

NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

PRIVATE VOLUNTARY INITIATIVES: Enhancing the Public Sector's Capacity to Respond to Nongovernmental Organization Needs

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During the past few years a number of authors have argued that agricultural and rural development strategies would benefit from increased collaboration between government organizations (GO) and nongovernmental development organizations (NGO) (Carroll 1992; de Janvry and others 1989; Farrington and Biggs, 1990; Jordan 1989; Korten 1987). At the same time, multilateral agencies have begun to call for more NGO involvement in programs that traditionally have been the preserve of, or at least always implemented through, the public sector (World Bank 1991a,b; Farnworth 1991; IDB, 1991).

We begin this paper¹ by taking a critical look at these statements, pointing to divergences of opinion that seem hidden behind different authors' use of similar terminologies. We then consider how such collaboration *might* address some of the constraints on NGOs' contributions to rural development and democratization. From this we move on to discuss the very real achievements of NGOs in agricultural and rural development, and how these might be drawn upon in public programs through interinstitutional contacts. We close with a discussion of the implications for the institutional organization of agricultural development in the 1990s.

A Curious Convergence of Interest: An Introduction and a Caveat

If we look a little more closely at the different calls for NGO-government collaboration, several characteristics of these statements seem significant.

First the interest in increased NGO participation in public programs has been inspired by a number of economic and sociopolitical trends that are visible in much of the developing world. The sociopolitical trends are the steady rise of grassroots movements with significant degrees of self-management potential (Slater 1985; Annis and Hakkim 1988), and the slow but steady installation of the processes of formal electoral democracy. The economic patterns are the fiscal and administrative crises of the state, and the structural adjustment programs that have been pursued to address these crises.²

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These changes give rise to two parallel, simultaneous trends: grassroots movements and civic associations are demanding more participation in the development process, and more control over how it affects them; and the state increasingly needs them to take a more active role in development because it can no longer afford to, or is being dissuaded from, performing a full range of social and development services. Thus both state and civic associations are interested in NGOs playing a more prominent role in development. The point, though, is that their reasons for this common interest differ. Although civil society is demanding such political concessions as a right, the state has sometimes given them out of economic necessity rather than political willingness. Indeed, several writers have gone so far as to argue that it is only because the state's financial resource base has been eroded severely that it has begun to offer grassroots groups and NGOs more participation in decisionmaking as a political concession in the absence of the economic concessions previously used as means of gaining support (Fox and Gordillo, 1989; de Janvry and others 1989).

Political tensions thus surround the issue of NGO involvement in government programs. These political uncertainties are aggravated further by the fact that in many cases the return to democracy "has frequently been more formal than real" (de Janvry and others 1989),³ has been stronger in urban areas than in the countryside (Fox 1990), and even in its limited form, reform is opposed by many interests inside and outside the state (Fox 1990).

A review of public sector management reforms under structural adjustment loans (SALs) shows why such political uncertainties are important. The review concluded that "political factors are enormously important to institutional reform in SALs" (Nunberg 1988, p. vii-viii) and can frequently obstruct reforms and cause problems, particularly as regards the relations among "actors and institutions that are critical to the reform process" (Nunberg 1988, p. 25). Given the social history of many NGOs, born in opposition to repressive and authoritarian regimes, or in criticism of corrupt and inefficient GOs (Lehmann 1990), these factors will be at least as important as functional complementarities in shaping GO-NGO relations in agricultural development, especially given the context of SAPs and public sector cutbacks (Bebbington 1991b). Nunberg's lament that these political factors have been given far too little attention in SALs (Nunberg 1988, p. 25) underlines the importance of considering them in proposed GO-NGO collaborations.

This gives particular significance to the second observation: the bulk of these statements give insufficient attention to the mechanics of such collaboration, and how it will be negotiated. Statements usually refer to the most appropriate general division of tasks between the two sectors. Little time is spent discussing the alliance building that must precede formal agreements, or how decisionmaking will be shared, or how the political competition over controlling that process will be managed, and so on.

Moreover, the statements are frequently based on optimistic evaluations of the nature and potentials of NGOs, and lack a strong empirical base of assessed NGO actions.⁴ Indeed, a recent paper from the Bank acknowledges that in practice NGOs have not performed as well in Bank financed projects as had been expected, implying that the Bank had set out with idealized visions of what NGOs could do, and would become (Beckmann 1991). Clearly then it is necessary to look more closely at NGOs' characteristics, at how they have performed to date, and at the relationships that they have already had with GOs in order to develop a stronger empirical basis on which to build interinstitutional strategies of agricultural development.

A further observation is that many commentators emphasize that the public sector will continue to play important roles in agricultural development, but that in order to achieve this it is paramount that the efficiency of the state be improved, eliminating the plethora of administrative and transactional costs that have so often undermined rural development programs (Grindle 1986; World Bank 1991a). The policy analysis, administrative capacity, and targeting capabilities implied, all suggest that any strategy devolving more activities to NGOs must still pay central attention to

improving "the management of the public sector, a goal that often requires a simultaneous reduction in the size of government and a strengthening of its quality" (World Bank 1991a, p. 136). Unfortunately, experience suggests that reforms of public sector management under SALs have not been very successful (Nunberg 1988).

A final observation reflects the first: the calls for collaboration come from different points across the ideological spectrum. They come from, on the one hand, NGO activists (for example, Clark and Jordan) and radical economists (de Janvry), and, on the other, from multilateral institutions. This may of course be cause for celebration; but it is also cause for circumspection. It suggests that different actors may be seeking differing products from such collaboration.

This indeed appears to be the case. Although it is very difficult to characterize writings, one senses a difference in emphasis between the two wings as they speak of (a) the role of the public sector in these proposed collaborations, and (b) the role of NGOs. There is general agreement that there is a need for a smaller but strong state, one that must intervene less directly in production and marketing, and reduce the amount of subsidies it channels to different interest groups: the issue, however, is **how much responsibility this state will continue to assume, and which subsidies to which social groups will survive.**

While such authors as de Janvry echo the far longer standing message of organizations such as OXFAM, the Inter-American Foundation, and southern NGOs, that the time of top-down, state-dominated forms of intervention in rural areas is over, this does not imply an argument for the end of, or even diminished, public sector financial responsibility in rural development. The state, it is argued, should still channel significant resources to rural areas and be active in their development, but in a more democratic and participatory way. However, governments and multilateral donors appear keener on simply reducing the role and expenditure of the state (Nunberg 1988, p. 9; World Bank 1991b). In crude terms, NGO and radical writers stress changing the role of the state in order to further the process of democratization, whereas among neoliberal economists and institutions the overarching goals of privatization and structural adjustment shine through.

