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Towards a New Profile?

Development, Humanitarian and
Conflict-Resolution NGOs
in the Age of Globalization

Tobias Debiel/Monika Sticht

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Institute for Development and Peace

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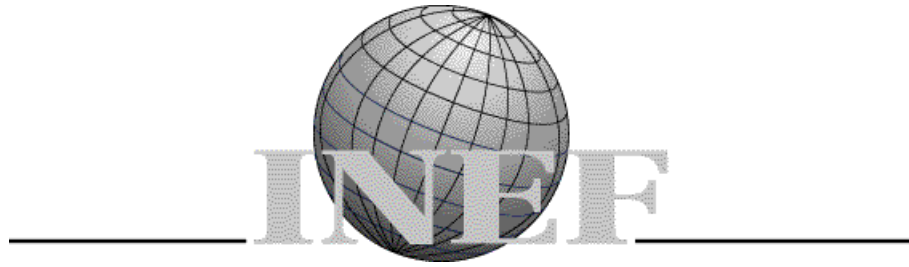
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Abstract

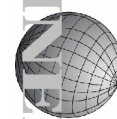
Tobias Debiel/Monika Sticht: Towards a New Profile? Development, Humanitarian and Conflict Resolution NGOs in the Age of Globalization. Duisburg: Institute for Development and Peace, University of Duisburg-Essen (INEF Report, 79/2005).

Both the significance and the profile of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have undergone a fundamental transformation in the past twenty years. In development cooperation new fields such as ecological sustainability and the promotion of democracy have emerged besides 'traditional' issues like poverty reduction. Furthermore, confronted with the realities of war and state decline, developmental NGOs pay increasing attention to crisis prevention and the resolution of conflicts; even a new type of nongovernmental organization has appeared, conflict-resolution NGOs. The change has been particularly dramatic in the area of humanitarian aid: even before the end of the Cold War some NGOs – Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) at the head of all of them – freed themselves from the "straitjacket" of only conducting humanitarian operations with the permission of the (often illegitimate) local government; meanwhile the concept of sovereignty has been substantially redefined. NGOs, however, also conformed to the imperatives of globalization and commercialization, and formed oligopolies on the market for humanitarian aid. At the same time, they are also confronted with their own "powerlessness" in conflict zones: actors of violence and power-holders successfully attempt to instrumentalize humanitarian aid for their own purposes, and western military forces threaten the independence of humanitarian work by demanding subordination to political and strategic goals.

Must we, at the beginning of the 21st century, bid farewell to the conventional image of unselfish, flexible and diverse nongovernmental actors which blossom freely like flowers? What criteria exist to assess the success of NGOs involved in development policy, humanitarian aid and the resolution of conflict? This study presents empirical data and illustrates it using concrete examples. It explains above all which basic principles, codes of conduct and instruments of self-assessment and self-control NGOs develop in order to safeguard and improve the impartiality, credibility, transparency and effectiveness of their work.

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Introduction*

The age of globalization and the end of the Cold War have dramatically heightened and altered the role played by private actors for the fields of development policy, disaster relief¹, and conflict resolution.

Some new themes – including the issues of ecological sustainability, promotion of democracy, or global structural policy – have been placed on the agenda. These have been added to the project- and program-based work engaged in by development NGOs², which has in the main centered on the "classic" fields of poverty reduction, healthcare provision, promotion of the rural population, or education (Eberlei 2002: 24; Hermle 2001: 16). But one of the main reasons for the growing influence of NGOs has been the erosion of state authority in crisis countries of the South. And not least, NGOs are more and more forced to work under the conditions of "fragile peace", or indeed of ongoing violent conflict.

* The original version of this paper (Entwicklungspolitik, Katastrophenhilfe und Konfliktbearbeitung: NGOs zwischen neuen Herausforderungen und schwieriger Profilsuche) appeared in: Achim Brunnengräber/Ansgar Klein/Heike Walk 2005: NGOs im Prozess der Globalisierung. Mächtige Zwerge – umstrittene Riesen. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. We thank the federal Agency for Civic Education for the permission to publish an English version of the article.

1 The terms "humanitarian relief," "disaster relief," and "emergency aid" are used synonymously in the present paper.

2 The English term NGO (nongovernmental organization) is used for the most part in the German-language discourse; see Holtz 1997: 13; Altwater/Brunnengräber 2002: 8.

The growing importance and transformation of development NGOs cast a new light on some important basic issues: How independent of government funding and influence are these NGOs in the actual work they do? How are NGOs responding to the commercialization pressure exerted by the market for donations and the need to build national and transnational networks? How, finally, must we assess the effectiveness, legitimacy, and transparency of development, humanitarian-aid, and peace NGOs? These questions play a key role for humanitarian work: in the first half of the 1990s NGOs saw themselves confronted in entirely new ways with "complex emergencies". To this extent disaster relief has become a growing important field of activity. Worldwide, NGOs like CARE international Caritas international, etc. provide a sizable contribution in this field (Reinhardt 2000). At the same time, NGOs are faced not only with substantial coordination problems but with moral dilemmas as well: Does short-term emergency aid contribute in the medium to long term to sustaining structures of force and violence? How are relations with the military to be defined in the framework of "humanitarian interventions"?

There is, in addition, another phenomenon closely associated with humanitarian disasters. The picture of war has changed in the course of the past 15 years: Political-ideological motives have been increasingly supplanted by war-economy-



related rationales. The conflict parties have multiplied and moved into shifting alliances. "Classic" military conflicts have lost some of their significance, and events are now dominated by guerilla war and massacres of civilians. In many cases the conflict parties are at the same time the principle war profiteers; and this of course means that they have very little incentive to seek lasting peace. The stubborn reality of the "new wars" (Münkler 2002, Kaldor 2002) has also led to a situation in which NGOs have, since the mid-1990s, turned more and more of their attention to prevention of crises and violence (Forberg/Terlinden 2002). This issue has in the meantime found its place in the "traditional" fields of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. Is this more than actionism, a merely fashionable issue? How should and can we measure the success of conflict-resolution NGOs? To what extent is it possible to integrate crisis and violence prevention into the everyday work of aid organizations active in both development assistance and humanitarian relief?

The present paper is an attempt to come up with some answers to the

questions raised above. The paper presents empirical data and illustrates them with concrete examples. The aim pursued here to shed light, from a critical distance, on some of the challenges and problems facing the work of NGOs in developing countries and – above all – countries in crisis.

We will start out by briefly defining and systematizing NGOs; we will then go on to present some of the important actors at the international and national levels. Second, we outline the ways in which the functions and the role of NGOs have changed in a situation marked by eroding statehood in the age of globalization. Chapter 3 looks into the independence and market power, the networking efforts and the legitimacy of development NGOs. Fourth, we take an in-depth look at the challenges and dilemmas faced by humanitarian relief. We then, finally, discuss how crisis prevention and conflict resolution have become established as a new field of activity and how these fields can be integrated into development cooperation and humanitarian relief.



1. Types, profiles, and players: the complex reality of NGOs active in development policy, humanitarian relief, and conflict resolution

Following Gordenker/Weiss (1996), we will define NGOs as private nonprofit organizations with the following features: they result from a voluntary association of people, are not subject to government directives, are designed to operate for a certain period of time, and have a formal character based on statutes. International NGOs (INGOs) pursue transnational goals and are characterized by their transnational operations and relations.

A brief look at the realities, though, indicates that only some NGOs meet this definition in its "pure form". Instead, many NGOs move in a gray zone between political-financial independence and more or less strong ties to governmental and multilateral donors. One phenomenon typical of day-to-day work in the fields of humanitarian assistance and development and peace policy is the great number of different interlinkages found between NGOs, the state, and politics. The actors in the NGO sector cannot be classified and typologized in terms of their distance or closeness to the state or with a view to their financial (in)dependence. Other criteria include the resource base, size, and membership of NGOs. There are, for instance, a good number of small, highly flexible, indeed even ad hoc NGOs that differ considerably in terms of their competence and reliability. There are also large, well-established

NGOs that are increasingly seeking to build networks and associations at the international level. This led to a situation in which, in the first half of the 1990s, nearly 50% of the US\$ 8-10 billion aid market was controlled by oligopolistic players – i.e. by a limited number of NGOs (Donini 1996). Some of the "global players" active in this area have included: CARE, World Vision International, Oxfam Federation, Doctors without Borders/ *Ärzte ohne Grenzen* and Save the Children. The transnational umbrella organizations that represent the interests of their member organizations and develop joint positions would include the Catholic Coopération internationale pour le développement et la solidarité (CIDSE), the Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organisations in Europe (APRODEV), and Eurostep.

In Germany too, a large share of funding (including donations) mainly benefit a small number of large NGOs.³ A study published in 2000 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicates that in Germany the 10 largest NGOs have received some 70% of all donations and other revenues provided for North-South work (Woods 2000:

³ See also BMZ 2002: 254-258.



62).⁴ As regards activity profiles, we can distinguish between an operational profile and a public policy profile. The former centers on concrete operational work on the ground. Policy-oriented NGOs, on the other hand, seek to create publicity and transparency as well as to gain influence on the agendas, the problem perceptions, and the decisions of political and social decision-makers. This may include concrete lobbying in political decision-making processes aimed at achieving certain self- or public-interest goals (lobbying), monitoring of the implementation of standards agreed upon, "advocacy" or "awareness-raising" on specific, value-oriented issues in the public and political sphere, or provision of general information for a broader public (public education).

