Hivos-ISS Civil Society Building Knowledge Programme
Report of MA Student Research Paper Seminars 2008

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Background

Since 2005 Hivos and ISS have been working together in a Civil Society Building Knowledge Programme (CSB KP). At the core of this collaboration is the interaction between practitioners and researchers to facilitate innovative research, improve policies and programmes and strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations.

The Knowledge Programme focuses on three main questions:

1. How can we understand the *dynamics of civil society formation* and the role of local actors in this process?
2. How do *external actors* contribute to this process?
3. How does civil society building as a process contribute to *structural changes* in unequal power balances in society?

In 2008, four ISS MA students (Karoline Kemp, Rebecca Davidson, Henry Armas, Jasper Hootsmans) were selected to conduct field research with Hivos partners, one working at a regional level in Africa, and others at a national level in Tanzania, India and Peru. The research was focused around the two main themes identified for the research cooperation on Civil Society Building: (1) social movements and citizenship, and (2) civic action for responsive government (for more information see www.hivos.net).

Hivos and ISS jointly organised a Network Seminar for the fourth time on 27 November and 9 December 2008. The case studies presented explored the diversity of roles and strategies employed by civil society organizations based on the recent field research of four ISS MA students supported by the Knowledge Programme in 2008. The aim of these seminars was to better understand the power of civil society to influence the state around issues such as HIV/AIDS, women's rights, reproductive rights, and intellectual property rights.

During the two afternoon seminars (with more than 40 participants), each MA student had about 20 minutes to present the major findings, followed by feedback from Hivos and ISS staff members, and discussion with the participants. The reflection and debate during the seminar were guided, firstly by the underlying questions of the Knowledge Programme and the contributions of these research projects to answering these questions and, secondly, the value of collaboration between a knowledge-based organisation (ISS) and a practice-based organisation (Hivos).

A brief report follows below of the major findings of the Research Paper findings as well as some of the most important points of discussion raised. In conclusion, some general lessons and implications for the Knowledge Programme are listed.

Research paper 1: Claims to Success: Advocacy for the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa

Presentation

Karoline Kemp (from Canada) examined the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in policy advocacy in Africa. Her case study looked at the possible role ICTs played in the successful ratification of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. A network organisation, Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR), had an explicit mandate to use ICTs as part of their campaign strategy to create an alternative invited space to the closed offline structures set up by the African Union and member state governments. SOAWR used Pambazuka News (www.pambazuka.org) - an online tool for non-sectarian news, analysis and debate on a wide range of issues.

The findings suggest that the level of communication and network-building using ICTs did strengthen the campaign, creating an online community for SOAWR. The benefits of working together in a coalition were clear: building capacity (such as journalism training), sharing resources, knowledge and experience, and thereby increasing legitimacy. Local partners were able to 'translate' the Protocol into local and plain language(s).

Karoline concluded that the ratification of the Protocol may have been the 'easiest' part of the process, while implementation and popularisation are just as important. ICTs are complementary to (rather than replacing) the community-building work with grassroots organisations, however using ICTs for this purpose remains a barrier due to more limited access of these communities. In terms of political lobbying the use of ICTs remains underutilised and is more dominated by (personal) relationships between civil society leaders and political structures and individuals.

Discussion

Points for discussion were made by Margreet van Doodewaard (Hivos) and Ria Brouwers (ISS).

Margreet started by pulling out the key question from the paper: would the Protocol have been ratified if ICTs had not been applied? She says that Karoline has set herself the difficult task of finding out what contribution the application of ICTs has made to the ratification of the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. This is an attribution question that is difficult because of the many factors that play a role in these processes. Karoline is not alone in this – it is a classic dilemma faced by many organisations, including Hivos (ICT4D programmes).

Karoline recognizes this in her paper and reflects on different aspects of civil society. The role of well-connected leaders in SOAWR, for example, who are in a position to access high-level government officials, proved to be more important than originally thought. In Kenya this is further strengthened by the fact that strong civil society leaders often move over to Government or Parliament (and vice versa). In development thinking we often underestimate the catalytic power of the pro-active individual, while focusing too much on the institutional level (NGO/civil society organisation, government, private sector). If the leader leaves, the organisation also weakens. Margreet argues we should focus on key individuals or loose networks as agents of change. For example in Eastern Africa, Hivos has developed a programme around citizen agency. She argues that ICTs (including the rapid increase in mobile phones) facilitate interaction and follow-up between different actors.