This difference then translates into different emphases in attitudes toward the role of NGOs. Within the logic of privatization, the attraction of NGOs is that (a) they can subsidize structural adjustment policies by implementing the "social effects of SALs" programs; and (b) they can take responsibility for implementing other programs thus avoiding the expansion of public sector agencies. In short that they are attractive as a resource to be used. This is the **instrumentalist** attitude to NGOs. It is striking how often the words "use," "utilize," and "useful" crop up in many discussions of NGOs. It is also telling that although World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) writings speak of several functions for NGOs (advice, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and cofinancing) in Bank financed projects fully 57 percent of NGO participations in these projects have been in implementation, compared with 9 percent in advice, and 19 percent in design (Beckmann 1991).

Yet for the better NGOs, it is precisely the design, control, and monitoring of projects in which they wish to have a role. Reflecting this concern, other authors visualize NGOs' and grassroots organizations' participation in agricultural development in terms of increasing the space and resources to local groups to develop their potential for self-realization and self-managed agricultural development. This sits uneasily with the instrumentalist undertones of many public sector proposals.

At issue, then, is not just the pooling of skills and resources, but also the sharing of power. The comments of Fox and Gordillo (1988), and the research reported in the remainder of this paper suggests that, for GOs, the former has been more attractive than the latter, and this has caused tensions in efforts to bring the two sectors closer together.

This opening caveat suggests that as we discuss collaboration, we must tread slowly, and be aware that these GO-NGO relationships are as much about political negotiations as functional

relationships. Furthermore, we must question whether the rapid interest in NGOs under adjustment pressures has led to a mis-specification of some of the issues at stake. If all that we are dealing with is the passing on of public functions to NGOs then, as Carroll (1992) argues, this is not development, and should not be indulged. If, conversely, we are dealing with a genuine democratization of development (Clark 1991), then GO-NGO collaborations will never be straightforward - but should be indulged. This is not least because NGOs have many shortcomings and weaknesses as regards their own contributions to democratization and development. One means of addressing these shortcomings might be through a closer relationship with the public sector.

The remainder of this paper is built on two complementary themes. First we consider the nature of NGOs' needs, how well government meets them, and how it might address them more effectively in the future. Second we consider NGOs' particular strengths, and how government might respond in order to take full advantage of these strengths in national programs.

What are NGOs Anyway?

Before discussing what NGOs might need, we must first discuss what they are. Among overused and abused terms, "NGO" ranks highly. A first distinction that must be made is between northern NGOs (such as OXFAM) and those of developing countries; in this paper we are dealing almost entirely with the latter. Authors such as Fowler (1991) and Carroll (1992) also have stressed that at the very least membership and nonmembership organizations must be separated, as they differ in many respects: their social and ethnic composition, their relations to grassroots groups, their social origins, their management styles and skills and so forth.

Carroll, Humphreys, and Scurrah (1991) and Carroll (1992) also stress the importance of differentiating base groups, or Grassroots Organizations (GROs), and those membership and nonmembership organizations that administer support to the bases. The former he calls membership support organizations (MSOs) and the latter grassroots support organizations (GSOs). It is the latter with which we deal here, as we speak of NGOs. These are the NGOs composed of professionals, frequently middle class, socially and ethnically distinct from the rural poor with whom they work. In some cases these professionals are themselves former public sector workers who left the state out of political necessity (as in the case of Chile after 1973: see Gomez and Echenique 1988), because the state ceased to pursue the left of center and populist orientations they believed in (as in the case of Peru after 1975: see Carroll, Humphreys, and Scurrah 1991) or because public wages no longer satisfied their needs (during the 1980s in many countries). Because of this middle class, professional origin, government and donor staff find it socially and culturally easier to work with NGOs than with peasant staffed MSOs, and at times there are family and informal linkages cutting across the GO-NGO divide, even when there are differences of political opinion.

Characteristics of NGOs

These NGOs differ from government organizations in certain fundamental respects.

Ethos. Public sector systems are concerned with service delivery within the boundaries of institutional mandates. NGOs' concerns, while spatially bounded, are less narrowly confined by such

mandates. Instead they focus on popular participation, through which the poor themselves should define the needs to which NGOs will subsequently respond. This philosophy of work allows NGOs to develop closer relationships with the rural poor, facilitating problem identification and feedback on local needs.

Structure and Size. NGOs tend to be small, avoid complex hierarchies and prize flexibility in decision taking, although there are tradeoffs between speed of decision and adherence to democratic decisionmaking procedures and complex decision criteria. Small size also means inability to internalize certain economies of scale in the research process.

Financial Organization and Accountability. While GO dependence on public funds facilitates longer-term research, and implies accountability to government, NGO dependence on donated funds contributes to short time horizons, and a keenness to demonstrate rapid impact of donations. Some NGOs manage to create room for maneuver, by creating their own funding basis, but in general NGOs' financial arrangements discourage, or preclude, commitment to long-term research and development.

These differences between NGOs and GOs recur repeatedly in the following discussion of NGOs' weaknesses and strengths, and we return to the theme at the close of the paper, as we discuss future institutional implications for GO-NGO relationships.

What Do NGOs Need from the Public Sector, and How Well Has the Public Sector Obligated?

We consider a series of seven different needs that we feel NGOs have, some of which NGOs often acknowledge, others they acknowledge grudgingly at best.

Access to quality resources and information usually controlled by the public sector. In a recent meeting,⁵ Asian NGOs expressed their need for access to the skills, facilities, genetic material, and specialist knowledge of government services: an access generally hindered by the complexity of government bureaucratic structure and procedure. Large NGOs acting in consortium have occasionally persuaded Indian bureaucracy to cater to their needs (Sethna and Shah 1991), but the time and costs implied even to garner information on government plans, let alone influence them, are beyond the resources of smaller NGOs. The Philippine practice of creating NGO desks at different levels of line departments in order to elicit NGOs' views on draft plans and to cater to NGOs' enquiries, was looked on enviously by NGOs of other countries.⁶

At recent meetings of South American NGOs,⁷ the participants identified similar requirements for the improvement of their work in the generation and transfer of agricultural technology: (a) special programs of peasant-centred agricultural research to generate technologies the NGOs do not have the capacity to develop; (b) public policies adapted to the needs of small producers; and (c) links to government to widen the impact of NGOs on national agricultural programs.⁸ A frequently reported constraint was a lack of GO staff suitably prepared to work in peasant agricultural development (IICA, 1987, p. 13). As the workshop report comments, it is worth emphasizing "that lack of financial resources for projects was rarely mentioned" as a problem, suggesting that money is one thing they do not need so much from GOs (IICA, 1987, p. 13-14) although this may have changed in the last few years.

High quality public programs oriented to the needs of the rural poor. Interestingly, these needs dovetail with the roles now being cast as the most appropriate for the structurally adjusted state.

