

NGO-GO RELATIONSHIPS: Prospects and Experience

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This paper focuses on the opportunities for and obstacles to enhanced working relationships between NGOs and Government Organizations (GOs).¹ It is divided into four sections, the first of which reviews and analyzes the government's 1993-1998 medium term development plan (MTDP). The MTDP is a good starting point because it puts together in one organized document the Philippine government's vision, objective, strategies, and policies for development in the next 5 years. Furthermore, the document is a product of

a multi-level and multisectoral consultation with NGOs, people's organizations (POs), as well as business, church, and other groups. This section specifically reviews the MTDP's imperatives and aspirations for development, presents a continuum of government-private sector roles in the development process, pinpoints specific roles for NGOs and suggests other potential roles for NGOs that are implicit in some of the strategic directions articulated in the MTDP.

¹For purposes of this paper, the term "government" shall be used to refer to government agencies, government-owned or controlled corporations, as well as state colleges and universities.

On the other hand, both national and internationally accepted definitions of the term "non-government" have been applied. The United Nations Economic Council Resolution 288(x) of February 1950 stated that "any international organization which is not established by inter-government agreement shall be considered as international non-government organization." This official definition of "non-government organization" has held up to now. By inference therefore, any organization not established by national governments are likewise collectively referred to as "non-government organization."

Section II of the report further expounds on the opportunities for NGO involvement in Philippine development as articulated by Mr. Romulo Neri, Director General of the Congressional Planning and Budget Office (CPBO). Given Director General Neri's extensive dealings with the country's congressional representatives, it can be safely said that a number of his suggestions are reflective of the thinking of one of government's policy making bodies.

Section III deals with concrete experiences of NGO-GO relations in national line agencies and local government units. It is based on interviews with government officials in agencies like the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), local government officials, and NGO informants.²

The concluding section synthesizes the discussion in the previous sections and identifies possibilities, opportunities, and challenges to future NGO-GO relations. It suggests possible areas of intervention for donors, NGOs, and GOs that can ensure a fruitful NGO-GO collaboration in the future.

I. The 1993-98 Medium-Term Development Plan

A. *Imperatives, Vision, and Strategies for Development*

The MTDP 1993-98 was formulated to address five development imperatives for the Philippines: the need to carry on the

EDSA 1986 revolution from the restoration of democratic political institutions to the challenges of economic development; the Philippines' lagging behind most ASEAN countries in terms of per capita GNP; the Philippines' low (lowest in ASEAN) GNP growth rate from 1965-90; the slowly growing and sometimes declining production and incomes of Filipinos; and the inequitable distribution of wealth in the country.

In response to these imperatives, the MTDP defines its vision of development for the country as the "attainment of the most basic needs, such as being well nourished and free from avoidable diseases, being adequately sheltered and clothed, being educated, having resources sufficient to provide for the needs of the next generation, being physically safe, and being politically empowered to deal with one's social circumstances" (MTDP, p. 3). This broad vision redounds to the reduction and ultimate eradication of poverty.

The MTDP cites the twin strategies of people empowerment and international competitiveness as the means to achieve the country's development objectives. People empowerment in the economic field is defined as "reliance on markets, entrepreneurship, innovation, and effort" balanced with government intervention to equalize economic opportunities through "agrarian reform, progressive taxation, spending on social services and infrastructure in depressed regions." (MTDP, p. 4). International competitiveness is defined as "the ability of domestic producers to produce for the world market ... compete against imports on the domestic

²The anecdotes shared by key informants were also used to highlight concrete experiences which support the conclusions of this section.

market on an even footing ... the development of a skilled workforce imbued with a genuine work ethic, and an entrepreneurial class that can seize opportunities and motivate workers to attain new heights of productivity. (MTDP, pp. 4-5) The plan adds that all of these are to be done without compromising the environment through the framework of sustainable development.

Six thrusts aimed to guide the implementation of development strategies emanate from the Plan. These are:

1. *decentralization* – defined as enabling “lower levels of government to set priorities and decide matters in their own spheres of development.... within the legal framework of the Local Government Code ...”
2. *private sector-led decentralization* – defined as “reliance on non-government initiative, i.e. NGOs, cooperatives, private business sector ...privatization... defining and enforcing the rights of local communities to use resources in a sustainable manner..”
3. *democratic consultation* – defined as “genuine democratic consultation .. to seek real alternatives and find accommodations..”
4. *full cost recovery* – defined as “ensuring that outlays for programs are justified by commensurate social benefits... removing the elements of subsidy...”
5. *social equity* – defined as the reserved right of government to apply “exception to the principle of full cost recovery when the intended beneficiaries are among the poorest, or the services provided are nonmarket in nature...”; and
6. *macroeconomic stability* – defined as “adherence to rules rather than discretion in the pursuit of stability and transparency” in macroeconomic management. (MTDP, pp. 7-8)

The critical sections of the MTDP, reveal that economic development through private initiative and industrialization is the focus or lead strategy of the government while continuing political democratization and social equity are the supporting strategies. Although the implications for the NGOs can be derived from the thrust of the MTDP, it is important to note that the Plan explicitly indicates the roles different development players will play in its implementation.

B. GO-NGO Roles in the Development Plan

In the section on “development administration”, the Plan gives a general idea of the division of roles among the different sectors in society. On one end, government is charged with all the functions of policy making, program development, and service delivery in critical areas requiring major investments in public funds such as public health, primary and secondary education, social welfare, and national security. On the other end, it sees the private sector which includes NGOs and POs as taking *primary responsibility* in the areas of agriculture, tourism, labor, trade and industry, tertiary education, energy, transportation and communication. The roles of government in this area are confined to the “creation of facilitative policy environment to stimulate private initiative.. and regulation.” (MTDP, pp. 5-12 to 5-13). Between the two extreme ends

of role definition, the Plan sees a joint role for government and the private sector, with the former undertaking policy making and program development and the latter engaging in service delivery in the areas of natural resources, public works and highways, housing, and science and technology.