Margreet also argued that SOAWR's role as a network organisation in effectively liaising with a wide variety of actors may have contributed more to the success of the ratification process than ICTs. The theory on network organisations argues that a network can be successful if it is

established for a very specific goal (with a clear beginning and end) and it is strongly tied to the interests of the participants. SOAWR provided relatively strong and clear facilitation – another crucial success element for networks.

SOAWR also works at grassroots level. A mix of ICTs – both digital and more traditional analog methods (radio, noticeboards, storytelling) – often plays a crucial role in raising awareness of rights in poor communities. Margreet asked whether ICTs may have a greater role to play as a communication tool in the dissemination of the Protocol, rather than the ratification process itself.

Margreet highlighted the point in Karoline's paper that ICT is a means to create spaces for civil society. Mobile phones, the internet and wireless connectivity allow civil society organisations and individual activists to claim their own space. In the face of opposing forces, it allows a relatively safe environment – to inform, to react, to act, to interact quickly, and to link the profusion of networks online.

Ria raised three points related to the question 'what can Africans do with ICTs'? The paper touches on the debate about how to define both 'access' and 'ICTs' (also radio and many other forms besides internet). She highlighted the point in Karoline's thesis that the use of internet in this particular case study involved the most active people within organisations that have been able to connect with each other (not only upwards but also horizontally) to push ratification of the Protocol.

Ria argued that these activists and politicians are a sort of 'elite' that works together but that this is not connected downward yet. Despite the rapid changes in Africa there is still a digital divide between the urban (young) and the rural (poor). The paper states that the digital divide is not just technical one – there is still a gap in terms of bringing the protocol down to the vernacular/local languages. Ria noted that these ideas have not yet been worked out to include a more cultural notion of digital divide. It is not only language or technology, but also culture and attitude, and the way people communicate with each other. She calls for more research about the prospects of ICTs in primarily oral societies – how do people use the Internet in communities where face-to-face communication is a priority?

Ria also noted that part of the research relates to participation theory and distinguishes between upward and downward advocacy. ICTs in this case served upward advocacy and horizontal links between activists and politicians, but to a lesser extent downwards in terms of bringing ideas to a larger group of people. Ria questioned whether SOAWR rightly played a major role in terms of upward advocacy, while other organisations may be better placed to serve the downward relationships with the wider public. She agrees with Karoline that the ratification may have been the 'easy' part and that SOAWR is now faced with new challenges of ensuring the Protocol is disseminated, widely known, and enforced. In that regard, Ria had a policy question for Karoline: Can the same organisation be expected to be effective in the coming phase where interaction with the public will be paramount and would Karoline fund SOAWR for that kind of work? Karoline responded that SOAWR is well placed in terms of networks across the continent and partners on the ground that can work with at grassroots level. Margreet shared the information that Hivos will not fund SOAWR for a next phase.

During discussion with participants it was argued that the internet is only one component of ICTs. Text (sms) campaigns have been used effectively for advocacy campaigns in Africa. As was demonstrated by a SOAWR campaign, as a stand-alone they have limited effect and should be part of a broader campaign. Other examples were raised of young women from rural

communities being mentored to write blogs for women's rights campaigns. Online AIDS awareness game for youth is another example. Experiences in the 'millennium villages' in Kenya found that civil society was reluctant to use online forums as it opened them up to government interference.

In conclusion, the use of ICTs in the ratification and later implementation and popularisaton of the Protocol will likely require a much wider engagement and broader strategy in future (for example, using radio, print media and even mobile phones) for both civil society and external actors that work on these processes. Support should be given to different actors with a specific roles working on women's rights at the community, national and international levels. Face-to-face communication and interaction remains important to bring various programmes to the grassroots.

Research paper 2: Framing and Claiming Reproductive Rights: A Case Study of Civil Society Actors in Tanzania

Presentation
Rebecca Davidson (from Canada) presented the main findings of her study focusing on the issue of maternal mortality - how civil society organisations in Tanzania are both framing the issue of maternal mortality as a human rights issue and how rights claims are being made.