These include the following: (a) the definition of policies that are coordinated with and favorable for rural development programs (de Janvry and others 1989, p. 135; (b) the provision of public goods and services such as infrastructure and technology (de Janvry and others 1989, p. 135; World Bank 1991b, p. 131); and (c) the creation and development of human capital resources (de Janvry and others 1989, p. 136; World Bank 1991b, p. 131).

As noted above this requires the state to have high quality staff and function efficiently, and be well oriented to resource poor farmer needs in policy, technology generation, and training programs. While global generalizations on how well this has been achieved are impossible we can make a few points.

The policymaking challenge to the state requires quality economists (de Janvry and others, 1989, p. 141). The technology generation challenge similarly requires quality scientists. Given that private sector demand for such people means that they do not come cheap, the public sector must pay them well. If NGOs argue that they need these supports from an efficient state, then they ought to reassess their instinctive tendency to criticize wage hikes in current public sector reforms (for example, current reforms in the Bolivian Institute for Agricultural Technology).

The orientation of GO research to small farmer needs has been a goal of numerous farming systems research (FSR) and on-farm research projects over the last decade and a half. The ISNAR evaluations of these attempts show that some advance has been made, but not much (Merrill-Sands and Kaimowitz 1991). Similarly a series of papers at a recent FAO meeting on the institutionalization of FSR perspectives (FAO 1991) showed that institutionalizing training programs with an FSR and peasant-oriented perspective has been extremely difficult. As the on-farm research program in Ecuador currently faces the challenge of expansion, one of its main constraints is the lack of personnel with appropriate training (Cardoso, Caso, and Vivar 1991).

According to overviews of rural development programs (Grindle 1986), perhaps one of the areas in which public sectors have performed most successfully has been to install infrastructure in rural areas. There is much, however, that remains to be done in installing infrastructure for small farmer irrigation, rural agroindustry, product transformation, feeder roads, and so on. While NGOs and grassroots groups could and maybe should play roles in cost sharing for continuing these works (Silva 1991), it is very important that such works also continue to receive public assistance, despite SAPs. The extent (financial and spatial) of the work involved in many such schemes exceeds NGO capacity. The special contribution of NGOs' and MSOs' involvement may be to facilitate ex ante farmer feedback and subsequent monitoring.⁹

NGO coordinating mechanisms. A further set of requirements is acknowledged by NGOs with less frequency, but needs critical attention - and government could play a role in this. These needs stem from structural characteristics of the NGO sector. While NGOs' small size and autonomy may lead to greater flexibility, local knowledge, adaptability, and responsiveness it also leads to poor coordination, competition, duplication (of effort and of failures) and a consequent inefficient use of resources, worse in some areas than others (see Kohl 1991 for an extreme example). Also small-scale and localism means that the organizations fail to address regional and structural problems and are often unable to influence the policymaking processes that primarily determine the viability and outcome of local actions (Bebbington, 1991a). These failings imply that NGOs need a state structure to help coordinate actions to avoid proliferation and duplication; to marshal local initiatives to address regional issues; and to scale up local innovations and facilitate information dissemination (Bebbington 1991b; Morgan 1990).

Access to policymaking processes. NGOs also need a relationship to the state structure if they are to be able to influence policymaking (a goal implicit in the logic of their actions and rhetoric). This implies that NGOs will benefit if the public sector takes initiatives to learn from NGOs, to find mechanisms for evaluating NGO experiences in terms of their wider applicability, and

to install information collection and dissemination systems. Above all the state must find means to strengthen its capacity to coordinate among local actions, and develop policymaking processes that improve the coordination of local, regional, and national programs. Most importantly, if these initiatives are to improve NGO-GO collaboration and relations, they must incorporate means of involving NGOs (and MSOs) in the process as decisionmakers with voting power and influence. In the World Bank's terms, they must involve NGOs in the advising and design stages of policies and programs. It is only very recently that public sector agencies have begun to allow this sort of influence, and the progress is still slow.

However, to participate more effectively in these fora, NGOs must sharpen considerably their analytical and evaluative skills (Beckmann 1991). This implies the need for further training in, for example, economics, administration, and planning courses that might be provided through public or private institutions. Given the cool relationship between the two sectors, until recently, GOs have done relatively little in this regard, although GO sponsored workshops and conferences have been used by NGOs and are a useful, first stage means of establishing contacts and exchanging expertise. Much could still be done in developing courses from which both public and NGO technicians could benefit.

Similarly, NGOs if they are to realize the full potential of their contributions to policy must at least rethink, and often jettison, some of their own ideas and theories.¹⁰ NGOs, like development analysts, need new theories. Their concepts of state intervention are outdated, and simply not viable in the context of the state's fiscal crisis. Much of this rethinking must be done from within, but the public sector can help by providing more information on policymaking constraints and macroeconomic conditions. This is the policy dialogue so often talked about (World Bank 1991a, b, c; Beckmann 1991). One of its most important contributions to GO-NGO collaboration could be to increase each sector's appreciation of the operating conditions of the other, and their theories of development.¹¹ External agencies have clearly used their leverage to push forward such dialogues.

Up-dated theories of the state. This challenge to rethink touches a deeper issue. NGOs' theory of what the state was and should be has been bound up in their identity. NGOs have largely understood themselves in relation to the public sector: they existed to change, reorient and democratize a state that had resources, but gave all too few of them to the rural poor. Now that the state has fewer resources, and is reducing its direct role in such subsidiary actions (Silva 1991), NGOs must rethink their concept of the state's role in society, their relationship to it, and hence their identity. This is an extremely difficult process (Aguirre and Namdar 1991; Sotomayor 1991) and threatens the coherence and self-justification of these NGOs. Many fear becoming no different from rural consultancies. This may indeed be one viable option, but if NGOs are pushed too quickly toward it by donor and government overtures characterized by "superficiality or clumsiness, and insensitive World Bank attention" (Beckmann 1991). The threat to their identity may inspire dogmatic resistance, or quite simply the folding of the organization.

A more democratic relationship with the grassroots. A final requirement of NGOs that they rarely acknowledge is that while they may well be agents of increased democratization (Lehmann 1990; Fox 1990), their own relationship with the rural poor requires further democratization. A recurrent criticism from organizations of the rural poor (Bebbington and others 1991), development consultants (Tendler 1982), and Beckmann (1991) is that NGOs' rhetoric on participation far exceeds the reality of their agricultural and rural development activities. Similarly, NGOs are self-appointed, not elected, bodies, and control institutional resources from within. They rarely apply to themselves the principles they apply in their criticisms of the state, that the rural poor should have a voting say in the use of public resources.

For the state to try and involve itself directly in these problems would be the quickest way to frustrate NGO-GO relations, as the last few years in Kenya have demonstrated (Fowler 1991).