Three things are apparent in the above discussions. First, there is a conscious effort on the part of the authors of the MTDP to delineate roles and responsibilities between government and the private sector. This, at the very least, is an explicit and consistent expression of the need for private sector involvement in development. This has been a clear theme in the vision and strategies expounded in the first part of the Plan. Second, while there is a conscious effort at delineating roles, the delineation is more a matter of degree of involvement rather than exclusivity of responsibility. Third, the definition of "NGO" from the perspective of the Plan is a very broad one. Three distinguishing features are enough to classify a private organization as NGO — it must be non-profit, voluntary, and for service. This definition is important especially since there are a number of specific tasks the Plan identifies as fit for "NGOs".

C. Roles of NGOs in the MTDP

The MTDP identifies key areas of NGOs involvement in the implementation of the strategies and policies laid out in the plan. The Plan enjoines active partnership between agencies and NGOs in Human Development and Human Resources and in the pursuit of agri-industrial development.

Community organizing, people empowerment, provision of low-cost housing for the poor, values and attitudes formation for families, implementation of social programs and projects, manpower training for the informal sector, and support for bilateral negotiation in debt reduction are among the NGO roles envisioned in the Human Development and Human Resources sector of the Plan. Its sector on Sustainable Agri-industrial Development on the other hand, encourages NGOs to assist in the speedy and effective implementation of the comprehensive agrarian reform program at the provincial level; and in the joint development, adaptation, adoption, upgrading, and utilization of technology.

Similarly, a number of potential roles for NGOs can be gleaned in the following policy thrusts of agri-industrial development;

- adoption of an apex cooperative bank;
- promotion of agri-industrialization and small industries in the countryside;
- identification and prioritization of regional growth centers;
- encouragement of local government initiatives in the growth centers; and
- organization and strengthening of people's law enforcement boards.

In other areas, the MTDP does not specify the kind of NGO participation that will be needed. However, given the nature of NGO work and the substance of the policy statements in the Plan, real opportunities for NGO-GO collaboration exist in the following areas of Human Resource Development:

- planning, monitoring, and evaluating the implementation of social development objectives at the local level;
- awareness raising and information campaign on sustainable development;
- people-based delivery of primary health care;
- locally initiated social assessment and information base;
- alternative education delivery systems;
- development of the rural financial sector to ensure adequate supply of credit to the countryside and local government units; and
- ensuring transparency and accountability in the utilization of resources to eliminate corrupt practices.

It is apparent from the foregoing sections that most of the MTDP specified roles for NGOs are along their areas of competence. Except for the support in bilateral negotiations for debt reduction, manpower training, and technology development, other concerns as community organizing, people empowerment, values formation and rural development and agrarian reform are considered the traditional purview of NGOs. Of the NGO opportunities mentioned in the Plan, the ones which seem significant are in the areas of large scale rural financing; involvement in local governance specifically in development planning, implementation, transparency and accountability, monitoring and assessment, and entrepreneurial initiative in countryside industrialization. These are non-traditional

roles that open doors for NGOs because they are identified as government priorities for the next five years. Some of these non-traditional NGO roles have been identified by the Congressional Planning and Budget Office.

II. Views from the Congressional Planning and Budget Office (CPBO)

The CPBO is the think tank of the Lower House of the Philippine Congress. It draws up policy studies and assists the House of Representatives translate development strategies into concrete legislation. It is therefore a key actor in the formulation and implementation of the government's development plan. This section revolves around the views of CPDO Director General Romulo Neri on the future of NGO-GO relations in the Philippines. He has been in his position for almost four years.³ His insights are therefore indicative of the reflections of a development thinker and of someone who knows how policy makers in the legislative branch of the Philippine government contemplate the role of NGOs in the next five years.

Director Neri identifies four critical roles of NGOs in national development: social advocacy, management of enterprise projects, environmental concerns and training programs for local government units.

1. Potential Roles of NGOs

Advocacy has been a traditional area of NGO competence. The wealth of NGO experience in this arena of work can be

³Prior to this he was a professor of development and business management at the Asian Institute of Management where he taught and did research in development finance, macroeconomics, and environmental analysis.

utilized but for a different purpose. Director Neri sees the need for NGOs to build a constituency in order to push for community development projects and to act as fiscalizer at local levels. Such a constituency can advocate for more worthwhile projects as opposed to the vote getting or "fee-based" projects which take priority when politicians are left alone to decide for the people.

The shift of NGO roles from political advocacy to social advocacy is seen as a way of facilitating economic development at the barangay level and as a counterforce to influence the way congressmen, governors and mayors utilize development funds and the internal revenue allotments (IRA) to barangays. These funds can be substantial given the devolution of powers to local governments. For example, the IRA for barangays in 1995 amounts to P12 Billion. Since this amount will be made available at the lowest level of government which is far removed from fiscal controls and systems of accountability, Director Neri asserts that the only way to ensure transparency at these levels is for the people themselves to act as guardians of the public fund.

Regarding the management of enterprise projects, Director Neri suggests that NGOs and/or POs manage business projects themselves. This is a role NGOs can easily fit into because the nature of their work brings them very close to the production base of the economy, i.e. farmers, fishermen, laborers. He proposes that business initiatives be taken in the areas of agri-industrialization and rural industries.