The point of entry for Rebecca's field research began with exploring the lived realities of reproductive health and rights in Tanzania. Focus group meetings in rural Dodoma showed how the issue of safe motherhood was framed and negotiated by grassroots women. These discussions provided rich material in which women talked about their access (or lack thereof) to reproductive health services and their desire and sense of entitlement for safe deliveries with skilled attendants *as well as* broader access to health services in their community. Distance and transport were the key barriers women faced to delivery services. Participants in the focus groups had a clear sense of entitlement as well as clearly articulated their limited opportunities for increased economic empowerment and self-sufficiency - an important reminder that reproductive health rights are located within the larger context of women's lives.

Focus group participants had very limited direct contact with civil society organisations on these issues. This may be in part because the focus of organisations in this research was on working with Government health officials and therefore their interaction was mediated by district level health staff with respect to reproductive rights promotion. This also revealed a gap between urban-based NGOs and rural women that are often claimed as their constituency.

Socio-legal theory was used to explore the relationship between international human rights norms and how these are understood, experienced and practiced in the Tanzania context. Particularly useful to the research was Sally E. Merry's conceptualisation of "translators", whom she describes as civil society actors who travel between transnational forums, such as those involved in articulating internationally agreed upon global human rights norms and their local context to translate these norms into the vernacular.

Merry also found in her research on gender violence, a difference in approaches between those organisations that focused on providing services and building rights consciousness among the

constituents they served and organisations that focused their efforts at the national level to advocate for reform in line with international rights treaties. Merry argues these converge in important ways in promoting rights.

Rebecca also found that the framing of the issue of maternal mortality by civil society actors in Tanzania informed the way in which rights claims are made, with a distinction she borrows from Merry between a "social-service approach" and a "human rights advocacy approach". The relationship between civil society organisations and the state on the issue of maternal mortality was found to be influenced by the chosen approach to human rights promotion. Those organizations that framed the lack of progress in reducing maternal mortality in part because of a lack of political will often took a "human rights advocacy approach" challenging power relations. These organisations were found to have a more difficult relationship with the state. Those organizations that worked to fill service delivery gaps left by the government, or who took a "social service delivery approach", often had a more amicable relationship with the state.

Rebecca found that while many organisations were involved in mobilisation around citizen engagement with the state, building a widespread (mass) political movement was not a priority for civil society organisations in Tanzania. Her investigation also found more evidence of *translations* (programs or projects that have been adopted from other contexts) than *translators* (individuals that adapt programs to the local context). Multilateral organisations played more of a role in translating global policies into the national context. Civil society organisations played an important role in terms of moving between the national and local levels. There still exists a large gap between policy at national level and implementation at the district level, particularly in the context of decentralisation in Tanzania. In addition, civil society organisations raised lack of funding as a barrier to participating in international forums. Project-based funding means that there is often no support to attend regional or international forums that discuss these issues.

A key aspect of this research was how reproductive rights are adapted to the local context and in turn how civil society actors use them. Culture and tradition were found to influence current safe motherhood discourses (for example, the naming of "traditional" birth attendants). Rather than a static and essentialised model of culture, Rebecca argues that culture is always contested and can instead be seen also as an opportunity, working within social and kinship arrangements for human rights promotion around safe motherhood.

In terms of moving forward and potential opportunities, Rebecca recommended that a future focus for civil society organisations could be citizen engagement and advocacy to link rights to national law and international treaties. Legal engagement could be one tool to garner public interest and government attention. Another strategy could be to promote a rights consciousness among local constituents to reinforce and support change at both the local and national levels. Widening civil society organisations working definition of reproductive health and rights to include the issue of abortion and sexuality (including sexual pleasure) could move the issue of reproductive rights away from simply issues related to reproduction and instead challenge current narrow definitions of reproductive health in Tanzania. Another strategy related to culture could be to look for strategies and the capacity for change in local social arrangements to protect women's reproductive health rights.

Finally some implications for practice were suggested, including funding from organisations like Hivos to allow more local organisations to be involved at international and regional forums and to encourage *upward* accountability. Support could also be given to develop innovative tools for the media and civil society and enable them to put more pressure on the government and international community to move forward the safe motherhood agenda in Tanzania.

