

## **NETWORKING, ADVOCACY, AND INFORMATION FLOW: TRENDS AMONG AFRICAN NGOs**

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This paper analyzes trends in African NGOs' use of structures and skills in networking, advocacy, and information flow, citing examples of practices from regional to national and community levels. Throughout the paper, the theme of governance recurs. A brief introduction to efforts at the international level serves to illustrate efforts being made to influence governance and policy negotiation within world organizations, since decisions at that level have implications for what happens regionally and locally. The paper draws on the available literature on the subject, as well as the writer's personal experience in the field. Depending on the particular cases cited, the lessons learned from those cases are specified, and questions are raised for further discussion and recommendations.

The paper consists of three sections. The first section briefly introduces recent efforts to press for access to policy making bodies at the international level. The second section examines the context and the challenges in the African region, and the trend toward restructured participatory and empowering coalitions and alliances for networking and advocacy. The third section attempts to use Longwe's framework of advocacy and empowerment to illustrate how, at the national level, NGOs are using structures and skills in new ways to meet development challenges.

### **Trends at the International Level**

A comprehensive analysis of trends in networking, advocacy, and information flow has been carried out by Madon (2000), illustrating the crucial dependence of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) on regional and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for what happens at the local level. In turn, the study indicates that the relationships and exchange of information and experiences are the ammunition required for advocacy by INGOs at the international level.

Beyond Madon's analysis, it is important to state that the sustainability and continuity of learning by NGOs is a factor in moving learning processes forward to the goals of empowerment and transformation which constitute the vision of the more radical NGOs. The experience of financial dependence of Southern NGOs on INGOs makes such sustainability precarious at best, and leaves open the question of funding relations, financial management, and governance issues (Antrobus, 1987).

Madon's analysis could not have dealt with the issue of funding and dependence, but it is no less an important consideration because of the wider question of NGO empowerment and the ability of NGOs to further their mission and vision. Secondly, it is important to note that regional and national NGOs view themselves as having advocacy responsibilities on governance at all levels, including the international level, implying for the NGOs a strategic interest in participation and governance at that level. This interest is borne out of the conviction that the current debates on

state and governance overlook both historical analysis and the changes which global economic, political and socio-cultural processes have wrought on the geopolitical landscape. These changes are so pervasive that the sovereignty of states in the developing world is threatened by global political, economic, and cultural forces (Taylor, 1998).

The strategic interest of NGOs in participation and governance at the international level is manifested in recent trends. Underlying these trends is the conviction that governance at the level of international institutions could no longer be seen as separate from governance at the national level. Consequently, in the period following the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, NGOs have formed international networks to research on and engage in priority policy advocacy which is governance related. A large network such as Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), for example, constitutes a network of African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean co-ordinators and focal points. Its research priorities include political restructuring and social transformation, political economy, social reproduction, reproductive rights, sexuality, and gender (DAWN, 1998). By 2001 when a regional consultative meeting was held in Zanzibar, DAWN's African partners were revisiting their priorities and strategies in order to function as a Pan African coalition of networks.

The trend toward advocacy on governance related issues is also manifested in the global mobilization of NGO and civil society networks. These include mobilization of a network of civil society organizations to participate in the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI) against World Bank policies, and against the effects of IMF Structural Adjustment policies in certain regions of the world. Other global governance related initiatives are those of the International NGO Task Group of Legal and Institutional Matters which advocated, with limited success, on expanding NGO access to a range of UN bodies such as the General Assembly. Developing country governments of the G77 on this issue favored a proposal which would allow NGO access to all areas of the UN including the Security Council and the World Bank (WEDO, 1997). On the historical significance of the global mobilization against the World Trade Organization, Shiva (2000) stated that Seattle "brought us nearer to the creation of a global, citizen-based democratic order."

These global coalitions and activities indicate the important role NGOs and civil society play in advocacy, governance issues, and development. They indicate not a desire to displace INGOs, but to expand the mechanisms at the disposal of NGOs for negotiation and policy advocacy which, in turn, require information flow, sustainability, and empowerment on the part of NGOs. This partly explains other inter and intra-networking examples discussed later in the paper, and the use of more powerful networking tools and mechanisms such as the World Wide Web and listservs.