NGO involvement in environmental concerns on the other hand, is deemed an extension of their efforts in community capacity building and credit, and livelihood promotion in ecologically sensitive areas. Director Neri considers this role as supportive of the government's people-based environmental protection thrust for sustainable development.

Finally, Director Neri sees NGOs as potential trainers of provincial and municipal executives given their exposure in the areas of planning and mobilization. They can specifically intervene in the areas of barangay-based planning and budgeting which include translating provincial strategic plans into detailed feasibility studies; providing mechanisms for meaningful community consultations; development priorities setting; setting mechanisms for transparency; and community capability building.

2. *Skills Needed to be Developed by NGOs:*

The roles suggested by Director Neri for NGOs requires the development of skills in at least five areas: Social Cost-Benefit Analysis; Project Evaluation; Social Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Management; Public Administration; and Trainers' Training.

Learning social-cost benefit analysis is critical to the NGO roles of identifying priority development projects to be pushed or advocated by communities, while skills in project evaluation are necessary for assessing project performance and in the latter stages, for assessing public accountability and transparency. Skills

development in the last three areas on the other hand, is needed to enhance NGO enterprise initiatives at the local level, their understanding of the bureaucracy and the concerns of politicians, and their role as trainers of local government executives, respectively.

3. Government Support to NGOs

According to Director Neri there are plans to set up an NGO-PO fund for capacity building through legislation. An initial figure being considered is P1 Billion to be administered by the Cooperatives Development Authority or a taskforce. He says about 20%-30% of this money will be earmarked for livelihood projects and another 10% for administration. In terms of legislation, he says the Constitution and the MTDP have enough policy statements encouraging the involvement of NGOs and POs in development.

The legal framework of government to support NGOs is laid out in the Constitution. The Constitution contains relevant provisions which expound on the basic premise that the "State shall encourage non-government organizations, community based or sectoral organizations that promote the welfare of the nation."⁴

In the spirit of the Constitution, numerous laws that have been passed in the post-Marcos years include Republic Act 7160, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of 1992 which has a far-

reaching impact on local governance and development. The Code explicitly provides for the participation of the non-government sector specifically in the following areas; membership in local special bodies, partnership with government in joint ventures, as recipients of funds and other assistance (including preferential treatment), and participation in local legislative processes.

III. Experiences in GO-NGO Collaboration

Collaboration between government and non-government sectors on various development undertakings has pre-dated its institutionalization in the official policy pronouncement of the post-Marcos administrations. Government agencies that have attempted to implement development programs with the assistance of the non-government sector prior to 1986 have done so because they recognize that the relative competencies of each sector offer a wide latitude for the complementation of their efforts and resources. In the main, collaboration between the two sectors has been in one or a combination of the following areas: program implementation, policy setting and plan formulation, and institution building and strengthening. Actual experiences in each of the areas identified above, as well as selected combinations in which GO-NGO relations have been pursued, are discussed more lengthily below.

⁴"The State shall respect the role of the independent people's organization to enable the people to pursue and protect, within the democratic framework, their legitimate and collective interests and aspirations through peaceful and lawful means..." (Article XIII, Section 15); "...the right of the people to effective and reasonable participation at all levels of social, political, and economic decision-making shall not be abridged. The State shall, by law, facilitate the establishment of adequate consultation mechanism..." (Article XIII, section 16)

A. GO-NGO Collaboration in Program Implementation and Management

1. *Recognizing the Need for Collaboration*

The collaboration between the government and non-government sectors in the area of program implementation came about largely as a response to the identified shortcomings of government. These include its limited reach relative to the size of the most disadvantaged sectors that programs and projects sought to benefit; and its failure to sustain many government initiatives long after the term of the program or project. Government was impelled to innovate so that it could effectively and efficiently expand the clientele serviced by its programs and projects. At the same time, it needed to maximize limited government resources by employing the most economical means for delivering the services while ensuring the long-term benefits of various development activities.

An approach that catered to both these considerations involved developing the stakeholdership of the beneficiaries themselves in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these programs and projects. However, the early efforts of government in this direction yielded uneven results. Where beneficiaries were already organized and thus able to enter into direct dealings with government, the approach has proved effective over time. Numerous studies have shown for example

that well organized cooperatives demonstrate better capacities at performing their expected roles. However, where cooperatives were organized simply for the purpose of establishing access to the services and benefits of various programs, few were sustained beyond the duration of the programs around which they were organized. The failure of these community organizations has been attributed to the short-term opportunity-seeking orientation of many of these quickly organized cooperatives. Furthermore, the weak support services available for institution building has made it difficult to expect these organizations to transform themselves into self-sustaining entities.³

Cognizant of its past limitations, government began to turn more and more to non-government development organizations as partners in mediating the process of stakeholdership-building among program beneficiaries. NGOs were in a position to mediate because of their heavy investment in community organizing and social preparation processes among the most marginalized groups. This, and their track records in responding quickly to the needs of the communities account for the high levels of credibility enjoyed by NGOs among beneficiary communities.

Riding on the presence of NGOs in communities not otherwise reached by government and on their credibility with client systems is seen by government as a viable alternative to directly working with the clients themselves. NGOs can help

³The entire range of successful and failed experiences in government's attempts to develop stakeholdership may be observed in the Samahang Nasyon program which sought to work directly with farmers' cooperatives in the implementation of the equity and productivity programs.

implement government programs and projects in areas not effectively reached by the limited government machinery but where they are already present. In addition, government programs and projects could benefit from NGO investments in community organizing and institution strengthening. Finally, government resources available for its various programs and projects can be maximized by the NGO in the communities they were servicing.

