way that is required by donors.

The aid chain

The GLP started as an initiative of several international NGOs with a common concern to contribute to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS and promote tolerance and respect for those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Creative, dynamic, relevant and appropriate measures were sought, and the approach adopted was to be multisectoral (not health based), rights-based, and attentive to gender integration in all interventions. Civil society, especially community based and non-governmental organisations, were key targets for capacity enhancement.

GLP funneled approximately R2 million [will this reveal the organisations?] to a dozen organisations involved in HIV/AIDS work. These NGOs and CBOs were selected to match with GLPs' own priorities regarding strategic priorities, geographic location, and sectoral strengths (e.g. capacity building, service delivery and advocacy). GLP provided for backstopping and training to NGO and CBO staff around programme management skills and HIV/AIDS mainstreaming, skills seen as gaps in the South African civil society response that formed a barrier to effective prevention and care.

A second phase of the project envisioned an expanded number of "partners" in a wider geographic area and a shift in the conceptual framework to highlight three strategic themes.

If listed then reveals the organization!!!!

Theme One: Organisations focusing on gender and sexuality issues in HIV/STI prevention work, especially in relation to young people;

Theme Two: The continuum of HIV prevention and care, as implemented in integrated community-based services that respond holistically to expressed community needs; and

Theme Three: Organisations promoting an enabling environment for an effective civil society response to the HIV epidemic, with a particular focus on the rights of people living with, and directly affected by, HIV/AIDS

Each organisation funded has been "assigned" to one of the three key themes listed above. This distinction is however artificial with many organisations spanning at least two or all three of the themes. Whilst gender is still seen as a cross-cutting issue the fact that it is central to theme one, but not explicitly mentioned in themes two and three could be interpreted as not being equally as important in all three themes.

The GLP Aid chain [see Figure 1] can be represented seven levels, which include:

Figure 2.4. Levels in the GLP aid chain

Level one: Back donors (e.g. DFID) in different countries, including governments, who fund the different INGOs. The South African office and partners do not often interface with the back donors.

Level two: The INGOs, each of which contributes a different amount to GLP, although this does not appear to affect the decision making powers.

Level three: The International Programme Committee, made up of one representative from each of the contributing INGOs, informs the programme in terms of overall strategy and direction as well as reviewing progress and contributing to problem solving. Local staff, level four below, attend programme committee meetings to provide information but not necessarily to make decisions.

Level four: An Advisory Board comprised of South African experts was set up at the beginning of the programme to ensure local participation in overall strategic direction of the programme. The structure is made up of local experts with experience in human rights, gender and HIV/AIDS as well as women living with HIV and AIDS. An evaluation of GLP suggested that the local expertise on the Committee was under-utilised and should be more involved in shaping the programme.

Level five: The GLP South African office employs a small number of local people (1-5) to oversee and manage the programme. Of the 3 coordinators of the South African office, each has had varying degrees of experience and skills.

Level six: At present there are over 15 partners, some working nationally and others in the targeted geographical areas. Most are involved in service delivery, with a few others involved in capacity building or advocacy work.

Level 7: GLP partners work with both functional and geographical communities. Geographical communities include women, men and children in cities, townships, villages and rural areas. Functional communities, include sectors such as youth, women, men in soccer. Some partners work directly with other NGO's and CBO's and others with policy and decision makers.

Research conducted for this case study entailed interviews with people at levels 2 – 6, review of internal and external evaluations, vision, policy and planning documents, reports and partner-produced documentation, and participant-observation at GLP meetings.

[rest of case study still to be edited for confidentiality and brevity – 21 pages to go]

Aid Chain 3. International NGO A and NGO A1⁷ [need pseudonyms, disguise focus on elderly?]

This case study is quite different from the others dealt with in this research project. Essentially, international NGO A (INGO A) is an international network and the SANGO-A is a bona fide member. In many respects SANGO-A is the face of INGO A. In other words, SANGO-A's achievements would be INGO A's achievements. However, it is clear from interviews with staff and beneficiaries of SANGO-A that they view INGO A as a donor and are grateful for whatever opportunities come their way because of their association with it.

INGO A currently has 62 organizations belonging to the network. Its regional offices are located in Asia (Thailand), Africa (Kenya), Caribbean (Jamaica) and Latin America (Bolivia) and the head office is based in London. The organization's work with the elderly is essentially divided into four broad categories: development of their membership, projects, crisis support and advocacy.

INGO A viewed the elderly in South Africa as less disadvantaged than the elderly in other countries so its programme here concentrated on capacity-building of existing organizations rather than setting up new projects. As well, their vision is that this capacity-building process would take about five years and then their members (of which there are two in South Africa) would be in a position to take on the role that INGO A staff play in South Africa. This vision is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, in view of the level of capacity in SANGO-A for example, it is rather ambitious and impractical. Secondly, it seems that SANGO-A is unaware that INGO A is retreating from its role in South Africa. Considering that INGO A is a well-resourced

⁷ Unlike most of the other organizations that were interviewed, NGO A and NGO A1 had no concerns about confidentiality. Names are disguised because other organisations are kept anonymous.

organization, this expectation of its members does not seem to be ethically responsible given that member organizations are in fact struggling for an existence.

The NGO A1 was experiencing severe financial constraints at the time that interviews were conducted. The organization was in the midst of retrenching staff. This was in response to the end of a funding cycle and a lack of alternatives to keep a project running. As with many organizations, SANGO-A has expanded and contracted according to its funding opportunities.

The organization was formed in the 1970s by a group of women concerned with the lack of services for Black senior citizens. It became a formal institution in 1982. The original focus of activities was social services for the elderly in the townships of Clermont, Lamontville and Chesterville in KwaZulu-Natal. Later these activities were extended to literacy services in these areas as well.

The relationship with INGO A began in 1990 when SANGO-A first sent a funding proposal to them. INGO A made a project visit and decided to fund the organization for R50000 towards the homecare project. Once the programme was established, INGO A further assisted the organization by training staff in a train-the-trainer homecare programme. Thereafter, they assisted by providing the organization with materials and small grants to set up a training programme on homecare for family members of the frail elderly.

INGO A's relationship with SANGO-A ceased to be a direct funding one at that point. Instead, INGO A began to provide supportive assistance in terms of helping the organization identify its needs and access other funding. In 1996, INGO A assisted SANGO-A to conduct a participatory needs assessment with the elderly in Clermont to determine what programmes the organization should implement in response. At the time, the Department of Welfare had decided to subsidize the lucheon clubs run there as full-time service centres and required that the programmes be upgraded. Much to everyone's surprise, participants prioritized literacy training. They saw it as a means to improve their lives, to participate fully in society, to access information and to prevent exploitation. AI was able to source funding from DfID and Help the Aged UK for the entire project for three years. Throughout the project, INGO A assisted with various different processes including report writing, setting up partnerships and the monitoring and evaluation process. However, once funding for the literacy project ended, SANGO-A was left to its own devices in terms of keeping the project afloat.

Although the funding relationship between INGO A and SANGO-A has ended, the partnership has continued to evolve. As a full-fledged member of INGO A, SANGO-A is entitled to participate in international workshops and training programmes. The Project Manager of SANGO-A describes these opportunities as "empowering" and providing "a sense of belonging". Recently, she has attended workshops in Spain and Mauritius and found them to be important networking opportunities and learning experiences. SANGO-A has the expectation that INGO A will continue to assist in accessing external funding for specific projects, however, as mentioned above, INGO A foresees a lesser role for itself in South Africa. At the feedback workshop held in London in March 2003, an INGO A employee indicated that some bridging funds had been disbursed to SANGO-A. However, it was unclear how long this was intended to assist. The INGO A employee seemed quite unsympathetic to the plight of the learners. He was adamant that SANGO-A was aware that funding was going to be temporary and should have sought out alternatives.

Apart from INGO A, there were no other international donors funding SANGO-A. The Project Manager expressed that one reason is that donors feel that the organization has sufficient support from INGO A. Thus, SANGO-A finds itself in "a catch-22." Efforts have been shifted to sourcing funding locally, however, with not much success. In the end, SANGO-A was not able to sustain the literacy project in its original form.

During the funding period, there were six learning centres, run by 12 Facilitators and a Coordinator. Once funding was terminated, the project was collapsed to four learning centres where six Facilitators ran classes twice a week. Since then, the organization had undergone some dramatic changes due to funding constraints. The literacy project was almost shut down. At the organization's AGM in July 2002, the announcement was made that there were no longer funds to continue with the project. They decided to keep a few classes going till Christmas when they hoped "people would be more generous". There was only one remaining paid employee for the project – the Coordinator. Some of the literacy facilitators had remained on as volunteers but others had moved on either because they could not cover the transport costs to get to the classes or to find another job. The organization also found the need to undertake other retrenchments. So from an original staff complement of 40, the organization was down to 23 staff.

The current primary source of funding is the Department of Welfare (DoW) that subsidizes 75% of the social services programme. This funding has been "creatively" stretched to the literacy and homecare projects as well. The National Lotteries Board allocated some funding – albeit short-term - earlier this year for SANGO-A's literacy and homecare projects. The management of SANGO-A seems to have a remarkable ability of running their organization with minimal funding. A key driving force is the spirit of volunteerism, even amongst staff who appear to be paid nominal salaries.

While the funding relationship between INGO A and SANGO-A has been inconsistent, INGO A has been committed to the transfer of technical expertise to SANGO-A. Apart from inviting SANGO-A to participate in workshops and work with the network on policy development, INGO A sends personnel to train SANGO-A staff on homecare for example and the Help Age Programme Manager works closely with SANGO-A staff on various different tasks.

INGO A offered considerable assistance to SANGO-A in the report writing process. The INGO A Programme Manager would essentially help to formulate the report. There was no standard format that SANGO-A was expected to follow, but the INGO A Programme Manager would come down to Durban to provide guidance. In the first year of the literacy project funding arrangement, SANGO-A's Project Manager would write a report and send it to the INGO A Johannesburg offices until, according to her, they realised that SANGO-A was the only organization that was in a funding relationship with INGO A. They then decided to provide assistance by working together on the report-writing process.

INGO A, in turn, has their own responsibilities to their back donors. The INGO A head office in London requires monthly financial and narrative reports. There is no standard format for reporting to them. However, different donors have different guidelines. The INGO A's Regional Programme Manager who does the actual reporting to DfID argues that DfID's requirements are "very strenuous". While they may try to be thorough, it sometimes seems to her that they are "splitting hairs". Information gathered from meetings and report-writing processes with SANGO-A is translated into detailed and complicated reports to DfID.

The INGO A's Programme Manager acknowledges that it is sometimes confusing to partners whether INGO A should be viewed solely as a donor. She feels that they need to understand that INGO A also has to get money from their own donors. Problems arise with their partners when as a funding conduit, they have to be responsible to their own donors and require the cooperation of their partners in order to do so. This pressure can strain relationships with members/partners. For example, INGO A enjoys a good relationship with SANGO-A. However, before funds can be disbursed, there are usually strict reporting requirements. In these instances, SANGO-A may not have understood that a donor can be "very fussy" and that that complying with their requirements is of crucial importance. Instead, they may have thought that INGO A was being unduly hard and demanding of them, not realizing that INGO A is accountable to its own donors.

[add section her analysing the case study – importance of a single donor, lack of information on constraints and pressures, effort versus ability to divorce funding from partnership, burdens associated with report-writing]

[add second gender case here or keep for later?]

Aid Chain 4. KZN Housing Project⁸ [again trim and focus on aid chain dynamics, importance of having multiple funders, issue of umbrellas]

The KZN Housing Project (KHP) is an example of an organization that has been able to attract multiple funders through its membership in a network. The organization has been in existence for over twenty years and has been a strong advocate for housing needs for the poor. It has a diverse funding base. Apart from key donors such as the European Union, Oxfam Canada, CIDA, DfID, HIVOS, Interfund, USAID, and CAFOD, KHP raises funds through hiring out staff services, local donors and the state housing subsidy.

As with many NGOs, KHP has had to balance responding to donor requirements with responding to the needs of the communities they serve. They claim that their ultimate commitment is to communities - "we won't be dictated to by donors." One of their criticisms of donors is that their funding categories are not generic enough to fit communities' needs. They add that donors generally do not cover surveys, needs assessments and baseline studies that are valuable to their work. As well, KHP has had very little access to money for research because donors are sceptical of funding studies. They also find it difficult to access money for pilot projects. KHP has observed that most donors now do not like funding small projects since they think they require too much effort and high administration costs.

Another source of frustration is that donors tend to want KHP to plan years in advance. They find that this is very difficult to do within the context of a rapidly changing local policy environment and complex community factors. Also, working properly with communities takes time that is not accommodated for in some donors' requirements and expectations for delivery. Despite demands for forward planning, KHP finds it difficult to get multiyear funding from donors, especially when different donors have different financial years.

As is typical of many NGOs, the organization has recently been in and out of financial crises. It is currently surviving financially through its professional staff fees. There is an agreement with professional staff that they will be paid salaries below professional rates and they will use the difference from the professional fees charged to government to pay for things donors do not fund, such as overheads, research, and legal fees to support evicted communities. There is also a fair amount of contract-based work that includes partnerships with local government in relation to housing and municipal services.

One of the Managers observed that the contract work is an area that has to be evaluated more closely. He believes that the organization might find that it relies too heavily on this avenue. It may also constrain the organization's ability to exercise an independent voice. Many NGOs are faced with this dilemma of having to find alternative means of raising funds – often through contracting out to government or the private sector – without compromising their values and identity.

According to the Manager, KHP has proven to be a highly sustainable organization "as far as NGO sustainability goes which is always a relatively insecure situation". The organization has never had to retrench staff in 19 years of operation. He acknowledged though that the organization could always be more secure with greater levels of reserve or access to

⁸ This name is an alias.

endowments that would support recurring costs. He believes that donors perceive the organization as a reliable partner.

In the last two years, the organization has been through a crisis in leadership. Two directors have resigned. The appointment of the last Director proved to be a disastrous experiment. This Director attempted to install a new vision for the organization that never was formally adopted. Staff described this vision as more of a private-sector- delivery agency paradigm as opposed to a people-centred one. As part of this paradigm shift, the Director had encouraged a much stronger focus on outputs and quantitative data.

Staff felt that this transition in the organization did more harm than good. It was a futile diversion. It forced the organization to go back to basics and re-establish and clarify values, principles and a development paradigm. They needed to go through the exercise of verifying whether the old vision was still the correct vision. At the time, the organization had placed an advertisement in the Mail & Guardian for an external facilitator to assist with “change management” and a strategic planning process. This process was expected to take between six to nine months. However, staff did not envisage a dramatic departure from the original vision and values.

According to the Manager, one of the main lessons from this experience was that the Board did not really have a vision for the organization especially since they were prepared to back a Director with a vision that was a drastic departure from the original vision. This costly decision created a lot of instability and conflict within the organization. It also demonstrated a need for further development of the Board. The Manager suggested that in light of these developments, “support from donors in terms of improved governance would be a useful intervention”.

KHP does not have a direct relationship with many of its donors. There is an intermediary organization that liaises with donors. However, donors do make project visits and outline their requirements. KHP observed that the EU's reporting requirements were complex and demanding. The EU required quarterly financial reports and reports measuring project progress against specific indicators. They also required six monthly narrative reports. The quarterly progress reports involved completing a substantial number of indicators, and the reporting timeframes were very strict. The reports were quite broad covering habitable environments, governance and sustainable livelihoods/economic development activity. Reporting to the EU in this way was not very useful to KHP. It was not really possible to show what had or had not been achieved according to the EU's reporting indicators, as some of them were inappropriate. KHP was in the midst of trying to refine those indicators again.

Reports related to the EU contract would go through an intermediary umbrella organization. Each individual member of the organization would send a report to a head office where it would be compiled into one comprehensive report that would be submitted to the EU every six months. This task was a demanding one as it involved synthesizing a large number of indicators from members' reports. All members were required to use the same reporting format and found it challenging to get reports done properly and on time. The head office would often complain that the quality of members' reports was inadequate in some cases. They felt that members did not understand the donor expectations of the head office.

According to the previous Director, USAID also had very rigorous reporting requirements. As part of the funding relationship, USAID would send auditors to KHP to assess capacity for financial management. The project coordinator at KHP is required to submit six monthly reports to USAID - a narrative one that outlines the successes of the project and a financial report. She observed that while these requirements were not as cumbersome and demanding at the project level, she expected that they would be when the head office has to compile its consolidated report to USAID.

Interfund was mentioned as having the strictest reporting requirements of KHP's donors. The donor required six monthly audited financial reports. Where possible, KHP would use the

reporting formats/indicators of one donor to report to others. Staff acknowledged that it is difficult and expensive to adapt donor requirements into learning for KHP. They also admitted that sometimes reporting does not reflect what actually happens on the ground. In light of the complexity of KHP's work, it is not always possible to encapsulate their activities, achievements and context using donors' indicators. They emphasized that one important way forward is that donors need more contact with partners and that annual donor visits were not enough.

