Beyond the Rhetoric:
Exploring the Reality of North – South NGO Partnerships

by

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B.A. (Hons), University of Toronto, 2001

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Abstract:

Increasingly, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the North are referring to their relationships with NGOs in the South as “partnerships.” The partnerships that will be explored in this thesis are those created with the intention of addressing the impacts of HIV/AIDS in Southern countries. Given the necessity of facilitating Southern input into HIV/AIDS initiatives, this thesis will investigate the reality of North – South NGO partnerships. Interviews with Canadian NGO staff members, whose organizations create partnerships with African NGOs, bring to light the discrepancies that can exist between the partnership ideology, which promotes equality between partners, and the relationship in practice. The interviews expose obstacles that exist for Canadian NGOs attempting to create partnerships that promote equality between partners. Furthermore, this research highlights how partnership discourse can be used as a blanket term with which to refer to a myriad of NGO relationships, potentially hiding any inequalities that may exist between partners.

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List of Abbreviations:

CBO	Community-Based Organization
CCIC	Canadian Council on International Co-operation
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GRO	Grassroots Organization
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICASO	International Coalition of AIDS Service Organizations
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPVO	International Private Voluntary Organizations
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NNGO	Northern Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAC	Partnership Africa Canada
PLHA	People Living with HIV/AIDS
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs
SNGO	Southern Non-Governmental Organization
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSO	Volunteer Sending Organization
WB	World Bank

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1 : Introduction: Presenting the Issues

In the 21st century, HIV/AIDS has become a far-reaching threat to development affecting over 40 million people worldwide. As of yet, there has not been a cure developed or vaccine created to prevent its spread. HIV/AIDS knows no boundaries. It has the potential to affect populations in any country, permeate all aspects of society, decimate populations and wreak havoc on the labour force. Most importantly, in terms of development, the syndrome impairs any efforts to improve the situation of developing countries. Those living within developing countries are the ones who bear the burden of the illness with the African continent holding the highest number of infected individuals while African governments carry high debt loads and many communities suffer under increasing levels of poverty. There is no question how important a global development issue it is and, therefore, the immediate attention it demands from the international development sector.

In recognition of this, the global commitment to fight HIV/AIDS has never been higher (Jackson 2002: vii). HIV/AIDS has become a priority area for the national development strategies of wealthy nations that direct a large portion of their funding resources toward addressing the epidemic in African communities. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which often receive funding from Northern national development organizations, have also been directing a large amount of their energy toward this issue.¹ However, a major point of difficulty lies in discovering the most effective and appropriate way for these organizations to address the epidemic in Africa. NGOs in

¹ Although I am not entirely satisfied with the use of the terms “North” and “South” to signify the often vast differences in the economic and social development status of inhabitants of geographical areas on a global scale, the terms will be used in this paper to do so.

countries that have the means to give much needed support to HIV/AIDS initiatives in Africa will be misdirecting their time and resources if the development strategies they are relying upon are not effective. A primary strategy in use is the formation of partnerships between NGOs in the South and those in the North. Given the increased use of these partnerships to address HIV/AIDS issues in African communities, this thesis will critically examine transnational NGO partnerships.

Aim of the Research

The partnership relationship deserves further scholarly attention given its growing popularity within the global development sector. The perspective that anthropological research can bring to the study of transnational NGO partnerships is vital, as anthropologists are interested in exploring beyond the rhetoric perpetuated by the development sector and are, therefore, able to unpack the politics surrounding NGO relationships, contributing greatly to the study of development processes (Fisher 1997:441). Many anthropologists have focused their research on communities, whose members are now affected by HIV/AIDS and, in doing so, have gained valuable knowledge of these communities (Fisher 1997:456). For this reason, it is appropriate that anthropological research strives to discover how relationships within the development sector are impacting those living with HIV/AIDS in these communities.

In this thesis I begin with an investigation of the concept of “partnership,” a term that I found is used to describe many relationships created between NGOs in wealthy countries and those in less developed countries. As will be shown later in the thesis, the formal definition for partnership implies a relationship in which partners are able to share

resources and participate in joint decision-making processes and there exists a mutual sense of trust and respect between the partners. In other words, it is intended to be a relationship built on egalitarian principles. Within development, partnership proposes to be a step away from the paternalistic approach of top-down, traditional development strategies between donors and recipients in which Northern organizations as the donors clearly hold the power in the relationship. My research looks beyond this rhetoric of partnership to discover the reasons why a given North – South NGO partnership may differ from this rhetoric in practice. I explore the experiences that Canadian NGOs may have when creating and sustaining partnership relations, how they are addressing the partnership issues that they encounter and what obstacles they come across when attempting to create partnerships that strive to improve partner equality.

As part of my primary research, I present four models of partnership that are based on those I encountered during my interviews with Canadian NGO staff. These models are not intended to be a comprehensive list of models that are used by Canadian NGOs simply because that was beyond the scope of my research. The models highlight the inaccuracy of applying the term partnership to a variety of relationships that can differ fundamentally in their strategies and goals. When used in this way the term partnership can be a blanket term, which effectively hides any negative or positive attributes of a given relationship while the relationship is assumed to be egalitarian and therefore any issues will go unquestioned and unchallenged by the partners involved.

The purpose of my research is two-fold. Firstly, the research is intended to encourage the use of specific terminology that will facilitate the transparency of relationships for current and potential partners, while increasing discussion between

partners regarding their relationships. It is hoped that by increasing the amount of discussion regarding NGO relationships, a sharing of the lessons learned within partnerships will occur within the development sector as a whole. Secondly, the aim of the research is also to highlight the importance of incorporating Southern NGO (SNGO) viewpoints into the process of partnership relationships as well as the project and programs that are the focus of the relationship. The research will show the value of mutually beneficial relationships between NGOs for they promote open dialogue, the sharing of ideas and a variety of resources in order to encourage Northern NGOs (NNGOs) to lobby for the donor flexibility needed to overcome the obstacles they encounter within their partnerships.

Research Scope

There were many avenues for further research that were beyond the scope of my own work. My primary research was limited to interviewing staff at Canadian NGOs and, for this reason I was not able to gain the SNGO or donor government perspectives, which could further the anthropological knowledge of the partnership process even more. In future research it would be useful to gather these perspectives by conducting a full stakeholder analysis regarding a specific partnership process. However, for logistical reasons I was not able to pursue this type of analysis given the time, limitations in the length of the thesis and geographic constraints limiting the scope of my work. Given these constraints, I focused my research on North – South NGO partnerships, while recognizing the importance and relevance of other types of partnerships such as those between SNGOs. I chose to focus on the North – South power dynamic that can occur

between NGO partners, as well as the benefits that can accrue, including the support and facilitation of South – South NGO partnerships by NNGOs. While researching partnerships, the complexity of these relationships and the number of different types of partnerships that exist became abundantly clear. While I am careful to acknowledge this fact within my research, an in-depth study of all the possible variations of partnerships that can exist is beyond the feasibility of this study. These variations can include partnerships between Southern governments, Southern NGOs within one country and between countries, SNGOs or NNGOs and community organizations, NNGOs and Southern governments, as well as Northern governments and Southern NGOs. Each of these types of partnership deserve individual study in order to understand the specific complexities within these relationships; however, I chose to limit my attention specifically to the type of partnerships that exist between Northern and Southern NGOs.

My research was not broad enough to fully explore the effects of government policy, such as Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs) and bilateral aid, on NGO partnerships, leaving room for further research to investigate this important aspect. However, this thesis does provide some suggestions as to where NGO partnerships might usefully complement these government strategies. Research is still needed to investigate specific aspects of a given partnership such as the selective processes of NNGOs and the accountability measures in place for both partners. Although my research was able to show that both the selective processes and measures of accountability put in place by the NNGO partners and their Northern donor(s) can contribute to partnership imbalances, I was not able to delve too deeply into these areas. My research indicates that the autonomy of NNGOs can be limited by government stipulations on funding, which

restricts the ability of NNGOs to respond to SNGO identified needs. Further research regarding the degree of autonomy held by NNGOs would be beneficial in order to more completely determine how much control NNGOs have to adjust their partnership model according to SNGO needs.

Methodology

My primary research was based on interviews with staff members from seven development NGOs based in Ottawa, Canada. When selecting organizations, I chose NGOs that regularly work with NGOs in African countries on development issues and those that consider addressing HIV/AIDS in African countries an integral part of their mandate. All of the NGOs use the term partnership in written material including brochures for a public audience, government documentation and internal reports. After researching NGO websites to discover which Canadian NGOs would be relevant to my research, I contacted NGO staff members that would be accessible for interviews in Ottawa. I interviewed the staff members that responded affirmatively to my request. I do not claim that the organizations I involved in my research provide a well-balanced, comprehensive representation of all Canadian development organizations with similar HIV/AIDS objectives, as my subjects provide but a small sample of the opinions that may be present within Canadian NGOs. Given that the interviewees were limited to seven staff members the number of interviewees will not be statistically significant. However, the importance of the interviews lies in the fact that they lend themselves to a qualitative, rather than a quantitative, analysis of the perspectives of the interviewees regarding the partnership issues previously identified by other researchers in the literature review. The

interviews provide a necessary window into the comprehension of the term “partnership” and what the term entails from the perspective of those within the Canadian development sector who are working on HIV/AIDS related issues.

In my primary research I chose to focus on Canadian NGOs that create partnerships with African NGOs with the goal of supporting HIV/AIDS initiatives for three main reasons. Besides my own personal interest in HIV/AIDS issues, I used the focus on HIV/AIDS to narrow my field of research, limiting my interviewees to NGO staff that are working on HIV/AIDS initiatives in African communities. A second reason is that currently HIV/AIDS is perceived by Northern development organizations as one of the most important development issues today, especially in African countries, AIDS exacerbates poverty and has proven to be beyond the capacity of many African governments to address independently, making it difficult for development efforts to be successful. Consequently, Northern donors and NGOs choose to apply a great deal of their resources toward addressing this issue, often with the use of partnerships. Most importantly, I chose to focus on HIV/AIDS because it is a development issue that clearly necessitates equal input from Southern partners when developing and implementing appropriate initiatives because of the first hand knowledge that those working within African countries can contribute, thereby increasing the effectiveness of development efforts in the long run. In this thesis, the HIV/AIDS syndrome is used to place partnership in the context of a specific development issue, illustrating the benefits of applying a relational strategy between Northern and Southern development organizations that facilitates the participation of Southern agencies who are working directly in the communities affected by the epidemic.

Chapter Outline

Before beginning with an exploration of NGO partnerships, chapter two will emphasize HIV/AIDS as a priority development issue, one which requires comprehensive and effective programs in order to appropriately address the needs of those living with HIV/AIDS. The ability of African governments and SNGOs to adequately address the epidemic is extremely limited given various factors that will be outlined in this chapter. Given these limitations, international co-operation efforts focusing on HIV/AIDS issues, specifically transnational NGO partnerships, are seen as a vital strategy for NNGOs to use in order to provide support to SNGOs.

Chapter three provides a definition of NGOs, their role as members of civil society and the type of work in which they are involved. A review of the literature provides critiques as well as the positive attributes most commonly associated with NGOs and their ability to contribute to global development initiatives. With the use of David Korten's "three generations framework," the evolution of NGO strategies are highlighted, showing the increase in frequency and the recognized importance of NGO partnerships as well as the possible reasons for their proliferation.

The fourth chapter deals more specifically with North – South NGO partnerships by exploring in greater depth the positive and negative attributes of the partnership relationship. The key concepts of the partnership ideology are stressed bringing to light the differences that can exist between partnership discourse and partnership in practice as recognized by previous researchers. It is intended that with the recognition of these discrepancies, the importance of investigating NGO partnerships will be made clearer.