Even with this change in approach, however, collaboration between the government and non-government sectors has not come easy. Collaboration between the two sectors in the area of program and project implementation has been inhibited by several factors. While many of these factors have been addressed in the course of continuing collaborative efforts over the years, some continue to restrict the full complementation of efforts, expertise and resources.

2. Program/Project consideration

Early government attempts to get NGOs into the implementation of various development programs and projects were informed by very clear ideas on how NGOs were to be involved. In most instances, government would invite NGOs to participate in programs and projects that were about to be implemented, or were already at some stage of implementation. At other times, NGO participation would only be solicited for certain phases of program and project implementation. More often than not, NGOs would be asked to fork into the social preparation phases of various programs, usually to organize and/or strengthen community organizations to sustain interventions beyond a project

term. Because this was usually the case, the selection of NGOs to be invited to participate in government programs and projects was a function of the program sector or the specific areas where the programs and projects were to be implemented.

A review of actual experiences of GO-NGO relations in program and project implementation, however, suggests that where government has a clearer idea of the role complementation it would like to achieve collaboration, more successes were attained. Corollarily, where the gains from collaboration were not as clear to government, successes have not been as pronounced, with both government and NGOs equally frustrated, if not exasperated and pessimistic, about the viability of collaboration.

Partnership in Health Services Delivery. When asked to recount their initial efforts at linking with NGOs, key personnel of the Health Department at both the national and field levels reported great difficulty in establishing effective working relations with their counterparts in the non-government sector.

Part of the difficulty mentioned by an officer of the Provincial Health Office of Cotabato was that prior to 1986, the political climate was not conducive to working relations between the two sectors. Most of the NGOs in the province at that time had very firm positions about both the national and local government, and generally chose to keep to the "non-government" sector. The relationship between the two were, in the main, adversarial and the NGOs were openly criticizing the government for not being

able to deliver the most basic of services. Except for the NGOs that were attuned to the political leadership at that time, there was hardly any dialogue between the two sectors. Church-based NGOs in the province were themselves operating health programs that took on very different approaches from those taken by government. While this collective expertise and experience could have helped expand the reach of many government health programs, the fact that the programs opened up by government to NGO participation were already "fixed" in terms of operational details made it difficult for government to convince health NGOs to be "coopted" into a partnership. In the period prior to 1986, therefore, the NGOs that agreed to enter into partnerships with government were generally limited to those that were not considered by the government and the military as "left-leaning." At that time, "left-leaning" included most, if not all, "development-oriented" NGOs.

Another difficulty mentioned by the Provincial Health Officer is that there were hardly any budgetary provisions in government programs at that time for NGO participation. Program budgets provided for program inputs such as education materials, mothers' classes, vaccines and a limited amount for medicines. But there were no corresponding budgets for the organizing component which NGOs were expected to undertake. He said that government auditing procedures, as well as the politization of many health programs prevented them from realigning budgets to cover the costs that NGOs would incur in collaborative undertakings.

These points were corroborated by staff members of the Churches Community-Based Health Program (CBHP), who mention that it has taken them time to rethink their initial positions on working with government.

Initially the CBHP position (and shared by many other development NGOs) was to stay clear from government programs because government's move to involve NGOs in these was suspected to be merely as an effort to "coopt" NGOs in order to "legitimize" government programs in communities that had lost their trust in government. Moreover, there was very little funding support for community organizing, as the bulk of program funds were allocated for actual service delivery which the Health Department was not predisposed to share with the non-government sector. For the NGOs, therefore, it appeared that government simply wanted to link up with them in order to have access to communities they had already organized. NGOs felt that if they allowed this to happen, they would lose the trust and confidence of the communities they had painstakingly nurtured.

The concern with resource support for NGOs in government programs has since been addressed to a considerable degree. Government has not only allocated resources in its programs and projects for "community organizing" activities, but perhaps more importantly, health NGOs have been mobilized for greater involvement in the actual delivery of services, wherever this was deemed appropriate. Such moves have allowed the non-

government sector to access the resources of government programs on the one hand, and to expand their own resources for health services delivery on the other.

Interviews with officers at the national office of the Health Department also revealed that after working with NGOs, government's attitude to the non-government sector has changed. There is now a basic recognition of the capability of health NGOs to be involved in government community health programs including the actual delivery of services. Dialogues on the kinds of programs that health NGOs were undertaking contributed greatly to sensitizing government workers to NGO community-based health program operations, methods and styles of work, and the kinds of expertise health NGOs had developed over time.

With this process of familiarization, as well as the increasingly conducive policy environment for GO-NGO collaboration, the Health Department has had some success in mobilizing partnership with NGOs for various community-based health programs. A few examples illustrate this point. The Tuberculosis Control Service of the Health Department has involved NGO partners in information and education programs to prevent tuberculosis. At the same time, NGOs have been tapped for tuberculosis casefinding and treatment activities. Similarly, the Malaria Control Service has mobilized NGOs in information and education programs, as well as in case-finding, malaria detection and treatment referrals. The same may be observed for programs of the Department's Nutrition Services, Communicable and Non-Communicable Disease Control Services,

Family Planning Service, and Community Health Service.

Partnership in Livelihood Services Delivery. As with the health sector, government has increasingly tapped NGOs in the delivery of livelihood services. Again, the general mold of partnership has been, and continues to be one where the non-government sector serves as the principal conduit for livelihood assistance to targetted communities. This has usually involved the social preparation of communities and the actual extension of livelihood technical and/or financial assistance.