Discussion
Points for discussion were made by Marijke Mooi (Hivos) and Jeff Handmaker (ISS).

Marijke started by stating that the paper provides important conclusions for Hivos' focus on strengthening civil society. She noted that the effectiveness of advocacy work in Tanzania is weak. Despite an estimated 16,000 registered NGOs, there is no real mass movement. The progress around maternal mortality has also not been positive. Budgetary allocations have been decreased and the government is really only paying lip service to the international agreements. She wonders how could civil society organisations be more effective? Usually they cover small pockets of influence and lack political drive. What kind of space is available in Tanzania and what is the political power of civil society organisations?

From her own experience with Hivos programmes, Marijke also noted that there is often a gap between the practical issues faced by women (lack of access to transport to reach health services) and the focus of civil society organisations on structural long-term changes. Apparently the civil society organisations don't see how to bridge this gap or picked up by the women's movement. The paper argues that action-oriented research may be able to address this gap – this needs more elaboration.

Culture and customary law seems to be a bigger hindrance to women accessing health services. While participation and democratisation is important to get access to rights. Marijke wonders how Rebecca sees the role of 'translators' in this given that they seem to focus on the translation of international law to national law? Or is there another group of civil society organisations that could look at customary law?

Jeff was intrigued by Rebecca's initial proposal to use socio-legal theory as way of evaluating the space for civil society to advocate for a very difficult area of rights claims. He also finds the socio-legal approach helps to understand how global rights and concepts are understood and articulated at the local level, how they are perceived by rural women and national elites, including the organisations advocating these rights that tend to be more urban-based. Jeff comments that this socio-legal approach explains the extent to which rights have been extended and is therefore more sophisticated and useful for Hivos.

He remarked that Rebecca's paper also revealed some important political dynamics. For example, 'elites' are clearly not only composed of national government representatives, but also NGOs, health service providers and advocates. All these elites interact in different forums and this is an important dimension to recognise in explaining the framing and claiming of rights. Jeff also remarked that Rebecca's paper revealed how important it is to understand how rights are understood and articulated in their historically-specific context. For example, in Tanzania, 'safe motherhood' is a locally-embedded concept, as compared to 'reproductive rights', which are part of a more abstract discussion at the international level. Civil society organisations need to be aware of the rights consciousness that people have and how relevant this is (or not) to their daily lives in gaining access to health services, which may be greatly affected – as Rebecca has noted – by distance, cost and unreliable forms of transport. Jeff argues that there is indeed a link, but also an important distinction to be made between how women access services (filling the gap) and access their rights (a more abstract concept) and to explain how these are mutually reinforcing.

Jeff further remarked that Rebecca's paper illustrates well how translation operates both upwards and downwards, taking place cumulatively over a long period of time. Framing global policies is part of upward translation. This also leads to a question. What concrete role is there for Hivos to

encourage the increased participation of grassroots organisations in global processes? In terms of downward translation, Jeff wonders what Rebecca sees as the role of Hivos in supporting more horizontal relationships within government and amongst civic actors, to transform institutions or organizations responsible for service delivery? Is there a role for Hivos to support and strengthen other types of "translators", for example other civil society organisations and advocates (police, courts, local and national government, parliament, regional and international human rights and implementation bodies such as WHO and UNDP)?

Jeff reiterated that one of the biggest challenges in realising this whole project relates to the 'mutually reinforcing' relationship between access rights and services. He argues that there is, on the one hand, a need to work with government, while on the other hand a need for critical advocacy, which involves an inherent tension.

Rebecca responded that those advocating for structural change from within the health system do face a dilemma. It is a matter of setting priorities and balancing in terms of urgent needs in the short term and longer-term structural changes in the health system. While space and political power in Tanzania have increased in recent years, accessing reproductive rights is definitely still limited. Rebecca argued that civil society organisations may need to take a more confrontational approach to promote action on the part of the government. Rebecca will be undertaking a follow-up study on some of these issues for Hivos in Tanzania in early 2009.