Similarly, when the Bolivian Government in 1989-90 proposed a register of NGOs, in part to bring them under government monitoring on the grounds that NGOs should not be concerned if an elected government wants to know, learn from, and coordinate the actions of unaccountable NGOs, the arguments that emerged set back progress in GO-NGO collaboration. In particular they did not help the proposals being tabled for a far closer collaboration between Instituto Boliviano de Tecnología Agropecuaria--the Bolivian Institute for Agricultural Technology (IBTA) and rural NGOs in a coordinated research and extension program.

However, these NGO limitations suggest certain implications for the public sector: primarily that it should not see NGOs as representatives of, and voices for, the rural poor. Instead they should be seen as just one of several rurally sensitive voices, and in policy and programming discussions government should also invite organizations of the rural poor directly to the negotiating and planning table. This would, in turn, place more pressure on NGOs to be more accountable to rural populations. A second, longer-term, contribution government could make to these problems is to sustain educational programs in rural areas. More than anything else, it is the institutionally and politically modernization effect of broad-based education that contributes to increasing assertiveness and modern forms of self-organization among the rural poor (Thiesenhusen 1989). Those are the changes that ultimately will oblige institutions in rural areas, be they NGOs or GOs, to be more accountable to local populations.

More time, more flexibility. The reasons why NGOs have achieved less popular participation than hoped for are not, however, mainly Machiavellian. The main problem appears to be time and urgency. NGOs are primarily involved in service delivery because of the immediacy and enormity of problems they encounter in the countryside (Carroll 1992). Popular promotion and participatory actions take time, and are often pushed to one side because of other pressing concerns. Moreover, NGOs' beneficiaries are frequently impatient if all they receive from NGOs (and MSOs) are meetings and consciousness raising sessions: most would prefer seeds, fertilizers, latrines, and irrigation ditches--and now.

This tension faced by NGOs between empowerment and the exigencies of service delivery is significant because it makes explicit an apparent tradeoff that must be considered more carefully in discussions of NGO-government collaboration. Although donors and GOs say that "the importance of NGOs lies in their ability to involve communities and grassroots organizations more effectively in the development process and in addressing poverty" (World Bank 1991a, p. 136), the bulk of the initiatives taken to involve NGOs have been in implementation - that is to say the dominant approach to NGOs is clearly an instrumental one. There is then a mismatch between what donors and GOs say and what they do; this is particularly significant because NGO experience suggests that a focus on implementation crowds out organizing and empowering actions.

This mismatch leads to one of two conclusions. The first, less generous, conclusion is that in fact governments and their donors do not want NGOs to continue organizing and empowering the poor and are seeking to frustrate such work by (a) increasing NGOs' service delivery work, and reducing the time available to them for organizational strengthening; and (b) drawing the NGO into a closer relationship with donors and government, through which the NGOs have to become more accountable to them, with the consequence that their relationship to the poor becomes compromised and weakened. The risk of this occurring concerns many NGOs. Indeed there is evidence that some public sectors are seeking to weaken NGOs' relationship to the poor through contracting implementation activities to the NGO.

The second, more generous, conclusion is that donor agencies and GOs want it both ways--grassroots organization and implementation. We believe that this may not always, or often, be possible. This implies that those NGOs committed to rural empowerment will not want to be

inundated with responsibilities for the implementation of projects in any collaboration they may have with government, though different NGOs may commit themselves to one or the other.

What Could Governments Gain from Collaboration?

If there is a tradeoff between what NGOs can contribute to increasing grassroots participation in public programs, and their contribution to enhancing the implementation of these programs, then donors and governments must consider much more carefully what in fact it is that they want from NGOs. Much hard thinking remains to be done here. This thinking should not be based on an assessment of whether NGOs meet the demands of their rhetoric, but rather on an assessment of what it is they do better than other, public or private-for-profit institutions. Then the issue is to see how this contribution can be enhanced and harnessed without being reined in.

What Do NGOs Do Better?

Public sector agricultural research is conventionally analyzed by stage, that is, from basic research through strategic, applied, and adaptive, with some consideration of research-extension linkages. Application of this approach to NGOs would not be particularly illuminating, because (a) practically all NGO research is problem-oriented or issue-oriented; (b) research is conducted at the levels appropriate to the issue; (c) NGOs do not feel obliged to adhere to one or other stages, they may work in, or draw on several simultaneously; and (d) NGOs often are concerned at least as much with action as with research, and many work simultaneously along the spectrum of research, testing, dissemination, and implementation (but to varying degrees at different points).

In the following five main areas NGOs have been both innovative and constrained in what they have achieved: (a) diagnostic and farming systems research methods; (b) innovations in technologies and resource management practices; (c) dissemination methods; (d) training activities and methods; and (e) promoting farmer organizations for agricultural development.

At this point, however, it is important to make a cautionary note about generalizations. The following should not be read as a manifesto for NGOs. There are many things NGOs do not do well, some of which have and will be considered. Moreover, different NGOs have different strengths. Some are better innovators; some are better popular mobilizers; some are better implementers. In the future this should lead into a more explicit differentiation within the NGO community on the basis of specialties. A parallel question to which we return later is, therefore, how can the public sector develop an approach to NGOs that will allow and facilitate this differentiation?

Diagnostic and farming systems research methods. NGOs' natural resources programs commonly focus on the rural poor, including women and the landless. They also tend to work predominantly in what have been referred to as complex, diverse, and risk-prone areas (Chambers, Pacey, and Thrupp 1989). Conventional reductionist approaches to research have difficulty in coping with the wide range of agroecological and socioeconomic conditions characteristic of these areas. Much research must not merely be on-farm and farmer-managed, but highly participatory in order to meet farmers' needs, opportunities, constraints, and aspirations and to draw on local knowledge which, in many cases, has evolved over generations. However, many participatory approaches have

been expensive in terms of the amount of change-agent time that has to be spent for each beneficiary, and NGOs have been innovative in developing more parsimonious approaches, and then training other NGOs in the use of these methods.

For instance, in Ecuador, the NGO Comunidec has used popular education techniques to elaborate techniques for participatory appraisal, design and ranking for agroforestry projects. In Kenya, the Diagnosis and Design methodology practised and diffused by ICRAF finds its origins in development by CARE and Mazingira in the early 1980s of methods to elicit rapid farmer assessment of tree species and of the opportunities for introducing new species (Buck forthcoming). In Chile, NGOs (especially the Grupo de Investigaciones Agrarias, GIA, and AGRARIA) were responsible for the elaboration of farming systems perspectives, and their subsequent teaching to other institutions (Sotomayer 1991; Aguirre and Namdar 1991). In India, Myrada has been instrumental in developing participatory rapid appraisal methods and training both other NGOs and government staff in their implementation (Fernandez 1991).