The Tulong sa Tao Program, comprised of the Self-Employment Loan Assistance Program (TST-SELA), and its later variant, the Tulong sa Tao-Micro-Credit Program (TST-MCP), are among the livelihood assistance programs of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). The program is a credit facility that wholesales credit funds to NGOs, which in turn, are expected to relend the money to partner people's organizations and cooperatives for manufacturing, processing, trading and service activities. Under the mechanics of the ADB-funded TST-MCP, the DTI provides an NGO with a credit line of as much as P2.0 million, at 12 percent interest per annum. From this fund, NGOs extend to partners credit for livelihood activities according to ceilings set by the program. These ceilings are P200,000 for groups, while for individuals, the amounts prescribed are P25,000 for first time borrowers, P35,000 for second-timers, and as much as P50,000 for the third credit cycle. NGOs have been allowed to add the cost of service charges and guarantees to

the interest at which they retail the credit funds, but program guidelines specify that the final interest rates charged of clients must not be higher than the prevailing commercial rates in the area. The implementation of the TST-MCP begun in 1993 with selected pilot provinces nationwide. Since the start of the year, the TST-MCP has been replicated in other provinces, including the province of Cotabato which has mobilized as many as 30 local NGOs to participate in the implementation of the program.

Partnerships for Social Equity Programs and Projects. Social equity programs of government have also provided an effective avenue for collaboration between the government and non-government sectors. These programs lend themselves well to the participation of the non-government sector on various fronts, from the facilitation of program processes to the implementation of specific components, and to overall program management and monitoring and evaluation. This is most evident in the Department of Agrarian Reform's (DAR) Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

Judging from the experiences of the CARP, NGOs had a strong inclination to participate in the management and implementation of this program. In the main, this has been attributed to the fact that social equity programs intend to benefit the most marginalized sectors, which NGOs are also mandated to serve. That several known NGO personalities were appointed to key positions in the DAR further served to facilitate GO-NGO collaboration. The successes of colla-

borative approaches demonstrate that common interests and concern for social equity generally facilitate effective working relations between the government and non-government sectors, especially when these are forged at the national level.

Closer inspection of the actual experiences at the local level seem to indicate, however, that despite common interests in the nature and objectives of the CARP, collaboration between the government and non-government sectors has not been easy. The implementation of the program called for the organization of the Provincial Agrarian Reform Committees (PARCOM), an inter-agency body charged with the responsibility to oversee and facilitate the implementation of the program. Part of the role that the PARCOM is expected to play is to galvanize other actors in the local area in support of the CARP. The composition of the PARCOM includes a representative of the non-government sector, who is expected to mobilize other NGOs in the province for program implementation.

The Provincial Agrarian Reform Officer (PARO) of the province of Cotabato recounted that their office was initially very weak in mobilizing NGO support for the program because they felt that NGOs were generally skeptical of government's resolve to realize agrarian reform. Not long after however, the provincial office realized that the uncooperative attitude of many NGOs was due to the fact that the NGO invited by the Department to sit in the PARCOM was the head of a local Rotary Club Chapter. Unknown to the Department at that time, this NGO representative had substantial landholding interests, and therefore was not

particularly predisposed to the swift and smooth implementation of the CARP.

The situation was resolved with the reorganization of the management of the program. The national office called for the organization of the Provincial Agrarian Reform Coordinating Council with representatives from the NGO sector. By then, the provincial office was more careful in screening the NGOs they invited into the Council. The NGOs identified were selected based on their track record in service programs for the poorest sectors of the province; the extent and scope of their involvement in social organizing and livelihood programs, and their presence in communities identified as priority areas for CARP. On the basis of these criteria, the provincial office has had more success in engendering NGO partners to help in program implementation

3. *Personality consideration*

Apart from the nature, sector and site of programs which can enhance or constrain GO-NGO collaboration, key informants also mention that part of the successes behind GO-NGO relations depends on "who one is talking to." This was especially true during the early years of government's attempts to establish effective working relations with the non-government sector.

Health Department officials at both the national and local levels, for example, recounted how in earlier years personality considerations were critical for even just establishing dialogues with the non-government sector. The Health Department, and multilateral donors such as WHO and UNICEF, experienced tremen-

dous difficulty in getting health NGOs to a meeting to discuss how they might complement efforts at health service delivery. But one could predict which NGOs would come to a meeting simply by knowing who called the meeting.

Prior to 1986, national Health Department officials worked through personal friends and associates to get to the NGOs. In many instances, agencies such as the UNICEF would be asked to convene meetings in order to ensure the attendance of NGOs in meetings. Similar strategies were resorted to at the local level. Local health officers would identify credible go-betweens to serve as conduits for communication between government and the NGO sector. Usually, this would be a religious personality (from the local parish, or schools), or a respected individual in the area.

With the development of a policy environment generally more conducive to GO-NGO collaboration after 1986, government increasingly relied on consultations to facilitate communication with the non-government sector. These consultations were necessarily "open-ended," with agendas negotiated with the participants prior to the consultation itself. Again, personal ties between and among those involved from both the government and non-government sectors facilitated the steady growth in the number of people attending these "consultations."

The apprehensions and skepticism that government and non-government groups had of each other were also addressed by similar "consultations" sponsored by various line agencies and newly installed local government officials. These consulta-

tions provided venues for both sectors to become familiar with one another's programs and projects, and methods of work, strategies and approaches. These familiarization in turn enhanced personal ties and the collaboration between government and NGOs.

4. *Work Habits and Arrangements*

While changing policy and program environments have tended to facilitate closer cooperation between government and non-government sectors, and while personality considerations have given an additional push to GO-NGO relations differences in work habits and arrangements have tended to inhibit and restrain the full potentials of complementation. Among procedural considerations, the most important are the methods of work, financial constraints, and procedures and systems for establishing accountabilities relative to expected roles in the partnership.