Chapter five explores NGO partnership issues further with the use of primary research from interviews with Canadian NGO staff members. The methodology for this primary research is explained more fully at the beginning of chapter five. The perspective of these staff members was explored regarding the issues they encounter within their partnerships with African NGOs; how they are attempting to address these issues; and, what obstacles they have encountered when attempting to create ‘true’ partnerships which promote equality between partners in the North and the South. The interviewees also provide examples of the types of partnerships that are in use by Canadian NGOs who work with African counterparts. Since all of these relationships are labelled “partnerships,” the differences in these partnership models are stressed in order to show that the term serves to obscure and effectively hide the true nature of a given partnership.

The final chapter concludes with a brief discussion of Korten’s “mutual empowerment” framework, which can be used as a guideline for international co-operation including transnational NGO partnerships. This chapter also highlights the potential that NGO partnerships may hold for supporting the increased participation of Southern NGOs within partnership relations so that they may have more input into how the HIV/AIDS epidemic should be addressed in their communities. In doing this, the chapter also emphasizes the ultimate aim of this thesis, which is to advocate for further research into international co-operation strategies between the North and the South, such as partnerships, in order to promote and increase transparency of these relationships and to encourage the equal participation of Southern development agencies in addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This thesis articulates the need for further anthropological research on the relationships that are created between organizations and the people that work

within these organizations, as international co-operation within the global development sector increases. The final chapter also highlights the unique ability that anthropologists have to take a “practice approach” in order to determine the realities of NGO processes such as partnerships (Murdoch 2003:525).

2 : HIV/AIDS in Africa: Partnerships as a global response

Introduction

As the year 2000 came to a close, 36.1 million people had contracted HIV/AIDS, with seventy-five percent of this total living in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Subsequently, in June 2001 the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on HIV/AIDS produced a “Declaration of Commitment” to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic, identifying sub-Saharan Africa as “the worst affected region where HIV/AIDS is considered as a state of emergency” (UNGASS 2001: 2). The Declaration states that the epidemic in Africa jeopardizes the development goals that the countries have worked toward, and undermines any possibility of political, economic and food security that development initiatives strive to achieve. For these reasons, the epidemic in Africa is regarded by the United Nations as one which requires immediate action on a national, regional and international scale. Accordingly, the Declaration requests that all countries strive to aid the countries that are most drastically affected by the syndrome. Partnerships between development organizations are suggested as the primary way for countries to aid those affected by HIV/AIDS. It is assumed that increased cooperation between development organizations will alleviate the negative affects that the syndrome is perpetuating (UNGASS on HIV/AIDS 2001).

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimated that in 2003 five million people acquired HIV, increasing the number of people living with HIV worldwide to 40 million (UNAIDS 2003). In Africa, where two-thirds of the world’s HIV

positive people are living, the harsh reality is that governments are forced to channel more money to pay off foreign debt than they are able to devote to the health and education sectors. As a result, the millions of new patients requiring treatment and care at various stages of infection are over-burdening the already fragile health structure in these countries (UNGASS 2001: 2). In the international development sector, projects involving various AIDS care and support strategies, which range from water and sanitation improvements and income generating projects to psychosocial counseling and home-based care, are increasingly becoming an integral part of development programs. Many development organizations' officials are now well aware that HIV/AIDS poses a definite threat to the sustainability of any and all development goals as it depletes the workforce, decimates household income, and can leave family members and whole communities dependent and vulnerable. Consequently, projects involving care and support to those affected by the syndrome are increasingly being regarded as a necessary response if development programs, in general, are to attain their goals. In view of this, organizations strive to incorporate care and support projects with ongoing prevention efforts. I

In recognizing the importance and urgency of providing AIDS care and support, the UNGASS Declaration states that although African countries should strive to allocate at a minimum 15% of their yearly national budgets to the health sector they also recognize the difficulties that debt ridden governments may have in doing this. For this reason, increased assistance from wealthier countries is encouraged (UNGASS 2001). Despite the recommendation for increased assistance to the health sector, in an online discussion in preparation for the International Conference on AIDS and Sexually

transmitted infections in Africa (ICASA), Dr. Uzodinma Adirieje of Nigeria noted that African leaders, as well as those in wealthier countries, were falling short of their UNGASS commitments for AIDS care and support (Health and Development Network 2003). Canada, as one of these wealthy countries, is arguably in a position to aid African communities that are attempting to cope with the effects of HIV/AIDS. Given this position and the current relevance of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa to the global development sector, it is necessary and extremely worthwhile to research the ways in which Northern development organizations are addressing the impact of AIDS on African communities. Accordingly, my research investigates transnational partnerships, which have become a primary way in which Northern NGOs attempt to address the impact of the syndrome in African countries.

North-South Partnerships: Providing support to AIDS Programs in Africa

Juan Manuel Suarez del Toro, President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, refers to the HIV/AIDS epidemic as “an alliance of ills, all quietly interacting, feeding and exploiting one another” (del Toro 2003: n.p.). As such, he states that since the impacts are so widespread, they require a concerted effort to address them. He suggests that the only viable way to deal with this is by having a consortium of partners dedicated to the creation of long-term solutions that would address the needs of an affected community in a holistic way (del Toro 2003: n.p.).

Evidently, the international development community has slowly begun to realize that, prevention should remain a key focus in the global attempt to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS, although the reality is that millions of people, ninety-five percent of whom

live in developing countries, are already infected with HIV/AIDS. These people are forced to deal with the disease on a daily basis and, in many cases, in circumstances where beneficial resources are lacking (WHO/UNAIDS 2000:2). Some organizations have argued that care and support programs have great potential for prevention efforts, arguing that when families and communities know individuals who are HIV positive and become directly involved with their care, the lethal nature of the disease becomes a realistic threat and has more of an impact on behaviour change (UNGASS on HIV/AIDS 2001: 17, 19; MoHSS Namibia 2001: 9; Secure the Future 2001: 9). Above all else, those affected by HIV/AIDS have a human right to adequate care and support measures. UNAIDS has emphasized this point in the *2002 Report on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic* stating that those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS have the right to “the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health”; a right to education and information regarding the disease and adequate treatment available; to privacy and the opportunity to be involved in the sharing of information to promote wider access to care and support (UNAIDS 2002: 63). NGO partnerships focusing on AIDS care and support projects are thought to be part of a constructive effort to elevate the physical and mental well-being of those affected by HIV/AIDS.

The necessity of AIDS care and support is further promoted by the fact that there may not be a cure for HIV/AIDS within the next ten years, leading to the continued exacerbation of social, political and economic instability in the African countries affected by the disease. Without a cure, increased efforts will be vital within the next few years to address the various types of care and support required by the individuals and their families who are affected by HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS 2000:17). The poverty levels in rural

areas of Africa, where many people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) live, are so high that even if a cure is discovered many of those infected could not afford the required costs or gain access to the treatment (Kiwombojjo 2002: 9). For this reason, the promotion of care and support systems that are readily accessible at the community level would prove highly beneficial to the majority of people affected by the syndrome.

It is in the resource poor settings of the rural areas of these developing countries, where the majority of the African population lives, that access to required resources such as psychosocial support, medicine, food and water are extremely limited (Ng'weshemi et al 1997:10). While the international development community has been slow to organize their care and support efforts, grassroots community organizations have been actively creating support networks to meet the needs of those identified as PLHA in their community, as well as the family members that are struggling to care for those infected. These efforts can involve the provision of various resources to those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS who are often marginalized within their community. International support, through solidarity specifically in terms of organization, advocacy and financial means, is also extremely important to the success of these local programs. Development organizations often imply that, by organizing efforts and combining international support with community initiatives, resources can be more adequately mobilized, networks can be stronger and project goals can prove to be sustainable and effectively oriented toward meeting the varied needs of PLHA.

African countries have been exposed to a great deal of civil strife, disease, famine, drought and economic adjustment policies, which have contributed to the weakening of the infrastructures of these countries (Leonard and Muia 1998). Catastrophes such as the

1984 famine in Ethiopia and the Sahel drought of the early 1970's, which together claimed well over a million lives, have greatly hindered the ability of local governments to provide necessary public services. A consequence has been a rise in the number of NGOs needed to provide relief services (Welch 1995: 45). Additionally, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), civil war is one of the leading factors, along with drought, that has negatively affected food production in numerous African countries increasing the demands on limited government funds (FAO 1999).

To make matters worse, highly prevalent diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS have drastically over-burdened the African health systems. For example, in 1998 approximately fifty-four percent of the admissions to the medical ward of the King Edward VIII Hospital in Durban, South Africa, were HIV-related (Russel and Schneider 2001: 1). The ability of the health sector to deal with the increasing number of HIV/AIDS patients has been detrimentally affected by reforms to the health sector instigated by Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs). Many researchers believe that these policies have not managed to strengthen the health sector in Africa, but instead have alienated people from using the services by implementing user fees and decreasing the amount of funds allotted to the health sector of these countries (Leonard and Muia 1998). The majority of Africans live in rural areas where there is extremely limited access to the health care system and, in some cases, for marginalized groups, no access at all. The formal health system reaches a limited number of Africans, approximately ten to twenty percent, who live mainly in urban areas (The Hunger Project 2001: 16). As a result of their limited access to health care resources it is assumed that the people who are living in

poverty stand to benefit the most from the AIDS care and support programs, which are supported by transnational NGO partnerships (Hansen et al 1998: 6).

The experiences of people living with HIV/AIDS are of increasing poverty, as their ability to obtain the means to acquire basic needs such as food and shelter are limited by the progression of the syndrome. Many HIV positive people, living and working in urban areas, choose to return to the rural areas where their families can care for them once they begin to contract opportunistic infections. As the disease progresses, their capacity for work decreases. This leads to burden and stress on the rural household, which must deal with additional mouths to feed and the care needs of the sick family member (LeBeau et al 1999: 134). Often people living with HIV/AIDS have feelings of isolation and rejection because they no longer have active roles in their communities. They feel useless and may be depressed when they feel that they can no longer actively contribute to the household economy as they once did. If there are children involved, they may fear for the future well-being of their children, wondering how the children will be cared for when they are no longer alive (Russel and Schneider 2000: 2).

The impact of the AIDS crisis is proving to be beyond the coping abilities of these family and kinship networks. Moreover, the AIDS projects created by small African community groups, to provide care and support to these families, are struggling to stay afloat, finding it difficult to maintain the financial support necessary to continue their varied activities. Western nations are currently organizing billions of dollars in funds to be channelled through huge initiatives such as the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. With funds being administered on such a large scale, there is a fear that “ambitious mega-projects” will be favoured over projects initiated by small

localized NGOs where the funds may make more of a difference at the grassroots level (Epstein 2003: 10).

AIDS care and support programs run by these small localized NGOs involve the efforts of a wide group of people. Community health workers, religious groups, traditional healers and volunteers are often involved with the identification of specific communities and families, in a given area, who are affected by HIV/AIDS and need support, and mobilize scarce resources toward care and support for the specific family as well as for the community as a whole. The programs can have a variety of aims – food supplements, medical outreach, counselling, water and sanitation improvements, income generating projects – depending on the perceived needs of those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS in a given community (MoHSS Namibia 2001: 9). In fact, the World Health Organization and various international organizations acknowledge that AIDS care, by necessity, must be holistic in nature. This concept is referred to as “the care continuum” and consists of a wide range of health related services which strive to address HIV/AIDS issues in a comprehensive manner. These services can include “counselling and testing, clinical management, nursing care and community-based social support” (Osborne 1996:62).