NGOs have introduced systems approaches to research which go beyond conventional FSR. For instance, in Chile, AGRARIA is experimenting with means of commercializing small farmer grain, in the absence of state initiatives in this area. Its early innovation has been so successful that the National Institute for Agricultural Development (INDAP) has since contracted it to study the possibility of expanding the innovation to other areas (Aguirre and Namdar 1991). In Bangladesh, the Mennonite Central Committee conducted the varietal research on which around 1,000 hectares of soybean production by farmers is now based. Realizing that the potential uses of this crop were unfamiliar to small farmers, they introduced training programs in marketing and processing, which helped to stimulate commercial demand for the product (Buckland and Graham 1990). In The Gambia, production of sesame introduced by Catholic Relief Services peaked at 8,000 hectares owing in part to their simultaneous introduction of oil extraction technology (Gilbert 1990).

Nonetheless, there are also constraints on how far NGOs can operationalize an FSR approach. The time and resources required for thorough systems analysis are often beyond the capacity of NGOs. There is also frequently a tension between the action concerns of the NGO and the time required for full identification and delineation of a farming system (Farrington and Bebbington 1991).

NGOs have also been instrumental in introducing a social organizational dimension into the testing and subsequent adoption of certain technologies. Lack of this dimension, which government finds difficult to introduce, has often led to previous failure of the techniques. For instance, in India, Action for World Solidarity and a consortium of GROs in Andhra Pradesh devised a strategy for integrated pest management of caterpillar (Amsacta) on castor together with government research institutes, and then helped to organize farmers to take certain action simultaneously in order to achieve maximum impact (Satish, Vardhan, and Farrington 1990). In The Gambia and Ethiopia, NGOs have helped farmers to organize local informal seed production in ways designed to avoid undesirable cross-pollination (Henderson and Singh 1990). In Bangladesh, NGOs have helped to organize landless laborers to acquire and operate 'lumpy' irrigation technology (Mustafa and others 1991), and have organized groups (mainly of women) to interact both among themselves and with government services (providing day-old chicks and vaccines) in chicken rearing (Khan and others 1991).

Innovations in technologies and management practices. Although it is comparatively rare to find NGOs conducting long-term research for the generation of technologies, several have done research which has had far-reaching implications. For instance, in India, the Bharatiya Agro-Industries Foundation pioneered research into frozen semen technology and through its 500 field programs in six states has been responsible for producing around 10 percent of the country's cross-bred dairy herd.

Similarly, the South Mindanao Baptist Rural Life Centre (Philippines) has conducted highly innovative research to identify integrated methods of managing hillslopes (Sloping Agricultural Land Technology) (Watson 1991). The agroecology movement in Latin America, now strong enough to have a continental network (the Latin American Consortium on Agroecology and Development, CLADES) that negotiates with international and national agencies has been built mainly through the efforts of NGOs in contact with North American universities (Altieri and Yurjevic 1991; Altieri 1990). Many of these NGOs sought to develop low input technologies in response to the resource constrained environments of the rural (and urban) poor.

It should be noted, though, that not all these NGO technology generation initiatives have been successful, as the very variable success with protected crops technologies in the Bolivian highlands shows (Kohl 1991).

Most NGO research efforts are, however, at the adaptive end of the spectrum. For instance, in India, PRADAN has scaled down technologies developed by government institutes for mushroom and raw silk production, and for leather processing and, in the case of the latter, has devised integrated schemes of credit and marketing (Vasimalai 1991). Under the Farmer Innovation and Technology Testing program in The Gambia, eight NGOs collaborated with the Department of Agricultural Research in 1989 to test a number of new crop varieties on-farm and provide feedback (Gilbert 1990). In East Africa, NGOs have been testing new crop varieties in Zambia (Copestake 1990) and in Zimbabwe (according to MacGarry in Ndiweni and others 1991), and have been developing tree management practices in Zimbabwe (according to Gumbo in Ndiweni and others 1991) and Kenya (according to Arum in Mung'ala and Arum 1991).

Dissemination methods. Diffusion and dissemination of the technologies with which they work is ultimately limited by NGOs' small size and limited spatial coverage, although some studies demonstrate significant impacts of NGO disseminated technologies among small producers (Aguirre and Namdar 1991). Perhaps more important than this direct impact have been institutional and methodological innovations developed by NGOs, which facilitate the dissemination of technologies, particularly innovations facilitating the delivery of small amounts of credit to peasant producers. An obvious example is the Grameen Bank, but another would be the joint fund developed by La Central Ecuatoriana de Servicios Agrícolas - the Ecuadorian Center for Agricultural Services (CESA) in conjunction with the National Agrarian Bank in Ecuador (Jordan and others 1989, p. 281).

NGOs have sought to develop dissemination methods consistent with their wider participatory and empowering approaches. For instance, in Thailand, the Appropriate Technology Association developed farmer-to-farmer methods of disseminating rice-fish farming technologies, which have subsequently been adapted by the department of agriculture. In Ecuador, CESA has developed systems for farmer-managed seed multiplication and distribution (CESA 1991; Mastrocola, Andrade, and Camacho 1991). A number of NGOs in eastern Bolivia use local radio services to disseminate information on agricultural technologies.

NGOs have been much quicker than GOs to develop networks as a tool for the information exchange. Examples include the East India Farming Systems Research Network operated by Ramakrishna Mission (Chakraborty and others 1991) and the national network of development organizations working on environment, energy, and community development, which comprise the Kenya Energy and Environment Organizations (KENGO) (according to Arum in Mung'ala and Arum 1991).

Training activities and methods. As mentioned above, a number of NGOs train both members of other NGOs and of government organizations in participatory methods, for instance, Myrada (Fernandez 1991) and Ramakrishna Mission (Chakraborty and others 1991) in India, and GIA and AGRARIA in Chile (Berdegue 1990).

A particularly innovative approach was developed by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Gujarat, India, over a period of years (Shah and Mane, 1991). Their contact with farmer groups in a number of villages led to the identification of training needs on several topics. Initial attempts to have government services conduct the training proved unsuccessful. Despite AKRSP's attempts to have trainers make prior visits to villages in order to adapt their material to local situations, the courses themselves were held in a classroom setting, with trainers lecturing to farmers. Farmers' evaluations showed that they had learned little of practical value from the courses. AKRSP responded by developing a participatory training and extension methodology with local farmers, which it tried out successfully in several areas before bringing government staff in to observe, participate in, and finally adopt the methodology. Successful adoption was reinforced by informal networks, and exchange of experience at workshops and consultations.

A further innovation, this time the preparation of materials for training and dissemination, is reported by Gonsalves and Michlat-Teves (1991) for the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction in the Philippines. This NGO was given the funds by an international foundation to assemble resource persons from NGOs and GOs at a one-week workshop, the objective of which was to produce a completed Agroforestry Resource Kit. The manual was produced according to plan, and is now used widely.

