

### EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Development activity was for long virtually the monopoly of the state. However, the lack of alternatives did not mean the state was always a positive force for development. Moreover, in the late twentieth century, the state's claim to this monopoly weakened, while other agencies of development such as the World Bank, the IMF and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), gained a higher profile. Development has to be seen in the economic context of global capitalism, but also in the political context. The most crucial relationship is between the state and the economy: states participate directly in processes of productive capital formation (establishing a set of economic policies favourable to capitalist accumulation), provide infrastructure and affect private-sector resource allocation through monetary and fiscal policies. The state provides an enabling environment/structure for development by other agencies. The state is the network of government, quasi-government and non-government institutions that co-ordinates, regulates and monitors economic and social activities. The role of non-state actors seems destined to grow as the power of the nation-state declines and global economic activity intensifies.

Total official development assistance (ODA) allocated by all major donors is low and declining. Little is used directly to alleviate poverty. Even though some ODA appears altruistic, much is manifestly deployed to promote the political and economic concerns of donors. Increased emphasis on aid conditionality underlines this. Now not only the World Bank and the IMF but also many bilateral ODA programmes require recipients to adhere to certain policies. Aid is viewed as a means of promoting donors' perceptions of 'good governance' and 'sound' economic practices, leading many analysts and politicians to become very critical of aid. Good governance is defined as sound management of a country's economic and social resources for development. What is 'sound' for the World Bank and others holding the view that 'democratization stimulates development' is a range of management techniques that are believed to work well within a standardized liberal democratic model. Critics contend that there are, and ought to be, different paths for development; they are not opposed to 'good governance' but urge that this is compatible with alternatives to liberal democracy in poor countries with different institutional contexts.

The purpose of giving ODA and its deployment is more open to scrutiny. One response has been increased funding for NGOs, generally thought more able to reach the local grassroots level.

In the New Policy Agenda, combining market economics and liberal democratic politics, NGOs are simultaneously viewed as market-based actors and central components of civil society. NGOs fill gaps left by the privatization of state services as part of a structural adjustment or donor-promoted reform package.

There are various types of NGO. At the international level we can differentiate between campaigning and charitable or service-providing NGOs. Both of these are generally based in the North. International campaigning NGOs are epitomized by Greenpeace. Such NGOs will address

development policy issues from a distance. Northern-based, service-providing NGOs include Save the Children, Oxfam, Christian Aid and so on. These generally have branches in the Southern countries in which they work. Often they will run their own projects, sometimes setting up their own bureaucracies, effectively by-passing those of the state. In other circumstances they will fund and monitor local service-providing NGOs or membership organizations.

At the national level many NGOs are public-interest research or campaigning organizations. Some are Western-style human rights or conservationist NGOs. Usually relatively few, they often represent the concerns of particular groups. Other types of NGO are indigenous, national (and provincial) service-providing NGOs – mostly concerned with welfare and development. Many international NGOs have moved from directly running projects to working through partnerships with such NGOs. Lastly, there are membership organizations, often called ‘grassroots organizations’, which exist to further their members’ interests.

Recent findings have shown that NGOs are weak in contextual analysis of societies in which they work and that their approaches to monitoring and evaluation are rarely adequate. Further, certain key technical skills are frequently seen as lacking in their human resource base and many are more concerned with micro- than macro-context work. Finally, the practice of participation and innovation in project implementation can be poor.

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