Other forms of care and support which are strong components of the care continuum would be income generating projects for PLHA and orphan care strategies. At a workshop in India, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance stressed that the idea behind a “care continuum” is that it is intended to provide a supportive framework to address the variety of needs of people affected by HIV/AIDS, a framework that is accessible to all those who require immediate access to AIDS care and support resources (International

HIV/AIDS Alliance n.d.:4). It is clear that the task of organizing and mobilizing the resources needed to create and maintain a functional continuum of care is a large one, and, for this reason, it is believed that African organizations involved in this process could benefit from partnerships with Canadian organizations.

Moreover, in many rural areas where these AIDS care projects are functioning, households do not have access to resources that are deemed necessary to improve and maintain good health, namely access to clean water, soap, proper hygiene, nutritious foods and basic medicines (WHO 1993: iii). Russel and Schneider note that the majority of clients of the AIDS care outreach projects in Africa lack these resources and as a result have difficulty maintaining the care they receive from health workers (Russel and Schneider 2000:28). It is clear that AIDS care and support projects must be organized in an holistic manner to address the varied needs of those who are not only suffering from the effects of the debilitating disease but also from a cycle of poverty, which keeps them from maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Clearly numerous challenges face SNGOs in their attempt to implement AIDS care and support programs within African communities. While many SNGOs have realized the need for a wide variety of support mechanisms, including immediate support such as welfare support and income generating activities in communities with high infection rates, at the same time, they are acutely aware of the lack of resources available (Nsutebu et al 2001: 246). It has been noted that increased support needs to be given to the SNGOs that implement these programs so that they may be able to deliver their services effectively (UNAIDS 2002: 156).

Relationships between African NGOs and those in wealthier countries are increasingly referred to as partnerships and viewed as having the ability to provide an adequate flow of necessary resources to the SNGOs that require them. NGO partnerships are often believed to facilitate local ownership and to increase the level of SNGO participation on important development initiatives such as HIV/AIDS. This thesis explores transnational NGO partnerships, specifically between Canadian and African NGOs focusing on HIV/AIDS issues in Africa, in order to identify reasons why this type of relationship is regarded with much potential and to examine critically what the relationship might entail. The following chapters discuss the rise of this type of North-South relationship and the potential benefits and negative aspects of NGO partnerships. The primary research consists of interviews with Canadian NGO staff members in order to investigate the Canadian NGO perception of North – South NGO partnerships. In my exploration of the viewpoints that Canadian NGO staff hold, I focus on three main areas: partnership issues that have been identified; how these issues are being addressed; and, the obstacles that may arise when attempting to address these issues. The purpose of the following chapter is to clarify the role that NGOs can play within development initiatives while highlighting both the positive and negative qualities that they may possess. The chapter will review the historical trends that may have led to the increased reliance on North – South NGO partnerships as a way to address HIV/AIDS initiatives in Southern countries while concluding with a discussion of NGO partnerships within the current Canadian context.

3 : Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to draw attention to the rise of transnational NGO relationships and, therefore, to highlight the necessity of studying this topic. This will be done by presenting an overview of the different types of NGOs that exist and their evolving role in promoting international co-operation focusing on development initiatives, particularly those that address the needs of African communities besieged by the effects of HIV/AIDS, which will be investigated further in the following chapters. NGOs are considered to be an integral part of civil society, which in international development discourse is made up of various types of institutions whose primary purpose is to address issues of social development. Taking into account their inevitable limitations, NGOs can provide a necessary and irreplaceable forum for confronting the HIV/AIDS epidemic and constructing relationships geared toward addressing the impacts of the syndrome. The numerous roles played by a variety of NGOs in their attempts to address development aims and their ability to bring these issues to the attention of the global development community will be outlined, as well as their potential ability to further development initiatives as a whole. The critiques of NGOs will be considered in order to present a more realistic picture of both NGO shortcomings and their positive contributions to global development issues. However, first of all, it is helpful to place NGOs in the historical context which led to their proliferation in numerous countries worldwide, in order to emphasize the needs that they are thought to fulfill.

The ultimate aim of this chapter is to show the increased prominence that transnational NGO relationships have had within the development community as the mode of choice for addressing contemporary development issues. NGOs are often touted as holding much potential to adequately address development issues through their position within civil society. They are believed to be flexible in comparison to government agencies, have diverse experience and, therefore, lessons learned in key development areas. They have a variety of ways to address development needs, especially at the grassroots level. Once the role of NGOs has been explored it becomes clear that NGOs hold the potential to develop beneficial relationships with each other with the mutual goal of strengthening local communities to provide care and support for PLHA. However, since these NGO relationships have become so prominent, further study of specific relationships is imperative, as their critical examination is needed in order to discover if these relationships currently hold the ability to have a positive effect on the lives of those they intend to help. In light of this, Canadian NGOs and their recent experiences in the context of the Canadian development community are addressed later in the chapter, further illustrating the importance and relevance of transnational NGO partnerships that have increasingly become a primary model used by NGOs when relating to one another.

Civil Society and NGOs: Clarifying the terms

Although it is a common term used within the development sector, pinpointing an acceptable definition for civil society is highly problematic. A basic definition will describe civil society as an entity made up of all organizations excluding those involved

in government and those seeking purely profitable ventures. However, in its simplicity, this definition portrays civil society as distinct from the state and business sectors, ignoring the complex interface that can exist between organizations within these sectors while at the same time assuming that civil society organizations are always working for public interests (Van Rooy 1998:16). When defined in this way, civil society is portrayed as a homogeneous entity in which organizations are perceived as though they “operate on an even playing field, share similar values and seek common ideals” (Howell and Pearce 2000:81). In reality, each civil society organization has its own distinct aim(s) that can be supported or thwarted by donor and government institutions to differing degrees. As a result, differences in the range of capabilities held by civil society organizations can exist as they must negotiate within the “spheres of power” created by the interactions of various institutions (Rutherford 1997:5). Furthermore, the rhetoric of civil society implies that the term is a universal one that can be readily applied to various cultures regardless of the fact that the term originated in Western nations as a result of specific cultural and historical experiences (Rutherford 1997:5; Howell and Pearce 2000:81). Within the development sector, donor organizations have found it necessary to use the rhetoric of civil society in order to identify and support the efforts of those organizations whose program goals coincide with their own. Often this selective process involves focusing primarily on NGO activities (Howell and Pearce 2000:80). This civil society rhetoric can, in turn, be used by NGOs to create a niche for themselves in which they facilitate links between the state, the business sector and society.

The stated aim of many civil society organizations working within the development sector is to find resolutions to some of the negative economic and social

effects of both the government and business sectors, negative effects that can contribute to the creation of many pertinent development issues that exist today, such as the increase in the number of people living in poverty worldwide (Van Rooy 1998:1). Following this definition, development NGOs are regarded by themselves, donors and others as one of the vital components of a given country's civil society and, as such, are seen to play an essential role in combating poverty. Particularly since the 1990s, NGOs are also understood within the international development field as "CSOs," civil society organizations. Poverty is one of the main focuses of many national official development assistance policies as well as an issue that exacerbates various health epidemics such as HIV/AIDS. Those working within civil society organizations claim that their contribution towards the eradication of poverty and consequent inequalities lie in their ability to promote innovation, to create a space for the voices of marginalized groups to be heard, as well as to highlight and strengthen the rights of the poor (CCIC 2003: 2).

Furthermore, from this empowered definition within international development, "civil society" involves a wide variety of organizations whose individual mandates state that they intend to address the diverse yet equally imperative interests of citizens. These interests can include promoting democratization and addressing human rights grievances as well as other initiatives that aim to enable poorer communities to achieve sustainable and productive livelihoods (CCIC 2001). NGOs are seen to be valuable actors contributing to these and many related issues and hold the ability to play an important role in addressing the global inequalities that are repercussions of the political economic contexts in which local communities in less developed countries find themselves.

The term NGO can be used to refer to a wide variety of CSOs, which provide various forms of relief and development support to communities and other organizations in a given location (Edwards and Hulme 1996:1). To give an idea of how diverse NGOs and their specific functions can be, John Clark provides a description of “six schools” or types of NGOs. The schools include: Relief and Welfare Agencies; Technical Innovation Organizations; Public Service Contractors; Popular Development Agencies; Grassroots Development Organizations; and, Advocacy Groups and Networks. It is stressed that these schools often overlap and, therefore, more than one school can be represented in a given NGO. Additionally, it is noted that each of these schools has an important contribution to make to development initiatives, and all are important in their own right (Clark 1991:40-41). However, for the purpose of providing clarity in this paper, the term NGO will not be used to refer to Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Grassroots Organizations (GROs), which differ from national NGOs in that they are membership-based, typically smaller in size, and often lack international exposure. Their vital work within specific local communities is often the focus of support from larger national level NGOs. The term NNGO will be used to refer specifically to the organizations Clark labels Popular Development Agencies, Advocacy Groups and Networks, and Public Service Contractors, all of which encompass national level development organizations from both the South and the North that create relationships with each other in order to address pertinent development issues.

Given that NGOs operate and form relationships at several levels, ranging from the local level to the international level (Kamat 2003:89), for the sake of clarity a further differentiation will be made between SNGOs and their Northern counterparts. This thesis

focuses on the transnational relationships forged between Northern and Southern NGOs and the ability of this type of relationship to impact how NGOs mutually address HIV/AIDS as a development issue.

Setting the Stage: A Brief History of NGOs

According to Clark, many early NGOs in the South that reached national scale evolved from social struggles for independence during the late colonial era beginning in the 1950s. The first NNGOs date back to the end of World War I but increased in number and strength following World War II when focus was given to rebuilding war-torn European communities (Clark 1991:34). More recently, the 1980s have been coined the “NGO decade” referring to the rapid growth in the number of NGOs in both the North and the South, with those in the South benefiting from increased donor interest (Postma 1994: 448; Fowler 1992: 16). SAPs implemented by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over the past 20 years extremely limited the ability of African governments to adequately respond to those in need particularly the poor and marginalized. The creation of NGOs occurred in part in order to try to address these needs by providing necessary services including education, health and credit where governments were unable. It is believed that NGOs “emerged to play important roles as catalysts in the emergence and consolidation of social movements; as promoters of citizens’ rights; and as a force for mobilizing and strengthening citizens’ organizations and alliances” (CCIC 2003: 3). In 1909, there were 176 NGOs that provided services at an international level compared to 28,900 by 1993 (Edwards and Hulme 1996:1). To avoid over simplifying the reasons for this unprecedented increase it is important to note

that many complex issues, which are beyond the scope of my research, contributed in various ways to the rise in NGO numbers. A highly significant one would be the impact of globalization, which heightened the North's awareness of the struggles occurring in the South. However, one can conclude that this notable rise in the number of NGOs over almost a century illustrates the fact that there was a gap in the social services provided by government agencies that needed to be filled and that, on a global scale, NGOs could be seen responding to these needs.² In doing so, they defined a niche for themselves a part from the services provided by governments and private sectors.