Promoting farmer organizations for agricultural development. For many NGOs, if not most, the ultimate stated goal of their work is to enhance the rural poor's capacities for self-management and for negotiating with the state. In this regard many NGOs operate with a concept of participation that goes beyond the ways in which the word is generally expressed in farming systems and participatory research literature. For these NGOs to enhance participation means a commitment to work in popular education and in strengthening peasant organizations (Farrington and Bebbington 1991).

Consequently, NGOs have emphasized project methodologies and actions that contribute to strengthening the coordination between individual producers, and subsequently between communities. In such a context, seed and input distribution systems, irrigation development and management, and work with groups of farmers to design, conduct, and evaluate on-farm trials have become priority areas of action. By creating spaces where joint action is necessary the hope is to foster the formalization of an organization. In many cases such a combination of productive and organizational initiatives can increase the impact of the project and strengthen the organization simultaneously. The ultimate aim is to establish a financially and administratively self-sustaining organization (CESA 1980, 1991).

Notwithstanding these goals, and the rhetoric that surrounds them, there have been limitations to NGOs' contributions to the formation of farmer organizations. However, it remains the case that the bulk of the experience in linking agricultural development projects with organizational strengthening has been gained in the NGO sector and for that reason NGOs have much to teach GOs in this area.

NGO Performance and Institutional Characteristics

The overall picture is of a vibrant NGO sector whose principal strengths are a capacity for innovation, adaptation, responsiveness, and in certain measure popular participation, and whose principal weakness arises at the point of implementing and scaling up the impact of these innovations.

To give a full explanation of the reasons for these performance characteristics is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to draw attention to several considerations.¹²

At the heart of any explanation of this performance is the institutional structure of NGOs, individually and as a sector, for it is this structure, and the historical circumstances that gave rise to it, that are a source both of NGOs' strengths and of their weaknesses.

The creation of NGOs has been a response to tendencies in the state, economy, and society. As noted, many were formed in political opposition to governments that pursued policies toward the rural poor with which the NGOs' founders disagreed. Others were formed in response to ruling party patronage, or frequently authoritarianism, that forced nonparty members and/or left-leaning professionals out of public sector and university positions. Others were formed as a result of the crisis of developing country universities, particularly social science departments, starved of resources by government for either political (for example, Chile) or economic reasons. For all these groups, forming an NGO was in part a survival strategy, and in part a means to continue pursuing the sort of work these professionals wished to do.

The result was the formation of organizations that had to be small because such NGOs would live off relatively small grants from the North, and at times because smallness was a means of "keeping one's head low" in politically difficult circumstances. The political context meant NGOs were critical of government, which led them to avoid any contact with it. The structural context of their origins meant that the intellectual and professional calibre of NGO staff was generally high.

The result was small groups of motivated, qualified, and relatively well-paid professionals, often with close links to supportive northern universities offering postgraduate training,¹³ a recipe for creativity and innovation. The sociopolitical origins also have much to do with the frequently noted work mystique among NGO staff (Carroll 1992). Their smallness, and the related institutional flexibility, similarly contribute to this mystique, and to the NGOs' 'shallow' hierarchies, and their short lines of communication. Smallness and flexibility also facilitate effective collaboration among disciplines, a capacity for rapid decision taking, a quick response to eventualities and a work ethic (and corresponding reward systems) geared to generating sustainable processes and impacts.

But the smallness and the political origins and orientation of the NGOs are also their "Achilles' heel." The concern to keep a distance from public sector machinations, and the lingering distrust of the state are a clear consequence of these origins. The smallness also means that (a) NGO projects rarely address regional and structural factors that underlie rural poverty; (b) the research capacities of NGOs are resource constrained; (c) the dissemination capability of the NGO is highly circumscribed; and (d) the activities of different NGOs remain uncoordinated, and information exchange is poor. The distance they keep from the state structure means they are also distant from the main means of increasing such coordination and communication, of widening the impact of good innovations, and of gaining access to research that might address the technology generation constraints noted earlier.

Finally, the nonpublic nature of these NGOs leads to financial arrangements that are also a source of some of the weaknesses noted. Dependence on short cycle project funding is an obstacle to long-term perspectives and long-term research commitments (for instance in sustainable resource management research).^{14,15} Similarly the knowledge that other NGOs are seeking the same funds from a finite stock fosters an unhealthy competition that can make them unwilling to share information, and focus on rapid visible impacts in order to impress donors, so that they renew the grant (Kohl 1991). This can lead, for example, to the dissemination of technologies still insufficiently screened (Kohl 1991).

Institutional Implications for Public Sector Strategies under the Pressure of Structural Adjustment

The NGO experience has, then, been characterized by a wealth of creativity and action. Taken together, these leave as their heritage a corpus of accumulated knowledge and experience in the problems of agricultural development in complex, high-risk, rural environments among the poorer segments of the rural population.

At the same time there have been many failures, in part reflecting inherent limitations on the NGO model of rural development. Central to these limitations is the poor (or nonexistent), coordination of a large number of small, local activities conducted by a population of NGOs that has a real potential for continued proliferation.

In times of structural adjustment programs, as public sector resources for agricultural development become scarcer, the resulting challenges to government are (a) to support and enhance this NGO capacity for creativity; (b) to help address the conditions that obstruct the NGOs' contribution to sustainable and democratic forms of agricultural development; (c) to identify areas of action in which direct collaboration between GOs and NGOs may be viable; and (d) to incorporate the results and lessons from the NGO experience into wider programs of agricultural and rural development. Responding to these challenges will require a sensitive, measured response on the state's part, and will demand the characteristics of a strong state that several of the authors noted at the beginning of the paper called for.

Supporting and enhancing NGO creativity: resisting the temptation of instrumentalism. Taken as a population, NGOs have contact with a large number of rural producers, above all with poorer strata than those with whom the state has typically worked. In 1988, NGOs in Chile had as many staff as INDAP (Berdegue 1990). In 1990 in Bolivia, FAO counted 385 NGOs, 154 in the countryside (FAO 1990), and other informed estimates suspected the total was nearer 600 to 700. As such, there is a strong temptation to see the NGO sector as a potential disseminator on a mass scale.

This temptation should be resisted. If indulged uncritically, it may easily aggravate NGO-government relationships. In almost all our contacts with NGOs we have detected a strong criticism of governments and multilateral donors for seeing them as a resource to be used as a subsidy to the implementation of public programs. In Bolivia, when the idea was floated that the Bolivian Institute of Agricultural Technology would leave extension in the *altiplano* to NGOs, their reaction was lukewarm to say the least. Many NGOs reject such an instrumentalist attitude on the grounds that (a) they are very uncertain about participating in the privatization of the service provision that they argue should be the state's responsibility; and (b) if they are to play such a role, they must play a role in program design and decisionmaking as well: if responsibilities are to be shared, then so too must power.