Most non-state actors may be seen as a mixture of these two profiles. In addition to their core operational business, some larger and established NGOs like e.g. Oxfam or Doctors without Borders/ Ärzte ohne Grenzen also have sizable resources for their activities in the field of public policy. Only in this way are they able to credibly convince the public and political spheres of the goals of and the need for their work. In Germany, the church-based aid organizations

(e.g. Misereor and the Katholische Zentralstelle für Entwicklungshilfe/ Catholic Central Agency for Development Aid and the Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst/ Church Development Service and Brot für die Welt/ Bread for the World), and other organizations without either church or party affiliations (e.g. Deutsche Welthungerhilfe/ German Agro Action, Kindernothilfe/ KNH, Terre des Hommes, or medico international) are to be mentioned in particular.

A close linkage between operational and policy-oriented profiles marks the German political foundations, which play a pronounced role in Germany's development cooperation. At the same time, there are also organizations that are dedicated unequivocally to one profile. Leading public policy NGOs like Human Rights Watch or the NGO think tank International Crisis Group (ICG), for instance, do not engage in any operational work at all. In Germany a similar situation may be noted for organizations like WEED (World Economy, Ecology and Development), Germanwatch or FIAN (FoodFirst Information and Action Network).⁵

NGOs for the most part pursue specific objectives bound up with their origins and their ideological/worldview backgrounds (Karp 1998: 296). For instance, the church-based aid organizations are not only engaged in efforts aimed at poverty reduction and improvement of living conditions, they are also committed to building a just social order. The political founda-

4 These 10 NGOs are the Catholic relief organization Misereor, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Hermann Gmeiner Fund, Adveniat (founded by the German episcopal conference), Brot für die Welt/ Bread for the World, the (Protestant) Church Development Service, Welthungerhilfe/ German Agro Action, the Deutsche Komitee UNICEF/ German Committee of UNICEF, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, and the Internationale Christoffel-Blindenmission/ Christian Blind Mission International (CBM international).

5 See <<http://www.weed-online.org>>, or <<http://www.germanwatch.org>>, and <<http://www.fian.org>> or <<http://www.fian.de>>.

tions in turn, in keeping with their affiliations to political parties, see promotion of democracy as their

"core task" (Kesper 2002: 31; BMZ 2002: 256).

2. Privatization of public functions? Eroding state authority and NGOs in the age of globalization

The surge of globalization experienced during the past two decades has served to boost the significance of internationally active NGOs. Since the 1980s these NGOs have gone through a period of exponential growth, a fact documented e.g. by various issues of the "Yearbook of International Associations". UN organizations like e.g. UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), or WHO (World Health Organization) have set up a great number of different communication channels to facilitate direct cooperation with NGOs. Furthermore, NGOs are increasingly taking on operational tasks in UN-peace missions and humanitarian assistance as well as in the field of human rights and environmental protection.

We can observe a "privatization of world politics" (Brühl et al. 2001) that has permitted nonprofit organizations and private companies to expand their radiuses of action in both spatial and substantive terms. This trend cannot be traced back to any one single cause; nor did it take place overnight. The background of this development is, instead, a more complex one (Debiel/Hummel 2001). To cite a number of factors that should not be underestimated

in this context: first, the diffusion of new information technologies and mass media. This operates in favor of the transnational networking of non-state actors. Second, the end of the Cold War has accelerated tendencies toward privatization. The big powers have largely ceased to generously support their clients in the South, leaving the task of providing for crisis regions more and more up to NGOs. Third, the world conferences of the 1990s, including e.g. the UN World Conference on Environment and Development held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, constituted a substantial incentive to found new NGOs or to enlarge the radius of action of existing NGOs (Messner/Nuscheler 1996; Fues/Hamm 2001). The reform of the guidelines for NGO accreditation with the UN was also an influential factor at work here.

Last but not least, a central role is played here by the triumph of the "neoliberal project", which experienced a breakthrough in the 1980s. It is in the dismantling of the welfare state, flexibilization of the world of work, monetarist money policy, major steps toward privatization of state welfare and infrastructure services, and worldwide trade liberalization that the neoliberal approach sees the key to overcoming the slump that has beset the





dynamics of world economic growth since the 1970s. Neoliberal thinking is keyed to an attitude highly skeptical of the state, one that is reflected in the emphasis given to the principle of subsidiarity and the privatization of services otherwise provided by the state. To this extent neoliberalism has in effect promoted the development of civil society since the 1980s (Wahl 1996: 41).⁶ For one thing, NGOs have, in the sense of subsidiarity, been assigned new service functions, especially in the social and health sectors, for which the state had until then been responsible. The progressive critique of the state, concerned about the emergence of a growth-oriented, expansive, "authoritarian security state", here ran up against a neoliberal, conservative critique of the state that had set itself the task of transforming the "bureaucratic welfare state". Civil-society organizations, however, have also emerged as a movement working counter to the growing – and not least: commercial – tendency toward privatization and calling for transparency and democratic control (this goes in particular for public-policy NGOs).

Since the end of the Cold War more and more public funds have been channeled via NGOs – a trend, though, that now appears to be abating. To cite an example: the average amount of funds channeled by OECD countries via NGOs was US\$ 3.1 billion in 1985-1986 per year, US\$ 5.2 billion in 1990-1991 per year, US\$ 6.7 billion in 1999, and US\$ 7.2 billion in 2001.⁷ NGOs

have thus, since the early 1990s, become an actor second in size only to bilateral donors (Donini 1995: 426). The state's direct role in operational emergency and development assistance is growing smaller and smaller, with nonprofit organizations increasingly conducting projects and programs on behalf of countries from the North. This new role of NGOs is as noteworthy as it is ambivalent (Sogge 1996). While donor governments are increasingly outsourcing the implementation of aid programs, this by no means implies that they are leaving the political decisions up to private actors. Indeed, in many cases development organizations are more and more assuming the role of the "private arm of donors" (Ludermann 2001).

In view of the declining scope of state activities, development NGOs increasingly see themselves faced with the need to take on originally government tasks in given development countries – e.g. in health-care or education. NGOs here sometimes even undercut the authority of public agencies and governments. The International Monetary Fund has often forced this trend and the World Bank, whose structural adjustment programs have pushed for cuts in government services. And yet, precisely in crisis regions, the term "denationalization" does not adequately describe this process of privatization,

Total Net Flow of Long-Term Financial Resources from DAC Countries to Development Countries, available under: <<http://www.oecd.org/dac/html/dac-stats.htm>> (13 May 2003). The data are no longer available online in this form. Up-to-date DAC statistics on North-South financial transfers can now be found under: <<http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats>>.

⁶ See Schrader 2000: 46-47; Roth 2001: 45; Windfuhr 1999: 539.

⁷ The figures are based on: OECD/ Development Assistance Committee (DAC), The

since some such areas lack even a functioning state. Mark Duffield (1993: 140-141) succinctly referred to this development as the "internationalization of public welfare" (see also Fowler 1992). Since the 1990s the field of conflict management has ceased to be the undisputed

domain of state and multilateral actors – indeed, newly founded non-state actors have become involved in this area at a pace that can only be termed breathtaking. They have in many cases done so with state support (see Chapter 5).



3. Some reflections on the independence, market power, networking, and legitimacy of development NGOs

In science, politics, and the public sphere NGOs are seen as having some comparative advantages that, initially, served to earn them a "good reputation". The first point here is their political independence – one of the features of NGOs that has lent a high level of credibility to the arguments and activities of civil-society actors in the public eye. NGOs are seen as particularly flexible and effective: they are often able – sometime at short notice – to mobilize considerable resources, e.g. to respond rapidly to emergency situations or to provide support for victims of human rights violations. NGOs are, however, faced with organizational and financial limitations. The more they professionalize and gear their activities to efficiency criteria, and the more they develop bureaucracies of their own, the heavier may be the toll in terms of voluntary commitment and discourse on an equal footing, the sources of their strength. On the other hand, NGOs are unlikely to be able to achieve the professionalism of state bureaucracies or the efficiency of private-sector companies as long as

they remain committed to their original logic of action. Moreover, bureaucratic apparatuses necessarily develop an existence and logic of their own, not least because of their constant need of funds (Debiel/Hummel 2001).

The high level of respect originally enjoyed by NGOs – one of the factors that accompanied their boom in the first half of the 1990s – has by now been impaired somewhat; and there are more and more skeptical voices to be heard. Four central points of criticism are advanced here: NGOs, it is claimed, are not as independent as they are often claimed to be; their profile has taken a problematic turn thanks to their orientation to the media and markets for donations; their attractive diversity is increasingly giving way to hierarchically structured and largely intransparent networks; and finally, it is claimed, the developments referred to are increasingly undermining their legitimacy and transparency.



3.1 Independence at risk – NGOs as vicarious agents of the state?

As our discussion has indicated, there are some good reasons to cast doubt on the independence of NGOs. In part, nongovernmental organizations are consciously recruited, outsourced, to serve as an extension of government policy. Also, official and nongovernmental development cooperation have become closely intertwined owing to financial transfers and numerous processes of consultation as well as to the inclusion of NGOs in government delegations and a great variety of oversight and advisory bodies. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) has, particularly over the past fifteen years, increased the funds it provides to NGOs.⁸ Cooperation and consultation are part and parcel of day-to-day operations, and have become customary practice in working out development-related country and regional concepts.⁹ But does this fact imply – as noted by Ansgar Klein (2002: 3) – that nongovernmental organizations "are often no more than the vicarious agents of state interests or a policy involving privatization of development assistance and humanitarian programs"? In this case the consequence would be plain to see: both "states and private business interests are cash-

ing in on the expert competence, flexibility, effectiveness, and public esteem of NGOs" (ibid.).