### **Trends among NGOs in Africa**

#### ***The Context and the Challenges***

The context against which NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) work in Africa presents a dismal picture of the development prospects for the peoples of Africa, especially

sub-Saharan Africa. It is a context in which states and regions are plagued by conflicts, health epidemics such as AIDS, debt burdens, and poverty. The problems generally go beyond national and regional borders often requiring international interventions. Like other regions, Africa is also struggling to emerge from patriarchal structures which underlie these and other problems, especially control of land and land resources (in all senses including diamonds and forests), and control of access to information and communication technologies in the global economy. Increasingly, NGOs recognize the need to evolve regional and national coalitions and collaborative networks to meet the challenges which have a direct impact on national governance.

This networking of NGO partnerships and alliances has been marked by professionalism on the part of sector-specific NGOs and among those with multisectoral mandates. The professionalism of their leadership and membership is tested within varying political, legal, and policy environments (Commonwealth Foundation, undated). This puts NGOs at the cutting edge of change (CONGO, 1998) as they work to extend democratic practices among the disadvantaged and marginalized in Africa. The significance of this and the challenges that the NGO leadership has set for itself can be summarized by reference to Korten (1995), who explains it this way:

The democratic legitimacy of institutions to which we yield power ... are failing [us.] ... Capturing state power, whether by election or revolution, does not change this [reality] ... elections have become meaningless. We must transform the system itself by reclaiming the power that we have yielded ... [and] redefine the relationships of power between the global, the national, and the local (p. 294).

The transformation of the system to reclaim and redefine power relationships between the regional and national in Africa is ongoing. Recently, African Ministers of State converged on Zambia to deliberate on transforming the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into an African Union Recovery Program in a European Union style (BBC World Service, July 9, 2001). The promise of this African recovery vision and the positive or negative results it holds for democratization and the marginalized in Africa (not just refugees) could best be left to historical analysis. Whatever it holds, it is one among a number of alternatives in the political and constitutional process to which NGOs could, and have played a part in redefining the democratic legitimacy of governing institutions regionally and locally.

Other regional initiatives on participation and governance have expanded in the late 1990s within such institutions as the Technical Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). One example of this is the historic and momentous Africa-wide NGO Forum regarding participation in the OAU Ministerial Conference on Human and People's Rights in Africa, organized by the International Commission of Jurists on behalf of the OAU and the Africa Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (Amnesty International, 1998).

Theory and activism have shaped the scope and quality of NGO contribution to these transformation processes. Those NGOs which have developed organizationally beyond provision of welfare for their constituents, have worked to popularize and implement theoretical

frameworks which emphasize awareness raising, conscientization, and social transformation. The Longwe framework, discussed in greater detail in the next section, is preferred by those NGOs. The radicalism which underlies this framework entails putting in place alternatives for confronting power systems which are patriarchal, highly organized educationally, experienced in manipulating the media, and sometimes brutal in social engineering methods. Lest the seriousness of this is underestimated, it is worth referring the reader to National Quarterly Human Rights Reports and annual reports of national chapters of professional bodies such as the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA).

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender Mainstreaming in Development Planning (Taylor, 1999) program, on the other hand, is an initiative of the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs. It is a model which entails establishing gender management systems within established governments through government technical support programs. Semi-autonomous gender research university centers and NGOs, as part of civil society, could participate in using this model to test the democratization process. But serious problems with respect to government partnerships with civil society have been identified by organizations with a long history of technical partnerships in Africa (United Nations Population Fund, 2001). The most serious problem identified across the African region was weak co-ordination between NGOs in the country and between NGOs and the government. Moreover, radical feminists would argue that mainstreaming is ideologically and philosophically unacceptable for social transformation. On a more positive note, the model is gradualist in approach, more likely to work across government departmental boundaries, and less open to power relationship confrontation. Where a country's civil service has been modernized, it would be less susceptible to governmental delays characteristic of the colonial civil service mentality.

The theoretical debates and testing of frameworks and models proceed while NGOs grapple with other challenges within their systems. One challenge has to do with establishing and sustaining the use of the principles of social learning and networking in the culture of their organizations and in the wider civil society. The recognition that social learning requires an organizational structure amenable to the practice of democratic principles, continuity, and engagement of all stakeholders, including the grassroots, is largely an educational challenge. This challenge has been a concern of NGOs, the African Development Forum (ADF) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Speaking on the challenge of bringing a knowledge perspective into the development process, Barka (2000) states that years of intensified efforts "have not produced results commensurate with the over 70 programs operating in Africa." More specifically, he observes that "rhetoric needs to be aligned with the reality on the ground. Users, from community level up, must be incorporated into project and program design" (p. 4). The assumption is that this could be accomplished.