The homogeneity that was characteristic of the way in which most of the earliest NGOs chose to respond to relief efforts quickly led to a much wider differentiation of development activities, as many organizations began experimenting with new activities geared toward aiding those in need that went beyond relief efforts. Although NNGO activities originally focused strictly on applying Northern expertise and technology to problems identified by Northern development officials, Clark asserts that by the 1960s many NNGOs began to critique this Northern biased "traditional development model." The initiatives and voices of SNGOs that were once to a great extent ignored were now given greater attention by NNGOs, leading to increased funding and other support given to create and help sustain SNGOs. An example of this would be the NNGO, Oxfam, which, in 1961, altered its funding preference from NNGOs working in the South to the direct funding of Southern efforts. This policy shift was an extremely important one,

² It is important to note that these "needs", as discussed here, were all too often defined by Northern development agencies and were addressed according to the development strategies designed by the North and not necessarily according to needs as defined by Southern agencies and/or communities. In fact, Ivan Illich goes so far as to say that "'Basic needs' may be the most insidious legacy left behind by [Northern] development" (Illich 1992:88) as the term has been co-opted by development as common rhetoric and used as a basis on which to legitimize development strategies (Illich 1992).

which led to the increase in strength and number of SNGOs, enabling them to become more self-assured as the importance of their development perspectives could be recognized and they began to receive some of the acknowledgment they deserved from the global development community (Clark 1991:35).

Historical Trends

David C. Korten's (1987:147-149) description of what he terms the "three generations of private voluntary development action" provides a useful analysis of the historical evolution of NGO efforts over the past century, and highlights the underlying directional shift that development initiatives have taken as a whole. The three generations begin with "relief and welfare," then shift to a focus on "local self-reliance" and culminate with "sustainable systems development." The first generation strategy was directed at providing "relief and welfare" for the most basic of needs which arose primarily in relation to wars and natural disasters. Although humanitarian aid remains a necessary focus for development institutions as long as there are natural and human-made disasters occurring worldwide, it is no longer the main development strategy of most NGOs, as it was at one point in time, primarily because this strategy does not contribute a great deal to the ability of those affected by disaster to meet their own needs in a sustainable way (Korten 1987:147-149).

The second generation strategy focusing on "local self-reliance" came about in the late 1970s. It centered on the support of localized community projects designed to address a specific development concern in that community such as building schools or providing health clinics. The benefits of these initiatives were expected to be maintained

by the local community who were seen to have a vested interest in obtaining and using the services provided. However, since this type of development response is very limited in scope, and does not address the underlying reasons why these services were needed in the first place, the focus of the third generation NGO interventions came to be “sustainable systems development.” This focus arose from the realization that linkages must be made between development efforts in various communities and public and private organizations, which can provide the necessary support communities require instead of leaving them in the lurch after short-term projects come to an end. Even though the difficulties in implementing the program strategies of the third generation have yet to be overcome, it is important that NGOs have recognized that relationships between various organizations are key to altering the underlying causes of underdevelopment. Partnerships with private organizations, government departments as well as other developmental institutions are imperative to the success of development strategies (Korten 1987:147-149).

A number of important NGO trends are apparent in the progression of Korten’s three generations of development initiatives. NGOs have been able to increase their impact and effectiveness by creating development strategies that incorporate “longer time perspectives, broadened definitions of the development problem, increased attention to issues of public policy and a shift from exclusively operational to more catalytic roles” (Korten 1987:147). These “catalytic roles” can include NNGOs encouraging and enabling networking and partnerships between various development actors, themselves included. Clearly, throughout the three generations of the NGO development strategies, more and more stakeholders become involved so that the initiatives shift from involving

only the NGO as the sole implementer of the strategy to a strategy that acknowledges and necessitates the contribution of various other organizations, including other NGOs, in order to achieve the goals of the development initiative (Korten 1987:148-Table 1).

Korten's three generations framework helps to illustrate how each shift in NGO development strategy has led to an increase in the relevance of NGO partnerships within NGO development work. The framework also suggests that NNGOs, whose programs and projects follow the first and second generation strategies, are not as likely to engage with SNGOs when designing and implementing development plans to the same degree as those who focus on development initiatives following the third generation strategy.

Korten does go on to explain that each generation is necessary in specific development situations and that a given NGO may follow first generation strategies for one program and second generation strategies for another. He also points out the fact that efforts toward first and second generation strategies will be in vain without incorporating third generation strategies that take into account the need to integrate other organizations into their development strategies if any sustainable development impact is to be made by NGOs (Korten 1987:149). It is not until this third generation strategy is accepted that NNGOs acknowledge the importance and necessity of working with their SNGO counterparts and act on this belief.

Charles Elliot (1987:57) produced a "spectrum of NGO behaviour and attitudes" very similar to the three generations provided by Korten. Elliot's spectrum includes three different approaches which correspond to Korten's three generations: the welfare approach; the development approach; and the empowerment approach. Elliot optimistically believes that it is this ability of NGOs to change where necessary and to

evolve the ways in which they deal with development issues that makes them a “viable alternative approach to the processes of development” (Elliot 1987:68). The ability of NGOs to adapt and continuously learn from their experiences in the development field, as illustrated by Elliot’s and Korten’s analyses of changing NGO strategies, is considered to be the most important attribute possessed by NGOs.

Important Attributes of NGOs

NGOs are perceived to hold many other positive attributes which further reinforce their vital position within civil society. These attributes include flexibility, diversity, a strong value-base, effectiveness at the local level, a participatory nature and innovative tendencies (Edwards and Hulme 1992:14,16,19). In 1983, a Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) president elaborated on the positive characteristics of NGOs with the following statement:

NGOs, in my judgment, have some very practical, as well as visionary, virtues. They are human, personal and unbureaucratic; they are low in cost and high in dedication; they are flexible, fast and innovative; they can work effectively in fields and places where government cannot operate; they have the knack for building partnerships and for getting aid to the grassroots, to those who need it most. (Catley-Carlson 1983:15 as cited in Herbert-Copley 1987:26)

Although each of the attributes mentioned have been debated in one NGO context or another, this list of positive characteristics sheds light on the vast potential that donors feel NGOs hold for development initiatives, and can help to explain the increased tendency for international donors to support NGO activity which led to the ‘NGO decade’ of the 1980s.

To elaborate on one of these attributes, NGOs are often seen as a more development friendly alternative to government agencies. NGOs are able to address gaps

in government services, directing critically needed resources to those who desperately require them, the poor and the marginalized who are not able to access them from existing government services (CCIC 2003:3). Government agencies, in contrast to the characteristics assigned to NGOs, are described as “rigid, hierarchical, and autocratic” entities which are highly bureaucratic, implementing power and control over society, and leaving little room for citizen participation (Edwards and Hulme 1992:16). Given their centralized power structure, governments are not likely to promote internal flexibility or innovation if these are to compromise the hierarchical core. As a result, numerous administrative obstacles are created which can make it difficult for government bodies to fully address the needs of their marginalized citizens (CCIC 2003: 3). Therefore, NGOs are seen as complementary to government services, as the aforementioned qualities they hold allow them to address key societal issues. It is far from my intention to prove that NGOs are superior in their capacity to address development issues such as HIV/AIDS and hold a “comparative advantage” in this area.³ On the contrary, government bodies are capable of advancing development ideals and the necessity of their involvement in these goals cannot be underestimated. Additionally, researchers such as William Fisher (1997) point out that NGOs are all too often painted in a positive light when much more research is needed regarding the assumed ability of NGOs to address development issues effectively. However, the point intended is that NGOs, as part of civil society, can play a vital role in dealing with various development issues. According to Ian Smillie, for the past thirty years or more, NGOs have been the development agents who have identified and worked to address various development needs often well before government development agencies were able to do so (Smillie 1996:196). For this reason it would be

³ See Robinson 1992:28 for a clear argument on this point.

extremely detrimental to the development community, as a whole, if the unique position, potential, and value of NGO contributions were to be overlooked.

Some Negative Trends affecting NGOs

As NGOs attempt to fill the gaps in government services and address development issues that governments cannot adequately do alone, there is a fear that NGOs will become co-opted by funding organizations including government bodies, decreasing NGO autonomy. The “new policy agenda,” (Biggs and Neame 1996) as it is called in development circles, is believed to formalize NGO activity, as it stifles creativity and ingenuity with its focus on a linear model of development inputs and outputs. An emphasis on development projects, the second generation of Korten’s model, as the desired way to address development issues may result, as project cycles fit neatly into the linear input-output model and finite time span that government funding institutions may require (Biggs and Neame 1996:47,49). The same obstacles that exist for government agencies could effectively stifle any positive potential that NGOs hold for development work. This could have dire repercussions for development initiatives as many believe that NGOs could easily become agents of the state, contracted out in order to deliver services to those in need, while the deeper social issues which need to be addressed are ignored (Edwards and Hulme 1996:3). If NNGOs are forced to listen more closely to government agencies than to the SNGOs that serve local communities, they run a greater risk of not being able to adequately listen to and appropriately address issues identified by their Southern counterparts. As a result, a gap may be created between SNGOs and NNGOs, pushing NNGOs away from a third generation strategy.

Another disheartening observation linked to the “new policy agenda” is that it tends to promote the idea of NGOs as isolated actors. NGO accomplishments are regarded individually rather than seeing NGOs as a heterogeneous group of actors that create diverse types of relationships in an attempt to tackle development issues and are affected by differing external and internal pressures (Biggs and Neame 1996:49-50). It is important not to overlook the relationships that NGOs can create with other organizations, government bodies, private businesses, and other NGOs, and, subsequently, how the development initiatives the NGO strives to implement are affected by how these relationships function in practice. In 1992, there were approximately 4000 development NNGOs located in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries allocating three billion U.S. dollars in resources to between 10,000 to 20,000 SNGOs (Edwards and Hulme 1992:13). Therefore, NNGOs represent a significant source of support for more narrow development purposes, such as supporting the provision of HIV/AIDS care and support in a local context, because they funnel large amounts of funding and other resources to SNGOs (Van Rooy and Robinson 1998:55). Considering that these SNGOs have the potential to impact the lives of millions of people, the relationships forged between Southern organizations and NNGOs will have far reaching repercussions and, therefore, warrant individual study if we are to discover the effects and potential of the current development strategies used by NNGOs.

In his review of the current literature concerning NGOs and their increasing role in the development community, Fisher highlights the fact that in recent years there has been a drastic increase in the number of transnational NGO coalitions and communications networks (1997:450) and states that “this proliferation and interweaving

creates numerous intersections that deserve anthropological attention” (1997:448). He states that, although the increased presence and resulting influence of NGOs is often uncritically regarded by many development planners and economists in a positive light, stressing that they help to alleviate rural poverty among other good deeds, there can be indirect repercussions from transnational relationships that justify further study (Fisher 1997:440).

NGOs have been described as possessing traits which give them an advantage when it comes to local level development initiatives (Edwards and Hulme 1992:19). Many NGOs in both the South and the North feel it is important to act as a catalyst in the creation of GROs and CBOs. NGOs are considered to be gaining legitimacy for themselves by supporting local organizations who have identified needs expressed within a community that are currently not being met. At the same time, NGOs are believed to be furthering the bottom-up process of listening directly to communities affected by the HIV/AIDS syndrome that is considered a necessary aspect of sustainable development initiatives (Edwards and Hulme 1992:25). However, researchers fear that increased professionalization of NGOs and their subsequent attempts to be non-political will result in a more rigid organizational structure, one that does not lend itself to innovation, relying instead on a cookie-cutter style service delivery and stepping away from supporting local groups that are organizing to address development issues directly affecting them (Kamat 2003; Murdock 2003).⁴ There is also the critique that the

⁴ The term professionalization as used here refers to the process in which “...NGOs move away from education and empowerment programmes that involve structural analysis of power and inequality and instead adopt a technical managerial solution to social issues of poverty and oppression” (Kamat 2003:90). Supported by the neo-liberal policy context in which many development organizations find themselves, this process encourages the formalization of organizational structures within NGOs and CBOs/GROs while persuading staff members to take an apolitical approach to development projects/programs (Kamat 2003:90).

increased reliance governments place on NGOs contracted out to provide public services will decrease NGO autonomy, while reducing government responsibility for public welfare (Edwards and Hulme 1992:215). As NGOs become more and more reliant on government funds, as is the case in Canada, it is believed by some that their flexible nature, which has enabled them to form relationships with various GROs focusing on a number of development issues, will be constrained (Edwards and Hulme 1996:3; Smillie 1996). Therefore, it is vital that we continue to look at the relationships between NGOs in the North and South in order to discover the degree to which NNGOs are able to create viable relationships which allow them to address HIV/AIDS issues effectively and according to the needs identified by SNGOs.