In the financing of German NGOs and political foundations, the public-sector share is substantial. Not many NGOs have a broad membership base that would permit them to finance their work exclusively on the basis of membership contributions and individual donations. Many NGOs rely on outside financing by public authorities, private foundations, or other sources. In individual cases this can in effect mean that NGOs assume the role of implementing agencies of state bureaucracies or mutate into commercial service companies. This, however, deprives them of their main advantage and the base on which their public reputation rests, namely their independence. In all, though, the relationship between state bureaucracies and NGOs has tended more to be one of mutual influence. In his thoroughgoing analysis, Markus Karp (1998: 95-99) emphasizes that the BMZ expects NGOs to adapt their activities to the broad lines of its development policy. At the same time, he notes, the ministry is also interested in a semi-autonomous status for NGOs – otherwise there would be little reason to make use of them instead of the ministry's own quasi-independent implementing agencies (GTZ, KfW)¹⁰ (Karp 1998: 97).

What are the concrete figures involved? It is difficult to determine the "public-sector share" of NGOs active in development policy and

⁸ See BMZ 2002: 255, 375. For instance, in 2002 NGOs were given a total of EUR 459 million for their work. This amounts to roughly 10% of the ministry's overall budget expenditures.

⁹ See BMZ 2002: 253-255; Eberlei 2002: 25-26.

¹⁰ GTZ = Deutsche Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit/German Agency for Technical Cooperation; KfW = Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (German Financial Cooperation).

cooperation, since this would require both a comparative tabulation of the bi- and multilateral public subsidies they receive and a good measure of transparency concerning the internal resources and the donations of all NGOs. Against this background we can do no more than seek to compile some approximate relative figures and distill trends from them. One indicator in the German context is the public bilateral subsidies (net disbursements) provided to NGOs under Section 23 of the BMZ's budget. These figures can then be set in relation to the funds that NGOs raise from their own resources and from donations.¹¹ The percentage of public subsidies based on these criteria never exceeded 50% of their overall revenues during the period extending from 1974 to 1987. In this period the figure ranged between 37.7% (1985) and 46.5% (1987). In the five years that followed, the share of funds provided to NGOs by the BMZ exceeded their own resources and donations, and continued to rise. 1992 was the high point for the share of public-sector subsidies provided to NGOs as a percentage of their total revenues; the figure for this year was 64.7%. In 1993 this public-sector share declined to 56.9%, while the funds raised by NGOs themselves were at the same time on the increase. In the years between 1994 and 1997 NGOs financed some 50% of their activities on the basis of public subsidies, and from 1998 to 2000 the funds they received from section 23

continued to decline from 46.2% to 42.7% of their own revenues.

Between 1998 and 2000, as well as in the period up to 1987, the NGOs active in development policy and development cooperation thus funded their operations more from own resources and donations than from government subsidies. Furthermore, the donation revenues of NGOs were not subject to any extraordinary fluctuations in the 1990s. In other words, averaged over the years, the figures do not indicate any dominance of BMZ-funding in the revenues of NGOs. In just about every year considered, though, the figure has been over 40%, a clear indication that state subsidies for NGOs have been and are sizable and relevant. It is above all the years 1990 and 1993 that jump to the eye, with public subsidies accounting for some 60% as per section 23 of overall NGO revenues. A percentage share of this level is without any doubt often bound up with state influence in the work of NGOs, e.g. as regards their orientation to the BMZ's priorities and criteria.¹² Still, these figures should, in the end, not be overestimated: the major share of these public subsidies goes to the German political foundations. In the year 2000, for instance, the German federal government provided these foundations with 37.9% of the public-sector support funds they received; the figure for church-based organizations was 35.9%. All of these groups are self-assured actors with an identity and history



¹¹ The following data are based primarily on the table "Bilateral public subsidies (net disbursements to nongovernmental organizations from Section 23 (BMZ)", in: BMZ 2002: 375. These data cover the period from 1965-2000.

¹² For comparison: in 1993 in the OECD framework the share of nonpublic subsidies for NGOs averaged 58%, while in the same year the public-sector share amounted to 42% (Woods 2000: 15-17).



of their own, and none of them is particularly likely to dance to the tune of state financiers.

There is a broad spectrum of dependence and independence respectively on state funds. In 1997 several NGOs financed their activities wholly without public-sector subsidies; they include e.g. Cap Anamur and Ärzte ohne Grenzen/Doctors without Borders. Others relied on a funding mix. Medico international, for instance, financed its activities half from public-sector subsidies and half from other funds. An organization like HELP, on the other hand, funded 92.5% of its costs from public-sector funds and was thus just about completely dependent on public-sector subsidies (Deutscher Bundestag: 110). At the same time, dependence versus independence is not something that is indicated solely (and perhaps not even primarily) by funding structures. Despite its noteworthy share of state subsidies, medico international, for instance, enjoys great public respect for its statements and campaigns, which may well deal critically with government policy. Dependence is thus also a matter of an organization's credibility and – hard-worked-for – standing in the public eye, factors that can make an organization less susceptible to state leverage. In addition, development ministries like the BMZ may be forced to rely on NGOs to strengthen their own hand vis-à-vis other ministries. NGOs that, in this context, prove able to generate public support are, in a certain sense, natural allies that are difficult to instrumentalize for other purposes. Finally, it is essential to analyze how the relationship between NGOs and donors is anchored in different political cultures. In Scan-

dinavia, for instance, NGOs are more closely involved in the policy-making process than they are in Germany. Here the high share of public funds is not so much a sign of political independence as it is a reflection of a close mutual relationship.

3.2 Commercialized, media-minded development agencies?

The second point of criticism goes, in a certain sense, in the opposite direction: The more NGOs concentrate on acquiring donations and new members, the more they are forced to adapt to the laws of the market and the media world. This entails a risk that such organizations may mutate more and more into commercialized development agencies, losing sight of their origins and instead narrowing their focus down on the impacts of public relations. To cite an example: this charge of commercialization was pointedly formulated by Sylvie Brunel, former president of Action Contre la Faim, as follows:

“I have the feeling that some NGOs use the argument of suffering to justify their existence and increase their market share. To keep going becomes their main reason for being and their real 'beneficiaries' their nomenklatura. Many NGOs are only associations by virtue of their fiscal statutes and the fact that they don't give out dividends. But their marketing practices distance them from their true objectives and make them real businesses.”¹³

13 Interview with Sylvie Brunel, former president of Action Contre la Faim, by Jean-Dominique Merchet, in: Libération, March 7, 2002, (“Humanitarian Organizations Have

In fact, NGOs are – not unlike political parties – coming, in qualitatively new ways, to be reliant on the media, not only as a means of getting their message to the public but just as much with an eye to acquiring resources. This has implications for their practical work, as Thomas Gebauer (2001: 113) aptly emphasizes: "The doubtful consequences of the mass-media-mindedness of NGOs and their work include a tendency toward a reversal of the relationship between ends and means and a restriction of their activities to issues that can be 'sold' in and through the media." Since NGOs are forced to rely on an unbroken flow of donations to fund their project and program work as well as to cover their own operating costs, they have no choice but to adapt to the functional mechanisms of the media (Gebauer 2001: 113-114; Roth 2001: 45-46). True, this is a reciprocal relationship: the media also depend on NGOs – for one thing, because the latter know something about launching issues and giving them a slant congenial to the media; for another because in cases of humanitarian disaster NGOs often have transportation and infrastructure networks that enable reporters to capture and deliver "good image material".

This growing media-mindedness is encouraging NGOs to shed their original profile and instead to focus on events with high public visibility (e.g. the conflicts and wars in Somalia, Rwanda, and Iraq). Without an up-to-date media image NGOs have trouble sustaining their inflows of public and private funds.

Become Businesses"), via Internet: <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/role/globdem/credib/2002/0307bus.htm>> (22 July 2005).

This trend takes on a problematic hue when NGOs focus on generating make-believe world and cut their grass-roots at the local level, losing sight of both the interests of their social base and their contributions to "helping people to help themselves" (Schrader 2000: 112).

3.3 Between self-organization and oligopolization: umbrella organizations, networks, and BINGOs

In the 1990s BINGOs (big NGOs) like CARE, Caritas international, or medico international came to play an increasingly important role. Furthermore, NGOs increasingly organized in national and transnational associations and networks.¹⁴ The year 1995, for instance, saw the emergence in Germany of VENRO, der Verband Entwicklungspolitik deutscher Nichtregierungsorganisationen e.V./"the Association of German Development Non-governmental Organisations", a federation of some 100 NGOs, which also include some regional NGO networks with local initiatives (VENRO 2003; Eberlei 2002: 26-27; Reinhardt 2002: 382). At the European level, too, there are networks that have their eye on the European Union as a contact partner. On January 30th, 2003, for instance, Europe was witness to the birth of a new associa-

¹⁴ Generally speaking, one distinguishing feature of NGO associations versus networks is that the former represent their member organizations, while networks tend more to be loose associations that focus their work e.g. on achieving progress on specific individual issues.





tion of European NGOs called CONCORD.¹⁵

The goal pursued in forming NGO networks and associations is to give more effective shape to lobbying and advocacy activities by assuming the function of mediators between different levels (local, national, international) and different actors (states, international organizations, other NGOs). Networks can in this way contribute to improving the internal coordination of NGOs, enabling NGOs to appear jointly before decision-makers and international agencies, and facilitating the definition of joint codes of conduct (Altvater/Brunnengräber 2002: 9).