UNECA recognizes that the challenge is immense. Barka (2000) calls for more emphasis on learning from projects, disseminating results, and sharing information. He adds, "The issue is whether development agencies are prepared to invest to learn and build systems that work. It is the absolute sine qua non for the success of our mutual efforts" (p. 4). Considering the need for facilitating the acquisition of skills, values, and attitudes at both the national and grassroots levels, formal and non-formal, building systems that work requires monumental investment of

resources, human and non-human. Apart from the required infrastructure, diffusion of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in particular requires the creation of a new learning ecology, and an understanding of the principles for assessing learning processes and qualitative change (Whyte, 2000; Longwe, 1999).

Quality education requires dismantling former practices and the power of the established overt and hidden curriculum, training trainers and supervisors, repackaging international agreements for different educational groups, and the provision of enabling environments. This is an expensive enterprise. The changes desired are hardly visible even over long periods (GEO and REPEM, 1999). This leads to another challenge — financing for development generally and for education in the widest sense. In the 1990s, financing for development (FfD) was a central concern of NGOs, especially for the advancement of literacy and gender justice as an aspect of sustainable development. However, the intergovernmental debates on FfD, and the positions taken by regional blocks of developed and developing countries on the primary means of FfD, show serious advocacy challenges (Waghray, 2001). The developing world, including Africa, has not gained much, if any ground in the debate about economic growth, sustainable development, and poverty, and on the scope and content of FfD. That challenge aside, the commitments of governments in Brussels (United Nations, 2001) and the Action Agenda for participating at the forthcoming Financing for Development conference demands a brief discussion of one challenge for NGO advocacy at national level.

Briefly, this requires organizing NGO leadership and the grassroots to understand the point in the government budget cycle when lobbying intervention is effective, what to lobby about, why it is critical in development terms, who should be targeted, and how to carry the process forward. Trends in the 1990s show that the University of the Western Cape in South Africa and other semi-autonomous organizations have evolved learning packages (e.g. the concept of Fair Share) designed to involve marginalized communities in the formation and delivery of public policy. The challenge of integrating such knowledge into NGO culture and practice is demanding, but critical for equitable financing for development, and ultimately for the transformation of power relationships. The term *critical* is used advisedly as gender justice advocates have argued for changes in national accounting systems.

This challenge is to be distinguished from the issue of NGO advocacy for funding to ensure their own networking sustainability to facilitate the transformation process. If NGOs are to be sustainable, they need to free themselves from dependence on funding agencies which often have donor driven agendas. The trend in NGO sustainability has not been altogether negative in this regard. National NGOs such as the Grassroots Gender Empowerment Movement (GEM) in Sierra Leone have built themselves a sustainable infrastructure. For other NGOs that periodically face sustainability crises, the message is clear. Their funding agencies need to learn that people-centred development and system transformation cannot be separated from the sustainability of structures that support such development.

This section cannot end without reference to funding through government bureaucracies. Funding agencies whose support has been linked to or which use government sources for the transmission of funds have been treading on very thorny ground. The experience of the Sierra Leone Women's Forum is highly instructive (Daramy, 1998).

The magnitude of the challenges as discussed above have prompted NGOs to form thematic alliances and other collaborative networks. Examples of the issues and concerns around which these alliances have worked, and the lessons learned are discussed below.

### ***Inter-NGO Thematic Collaboration and Alliance Building***

The emergence of inter-NGO collaboration to initiate common platforms for deliberating on specific issues and concerns, including NGO governance, was a major trend in the 1990s. The rationale for thematic collaboration on governance is first, that inter-programming to deal with a common concern is the most effective way to manage resources. Secondly, leadership dilemmas and top-down organizational structures are ideological contradictions for organizations which are supposed to be concerned with empowerment. A third and fundamental rationale was that the ability of an NGO to make an impact and be accountable depends on how it manages the internal and external dynamics of its relationships, growth and development. These concerns prompted three NGOs to hold a governance workshop for African women's NGO networks in 1998. The alliance between the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Akina Mama wa Africa (AMwA), and Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF) is one manifestation of the new era in which a new mechanism and an alternative way to work is applied in the process of empowerment for development. The main lesson derived from this activity is that advocacy at the highest levels requires the strength of collective rather than competitive negotiation.