This implies that any such devolution of implementation to NGOs must be carefully and openly discussed with them from the start, rather than presented as a *fait accompli*. The bad feeling generated in the Bolivian case was one of the factors that contributed to a very slow start in the planned restructuring of IBTA. It is now apparently being resolved by some skillful mediation by more sensitive individuals.

Second to force NGOs into an implementational role can easily damage the NGO and its capacity to innovate. Comparing the experiences of two Chilean NGOs, GIA and AGRARIA, with INDAP's extension program is illustrative here. Since 1990, INDAP has allowed NGOs to bid for contracts to implement agricultural extension, expanding a mode of contracting in which only commercial extension companies had been allowed to bid under the Pinochet regime. AGRARIA

committed itself wholesale to the program, more than doubling its staff with the new INDAP contracts it won. However, the number and inflexibility of the contractual requirements prevents those parts of AGRARIA working with INDAP from pursuing the social promotional work that has characterized the NGOs' work in the past. This has introduced tensions within the organization between those working under the rigors of INDAP contracts, and those on the softer projects of donor agency money that allow more time to be spent experimenting and in fostering farmer organization. It also has hindered AGRARIA's capacity to continue innovating in extension methods. The time spent simply administering the contract has diverted staff attention from developing their reflections on the implications of these contracts to generate and publish alternatives. While AGRARIA's strategy has been to use the income from these contracts to subsidize experimental work in postharvest stages of the food system, which shows signs of being successful, the institution is very concerned that the burdens of implementation are damaging the cohesion and identity of the organization (Aguirre and Namdar 1991).

GIA, by contrast, has decided to treat the possibility of bidding for INDAP contracts as a chance for a new form of research. By participating in the contracts, GIA can study their mechanisms, and their implications for both the farmer and the implementing agency. Consequently, GIA has bid for and won a restricted number of contracts in order to study the process of administering extension under INDAP's criteria. GIA intends to publish some of these findings, with recommendations on how to amend INDAP's strategies.

This innovative capacity of NGOs is an important resource, given that the pressure of workloads and the frictions of bureaucratic procedure mean that innovation does not come easily to the public sector. The study (Cardoso, Caso, and Vivar 1991) of the on-farm program in Ecuador's public sector demonstrates the constraints of bureaucracy. Thus the state should place a strong premium on nurturing NGOs' innovative capacity, and then on developing means to harvest the fruit of such creativity for wider implementation.

If, as we are claiming, a heavy emphasis on delivery hinders innovation, the implication is that the most innovative NGOs (like GIA) ought to be stimulated to continue innovating, while others be encouraged to work in delivery programs that incorporate such innovations. This implies a differentiated public policy, supporting research in some NGOs, but also sustaining a subcontracting implementation program. Research ought to be financially supported through programs of competitive research funding, with support going beyond the short term in order to allow analysis of longer-term resource management issues, and to take pressure off research competent NGOs to look for implementation money. Over time, different NGOs would find their niche, some as innovators, others as implementers. The implementers ought to be supported with training programs, perhaps given by other innovative NGOs, disseminating ("scaling up") their innovations. Ultimately a three-tiered NGO community might emerge: some as applied research centers; others as essentially rural development consultants (contracted to GOs and MSOs alike) akin to the 'Technology Transfer Companies' of Chile, and the IFAD proposals for contracting NGOs to implement a technology transfer and rural credit system for Peru (IFAD 1991); and others as hybrids combining research and implementation with donor and national resources.

Financial Implications. This of course brings us to the issue of what, if any, government's role might be in funding NGO activity. There are several mechanisms available.

Research Grants. If it is accepted that NGOs' creativity is a national resource that should be promoted, then there is a clear role for government support for this research. The mechanism for support might be a research contract, another might be grants with fewer stipulations. The one main demand on the NGO ought to be that the results of the research be available and published in the public domain. Such grants also would allow support of longer-term research activities than NGO donors generally support.

Contracts for Implementation. While there are many drawbacks to contracting implementation to NGOs, these relationships will clearly be important in the future, and some NGOs will opt for such contracts. While accountability requires that the contract have terms of reference, there is still a case to be made for incorporating an element of flexibility into the relationship, to allow the NGO to respond to local needs and problems as they arise.

Contracts for Training. If NGOs are to train public employees, these services should be paid.

Consultancy Contracts. Another promising mechanism is to channel certain consulting work to the NGO sector, with contracts given to the NGO rather than the individual so that the income generated contributes to strengthening the NGO's funding base. Given the high quality of professionals in many NGOs they are a clear source of expert knowledge. Indeed their staff have already been used in multilateral agencies preproject consultancies, apparently to good effect.

Flexible Legislation. Government's contribution to strengthening NGOs' financial standing need not be only direct. Equally important is to provide a legislative framework that makes it easier for the NGO to experiment with new ways of raising resources. Many NGOs have charitable status, but a further support to NGOs could be to make legislation for the creation of foundations more flexible. Similarly attractive might be to establish mechanisms to allow NGOs to combine project and consulting activities, charging market rates in the latter in order to contribute to central funds or project resources, but without losing their charitable status. In Chile, AGRARIA is currently considering just such a strategy. Conversely, any government attempt to begin taxing NGOs' incomes would only weaken their capacity for innovation and experimentation.

Potential areas for direct NGO-GO collaboration. Despite all the caveats about the problems of a GO approach to NGOs that seeks to "use" them, there do seem to be areas in which direct collaboration and sharing of resources, skills, and responsibilities could be mutually advantageous for NGO and GO alike. One area is in more carefully conceived contracting relations.

Another area with potential for closer collaboration is in sustaining (and enhancing) on-farm research programs. From an NGO viewpoint, a contact with such programs could be favorable for various reasons: (a) it would help address a frequent problem for NGOs, namely their poor access to GO technologies, especially seed; (b) it would be a means of gaining research and technological support, to help address some of NGOs' technology generation constraints; (c) it could offer a channel for NGO influence, via the on-farm research programs (OFRPs) on experiment station research; and (d) combining these three points could enhance the efficiency of NGOs work in technology adaptation work.

This NGO need marries well to a need of the public sector: OFRPs are expensive because of the diagnostic research they require, and the personnel and travel costs of maintaining on-farm trials. Consequently, they are often early casualties of resource cutbacks (Biggs 1989). As an example of a GO response to this constraint, the former director of Ecuador's OFRP has proposed an NGO-OFRP collaboration in which the GO provides technical assistance in the research, and facilitates NGO access to public sector generated technology, whereas NGOs provide local diagnostic knowledge, supervise on-farm trials, and conduct the bulk of the field adaptation, and on the basis of their experiences influence public sector research (Cardoso 1991).