However, NGO associations are also concerned with carving up and controlling the donation market. Finally, the later 1980s/early 1990s saw the emergence of a regular market in which NGOs competed for funds that were becoming increasingly scarce. Apart from the above-mentioned aims and possibilities of NGO associations, the latter also have advantages as far as their presence in the media and their media reach are concerned. They furthermore facilitate outflows of government funds in that government authorities can now

fall back on a number of already consolidated non-state contact partners with whom they have little trouble reaching agreements on uniform rules and procedures. This has, especially in countries of the South, led to a subcontracting culture in which NGO associations channel funds to intermediate and local NGOs (Wegner 1994: 341-342). This gives rise, practically automatically, to control problems. In other words, there is a real danger here that NGO associations may take on hierarchical structures and be controlled by a small number of organizations or persons. This would mean in effect that their egalitarian structures would fall victim to structures of dominance. Moreover – and in analogy to the state level – transparency presents more of a problem, the more distant organizations of a certain kind become from their memberships and a critical public. This is at times a particularly striking feature of globally organized networks, which are as a rule marked by an overt North-South differential as regards influence, power, resources, staff, and the power to define issues (Gebauer 2001: 103-104; Roth 2001: 40-41).

Apart from creating networks and organizations designed for the medium to long term, NGOs have also, with considerable success, joined forces to launch campaigns geared to highly specific goals of a short- to medium-term nature. Such campaigns link public relations, education, mobilization, and lobbying work, bringing together under one keynote a great variety of actors that, faced with issues of a different nature, would be unlikely to reach consensus. At the same time, NGOs are increasingly trans-

15 See E+Z (Entwicklung + Zusammenarbeit), (March 2003), vol. 3, p. 94; also: <<http://www.eu-platform.at>>. CONCORD stands for European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development; it is the legal successor to the Liaison Committees of Development NGOs (CLONG). CONCORD represents some 1.200 NGOs, some of them already represented by a great variety of other European NGO associations like CIDSE or APRODEV, while others, like terre des hommes and Caritas Europa, are members of CONCORD. See also <<http://www.concordeurope.org>>.

nationally organized. They are in this way responding to a need resulting from globalization, namely the need involved in efforts to gain political influence and to go beyond their own national government and address decision-makers and the public in other countries.

3.4 Legitimacy, transparency, and the key resource of credibility

This brings us to the fourth point of criticism: problematic legitimacy. The more influential they become, the greater the pressure faced by NGOs to justify their actions; the reason for this is of course that the existence and influence of NGOs is not legitimized by general elections (Klein 2002: 4). The only means that NGOs have to compensate, at least in part, for this deficit is internal democratic structures and strict adherence to principles like accountability, equality, and transparency (Edwards et al. 1999). These principles – precisely under the conditions posed by transnational networking – are increasingly difficult to realize. In a growingly globalized world NGOs are thus faced with problems similar to those besetting supra- and international organizations or transnational corporations, which likewise are marked by substantial deficits in legitimacy (Klein 2002: 4; Altvater/Brunnengräber 2002: 12). NGOs do have one advantage, though: if they, in their role as sensors and voices of society, succeed in monitoring state actors and legitimized power-holders and/or providing them with guidance in coming to decisions (Habermas 2001: 356-357), they win a "bonus" in the eyes of the public. The fact

that state and multilateral actors are often not flexible enough to respond adequately to new challenges gives rise to unoccupied spaces in which privately organized world politics may prove more effective and issue-oriented than a world politics based solely on the classic model of the nation-state. Private actors can, in other words – despite weaknesses in their internal makeup – gain profile and legitimacy by contributing, at the global level, to the realization of basic democratic norms and fair procedures (input legitimacy) and effective and equitable provision of services (output legitimacy) (Scharpf 1998).

They must, however, ensure that their own weaknesses do not serve to undercut their key resource of "credibility". This credibility is not to be had without a certain minimum level of transparency. One factor that is proving to be increasingly problematic is that this transparency cannot be seen as a general trademark of the work of NGOs. Some interesting pointers are provided by a pilot study conducted by "One World Trust (OWT)" (2002/2003) which looked in to the accountability of seven international NGOs (Kovach et al. 2003): amnesty international (ai), CARE international, the International Chamber of Commerce/ Internationale Handelskammer (ICC), the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Oxfam International, and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Only some of these organizations are of interest in terms of the focus of the present report; still, the ten-





dencies revealed by the study are quite instructive.

In the first place, OWT sought to measure the extent to which members of the NGOs under study are able to control their internal administrative and power structures. Second, the study looked into the issue of access to information, restricting its scope, though, to the online information services provided by these NGOs – a factor that, while certainly relevant, is limited in its value as evidence (Kovach et al. 2003). What are the most important results of the study? With the exception of amnesty international, the NGOs under study made available only very limited amounts of information on internal decision processes. As far as control of membership is concerned, amnesty international has the highest number of points (100). On the other hand, among the NGOs analyzed, CARE international has the lowest ranking on “access to online information”. For instance, hardly any information on CARE international’s programs can be found on the Internet. Furthermore, these organizations were restrictive in making important information available to the public – for instance on the uses to which donations are put and the extent to which goals have been achieved. The picture that emerges is somewhat differentiated, though: while two organizations – namely Oxfam International and the IFRC – have provided, in their annual reports, detailed in-

formation on their finances, the others have not. Hardly any of them provide online information on their evaluations of programs and projects; a positive exception in this regard is the IFRC.

Neither lack of any real control and limited transparency as regards finances and internal decision structures nor the success nor lack of success of an organization’s work are features that are restricted to the NGOs mentioned here. Eberlei (2002: 27) comes up with similar results for German NGOs, at least as far as their work abroad is concerned: “While large-scale NGOs have in the meantime developed evaluation instruments, they do not divulge their problems or engage in a broad, transparent discussion of the chances and limits, the successes and failures, of NGO work.”

Despite all need for reform, however, one thing should not be neglected. Unlike governments, NGOs lack the power to take decisions binding on the public. Nor do they – with some exceptions – have the financial resources and the political clout and lobbying power available to large corporations. They are, instead, voices in the political process. And they therefore continue to need transparency and legitimacy, even though the standards used to gauge them cannot be the same as those used to measure e.g. governments.



4. NGOs and the growing number of humanitarian disasters: challenges, dilemmas, and attempts to come up with solution

There are few reliable sources on the number and in particular the financial status of the NGOs involved in disaster relief (Reinhardt 2002: 378-379), although there are figures available that serve to corroborate evident trends. It is, for instance, safe to assume that the number of humanitarian NGOs active and their financial endowments have grown dramatically. While in the 1960s the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) had only some ten to twenty non-state partners for its implementation work, the figure had grown to several hundred in the 1990s. The European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) alone currently has framework agreements with some 180 NGOs. The amount of subsidies provided by ECHO to European humanitarian relief NGOs is impressive. In the mid-1990s their subsidy share as a percentage of total revenues was 40%, in 2000 the figure had increased to roughly 64% (Randal/German 2002: 25; Brasset/Tiberghien 2002: 58).¹⁶ At the end of the 1990s bilateral donors proceeded on the assumption that at least one quarter of their humanitarian funds were transacted via

NGOs; and the figure was even higher in some countries, e.g. in Denmark, France, the US, and the UK (Randel/German 2002: 24-25).

This rapid numerical growth should, however, not be allowed to obscure the fact that there are a limited number of dominant NGOs. UNHCR has noted in 1997, for instance, that roughly 75% of the public funds committed in emergency situations go to some 20 European and North American NGOs (Macrae 2002b: 15). The most important players and networks include Doctors without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Médecins du Monde (MDM), Action Contre la Faim (ACF), and Oxfam. Another piece of evidence: in 2000, in the US five organizations accounted for 30% of government expenditures in this area; these were CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Save the Children, and World Vision (Stoddard 2002: 48). With the exception of World Vision and IRC, these organizations are dependent on government support for roughly half of their revenues – a fact, which may of course not be without influence on their operational policies, and the way they are perceived by the public (see Table 1).

¹⁶ For comparison: the share of other international NGOs in EU humanitarian aid contracts was only 3.5% in 1999, the share of local NGOs was no more than 0.3% (Brasset/Tiberghien 2002: 58).



Table 1: US NGO funding sources (2000, US-\$)

	Total revenue/ support	US government support*	US gov't sup- port as % of total revenue	Other governments and IOs	Private contributions, revenue and in-kind
CARE	446.273.000	240.905.000	54%	121.486.000	83.499.000
CRS	382.865.000	237.227.000	62%	18.022.000	127.616.000
IRC	157.448.000	57.933.000	37%	61.727.000	37.788.000
SAVE	143.624.709	67.852.976	47%	8.673.635	67.098.098
WV	469.114.000	75.588.000	16%	11.330.000	382.196.000

Source: Stoddard 2002: 48, Table 3, based on USAID 2001 (VolAg Report 2000)

Note: * Includes food donations and freight costs in the framework of Public Law 480 (PL 480), which covers a "Food for Peace Non-Emergency Program"

The nominal expenditures of the OECD countries for emergency relief increased tenfold from the early 1980s to the early 1990s. In the 1990s the amounts of humanitarian aid provided roughly doubled. In its January 2003 report "Uncertain Power: the Changing Role of Donors in Humanitarian Action," the highly reputed Overseas Development Institute (ODI) assumed that expenditures in this area had increased from US-\$ 2.1 billion, to US-\$ 5.9 billion (in 1999 prices) (Macrae 2002b: 11).¹⁷ The share of humanitarian aid as a percentage of ODA increased accordingly: "In 1989, relief aid accounted for less than 5% of ODA. By 1999, this had doubled, to 10.1% and stood at 10.5% in 2000" (Macrae 2002b: 11).

The growing importance of humanitarian NGOs as well as of disaster relief, initially gave rise to coordination problems and raised

the question of codes of conduct. At a more fundamental level, though, the traditional self-perception of humanitarian organizations has been under discussion since the 1980s: Is it still possible, under the conditions of persistent structures marked by violence and military intervention, to continue to adhere to the model of impartial and neutral aid?