Aid Chain 5. Faith & Development and its Partners⁹ [trim, reduce focus on termination & money, add on other aspects of the partnership]

Faith & Development is an international NGO with operations in many countries. Partnership is a core element in the organisation's approach to development and one that they "take seriously" [fix – get info from Tina and Jenny's interviews to expand the intro here]. One aspect of the priority given to partnership was avoidance of headquarter coercion of the partners and the promotion of a more equal relationship.

A by-product of the partnership approach spilled over into our research. When we contacted Faith & Development to find out who their partners were in South Africa, Faith & Development was resistant to providing that information. Their preference was to inform their partners of the research and have the partners voluntarily contact the researchers; not surprisingly this generated little response, with only on local partners contacting the research team. Contact with some of Faith & Development's partners through the team's donor networks resulted in another two partners expressing interest in participating in the research.

Ultimately, there were two partners that participated and were engaged in more in-depth interviews within this research project. They were two quite different NGOs in a number of respects. NGO A was a well-established religious based NGO that had a large budget and large staff complement. The organization worked with its church membership around issues of economic development, democracy, HIV/AIDS and other priority issues.

NGO B was an economic development NGO that had downsized over the years in terms of staff and budget. Both NGOs were umbrella NGOs operating out of a single province. Faith & Development had long-standing relationships with both NGOs. However, while its relationship with NGO A was ongoing, it had terminated its relationship with NGO B. Also the nature of the relationship was quite different. The donor seemed to enjoy a supportive and consultative relationship (that could somewhat be characterized as a partnership) with NGO A but appeared to handle its ten-year relationship with NGO B disdainfully and what one of our researcher labelled "irresponsibly"

Interviews with staff members from NGO B revealed that Faith & Development had a long-standing relationship with the SA NGO, primarily around project funding. Contact was otherwise limited. Interviewees complained that Faith & Development would only make yearly project visits to the head office and did not demonstrate much interest or commitment to going out to the field. The donor was not particularly supportive of the NGO in any other way than the funds.

There seems to be a great deal of disappointment amongst all the staff interviewed about the termination of the funding from Faith & Development, who are not clear on the reasons why finding ended. The Programme Manager indicated that Faith & Development had made a project visit but at no point during the visit was there a mention of the termination of funding. The Director had received a letter from Programme Manager for Faith & Development-South Africa & Lesotho, stating that: "There are increasing pressures to spend more of our limited resources in

⁹ The partners of Faith & Development that participated in this study chose to remain anonymous. Faith & Development has been given an alias because other organisations are to remain anonymous.

tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, the epicentre of the disease, and we will be strengthening our HIV/AIDS programme there.” [can quote be used if reveals organisation?]

There was no discussion or negotiation with NGO B as to its HIV/AIDS programme or how it could work towards meeting these criteria. The Director expressed concern that this view of HIV/AIDS was divorced from the issue of poverty alleviation (the focus of NGO B’s work). The resentment around this issue was even evident amongst the field workers:

“We are involved because most of our members are affected. We try to run workshops. Sometimes we even bring in people from Health to run the workshops. But sometimes donors want you to run the project yourself. They want you to focus on that. It doesn’t mean that we are not making our members in the community aware of it or that we are not talking about it.”

“[It] doesn’t mean that all organizations must run a workshop or have a project on HIV/AIDS because they are already organizations doing it. We can network with the organizations already doing it and bring them in to run the workshops. We must have the knowledge but not have it as a project.”

Apart from its new HIV/AIDS focus, Faith & Development had also advanced another reason for terminating its funding relationship with NGO B. According to the Programme Manager, Faith & Development had expressed that NGO B had reached a stage where they could function on their own and that they wanted to direct their funding to emerging NGOs instead. The letter from the INGO donor notes that he is certain that the Director will be successful with local fundraising apparently without consideration of what the context would be like for such fundraising. Both NGO A and B expressed their disappointment and frustration with the lack of local funding sources.

In the case of NGO B, Faith & Development appears to have handled “ten years of partnership” rather irresponsibly. There was no consultation, negotiation or adequate explanation for the withdrawal of funds. Most of all, the sustainability of the NGO was not given much consideration – the buck was just passed to local fundraising.

In a follow-up informal interview with the Programme Manager, some doubts arose as to what actually happened. He expressed his belief that there had been financial mismanagement and indicated that the founder-Director still exercised considerable control over the financial operations. He suggested that donors might have been concerned about the way funds were managed. When asked for an example of mismanagement, he described situations where instead of purchasing a car or building on hire-purchase (lease) (according to monthly donor-approved budgets for such expenses), the Founder-Director would arrange for the entire amount to be advanced so the purchase could be paid off up-front. As well, he hinted that the organization does “shift funds around” when necessary and in fact has been criticized for doing so in an evaluation report commissioned by another donor and closely guarded by the management of the organization.

When the Programme Manager was specifically asked about whether Faith & Development had been concerned about mismanagement. He indicated that the donor had not explicitly stated so or made any queries in this regard. However, his various comments throughout the interviews about the financial irregularities had successfully created doubt around this issue.

In contrast, Faith & Development’s relationship with NGO A has evolved over time. NGO A has enjoyed ongoing support from Faith & Development in various ways. Recently, two senior staff members from the NGO attended a Faith & Development exposure visit to learn how to conduct local fundraising. They attended meetings and observed how Faith & Development conducts public fundraising. The approach to NGO A in terms of support for local fundraising is in direct

contrast to Faith & Development's approach to NGO B, where Faith & Development clearly left the NGO to its own devices.

NGO A's relationship with Faith & Development cannot, however, be characterized as a true partnership. This is elucidated by Faith & Development's approach to the issue of gender and more specifically, the two partners' perception of it. NGO B indicated that their need to address gender issues has been influenced by both donors and the reality on the ground. They noted that Faith & Development had recommended that the NGO have a gender policy but did not strongly push for it.

NGO A, on the other hand, felt that Faith & Development had almost demanded a gender policy from them. It was not that the NGO itself was opposed to having a gender policy but they felt that they were being held to ransom. There was a feeling that "either you had a gender policy or you would say goodbye to the funding". Faith & Development gave the NGO some examples of gender indicators to use in the projects. According to the Director, "...it wasn't difficult for us actually to establish a gender policy. There was no resistance to it but there was a feeling of perhaps wanting to resist simply because we were being told to do it, made to do it."

NGO A did end up devising a gender policy that was acceptable to Faith & Development. However there was clear resentment about having to be coerced in such a way.

NGO A also noted that Faith & Development is generally becoming more rigorous in its requirements. The donor also seems to be much more concerned with impact assessment than they were before. This was also an observed trend with another of their religious-based funders.

In considering Faith & Development's approach and relationship with the above two partners, several questions arise:

- Why did Faith & Development adopt different strategies and attitudes towards these two organizations?
- It is often said that in the donor world, it does matter who you know and this came up often in interviews. Did personality or reputation of the NGOs (amongst donors) matter?
- How important is the issue of race in considering this case study? NGO A had a white Director while NGO B had a black Director.
- Whether NGO B did indeed mismanage funds and warranted Faith & Development terminating its funding relationship with the organization, why was this exit not done in an ethical manner? What is the extent of a donor's responsibility and how are they held accountable?

The examples of Faith & Development and its partners, and of xxx and its partners, shows that a single INGO may forge very different relationships with its partners in the South. There are multiple implications arising from this simple observation. First, it suggests that the experience and skill of INGO managers is crucial to understanding the quality of the relationships – and in many ways – and the projects that emerge. In both of these two organisations, the international manager explained seeming heavy oversight or abrupt termination of funding as rooted in concerns over the competence, in the first case, or the probity, in the second of the project manager. While both such actions generated resentment on the part of the recipients, such a reaction was rooted in real communication, albeit not expressly stated. Second, it suggests that competence in Southern NGOs is, at times, matched with trust and exchange by dedicated INGO managers – such relationships are built over time, and can easily be undermined by a change in manager or policy focus at either end of the aid chain. Third, however, such cases simultaneously show the limits to such communication; would NGO B have been more capable of finding other sources of funding and sustaining its programme had Faith & Development representatives given some indication of concerns and shifting priorities during or immediately after the evaluation mission? Could the xxx manager have managed to provide support that was less threatening and intrusive while still maintaining close watch on progress? Could discussion of concerns assisted the process?

Add conclusion to aid chain chapter

Part 5. Key Issues

Section 5

What follows are some of the findings from in-depth case studies of 17 NGOs. We have organised our discussion around key issues arising from the research: NGO identities and missions; management tools and techniques; and partnerships. For each of these we draw on the interviews of staff members, interviews of beneficiaries (where possible), review of documentation and web information, and observation visits (where possible). We track how the power relations imbedded in funding, and the conditions attached to it, have affected the ability of local South African NGOs to address the pressing development problems of the country in participatory, just and sustainable ways.

Our key observations are:
[to add]

Changing NGO Identities

The transition to post-apartheid South Africa has meant significant changes for South African NGOs. The first of which involves the redirection of funding away from NGOs who had been hitherto involved in the anti-apartheid struggle, toward government who was expected to play the leading role in transformation in a post-apartheid scenario. From the side of international funders, it was expected that government would in turn devolve funding through to NGOs. However this did not happen as envisioned and the NGO sector found itself threatened by funding constraints, to varying degrees. This post-apartheid scenario involved a serious 'brain drain' of skilled NGO personnel into government, leaving a vacuum of skills and capacity within many NGOs. The government's flagship national development programme, the RDP, was abandoned after two years into transition, in favour of GEAR, a strict macro-economic policy, which has been called our homegrown structural adjustment policy.

It is within such a context that NGOs have been forced to develop new forms of interaction with government, most often related to funding. The case studies that we have researched reveal a common trend toward encouragement by their funders to tap local sources on the basis of the assumption that such funding sources are (a) available and (b) accessible. The NDA is one such example. This initiative set up by the government to channel funds to the NGO sector has been a problematic one. The NDA has proved to have serious capacity problems and appears largely incapable of disbursing funds through to needy NGOs.

Competition for funding has forced many organisations to adopt a more professionalised approach. One of our case study NGOs explained how there was strong donor pressure to operate on business principles. The organization has had to move toward a private-sector delivery agency paradigm with a strong focus on outputs and quantitative data. As the Director noted, "the changes after apartheid call for a more sophisticated level of governance." While professionalizing was one avenue, the organization has also had to ensure its financial sustainability through government contracts and professional staff fees.

Statements from the staff members demonstrate their perception that their essential identity as an NGO, as part of civil society, has been compromised:

"...this situation really places constraints on our independence".
"We've had to compromise our role..."

"We don't want to find ourselves becoming parastatals."

Another NGO also explained their compromised position by indicating: “Well, we have to agree with the government or else they will just give the funds to consultants.”

The Donor-driven Push toward the Formation of Networks/Partnerships among NGOs

The drive on the part of donors, toward the formation of issue-based networks is based on the assumption of a commonality of interests on the part of its funding partners. The reasons cited on the part of donors are usually that of cost-saving, the avoidance of administrative hassles and maximising sustainability. Thus NGOs are expected to coalesce around donor priorities. The case study NGOs revealed resentments that their essential identity is being compromised or at worst that they are at the mercy of donors.

One NGO indicated that: “the starting assumption is that we are all its [the donor’s] partners and that we will easily work together. But being its partner doesn’t mean that its automatically so.”

Another NGO complained that “this network can only get partners together when the funder is there.”

A more positive response came from an NGO that expressed enthusiasm about the marketing advantages that these donor-encouraged networks provide. One advantage was thought to be the enhancement of the organisation’s profile. The NGO highlighted that the assumption is that donors value these associations because it demonstrates that the organisation is well-established, fairly well-known and has a strong support base. The NGO appeared to derive a sense of validation from these networks.

Pressure to Change Strategic Focus According to Donor Priorities

An emerging trend is that NGOs often feel pressured to change or alter their strategic focus according to shifting donor priorities. They also feel powerless to resist this pressure because of their dependency on donor funding and their need not to jeopardize it.

One NGO explained the pressure it felt from two of its major donors to shift some of its operational focus toward HIV/AIDS. They acknowledged that “it is difficult to admit that it’s not a critical area”, however, “donors are not prepared to understand the specifics of HIV/AIDS from the point of view of our strategic focus”. The NGO felt that donors were adopting a conservative approach in that they were focusing largely on prevention and not as much on care and treatment. This was viewed as indicating a shallow understanding of the issue on the part of donors and reflected a disturbing bent toward an issue that has been raised a number of times in the research, that is, that donors follow ‘flavour of the month’ priorities.

There were many other critical comments from NGOs regarding donor responses to HIV/AIDS. Some of them are as follows:

One indicated that: “all the donors want to hear about is HIV/AIDS...there is such pressure on NGOs to take up this issue, even if its not our strategic focus”

Another NGO complained: “We are affected most because our members are affected. We try to run workshops. Sometimes we even bring people in from the Department of Health to run our workshops. But sometimes donors want you to run the project yourself. But don’t they understand that it doesn’t mean that we aren’t making our members in the community aware of it?”

Such findings raise serious concerns about the ability of NGOs to perform their essential role as an independent voice for civil society. In this way, many NGOs who have had to turn to government contracts and funding sources for work, have been disempowered in terms of their right to critical self expression. The following quote illustrates this:

“whenever we are critical we make sure it is absolutely constructive. We have to be so cautious because if the state felt we were being unnecessarily critical, it could affect our funding.”

The research also found that shifts in identity are often tied to leadership. It has emerged that the rapid staff turnover and consequent ‘brain drain’ into government has meant that the loss of highly-skilled key personnel from the top tiers of the NGO sector, has left an uncomfortable and disempowering vacuum within organisations. This raises the important issue of relationship-building and trust between donors and NGOs. For example, what happens after the departure of an influential and powerful figurehead - the NGO director - who usually exercises a monopoly on organisational funding and has formed personal relationships with donors in the course of the organisation’s history?

One case study demonstrated that the NGO was plunged into a funding crisis after the departure of the Director. Successive directors were unable to develop as much influence with donors and so could not access new funding. In this particular case, the influential ex-Director through her influence was able to still “remote control the organisation” from her subsequent position within government, thereby holding the organization together.

A related and pertinent question is what kinds of leaders are donors seeking? The case studies have raised in two clear incidences that donors wish to fund organisations which are run by a particular kind of manager/director, that is, “lawyers, directors, white people” or as one Director stated:

“Donors want people who can relate to them on the same intellectual level...they seem to like local people, but donors need to understand that there’s a real gap between people at a grassroots level and getting these people functioning at a management level.”

Partnership

Partnership is a highly contested term in the development vocabulary. There are expectations of such ideal virtues as equality, respect and mutuality, but in reality donor-recipient relationships appear to play out largely within a context of dependency and mistrust. Our case studies have had to separate out positive donor-NGO relationships versus problematic relationships.

Several NGOs expressed quite candidly that that they have become donor-oriented. As one NGO indicated, “we are just following the money” and in the process accepting the accompanying prescriptiveness of donors. An NGO noted that “[donors] will just tell you this is what we’re funding now” and NGOs are just expected to comply.

Another NGO indicated that:

“Donors must try to make us understand their policy. A donor may want you to shift your policy but there must be more effort to convince me and make me understand why. They can’t just impose change. Every organisation has its own aims and vision.”

One NGO cynically expressed that: “The joke now is that if you want funding, you have to make sure you include the words ‘sustainable livelihoods’.”

There are also deep levels of anxiety that NGOs express in their funding relationships: “I’m not good at writing” or “my English is bad” reflects the concern that NGOs do not measure up to the standards set by their donors. There is usually a great deal of anxiety about communication especially to either meet donor standards or to be convincing about funding worthiness.

The following quotes demonstrate further that the concept of partnership is mere rhetoric:

“We didn’t have the opportunity at the end of funding to tell xxx what the problems were with their requirements.”

“The relationship is just about sending reports and getting money. There is no partnership. Most of our donors only visit once a year anyway, or even once every two years.”

One case study tells a story of the abrupt termination of funding with very little advance warning. Despite the fact that there had been a field visit from the donor, no mention was made of the upcoming termination of funding. Communication of the funding termination came via a letter in which the NGO was told that the donor was looking to strengthen its HIV/AIDS focus and that the NGO should explore local funding sources. There was no discussion as to how the NGO could better meet the new criteria that the donor had outlined. The letter also indicated that it felt that the NGO was now equipped to function without its funding.

This is an example of a ten-year partnership being irresponsibly handled. There was no consultation, negotiation or even clear explanation for the termination of funding. The donor clearly gave no serious consideration to the sustainability of the NGO. Responsibility was merely devolved to local fundraising.

Thus, it was widely felt that donors have a limited understanding of the broader political and socio-economic environment that they work in. Some NGOs made strong recommendations about how they felt donors could be helpful. One such example was as follows:

“Donors should be using their influence and lobbying their governments in supporting our goals. If they truly wish to be partners, then they could help us by having staff placements from donor agencies. Skills locally are very expensive. For example, we would like legal skills and a land surveyor but they cost too much.”