Synthesis

Jeff drew a number of general lessons from the two presentations by Karoline and Rebecca, as well as the discussions.

It was clear that attribution is an important question for Hivos and one that is very difficult to evaluate. There may be a need for a more innovative framework to do this. The translation relationship between law and society could provide such a framework to help Hivos in understanding problems and addressing them. The papers all looked at how to open up historically closed spaces in different contexts. In terms of creating safe spaces in the context of ICTs, there is concern from many about regulation by state. Hivos is acutely aware that ICTs can facilitate communication and also increases civil society power.

Second, the concept of 'translation' can literal or figurative, through training journalists, for example, or looking at opportunities in culture and traditions. This may require a 'total' campaign (or holistic approach) that includes both service delivery and advocacy. Upward translation means understanding how policies are framed and how participation can be promoted. Downward translation in terms of informing the grassroots is also needed.

Third, it was clear from the presentations that we should not entrench these types of initiatives in one single organisation, but rather build networks of activists. In supporting these initiatives we should also realise that elites are not necessarily the 'enemy' but can help to raise the profile of grassroots organisations to play a more potent role in policy forums.

Research paper 3: Citizenship Participation in HIV/AIDS Policies: A case study of the Global Fund in Peru

Presentation

Henry Armas (from Peru) explored the experience of people living with HIV/AIDS participating in (Hivos partner) CONAMUSA: a multi-sectoral space based on a Global Fund model that is also shared with actors such as the Health Department and NGOs. The political stories of HIV/AIDS activists that participate in this model are marked by stigma and urgency to obtain access to life-saving anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs). Looking at the motivations of political action, a new form was identified by Henry called 'necessity participation'. This has important implications for the role of external actors in terms of sustaining advocacy. The paper also looked at the importance of 'micro-participation' and the role of support groups as possible spaces for raising political awareness.

Henry began his presentation explaining his theoretical framework and methodology. He showed results from a drawing exercise using 'rivers' as a metaphor done with focus group participants. This allowed fascinating insights into the life of activists before the diagnosis of HIV/AIDS, as well as the experiences in the platforms and deliberative processes around CONAMUSA.

An important focus of the research was motivation and circumstances behind participation – why do people become HIV/AIDS activists, particularly when the cost is so high in terms of the risk of discrimination and stigma? Henry explained that activists in the period before access to ARVs had to assume this high cost to live, as their life was already in danger. Henry developed his concept of 'necessity participation' tied to the need to access medicines and survive. Another characteristic of this participation is that the level of involvement among the activists is deeper than in other civil society cases of participation in which life it not at risk. The fact that the activists share the same diagnosis gives a different feature to the political interaction.

Interestingly Henry found that there are people that will continue participating once the necessity has gone, as they have discovered that their participation can have an effect in their lives beyond the necessity. However, he found that the main effect of the post-ARV period in Peru was a depoliticisation and weakening of the movement.

In terms of relevance for development organizations, Henry raised the activist-consultant dilemma. The Global Fund money injected into CONAMUSA affected the different groups and activism in general, changing power relationships, dynamics and practices in civil society. Henry suggested that an alternative approach to reduce negative impacts might be to implement the funding by sequences giving time for adaptation and more transformative processes. This will require activism that goes beyond the immediate interests, and a capacity to reflect on an agenda that not necessarily will affect them directly but that will have a deeper social transformation.

Henry argued that it is important that citizens have spaces for interaction with others, especially those who are more excluded and disempowered. The support groups ('Grupo de Ayuda Mutua' GAMs) were such a space for 'micro-participation' in which people with an HIV diagnosis could get together, not only to support each other, but also to move to activism.

Discussion

Comments were made by Rosalba Icaza (ISS) and John Cameron (ISS).

John raised three main points. Firstly, on the concept of necessity participation, he said that even if we are looking at something that seems to be driven by necessity, we still have to be aware of differences within that movement. Necessity does not simply wipe out all the differences such as rural/urban, different kinds of sexuality, and different kinds of claims. On the concept of micro-participation and the 'personal is political', John argued that Henry was eliding them very closely

to each other in the presentation, while in his paper it is clear that it is much more problematic than that. The paper raises questions such as how do we move from centres of therapy to centres of political action? Therapy can be provided in particular ways, sites, and locations. Does this become more confusing to political action? The personal does not become political automatically, we need to be aware of the different ways this happens.