4.1 Coordination and codes of conduct

Coordination among aid organizations constitutes a structural problem. This goes for governmental, multilateral, and nongovernmental actors as well as the relations between them. As a rule, approaches aimed at solving this problem focus on the one hand on intensified vertical coordination. This hierarchic approach may boost efficiency in the short term, but it entails a risk of impairing the motivation, flexibility, and independence of – in particular – small actors. Moreover, there are approaches involving horizontal coordination that tend to be popular among NGOs, though they may of course pose problems

17 On the whole, be it said, official development assistance (ODA) declined in the 1990s. Between 1974 and 1992 aid funding grew constantly, finally reaching a level of US-\$ 62 billion. By 2000, though, it had again declined by some 12% to US-\$ 55 billion (see Macrae 2002a: 11).



as far as reliability and practicability are concerned. Improved coordination is without doubt essential to the coherence and efficiency of humanitarian work, although it is also important to consider, on a case-by-case basis, both what tasks should be coordinated in view of the competence problems and transaction costs involved and at what level it is most reasonable to seek to improve coordination. A recommendation which Margaret J. Anstee developed for Angola, but which is more general in character, may serve as a pointer here: "Coordination should be decentralised as far as possible from headquarters to field and thence, if feasible, to the local level, with clear-cut definitions of responsibilities and limitations of authority at each level." (Anstee 1996: 175-176)

In view of numerous problems encountered on the ground, humanitarian NGOs launched a great number of initiatives aimed at defining codes of conduct. Of particular significance in this context is a Code of Conduct in Disaster Relief, which was adopted in mid-1994 by eight nongovernmental humanitarian agencies (NGHAs), including the International Committee of the Red Cross/ Internationales Komitee vom Roten Kreuz (ICRC), for their work in the field of disaster relief.¹⁸ The "Code of Conduct in Disaster Relief for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs" defines standards of conduct aimed at ensuring the independence and effectiveness of

relief operations. The document contains ten codifications and three annexes, which, however, are not subject to any verification or enforcement mechanisms (Bennett 1996: 138-139). Its most important principles may be summed up, the ICRC's words, as follows:

- the humanitarian imperative comes first; aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind;
- aid priorities are evaluated on the basis of need alone; aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint;
- NGOs shall endeavour not to act as instrument of government foreign policy; NGOs shall respect culture and custom;
- NGOs shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities;
- ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid;
- relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs;
- NGOs shall be accountable to both beneficiaries and donors.¹⁹

In Germany, furthermore, the Foreign Office's "Humanitarian Aid Coordinating Committee" has agreed on a set of basic rules for

¹⁸ ODI 1994; in July 2004 the Code of Conduct was signed by 300 NGOs. The list of these NGOs can be found under: <http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_disaters.pl?codeconduct_signatories.pdf> (19 July 2004).

¹⁹ See International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (ed.), Code of Conduct, available under: <<http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/>> (19 July 2004).



humanitarian aid.²⁰ The Coordinating Committee – initially a discussion group – was set up on April 9, 1992. Its realization that additional coordination was called for stems from the experiences made in providing humanitarian aid to the Kurds in the northern Iraq after the Second Gulf War. The wave of refugees from Rwanda in 1994 then made it clear that further coordination and a certain level of formalization were called for; and this led, on October 25, 1994, to the formal establishment of the Humanitarian Aid Coordinating Committee. The Committee is not a central control instrument but a body designed to serve the purpose of coordination. Its members include 19 German NGOs, VENRO, the Foreign Office, and other relevant federal ministries (including the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development [BMZ], the Federal Ministry of the Interior [Bundesministerium des Innern, BMI], and the Federal Ministry of Defense [Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, BMVG]).

4.2 Dilemmas and politicization of humanitarian aid

Humanitarian disasters are not a specific feature of the era following the end of the Cold War. However, the situation has changed qualitatively, in particular in the past two decades: people in emergency situations have become more vulnerable. This is bound up in par-

ticular with the fact that today the interplay between economic, ecological, and political crisis factors, the combination of famine, violence, and expulsion has made disasters more complex and possible reactions to them more difficult. The erosion of state structures in numerous countries of the South and the growing tendency of the donor community to privatize relief work has induced NGOs to take on new tasks. Some NGOs, like CARE international, Oxfam, or Caritas international even have budgets earmarked specifically for refugee relief in war- and crisis-torn regions which, in this particular area, are larger than those of UN organizations (Reinhardt 2000: 784-785; Roth 2001: 45). Faced with this background, established NGOs have been forced to rethink and adapt their operational procedures. Indeed, some new NGOs have even been set up in response to these specific challenges (Edwards et al. 1999).

Some of the advantages of NGOs in disaster relief may be sought in the fact that they have extensive experience and expertise on the ground. Furthermore, they are as a rule more flexible than large international organizations like the United Nations and able to intervene in crisis areas without being hobbled by time-consuming internal bureaucratic encumbrances (Karp 1998: 101-102, 106). Like national and multilateral agencies, however, NGOs are also faced with substantial problems and dilemmas: not only in the multi- and bilateral sector but for NGOs as well, it is seldom possible to coordinate efforts with long-term development aims. There is a risk here that disaster relief may in this

²⁰ See Auswärtiges Amt, Die Zwölf Grundregeln der Humanitären Hilfe, available under: <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/www/de/aussenpolitik/humanitaere_hilfe/grundregeln.html> (22 July 2005).

way be reduced to the level of charity for the losers of globalization, who, thanks to political and economic development blockades, find themselves on the margins of the world system. In addition, relief services tend to become an integral component of civil-war economies. They contribute to bringing about substantial changes in economic and currency relations, a situation from which, in particular, politically and economically strong groups of society tend to profit (Duffield 1994: 59-63; de Waal/Omaar 1996: 209-213). While massive inflows of food as well as large grain purchases in neighboring countries often alleviate the need of people in threatened regions, these practices likewise lead to marked distortions of local power structures. The outcome is speculative profits for dealers, commercial farmers, and transportation companies. Those in political power are as a rule good at profiting from outside support. One example is "Operation Lifeline Sudan", which was organized under the auspices of UNICEF and the World Food Programme/ Welternährungsprogramm (WFP) as a large-scale relief action for people affected by war and hunger. The warring parties managed to instrumentalize part of this aid for their own purposes. In 1989 the Sudanese government is even reported to have funded roughly half of its military budget from the operation. This was facilitated by an artificially undervalued currency that made it possible to skim off substantial sums at an exchange rate that brought losses for the donors and gains for the Sudanese government (Debiel 1996).

Finally, it is often claimed that humanitarian aid organizations misuse the media to boost their donation revenues by generating a certain compassion effect. This close link between fundraising and reporting in the media obviously has the effect of favouring spectacular or high profile projects. There is also a risk here that the so-called "CNN effect" will direct public attention, in a more or less irrational way, to certain regions, while others are simply "forgotten".²¹ The World Disaster Report (2003) recently pointed to the ethical dilemmas involved here. In presenting the report, Eva von Oelreich, director of Disaster Preparedness and Policy with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, pointed out that US-\$ 1.7 billion was mobilized for humanitarian relief measures within days after the war in Iraq came to an end; at the same time, however, the UN lacked US-\$ 1 billion which it needed, and which it had called for in detailed appeals, to alleviate the plight of 40 million people in 22 African countries. Donors and relief agencies are quite evidently turning their attention to disasters with a high political profile; chronic emergencies are largely ignored.²² One of the real dangers of this short-term focus on "glaring misery" is that it may lead the public to ignore the deep-seated causes of war and underdevelopment and, in the end, simply to acquiesce in

21 See Roth 2001: 45-46; Gabbier 2001: 113-114; Cater 2002.

22 Another important factor here is the fight against transnational terrorism, which is increasingly impacting on the way in which relief funds are channeled. See IRIN, 18 July 2003 ("World Disaster Report highlights ethical dilemma").





the collapse of many societies in the impoverished South. And this, be it said, stands in contradiction to an important principle of the Code of Conduct. According to it, disaster victims must be acknowledged in information, public relations, and advertising measures as "dignified human beings, not hopeless objects".

4.3 Humanitarian aid and the military

Up to the 1980s the humanitarian aid provided by NGOs played a more or less subordinate role. It was often linked to programs conducted by a host country with bi- and multilateral support. Humanitarian NGOs seldom risked a confrontation with the government of a host country. If they witnessed human rights violations, this was as a rule not made public. Alex de Waal and Rakiya Omaar once referred to this as "humanitarianism in a straightjacket" (deWaal/Omaar 1996: 205, 223). One important exception was Doctors Without Borders (MSF), a relief organization founded in 1968 by Bernard Kouchner. In view of the war in Biafra (war of secession in Nigeria, 1967-70) MSF questioned the legitimacy and effectiveness of two basic principles that were and are constitutive for the world of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and at that time defined the work of just about all NGOs: the practice of conditioning the supply of relief services on the consent of the warring parties and refraining from making any public statements on circumstances on the ground. Some two years later the debate was advanced another step by the famines that took place in

Tigray in 1984/85 and in Eritrea in 1987/88, and in which the Ethiopian government played a major role. In 1987 a group of prominent intellectuals and humanitarian workers around Kouchner formulated a widely noted "right to intervention" (*droit d'ingérence*) that was conceived as a means of being able to provide humanitarian aid even against the will of the governments concerned (Minear/Weiss 1995: 98). The discussion over the ongoing shift in state sovereignty intensified in the first half of the 1990s. This shift was influenced by an intensified "humanitarian intervention" on the part of NGOs and a drastically altered intervention practice on the part of multilateral and state actors. The United Nations experienced a wave of new-type interventionism that de facto placed a question mark over the sovereignty of individual states, and whose frame of reference came more and more to be violation of human rights and minimum humanitarian standards (Debiel/Nuscheler 1996).