This trend promises to develop in strength and direction into the 21st century. At present, Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE) is planning to host a Know How Conference in Kampala, Uganda, in 2002. This conference is being planned around women's media and information services and commitment to co-operative projects within the human rights framework. The initiation of this conference illustrates recognition of the media as a powerful force for change that is people-centred. The manner in which this force is shaped and its direction and pace will depend largely on the commitment, engagement, and sustainability of the inter-NGO network created.

Closely related to this thematic collaboration is a second and perhaps more powerful trend — networking on the World Wide Web. Reference has already been made to Madon's (2000) view that learning from the field is crucial for advocacy and for establishing close linkages with partners. Learning from the field and sharing experiences is certainly a rationale for the recent growth in the exploration of the Web as a networking tool by, among other organizations, ABANTU for Development, the networks created by Baobab and the Association for Progressive Communication (APC). The process of setting up inter-NGO networks and listservs in Francophone and Anglophone Africa to facilitate information flow by the APC has been a long struggle in which lessons were learned (Huyer, 1997). Among the lessons relearned is that the time between the conceptualization of an innovation and its adoption, implementation and institutionalization is considerable, and that the principles of social learning and engagement are indispensable. These lessons were no doubt put to use by APC-Africa Women and FEMNET in the creation of Flamme/Flame: African Sisters Online (Longwe and Akinyi, 1999). In terms of the democratic participation and use of the new information technology (IT) skills by the rural

women for whom development is meant (Kole, 1999), new lessons will emerge to inform our understanding of the processes of creating a new learning ecology.

### ***Intra-NGO Networking***

Institutionalizing the practice of intra-NGO networking around a network's program illustrates institutional and collective learning, both about the process, and about the exercise of developing indicators to assess implementation of internationally accepted agreements.

Commitment to monitoring the African and Global Platform and the drafting of the indicators began at FEMNET's Programming and Planning Conference in 1996. The process of networking to share ideas on administering the pilot questionnaire encountered problems relating to geographical dispersion which should not have been a deterrent for information flow given the "availability" of electronic communication. But problems there were, partly because the infrastructure and capacity for use of the new technologies are serious limitations in sub-regions outside South Africa (SADC, 1999; Moma and Khan, 2000). Further, unforeseen sub-regional conflicts contributed to fluid and unstable national mechanisms in some participating countries, and rendered reports about National Plans of Action from those sub-networks invalid.

The process of selecting countries for administering the revised questionnaire, compiling and analyzing the results and preparing a report for the Mid-Decade Global Review in June 2000 was not necessarily an easier exercise. It was, however, considerably assisted by two factors: the commitment, quality and dynamism of network members and FEMNET's leadership; and the financial support for a follow-up workshop from the network Women in Development Europe (WIDE) and the European Union (EU).

Numerous lessons were learned from the process. Among these were that:

- monitoring mechanisms must not be ad hoc but have some stability;
- networking is extremely crucial between different actors — civil society, governments, especially planning units of governments, and others;
- setting up data banks is central for the purpose of continuity and advocacy (FEMNET, 1999, p. 6).

The quality of input, discussion, and debate within the network and between the network and the INGO is indicative of learning that is dynamic, but that could only be translated into further action by sustained nurturing of the network and its follow-up plans. Without sustained nurturing, the culture of institutional change and empowerment of network members would certainly be jeopardized with consequences for accountability to all stakeholders.

### ***NGO Inter-Agency Alliances***

African regional NGOs such as the Africa Peace Forum B (APFO B) are joining in inter-agency alliances to propose advocacy methods for the solution of problems which are regional in scope. This and other alliances in the region are creative responses to situations in which international

bodies could or would not respond to the advocacy messages of people in the throes of conflict, including genocide.

In the case of the conflicts in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa, the creation of a thematic alliance under Project Ploughshares, is a strategy to contain a conflict situation that is multidimensional through a network of agencies from different constituencies. Project Ploughshares constitutes a regional thematic co-operation of the International Group on Disarmament and Security in the Horn of Africa B (IRG B), the Africa Peace Forum B (APFO B), and the Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfer (NISAT). As conflicts in the region escalated, NISAT collaborated with IRG/APFO and the East African Co-operation to bring a wide perspective to bear on a problem which is political, cultural, and historical in dimension.