Management Procedures

The ever-mounting pressure for accountability, cost-effectiveness and the demonstration of impact in the aid industry and development sector has resulted in the emergence of management procedures and tools that prioritize the measurable, and are tightly structured, neatly packaged and methodical (Howes, 1992; Wallace, 1997). These procedures include logical frameworks, monitoring and evaluation systems, strategic planning and strict reporting requirements.

Research on the management approaches and activities of NGOs in the developing world has shown that these have been influenced by donor agendas rather than by needs and priorities on the ground (Wallace, 1997). The following discussion examines these dynamics as they play themselves out in the South African context, and particularly in the KwaZulu-Natal region. Many of the management procedures that appear to be common practice in the developed countries, particularly, in the United Kingdom seem to be acquiring increasing importance and pervasiveness among NGOs in South Africa. What follows is an analysis of some of these trends in the South African context.

The table below illustrates the number of case study NGOs employing each type of procedure:

Table One: Prevalence of Management Procedures among Case Study NGOs

Management Procedure	Number of NGOs Employing Procedure	Percentage
Logical Frameworks	13	93
Monitoring and Evaluation	14	100
Strategic Planning	13	93

Reporting	14	100
Missing 3 – Isai which ones are here?		

Logical Frameworks

The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) emerged in the 1970s (Howes, 1992: 381). It was created by USAID to facilitate project appraisals (ibid). The approach has since become common knowledge and practice amongst project/programme planners and coordinators. Wallace (1997: 36) identifies two explanations for its adoption in Europe. Firstly, the increased demand for accountability and a demonstration of impact from national treasuries and donors has pressured NGOs into using rational planning tools such as LFAs to structure, monitor and evaluate their projects. Secondly, the NGOs themselves have chosen this direction as they have become larger in size, their work has become increasingly complex and their need to ensure their marketability and competitiveness has become priority.

Researchers have identified some of the merits as well as some of the problems with the approach. Howes (1992: 383) suggests that firstly, LFAs aid communication amongst stakeholders because key elements of a project can be represented on one sheet of paper. Secondly, it is unprecedented in its utility in terms of impact evaluation. The logical links between indicators and means of verification is the primary feature that enables this process. Lastly, by entrenching an acknowledgement of external factors that are beyond the organization's control, it encourages an understanding of the wider environment and social dynamics.

On the other hand, the limitations of the approach are numerous. Translating a framework that emerged from corporate America into one that has utility for the developing world has been fundamentally problematic. As Howes (1992: 383) notes, the framework does not have poor people or addressing poverty as a central concern. None of the provisions explicitly demonstrate this. As well, the structure and process involved in LFAs represent a type of "blueprint approach" where there is little room for participation and worldviews of other stakeholders. Instead, the person/s drafting the framework take on the role of experts in representing their "snapshot" of the project.

One of the other important criticisms of the approach is that it is clearly in the tradition of a mechanistic and linear causality worldview (Howes, 1992). Progress in this view is too simplistic whereas in the world of development much of the progressive activity is process-oriented. Thus, it is not so easy to attribute outputs to well-designed and methodical inputs. As well, the tightly structured frameworks with its predetermined goals make it difficult to incorporate or adjust for any possibilities of deviation (Howes, 1992: 391).

Finally, Howes (1992: 393) cautions that the uncritical and widespread adoption of a blueprint or management tool type of approach such as the LFA may have undesirable consequences. It may stifle innovation and suppress local initiatives. Equally problematic will be the resultant trend away from such long-term processes as institution and team building towards more short-term and easily quantifiable type projects.

On a more optimistic note, Howes (1992) has noted that some organizations have been trying to marry a participatory approach with the logical framework approach, however, a later discussion on the impact of the new management practices will show that this has not always been successful in practice. Despite the identification of the many limitations of LFA in recent research, the adoption of the approach has been on the increase.

The Research Findings:

This research on management practices amongst South African NGOs has focussed on the Logical Framework Approach because the assumption was – and as the findings have demonstrated – that these approaches are being widely and increasingly adopted in South Africa. LFA and the whole idea of “planning tools” have evoked extreme reactions from the fourteen NGOs participating in case studies. Some have expressed outrage at the notion of rationally planning development to such an extent and have claimed to be “anti-tool” organizations. On the other extreme was an organization that had unwittingly adopted such a framework. In this instance, the organization’s Programme Manager claimed no knowledge of it or of its use within the organization. A documentation scan revealed otherwise. Thus, LFAs have permeated the world of NGOs in one way or another.

For the most part, interviewees expressed ambivalence about LFAs. They have acknowledged the value of the approach in terms of organizing and thinking clearly, but have complained about its inflexibility, its tendency to be reductionist, and its complicated nature. None of the interviewees regarded the framework as an indispensable part of their work. The following discussion examines why and how organizations are employing the framework and their various reactions to it, whether positive or negative.

The Motivation Behind NGOs’ Adoption of LFA

The organizations that were using the framework were doing so because it was part of their donors’ expectations. For example, the EU and DfID, either as direct funders or through their intermediaries, have expected NGOs to use orthodox logical framework applications.

NGOs have been able to negotiate with donors on this to varying degrees. Some organizations were able to reject the imposition of the tool and resist the pressure from donors. As the Director of one of these organizations noted:

“...We do not use tools! And no, donor requirements don’t influence our work at all...We refuse to use logframes. Logframes are an iniquitous, dangerous, reductive trap...[S]ome people don’t have a choice. LFA is a military planning tool.”

A subsequent interview with the Director revealed that while the organization had not adopted an orthodox version of the tool, staff members were using it in some form or another. An interviewee from another organization noted that “We hate the word ‘tools’” and indicated that they do not submit in terms of LFA. However, as a training organization they have directed significant energies towards requests from NGOs and donors to train on the use of LFA. Where organizations have participated in training on the use of LFAs, it has primarily been organized by GTZ and DANCED.

It is no coincidence that organizations such as these that are aware of their choices and have opted to not use the framework, are relatively well-resourced or have a diversified funding base. They appear to be empowered to negotiate with donors and even reject them when their requirements are at odds with or impede their work.

On the other hand, the organization that is using LFA and is unaware of it is an organization that has tended to be extremely donor-oriented and dependent on donor funds and has been pulled in different directions by various donors because of this vulnerability. Indeed the use of LFA has been imposed upon them without their awareness of it. The organization’s Programme Manager who does all programme planning, the liaising, preparing of proposals and reporting to donors indicated that his organization did not use logframes. However, a review of a programme plan and report to the donor revealed that the organization was employing an application of LFA. For example, the plan was organized into a table with the following categories: “activity”, “expected outcomes”, “indicators”, and “schedule”. Thus, the approach was adopted with a lack of awareness or training about its purpose, use or implications.

One of the organizations interviewed was proactive in its response to donors' expectations around LFA. The organization observed a strong push amongst its various donors to use forms of LFA as a basic planning method. To meet all its donors various requirements and reshape proposals to these specific requirements was found to be a difficult and cumbersome task. It was for this reason that the organization approached a training agency to assist them with developing a single proposal and accompanying reporting format. The end result was that all of its donors were convinced to accept the revised format which turned out to be a "watered-down" logframe that the organization itself found acceptable to work within.

Extent of Use of Logframes

Of the fourteen case study organizations, only one did not work directly with logframes. The donor to which this NGO was accountable was in itself accountable to its donor back in the United Kingdom and so had to translate its local aid relationship into a logframe for its back donor. In order to do this, the intermediary donor/NGO had to work very closely with the local NGO to ensure that indicators were monitored and sufficient information was collected to report on progress.

There was an overall sense that NGOs were not making constant reference to the logframes. Initially, considerable time and energy would have been spent on drafting the frameworks, which would then be referred to when necessary to compile the required update reports. Funding proposals that were available for review did not have logframes attached. The assumption was that these would be submitted upon request from donors.

How NGOs are working with logframes

What was clear from the findings was that, whether organizations were using the approach or not, it has permeated or impacted their operations in one way or another. At the very least it has impacted their thinking as the following quote demonstrates:

"We don't use it ourselves but I think where we do use it is in our thinking. We use that language, where we say we've got this idea for a programme, what are the development goals, what is our immediate objective, who is our target group, what are we trying to get them to do, what could our output be about."

While some organizations use the orthodox LFAs to report to donors like DfID and the EU, many of the organizations have adapted the frameworks to their particular needs as the following quotes demonstrate:

"[Our] proposals are in a results-based format. The proposal has elements of logframes. It includes a workplan which lists target groups, objectives, inputs and outputs".

"Logframes are the basis for our plans, although we adapt them."

"The [organization] currently doesn't use logframes. [We] recognize the key elements such as monitoring and evaluation, key objectives and implementation. These elements will be included in...our plans."

Application of LFA at various levels of the organization

Partly because of its complexity and because it is so difficult to translate and communicate to field staff, many organizations have not fully integrated its use within the entire organization. In most instances, the framework isn't used beyond the office or management level as the following quotes demonstrate:

“For us, as a development tool, logframes are not carried through to the field level. For our staff it is quite confusing.”

“[We] modified the framework within training...LFAs were introduced but had to be simplified because it was too challenging.”

“[We] find it to be a useful tool, but it fails dismally at the community level and only works with office staff.”

In many cases, organizations have set up systems where field staff plan and monitor activities, according to workable or simplified indicators. Thereafter, Directors and Programme Managers translate this information into logframes. The challenge would normally arise where there are gaps in information which was the case with one Director who expressed frustration at “filling in the boxes” and fulfilling the donor “need” (expectation) that the NGO “puts down exactly what it is we do”.

Perceived benefits of LFA

As already mentioned, most NGOs expressed ambivalence about the LFA. Even where some were strongly critical of the approach, they saw the value of it and didn't reject it outright. Some have found them useful for organizing, structuring, summarizing and being rigorous about objectives as illustrated by the following quotes:

“I think it is a great tool for designing and planning. Once you designed and planned though, I think many things can happen. And it can be very difficult to report against that format when things haven't gone according to plan.”

“It [has] some useful elements, such as listing tasks to achieve along with stated outputs, although it is not any more useful than any other tool...”

“[LFA] has a lot of useful aspects to it that can assist one to become more rigorous in one's work and be clearer about objectives.”

“[We] used to work on the system of Management by Objectives. LFA is better, the focus on outcome is important. In the past, planning was much too focussed on activities...LFA puts the emphasis where it should be.”

“[LFAs] are useful monitoring tools. They are useful for clarity on project objectives and are also convenient for reporting to donors as they provide information at a glance...[L]og frames summarize the need and help donors understand the need quickly.”

“LFA has been useful in that it promotes a rigorous and disciplined approach to managing projects. However, not everything can go into a framework. While it is useful for structuring and planning, a lot of qualitative stuff has to be captured and reflected differently.”

Criticisms of LFA

Many organizations have been able to adapt and simplify these frameworks. So, for example, some organizations just extract and work with elements of the framework. Respondents have expressed that they have found it a complicated and cumbersome tool. One of the training organizations that has assisted in the training of NGOs on how to use logframes has observed that it is quite interesting how much of an investment such a training requires. Training on LFA takes them approximately five full days.

Another complaint about the log frame was that it was reductionist – it tended to reduce organizations to projects; it didn't incorporate institutional complexity and the whole dimension of

qualitative progress was absent. Some of the organizations would submit in terms of a log frame but would have to capture the qualitative developments differently in a narrative report for example. One interviewee observed that it has reduced the number of people handling reporting as well. Whereas in the past, there may have been two or three programme officers involved in evaluation, this has now been reduced and centralized in the hands of one person who does the “number-crunching”.

Some organizations were critical of the lack of flexibility of the tool. One respondent expressed that when conditions shift and the nature of the programmes change, it is difficult to make the changes in the framework. Indeed, the political context for many of these NGOs is quite unstable and it is not always possible to reflect this or make the necessary adjustments in a logframe. Some of the organizations felt that their work was too complex to translate to basic log frame indicators.

Another interesting finding about the log frames was that it tended to encourage dishonesty. For example, some people indicated that what they reported on didn't necessarily reflect what was happening in the field. Also, some felt the pressure of demonstrating change from report to report whereas change on the ground was difficult to effect quickly. So they went ahead with “doctoring the reports” despite what was experienced on the ground. One NGO director admitted that when they sat down to prepare the logframe under time pressures, they didn't have the luxury of sitting down with stakeholders so they just cooked up assumptions about them. Some have expressed that logframes are very easy to manipulate. As one interviewee suggested,

[you] set targets lower than you can achieve...[this] makes your performance look better and impresses funders.

Practice and Participation

These days, no responsible NGO will admit to not having participatory processes in place in their organization whether it is on paper or is the reality in practice. The new ethics within the development field proposes a people-centred approach where the target group or recipients of service are involved in all stages of a project cycle including needs assessment, design, planning, implementation, and evaluation. The idea is to give local people voice by incorporating their knowledge and values. Another vital aspect of participatory approaches is that they facilitate monitoring of projects. By keeping feedback channels open, especially from the bottom upwards through the organization, projects may be adjusted and adapted and hopefully rendered more effective overall (Mikkelsen, 1995).

Participation can take many forms and be defined in various ways depending on its objective. Mikkelsen (1995: 63) distinguishes between instrumental participation and transformational participation. In the former situation, participation is encouraged with a view to attaining predetermined objectives. Thus, the project participants are viewed as contributors to the project and not key actors. Transformational participation, on the other hand, refers to situations where participation itself is an objective and is viewed as key to such intangible and immeasurable results as interdependence or self-reliance. An important observation by Mikkelsen is that while transformation participation predominates on paper and in development discourse, it is instrumental participation that is pervasive in practice situations.

Power dynamics are central to how participation is enacted. White (1996: 6) raises the important point that, “Sharing through participation does not necessarily mean sharing in power”. So while local people tend to be engaged in an instrumental participation, this generally does not extend beyond the level of implementation. White notes that in order to be truly participatory, project participants have to be involved at decision-making and management level as well. Too often, this is merely given lip service. For example, while structures and processes may appear to involve local people in decision-making, the reality is that their contributions end up being marginalized or ignored.

Even when there are good intentions and a genuine will to institute a participatory paradigm, there will still be problems and tensions that may be encountered (Mayoux, 1995: 241). Firstly, the need for consensus amongst participants around needs and aims may prove to be an insurmountable barrier in view of the many competing interests. Secondly, participatory processes are costly in terms of time and resources which is also difficult to quantify for all stakeholders. Finally, the power differential between donor and recipient or service-provider and client will always be a fundamental barrier to true participation and an ongoing source of tension.

Craig and Porter (1997: 229) suggest that both participation and effective management are “deeply contradictory”. While the former goal is to share power and decision-making, the latter is premised on centralized control and predetermined objectives. Furthermore, the authority and expression of local people’s interests will be limited. Only those interests that are relevant to the project will carry weight. In addition, Craig and Porter note that:

People who are best at expressing themselves within the high moral and technical frame of the project will thus have greater influence. This is why educated elites and males tend to expect and get a greater portion of the project’s resources to flow in their direction. (231)

The growing influence of rational management procedures and tools such as the logical frameworks mean that effective management is becoming more technical, centralized into fewer hands, and inflexible. Clearly, this would be antithetical to an emphasis on participatory approaches. An investigation into participatory development in the South African context illustrates this further.

Limitations of the Research:

Research on the impact of donor-influenced management procedures and rational planning tools on field-level activities is limited. There is a considerable body of research on the adoption of these procedures amongst NGOs but the impact of these new approaches has not been tracked much beyond the office level. Case study research on South African NGOs is an attempt to fill this gap.

An objective of the research project was to not only assess the impact of rational management procedures on participation and practice, but also to determine whether such procedures are integrated throughout the levels of the organization. The research project was limited as to how well it could achieve these objectives. Firstly, contact with the organizations was primarily restricted to staff members and in most cases, staff at management level. These staff members were the usual point of entry to the organization and would thereafter tend to control the access that the researcher was able to gain in the organization (whether intentionally or because the researcher would rely on the particular staff member for such guidance).

Field visits and informal discussions with local project participants were undertaken in some instances, but these opportunities were scarce because of time constraints and logistics. Contact with these participants was usually short and superficial and staff members were generally present during these times – possibly creating a barrier to open discussion. Also, unless the researcher was completely immersed in the organization over an extended period of time, it was difficult to get a sense of how communication systems worked and to confirm whether what actually happened on the ground was reflected in reports and vice-versa.

Another concern about those field visits that were undertaken is that project participants tended to be highly sensitized to visits from donors, consultants or researchers. Visits were generally undertaken to field sites that were in the closest proximity to the head office suggesting that other outsiders would most likely be taken to these sites as well. As such, there was little opportunity

for eliciting spontaneous responses and observing situations that were not “performed” before for the purposes of impressing visitors.