We can look at it from whatever angle we like: humanitarian aid has become "politicized": to begin with, humanitarian action has impacts on power structures and violence-based economies in crisis regions – a side effect that can be mitigated, but not wholly prevented. Besides, again and again NGOs themselves have called, in the name of the "humanitarian imperative", for military intervention. This was the case in the early 1990s in Somalia and Rwanda no less than it was in the late 1990s in the events leading up to the war in Kosovo. The cases of Somalia and Kosovo in particular led to a rift right through the NGO community, and sometimes even straight through individual organizations. The question at issue

zations. The question at issue was and is the traditional self-perception of humanitarian work.

The war in Iraq has once again re-kindled the debate over the dilemmas of humanitarian aid and the relations between aid organizations and the military. The first half of the 1990s had already experienced an intensive scholarly controversy on this issue (Debiel/Nuscheler 1996); the discussion subsequently subsided, in order then, after the 1999 war in Kosovo, to flare up again. At the NGO level in Germany, VENRO has since then addressed itself intensively to this issue complex, pointing at many meetings as well as in numerous publications and position papers to the dangers that threaten the independence of humanitarian aid (VENRO 1999; 2000; 2003; Wenzel 1999).

On the occasion of the Kosovo war, for instance, a VENRO discussion paper entitled "Humanitarian aid for reasons of state?" (1999: 2) noted critically that the term "humanitarian" was being co-opted for military interventions, calling into question the impartiality of humanitarian aid (see also Eberwein et al. 1999). Against this background VENRO and other associations of NGOs reacted critically to the Brahimi Report (1999), which called for an integration of humanitarian activities with UN peace operations under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. VENRO is also cautious in its assessment of some new concepts that were developed by NATO under the header of "Civil-Military Cooperation" (CIMIC) and have since been concretized and further developed by the German

Bundeswehr (VENRO 2003: 8-9). CIMIC expands the military's spectrum of tasks into the civil and – in particular – humanitarian sector and also aims to tie non-state activities more closely to operational military planning. One especially problematic aspect of this is that humanitarian aid is losing the autonomous role it once had and are gradually becoming an integral component of military operations – not least as a means of boosting the acceptance of the military among the population on the ground.

Generally, NGO associations like VENRO (but also many independent observers) take a skeptical view of the sustainability of humanitarian aid provided by military actors. For VENRO, the Bundeswehr's 1993 Somalia mission "illustrates that a medical station set up in a militarily efficient manner or a technologically perfect well has a chance of surviving only as long as there are troops there on the ground" (VENRO 1999: 4). Similarly, the support provided by the Bundeswehr in building refugee camps in Macedonia in 1999 is acknowledged but regarded as suboptimal, since local organizations could have done the same work together with NGOs and refugees.

"As far as has been regularly reported, NGOs use armed protection on a regular basis in just four of the approximately 55 conflict-affected countries in which they are working, namely northern Iraq, Somalia, Russia (Ingushetia/Chechnya) and northern Kenya. Armed forces may also be used on a case-by-case basis, for example at border areas, for instance in Rwanda. NGOs are not drawing on protection from inter-





national peacekeepers where there are mandated UN operations, such as in East Timor, Ethiopia/Eritrea or Sierra Leone. Nor are they using protection from NATO-led forces in the Balkans. In some cases, NGOs are using private security companies to provide protection. This has been the case in Sierra Leone, where the state sub-contracted security services to private companies." (Macrae 2002b: 9)

The US' policy in the war in Iraq has further intensified the debate on the militarization and instrumentalization of humanitarian aid. The reason is that in connection with "Operation Iraqi Freedom" the US defense ministry has sought, "both in the combat and the post-combat phase, to 'embed' humanitarian aid in the US military strategy" (VENRO 2003). And in March of 2002 medico international held a conference in Frankfurt/Main called "Power and powerlessness of aid" to discuss these issues. Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel, director of the Social Service Agency of the EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany), speaking of the Code of Conduct adopted in 1994, warned that humanitarian aid was increasingly in danger of becoming a hostage or a plaything of politics. Since the Balkan wars at the latest, she noted, the humanitarian argument has served as a justification for military intervention, with humanitarian organizations serving to heal the wounds of war and indeed sometimes even – as the US administration recently bluntly demanded during the war in Iraq – as a vehicle for winning the sympathies of the population for intervening or occupying troops. NGOs, she went on, may well be tempted in such cases to accede to such demands or blan-

dishments. On the one hand, she noted, this could mean funds in abundance from governments and multilateral organizations; and on the other hand there is hardly a humanitarian organization active today that can "afford" not to be involved in a high-profile crisis associated with military intervention. After all, the aid market is a highly competitive one, and aid is becoming an instrument of closely interlinked business, media, and political interests.

A study by Wolf-Dieter Eberwein and Peter Runge arrives at similar results. The authors note that the independence of humanitarian aid is increasingly faced with the threat of being instrumentalized by the state (Eberwein/Runge 2002). Afghanistan is another recent example. Here aid supplies dropped in were not targeted in accordance with the dictates of needs-oriented efficiency; they served the purpose of polishing the image of an anti-terror coalition that had been tarnished by massive bombing attacks and of winning the sympathies of the Afghan population by conducting something on the order of a naive "hearts-and-minds" operation (VENRO 2003: 13; Macrae 2002b: 8). Furthermore, Afghanistan is currently being used as a testbed for experiments with a new concept, which intertwines military objectives with humanitarian considerations. "Provincial reconstructions teams" (PRTs) made up of military and civilian personnel are working there to rebuild infrastructure (e.g. schools, wells, health centers). The intention is to have these PRTs serve as points of reference for NGOs and international organizations (VENRO 2003: 13).

Under such conditions NGOs are likely to find themselves in the dilemma of either having to cooperate in alleviating a crisis, even if this means compromising their own impartiality, or remaining on the sidelines. In the US in particular NGOs are faced with growing pressure to act in the capacity of instruments of the administration. For instance, at a forum convened

by InterAction – a network of relief and development NGOs (including CARE and Oxfam America – Andrew Natsios, the head of USAID (US Agency for International Development), is reported to have explicitly referred to NGOs and private contractors receiving US government funds as an extended arm of the US administration (Beattie 2003).



5. Crisis prevention and crisis resolution: new challenges posed by war and state failure

In the past decade and a half NGOs have not only become increasingly involved in disaster relief; the number of NGOs active in the field of crisis prevention and crisis resolution – so-called conflict-resolution NGOs – has risen at the same time. Both of these developments can be seen in one context: most observers have come to the realization that wars and violence threaten to destroy the fruits of years of successful development cooperation and that preventive measures are therefore called for (Terlinden 2002: 57). In view of the new world "disorder" that followed the end of the Cold War, NGOs find themselves increasingly confronted with unpredictable violent conflicts and are thus more and more forced to gear their work to crisis prevention (Edwards et al. 1999).

5.1 Conflict-resolution NGOs – a new area of responsibility in the midst of a worldwide boom

Beginning in the early 1990s, there has been a massive expansion of NGOs active in the field of constructive conflict management, and many of them have developed marked profiles of their own. The spectrum of their work extends from training measures for social multipliers, dialogue forums and problem-solving workshops aimed at middle-level social or leadership circles to good services, nondirective facilitation activities, and direct mediation at the political decision-making level. This development has various religious and secular



roots. The Quakers, for instance, who mediated in a great number of conflicts after the Second World War, played a pioneering role here (see Mawlawi 1993: 395). Their work was highly discreet, and it was perceived only by a small group of experts. More influential in this regard was an upsurge in mediation activities in the US beginning in the 1960s that started out by addressing life world, communal, and interethnic conflicts. In North America and Europe in particular, there are at present countless international organizations active, even in the field of 'high politics'.

Founded in 1985 and based in London, International Alert (IA) has played a pioneering pilot role for the rapid growth of conflict-resolution NGOs. The organization is active in many areas of the world and seeks, in its own words, close contact to regional and local partners. The organization is involved in developing training programs aimed at developing conflict-mediation capacities. Furthermore, it is involved in issue-related fields of action, including early warning and preventive diplomacy, minority rights, network-building, and grassroots peace work. Finally, IA took on a direct role as a mediator. But it was precisely this field of activity that provoked criticism. And in the mid-1990s the Dutch foreign ministry commissioned an evaluation of International Alert's work that closely scrutinized IA's activities in Burundi, Sierra Leone, and Sri Lanka. Aside from recognition for numerous successful programs, there were also marked reservations. The tenor of the evaluation was that IA lacked a clear and transparent strategy and

that the organization's behavior was unpredictable. It was recommended that IA should concentrate less on mediation and focus more on strengthening local peace constituencies and support them by providing capacities, knowledge, and resources for long-term conflict-resolution processes (Sørbø et al. 1997).

One organization that has proven particularly successful in conflict mediation is the Roman lay community Sant'Egidio, which is specialized in facilitation and contributed substantially to settling the civil war in Mozambique. Beginning in the mid-1970s, this extremely brutal conflict, accompanied by famine and drought, brought untold suffering over the country's population. In this situation internal social forces that, in the 1980s, came out in favor of a political solution cleared the way for negotiations. Sant'Egidio took the initiative at the end of the 1980s. The lay community had been engaged in Mozambique since the 1970s and enjoyed the confidence of both church and state authorities. Its substantive competence and credibility made Sant'Egidio a near-ideal facilitator. The negotiations between the parties involved in the Mozambican civil war, which were conducted in Rome from July 1990 to October 1992, led to acceptance by all parties of the so-called Italian formula – a new type of interplay between NGOs, warring parties, and international actors. The regional actors Kenya and Zimbabwe also contributed to the success of these efforts.