Methods of Work. Differences in the work approaches of government and non-government bodies remain irritants in GO-NGO relations. Most government personnel are known to schedule their working hours around the conventional "eight hour day," even if their work essentially involves "servicing communities." Thus, the time government personnel actually spend in remote communities is dictated largely by the length of travel time required to get to and from the communities. Teachers assigned in the public schools of remote barrios for example, often require an entire day to get to and from school, effectively leaving them only three days for actual teaching. In much the same way, many government health and agriculture

personnel would cut short the actual time for service delivery to accommodate their travel to and from communities. In contrast, NGOs tend to be less influenced by an "eight hour day" work orientation, and would even spend protracted periods of time in communities if this was necessary for service delivery or the implementation of programs.

On the other hand, some NGOs have taken their being "non-government" a little too literally and fail to coordinate with government agencies on matters critical to program and project implementation. In some instances, such failures may disrupt and reverse modest gains that may have been achieved in GO-NGO collaboration.

Financial Constraints. Persons interviewed from both government and non-government sectors indicate that procedures governing the finances of joint initiatives account for another irritant in GO-NGO relations. While government has encouraged NGOs to participate in program implementation because of their speed in mobilizing communities, the same speed does not characterize government operations. In particular, procedures in the releases of program funds have become a sore point in GO-NGO relations.

In several Departments, delays in the releases of funds have prevented NGOs from carrying out their part in program implementation on time, thus adversely affecting the schedule and effectiveness of programs and projects. Delays in the releases of funds have also disrupted the schedules of NGOs involved in several other community work and activities.

In cases where collaboration in the implementation of projects extends over a significant period of time, as in the case of the debt-for-nature swap conservation program of the Haribon Foundation, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), a non-government financial mechanism has been set up in order to prevent delays in budgetary releases. The proceeds of the swap arrangement have been transferred to an NGO account, and the funds are managed from this mechanism. In other words, traditional roles were reversed, with government receiving from the NGO their budgets for the implementation of their end of the program. Government workers involved in the program found this an ideal arrangement because the funds were available in the amounts required and at the time needed.

Establishing Accountabilities. Perhaps one of the most sensitive issues in GO-NGO collaboration has been in the area of establishing accountabilities for performance in joint undertakings. While in most cases, collaboration between the sectors is governed by a Memorandum of Agreement that spells out the roles each is to perform relative to programs and projects, difficulties have arisen in cases where one party failed to deliver on its expected output. Where agreements between the two parties fail to cover courses of action in these instances, the situation can adversely affect the continuing collaboration between government and NGOs.

To illustrate this point, NGOs in Cotabato that have been mobilized to

provide a listing of agrarian reform beneficiaries for communities in which they had operations were "requested" by the Agrarian Reform Office to do so over a period of two months. Close to the end of this period, the NGOs said that the DAR provincial office was very conscientious in following-up the status of the beneficiary listings. While some NGOs were slightly delayed in submitting their listings, NGOs complained that it took the provincial office longer than six months after the listings were submitted to report on the progress in land tenure improvement. In some communities, no progress reports have been made despite submitted listings.

The Provincial Agrarian Reform Officer confirmed the delays but made it clear that all their office could possibly do to expedite the process had been done. The bureaucratic procedures delaying the process were already beyond the control of the provincial office. He admitted, however, that the situation was far from ideal, especially since they put a lot of pressure on NGOs to deliver the listings within a relatively short period of time. He said that cases such as these tended to undermine the effective partnerships that took considerable time and effort on the part of the provincial office to build.

On the part of the NGOs, the situation was considered to have resulted in negative consequences for their own partnerships with the concerned communities. Staff members of DAR partner NGOs generally felt that their involvement in the census listing activities of DAR tended to raise community expectations about the speed with which the land tenure improvement component could be

facilitated even as they cautioned communities against expecting too much from the initiative.

B. GO-NGO Collaboration in Policy Setting and Plan Formulation

Not long after the initial attempts at GO-NGO collaboration in the implementation and management of programs and projects, joint initiatives between the sectors extended to the areas of policy setting and plan formulation at both the national and local levels. Several factors account for this shift in the level of GO-NGO relations, the most important of which are the positive strides achieved in collaboration at the level of program and project implementation, the continued advocacy work of NGOs for "alternative" and more empowering development strategies, and the personal ties developed between personalities from the government and non-government sector.

1. Collaboration at the Local Level

That GO-NGO collaboration has been achieved in policy setting and plan formulation as a direct result of the gains in joint efforts at service delivery is more evident at the local level. A good illustration is the previously discussed planning for the realization of DAR Agrarian Reform Communities in the province of Cotabato. The planning approach for the Agrarian Reform Communities has involved DAR NGO partners in planning for more than just the components which the NGOs are expected to take. NGO staff members who were actively involved in these processes mention that their participation afforded them a better perspective of how they fit

into the overall scheme of realizing agrarian reform in the province. The processes also helped to strengthen their working relations with their DAR counterparts, a factor they considered critical in addressing problems and issues encountered in the field.

Similarly, the Governor's Office conducted a strategic planning workshop for the province in 1991, involving line agencies, LGUs, local Sanggunians, and representatives from NGOs and people's organizations that were already involved in the implementation and of government programs and projects. The workshop not only yielded a development strategy for the province, it also facilitated government and NGOs understanding of each other.

In the above examples, collaboration between the sectors in development planning was possible because planning was conducted from an area perspective (agrarian reform communities in the case of the DAR, and the province in the case of the provincial planning workshop) instead of the usual sectoral perspective in planning exercises. By adopting an area perspective, both government and the non-government sector felt that they could effectively contribute to local planning activities.