Impact of Rational Management Procedures and other Donor Influences on Practice among NGOs in South Africa:

There were a number of issues arising in the South African context around the rational management tools and other donor influences and how these impacted practice on the ground. While none of the field-level respondents spoke explicitly of rational management procedures, there was a general awareness that accountability was a pressing concern and donors’ requirements were getting stricter. Each field visit involved an exchange of written reports accounting for field activities from field staff and volunteers to the visiting office staff member accompanying the researcher. Field staff described the training in which they had to participate in order to perform their reporting and administration duties. Some clearly were not confident about whether they were meeting the standards. As one respondent noted:

The responsibility for reporting was also borne by the volunteer representative (often a secretary or treasurer) of the local group project. The highly formalized meeting procedures were also evidence of the growing standardization, professionalism and influence of management procedures. Even in the most rural of areas, there would be a chair presiding over a meeting according to a prepared agenda, with a secretary taking minutes and a treasurer who would account for the finances.

Donor practices seem to have had a significant influence on the size or scale of projects. In their funding proposals, organizations outline large-scale projects that gloss over local specific contexts and needs. In the case of one NGO, the local projects had various needs considering that they were located in such vastly different regions but these were all packaged into an HIV/AIDS funding proposal because that was the funding priority of the donor at the time. Donors also seem to not prioritize assisting organizations with research and the surveying of needs. As one respondent noted:

One criticism of donors is that their funding categories are not generic enough to fit communities’ needs, for example, surveys, needs assessments or baseline studies are generally not covered by donors... [Our organization] has found that most donors now don’t like funding small projects since they think they require too much effort and high administration costs.

One of the concerns raised was that the whole project and project cycle focus pushed by donors is out of sync with the reality on the ground. One interviewee observed that projects in themselves are not developmental. The time constraints of project funding - normally three or five year cycles - and the linearity of frameworks were found to be completely unworkable on the ground. Although it has eluded the donor world, in the NGO world there is a common understanding that development takes time and never proceeds smoothly. All of the fieldworkers interviewed described situations where getting people to meet at a specified time is difficult enough, let alone ensuring that project objectives are achieved. Meeting plans normally compete with other priorities such as pension or grant payment days, family needs, and taking refuge from inclement weather.

The management and reporting requirements advocated by donors have been criticized for being overly time-consuming. These functions alone have been found to divert valuable time away from work on the field. One of the interviewees was saddened that fulfilling donor requirements in terms of reporting has consumed so much of his time that his role in developing programmes and working closely with project participants has diminished. Fieldworkers also complained of the daunting and time-consuming nature of administrative requirements. While it was apparent that in many of the case study NGOs, people at all levels of the organization were conscientized about the need to attract funding and impress donors, knowledge about operational aspects of

the organization, for example, was less apparent through the ranks. Thus, it almost seems that NGOs spend considerable time and energy to raise funds to sustain themselves and then spend more time trying to fulfill the requirements in order to keep the funding or ensure that it gets renewed. Clearly, the obsession with funding and sustainability is tending to overshadow the needs and priorities of project participants.

Donors have been criticized for not prioritizing the needs of project participants enough. The ethical responsibility of donors has been called into question by one of the case study NGOs. This particular organization had initiated literacy classes for senior citizens that were deprived of an education during the apartheid era. The project was a novel idea at the time and was viewed as an interesting pilot and research opportunity. Funding for three years was secured by an intermediary organization from a back donor. The project benefited approximately 80 learners all over 50 years of age. There was a great deal of media attention and interest and the project also was an example of a successful partnership amongst a donor, a higher learning institution and a community-based project. However, once the three year funding cycle ended, the project was forced to shutdown. There were no local alternative sources of funding and the organization did and still does pin their hopes on the donor. Thus, in the space of eight months, the organization went from having a staff of 40 to a staff of 23.

This case study raises questions about the extent of responsibility that needs to be borne by donors. Literacy was well funded in the apartheid era when education was viewed as a political struggle. However, in the democratic era, not only have donors abandoned the sector but also government is not giving it the priority it deserves either. The interest in this project for senior citizens was perhaps aroused because it was a pilot and could have served as an important case study for an international organization – the donor. One respondent that was closely involved in monitoring the project questioned whether it was even worthwhile to start up such a project.

It is all very nice for donors to fund projects. But we need to question whether they are acting responsibly or irresponsibly. The problem lies where projects are not sustainable for various reasons. It then becomes a question of ethics. Was it nice to start in the first place or not?

What happens to the 75 year old and even 80 year old learner who for the first time is holding a pen in his hand or for the first time is able to go and vote? Literacy training is a long process. It is more than the mechanics of reading and writing. There are emotional effects.

The “flavour of the month” priorities of donors once again leaves project participants in the lurch. As one 78 year old learner noted:

The main thing I'm worried about is the closing of classes. If they stop it, where can we learn? We'll just die blind!

Overall, despite feeling abandoned and desperate to continue their classes, the learners were still grateful to the donor for starting such a project in the first place. They clearly felt that the progress made was worthwhile and would not have been realized if it were not for the donor funds.

The Impact of Rational Management Procedures and other Donor Influences on Participatory Development in the South African NGO Sector:

Participation has emerged as an important buzzword in the South African case study research. All the organizations involved in the research have acknowledged the importance of participation whether in interviews or within documentation. The research revealed several examples of how the new management practices and donor-orientation of NGOs have impeded participatory processes.

Policy versus Practice

There is an example of a case study where participation was shown to be mere rhetoric on the part of the donor and the NGO than reality in practice. Without proper consultation, the donor ended its relationship with the NGO when funding priorities shifted. As well, the donor rarely visited the recipient NGO and in the few cases when there were encounters termed 'project visits', the donor showed no interest in going to the field to interact with the local people involved.

It became clear that the NGO, on the other hand, had become so donor-oriented and so tied up with the hidden agendas of some of its board members, that the development of the local people associated with the organization had been stifled. While the NGO claimed to have participatory structures and processes, its commitment to properly instituting participatory development was not apparent. A review of the donor documentation and the recipient organization's proposals and profiles showed that participation was a key objective and feature of the funding relationship and of the organizations themselves.

A key funding criteria of the donor was that:

Projects should encourage and enable the full participation of poor people in both the project itself and in wider social and political processes

The donor also affirmed in a policy document that it

... will continue to influence and achieve demonstrable changes in the unjust and unequal power relationships and systems, structures and processes that discriminate against the poor...

The NGO also highlighted its commitment to participation on paper. In its annual report the organization described its "participatory and community-driven approaches". One of the key strategies highlighted in the document was "community-driven programme design, implementation and monitoring". Also, in its funding proposal the organization described its philosophy and approach within which the following provision was included:

Participatory capacity and capability development enhances informed direction and realistic rural empowerment

Despite what was contained in documentation, the commitment to participatory development was weak. One of the community project visits was most telling. In an open and honest discussion, the staff member working closely with project participants over time observed that they had not made much progress in their twenty years of being associated with the organization. So although funding had been spent and accounted for, peoples' lives had not changed much. The respondent was hard pressed to say with certainty that they had benefited in any way from contact with the NGO no matter how small or intangible.

Donors are often ignorant of local realities

One major complaint that NGOs had was that donors are often ignorant of the context and realities that they have to work with. Donors' well-meaning suggestions often perceived as coercion (because of vulnerability around funding) can be completely impractical. There is an example of an NGO where economic empowerment (at a very simple and practical level) was the focus of activities. Essentially, people would run local savings schemes for immediate needs such as buying furniture or paying off school fees. Along came the donor who visited these small projects and suggested that local people would benefit more if the focus of these activities become entrepreneurial. The NGO acknowledged the value of the suggestion by changing the focus of the project to "the aim of improving businesses and accumulating wealth.

Local people were encouraged to run small income-generating projects such as sewing and chicken-farming. Training programmes were set up to facilitate the set-up and coordination of such projects. The donor further suggested that the project become more regulated and formalized and indicated that there was funding available to hire office-based savings facilitators (his idea). The staff of the NGO went along with the donor's idea although they didn't see the value of it. Despite finding the donor friendly and approachable, they were still too intimidated to challenge him.

Eventually the savings facilitators were found to be useless positions and were reabsorbed into the organization in other capacities. As well, in spite of being steered in an entrepreneurial direction, project participants seemed to still want to save money for personal needs and continued to do so. Staff also acknowledged that there were limitations to how entrepreneurial relatively isolated rural people could become. Also, those members that may have been enthusiastic would have required considerable capacity-building and training to become entrepreneurs – an area towards which the organization needed to direct more resources.

Finally, the whole process of securing loans for entrepreneurial projects has ended up trapping people into personal debt and has imposed an individualist approach instead of fostering interdependence. This was attributable to the practice of the donor arranging the loans. The donor was strict about upholding its policy of entering into contracts with individuals rather than with groups (for its purposes of minimizing risk) irrespective of the values of the NGO and its beneficiaries.

Donor requirements impede participatory processes

Donor priorities and imperatives have been observed to hinder participatory processes. Clearly, there is no room for transformational participation if NGOs have to be cognizant of and responsive to donor agendas. As one respondent pointed out, "how can we be people-centred, when we are pushed [by donors] to be output and delivery-oriented?" Another respondent observed that the "strong focus on delivery...meant that those NGOs which are not delivery-focussed are not counted as performing".

One organization expressed frustration at how donor practices cause them to lose credibility and trust amongst their project participants. One such example is the undermining of their commitment to respond to the needs of their beneficiaries by setting up projects that are requested by them. In practice, once the priorities of local people are translated to proposals, and are chopped and changed by donors according to their own funding priorities, the project staff are left with the daunting task of having to explain why members' needs weren't given priority by being funded.

Another criticism of donors is that they seemed to prefer to relate more to staff and particularly at management level. So while donors strongly push for participation and expect that this be demonstrated at all levels of the organization they tend to keep their distance from the grassroots. As one interviewee pointed out:

"I would say donors do appear to want people who can relate to them on an equal intellectual level. This obviously sounds really arrogant but there is an advantage to that in that while funders like local people, locals often can't place the local in the broader context. The picture gets distorted. It's difficult to 'get both'. Donors have to understand that there's a real gap between people at a grassroots level and getting those people functioning at a management level."

Donor influences or not, NGO commitment to participatory development is problematic

The donor or funding-orientation of NGOs tends to exclude rather than promote participation of beneficiary communities. So, for example, although some projects or community groups serviced by the NGOs may be worthy, they may not fall under funding criteria of donors and therefore receive less attention. As one interviewee pointed out,

“...there’s a saying that each NGO has their ‘blue chip’ communities...you keep going back to that community because you know you will be successful which will mean you will continue to attract funds...”

Some NGOs seem to foster the dependency amongst their project participants in order to justify their jobs and existence. Equally problematic is the tendency for much of the funding from donors to get drained by overhead costs and salaries. Within the sample involved in this research project, there were examples of organizations that perpetuated the dependency and organizations that empowered their beneficiaries. An earlier example described an organization that appeared to be participatory in structure but actually was otherwise in practice. A further illustration of their lack of commitment to participation was the tendency for staff members to tightly hold onto many of the activities and responsibilities that could very easily have been fulfilled by volunteers – and the management had no will to change it. So for example, with the organization’s HIV/AIDS education programme, staff members were sent for training while the volunteer network was completely excluded.

On the other hand, there was an NGO that seemed to be concerned about empowering its community projects and the local management systems. Initially, this organization would remote control from their head office community organizations based in rural areas. This entailed looking after management, operations and finances. Later, the organization decided to train the volunteer management teams to run the local projects while the head office served as a funding conduit and organized the capacity-building workshops and ongoing support.

Irrespective of the level of commitment to participation among NGOs, as is the case with the donor-NGO relationship, the reality that NGOs control the resources available to local communities renders true participation and equal relationships a mere figment. As one respondent noted:

One thing is control over resources so you can try and be as participatory as you like but you the NGO are still making decisions about resourcing, even down to the level of how much time or staff you are going to allocate to that project... you are determining what the possibilities are for how much gets handed over ...

Conclusion

The fact that donors encourage NGOs to prioritize participation and demonstrate this in funding proposals and reports is a positive influence. This will have the effect of getting NGOs to think about these important issues and about their structures and systems. However, donors’ commitment to making sure this is a reality in practice is less ingenuous. Perhaps, in following through in this way and closely monitoring participatory development, donors may become more aware of the impediments created by their conditions of funding. However, in the end, their own imperatives of ensuring effective spending and properly accounting for expenditure will likely overshadow any concern with the experience on the ground.

C. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Introduction:

There has been a clear recognition of the need to monitor and evaluate projects to ensure effectiveness at various stages of the project cycle, to demonstrate accountability and to market the implementing organization to the donor community. Howes (1992) outlines the characteristics that distinguish monitoring from evaluation in a blueprint approach (from which the LFA emanates).

Table 2: The Difference between Monitoring and Evaluation in a Blueprint Approach

	Monitoring	Evaluation
Scope	Inputs and outputs	Outputs, effects and impacts
Purpose	To determine if project is proceeding as intended	To determine results of project and lessons for the future
Timing	Regularly during project	After completion
Sources	Project records	Monitoring data plus 'external' information
Done by	Project staff	Staff and outsiders
Done for	Project management	Management plus funding agency, planners

Source: Howes, M. (1992: 380)

Monitoring is essentially concerned with effectiveness of the project at every stage. Evaluation, on the other hand, draws on the data used in the monitoring process but goes beyond to examine impact of the project. It is often used interchangeably with the term "impact analysis" (Howes, 1992).

The inadequacy of traditional approaches to project design, and more specifically, monitoring and evaluation systems, has resulted in a shift in emphasis. NGOs have begun to experiment with more participatory approaches. The focus has shifted to ensuring that beneficiaries of service articulate their needs and take ownership of projects. The new role for NGO personnel is regarded as facilitators rather than experts (Howes, 1992). Also new is a role for beneficiaries in the monitoring and evaluation procedure in this process approach. Howes (1992) outlines the key differences in monitoring and evaluation systems between the traditional blueprint approach and the more recent participatory or process approach.

Table 3: Monitoring and Evaluation in a Blueprint Versus a Process Approach

	Blueprint Approach	Process Approach
Scope	Achievement of goals	Institutional growth
Data	Quantitative	Qualitative
Purpose	To determine results of project and lessons for the future	To redefine objectives and improve implementation
Timing	After completion	During project
Done by	Staff and outsiders	Staff and participants
Done for	Management plus funding agency, planners	Project management and participants

Source: Howes, M. (1992: 388)

An analysis of findings in the South African NGO experience reveals that although there is a clear recognition of the need to ensure more participation, overall this shift has been slow to effect.

Research Findings:

All the organizations within this study appeared to have some form of monitoring and evaluation – in some cases very rudimentary, in others quite sophisticated. Evaluations were conducted either externally, internally or both. However, the majority of case study NGOs had their evaluations conducted externally. This is illustrated in the table below:

Table 4: Evaluations – Internal versus External

Type of Evaluation	No. of Organizations	Percentage
Internal	7	50
External	9	64
Both	6	43
Unknown	4	29

In many instances (at least 43%), evaluations and impact assessments were done at the request of donors. In one case, an NGO that had multiple funders pre-empted any requests from donors for an evaluation by commissioning evaluations on a three-yearly basis. A few organizations recognized the importance of having participatory monitoring and evaluation systems and tried to institute such mechanisms. One respondent cautioned that “indicators of people’s development have to be thought through carefully”.

There is an example of an organization that had a comprehensive evaluation conducted by local people including a board member. The process was carried out over several months. One of the evaluators (who subsequently joined the staff) described the participatory process and emphasized the importance of it in building ownership of the recommendations:

We used the process to form a picture of the organization along the way, building peoples’ convictions and not just us [the evaluators] coming up with recommendations under sterile conditions. We presented findings, listened to people, took into account the capacity of the organization...because bodies and minds in the organization need to make something happen.

Although the researchers made requests to all the NGOs to review all relevant documentation including evaluations, none of the organizations were forthcoming with their evaluation reports. This raises questions about transparency and the lack of trust within the sector. NGOs do not want to be viewed as vulnerable or perceived in a negative light perhaps because competition for funding is always an over-arching concern. Since access to evaluation reports was limited, it is difficult to comment on the trends in this regard. However, there were a few issues that emerged around monitoring and evaluation systems.

The need to demonstrate impact is a primary concern for NGOs as it is an important marketing tool and medium through which confidence in the organization from donors and clients can be boosted. As one Director noted:

We struggle to monitor impact but it’s ultimately the impact that we are able to demonstrate that attracts us more work...so we are continuously looking to see how we show impact.

The training or OD institutions reported several requests to assist organizations with evaluations – most of which was donor-funded. The attitude towards monitoring and evaluation varied amongst the organizations. Some merely just mechanically went about it as something that needed to be done. Others wanted to really engage with the process, and wanted to have input into who the evaluators were and how these processes were conducted. As one Director noted:

We need to choose an evaluator who will understand our work – who will not just look at processes, the human organizational structures that have been created and see these as achievements.

As expected, the organizations that were relatively well established and financed were able to conduct regular external evaluations – usually once every few years or at the request of donors. The internal monitoring and evaluation process within organizations usually involved team or supervision meetings with reporting systems to monitor progress.