Such collaborations could be the basis for the establishment of regional research planning committees, in which NGOs, farmers' organizations, and the GO would all have voting power. On-farm programs seem to be perhaps the most promising area in which to initiate GO-NGO collaborations.

A role for GOs in addressing constraints on NGO impact. It was noted earlier that not all NGO generated technologies are useful - there have been misguided innovations that NGOs have disseminated with negative impacts on the rural economy (Kohl 1991). These ought to be monitored. There may be a role for a national technology evaluation council to try to avoid this sort of problem.

Much as NGOs will dislike the idea, some form of quality control is required. Again this offers scope for an initiative by the state. The sensitivity of the issue, however, implies that from the outset NGOs and farmer organizations ought be represented on the council.

However, perhaps the key constraints on NGOs' impacts are their limited resources and the poor coordination and communication among them and between them and GOs. One obvious role for the public sector would be to install mechanisms for the communication of innovations (and failures) in order to avoid duplication of efforts among different institutions. Periodic meetings, fora, or information systems could all contribute to this.

Coordination is a step beyond communication, requiring greater mutual trust, and so should be preceded with sustained informal contacts between GOs and NGOs discussing the possibility of increased coordination. Consequently, this is perhaps best initiated at local and provincial levels in periodic meetings. Again, this is a task appropriate for the public sector, both because of its axial administrative role in local society, and because, being the locus of policy and programming decisions, it could take the initiative of inviting NGOs into such programming. Contacts might begin with efforts to avoid overlaps between the actions of different institutions, and later move on to the planning of regional agricultural strategies, in which NGOs would also have decisionmaking power.

Some examples demonstrate that this coordination is possible. In South Nyanza, Kenya, the District Forest Officer has been able to act as a focal point for coordination of NGO and GO environmental activities (according to Charles in Musyoka, Charles, and Kaluli 1991). This contrasts with experience in neighboring Siaya District where many of the twenty-six NGOs with agricultural and agroforestry projects have individual links to government, but the absence of agreed mechanisms of coordination means that overlaps persist. All these are ways in which government can help address the much noted problem of scaling up (Annis 1987; Morgan 1990).

Incorporating NGO lessons into wider programs. A further stage in addressing the problem of scaling up, and one that is specifically a government task, is to incorporate lessons from NGOs into those government programs that continue to be implemented through the public sector. Such incorporation would be facilitated by the information exchange fora discussed earlier, but a further step might be to consider setting up advisory councils for public programs with NGO and farmer organization representation on the councils.

There are many different degrees to which lessons and innovations from the NGO experience might be incorporated in public programs. The simplest would be to work with technologies adapted or introduced by NGOs. Less simple, but not difficult, would be to incorporate NGOs' methodological innovations in participation, organizational strengthening, extension, screening, and so on. A more profound change would be to take lessons from NGOs' institutional structure and incorporate them into GOs. This would mean decentralizing authority within GOs, increasing the flexibility and adaptiveness of local offices. It also would involve structuring local offices of GO programs along the lines of NGOs' small, relatively informal field offices, while retaining the coordinating mechanisms made possible by the presence of the overlying institutional structure of the public sector.

A yet more radical institutional response would be to accept that the still limited accountability of NGOs to local populations is equally a shortcoming of the public sector, whereas local rural councilors are increasingly elected by the rural population, the staff of ministries of agriculture and rural development projects most definitely are not. If GOs are to criticize NGOs for not allowing real farmer participation in the design and monitoring of their projects, then GOs should also move toward allowing such participation in public programs of agricultural development. This is not to argue that farmers should hire and fire GO staff, but that they should have a far more active role in designing these projects.

The likelihood, of course, is that this will happen only rarely, partly because of GO resistance, and partly because organizations of the rural poor that would elect representatives do not exist everywhere. So in the short term, it is more likely that NGOs might be involved in these programs as representatives of the concerns of the rural poor. Indeed perhaps the key way in which the public sector can enhance the impact of NGO initiatives is to allow them as representatives of the rural poor to influence public programs through their insights and experiences. Ultimately though, and sooner rather than later, it should be the poor themselves who are there, with NGOs advising as experienced specialists.

Endnotes

1. This paper draws on multiagency study, coordinated by the Overseas Development Institute since 1989, into the scope for closer NGO-government links in the generation and transfer of agricultural technologies. The case studies, from Africa, Asia, and South America, will be published in three volumes by Routledge (United Kingdom) in 1993, together with an overview volume.
2. "The Bank's NGO initiative turned out to be part of an international wave of interest in NGOs. The dramatic spread of democracy ... has led to more favorable government attitudes toward citizens' groups in many countries. More generally, the experience with ineffective public-sector programs and tight fiscal constraints has made many governments aware of their limitations and more interested in what NGOs can contribute" (Beckmann 1991).
3. All non-English quotations have been translated by the authors.
4. Carroll's (1992) assessment of the characteristics of successful NGOs is a striking and illuminating exception in this regard.
5. Asia Regional Workshop on "NGOs, Renewable Natural Resources Management and Links with the Public Sector." Held in Hyderabad, India, 16-20 September 1991.
6. India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Indonesia.
7. IICA (1987) and the South America Regional Workshop "Generation and Transfer of Agricultural Technology: NGO and Public Sector Roles." Held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, 2-7 December 1991.
8. This is the "scaling up" concern noted by authors like Annis (1987).
9. An example here from the current research is the involvement of an NGO (CESA) and an MSO (Tukayta) in an IFAD funded large irrigation scheme in the southern Ecuadorian Andes (CESA 1991).
10. "To take advantage of the opportunities and avoid the pitfalls requires of NGOs new disciplines of analysis, research, and observation, and a rethinking of their position on development policy issues." (Clark 1991, p. 176).

11. The Bank suggests that such dialogues have led NGOs to see the need for economic reforms they would previously have rejected out of hand (World Bank 1991c, p. 4).
12. Carroll (1992) is a wide ranging and very useful study of the characteristics of NGOs that perform strongly.
13. For instance, in several Latin America countries significant numbers of NGO staff have trained at the University of Louvain.
14. The situation in the public sector is not necessarily any better. An eye on the next election also fosters "short-termism," and pressures on public budgets mean GOs cannot be sure of the resources they will have next year.
15. However, it should be noted that some NGOs have been highly successful in long-term research endeavors. For instance, the Mennonite Central Committee has conducted several pieces of long-term research during its 17 years of experimental work in Bangladesh. The agricultural origins of many MCC volunteers obviously foster this perspective. Similarly, the development research orientation of Baharatiya Agro-Industries Foundation (BAIF) in India has permitted its substantial investment in research.

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