Identifying the Issue: North-South NGO Relationships

As early as 1987 collaboration between NGOs in the North and the South was seen as one of the primary issues that needed to be addressed by the NGO community. In 1987, at the World Development/Overseas Development Institute Symposium in London, England, the relationships between NNGOs and SNGOs were considered a major concern for the international participants and therefore became a critical theme to be discussed. Questions of equality within North-South NGO partnerships were raised and examples given for how relationships could be improved. Both Southern and Northern NGO perspectives were represented at this symposium, as members from across the globe were invited to give their opinions on how NGO activity was faring in less developed countries. Many participants agreed that Southern NGOs must be supported and encouraged as the leaders when it comes to development issues in the South. It was

further noted that relationships between NGOs of the North and South must be actively reshaped in a way that promotes a more open dialogue of communication between them with increased commitment to long-term relationships which could more easily facilitate relationships built on equality and trust (Drabek 1987:x).

In an article written as a result of this symposium, Brent Herbert-Copley highlighted the necessity for Canadian NGOs to adapt to the changing needs inherent in development co-operation strategies if NGOs were to remain relevant contributors to international development. The relationship between Northern and Southern NGOs was seen as a specific issue that needed to be re-evaluated. A “new attitude toward local SNGOs is required – one that sees them not as instruments for disbursing funds, but as partners in a process of development” (Herbert-Copley 1987: 27). The need for a shift away from the all too common donor-recipient model, a model which was believed to promote Southern dependence and Northern paternalism, toward a more egalitarian “partnership” model was acknowledged and brought to the forefront at this development forum by members of Northern and Southern NGOs (Drabek 1987:x).

As Northern governments choose to provide funding directly to Southern governments and SNGOs, NNGOs have struggled to discover how they can remain productive contributors to development issues in the South. Many NNGOs feel that they can fulfill an important role as “partners” with their Southern counterparts, providing resources beyond funding and facilitating a give-and-take philosophy, wherein as much time may be spent learning from SNGOs as is spent imparting Northern knowledge and resources. The effectiveness of NGOs is believed to be greatly increased when networking, coalitions and partnership relationships are pursued with other NGOs, as

these types of relationships are often crucial to the goals of development initiatives (Biggs and Neame 1996:43). This collaboration is seen as necessary and most beneficial for all involved, given that combined efforts are much more likely to lead to more successful ends than any solitary effort could hope to achieve. However, Emma Crewe and Elizabeth Harrison point out the scarcity of academic research being done on the relationships between development organizations and question why this is so (1998: 90). Research into the transnational partnerships created between Canadian and African organizations would help to alleviate the paucity of studies in this field.

The increase in North-South NGO linkages has become so predominant in NGO activity that it has been termed by some to be an NGO “associational revolution at a global level” (Edwards and Hulme 1996:1). This “revolution” acknowledges the idea that the “roots of NGO comparative advantage lie in the quality of relationships that they can create” rather than the amount of resources over which they have control (Edwards and Hulme 1992:14). In the current development climate SNGOs are confronted with the difficult task of making their opinions heard in the global development arena, which is heavily influenced by Northern ideals. Therefore, they benefit when NNGOs provide solidarity in their local efforts, enabling SNGO opinions to be heard amongst a wider audience. However, according to Stephen Biggs and Arthur Neame, the predominant reliance on input-output indicators and results-based evaluations fail to acknowledge the process of creating and sustaining partnerships adequately, and the benefits that can be derived from these relationships. If NGOs are consistently persuaded by donors to look at their individual performance instead of the coalitions, partnerships and networks that they can create with Southern organizations, they will be effectively ignoring the major

achievements that these relationships could hold for development initiatives (Biggs and Neame 1996:49).

The Canadian Context

The North-South Institute's *Canadian Development Report 1999: Civil Society and Global Change* states that there were approximately 300 Canadian NGOs working internationally on development issues within 79 countries. According to this report, Canadian NGOs accumulate approximately \$412 million from public sources and \$209 million from CIDA on a yearly basis, placing them in control of 22 percent of Canada's total overseas spending. This is a high percentage in comparison to many other countries and, therefore, the potential impact that Canadian NGOs hold in terms of addressing development issues should not be overlooked (NSI 1999). In support of this acknowledgement, an issue paper from the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) discusses the important role of Northern civil society agents in development co-operation and states that Canadian CSOs have been "praised for their operational effectiveness and their responsiveness to the priorities and agendas of their Southern counterparts" (Saxby 2003:4). However, while emphasizing the value that Canadian NGOs place on their North-South partnership relations, praises such as this one hide the difficulties that may arise when Canadian NGOs attempt to respond to the needs of partner organizations.

In a critique of CIDA's recent programmatic changes outlined in their *Strengthening Aid Effectiveness* paper (2002), CCIC feels that CIDA is stepping farther away from the role they once played as facilitators and promoters of civil society

partnerships between Northern and Southern counterparts (CCIC 2001:8). These fears are provoked by the programmatic changes CIDA has proposed, which would provide funding only to Canadian NGOs who work within the development priorities set out by the national governments in a given Southern country (CCIC 2001:7). CCIC feels that this will greatly affect the autonomy of both Canadian and Southern NGOs. The CCIC report stresses the importance of maintaining the independence of civil society actors as organizational autonomy is necessary in order to identify and address the concerns of local peoples in the South who are not adequately reached by government efforts. When CIDA implements these programmatic changes, it is believed that these bureaucratic decisions will negatively alter the partnerships that NNGOs have worked hard to create, partnerships that enable NNGOs to gain knowledge from SNGOs that is relevant to the Southern context in which these development programs exist. Southern counterparts can receive solidarity and the provision of resources from these partnership relations for the development initiatives that they themselves, not their government, deem important (CCIC 2001:8). Indeed, there are benefits to be had by consolidating Northern development efforts in the South. In fact, NGOs in both the North and the South would do well to have a plan similar to the Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) being taken by CIDA and other international donors. Such a plan could facilitate the sharing of ideas and the coordination of development work in specific areas of Southern countries while helping to prevent the duplication of projects in a given area. Yet, there does not appear to be a sufficient coordination effort happening among Canadian NGOs to the degree that there could be, an issue which will be discussed further in later chapters. Nevertheless, by dictating where and with whom NNGOs they fund are able to work, CIDA may

undermine a number of partnerships in which Southern and Northern NGOs have already invested their time and energies.

Canadian NGOs hold a vast amount of experience creating and maintaining relationships and dealing with the issues surrounding development partnerships developed over the past 30 years with Southern NGOs. Through this experience many have realized that Southern ownership of development initiatives is crucial to the success of partnerships, and that this is only possible with the corresponding shift of power, resources, and responsibility so that Southern counterparts can be in control of their own development with Northern partners playing a complementary role in development initiatives (Saxby 2003:4; CCIC 2001). The need to investigate the assumed benefits that are strongly associated with North-South NGO partnerships has been acknowledged by many development organizations, yet the research in this area remains minimal. The impact that CIDA's programmatic changes may have on the ability of NNGOs to create partnerships with SNGOs that facilitate increased Southern participation in HIV/AIDS initiatives will be explored further in chapter five. However, chapter four will first focus on the creation of transnational NGO relationships and how the term "partnership" is often used without any major discussion and subsequent agreement on its meaning or definition by the organizations involved. Furthermore, the next chapter will also explore the role that partnerships play in the development process in greater detail, as examining this process and unpacking the assumptions linked to partnerships can lead to important lessons learned that can, in turn, benefit the HIV/AIDS initiatives that are the focal point of many North – South NGO partnerships.

4 : Transnational NGO Partnerships

Introduction

This chapter is intended to provide a closer examination of the role North-South NGO partnerships play within the global development process as set out in the previous chapter. It is necessary to problematize this relationship as it is commonly assumed to be a step toward equality between North and South by those working within the development sector and is often presented as such by development agencies. The exploration of factors that have contributed to the proliferation of a partnership discourse, and the increased use of the partnership model in the development sector, will help to determine why this type of relationship is so widely sought after within development circles. Additionally, the partnership model will be clearly defined with the principal characteristics of the relationship outlined. This will be helpful in determining what is required from organizations involved in partnership relations. An exploration of the critiques and positive attributes discovered in previous research on partnerships will help to expose, in a realistic manner, the potential that the partnership model may hold for HIV/AIDS initiatives. Furthermore, by bringing to light the various detrimental aspects of partnerships which the partnership discourse is often successfully able to hide, such as ongoing inequalities between partners, one can understand the importance of investigating this type of development relationship.

The partnership model has been growing in popularity among NGOs since the 1970s (Fowler 1997:107). With an increase in the desire for organizations to be perceived

as promoting egalitarian principles, “partnership” quickly became the “buzzword of the 1990s” for many types of organizations (Buchanan 1994: 109), and has proven to be a very attractive concept for development agencies specifically. Those researching the issue of organizational partnerships have found that “partnership as a concept dominates the social policy field and has been readily incorporated into NGO practice and rhetoric” (Lister 2000: 236). As a result of the increased existence of transnational partnership relations between NGOs, researchers have identified the necessity of investigating these relationships (Crewe and Harrison 1998; Fisher 1997; Fowler 1992). The creation of partnerships may very well be backed by good intentions which are apparent in the definitions of partnership. Yet, numerous studies have noted that there is much room to deviate from this definition, in practice, while still referring to the relationship as a partnership. For this reason it is necessary to unpack the term, exploring how it is used in practice in order to expose any discrepancies that may exist. The overall purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the contradictions that often remain hidden behind the term partnership and, therefore, the necessity of digging deeper into the meaning and implications of partnership within international development.

Why Partnership?

While it is not my intention to simplify the processes which led to the proliferation of the partnership model, for there are undoubtedly many, it is useful to highlight certain issues which may have contributed to the popularity of the partnership ideology. The following quote from Charles Abugre is useful in that it summarizes some of the main reasons why partnership has become the relationship of choice for Northern development agencies:

The purpose of the 'partnership' framework is to address what recent diagnoses of the aid industry conclude are the critical gaps which accounted in the past for the ineffectiveness of aid. These are identified as: 1) the lack of local 'ownership' of policies and programmes, perceived as the key to good management; 2) inappropriate donor behaviour, including aid co-ordination and the ineffectiveness of conditionality as a surveillance and quality control mechanism and; 3) the underlying environment, including the nature of policies, institutions and the political system. Consequently, partnership seeks to address inclusiveness, complementarity, dialogue and shared responsibility as the basis of managing the multiple relationships among stakeholders in the aid industry. (Abugre 1999:2 as cited in Fowler 2002: 246)

The issues which Abugre has touched on are explored more fully in the following paragraphs. However, it is important to note how challenging and overwhelming a task these "critical gaps" pose for the partnership model (Fowler 2002: 247). This partnership framework could prove to be especially difficult given the history of inequality between Northern and Southern countries, countries whose organizations are now expected to be equal partners.