Integrating monitoring and evaluation systems throughout the levels of the organization has not been problem free. There is an example of an NGO that tried to use a simple reporting tool to monitor progress at field level. It was in the form of a timesheet and included sections for activities and outputs. This was intended to feed into a larger six monthly report to donors. The NGO field staff experienced so many difficulties with this report. Even those staff that had education levels beyond high school had problems with it because they found it difficult to reflect their experiences in such a manner. They needed training and ongoing support to meet these expectations of them (valuable time taken away from their field work activities).

D. Strategic Planning

Introduction:

Strategic planning is a relatively new phenomenon that moves beyond the focus at project level to an overall concern with organization development (Wallace, 1997). The primary concern here is with relevance to a wider context and responsiveness to the dynamism of local stakeholder needs. Wallace (1997: 40) observed that there have been four broad reasons for the adoption of strategic planning. Firstly, rapid growth and restructuring in NGOs has meant that they had to rely on a procedure like strategic planning to manage change. Secondly, strategic planning was used by NGOs to either discover or affirm their mission and to establish their support base. Thirdly, with increasing competition in the sector, NGOs have become concerned with establishing their niche and legitimacy in the development world for which strategic planning was one medium. Lastly, external consultants were engaged in the NGO restructuring and planning process, many using strategic planning to facilitate this.

Wallace (1997: 40-41) noted that NGOs have employed strategic planning in different ways, something that is evident in the South African research as well. Some NGOs have used a top-down approach in instituting plans while others have employed more participatory approaches. In the former case, this has been experienced as an imposition on staff and in the latter case, strategic planning has become a time-consuming and complex procedure. There has been recognition that strategic planning processes have value in organizations as they contribute to team building, having clear direction, being more focussed and making necessary changes. However, there have also been concerns about having to deal with conflict and new tensions generated by the process.

Research Findings:

Research in the South African context has shown that many NGOs have recognized the value of strategic planning to organization development and positioning themselves in relation to donors and other stakeholders in the wider context. With the exception of one organization, most of the NGOs (93%) interviewed undertook a strategic planning exercise. The organization that was not undertaking such an exercise claimed that that it was engaging in such a process on a yearly basis. However the interviews revealed that this process was actually being confused with a

yearly operational plan. One of the OD institutions observed that this was a common problem amongst the NGOs to which they provided assistance with strategic planning.

According to many of the NGOs, the emergence of strategic planning processes could be attributed to donor requirements. They expressed resentment that donors seem eager about five-year plans and long-term planning in general whilst many of the NGOs are grappling with financial crises and the constant dynamism of organizational and beneficiary needs. However, they recognized the importance of strategic planning exercises for organizational development. One organization that was experiencing a leadership and financial crisis viewed the strategic planning exercise as crucial for the organization to consolidate and re-establish its mission and identity.

One of the OD organizations recognized the importance of building strategic thinking throughout the rank and file of the organization as opposed to relegating it to an event. So although the actual strategic planning exercise occurred once in three years, the strategic thinking was an on-going basis and was more formally structured to occur once quarterly. There was a clear shift to move the responsibility from a single leader out laterally to other staff.

There were several other trends that emerged around the issue of strategic planning. Firstly, there was the recognition among many of the NGOs that the process needed to be more participatory than it was. People felt that it should not be confined to the boardroom but taken to the field. The other observed trend was that much of the focus of the strategic planning exercises was the issue of sustainability, cost-effectiveness and attracting more donor funds. Finally, the strategic planning process was viewed as important in giving focus and direction in terms of the organization's work, as well team-building.

Reporting

Introduction:

Reporting is a key obligation on the part of NGOs to their funders. It is the medium through which they demonstrate accountability and update donors on the progress and important developments surrounding the funded project. Considering that the head offices of donor organizations are normally based overseas in developed countries and project visits from donors are generally few and far between, reports are the primary means of communication and feedback. It is common practice for reporting guidelines, procedures and periods to be outlined and agreed upon at the initiation of the funding relationship and as part of the funding contract. As well, funding that is disbursed in tranches is contingent upon reports being sent out on time before release of the next tranche. Of all the management procedures, the pressure to report comprehensively and on time appears to have the strongest incentive and penalty.

Research Findings:

Amongst South African NGOs, the pressure to report according to donor expectations was felt throughout the organizational levels. The whole process of reporting and managing donors was also found to be a rather time-consuming one indeed. At the field level, people expressed that they didn't feel confident enough about their reporting. They were concerned about either communicating in English when it is their second language or about appropriately expressing

themselves for fear of being misjudged or misunderstood. At the office or management level, people clearly expressed that reporting was tedious and time-consuming. One organization tracked the number of hours spent on donor-related matters (whether reporting or attending workshops and meetings) and found that it consumed 230 hours in less than a month. A project manager from another organization observed that reporting to donors now consumed 60% of his time while in the past he had spent most of his time on programmes. Both organizations felt that they were in too vulnerable a position to express these concerns to donors.

Many NGOs expressed frustration at complying with different reporting requirements from different donors. As mentioned earlier one organization managed to take a proactive stance on this. They enlisted help from an OD organization to compile a standard reporting format and negotiate with their donors to accept this. This system appeared to have worked really well for the organization in question. Another organization merely incorporated their donor reporting requirements into one big package. However they noted that donors still asked for information already contained in that package, evidence that they had not read it.

There was the perception and in some cases admission from donors that the six-monthly reports went largely unread. As such, there usually was no feedback from donors. NGOs were frustrated about all the time and effort spent in compiling these reports only to have them collect dust on a desk.

Some NGOs expressed that the complexity of their work made it very difficult to report against donors' indicators. This proved to be extremely frustrating for them. As one interviewee noted:

Consultants seem to be the only ones benefiting from complicated reporting and application requirements...There needs to be a middle path between donors' interests and the NGOs' interests...Building relationships and not just systems is key.

No doubt, the purpose of this type of reporting is questionable when donors do not read them and NGOs do them to comply with donor requirements and not necessarily reflect their work on the ground.

One of the observations about balancing reporting requirements with the actual situation in the field was that there is a considerable pressure to demonstrate progress from report to report. Considering that most reporting is done on a six-monthly basis, the type of progress that donors may be looking for is difficult to achieve in such a short space of time. Some of the organizations are able to re-negotiate with donors around this but are faced with the additional problem of having unspent funds at the end of a funding period. Thus, NGOs not only face the pressure of fundraising but also that of hanging onto the funds already disbursed.

Conclusion

The new donor-inspired management practices have been embraced and instituted by South African NGOs whether happily so or not. The concern is at what cost. NGOs are now faced with having to manage the tensions of complying with donor requirements, dealing with threats to sustainability and being responsive to the needs of project participants. Inevitably, some aspect will suffer. The most disturbing trend is that the commitment and responsibility to project participants appears to be the one that is easily compromised.

Logical Frameworks from earlier piece

"It is a great tool for designing and planning. Once you designed and planned though, I think many things can happen and it can be very difficult to report against that format when things haven't gone according to plan."

“It is difficult to articulate precisely what you want to do... The quantitative orientation of it gets in the way...programmes are really process-driven. If you don't include quantity, you are failing the donor, but quality is the missing element there... Not everybody is logical or left-brained.”

“We refuse to use logframes. Logframes are an iniquitous, dangerous, reductive trap...some people don't have a choice and LFA doesn't even work from an organizational point of view...LFA is a military planning tool.”

“LFA particularly has been on the tools that has depoliticized development...It has made development a technical issue rather than a political one.”

The above are quotes from managers from four very different NGOs. They demonstrate the range of reactions towards LFAs. While our research has examined various different rational planning tools, the focus of this discussion is on the Logical Frameworks that have permeated all of the organizations we interviewed in some way or another.

There were extremes in reactions to the tool. On one end of the spectrum, there was an organization that totally rejected the tool (as evident in the third quote). On the other end, there was an organization that didn't know what it was and claimed to not use it. But, when we reviewed their project proposals and reports, we found that they were reporting against an adapted version of the logframe format. It is also interesting to note that the organization that was able to reject the tool is well-established and is well able to negotiate with donors and even reject them when their requirements are at odds/impede their work. The other organization that is using the tool and is unaware of it is an organization that has tended to be extremely donor-oriented and dependent on donor funds and has been pulled in different directions by various donors because of this vulnerability.

The organizations that fall in between these two extremes have expressed some ambivalence about these planning tools. Some have found them useful for organizing and structuring and being rigorous about objectives (as illustrated in the first quote). Many organizations have been able to adapt and simplify these frameworks. So, for example, some organizations just extract and work with elements of the framework.

People have expressed that they have found it a complicated and cumbersome tool. One of the training organizations that has assisted in the training of NGOs on how to use logframes has observed that it is quite interesting how much of an investment such a training requires. Training on LFA takes them approximately five full days.

Partly because of its complexity and because it is so difficult to translate and communicate to field staff, many organizations have not fully integrated its use within the entire organization. In most instances, the framework isn't used beyond the office or management level. There is an example of an NGO that tried to use a simple reporting tool to monitor progress at field level. It was in the form of a timesheet and included sections for activities and outputs. This was intended to feed into a larger six monthly report to donors. The NGO field staff experienced so many difficulties with this report. Even those staff that had education levels beyond high school had problems with it because they found it difficult to reflect their experiences in such a manner. They needed training and ongoing support to meet these expectations of them (valuable time taken away from their field work activities).

Another complaint about the log frame was that it was reductionist – it tended to reduce organizations to projects; it didn't incorporate institutional complexity and whole dimension of qualitative progress was absent. Some of the organizations would submit in terms of a log frame but would have to capture the qualitative developments differently in a narrative report for example. One interviewee observed that it has reduced the number of people handling reporting as well. Whereas in the past, there may have been two or three programme officers involved in

evaluation, this has now been reduced and centralized in the hands of one person who does the number-crunching.

Some organizations were critical of the lack of flexibility of the tool. One person expressed that when conditions shift and the nature of the programmes change, it is difficult to make the changes in the framework. Indeed, the political context for many of these NGOs is quite unstable. Some of the organizations felt that their work was too complex to translate to log frame indicators.

The whole process of reporting and managing donors was found to be a rather time-consuming one. At the field level, people expressed that they didn't feel confident enough about their reporting. They were stressed about either communicating in English when it is their second language or about appropriately expressing themselves for fear of being misjudged or misunderstood. At the office or management level, people clearly expressed that reporting was tedious and time-consuming. One organization tracked the number of hours spent on donor-related matters (whether reporting or attending workshops and meetings) and found that it consumed 230 hours in less than a month. A project manager from another organization observed that reporting to donors now consumed 60% of his time while in the past he had spent most of his time on programmes. Both organizations felt that they were in too vulnerable a position to express these concerns to donors.

Another interesting finding about the log frames was that it tended to encourage dishonesty. For example, some people indicated that what they reported on didn't necessarily reflect what was happening in the field. Also, some felt the pressure of demonstrating change from report to report whereas change on the ground was difficult to effect quickly. So they went ahead with "doctoring the reports" despite what was experienced on the ground. One NGO admitted that when they sat down to prepare the logframe under time pressures, they didn't have the luxury of sitting down with stakeholders so they just cooked up assumptions about them. Some have expressed that logframes are very easy to manipulate. As one interviewee suggested, "[you] set targets lower than you can achieve...[this] makes your performance look better and impresses funders".

Impact of Donor Influences/Requirements on Practice

One of the concerns raised was that the whole project and project cycle focus of donors is out of sync with the reality on the ground. One interviewee observed that projects in themselves are not developmental. The time constraints of project funding and the linearity of frameworks were found to be completely unworkable on the ground. There is a common understanding that development takes time and never proceeds smoothly.

One of our case studies is a rather sad one. It involves an organization that started up literacy classes for senior citizens who were deprived of an education during the apartheid era. The project was a novel idea at the time and was viewed as an interesting pilot and research opportunity. Funding for three years was secured by an intermediary organization from a back donor. The project benefited approximately 80 learners all over 50 years of age. There was a great deal of media attention and interest and the project also was an example of a successful partnership amongst a donor, a higher learning institution and a community-based project. However, once the three year funding cycle ended, the project was forced to shutdown. There were no local alternative sources of funding and the organization did and still does pin their hopes on the donor. Thus, in the space of eight months, the organization went from having a staff of 40 to a staff of 23.

One major complaint that NGOs had was that donors are often ignorant of the context and realities that they have to work with. Their well-meaning suggestions often perceived as coercion (because of vulnerability around funding) can often be completely impractical. There is an example of an NGO where many of its activities involved economic empowerment but at a very simple level. Basically, people would run savings schemes in order to buy furniture or pay off

school fees. Along came the donor who visited these small projects and suggested that the focus of these activities become entrepreneurial. People were encouraged to run small income-generating projects such as sewing, chicken-farming and so on. The donor suggested that there were funds available to hire office-based savings facilitators (his idea). The staff of the NGO went along with the donor's idea although they didn't see the value of it. Eventually the savings facilitators were found to be useless and were reabsorbed into the organization in other capacities. Also, the beneficiaries seemed to still want to save money for personal needs and appeared to need considerable capacity-building and training to become entrepreneurs. The whole process of securing loans for entrepreneurial projects has ended up trapping people into personal debt since the donor arranging the loans held a policy of entering into contracts with individuals rather than with groups.

One other issue that emerged was that donor requirements are often problematic when it comes to participatory processes. As one interviewee pointed out, "how can we be people-centred, when we are pushed to be output and delivery-oriented". One organization expressed frustration at how these requirements and processes cause them to lose credibility and trust amongst their beneficiaries. They try to respond to the needs of their beneficiaries by setting up projects that are requested by them but once these are translated to proposals, chopped and changed by donors, the project staff face the daunting task of having to explain why members' needs weren't given priority or funded. These are just a few examples of how practice is impeded by donor requirements.

'Partnership' Case Study

Introduction

The concept of 'partnership' has become a loosely-used catchphrase in the donor vocabulary. Yet it is almost always never subjected to a thoughtful interrogation of what it means, both at a conceptual level and then at the level of practice. It is commonly used to describe an ideal relational state between donor and funding recipient, and is associated with such ideal virtues as equality, respect and mutuality. There is also the implicit assumption of a level of trust between donor and partner. However in reality donor-recipient relationships are somewhat different from the idealized portrayal of the commonplace 'partnership' model. Few NGOs would claim that to have achieved a relationship that meets their own basic criteria of what such a 'partnership' should be like. This is borne out by such comments as "It's an artificial term but some donors better than others at creating a spirit of partnership." Or "partnership seems to be a word to make the donors more comfortable."

Donor-recipient relationships appear to play out largely within a context of a fundamental power imbalance, that often becomes skewed toward a state of dependency and mistrust. Some rare exceptions to this general state of dependency and inequity do exist, but even these do not bear very favourably upon the concept of 'partnership' as such. This will be explored in further depth.

What is Partnership

Definitions of partnership vary, depending on who is doing the articulating and what their particular motivations may be. Partnership is mediated by the following factors:
funding agendas are flexible.

hard to experiment because it's difficult to source funds for pilot projects

funding categories are not generic enough to address the needs of communities

want organizations to plan years in advance (changing local policy environment, dynamic conditions in communities, how to get multiyear funding from donors when different donors have different financial years/requirements)

There are several kinds of partnership as espoused by both donor and partner:

Conceptual as in terms of a relationship description

The conceptual notion of 'partnership' as a relationship encompassing a set of idealized characteristics, must be offset against the very practical constraints of the power dynamics

imposed by the donor-recipient relationship. The primary constraint lies in the simple fact that 'the rules' of the funding game are fundamentally set by donors. There are deep levels of anxiety that NGOs express in their funding relationships: "I'm not good at writing" or "my English is bad". One NGO expressed the concern that, (as management) donors prefer lawyers, directors, white people". This reflects the concern that there exist a set of prescriptive standards 'imposed' by donors which NGOs fear that they do not measure up to. Thus there is a generalized sense of frustration and resentment expressed by the case study NGOs, which are revealed in statements such as the following: "we didn't have the opportunity at the end of our funding to tell (donor X) what the problems were with their requirements."

Several NGOs expressed quite candidly that that they are fundamentally donor oriented in such statements as "the relationship is just about sending reports and getting money" and "what we are really doing is just following the money." Another NGO made a statement relating to the fickle nature of funding areas : "the joke now (amongst NGOs) is that if you want funding, you have to make sure you include the words 'sustainable livelihoods'." "They (the donors) will just tell you this is what we're funding now." Donors themselves identify the areas that they want to focus on- "they will just tell you 'this is what we fund now' " and you are forced to go along with them. "

Another NGO said: "Donors must try to make us understand their policy. A donor may want you to shift your policy but there must be more effort to convince me and make me understand why. They can't just impose change. Every organisation has its own aims and vision."

There are several concrete issues that case study NGO identify as problem areas within their donor relationships. For example, there is a specific emphasis by donors on outcomes and impact, which does not always make for a complementary 'fit' with the complex, uneven nature of developmental work. As one case study NGO states: "The problem is timeframes. Can one make a meaningful difference in project-based timeframes? How do we translate the success stories in a language donors can understand and that they can capture in their reports? This focus on outcomes means that like or not, you are pushed in a certain direction of where they are thinking." This NGO acknowledges that this sometimes means having to restructure the way in which data is captured, and that in some cases it is easier to quantify data than others. Another case study NGO states "It's something about us here trying to communicate to someone six thousand miles away about the difference you are making on a piece of paper."