It is apparent that this is an example of the creation of a new structure outside the traditional mechanisms and also outside the more formal and entrenched structures such as the OAU. The strength of this type of alliance in terms of networking, advocacy, and learning potential is not yet clear. The Project's conference proceedings, however, indicate it is building an organic and synergistic structure to address a conflict which is multidimensional, ranging from cattle rustling to power sharing struggles, and which underlies the distribution and proliferation of small arms. The power and influence of this alliance in the emergence of the African Union Recovery Program has not been researched for this paper, but it is clear that both regional concerns have to do with deep transformational issues touching the survival of democratic governance and trafficking in arms. In comparison with this alliance, another structure created at the national level in Sierra Leone that positioned its advocacy on governance issues will now be discussed.

### **Trends at National and Community Levels**

#### ***The Sierra Leone Women's Forum Network***

The Sierra Leone Women's Forum evolved in response to a networking need preparatory to the Fourth World Conference on Women. The need for such a networking mechanism became more evident as national events threatened the democratic process nationwide. In the mid-to-late 1990s the regime in power, which was military, was engaged in an internal struggle and a rebel war was intensifying. The nation was steeped in heated debates on a central issue for which a national policy decision was to be made — negotiation and completion of a peace deal before elections, or elections before peace. The Women's Forum rallied around the cry "*Elections before peace!*" Mobilization, therefore, centered around national policy advocacy for elections before a peace deal.

The mobilization process that unfolded from 1995 until the elections of November 1996 could not have been organized by one umbrella NGO for many reasons, including the fact there were leadership dilemmas between rival "umbrella" organizations. The women of Sierra Leone, therefore, organized their networking for mobilization within the forum. This illustrates how a new structure was put to use to engage an unprecedented problem.



The characteristics of the forum's structure evidently contributed to its dynamism and flexibility. It was an open forum for women, no fee was charged for participation, and it was non-hierarchical. The chair of meetings was taken up by participating NGOs in rotation, and the Young Women's Christian Association hosted meetings in the capital. The networks of participating NGOs constituted the mechanisms for communication flow, but use was made of all the traditional means of communication, especially the radio, telephones where available, and indigenous home-grown societal mechanisms.

The successful impact of the Forum's advocacy was also due largely to its choice of advocacy methods. It mobilized a highly successful national march of NGOs and civil society organizations in the nation's capital, and strategized politically for the purpose of voting in what became known as Bintumani I and Bintumani II. The latter were national conferences organized by the military authorities for making a choice between election before peace or peace before election. Eventually, the forum's advocacy and mobilization was widely credited with the outcome of election before peace at Bintumani I and II. This contribution of women's NGOs and civil society to the democratic process in Sierra Leone became a historic landmark.

A number of lessons could be deduced from this experience:

- an open, non-hierarchical and flexible structure could generate the dynamism needed for national policy advocacy;
- mobilization, especially of a political nature, is needed for successful impact;
- mobilization and networking through home-grown structures are a part of learning for the process of empowerment.

The major event following the selection of a democratically elected government in Sierra Leone was the re-invasion of the capital by a rebel army in April 1997. This had immediate repercussions for the leadership of the Women's Forum, many of whom relocated to other countries as refugees, and created Women's Forum chapters in Guinea, Gambia and England. The process of democratization could in this sense be described as an obstacle race with many roadblocks, some of them of giant size proportions. Notwithstanding these roadblocks, the Forum's activity drew international attention to the issues at stake. From April 1997 to the restoration of the democratically elected government, the nature of the diamond trade in the wider international and sub-regional political ideological power struggle was acknowledged.

### ***Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), Kenya***

PATH in Kenya has inserted its Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) program in a historical context in which women's health is internationally recognized as strategic for reproduction of a healthy labor force. Within the health sector, FGM is a strategic concern because of the reproductive and psychological health risks it poses for mothers and babies (Hosken, 1999). For the purpose of this paper, however, FGM is taken as an aspect of a wider web of social control that relegates people into different spheres in terms of decision-making. In short, who decides what in private or public matters (which often cannot be separated) is an issue of power relationships, and the private is public.