John highlighted another point from Henry's paper describing how some of the greatest activists became consultants. Large or even small-scale disbursing of donor funds requires channels in which it can be delivered, and these channels require time and energy of those coming towards those funds. It arguably makes them less political and more agents of the funders, and ends up diverting time and energy of some people away from what they would otherwise do. Henry responded there was a certain level of cooptation that stemmed from the $ 96 million channel of Global Fund money. Eventually it caused a degree of depoliticisation in the movement. Suddenly the activists became paid consultants and there was limited advocacy work being done.

The third point was about the focus of the research on people living with HIV. A valuable contribution in the paper is the recognition that HIV, once you are receiving ARVs, allows you an option of not being identified as a person with HIV. It allows the disease to become less a part of your 'identity for life' – it becomes publicly invisible. While there may be a culture of care at home, ARVs allow you to be as active or inactive a citizen as you choose to be.

This last point also relates to Susan Sontag's descriptions of how illness and diseases are 'metaphored'. John is interested in stigma as a commonly used metaphor in the HIV discourse, but noted that those with HIV do not usually have an immediately visible or evident impairment. He would like to see research on this to think through how this epidemic has become metaphored in different ways.

Rosalba then highlighted the interesting research methodology that is one of the strongest aspects of the paper - engaging with critical images, methaphors, and focus groups with people living HIV/AIDS. In terms of the future, she was interested in what lessons were learned in using this type of methodology. It could be very valuable for Hivos to produce an article that is more explicit about the methods and challenges faced. Henry responded that the categories he used in river methaphor allowed comparison of what happened in lives of people before knew they were positive, then immediately following and how some were channelled to different political groups. He also used images for discussion. One challenge was that respondants gave different meanings to the same image and so he reported the differences rather than the similarities.

Rosalba was also interested in the way in which Henry developed the concept of necessity participation. She asks whether this is only a concept, or should necessity participation also be treated as an outcome or process in itself? Henry responded that the effect of participation was varied. There is now a mational network of people living with HIV/AIDS. Those living in Lima still have more opportunities to access meetings with ministers. If there is a lack of ARV supplies, for example, those living in rural areas of towns can use mobile phones to reach the ministry in charge of supplies through the network of activists.

Rosalba also raised the question of time, stating that it is not the same for people living with HIV/AIDS to participate in CONAMUSA before and after access to ARVs became possible. The time factor is constantly neglected in participation studies, not only in academia but also in most analyses of citizen engagement. She encourages Henry to try to produce and disseminate an article on this neglected factor of time, as it is also relevant for other countries and sectors.

Finally, Rosalba noted that participation was framed in the paper in relation to one particular subjectivity, and then this subjectivity was related to one particular activity – the support groups (GAMs). She stated that it would be useful to have more information and a problematisation of how this process happened. During discussion a similar question was raised about what happened to the GAMs after the transformation? Some activists stayed and some left - what were the reasons behind this? Follow-up research would be interesting to analyse involvement in support groups - how are activists catalysed to different political groups. Henry responded that he also interviewed those who decided not to participate in the process after the transformation. Interestingly it was not a natural step to get involved in other political activities based on their increased political awareness. Many decided to refocus on their own careers and struggle with their own lives. There are still many other issues that need advocacy work, for example the level of infection amongst transgender sex workers is not discussed openly. Activists tend to use the more 'comfortable', socially accepted identity as HIV/AIDS activist rather than as a transgender.

In conclusion, the paper has made several significant contributions in terms of methodology, of increasing our understanding about participation and how political movements may flower may also collapse, and also contributing to our knowledge of civil society participation. There was a lot of interest in the participatory techniques used for the research. A proposal will be developed with Henry with the Knowledge Programme to share these techniques with other development organisations through articles, using an online community, and presentations in 2009.