With an increased awareness of the implications of globalization, development organizations have been encouraged to acknowledge the reality of the interconnectedness of development issues that exist in the contemporary world (Fowler 2002: 241). In direct response to this, the partnership relationship soon became the norm as it most readily "expressed ideological aspiration of international solidarity in the development cause" (Fowler 1997:107). In confronting this reality, many development organizations realized how their programmatic goals might benefit from an integrated development effort on a global scale. A consequent increase in networks among development organizations world-wide enabled NGOs, in a developing country context, to have their views heard by the international development community and, moreover, to gain access to international support (Sinaga 1995:30). In his research on the role of

NGOs in Indonesia and their ability to alleviate local poverty, Kastorius Sinaga refers to a “one-world” framework, which helps to illustrate the implications of globalization for the development community. The partnership development model stems, in part, from a “one world” ideology which “considers crisis and problems as common challenges that need to be solved simultaneously at various levels of the decision making process” (Sinaga 1995:30).⁵ In accordance with this model, transnational partnerships are an attempt to develop a shared agenda by incorporating research and knowledge on a given development issue from both Northern and Southern counterparts who have a common purpose, thereby creating a mutual agenda upon which they may act (CCIC 2003:10). However, it is important to note that, most likely, the successes and the failures that can result from these joint development ventures will not be shared equally between Northern and Southern counterparts.

The “one world” theory also highlights the reality that development issues do not limit themselves to arbitrary national boundaries. Development concerns, such as those surrounding the areas of environment, health and poverty, have increasingly become regarded as global problems that need to be addressed by global stakeholders. Korten (1990) provides examples of this in an extensive list of “problems without borders,” development problems that cannot be considered distinct to Northern or Southern countries but are increasingly considered to be common problems shared among nations. Examples include treating those with HIV/AIDS and limiting the spread of infection, providing housing for the homeless and protecting basic human rights (Korten 1990:148). In light of this, it becomes clear that common problems will require common solutions, hence, the necessity of transnational partnerships. Joint efforts between development

⁵ See also Sachs 1992 for a critical overview of the “one world” concept.

organizations can be seen as highly advantageous when it is acknowledged that working together to address common problems holds greater potential for success in achieving concrete goals.

When development initiatives that followed a top-down process, such as SAPs, failed to provide a successful blueprint on how to improve the living standards of the poor in developing countries, it became increasingly clear that a development relationship based on conditional ties (in which the North dictated the terms of development to the South) was no longer an acceptable or beneficial way to operate if development goals were to be achieved. SAPs were perceived by the South as an “imposition from outside” (Kayizzi-Mugerwa 1998: 221). They had become the most controversial Northern intervention in Africa’s history since the colonial period, primarily because the program was not based on local viewpoints and, therefore, did not incorporate adequate input from members of the African nations affected by the programs (Lavergne 2003). Furthermore, in most African countries SAPs have led to increased levels of poverty, placing many African communities in vulnerable positions (Grootaert 1994; Sparr 1994).

The majority of Northern development organizations have come to realize that developing countries need to be actively involved with development strategies that will affect them. More specifically, according to a statement from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD, in *Shaping the 21st Century*, Northern development agencies must “respect and encourage strong local commitment, participation, capacity development and ownership” (Saxby 2003: 1). It had become apparent to those in the global development community that Northern countries did not necessarily hold all the answers as they once firmly believed and, consequently, it was

acknowledged that development processes could greatly benefit by incorporating a local perspective. This led to a growing amount of rhetoric within Northern development organizations surrounding the importance of “promoting local ownership of development agendas” (Saxby 2003: 1; see also Lavergne 2003). However, the promotion of local ownership and participation of the South within development can also be seen as coinciding with the neo-liberal ideals behind SAPs which promote individual responsibility, by decreasing responsibilities of Southern governments, creating a need for SNGOs to provide the services that are lacking within African communities. The neo-liberal agenda follows the “notion that health is largely a private and individual responsibility regardless of social and economic conditions in which sick bodies find themselves” (O’Manique 2004:51). Therefore, it is quite possible that neo-liberal policies such as SAPs created an opportunity for North-South NGO partnerships to arise (Rutherford 1997:14ff.; Kamat 2003:89). As SNGOs take on the role of service provider for communities that lack adequate healthcare, NNGOs are conveniently presented with “partners” whose capacity they can focus on building.

An increased focus on partnership within development co-operation is demonstrated in numerous Northern national documents including the UK’s Department for International Development’s (DFID) White Paper entitled *Eliminating World Poverty* and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ *Partnership with Africa* (Kayizzi-Mugerwa 1998: 220). DFID’s White Paper emphasizes the “mutual dependence” and “common interests” that both North and South hold, thereby illustrating their support for a shift to a partnership model to address poverty, which is a primary development concern that exacerbates many other pertinent development issues especially those related to health

(DFID 1997: 16 in Kayizzi-Mugerwa 1998: 222). More recently, CIDA emphasized the importance of development partnerships by including “stronger partnerships” as one of their five key “principles of effective development” in their policy statement on strengthening the effectiveness of foreign aid (CIDA 2002: 4-5). Similarly, NGOs also began to increasingly use partnership discourse, as Northern development organizations as a whole attempted to make it clear that they were taking a conscious step away from the paternalistic relationship that they once promoted with developing countries (Fowler 2002). Accordingly, as Alan Fowler asserts, within the international development community there was a “promotion of ‘partnership’ as the ‘politically correct’ mode of relating” (Fowler 2002: 241). Referring to their development counterparts as partners would enable NNGOs to feel that their interactions with SNGOs were just and fair, and were, therefore, an improvement from the paternalism of SAPs promoted by the IMF and the WB.

Defining Partnership: Potential Benefits

The increased focus of NGOs on working co-operatively led to a shift in philosophy as the “relationship between north-south NGOs considerably shifted from just charitable manner of ‘donor-recipient pattern’ to ideology of partnership” (Sinaga 1995: 29). The partnership model attempts to replace the donor-recipient relationship that realistically necessitated Southern dependency on Northern funding. In the donor-recipient relationship, emphasis was placed on the need for funds with very little attention given to nurturing any type of relationship between Northern and Southern development counterparts. Power relations came into play, as it was the Southern development

organizations that desperately needed the funding, while the Northern institutions had funding to give. The use of the word partnership attempts to go one step further by describing a shift in development models from helping to sharing, from charity to enabling, from a relationship based on one-sided conditionality to one based on egalitarian principles. Instead of a relationship based on rules regarding aid to which the SNGO must comply, partnerships are intended to place aid recipients “on a more equal footing” with their Northern counterparts (Kayizzi-Mugerwa 1998: 219). By creating a discourse using the term “partnership,” emphasis is placed on the difference between previous aid relationships based on conditional rules that aid-recipient countries must meet in order to receive aid and the supposedly more mutually beneficial relationships involved in the transnational partnerships of today.

The potential that ‘authentic’ partnership relationships possess for development initiatives is often depicted as quite high since the ideology behind partnerships is a positive one and sensible if the term is to be taken literally. Partnerships are said to be based on an “equitable sharing of rights and responsibilities...underpinned by agreement on common objectives and responsibilities” (CCIC 2003:6). A discussion paper by the Canadian NGO, Partnership Africa Canada (PAC), defines partnership more specifically as “a sharing of power, resources, information and experience based on equitable arrangements regarding trust, accountability and exchanges” (PAC 1989: 13). The term often implies a relationship which strives to promote participation and equality for all those involved (Balloch and Taylor 2001: 2). In relation to this, the concept of partnership can be further described as “a working relationship that is characterized by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and the willingness to negotiate” (Pugh et al

1987 in Lister 2000: 228). To give an idea of what specific attributes an authentic partnership relationship would hold, the following is a list of some of the characteristics that have been referred to as essential for the formation of true partnerships:

- Mutual respect, which grows out of a discussion of values and respective roles;
- Mutual trust and an effort to move towards equality in all aspects of the relationship. This will require constant monitoring of the relationship and the establishment of some basic criteria to assess progress;
- Transparency and reciprocal accountability – partners must be accountable at all levels to one another and must not believe that some things cannot be discussed between themselves;
- A sensitivity to the political, economic and cultural and institutional development of each partner;
- A recognition that relationships are evolutionary and that change happens over time;
- A long term commitment to the relationship; and
- A joint decision-making process to ensure reciprocity, trust and mutuality.

(PAC 1989:13)

It is difficult to imagine that all relationships in development referred to as partnerships are actually staying true to a number of these elements, let alone strictly adhering to all of them, thereby fostering the growth of egalitarian partnerships. Therefore, are development organizations adequately acknowledging their difficulties with partnerships? Are they learning from the problems they may encounter when attempting to meet these characteristics in their own partnerships or are mistakes more likely to remain hidden or ignored entirely? Do NGOs feel they are able to address the issues surrounding their partnerships adequately, in order to make their programs as effective as possible? With respect to Canadian NGOs, these questions will be explored further in the next chapter.

Following the definitions given for the term partnership, the use of partnership relations to further development aims hold a promise of increased efficiency in meeting

these aims. Partnership “adds value” for the organizations involved by allowing them to gain access to the specific “resources” they were lacking, whether these “resources” include one or a combination of the following: ideas, international exposure, legitimacy, information, skills, material goods or financial resources. Furthermore, it is believed that partnership “can generate ‘new insights or solutions’ and provide a ‘synergy’ that offers more than the sum of its parts” (Balloch and Taylor 2001: 1-2). In helping to define the reasons for partnering, Maureen Mackintosh provides three models which describe various motives organizations may have for becoming involved in a partnership. The first model is “synergy,” referring to a focus on the pooling of resources in order for each organization to provide “complementary assets, skills and powers” to their partner (Mackintosh 1993: 214). In essence, this would be a win-win relationship for each partner creating the ideal partnership. The next model is “transformation” in which each partner tries to alter the other so that its own needs will be more readily met. This model identifies an important implication for North - South partnership, the fact that each partner may try to “move the objectives and culture of the other more towards their own ideas” (Mackintosh 1993: 216). The third model is referred to as “budget enlargement” in which the organizations partner with the aim of obtaining funds either from their partner or a third party organization (Mackintosh 1993: 218). Although Mackintosh’s research focuses for the most part on public/private partnerships, it provides useful insights for the study of partnerships within the field of development, as NGOs also deal with the issues outlined in these models and may very well decide to seek out a partnership for the same reasons as organizations in other sectors.

As identified in Mackintosh's research, "partnership can offer participants the opportunity to influence other agencies to operate in ways to help them achieve their objectives more effectively" (Balloch and Taylor 2001:2). This is an attractive characteristic for SNGOs given that their specific needs may often go unmet unless they are able to gain the attention of NNGOs who hold the much needed resources and exposure as described above. Therefore, for development organizations from developing countries that are searching for a more equal relationship with NGOs in donor countries, it is not surprising that they might place their faith in the promise that the partnership ideal holds. Furthermore, according to the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) *New Partnership Initiative (NPI) Resource Guide: A Strategic Guide to Development Partnering*, a beneficial aspect of partnerships between Northern and Southern development organizations lies in their ability to

tailor development projects to local needs and concerns, thus leveraging the development expertise and resources of outsiders well beyond Northern capabilities. Widespread capacity building enhances the ability of Southern partners to deliver and expand their services – while reducing costs and increasing legitimacy with local governments and actors. (USAID 1997: 220)

Partnerships between Northern and Southern counterparts are often given credit for using scarce resources more efficiently since partners are expected to pool their resources thereby providing each other with resources previously lacking, allowing projects to be more effective. Additionally, it is believed that partnerships will increase the sustainability of local programs and encourage participation at all levels especially from the communities that stand to benefit as a result of these programs (Lister 2000:228). However, the sustainability of programs will certainly only occur as long as the partnership is working sufficiently for both sides and the SNGO has access to the

necessary resources from their Northern partner. Furthermore, the level of participation Southern community members and the Southern partners, themselves, will have depends on the realities of a given partnership, as it is not likely that all partnerships will enable participation to the same degree. Therefore, without focused studies of specific relationships, it is unclear whether both organizations will find this type of relationship beneficial.