Case study NGOs cite pressures and tensions around donor requirements for reporting as a problematic element in their relationships with their donors, and to that end, their work. One familiar theme echoed by the case study NGOs is that of the effort put into report-writing, without any corresponding feedback on the work that they have done or even an indication that their reports have been read. As one NGO states, "we feel that reporting is just an administrative requirement. Because donors come asking the kinds of questions that they would know the answers to if they'd read the reports." It was further stated "they manage to combine very demanding rigorous requirements for reporting, for project proposals and budgeting with extraordinary inefficiency on their part. So they're expecting partners to be absolutely perfect in every respect while they themselves are very very far from perfect."

Two case study NGOs state the problem of having to account in great detail for small amounts of funding."

Yet NGOs recognize that reporting is an essential requirement for funding: "it strikes me that those who can write the best lines in a report are the ones that are going to survive the longest."

Collaborative partnership in which different organizations come together to promote a collective end (often promoted by donors)

Partnership is promoted as a means of collaboration amongst various NGOs.

NGOs are also experiencing donor-driven pressures toward the formation of networks/partnerships amongst NGOs. This drive toward the formation of issue-based networks

is commonly based on the assumption of a commonality of interests on the part of its funding partners. The reasons cited by donors are usually that of cost-saving, the avoidance of administrative hassles and enhancing sustainability. Thus there is a generalized feeling that NGOs are expected to coalesce around donor priorities, without a considered assessment of how the different organizations 'fit' together. There is also the sense that their essential identity is being compromised or at worst that they are at the mercy of the whims of their donors.

A case in point is that of a gender-based network formed around one UK-based funding organization. Four different NGOs were interviewed, which were part of this network. The formation of this network was initiated by this donor. The issues raised by the NGOs interviewed, center largely around the fact that this network was founded upon the initiative of the donor and is thus heavily dependent on the interventions of the donor to make it work. Although the partners in the network raised concerns regarding the formation of, and their participation therein, the network, the end result was to go ahead with the network ie with the decision of the donors.

One case study NGO stated, "This network can only get partners together when (the donor) is there."

One of the organizations interviewed, is technically not an NGO in itself, but rather a collective grouping of different NGOs for advocacy purposes. This organization said, "the starting assumption is that we are all its partners and that we will easily work together. But being its partner doesn't mean that its automatically so." This was raised as particularly problematic for this organization, given the fact that the organisation in question is a 'network' in itself. The fluidity of form of this NGO, means that it is not easy to 'fit' into another organizational entity. This organization, being a network, stated that it experienced a great deal of pressure from the donor in question, to develop the 'partnership' approach through this collaborative network. It also strongly encouraged the organization to write up and document the formalisation of this 'partnership' in order to drive the 'partnership' process.

An interview with the director of the aforementioned organization, reveals a degree of ambivalence in its attitude toward the donor in question. The relationship with said donor, is described as both "fabulous and flexible" and simultaneously "a bit intruding". The said donor has exerted a strong, if not dominant, influence upon the organization. It has been, until recently, the sole funding source for the organization, and is currently encouraging the organization to diversify funding as it does not wish to fund more than 40% of the organisation's core costs.

However these donor-encouraged networks are also viewed in a positive light, in terms of the benefits that it does provide. Marketing advantages are cited ie it enhances the organisation's profile, which is particularly useful for small struggling NGOs. One rural development NGO stated that there is value in belonging to these networks because donors themselves hold such associations in high regard. It is seen to demonstrate that the organisation is well-established, fairly well-known and has a strong support base. This NGO stated that it derives a sense of validation from these networks.

It seems that this form of 'partnership' ie through coordination or networking, must work efficiently only when there is sufficient consensus and interest among all parties involved, and not simply the donor organization which is dispensing funds. The longevity of such networks also needs to be examined, given that such issue-based networks are time-specific and demand-driven. It would also seem that 'partnership' can only be taken seriously when there are clear organizational values as well as well-defined values around the process itself.

Funding partnership

The primary relational criterion for this type of 'partnership' is the simple funding exchange. As one NGO states, "The relationship is just about sending reports and getting money. There is no partnership. Most of our donors only visit once a year anyway, or even once every two years."

A rural development NGO recounted its experience of the abrupt termination of a funding relationship with very little advance warning. The donor in question is a large UK-based ecumenical funding organization. Despite the fact that there had recently been a field visit from the donor, no mention was made of notice of termination of funding. Communication of the funding termination came via a letter in which the NGO was told that the donor was looking to strengthening its HIV/AIDS focus and was asked to explore local funding sources. There was no discussion as to how the NGO could better meet the new criteria which the donor had outlined. The letter also indicated that it felt that the NGO was now equipped to function without its funding.

This is an example of a ten- year 'partnership' where there was no consultation or negotiation around the termination of funding. Neither was there any serious consideration given to the sustainability of the NGO. The 'buck was passed', so to speak, onto local fundraising. This case study NGO partner expressed the feeling that this donor did not make a considered evaluation of the local funding environment in South Africa, stating that it is common knowledge that government funding agency, the NDA (National Development Agency) is problematic in terms of dispensing funds. As another case study NGO stated: "Donors should not push too much for local fundraising because South Africa is still needy despite it being a middle income country and (also) because there is an underlying moral obligation for Northern countries to assist the South." This NGO further added "it is about sustainable development. That is really the essence of partnership."

It is also particularly ironic that the donor in question is a large well-funded international agency with a stated emphasis on partnership and participation in its operational focus. It has appointed a Partnership Officer in its UK-based head office and it is currently publishing a manual on the partnership approach. Although its approach to partnership is asserted as "support(ing) the rights of southern organizations and peoples to determine and control their own development," it admits that there is no consensus on what partnership actually means.

Yet there are nuances in the commonplace portrayal of donors as controlling and manipulative. It is acknowledged that donors are a heterogeneous grouping and that the complexities of the funding chain mean that they are facing their own pressures generated from their own back donors. As one case study NGO states "one senses that they too are under pressure and they are trying not to put pressure on us but they have to."

One UK-based ecumenical donor empathises with its partners around reporting requirements. As the NGO partner in question states "if we do not like writing, they have told us to find a more creative way of data gathering."

Another UK-based donor acknowledges that the new bureaucratic demands or as it states "the rigidity of rules" are creating great strain on their partners as well as creating tensions in their relationships. This funding organisation acknowledges that there is much contradiction in the rhetoric of partnership.

In much the same way that donors appear to be portrayed in a particular light, NGOs may be seen to be highly dependent and vulnerable entities. Whether this is an accurate portrayal of the state of NGOs is subject to debate. There are certain NGOs who have managed their relationships with donors, in an assertive and direct manner which precludes any questions of control or dependency. This is done by attempting to claim back their own autonomy, both at the level of (a) attitude and b) operational strategies. As one women's rights NGO states, they do not deal with "prescriptive demoralizing donors. (They) do not need to accept funds from such donors." This NGO states that one of their main donors, an influential multilateral organisation, expects its partners to attend capacity building workshops. But this NGO feels sufficiently empowered not to do so and still protect the integrity of its funding relationship.

Conclusion

This research begs the question, does the 'partnership' approach, in the context of the aid game, resonate with any fundamental or significant meaning? It would appear from the evidence as cited above that a clear answer to the question is to be sought within the obfuscatory depths of the prevailing paradigm of 'powerless vs all-powerful' or 'victim vs perpetrator'. How do southern NGOs develop their own 'voice' is a key issue for a transformative perspective on the simplistic binary oppositions which have come to characterize donor funding relationships ie recognizing and strategizing around those aspects of power which are inherent in their seeming 'powerlessness'.

HIV/AIDS Case Study

The issue of HIV/AIDS has sounded a persistent refrain throughout the fieldwork carried out in the course of this research. HIV/AIDS has impacted powerfully upon the NGO sector, entailing complex changes in the funding relationship between donor and recipient. These multifaceted changes have been complicated by the overriding socio-political context provided by the policy and attitude of the South African government toward HIV/AIDS. Some factors include the refusal of the presidency to recognize the link between HIV and AIDS and the debate around the provision of anti-retroviral drugs. Thus HIV/AIDS has become a deeply controversial and polarizing issue, coloured by criticism, misperception and skepticism. This climate of extreme sensitivity has filtered down to the NGO sector in several concrete ways, in a manner which clearly exposes the innate contradictions and complexities of the donor-recipient funding relationship.

Among the case study NGOs interviewed, there was a general feeling that donors have responded to the urgency of the crisis through their recognition of the primacy of the issue to developmental work. One NGO said: "Donors have recognized the issue more so than NGOs." The role of donors in pushing an HIV/AIDS agenda is recognized and in certain cases, appreciated.

But this recognition takes different forms. At its most positive, three case study NGOs have stated that their donors were instrumental in allowing them the necessary space to incorporate HIV/AIDS into the work. For one urban housing NGO, two of its donors helped bring other urban development NGOs together in an HIV/AIDS project. The main donor and invested in capacity building workshops with the consortium of urban development NGOs. This donor also facilitated the capacity building workshop.

A gender based violence NGO felt that its primary donor, a large UK-based funding organization, helped them recognize the need to 'mainstream' HIV/AIDS into their work in a very concrete way. This donor had contacted the NGO in a reaction to the UK press carrying a news item about the murder of a South African HIV/AIDS activist, Gugu Dlamini. Dlamini was murdered for courageously revealing her HIV status. This donor encouraged the NGO to see the relationship between HIV/AIDS and violence against women. This prompted a process of reflection on the part of the NGO partner, which all along had been working in the arena of gender-based violence and had not made the connection. This intervention by their donor was viewed in a very positive light by the NGO partner in terms of further developing and enhancing their work.

The majority of the case study NGOs expressed the view, to differing degrees, that their donors expected them (in the words of a gender-based violence NGO) to "simply jump on to the HIV/AIDS bandwagon." For example, one rural development NGO explains the pressure it felt from two of its major donors to shift some of its operational focus toward HIV/AIDS.

The director of the rural development NGO stated "we are affected because most of our members are affected. We try to run workshops. Sometimes we even bring people in from the Department

of Health to run our workshops. But sometimes donors want you to run the project yourself. But don't they (the donor) understand that it doesn't mean that we aren't making our members in the community aware of it. They want you to focus on it. It does not mean that we are not making our members in the community aware of it or that we are not talking about it. It doesn't mean that all organizations must run a workshop or have a project on HIV/AIDS because all other organizations are doing it."

This NGO says "it is difficult to admit that it (HIV/AIDS) is not a critical area" but that "donors (are) not prepared to understand the specifics of HIV/AIDS from the point of view of our strategic focus".

The level of donor interest in HIV/AIDS was critiqued by several NGOs. There are certain instances cited in which it may be said that donors are interested in the issue at a superficial level and as such do not appreciate the full nuanced complexity of HIV/AIDS. For example, one urban housing NGO commented that "donors are only interested in education, awareness and orphans. It is easier for donors to justify help to orphans, than to housing. There are new ways of accommodating HIV/AIDS within the built environment. There are so many ways that housing can potentially contribute toward the spread of HIV and in that way it's quite controversial".

One NGO indicated that "all the donors want to hear about is HIV/AIDS" and further stated "there is such pressure on NGOs to take up this issue, even if it's not our strategic focus."

For one rural development NGO, it was felt that HIV/AIDS was a "conditionality" for them and that they had been coerced into giving HIV/AIDS priority. This NGO experienced a great deal of pressure to 'mainstream' the issue into their work to the extent that one of its donors held a workshop for this very purpose. This NGO felt that its donor placed them in an awkward position.

The awkwardness of its position is borne out by the fact that the same NGO was informed by another donor that its funding would not be renewed because the donor in question would be concentrating on funding HIV/AIDS interventions and the NGO did not meet the criteria. This notice of termination of funding was communicated by way of a letter, which advised said NGO to source local funding instead.

It is clear that the combination of a developmental crisis and the inequalities of the funding environment have created instability on several levels:
for NGOs who must incorporate HIV/AIDS into their work purely as a serious developmental issue that impacts upon them
for NGOs who must incorporate HIV/AIDS into their work in a manner prescribed by their donors (hence the example of HIV/AIDS mainstreaming workshop)
for donors, who must integrate HIV/AIDS as a factor of great significance into their work. This, in turn, involves transferring some of the exigencies around confronting the epidemic to their funding partners. How these pressures are transmitted and resolved, plays itself out in a number of ways; some of them involve positive spinoffs for NGOs and some simply create instability and widen already existing tensions.

Key Trends:

What follows is a broad overview of some of the key trends emerging from the case studies:

First, there is increasing differentiation within the NGO sector in South Africa. There appear to be four different types of NGOs, as defined by their relationships to their funders, as follows:

Professional and larger NGOs that accede to, manipulate, or negotiate the conditions that accompany their funding.

There is strong evidence that these NGOs are attempting to manipulate the conditionalities of their funding and confine their effects to the office level. Examples: They prepare their monitoring reports in the office according to the specified outputs or milestones, with only weak or tangential links to information gathered at the project level. Their funding is based on logframes or strategic foci that again, are not translated downwards to field staff or project beneficiaries.

There also seem to be some efforts to work with funders to reduce hardships associated with new management practices. For example, there have been efforts to co-ordinate the format of reports, so that a single report will serve all the funders.

The management tools and practices employed by many funders are not producing the desired effects – projects are not better managed, outputs are not more assured, and information and learning are not promoted. To the contrary, there seem to be strong incentives to “bend the truth” and “creatively work the system.” There is evidence that the efforts to enhance impact are (a) ineffective and (b), even worse, are pernicious, distorting reality, obstructing learning, and establishing time frames and approaches that don't work.

This is even more the case for the next group of NGOs. Many smaller NGOs and CBOs, especially those that are rural-based are struggling to cope with the new management practices and conditionalities. There is considerable field evidence of lack of understanding of the frameworks and tools with which are now required to work.

There is a smaller group of NGOs that are redefining relationships with their funders. Many of these are in the OD sector or have benefited from longer-term positive relationships with one or two funders. For example, a number of these NGOs have insisted on the need for capital reserve funds, from which they can draw interest to cover core costs or pilot projects. Many funders refused to finance projects when the organization had such resources. Several NGOs refused to accept funding altogether under those conditions. The funders returned and after several years of negotiation have agreed to provide project funding with the understanding that NGOs would continue to maintain their investment reserves.

There are countless smaller NGOs and CBOs that are not linked into international funding flows or that are linked into government funding relationships. These organizations were not the focus of this project.

There have many observations about different types of funders and grantmaking practices. What is most notable about NGO reports on their funders is the level of ambiguity. NGO staff differ greatly in who they pinpoint as the desirable funders. Nonetheless, certain types of funding practices have been described as positive, as follows:

Funders that put time into building a relationship with partners. In South Africa, these are less likely to be in the form of a formal partnership or membership agreement (though they do exist). These relationships are characterized by frequent visits or calls, e-mails, feedback, interest in the field results, and are built over time on the basis of personal relationships.

There are risks currently facing such relationships, a few of which are:

Turnover of staff amongst South Africa NGOs and amongst Northern NGOs and donors;

Requirements that Northern NGOs must pass to partners;

Changing priorities and the need for support from local constituencies (e.g. marketing) that turn visits (for example) into displays instead of opportunities to learn and listen; and,

Inadequate communication of debates and pressures from Northern NGOs to partners in South Africa.

Funders for whom the money is the only real link to the South African NGOs. This is not viewed as a relationship but is “easy to manage” – all that is needed is fill in the forms and file the reports.

This leaves open the question of what happens on the ground, and is often accompanied by conditions that undermine NGO efforts to isolate their funding terms from operations and program/project level activities.

There have also been interesting results and insights into funding relationships that have arisen from the research process itself. Here, there are four key issues: access; confidentiality; fear; and use of information.

Access to the organizations with which we wanted to work was difficult. Often we had to make repeated phone calls to establish initial contact or to secure interviews. Sometimes we did not succeed or staff decided not to continue (often because they were in vulnerable position at the time or in the midst of a period of intense work). People were busy, and also cautious about the research. In one case, a UK organization participating in the research refused to even give us the names of their South African partners, insisting instead on contacting them directly about the research and indicating that they could – or not – choose to contact us. None of them, not surprisingly, did. As it turns out, we already know some of the partners through our own networks and several of the organisations did agree to participate. However, we have no idea how representative they are of the overall partners and, as researchers, feel strongly that the staff of the partner organizations should have had the chance to decide independently – based on contact with us – whether or not to participate, as other organizations did.

Confidentiality was an important issue for many respondents. Almost all did not want to be directly quoted. Most wanted all comments disassociated from their organization. A few, though agreeing that the material drawn from interviews, field visits, and office documents could be used, did not want their organization even mentioned as a participant in the research project.