2. Collaboration at the National Level

GO-NGO collaboration for policy setting and planning at the national level has been known to happen on two fronts: first as this relates to programs and projects that are implemented at the ground level; and secondly, as this relates to more macro-level development policies. Experiences in agrarian reform, illustrate the first, while

the experience in policy setting on the country's foreign debt would be an example of the latter.

The evolution of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Laws provides an example of NGO involvement in policy setting and planning at the national level. Soon after President Aquino's assumption of office, agrarian reform became a central advocacy issue for NGOs. There were frenzied attempts on the part of the non-government sector to influence the framing of the new government's agrarian reform program. Consultations nationwide were held with target beneficiary groups, NGOs, and other concerned sectors including the academe. These efforts eventually led to the organization of the Congress for a People's Agrarian Reform (CPAR), which put forward its own proposals for a comprehensive agrarian reform program. Representing the minimum position that united the broadest spread of the non-government sector, CPAR orchestrated a major lobby in Congress for the enactment of a progressive land reform bill. Although what was eventually enacted into law was a much watered-down version of the CPAR proposals, CPAR decided to focus its efforts on influencing the operationalization of the program within the limits defined by the law. Representation was made with "friendly" executives in the Agrarian Reform Department to create as much operational leeway as possible for "genuine" agrarian reform to be realized. This included the increased participation of the non-government sector in the various components and activities related to the implementation of the program as described in previous sections.

C. GO-NGO Collaboration in Institution Building

Perhaps the richest experiences of NGO mobilization by government to service its own needs and requirements may be found at the level local government units which are expected under the Local Government Code to assume the major responsibility for the delivery of basic social services previously held by national line agencies. In most cases however, LGUs lack the practical skills and capabilities to manage the devolution process, and to take the lead in the planning, implementation and management of newly-devolved service delivery functions. Because of the overwhelming demand for assistance which the Interior and Local Government Department cannot all respond to, many LGUs have turned to the non-government sector for needed assistance. Several NGOs are now involved in assisting LGUs develop systems and structures for more effective local development planning and governance. They provide technical training to the various units of provincial governments and assist in installing systems for organization and management, local development planning and financial management.

Apart from LGUs, some national line agencies affected by the Local Government Code have also sought NGO assistance. The Department of Health is a good case in point. More than 50 percent of Department's total staff complement, 75 percent of its total hospital heads and 50 percent of its budget have been devolved to LGUs. So great was the impact of the Code on the operations of DOH that it had to redefine its role in public health

services delivery. The Department thus created a special task force to draw up the implementing rules and regulations for devolution as it applied to health services delivery. The Task Force is headed by and composed of NGO people experienced in organization, mobilization and management. Not originally part of the Department, the NGO Task Force is seen as a body that can better balance "pro" and "anti" devolution sentiments within the Department. It has also worked to access donor funds to strengthen LGUs and other groups for health service delivery.

IV. Lessons Learned

The foregoing discussion of prospects and experiences of GO-NGO relations highlights the following lessons.

1. *On the Philippine Government's Policy towards NGOs:* It is apparent that the existing government is open to NGOs. This openness seems to have gone beyond the level of verbal pronouncements and personal ties to the level of strategic direction, development policies, and national legislations. With such an openness to NGOs and sustained by a significant amount of actual NGO-GO interactions at the national and local levels, the NGO involvement in mainstream development efforts can no longer be treated on an ad-hoc basis, at least from the point of view of government. It is also safe to conclude that this openness is not a temporary phenomenon. Efforts will continue to be exerted to forge working relationships and institutionalize GO-NGO alliances. This will be done through additional legislations, material resources, and
2. *On the NGOs' response to government's openness:* From 1986 to the present, NGOs have responded to the challenges of mainstream development efforts. This increasing responsiveness is seen both in terms of the qualitative and quantitative nature of NGO involvement. It has been observed that prior to 1986, the NGO roles in government development initiatives have been largely limited to socio-civic clubs and government sponsored/organized sectoral groups. With the entry of development oriented NGOs that sprung from the earlier anti-government movement, the number of NGOs involved in government programs has been increasing. The increase of NGO involvement can also be seen in qualitative terms. The initial years saw collaborative pilot projects on very limited sectoral concerns for specific sites. Over the years, however, GO-NGO joint programs and projects have developed in such areas as agrarian reform, health, livelihood, and area development, among others. NGO roles focused on project/program operation and management, policy setting, and institution building.
3. *On key Success and Failure factors in GO-NGO Relations:* The lessons from past experiences of GO-NGO collaborations point to some of factors influencing for the success or failure of GO-NGO collaboration:
 - 3.1 *Presence/absence of personal ties:* It has been observed that collaborative efforts are affected to a

structures that government may pursue to further improve the environment for GO-NGO relations.

significant degree by the existence of ties among the key persons involved in the activity. With these ties, the credibility of each one is easily established, accurate assessment of capabilities prior to the work is facilitated, and communication and day to day operations flow more smoothly. Past experience further suggests that in times of crisis, personal ties derived from earlier working relations become very critical. In some instances, personal ties derived from encounters and working relations in joint activities are a more dominant consideration than ideological issues in determining the success or failure of collaboration ventures.

- 3.2 *Delineation of Responsibilities:* Where the roles and functions of each of the partners are clearly defined, the likelihood of a successful collaboration between GOs and NGOs is high. A clear delineation of functions sets realistic expectations and prepares both the NGO and GO in a psychological and managerial sense.
- 3.3 *Nature of Work:* Collaborative efforts are also more likely to be successful where objectives and mandates are commonly shared by the GO and NGO partners. The process of arriving at a common set of objectives entails clarification of how the joint activity relates to the NGO's mandate of serving the interest of the people. Given its previous operation

outside the ambit of the government, independence and autonomy are among the critical issues to be resolved by the NGO. Once these are resolved, then the NGO compares its specific objectives with those of government's programs and projects. If there is a match between GO and NGO expectations, then the project goes. Apart from commonality of objectives, it has been observed that NGOs are more willing to bring in additional resources to the joint effort if it is consistent with their mandate. This willingness then adds to the chances of project or program success.