According to Alan Fowler, partnerships, which are true to their definitions in practice, play an important role in addressing international development issues for two reasons: building and sustaining social capital; and, increasing the economic efficiency of development aims (Fowler 1997: 107-108). Healthy partnerships between NGOs can help to build and support social capital which Fowler describes as,

the self-willed webs which connect individuals, groups, communities, societies and other forms of human association...It is the sum of trusted, reciprocal relationships between citizens and their associations at all levels of politics and economy. (Fowler 1997: 107)

NGOs, as organizations that base much of their livelihood on forging relationships with other constituencies on a regular basis, hold the potential to play a large role in promoting and preserving social capital through the creation of strong positive relationships.

Relationships between SNGOs are also deemed to be an important part of social capital and NNGOs can play a role in facilitating and strengthening these links. The second reason given is based on economics – if partner organizations have a mutual agenda, conflicts will be decreased and the coordination of activities will run more smoothly, thereby leading to greater economic efficiency of the development initiative in the long run (Fowler 1997: 108).

It is worth noting that many of these perceived benefits previously mentioned originate from a “value-based” way of thinking, which has encouraged NNGOs to initiate partnerships with Southern NGOs. Some value-based reasons for partnership can include:

- Increasing local control over the direction of development
- Building local capacity and confidence through increased participation
- Increasing sustainability by developing local independent structures
- Strengthening “civil society”
- Increasing mutual learning

(Leach 1997:2)

As Fisher points out, much of the literature discussing the collective action Northern and Southern NGOs are taking together has been “based more on faith than fact” (Fisher 1997:441). He states that this literature is filled with “sweeping generalizations [and] optimistic statements” regarding the ability of NGOs to tackle development issues and, for this reason, he calls on anthropologists to provide more detailed studies in order to discover the reality of NGO relationships, research that goes beyond the rhetoric of “doing good” (Fisher 1997:441).

Taking a critical view: Unpacking the meaning of partnership

My interests in the partnership relationship, as it is used within the development sector, lie along a similar vein to James Ferguson’s research insofar as his work is an “investigation of how specific ideas about ‘development’ are generated in practice and how when put to use what effects they end up producing” (Ferguson 1990: xv).

Ferguson’s study of the Thaba-Tseka rural development project in Lesotho, a project funded by CIDA, the WB and the Lesotho government, focused on analyzing a specific development project in order to comprehend the inner workings of the development process and the changes that arise throughout this process. What is specifically relevant

to my research is that his conclusions highlight the fact that development rhetoric does not always accurately describe the processes of development that are occurring in practice. This can mean that good intentions outlined in development plans, which often originate in the North, do not ensure accurate implementation of a project or program according to these plans. These findings point out that partnership relationships in practice may not be identical to the guiding principles and characteristics outlined in the definitions of this type of relationship, and that other issues on either side of the partnership can easily interfere with the dynamics of the relationship, making it difficult for a development organization to strictly adhere to these principles. Research such as Ferguson's clearly indicates why it is important to question the value attached to the discourse used within development institutions (Ferguson 1990: xv).

Further critiques of partnership relations show that there are reasons to be sceptical of whether partnership stays true to its definitions in practice. The term partnership "assumes overarching common interests between different players and it can disguise difficulties which may arise when bringing together different interests and different cultures" (Balloch and Taylor 2001: 2). This is why Susan Balloch and Marilyn Taylor believe it is very important to critically examine the expectations and assumptions behind the partnership term and determine the possible implications that may arise for the programs at the heart of these relationships. The term partnership provokes an often false sense of equality making it seem as if the organizations involved in a project have the same amount of power and input into the implementation of the project, when in all likelihood this has yet to be proven in practice (Fowler 1992). In their discussion of partnerships, Crewe and Harrison note that there has been a predominant shift within the

development discourse to a discussion of “partnerships” between organizations while ignoring the fact that there are donors and recipients within these relationships (Crewe and Harrison 1998: 73). The case studies provided by Crewe and Harrison illustrate the fact that partnerships with equal footing are seldom the case. In contrast, disagreements, misunderstandings and differing agendas are often the norm with these partnerships (Crewe and Harrison 1998: 80).

Partnerships between North and South are oft critiqued as being inherently unequal in nature given that the relationship involves NGOs from the wealthier North and those from the South who have limited access to this wealth and must conform to the NNGO partnership criteria if they wish to gain access to these finances. Sinaga’s research on Indonesian NGOs points out that SNGOs often rely primarily on foreign financial aid in order to survive, a fact that can weaken a SNGO in the long run by limiting its autonomy and decreasing internal stability (Sinaga 1995:187). Fowler states that there was an increase in the monetary resources of NNGOs in the early 1980s, primarily arising from the respective Official Development Assistance (ODA) of various governments (Fowler 1992:17). Since NNGOs have access to greater amounts of funding as compared to SNGOs, whose governments cannot or will not supply adequate funding for various reasons (PAC 1989:13), NNGOs are in the position of gatekeepers in a partnership, controlling SNGO access to Northern funds.

Clearly, power dynamics are a key issue in partnerships. In their edited volume, *Partnership Working: Policy and Practice*, Balloch and Taylor noted that previous research on partnerships have implied that the power relations that may exist between partners are rarely altered through the partnership process, allowing the partner with more

power to dictate the criteria and goals that the partnership will follow (Balloch and Taylor 2001: 8). In the same volume, David Byrne provides a summary of his research on the links between partnership, participation and power in the context of an Education Action Zone in England, which strives to improve educational standards in working class neighbourhoods by encouraging partnerships between various organizations from the public, private and government sectors. He concludes that weaker parties in these partnerships are not empowered through the process of partnership, a relationship which he feels “at best attempts to reconcile irreconcilables and at worst, which means usually in practice, offers the objects of policy, at the very most, some role in influencing the implementation of strategies that have already been decided on” (Byrne 2001: 256).

Sarah Lister provides a useful analysis of power dynamics within the partnership process which emphasizes the disparities that often arise between the rhetoric and reality of NGO partnerships. In her research regarding a North-South NGO partnership, she noted that the power within this relationship was seen to lie with the NNGO, which acts as the gatekeeper to the financial resources of the project. Even though the SNGO enables the NNGO to gain access to grassroots communities in the South, in reality this is not deemed a powerful enough resource to equal out the power relations between the NGOs (Lister 2000:232). Elliot points out that the involvement of money within partnership relations creates a

dialogue of the unequal, and however many claims are made for transparency or mutuality, the reality is – and is seen to be – that the donor can do to the recipient what the recipient cannot do to the donor. There is an asymmetry of power that no amount of well-intentioned dialogue can remove. (Elliot 1987:65)

If money were no longer the primary focus of a partnership or a compelling reason to form a partnership, it is believed that there would be more energy to concentrate on the

two-way flow of other types of resources such as knowledge, skills and experiences; resources which lend themselves to a more equitable distribution between partners (Elliot 1987:65).

The discourse of partnership is a powerful way to subtly shape ideas and perceptions of this development process while obscuring its realities (Escobar 1984). The focus on partnerships in development discourse follows other key terms favoured by the development community, terms which help to increase the “legitimacy and acceptability” that development donors strive to embody (Crewe and Harrison 1998: 73). Partnership is regarded as closely linked to terms such as participation, empowerment, ownership and capacity building, which work to give the partnership model instant value and validity within development circles (Gardner and Lewis 2000). As a result, partnership is viewed as a viable development model and its use is rarely challenged within emerging policy texts (Saxby 2003: 2). In his research on the trends of development aid over a fifty year time span beginning in the 1950’s, Anders Narman concludes that development relationships are not building on previous experiences and adequately altering the “underlying concepts and methods” on which relationships are built (1999:174). Although the main vocabulary used today to describe development co-operation and aid relationships, such as empowerment, partnership and participation, provokes ideas of a more egalitarian relationship between North and South, he feels that these are superficial changes as the structural relationship between development parties are seldom altered (Narman 1999:174).

Disguising a donor-recipient relationship, in which the donor holds much of the power, as a new and improved relationship that seeks to balance power between partners

is not only misleading but it can also be detrimental for development practices in the South as, in reality, the relationship may not be allowing adequate room for the incorporation of a Southern perspective. When the inner processes of partnerships are glossed over and assumed to be promoting equality within NGO relationships, the reality of these relationships are likely to be ignored. There is less of a chance that the opinions of Southern development organizations and, through them Southern communities, will be acknowledged and integrated into development processes if the partnership relationships between Northern and Southern NGOs are not investigated. For this reason, it is important to examine development discourse in order to discover detrimental hidden agendas and counter-productive outcomes, as well as possible benefits a given development relationship may promote (Gardner and Lewis 2000; Escobar 1984).

Moreover, Fowler states that “by appearing to be benign, inclusive, open, all-embracing and harmonious, partnership intrinsically precludes other interpretations of reality, options and choices without overtly doing so” (Fowler 2002: 249). The ability of partnership to be used as a blanket term, effectively hiding imperfections that could affect the relationship, may be part of its appeal (Harrison 2002:590). Partnership is most often the preferred term for development relationships instead of relation specific terms, such as counterpart, collaborator, benefactor, supporter and client, simply because these specific terms expose the power relations involved by more accurately describing a given relationship (Fowler 2002: 244). Fowler suggests that a more beneficial option to partnership could include terms such as cooperation and solidarity which focus more on the necessary interdependence required in development relations between North and South (Fowler 2002: 250).

It has been noted in Mackintosh's models that there can be a tendency for organizations to attempt to transform their partners. More specifically, it has been observed by researchers that NNGOs often try to shape their SNGO partners similarly to themselves as they strive to strengthen the capacity of these partners by providing the necessary resources SNGOs require in order to fulfill their mandates effectively (Fowler 1992; PAC 1989). According to the characteristics of partnerships outlined earlier in this chapter, NGOs look for similar objectives in a partner organization. This can often lead to NNGOs specifically seeking out SNGOs that they feel will follow similar development priorities and programmatic goals (PAC 1989: 13). The mere fact that SNGOs are automatically seen as the ones that are to become more like the NNGOs as they build capacity clearly illustrates the imbalance of power between the Northern and Southern development counterparts (Fowler 1992:20). The selective ability that NNGOs demonstrate can effectively alienate those who do not conform to the specific criteria that Northern agencies define for their partnerships. Therefore, partnerships, by definition, will be exclusive to a certain extent (Kayizzi-Mugerwa 1998: 224) as "not all NGOs will have the ability to participate" (Fowler 2002: 247).

Although it is beyond the scope of my research to provide a thorough examination of the effects that SWAps can have on North-South NGO partnerships, it is important to be aware of the implications that their ever increasing appeal to Northern government agencies may hold as was shown by the opinions of CCIC in the previous chapter. Broadly speaking, SWAps entail coordinating development activities in a given sector (i.e., health or education) by pooling donor resources into a large fund that will be primarily administered by the recipient Southern government. According to CIDA,

SWAps promote a strategic approach which would emphasize “local ownership and donor coordination and embody a comprehensive approach to development” (CIDA 2002:7). Brian Tomlinson of CCIC acknowledges that a number of NGOs have expressed positive opinions regarding SWAps, and feel that providing aid in this way could prove to be beneficial for Southern countries. However, he points out that in general the role of NGOs within SWAps, especially NGOs in the North, remains uncertain. He states that the majority of literature regarding SWAps is written by and for official donor agencies and, therefore, does not adequately reflect the experience or opinions of civil society organizations. Moreover, even though there is ample discussion of participation within the SWAp literature, rarely are explicit roles for NGOs discussed (Tomlinson 2000). Given that government agencies of the OECD member countries, such as CIDA, are finding SWAps an attractive strategy to pursue, clearly more research and discussion regarding NGO roles in SWAps would be beneficial.