We attribute the concerns about access and confidentiality to a high level of fear about the repercussions of the research on funding. People were very concerned that information not get back to their funders (or to their recipients in the case of intermediaries).

There were also concerns that the information be put to use. And I'll just quote from field notes to make this point:

Isaivani: When I first approached XX for an interview, XX asked a lot of questions about the purpose of the research, who would read it and what kind of impact it would make....She explained her need to find out this information.

"I'm often a bit worried about research projects that are about excavating information that potentially have no benefit to those that you're excavating information from. And there are always different kinds of interest served in having certain kinds of information. It is just important for me to know where your will is and your interest lies before we start sharing a whole lot of our experiences. Our experience is unique and something that shouldn't just be given away with no kind of sense of...if this information is going to influence things for the better, then great, we choose to use our time to spend talking about our experiences if we know it might have some meaning for the NGO sector."

As researchers, we share our respondents concerns, and very much hope that the research will lead to better understanding of current funding and management practices, their effects, and possibilities for more just and effective approaches.

Reflections on CDRA: from authentic practice to authentic donor –relations?
ALLAN KAPLAN (former director of CDRA) with Isaivani Hyman

Add 7 page rewrite from August – note that Isai would prefer not to have this take the format of an interview although I think that it now reads very well and that Allan – and Isai – have done a great job of highlighting extremely important issues.

IH: CDRA has a voice, within the development world, far in excess of its size; perhaps because its message presents a radical counterpoint to our usual way of approaching development work. Can you describe the essence of this message and some of its implications?

AK: In the first place, the development sector has always taken an engineering approach to the world; it has seen the object of its endeavours as a thing which can be manipulated, a thing which can be controlled. Under this assumption, it seeks to analyse the thing, and then provide inputs which, it presumes to predict, will lead to relevant outputs. In other words, it assumes that the correct inputs will lead, in a more or less linear way, from cause to the predicted effect. It thus seeks to do to, and on behalf of, others, where the other is 'controllable', and where the effect will be on the other and not on the one who intervenes. CDRA has always regarded the 'object' of development endeavours as a living being - whether it be an individual, organisation, community or social situation - which means that it has its own inherent development process, or movement, into which we intervene. Therefore development work can never assume linearity; we are always having to deal with aspects of another being's process which defy any attempts at analysis or prediction, or control. We cannot perform engineering operations on others as if they were things; we can only walk alongside, anticipate, respond, and keep adapting our interventions as the situation changes. This demands that we are at home with ambiguity and uncertainty; it demands that we treat the object of our endeavours with the kind of respect and love which we would apply to a loved one (which is already a radical departure from current development practice); and it demands that we accept, more - welcome, the changes that will take place in ourselves if our development work bears any fruit.

Because development work is entirely about relationships. And we are a significant part of the relationship. We cannot separate ourselves from the other; while conventional development work presumes to do exactly this. Conventional development work, in recent years, has become far more amenable to concepts of participation and ownership, but still generally as a means to an end; the success of the development project is often assumed to depend on, for example, participation. For CDRA, concepts like participation and ownership are not a means to an end but are the end in themselves; if we can achieve participation and ownership we have done all that we can possibly hope to do.

As well, CDRA has always placed a high premium on the concept of practice. Most development organisations and projects are content to rest with aims and objectives and strategies and indicators for success; they seldom look deeply enough at their methodologies for achieving these, their on-the-ground practice in the field. Too little time is spent interrogating that practice, and improving it. Which takes us to the question of learning. More and more development organisations pay lip-service to the concept of the learning organisation, but very few organisations actually engage in rigorous and continuous processes of self-critique, around methodology and practice, in order to improve action. For CDRA, given the ambiguous and uncertain and participatory (with respect to the intervener as well) nature of development, the only real guarantee of good practice is adequate ongoing learning; we have always seen rigorous learning and self-critique as the only true and relevant form of accountability, for a development organisation or practitioner. Yet those who fund development, who spend so much energy demanding compliance to their criteria for accountability, seldom are prepared to provide funds for such learning to take place. And even less frequently do they engage in such processes themselves.

Which in a way takes us back to something I said earlier - effective development practice demands that we ourselves, as the ones who intervene, are prepared to change and develop. The refusal to fund, and engage with, real processes of learning (not external evaluations, which we all know have only a limited amount to do with learning) is a mark of the cynicism with which many donors and their counterparts approach development work. It is not simply a question of not knowing any better; it's an indication that most of those who engage with development do not themselves see any point or necessity to their own development. And what could be more cynical than that?

IH: That kind of very strong statement is probably what has contributed to CDRA's reputation for never bowing to the kinds of conditionalities imposed by donors. This is a privileged position for an NGO to be in - not to have to feel overly grateful to the hand that feeds it. Is CDRA's strong message not compromised through this privileged position; I mean, where other NGOs may feel that their circumstances do not allow them to take as strong a position, or make as strong a critique?

AK: If CDRA's position is seen as privileged, then yes, I guess it must compromise the message. So it feels important to set the record straight. CDRA has, yes, benefited from core (institutional) funding, from receiving funding for its own learning processes, and from remarkable relationships with many of its donors. But it has never been privileged in the sense of having been born into these circumstances, or having been lucky. It has won these circumstances through struggle, through commitment to a vision of development practice and through a rigorous authenticity.

It has never compromised on its vision, not because it has never been forced to, but because when it has been forced it refused to cooperate. For CDRA, compromise has never felt worth it; we have always known that if we're forced to compromise to too great an extent then we would rather throw in the towel and do something else with our lives. What's the point of engaging with development work when you're compromising to such an extent that you're not really doing it anyway? There have been donors who have tried to bend us into the project mode of operation, and we have refused their money, not because we had alternative sources but because then the game would not be worth the candle. Strategic coherence, for CDRA, has always been paramount; and it has refused project funding except on grounds when it would not compromise this stance. The vehemence of CDRA's argument, and its inherent rationality, has often forced donors' hands; simply because it has refused the conventional wisdom which has it that NGO's, as beggars, cannot be choosers. We have demanded an intelligent relationship with our donors, and we have been rewarded by having intelligent donors, who are often even prepared to go against the dictates of their agencies, and who have sometimes, as a result, had an instructive influence on the funding policies of their agencies. This is the way things work; it's the approach CDRA has always taken, also with those whom it serves. You have the ability to influence your world; don't think of yourself as a pawn in the game of others. This is a deep underlying message contained within CDRA's approach to development and organisational work, and it plays itself out as much with our donor relationships as it does in our work with 'clients'.

Development, for CDRA, is essentially about people; it is work performed in the realm of relationships. It has everything to do with authenticity; anything less is technique, which brings us back to the engineering approach. CDRA has carried that approach, that way of being, perhaps, into its relationships with its donors. It has always tried to relate from a place of authenticity - transparency, honesty, equality, rigour - and it has been rewarded through having authentic relationships with donors. Where this has failed, it's simply failed, and we have fallen out of relationship, and we have moved on. But it's very dangerous for NGOs to think that they are subservient, unable to influence; the truth is, I think, that it is that very thinking which creates the subservience. It's remarkable that, the higher you go in the donor hierarchy, the more the donors themselves will complain that 'their hands are tied'. The closer to the centre, the closer to the source of power, it seems, the more powerless people become. This is a dynamic which CDRA has been obliged to explore in some depth. In the development world, it sometimes feels as

though everyone thinks of themselves as a pawn. The only way to move beyond this dynamic, is to move beyond it . . . and not sit around waiting for circumstances to change.

CDRA has always assumed that it has something to contribute. This is another reason for the different dynamic with donors. CDRA has had funding for its learning processes partly because it has engaged seriously with those processes and has tried to share its learnings - unadulterated, transparent and honest - with the outside world. Thus it has proved the value of the funding, not by ticking off quantitative indicators in a logical framework but by making sense. It's surprising (or not) how much sense it makes, to make sense!

If CDRA is regarded as privileged, it reflects quite frighteningly on donor practice with respect to other organisations. When CDRA started, it had the benefit of meeting an intelligent donor whose agency allowed him space to respond flexibly and differently to specific and unique situations. This set CDRA's ball rolling, its true. If this is seen as privileged, then donors have only themselves to blame. And if NGO's retreat from vociferously challenging the practice of the agencies which provide their life blood, then they too have only themselves to blame. There are other things to do in life; we do not have to choose to remain in abusive relationships.

IH: How much of this relationship with donors had to do with you?

AK: A lot of it had to do with me, just as I set my stamp on CDRA more generally. This is the way it is with leadership, particularly with respect to the founder. Even in what I have been saying to you in the last while, its difficult for me sometimes to discern clearly what is CDRA and what is me. If CDRA had had a different founder, surely it would have been different. So perhaps, yes, it was not simply CDRA, but my own approach, which created a certain set of relationships with donors. But I'm not sure that the question, put like that, is helpful. Within CDRA, I have been blessed with a remarkable group of colleagues. They are equally the reason why our funding relationships have been so healthy; but once again, you could ask the question - how much of the fact that CDRA has been graced with remarkable development workers has had to do with me? The question doesn't seem to take us very far, and in fact masks some perhaps more relevant considerations.

What is relevant is the demand for authenticity in relationship with respect to both myself and the other (in this case the donor). What is relevant is the refusal to accept that which does not make sense, simply because one is told that that's the way it is. What is important is always to critique practice, firstly your own - both for authenticity and because by doing so you begin to know what to look for in others - and secondly the practice of those you come into contact with, including donors. What is important is not to set donors up as some kind of holy cow; and by refusing to do so you help them too, because they are beset on all sides by their own holy cows. What is important is to recognise that donors are as much part of the game as those they fund; they too need to be challenged to look to their own development, they too need to be confronted with their own contradictions. What is important is to recognise that donors are as clueless as the rest of us when it comes to understanding good development practice, and not to be intimidated by them, or to be seduced into thinking that they must be privy to some higher knowledge just because they have more money; their wealth is directly related to the lack of wealth amongst the communities we work with. What is important is to look to your own strategic coherence, your own practice and methodology, and not to bow to pressure to run disparate and fragmented projects just because this is the tool used by donors to pass the money around. What is important is to develop authentic means of accountability, and not simply to complain about donor practice in this regard. What is important is to hone your own analysis and practice so that you have the means and integrity with which to challenge donors. What is important is to recognise that donors are part of the problem; but what is equally important is to recognise that you (we) are as much part of the problem, and to strive to move beyond this. And what is also important is to give credit where credit is due, recognise and respect good donor practice when you see it, and let them know when you do see it, as much as you need to critique when you don't. This is a basic component of healthy relationship.

CDRA, and CDRA's donor relationships, are not simply a function of my role. From the very beginning, in CDRA, we paid close attention to our own learning processes. It took years to create the institutional conditions in which this would thrive. But we never gave in to the kind of indolence, lethargy, resistance which besets so many organisations when they try to implement deep learning processes. For the last however many years CDRA has spent perhaps 20% of its time on its own learning. This is relatively unheard of in the development sector. But development organisations are performing tasks which most commercial organisations would stumble over; it takes a wily intelligence and a flexible rigour and a deep sense of principle coupled by the ability to let go of holy cows, to engage in a successful development practice. The time CDRA has spent on learning has generated not only a stable institutional practice but also a group of resilient and rigorous practitioners, who developed themselves to carry CDRA as much as I ever did.

IH: CDRA has achieved a significant degree of what may be termed 'brand-share', in the development world. Did you deliberately set out to create an image of the organisation which would 'sell' in the sense of raising funds?

AK: We were looking to create an organisation with character. An organisation which has a particular and strong character necessarily has coherence - its vision is reflected in its strategies which are reflected in its practices which are reflected in its organisational processes and functioning which is reflected in the image (right through to logo) which is presented to the world. The importance for CDRA was that it had a strong and recognisable character; the issue was never one of creating an image. If it is to be authentic, then the character of an institute carries the image, rather than the other way round. And if a character is strong enough to carry an image, then you reap the consequences of that, both for better and for worse.

IH: So given your remarks about character, and the strength of your message and the funding relationships you've fought for, what impact do you think you've had, generally and on other NGO service organisations?

AK: How does one really measure impact? Many years ago, before CDRA, as a fieldworker in the rural village of Wupperthal (Cape Province of South Africa), a visitor passing through gave me a book called *The Developing Organisation*, by Bernard Lievegoed, a Dutchman who, in the 50's, founded an organisation called the Nederlands Pedagogical Institute. This book revolutionised my thinking. Though it was written for, and out of, what he referred to as post-industrial society, and though I was working in what almost amounted to pre-industrial society, I absorbed these ideas and began to work with them in the situation I found myself in. Later, these ideas formed the basis of the CDRA's practice (not to mention that of many other development consultancies in other parts of the world). Lievegoed died before CDRA was founded. If someone had asked him what impact he had had, he clearly would never have mentioned me or the CDRA. Yet equally clearly he had a tremendous impact on an entire area of work that he had never thought of. So how do we measure impact?

Our timeframes are too short. And in any case, our current penchant for evaluating impact is too linear and too discrete. CDRA works largely in the realm of ideas and in the realm of inner development, because these are the areas that lead change, these are the areas that really have impact. CDRA itself is nothing more than an idea. And how do we measure the results of such ideas? By the visible signs of changed behaviour? But Lievegoed would have seen no sign of this in me before he died. If a fieldworker in an NGO which CDRA has worked with changes 'as a result', but her organisation does not change, and she moves on, and the organisation loses its best worker, has CDRA had a valuable impact? (And what do those words 'as a result' mean anyway; there are so many influences impacting the fieldworker's life, how can we separate CDRA's from the rest?) If a donor sees the value of what CDRA is saying, but is unable to shift the bureaucracy he works for, has CDRA had an impact? Would you change your answer if you

discovered that some years later the donor founded a new international think-tank? Or found himself back in the field, in a developing country, having chosen the move after many years of working as a donor out of Europe?

I think CDRA has had tremendous impact. I could tell you many stories of real organisational and individual change which has resulted from CDRA's intervention. I could tell you stories about the shifts that have happened for individuals, and the organisations they belong to, as a result of CDRA's formation (training) programmes. I could tell you about the numbers of inspired responses CDRA gets to its writings; how many people claim to carry CDRA's Annual Reports around with them, and CDRA's books. I could tell you about the number of development programmes at both university and other levels which use CDRA's writings and ideas. I could tell you that before CDRA the terms capacity building and organisation development were entirely absent within the development world of southern and east Africa, whereas now the concepts and the practitioners are ubiquitous throughout the region. I could tell you that CDRA's particular 'take' on capacity building and organisation development - and development practice generally - are recognised as a unique contribution throughout the world, and valued for this.

I could quote you the number of hits that CDRA's website gets daily. But this would only go to show the absurdity of this whole exercise. What are 'hits' anyway? What impact does one hit have? Someone makes a hit, reads a few lines and moves on. Someone else prints what they have read and passes it on to thirty others. All thirty revolutionise their lives. No, none of them are the least effected by what they've read. Who knows? A brilliant but enigmatic writer, Owen Barfield, once remarked that he would rather his books were read deeply and used continuously by a few than that they were read superficially by many and then put back on the shelf. This is a very difficult angle for the development sector even to begin to get a grip on; we demand instant and visible and quantifiable and replicable results, else no money next year (but no-one could replicate Owen Barfield).

I think CDRA has had tremendous impact on many people. But CDRA's voice and message is often regarded as complex, controversial; certainly its trying to push against the self-imposed boundaries which frame our current thinking. This is its value, but it also inevitably makes for depth rather than breadth with respect to its impact. Yet this is precisely what CDRA would want. At the same time, there are many more people who have never heard of CDRA, and others who have rejected CDRA's arguments. Who knows?

I know this. I know that many people have heard CDRA's message, and that its message has found its way into the heart of many NGOs, service organisations and consultancies included. Yet always only aspects of its message, never the full complexity. Yet this is as it should be; I would prefer people to take an idea and allow it to mingle with other ideas in their developing understanding, than to swallow a package and emulate it in practice. In any event, I work in the former way, which seems, after all, to be most like a developmental way. An authentic development practice has to be honed as an inner practice, not imported from without.

IH: Then you would have a similar response to a question about your impact on donors?

AK: Well, yes; but its even more complicated in this arena. There are donors who have really changed their practice, or adapted aspects of it, in response to contact with CDRA. For example, providing funding for capacity building, organisation development, learning processes, alongside more conventional funding, and without being asked for it. Or becoming more programme oriented, rather than project; or more institutionally oriented, rather than programme. Responding to different criteria for evaluation; accepting and encouraging new kinds of evaluation - learning processes involving self-critique, for example, and not simply external assessments and

judgements. But the truth is, far more donors have not changed at all, than have. Actually it's even worse than this.