- 3.4 *Consultation Mechanism:* Throughout the operation of the joint activity, regular consultations between the NGO and the GO contribute to project success. It is therefore important to have consultative mechanisms in place. Such mechanisms may include committees, multisectoral fora, and joint training programs. These consultative mechanisms serve not only to facilitate communication but more importantly to continuously clarify roles, functions, and mandates and to monitor and assess the direction of the joint effort.
- 3.5 *Joint Trainings:* Joint training programs involving skills-building, strategic planning sessions and feedback on field operations help establish a firmer base for project success. Some of the positive outcomes of joint training are

the adoption of a common management language among NGO and GO participants, a concrete plan of action which clarifies and delineates functions, and better personal ties which enhance working relationships.

3.6 *Bureaucratic Considerations*: This is a critical factor which has affected NGO-GO relations in the areas of budgeting, coordination and accountability. The issue of government resources allocation to NGOs has been addressed in most cases. What continues to strain GO-NGO relations, however, is the timing of fund releases. When NGOs front-end for government, this often results to a financial problem for NGOs. This is a potential obstacle to GO-NGO relations especially since most NGOs do not have much resources to spare. The other critical area is coordination and accountability. Since GO and NGO partners are supposed to be independent of each other, the absence of a clear cut system of accountability for poor performance of either partner presents considerable difficulties for GO-NGO relations. This is especially the case when the outputs of each one are interdependent such that the failure of one party results to the failure of the other.

4. *Future Trends in GO-NGO Relations*: The following are the development areas where GO-NGO collaborative efforts may be further pursued.

4.1 *Community and Institutional Capacity Building*: This has always been the area of competence of NGOs and there are indications that government will continue to tap them for these activities. Community organizing will continue to be required in the areas of agrarian reform, health and the environment. However, new development objectives will be set for community organizing and institution building work. Mr. Neri's suggestions that NGOs play a role in social advocacy and in developing local governments' capability for CO and area planning seem feasible given NGO positive experiences in these fields.

4.2 *Policy Setting*: Experience in the past few years indicates that GO-NGO joint effort at policy setting is possible and can produce positive results at the local level. This type of collaboration will continue as a natural consequence of government's preferred process of building a consensus around a development agenda. However, it is important to note that GO-NGO policy setting efforts at the national level are more open to the ideological influences of both the government, and NGOs. On the whole therefore, national policy setting will still be the purview of government although it will be influenced by GO-NGO advocacy efforts emanating from the local levels.

- 4.3 *Economic Activities:* Government development strategies envision NGOs to assume the role of initiating and sustaining economic activities at the grassroots levels. There have been joint GO-NGO experiences particularly in the areas of livelihood and credit extension. As the Philippines makes its bid for the status of a newly industrializing economy, demands for NGOs to undertake more types of economic initiatives shall also intensify. However, the NGO community will have to learn from its past experiences and acquire new skills if it wants to take on this challenge.
- 4.4 *Consortium Approach to Development:* As competition for development funds increases among developing countries, international development aid has become more limited and the need for greater impact per unit of development investment has become an imperative to development financing. Against this backdrop, government is impelled to rationalize its relationship with NGOs. In this regard, the consortium approach whereby groups of NGOs band together to act as one in dealing with government and bilateral funding, has been tried in a number of development projects.
5. *Possible Areas of Intervention:* The following recommendations may be useful in enhancing and widening the areas of cooperation between NGOs and GOs.
- 5.1 *Training and Skills Building:* From past experience it can be said that both NGOs and GOs need to update their development skills further. For the NGOs, skills upgrading is needed in the areas of social enterprise development and management, project evaluation and assessment, and area development management. These are the areas in which there will be an increasing demand for NGO participation. Hence the NGO community must develop competence in these areas.
- 5.2 *Organizational and Bureaucratic Streamlining:* This should be done to make the government bureaucracy more conducive to NGO participation in development efforts. Making the budgeting process more flexible and the accountability system more responsive to joint initiatives should be the direction of the streamlining. At first this intervention may look relevant only to the government sector, but NGOs have a stake in this effort. The NGO community should lend its recommendations to the government on what aspects of the existing systems must be modified and how these should be altered.
- 5.3 *Action Research on Consortium Building and Strengthening:* Although there have been some experiences in this area, a lot more has to be done by way of understanding how consortium arrangements among NGOs, are effec-

tively forged and how to deal with government and possibly a consortia of funders. This understanding will have to guide the actual task of consortium building and strengthening.

- 5.4 *Strengthening of Institutional Support for GO-NGO Partnership:* The existing policy guidelines on NGO involvement in development must continue to be translated into implementing structures such as coordinative and facilitative bodies like GO-NGO councils at the national and local levels. It will be through such mechanisms that the roles and functions of NGOs and GOs in development will continue to be defined. Government's part in this task is obvious but NGOs, also have a significant role to play in terms of pushing for such structures and participating in those that are established.

- 5.5 *Shared Information Systems:* GO-NGO collaboration at the local level is facilitated by each party's knowledge of the other's objectives, mandates, resources, capabilities, and personality profiles. General information on each group is readily available, but this is not the case for specific projects or programs which are the starting points for GO-NGO collaborative efforts. Establishing mechanisms for generating and sharing such information can be very useful in encouraging more effective collaboration between NGOs and the government.

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