The distribution of roles was unusual. In its role as facilitator, the lay community Sant'Egidio shaped

the course of negotiations; the superpower USA focused on providing flanking advisory support, though not without exerting pressure where it was needed; Lonrho, a transnational corporation, worked for a regionalization of efforts to find a solution – i.e. one that included the neighboring countries – and made some of its logistical capacities available. Lonrho not only contributed to initiating talks and contacts with regional actors, it also provided financial resources and transportation services. In October 1992 this multitrack diplomacy succeeded in coming up with an agreement. While the United Nations were included in the process only at a late stage, it nevertheless managed to define a convincing role for itself: It not only provided a framework and assumed the role of a guarantor for the transitional phase extending from the peace agreements to elections, it also claimed for itself the leading role in this follow-up process (Debiel 2003: 107-129).

We can observe that as their profiles grow – e.g. thanks to the involvement of prominent personalities – many of these conflict-resolution NGOs tend to move closer to the state sphere. One particularly clear example is the International Negotiation Network (INN), which was founded by former US president Jimmy Carter and is coordinated by the Carter Center (Atlanta, Georgia). The Carter Center was founded in 1987; its objective is to provide, in the role of a third party, background analyses, consulting services, and public relations work aimed at settling conflicts by nonmilitary means. The INN operates in a gray zone between the private and state sectors.

Accordingly, the INN is in a position to provide 'eminent persons' as mediators and contact persons. Moreover, it has direct access to political decision-makers, and is also in possession of sufficient resources to develop the infrastructure and technical support needed for negotiations.²³ In contrast to many other organizations, however, the Carter Center shuns secret negotiations, always informing the public when it acts (see Mawlawi 1993: 404). The INN has sought to mediate in North Korea, the former Yugoslavia, Haiti, Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, and Ethiopia. Aside from conflict mediation, the INN is also active in the key field of election monitoring – these two areas of activity are also linked, e.g. like in Liberia.

In Germany, an organization known as the Plattform Zivile Konfliktbearbeitung (Platform for Civil Conflict Resolution), an association of German NGOs, was founded in November of 1998 in Bad Honnef (www.konfliktbearbeitung.net).²⁴

The Platform is a joint project of persons, organizations, and institutions from peace work, human rights work, humanitarian aid, development cooperation, and of scientists active in these fields. The Platform is an open network that

²³ See Mawlawi 1993: 404-405. There is also an African organization, similar in makeup to INN, called the African Leadership Forum; many regional mediators are recruited from it (Amadou Toumani Touré, Olesegun Obasanjo, the late Julius Nyerere, etc.).

²⁴ The Platform sees its central activities in efforts to improve the exchange of information as well as in lobbying work. The Platform also serves as a clearinghouse for the exchange of expertise. The organization's secretariat places requests for experts, or e.g. search queries, into the network, clarifies the requests and forwards them.





includes more than 50 organizations and over 100 persons.

A new supporting organization active in the field of conflict resolution is the Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst (ZFD/Forum for Peace Service). Under the current Red-Green German government the Forum has achieved its goal of founding "a civil peace service in the form of a government-supported service provided by trained male and female expert peace workers organized on a pluralistic social basis" (www.friedenbrauchtfachleute.de). It has over 120 individual members and 40 member organizations. Thus far it has provided professional training for over 120 expert peace workers. Its zfd500 campaign aims, by 2006, to train at least 500 additional men and women and to appoint them as peace workers²⁵ (Ludermann 2003).

A guide to "Konfliktbearbeitung in Deutschland" (Conflict Resolution in Germany) (Fiebich 2001) demonstrates how diverse the spectrum of relevant organizations has now become. In Germany the Berghof Forschungszentrum für konstruktive Konfliktbearbeitung/ Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management has broken new ground in providing training, dialogue workshops, and capacity-building, e.g. in Sri Lanka and in the Georgia-Abchasia conflict.

25 Peace experts are active in crisis regions throughout the world for peace and development services or international organizations like the OSCE. Prior to their missions they are given several months of training. In their mission areas they support local initiatives such as women's or human rights groups, mediate between conflict parties, provide for venues, and organize cooperation efforts.

New EU-wide structures have also been created that have encouraged close cooperation and exchange of expertise in the form of a "policy network". One clear example is the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation founded in February 1997 in Amsterdam. Early in 1997 a number of different international organizations, research institutions, and NGOs joined forces to found the Forum for Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER).²⁶ In the autumn of 2002 roughly a dozen organizations active in the field of conflict resolution set up a European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a independent subgroup of the European Platform. Its aim is to ensure improved access for NGOs to the EU's activities in this issue area, to fortify transparency and to facilitate the information flows for NGOs. This cooperation with non-state actors, many of them in possession of vast knowledge and direct contacts with the grassroots in crisis regions, has been a contributing factor in inducing the EU to accord more attention to the social and political causes of conflicts in its conception of development policy (Debiel/Fischer 2000).

26 They include the European institutions International Alert (UK), the PIOOM Foundation (NL), the Russian Academy of Sciences/Institute of Ethnology (Russia), but also e.g. the Council on Foreign Relations (US), York University (Canada), and some UN agencies. Another organization closely associated with FEWER is e.g. the Schweizerische Friedensstiftung/Swiss Peace Foundation (SFS) in Bern which has developed an information system for early analysis of tensions and fact-finding (Früh-Analyse von Spannungen und Tatsachenermittlung, FAST).

Regions of the South have also experienced an NGO boom.²⁷ In Africa, for instance, conflict-resolution NGOs are now quite widespread. In its publication "Searching for Peace in Africa" the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation presents profiles of some 100 Africa-based conflict-resolution NGOs; in addition, it contains presentations of 23 international NGOs active in this area.²⁸

5.2 Instruments used to anchor crisis prevention in development cooperation and humanitarian aid

It has been noted repeatedly since the end of the 1980s that external support in crisis and conflict situations can entail extreme alterations to the political and economic situation on the ground and unsettle local markets. Indeed, aid funds or goods are sometimes diverted into given areas to supply troops and purchase arms or to secure political support. Moreover, implicit messages sent by external actors may also have subtle but far-reaching effects: For instance, establishing contacts with warlords – something that relief organizations are often unable to avoid – may serve unintentionally to boost the

intentionally to boost the formers' legitimacy.

This debate concerning the ambivalence of humanitarian aid gave rise to the "Do No Harm"²⁹ principle (Anderson 1999). What this imperative implies is that those active in the field should subject their work to critical self-reflection, and it at the same time serves to sensitize them to the impacts that their own actions may have on conflict constellations. Collaborative for Development Action, Inc. (CDA)³⁰ has advanced the approach and is concerned with seeing it implemented both in humanitarian aid and in development cooperation. The "Local Capacities for Peace Project (LCPP)" and the "Reflecting on Peace Project (RPP)"³¹ have analyzed numerous case examples with a view to identifying negative impacts on conflicts and deriving from positive experiences scopes for constructive action. The cases stem from nearly all regions of the world, e.g. from the South Pacific (Fiji), Asia (Sri Lanka, Philippines, Afghanistan), Africa (South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, South

29 The "Do No Harm" Principle is derived from the Hippocratic Oath, according to which medical treatment must not harm the patient.

30 The activities of CDA, which was founded in 1985, are generally focused on economic and social development in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and central and eastern Europe. As far as its measures and activities in the field of conflict prevention and resolution are concerned, CDA works to promote the role played by third parties in conflicts and post-conflict situations. See <<http://www.cdainc.com/index.php>>.

31 Since 1994 the LCPP has been carried out jointly by numerous operational NGOs active in crisis regions. The RPP is also a joint initiative of more than 50 NGOs whose work often brings them face to face with violent conflict.

27 For an overview of all world regions, see <<http://www.euconflict.org/>>. The header "Conflict Prevention/Organisation" includes overviews on conflict-resolution NGOs throughout the world (listed by region, alphabetically, etc.).

28 See Monique Mekenkamp et al. 1999. With its regional focus, the overview expands on the brief descriptions published a year before by the European Platform (1998) in "Prevention and Management of Violent Conflicts: An International Directory".





Sudan), the Middle East (Palestine and Israel, Cyprus), Europe (the Basque country, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Crimea, Croatia, Georgia, and South Ossetia), and Latin America (Columbia, Guatemala, Chiapas in Mexico).

Parallel to the "Do No Harm" approach, various donor countries (in particular Sweden, Canada, Norway, and the UK) and NGOs like CARE, Oxfam, and Save the Children are working for a comprehensive integration of this problem complex into their efforts: "These efforts are geared more towards mainstream peacebuilding within the more traditional mandates of humanitarian assistance, poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Increasingly, concepts, ideas and practices are migrating across the once clear demarcations between the traditional fields of development, humanitarian assistance, conflict resolution and peacebuilding." (Hoffman 2001: 1)

One approach, which includes various strategies, mechanisms, and methods of conflict resolution, is "peace and conflict impact assessment" (PCIA) (see Austin et al. 2003). Following Ken Bush, PCIA can be defined as a "means of evaluating (ex post facto) and anticipating (ex ante, as far as possible) the impacts of proposed and completed development projects on: 1) those structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful coexistence and

decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence, or continuation of violent conflict, and; 2) those structures and processes that increase the likelihood that conflict will be dealt with through violent means." (Bush 1998: 7)

The call for peace and conflict assessment was and is closely bound up with the fact that cooperation and humanitarian aid must be seen as problematic or indeed as having failed in numerous crisis countries in the South: "In Somalia, international aid organizations were inadvertently drawn into rivalries between clans. In order to gain access to needy segments of the population, they paid protection money and tolerated hefty 'taxation' of relief supplies by the militias. As a result, in the final analysis they were effectively contributing to the financing and prolongation of the conflict. Similar patterns were also observed in Ethiopia and southern Sudan. In contrast, the genocide in Rwanda, which until that time had been considered a model country as far as development cooperation was concerned, raised the question as to whether a mistaken development model had been promoted for many years – one which perpetuated the structures of social exclusion and discrimination (Uvin 1998)." (Leonhardt 2001: 11)

Table 2: NGO strategies and impacts

	Direct intervention	Capacity-building	Advocacy
Fuelling conflict	Aid used to purchase arms	Providing support to political front organizations	Advocacy which supports one of the warring parties to the conflict
Holding operation	"Smart" distribution of relief so that it does not increase underlying tensions	Support for local organizations such as irrigation councils, church-based groups etc.	Protection of civilians against human rights abuses
Peacebuilding	Projects which bring different ethnic groups under the same programmatic umbrella	Support for civic peace groups	Advocacy for peace, justice, and reconciliation

Source: Goodhand/Hulme 1997: 24, Table 3

NGOs active in crisis situations (see Table 2) may aggravate a conflict, alleviate the suffering caused by crisis situations (holding operation), or – in the most favorable case – provide a contribution to peacebuilding.