The more I see of donor practice, generally, the more I despair. After so many years of trying to get the basics of an alternative approach across, one which asks development practitioners to take the living nature of their 'audience' seriously enough to begin to build an approach and a practice which is capable of responding to such living process with respect, dignity and a measure of truth, the donor community feels to be - generally; there are of course exceptions - moving in the opposite direction. Greater quantification, greater emphasis on fragmented projects, more rigid adherence to the new fashions emanating from the north (till the fashion changes, and rigid adherence gives way to sudden break, without due warning). Greater emphasis on control, on bureaucratic forms of 'accountability', less emphasis on learning, on methodology, on genuine interrogation of practice. Greater intransigence, less contact with smaller ventures on the ground. Greater conformity, less openness to experimentation. More and more jargon - like replicability, like sustainability - without due interrogation of what these terms may really mean. Greater emphasis on material product, less emphasis on the power of idea and inner transformation as development tools. Greater allegiance to their masters at the centre, less collaboration with the people on the margins. A spurious connection to an outdated science; little recognition that development work may be a creative art. A remarkably dogged adherence to their own organisational procedures takes the place of logic and strategy, despite their protestations to the contrary.

There are few who claim that CDRA's ideas are misguided; people generally love the alternative picture of possibility which CDRA presents. But there are very very few donors who take the ideas seriously enough to actually work with them. Largely because the ideas centre around the need for change with respect to those with power, not simply those without; and as I said earlier, donors do not see themselves as the subject of change. The level of cynicism which has crept into the development sector is profound.

IH: You talked a minute ago about the fact that donors pay less attention than necessary to logic and strategy. Surely the current reliance, or focus, on the logical framework instrument (LFA) is an example of respect for 'logic and strategy'. Yet CDRA's approach seems to be at variance with the LFA as a tool. Could we close this interview with a few words about the LFA, as it seems such a central focus of donor practice, yet remains controversial amongst grantees?

AK: When I speak of logic I am not referring to the logic of physical, material bodies, which would be an engineering logic, and where the LFA would make perfect sense. Logic would seem to imply for me that you adapt your approach to the kind of phenomenon being approached. When you approach living organisms, you have to discover the logic which is inherent to the functioning of those organisms, not simply apply a logic which you learned from dealing with dead matter. The LFA has nothing whatsoever to do with assisting the intervention into the development process of living organisms; it is a tool of the military, of engineering and business, it implies linear predictability, and a 'manipulation and control' mindset. It has nothing whatsoever to do with facilitation.

Proponents of the LFA would disagree of course. They will hasten to say that the LFA is valuable precisely because there are so many unpredictable variables in any development endeavour, and here is a tool which allows one to manage the complexity. There are many responses one could make to this - that the tool fragments and complexifies, rather than assisting the intervenor to get to the heart of the matter; that it demands more time than the development work it is supposed to assist; that it forces grantees to jump through hoops which satisfy donors rather than the object of their endeavours. And so on. But I would focus on the following.

The LFA distances, rather than brings you closer to the issue or community at hand. When you read an LFA - assuming you can do so without your mind wandering off into whatever fantasy grabs your fancy - it is really hard to get a feel for the situation being addressed. No fieldworker,

faced with the situation, would ever tell the story in this way. Indeed, there is no story with the LFA; the story, the whole, that which holds the whole situation together, the essential dynamics and patterns and relationships - all this is precisely what gets lost. What you have is fragmented bits of information. The logic of the living dynamic of a developing organism or situation is exactly what gets lost. You're left with . . . like the specifications for a motorbike. Would you ever get a sense of what its like to ride a motorbike, or a particular bike rather than a different one, from reading the specs of the two different bikes? The LFA assumes that development work is like fixing a motorbike; we need the manual. But there is no manual for development work. If you were trying to make right a friendship which had gone wrong, would you use a manual?

The LFA is a tool favoured precisely by those people who are somehow involved with development but who are not directly engaged with it in the field. The LFA does not bring you closer but sets you apart. The essence of a good development practice, CDRA has always believed, is intimacy and engagement; the entering into real relationship, together. The LFA is the tool of choice for those who are so far away - in many senses, not just geographically - that they must search for a substitute for the real thing. What the tie is for the businessman, or the weapon for the soldier, the LFA is for the development bureaucrat. It has no value for development work as such.

One of the greatest problems of the LFA is that it seeks to predict outcomes before the development work has been engaged with. This goes to the heart of CDRA's 'alternative' approach, which indicates that development is unpredictable, and that it opens things up, rather than closing them down to pre-set criteria. But, you may say, if we cannot strategise, what is the value of our interventions, and how can we even begin to hold the intervenor accountable?

We can indeed strategise; but prediction and pre-set indicators are the means of those who are not engaged with a development practice. For those who are, anticipation, responsiveness and a 'knowledgeable reading' - rather than pre-set indicators - are the kinds of faculties or capacities to be honed. The LFA cannot hold development work accountable, it simply placates the organisational procedures of donors. Real conversation between donor and grantee would yield far more 'truth'. The LFA does not simply take the place of real conversation; it prevents it.

Conclusions

Appendix 1: original proposal -excerpts

2. Objectives

The objectives of the project are: to understand the ways in which SNGOs in South Africa are adjusting to standardised development management procedures among northern donors and the developmental effects of such processes; to explore how South African development organisations are responding to the new language of development that emphasises the strengthening of civil society, local ownership of development projects, partnership, and participation; to establish a network of researchers in the South and North where information on the subject is shared and disseminated; and, through collaborative research and networking, to increase the capacity of research institutes in Southern Africa.

The research aims to contribute to understanding of development management along three dimensions:

- (a) the different ways in which South African NGOs have changed their programme/project and management practices,
- (b) the role of donors and donor funding, as contrasted with pressures related to the South African development environment, in such practices, and
- (c) the impacts of selected project management and organisational practices on NGOs' development work.

A central question of this project is to understand the ways in which northern donors and local forces are shaping the project/programme and organisational management practices of South African NGOs. Northern influence may be direct, in the form of funding and programme conditions, or may flow through other channels. These channels could include the rise of a local development management training capacity (comprising part of the "knowledge sector"), overseas training opportunities for local NGO staff, or the slower filtering of ideas from management texts, to practice and back. Moreover, the research will explore how the two languages of development – that of standardised management and increasing partnership and participation – translate into practice, both within the South African development organisations and in their work. Are these two set of approaches compatible? Are they consonant with the priorities and needs of South African organisations? Are they appropriate to the aims of delivering social goods on a mass scale and building a strong vibrant civil society? As such, the research specifically will address how the particular development management practices arising out of each of the local and northern influences, or the combination of the two, are affecting the work of local NGOs and their relationships with donors, other NGOs and beneficiary communities.

3. Research themes

The above research questions will be answered within or across the following three broad research themes:

Theme 1: Documenting the development management practices of local NGOs

This theme is intended to provide an overall picture of what project and organisational management practices and procedures South African NGOs are using and how they are generally using them. The preliminary research started answering these questions. However, in terms of project and programme management, it only examined a few of the many management practices local NGOs might be using (specifically strategic planning and Logical Framework Analysis). This next phase of the research will attempt to document the full range of project management techniques that local NGOs are using through the use of more open-ended questionnaires and interviews. Specific attention will also be paid to how South African NGOs are using these techniques, and the extent to which these standardised techniques are compatible with bottom-up planning and community participation. Important questions will be whether local NGOs are adapting these management techniques to local conditions and needs or

simply using them according to donor guidelines, and whether they are using them in a blueprint or a more process and participatory manner.

In terms of the organisational management practices of local NGOs, financial and organisational sustainability strategies and programme elements, such as poverty, community participation, gender and the environment, will be examined. The preliminary research provided an initial look at sustainability strategies and suggested that NGOs are narrowing their operational focus, and becoming more commercial in their relations to government and beneficiaries. There were important exceptions, even in the small sample, of organisations that continued to define themselves primarily in terms of their processes at the community level. The initial research generated little information on specific programme elements, and did not query the ways they were actually employed in development projects. The proposed study will provide both greater breadth of knowledge on organisational strategies, and detailed, in-depth insights into the development practices being used by local NGOs.

Theme 2: Explaining South African NGOs' choice of particular management practices

The main aim of this set of questions is to explore the reasons behind the use by South African NGOs of the development management techniques documented in Theme 1. In particular, the aim is to determine whether the main impetus for the use of these techniques is coming from northern donors, or whether factors specific to the South African political transition, and the resulting environment in which NGOs find themselves, are more important. Secondly, our concern is to qualify the nature of influence from the north – is the adoption of specific management practices a result of coercive demands placed upon unequal Southern partners? Or is the influence indirect and driven, for example, by local interest in what are perceived as improved practices? Are Southern partners able to reject practices and conditions that are either unworkable in South Africa or incompatible with the organisation's self-defined mission?

Certainly, both donor pressure and internal factors have played a role in shaping development management in the South African NGO sector. However, the South African case appears to provide some interesting anomalies. For example, South African NGOs have traditionally been, and continue to be, heavily dependent on donor funding. However, our preliminary investigations suggest that many local NGOs do not perceive donors as having had a major influence on the new management procedures they have adopted. Of course, it might be that NGOs have been less than completely open about their relationships with donors and that in-depth interviews with NGO staff will uncover other dimensions of donor-NGO relationships in South Africa. However, if donors do indeed influence only selected management practices of local NGOs, interesting questions arise. For instance, why are South African NGOs, which are heavily reliant on external resources, able to bargain with donors for greater policy and operational independence than NGOs in other countries that are equally dependent on donor funds. Alternatively, local NGOs may be adopting the same management techniques that are used by NNGOs, but based on their perceived merits and not in response to northern donor or NGO requirements.

Theme 3: The implications of the use of particular development management practices for the work of NGOs and recipient communities

Theme 3 examines the impact of South African NGO management practices on the quality and coverage of NGO development work, and on the relationship of NGOs to beneficiary communities. Potential impacts of standardisation on NGOs relationships with the wider society (donors, government, private businesses, and other civil society organisations) will also be explored. Our concern is to assess whether the development management practices increasingly used by northern donors and NGOs are straitjackets that hamper NGOs that attempt to focus on community empowerment, develop political advocacy functions, or foster alternative, non-donor driven, developmental approaches. If used in a rigid manner, do the new techniques nonetheless

constitute an improvement, in at least some areas, over the practices previously employed by the NGO? When employed flexibly, what adaptations are made, and with what developmental impacts?

These broad questions translate into three levels of impact analysis: the material benefits and services delivered through development projects (developmental products), the levels of participation and empowerment of the people targeted as beneficiaries of the development projects (community processes), and the organisational characteristics of the NGO sector (civil society processes). Each of these levels will be addressed in research conducted in rural and urban communities. At each level, the research will seek to assess the impacts of specific management techniques. For example, the research will explore whether LFAs or M&E can be associated with successful NGO efforts to achieve such typical organisational goals as delivering services, expanding meaningful community participation, improving accountability to the people served, and establishing links to other civil society institutions.

Moreover, two key changes in the NGO sector in South Africa - commercialisation and community participation - provide powerful organising elements for the research. The preliminary research provided support for arguments that the need for local NGOs to become more financially sustainable has led many of them to adopt the language and tools of the business sector (Habib and Taylor, 1999; Bornstein, 1999). Many NGOs have introduced income-generating activities, such as private consulting, contracting for government work and the introduction of user fees for services delivered to communities. While these moves may have helped NGOs to become more financially independent and sustainable, it is not clear what this means for service delivery to poorer communities, and how it has changed relations between NGOs and these communities. These will be important questions in this sub-theme.

The second important issue is the increasing turn towards participatory approaches to NGO development work in South Africa. Many of the NGOs interviewed in the preliminary study placed great emphasis on the importance of community participation in development projects. However, as Wallace et al (1998) found in their research, many of the new development management techniques currently being used by UK NGOs are not conducive to the participation of beneficiaries (and often also NGO staff) in the decision-making and planning of projects. It is, therefore, important to examine the ways in which recent changes in development management may contradict or limit attempts by local NGOs to make their work more people-centred.

Finally, NGOs are comprised of individuals, who work within and around the sets of rules and norms that govern their actions. Staff at different levels of the organisation, from directors and senior managers to field workers, may be experiencing the new management practices in different ways. Senior staff may see, for example, LFA and strategic planning as a way of making the work of the NGO more professional, effective and sustainable. Fieldworkers, in contrast, may find such techniques confusing, slow, inappropriate to local development needs and disempowering. Staff in the field may also experience first hand the reality of the potential contradiction between the new project planning procedures, including increased reporting and evaluation, and the desire to incorporate community participation into the planning and implementation of projects. Such differences in the way staff at different levels of the NGO experience these techniques reveal both inherent strengths and weaknesses of the new techniques, and provide insight in to the adaptations made in their actual application by South Africa NGOs. The research will specifically address how the use of new management procedures affects local NGO staff at various levels, and how they resolve any contradictions.

4. Research design

The research is structured around a series of inter-related research projects. These projects are organised around the stream or filiere of actors in the development process, and detail the relations of the development actors to one another and to the developmental outcomes produced

(e.g. delivery of developmental benefits, local beneficiary participation, programme management capacity, and civil society growth). As such, each research project will produce independent results of relevance to understanding the impact of standardisation on southern partners and their development activities. Moreover, the projects collectively will inform the overall project questions.

The core of the study will be the South African NGOs, using mainly interviews with staff at different levels of the organisations, and the NGOs' project and programme documentation. The research will also involve extensive investigation into what we can term the NGOs backward linkages to donors and potential donors, and forward linkages to the communities with which they work.

In addition to tracing the flow of funds and actors through specific projects, the research balances a focus on UK NGOs and donor policies with an effort to assure that the most important dynamics for South Africa are reflected in the design of the study. UK donors, UK NNGOs, and SNGO recipients of UK funds are included within the sample of NGOs to participate. We will attempt to include local partners of the UK NGOs involved in the earlier Wallace et. al. study; however, because few of those UK NGOs fund South African NGOs and even fewer conduct their own operations in-country, possibilities appear to be limited to OXFAM, World Vision and Save the Children-UK.

To assure that the sample reflects dominant trends in the wider South African NGO environment, the research projects also will include NGOs operating without northern funding, NGOs funded by several other major donors, and commercially-funded (section 21) non-profit corporations engaged in development work. Likewise, efforts will be made to include South African NGOs with long-standing relations with UK and other foreign donors, and to include some with more recent linkages or formation. While SNGOs will be selected to represent a range of important variables (e.g. size, sector, urban/rural focus, source and level of funding) for each research component. However, there is likely to be some bias, for practical considerations, towards SNGOs based in KwaZulu-Natal Province (where we are located) and near the major urban centres of Johannesburg-Pretoria, Cape Town, and Port Elizabeth.

A third consideration in the design of the research has been to strive for more informed and relevant research through active engagement with those involved in the research and through methods that permit triangulation and generation of various intensities of research. Our concern is that the NGOs who participate, whether northern or South African, do so because they find that the research is of some use or interest to them. This concern means that we have structured research to permit growing familiarity between the research team and participating organisations, with independent pieces which individual NGOs can choose to undertake or not. Research results for the later activities are likely to be greatly strengthened by the emergence of trust and familiarity between NGO and research staff. The use of various levels of analysis, of varying depth and with various actors in the process, has also been built into the research design to better allow for cross-checks on information, a form of triangulation. Such an approach has the further advantage of allowing for the possibility of differing experiences and understandings of procedures, projects, and relationships.

A final consideration in structuring the research was to assure that the comparative dimensions of the project were reflected within each country's projects. Enough information on the specificities and unique aspects of the NGO sector in each country, and of the ways in which UK donors, in particular, operated in each country, was needed as a preface to further comparative work on standardisation.

List of organisations and acronyms in table 1 (organisations with adverts in the M&G)

AFRA	Association for Rural Advancement
AIDS Foundation	AIDS Foundation of South Africa
Alexandra Clinic	Alexandra Clinic and the Institute of Urban Primary Health care
BESG	Built Environment Support Group
Black Sash	Women For Human Right: The Black Sash
CASE	Community Agency for Social Enquiry
CBDP	Community Based Development Programme
CCATC	Community Counselling and Training Centre
CRIC	Careers Research and Information Centre
DAG	Development Action Group
EDT	Educare Development Trust
ESP	Education Support Project
GAP	Gender Advocacy Programme
HRC	Human Rights Committee of South Africa
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IMSSA	Independent Mediation Service of South Africa
Mvula Trust	
NLC	National Land Committee
NLP	National Language Project
NPPHCN	National Programme Primary health Care Network
Operation Hunger	
OXFAM	
People's Dialogue	
POWA	People Opposing Women Abuse
Rape Crisis	
RSS	Rural Support Services
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SCAT	Social Change Assistance Trust
SCLC	Southern Cape Land Committee
TRAC	Transvaal Rural Action Committee
Triangle Project	
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USN	Urban Sector Network
VSO	Voluntary Service Network
WUS	World University Service

ⁱⁱ The chi-square tests reveal that there is no significant change in the type of jobs advertised in the three years (0.05 significance level). Results of the Chi-Square Tests are reproduced below:

	Value	df	Asymmetrical Significance.(2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	35.560	30	.223
Likelihood Ratio	41.279	30	.082
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.722	1	.099
N of Valid Cases	409		

a. 27 cells (56.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.29.