Research paper 4: Revolutionizing the Global Aid Chain: Gandhian Grassroots and the Politics of Funding

Presentation
Jasper Hootsmans (from the Netherlands) examined a case study of Hivos partner *Navdanya* in India. The research set out to identify alternative spaces for grassroots NGOs and private aid agencies in order to change partner relations in a 'beyond aid' paradigm. While *Navdanya* is (partly) dependent on external funding from Hivos, the case study also looked at creating independent spaces based on forms of self-finance (like local fair trade systems) and inclusive networks of membership and volunteering. Jasper argued for more constituency-based forms of knowledge networks, platform creation and alternative development education (in the North).

Jasper began by presenting his analysis of conventional aid systems and the effects these have in terms of depoliticizing, immobilizing and homogenizing relations between private aid agencies and grassroots organisations. His explanation of the case study of *Navdanya* highlighted examples of grassroots spaces of resistance in the Gandhian tradition with transformative forms of self-finance, such as local-oriented, small-scale and non-profit fair trade systems and inclusive networks of membership and volunteering. He argued that these types of radical spaces have the potential to structurally challenge capitalism.

An implication of these changes would be a change in the roles of private aid agencies, shifting from the exclusive function of aid distribution to more constituency-based forms of knowledge networks, platform creation and alternative development education, as well as more independent and structural forms of advocacy and campaigning.

Jasper acknowledged that, even an organisation such as *Navdanya* that can rely on the status of Vandana Shiva for their self-financed alternatives, is largely financed externally for their campaigns. The room for more confrontational advocacy is therefore limited by the

conditionalities of funding. He believes that while it is generally viewed as an open and flexible donor by partner organisations, Hivos itself is also limited by its practice of upward accountability.

Looking to the future, Jasper suggested a focus on forms of transformative self-finance that also generate funds to cover the costs of the social struggle to achieve structural transformative change. Grassroots organisations would then occupy independently defined spaces for advocacy and campaigning without the constraints of upward accountability and dependency. This would also allow these grassroots organisations to be more confrontational, for example, in educating the public in the North about deeper social justice issues.

Discussion
Comments were made by Josine Stremmelaar (Hivos) and Kees Biekart (ISS).

Josine began by appreciating Jasper's search for alternative strategies for development. She noted these system-level alternatives are being sought by challenging the current capitalist system through a bottom-up approach in which grass roots organisations raise 'radical spaces'. She questioned how these small-scale spaces of resistance would be able to initiate a broader alternative development process, and a structural challenge to capitalism. Despite the focus on Navdanya, in the first chapters of the paper generally portrayed grassroots NGOs as having limited power to change the aid paradigm, almost as if they are just means to an end in for private aid agencies. Jasper responded that even small organisations can contribute to structurally changing the system. However if they collapse with system they are trying to change, it defeats the purpose. Self-reliance therefore becomes confined to the locality, and so has limited influence on global agendas.

Josine agreed that the increasing emphasis on professionalism and on measurable results that has dominated the aid chain since the beginning of the 1990s has discriminated against membership organisations. In recognition of this, Hivos has recently reconfirmed the importance of membership and grassroots-based organisations in its partner portfolio (2007-2010 Business Plan).

The *Navdanya* case, however, illustrates a different model in which self-sufficiency and independence is aspired to. Josine wanted to know more about how independent these types of organisations really are, considering they do receive external funding. She supported the need for fostering more 'sovereign' organisations. However, this will entail more than food and seed sovereignty (in the case of *Navdanya*). She quoted the South African NGO Community Development Resource Association (CDRA), "such an organisation strives to know and work with its own purpose. It works on and out of clear principles and values and has the courage to hold on to these."

Josine stated that this does not mean such organisations cannot receive any external funding. Being sovereign also does not mean that the community and their organisations become isolated. By working with partners, it is possible to learn and grow together without losing independence. She quoted Castells, who has also argued "for communal identity to be a site of democratic resistance, communities must reach out and build links (network) with other communities of other cultures". Josine would like to see more detail on how grassroots organisations like *Navdanya* are placed within their local community and the networks they operate in. Which parties do they work with to make a difference? Jasper agreed that we should avoid a romanticised view of localities and acknowledge the power imbalance and inequalities within them.

Turning to the role of business in development corporate social responsibility (CSR), Josine felt that this should be more nuanced in the paper.. She argued that businesses play both positive and negative roles. In working towards self-reliance, stimulating entrepreneurship is something that donors, but also businesses, can contribute to. Jasper remains skeptical of CSR given the structural way corporations are set up and operated, arguing that they are by definition limited to doing activities that are profit-related.