The situation is at present marked by a heightened sensitivity as regards the potential chances and risks of development cooperation in crisis situations (see Table 3).

Against this background, numerous theorists and practitioners of development cooperation have taken a close look at PCIA and developed some approaches and methods of their own. In some countries, e.g. in Kenya and Guatemala³², various PCIA approaches have been and continue to be used and tried out in practice (Leonhardt et al. 2002).

³² The aim of the PCIA project in Kenya and Guatemala (which has already been concluded) was to develop practical techniques and instruments for the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of development projects and to strengthen conflict sensitization. These practical experiences have led, among other things, to the conclusion that a country-specific PCIA approach is preferable to a universal PCIA methodology. A further conclusion is that conflict analysis should be tied more closely into project planning and integrated within a project cycle with an ongoing monitoring process. See Leonhardt et al. 2002: 3 et seq., 30-33.





Table 3: Opportunities and Risks of Development Cooperation in Conflict Situations

Conflict factor	Risks	Opportunities
Politics	<p>Development cooperation (civil conflict management) is inadequately harmonized with diplomatic and military initiatives and consequently has a counter-productive effect</p> <p>Development cooperation indirectly strengthens illegitimate and authoritarian political structures</p> <p>Development cooperation weakens local forms of government by setting up unsustainable parallel structures</p>	<p>Various instruments of conflict management are used in a coordinated and sensitive manner</p> <p>Development cooperation strengthens legitimate formal and informal political structures</p> <p>Development cooperation promotes participation and respects local owner</p> <p>Development cooperation adopts a committed but neutral attitude to the conflict</p>
Economics	<p>Development cooperation distorts local economic processes and strengthens war economies</p> <p>Development cooperation amplifies existing regional or socio-economic inequalities and discrimination</p> <p>Development cooperation promotes the unsustainable use of natural resources</p> <p>Development cooperation consolidates disputed claims to natural resources</p> <p>Development cooperation trains individuals who later join armed groups</p>	<p>Development cooperation identifies and strengthens legitimate local economic processes</p> <p>Development cooperation promotes equality of opportunity, particularly for disadvantaged groups</p> <p>Development cooperation promotes collaboration and cohesion through joint activities</p> <p>Development cooperation promotes sustainable and just systems of resource utilization</p> <p>Development cooperation supports economic alternatives to the use of force</p>
Socio-cultural factors	<p>Development cooperation neglects local social capital and institutional capacities, creates dependency</p> <p>Development cooperation takes over and reinforces patterns of perception which encourage conflict (e.g. ethnicity)</p> <p>Development cooperation add fuel to existing lines of conflict through well-meaning but poorly implemented peace initiatives</p>	<p>Development cooperation promotes committed individuals ('human capital') and peace initiatives at the local level</p> <p>Development cooperation strengthens local coping strategies and thus reduces vulnerability to the conflict</p> <p>Development cooperation supports confidence-building and reconciliation</p>
Security	<p>Development cooperation ignores the human-rights and security situation in the country</p> <p>Development subsidizes warring groups by accepting theft and 'taxation' of relief supplies</p> <p>Development cooperation employs uncontrolled private security services, thus exacerbating miniaturization...</p>	<p>Development cooperation reports on infringements of human rights, and because of the international presence enhances the security of the population</p> <p>Development cooperation avoids becoming instrumentalized by warring groups by following clear principles</p> <p>Development cooperation creates security structures in close collaboration with partners and target groups</p>

Source: Leonhardt 2001: 17-18; based on: Anderson 2000; Hulme/Goodhand 2000; Klingebiel 1999; Leonhardt 2000; Uvin 1998.

It is still too early to judge the quality and effects of PCIA, since the tool is still in the development phase and has been in use in practice only for a limited number of years. But it can be said that the approaches that point ahead are mainly those that are organized in cooperation between North and South NGOs and seek to ensure that structures of dominance are not replicated at the evaluation level.

5.3 Assessment of the conflict work of NGOs

The crisis prevention and conflict-resolution work of NGOs focuses on different levels. The spectrum extends from diplomacy at the political decision-making level to efforts at the local level. In the planning and implementation of projects the possibility is given to minimize the potential for an escalation of violence, for instance by constructively and cooperatively involving persons at risk in project work (Terlinden 2002: 1-2, 4). One successful example of crisis prevention can be named in the field of water management in the northeast of Kenya. Here CARE international UK worked to strengthen the technical and administrative capacities of water users associations (WUAs) as well as to support municipalities in developing expertise and methods needed to constructively resolve resource conflicts.

The – wholly welcome – growingly important role played by conflict-resolution NGOs and the integration of conflict resolution within development cooperation and humanitarian project work should,

however, not be permitted to obscure the fact that NGOs – much like governmental and multilateral actors – do not always have a primary and undivided interest in constructive intervention. The work of NGOs is all too often influenced by masked interests, intrinsic organizational factors, or the pressure exerted by the media and the public, as was observed e.g. in the wake of the genocide in Rwanda. Moreover, approaches like PCIA are easily misinterpreted as a socio-technological endeavor. Such approaches may tend to underestimate the possible destructive impacts of external actors, while overestimating the possibilities that conflict resolution has to bring about changes in persistent structures of violence.

What is called for precisely in prolonged and persistent conflicts is modesty – i.e. the precept “Be Modest” – an imperative of reason and realistic self-appraisal. Here both conflict parties and external actors usually find themselves in a conflict-prone environment that may well also be unstable and even harbor marked self-destructive tendencies. Apart from state failure and the existence of economies of violence, another important factor in such situations that is especially detrimental to finding a solution is that the conflict parties are often fragmented: In such cases the chances open to constructive influence are limited.

In such constellations the manifold engagement of external actors may serve more to create confusion by defining new lines of conflict, permitting conflict parties to instru-





mentalize external forums, and blurring the lines of responsibility for agreements on settling conflicts. The Burundi conflict is a case in point here: In the course of the 1990s multilateral, governmental, and nongovernmental actors launched a good number of – sometimes competing – mediation initiatives. While these initiatives led to constantly reshuffled rounds of negotiations, they failed to end the conflict (to say nothing of coming up with a sound political arrangement). The imperative of modesty therefore, also implies that external actors should reflect critically on their contributions and seek to integrate them, in the sense of a division of labor, into a course of concerted action.

Another model may be seen in the “Do No Harm” principle mentioned above. But at present the challenge is to continue to factor critical self-reflection not only into operational action at the project level but also, and comprehensively, into the overall complex of trade, development, and security policy. The field that has made most progress here thus far – at least at the conceptual level – is development policy. To cite an example, at the end of the 1990s the Western industrialized countries commissioned, in the OECD framework, a landmark study, much along the lines of PCIA, on “The Influence of Aid in Situations of Violent Conflict” (Uvin 1999). Some important insights were also provided by a series of relevant comparative studies commissioned by the BMZ; the studies looked into the impacts of development cooperation for the cases of northern

Mali, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Rwanda.³³

One central challenge facing civil society forces is to critically accompany these evaluations, and to call for transparency and public scrutiny. Also, the “Do No Harm” principle can be developed politically into a new imperative: “Don’t Fuel Violence”, i.e. do anything to exacerbate an ongoing conflict. The NGOs assembled under the roof of the network Eurostep, for instance, are working toward this end when they call on the EU and its member states to pay more heed in their crisis-prevention strategies to the role played by arms exports and the trade in tropical timber, diamonds, or oil, a factor of key importance for war economies. One further demand must be to restrict the violence-promoting role that may sometimes be played by diaspora communities.

NGO conflict-resolution work should – this is the essential point – be neither all too harmony-minded nor blind the aspect of power. This goes for their relationship to their own government as well as to authorities abroad and international organizations. In many cases state actors may tend to aggravate a conflict or devote too little effort to overcoming conflict factors, because they, in cases of doubt, are apt to give priority to power- and alliance-related considerations and economic interests over serious efforts devoted to conflict prevention. But multilateral organizations in many cases pursue approaches

³³ The cross-sectional report was prepared by the Deutsche Institut für Entwicklungspolitik/German Development Institute (DIE) in Bonn; see Klingebiel 1999.

dictated by bureaucratic logics, particularist interests, or the blockade policies of powerful member states. NGOs active in the field of conflict resolution would therefore be well advised not only to view themselves as moderators, communication facilitators, trainers, or capacity builders. In many cases NGOs can achieve more by acting in the capacity of watchdogs and doing their best to gain a good grasp of complex situations and to create critical counterpublics. If

they are serious about their work as lobbyists and advocates of peaceful conflict resolution, NGOs active here will be without the convenient option of acquiescing in their role of mere implementing or project organizations (in receipt of large state subsidies). Only by assuming a critical stance toward the state will they be able to do justice to their original peace-oriented claim to be a vibrant element of civil society.



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