Successful research, networking, and advocacy against FGM could be cited from Senegal and Gambia, but the case of PATH is used mainly because it is a model which best illustrates the application of Longwe's empowerment framework to development work. Longwe (1998) argues that advocacy can be conceptualized within a list of alternative types of project intervention strategies, namely service delivery, capacity building, research and information dissemination, advocacy, networking, and empowerment. Longwe's argument is that whereas service delivery and capacity building are concerned with accommodation within the present social system, advocacy for reform is transformatory in approach, entails networking to bring a movement together, and collective action for empowerment and social change. She further distinguishes between top-down and bottom-up advocacy, the latter being characterized by inclusive management structures and processes, participatory appraisal and conscientization.

According to Longwe (1998), key elements in the empowerment process are often absent in the working parameters of conservative NGOs who limit their activities to welfare and access. Radical NGOs, by contrast, design their development programs within the empowerment framework which includes the key elements of conscientization, dissatisfaction, mobilization, and increased control. In her view:

The process of empowerment is more important than the particular activities, or even the actual outcomes. What is most important is for women of the community to build their capacity to recognize and tackle their own problems. Even if we fail to get the outcomes this time round, we'll be better able to succeed next time. We learn by experience and build the process (p. 108).

Longwe's analysis points to crucial requirements. The empowerment process is political and participatory, requiring achievement of consensus on objectives, priorities, strategies, and practices. It entails co-ordination, networking, and alliance building, all of which should be nurtured and sustained. It is also a learning process for all stakeholders, and the learning is built incrementally over time.

PATH's FGM program in Kenya illustrates the application of this conceptualization of advocacy and empowerment in a specific cultural context. Several lessons could be derived:

- social change involves values, attitude, and behavior change, and these are difficult to achieve. For FGM, it was important to focus on and achieve consensus on these in the design phase of the program;
- beneficiaries were active participants at every level of program development from conscientization to implementation and formation of core groups for expanding the advocacy network;
- open discussion and debate, development of an alternative rite of passage and implementation which involved men and other opinion leaders. The discussion and debate processes are in fact political in nature, and require a value shift away from an *activity* that was customarily held as sacred and indispensable for social recognition, to an alternative rite which holds that *people* (even children) could be accorded social recognition through an alternative rite. There is an underlying covert shift away from social to personal control which is people-centred;

- the research and development needed to build a model was carried out within a specific ethnic group. This does not necessarily assume but could mean replicability, depending on the flexibility of the model;
- all activities have learning implications. On the part of the NGO and civil society partners, negotiating, influencing, and capacity building skills were reworked and applied. On the part of the beneficiaries, skills in reflection on socio-cultural issues, self-esteem, and alliance building were not necessarily learned for the first time, but were put to new use and applied to an entrenched patriarchal system for the purpose of empowerment;
- the formation of core support groups and implementation of anti-FGM activities in seven districts of Kenya were exercises in peer support, alliance building, and networking for mutual empowerment. Building a wider empowerment constituency meant implications for nurturing groups in geographically dispersed communities in terms of financial sustainability, communication, effort, and time;
- the time scale of the program from 1991/1992 when the first 12 families were conscientized to 1997 when anti-FGM activities were underway in seven districts of Kenya indicates that the process of empowerment takes time. Any program that aims to empower people, such as this, must proceed at a community determined pace and roadblocks might be encountered.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has summarized the challenges confronting NGOs in their governance and democratization work and argued that the educational challenge demands the creation of a new learning ecology. It has argued that trends in networking, advocacy, and information flow among NGOs, especially the more radical African NGOs, have to do with empowerment and control, and are transformatory in ideology, governance related, and people-centred. Creative and innovative structures and skills which NGOs are evolving to confront unprecedented development challenges have been shown to require new alliances regionally and nationally.

The paper has drawn on the empowerment framework of Longwe to argue that the development and empowerment process requires participation in decision-making (with no exception), entails a political struggle which engages collective strength, mobilization, and sustained nurturing of networks. The distinction between mobilization for accommodation and mobilization for transformation and social change is drawn, with the emphasis that attitude change is crucial and the time scale for transformation is considerable.

With the foregoing points in mind, two questions will now be raised for discussion:

- Given the quality and scope of NGO governance related work, what are the policy implications for African NGO development and empowerment at international, regional, and national levels?
- What options are desirable and practicable for funding relationships, impact studies, accountability, and sustainability?

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