She agreed that there was a need to repoliticize aid at the local, national and global levels. This also concerns the emerging global civic space. In particular, grassroots organisations should challenge the transnational or global space because there seems to be a growing disconnect between grassroots activism and global civic spaces. Jasper agreed that it is critical to figure out how to reconnect global and local actors. The World Social Forum, for example, bigger transnational actors are claiming the spaces and taking over the agenda. Big NGOs could help to provide platforms for reconnection between the global and local.

Kees praised Jasper for the passion with which he did his research and wrote up his paper after returning from India, and raised two main points. The first relates to the issue of "how we can think beyond aid?" This is a topic that will become more and more important in the whole aid business, particularly as budgets are decreasing. In order to obtain the resources we need to do activities, we need to look at how we can reinvent the aid chain.

Another essential element is to look at how to change the unequal power relations in a capitalist setting, by reducing dependency, increasing self-reliance, and inserting more equality in the unequal aid chain. One way to do this could be to look at how dominant groups relate to the dominated and how this can be changed. Could *Navdanya* have existed without the existence of (nongovernmental) aid at all? Is *Navdanya* really a product of the same system that is at the heart of Jasper's criticisms? This is very relevant to the future of grassroots organisations. Jasper stated that aid itself comes from surpluses within capitalism. He acknowledged that *Navdanya* did get started with a large injection of external aid resources. How are organisations then driven towards self-financing? It is very context-specific but organisations can start small and then do not necessarily have to rely on external funding.

The second point raised by Kees relates to a concern about where the revolution Jasper talked about will lead to. What is exactly changing in a revolutionary way and is this always beneficial? Will a private aid agency like Hivos still have a role once revolution has taken place? Jasper responded that the role of Hivos could be to connect grassroots organisations with each other through knowledge-sharing and cooperation that is not defined by aid or the inequalities of funding, but by more cooperative forms of collaboration. Big NGOs and private aid agencies still have a role in challenging the system – how to do this is another question.

In conclusion, aid does have a role to play, but it should be a supportive role. Development needs to be redefined to focus on the grassroots (i.e. less than 30% of budget from external sources). The role of Hivos is therefore not obsolete but should go beyond managerialism to support grassroots organisations in spaces that they have identified for themselves.

Synthesis

Kees drew out some lessons and priorities for future research from the presentations and discussions by Henry and Jasper. Relating to the three leading research questions in the Civil

Society Building Knowledge Programme: (1) how to understand and explain the dynamics of civic actors and social movements, (2) what is the role external actors, and (3) what is the impact and who benefits.

First, in terms of the dynamics of civil society, Henry's concept of "micro participation" and "temporary participation" showed that participation can be very productive even if it is for short time. Jasper builds on the idea of self-reliance with a more political form that resists capitalist structures and modes of relationships. In that sense, both papers succeeded in analyzing import civil society dynamics in an original way.

Second, the role of external actors was explored in Henry's case study, particularly the problematic effects of activists becoming consultants, weakening the movement. This was seen as an important topic for Hivos to take into account. In Jasper's case study it would be interesting to find out how the grassroots would be affected in a process 'beyond aid' – they are the most vulnerable groups and may not be able to "afford" such an autonomous position.

Third, what are the results of these interventions and to what extend is civil society strengthening really having an impact on structural social change? Henry showed how people become empowered by ARVs. This merits further exploration and monitoring around changes in identity of actors and how people remain part of an activist process. Jasper has contributed important ideas to the debate by exploring how dependency relationships can be changed towards more horizontal forms of collaboration.

All MA participants involved in the Knowledge Programme were encouraged to present their findings to the organisations that were researched, in order to get feedback and to hear what they thought of the conclusions and whether they learned lessons from the research activities of Knowledge Programme. More condensed articles will be written out of the all four papers which will be put on the new Hivos Knowledge Programme website under the Civil Society Building theme (www.hivos.net). Kees also remarked that we should try next year to organize some sort of live communication with organizations during the seminars via video-conferencing, to practice the principle of mutual learning.

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