Southern Perspectives

Research investigating the experiences of Southern NGOs involved in partnerships provides further support for many of the issues previously discussed. CCIC noted, in their discussions with six representatives from Southern partner organizations, that one of the main difficulties with North-South partnerships identified by these Southern representatives was that NNGOs do not adequately consult with their Southern counterparts when setting the development goals for which the partnerships exist (CCIC 1996:1). NNGOS also need to have the autonomy which enables them to allow SNGOs to set more of the development agenda in a partnership. In part, this may be a direct result

of restrictions placed on NNGOs by funding sources that can effectively limit NNGO autonomy, primarily government funds which can have strict guidelines attached. If this is the case, SNGOs need to ascertain where NNGO funding comes from in order to know how much autonomy the NNGO may have and, therefore, the likelihood that the partnership will be able to address the needs of the SNGO adequately (Fowler 1992:17). However, it is recognized that from the SNGO perspective the transparency of NNGOs can often be limited and, given their high level of need, SNGOs often do not have the necessary time or resources that would enable them to be as strategic and selective when creating a partnership as is suggested.

It is also interesting that numerous researchers (Clark 1991; Lister 2000; PAC 1989) have noted that it is the Northern development organizations, those that are in a position of power because they control the financial resources, who are the first to label their relationship with SNGOs as a partnership. Although NNGOs may be quick to use partnership as a blanket term for their development relationships with Southern organizations, it is very telling that many SNGOs in these relationships will refrain from using this term altogether even continuing to refer to their Northern counterpart as “donors” (Clark 1991: 70; Lister 2000: 235; PAC 1989: 36). SNGOs who refuse to follow the Northern lead by describing their relationships with NNGOs as partnerships are clearly commenting on the fact that they do not believe the relationship to be based on equality, and, therefore, it does not warrant use of the term partnership. Often funding relationships allow the recipient SNGOs “little time and space to ensure real political participation. Hence they are typically caught between demands of the donors...and the demands or needs of their own people” (CCIC 2003:12). Indeed, in their experiences,

Margaret Simbi and Graham Thom observed that NNGOs are doing development a disservice by continuing to promote the partnership language without giving African NGOs the space to create a development agenda based on the priorities of a given community. NNGOs are giving an impression of an egalitarian relationship without following through in practice. Instead NNGOs often promote “implementation by proxy” where “an African NGO becomes a de facto subcontractor of the northern NGO under the mask of partnership” (Simbi and Thom 2000: 215). As a result, the African development perspective will continue to be stifled, with African organizations carrying the burden of failed development initiatives in multiple ways without having the power to try and correct these failings (Simbi and Thom 2000: 215).

What becomes abundantly clear after a review of the literature on organizational partnerships is the ability of the term partnership to camouflage the power imbalances that can occur in reality and, therefore, the necessity of anthropological research in this area. An exploration of the definition of partnership and the many beneficial qualities this relationship is expected to entail has shed light on why this term has been so heavily favoured by the development sector. However, taking a critical view of the relationship was also necessary in order to show the difficulties that can exist within partnerships. These difficulties become increasingly apparent in the following chapter, which provides a narrower focus on partnership issues by using primary research to explore the perspective of Canadian NGOs striving to create partnerships that will have a positive impact on the lives of those living with HIV/AIDS. Interviews will be used in the next chapter to show that Canadian NGO staff members encounter similar issues with partnership as those described by previous researchers in this chapter. The interviewees

provide insight into how they are addressing these issues, including the types of partnership models they implement as well as what obstacles may prevent them from creating partnerships that will facilitate the equal participation of SNGO counterparts in the creation and implementation of HIV/AIDS initiatives.

5 : Canadian-African NGO Partnerships: The Canadian NGO Perspective

Introduction

As demonstrated in the previous two chapters, over the last decade there has been an increased importance placed on partnerships between NGOs, especially in Northern countries. Given the resultant predominance of the partnership model in development initiatives and the many accompanying critiques that have been noted regarding North – South NGO partnerships by various researchers, I will contribute to this topic by investigating to what extent staff members of Canadian NGOs are aware of the limitations of North – South partnerships. I will explore the experiences Canadian NGOs have had in creating and maintaining partnerships with African NGOs, which are specifically developed to address HIV/AIDS issues in African communities, in order to grasp their understandings of partnership. A review of the literature in the previous chapter clearly highlights the reality that partnerships do not always involve a balance of power between partner organizations, as the term implies, and, therefore, the prevalence of this type of relationship does not guarantee that the requirements of each organization and, ultimately, those of their constituencies will be met. Therefore, it is important to discover exactly what types of issues Canadian NGOs may experience regarding their partnerships with African NGOs and what they are attempting to do to address these issues. By exploring the issues from the perspective of Canadian NGO staff, the intention is to identify some of the constraints that prevent these staff members from creating a viable environment for equitable relationships with their African counterparts.

However, before the Canadian NGO perspective is discussed, the first section of this chapter identifies the various types of partnerships that are being used by Canadian NGOs when dealing with African NGOs regarding HIV/AIDS issues and the reasons for doing so are also explored. The types of partnerships discussed will be limited to those encountered in the primary research. A description of the partnership models in use by the Canadian NGOs interviewed will be helpful in illustrating how the term partnership can, indeed, be used to describe relationships that differ from one another instead of describing a specific type of relationship as is often assumed. Expanding on these models and including a more comprehensive list of Canadian partnership models in further research will encourage the use of more realistic relation-specific terms that clarify the reality of a given partnership instead of continuing to mask and, consequently, ignore any discrepancies that might exist between partner organizations. Furthermore, organizational benefits of a given model can more easily be identified and lessons shared if descriptions are made to be more specific. It is hoped that this would promote a more open and inclusive attitude and approach toward NGO relationships between the North and South.

Methodology

My primary research is based on interviews with staff members from seven development NGOs based in Ottawa, Canada. The interviews lasted one to two hours each and took place between the months of October and December 2003. Each person was interviewed once with the exception of one interviewee who had two interview sessions. The staff members of the NGOs were either the Directors of the NGO or worked within the department of the NGO that was responsible for programming within

African countries. The interviewees were staff members at NGOs which focus on three types of development work. These included: 1) Volunteer Sending Organizations (VSOs); 2) NGOs that focus on promoting advocacy for development issues and networking between development organizations; and, 3) NGOs whose work includes implementing various development programs/projects in Southern countries. Each interviewee was given the choice to remain an anonymous contributor to my research. All of them chose to remain anonymous. Therefore, I will be referring to the interviewees as Interviewee 1, 2, 3, etc., which will be short-formed to Int1, Int2, Int3, etc. It is worth noting that certain interviewees were more forthcoming with relevant information during the interviews, and this explains why I rely more heavily on the information provided by these interviewees in this chapter.⁶

Partnership Models

This section will emphasize the necessity of dissecting how the term partnership is applied to more than one discrete type of relationship by drawing attention to the various organizational relationships it is used to describe. Therefore, the focus of this next section will be on highlighting the models of partnership that exist between Canadian and African NGOs as encountered in the interviews. An outline and discussion of some of the partnership models that Canadian NGOs use will prove beneficial in underscoring how the term “partnership” is not a label reserved for one discrete type of relationship, but can be used to describe relationships that fundamentally differ from one another. The use of one term to describe relationships which differ in their aims and how

⁶ For more information on the interviewees please refer to the Appendix.

they attempt to reach them can conceal difficulties that may arise for one or both partners. It is hoped that by stressing the differences between partnership models NGOs would be more likely to use terms that more accurately reflect a specific relationship in practice, encouraging a more open dialogue concerning NGO relationships between Northern and Southern countries.

Partnership Models Encountered in Primary Research

The following is a list of different ways that Canadian NGOs create and facilitate partnerships with African NGOs with the end goal of supporting HIV/AIDS initiatives. The models are limited to the types of partnerships that I encountered in my own research. Similar to Mark Leach's (1997) research which will be discussed further below, these models are not necessarily found in isolation to one another but can be used in combination by a given NGO. To further clarify, the aim of this list is not to provide a comprehensive description of all types of partnership models existing in Canadian NGOs, as this is beyond the scope of my primary research. The models are intended to bring to light the range of relationships, which are all too often indiscriminately described by the term "partnership," and to instigate an exploration of the differing benefits and drawbacks that may be the result of each. The models have been created based on the overall goals that each Canadian organization involved strives to attain and, therefore, describe the ways in which these organizations use partnerships to attempt to reach the goals of HIV/AIDS initiatives. The models are listed below along with a brief description of each and the interviewees that use these models at their organizations:

Volunteer Sending Organizations (VSOs) – The primary link between partners is the placement of volunteers from Canada within partner organizations in African countries. Monetary resources are a minor focus.

Int 6 and 7

Advocacy, Networking and Facilitating of Partnerships – Includes Canadian NGOs involved primarily in promoting and facilitating the creation of partnerships between Canadian NGOs and African NGOs. This type of organization assists with the creation of networks on an international scale as well as among NGOs in African countries and advocates to encourage the creation of partnerships. Often these types of NGOs are not entering into partnerships themselves but rather aid in the creation of partnerships between other NGOs in Canada and Africa which is in contrast to the next model encountered. Funding can be involved but is often of secondary importance.

Int 1, 3, 4 and 5

“Traditional” Partnership – This would involve a Canadian NGO and African NGO entering into some form of agreement to work together creating and implementing an HIV/AIDS project or program component which follows both of their mandates. Funding is typically a primary resource.

Int 1 and 2

Partnership to receive Third Party Funds – A Canadian NGO partners with an African NGO in order to aid the African NGO in the creation of a proposal for HIV/AIDS funding that will be submitted to a Canadian donor. Therefore, funding is not directly involved in this relationship.

Int 6

By creating a list of partnership “types” it becomes abundantly clear that it is inaccurate and misleading to refer to all relationships between African and Canadian NGOs by one term, especially one which connotes an inherently egalitarian meaning.

Purpose of developing and using partnership models

Developing a list of existing types of partnerships can help to draw attention to the fact that partnership is used as a generic term, actively applied by Northern organizations to numerous types of relationships (Leach 1997). In his study of inter-organizational models of collaboration within development, Leach points out that the

organizational relationships commonly labelled partnerships can differ in a number of ways, including

- Degree of mutuality in power and decision-making
 - Number of organizations involved
 - Purpose and scope of the collaboration
 - Roles and responsibilities of each organization
 - Formal and informal structures for interacting
- (Leach 1997:1)

Given these potential differences between organizational partnerships, it seems reasonable to suspect that the egalitarian implications of the term partnership do not accurately describe all of the relationships to which the term is applied. By developing a list of discrete partnership models currently in use and having NGOs identify which model or combinations of models they choose to follow creates space for partner organizations to discuss the model in use. Furthermore, models provide room for NGOs to choose appropriate labels for their relationships. These relationships can then be more accurately conveyed to others with the use of more suitable terms such as those mentioned in the previous chapter, i.e., collaboration, benefactor, accompaniment, counterpart.

David Billis (1993) initiated a useful action-research approach using models which attempted to dissect some of the central issues of organizational partnership relations. He began by presenting two organizations currently involved in a relationship that they had labelled a “partnership” with a description of four relational models, which could be used to describe their relationship with one another. He then asked each organization to choose which model they felt most accurately described their relationship with the other organization and then to explain the rationale behind their choice. The models they were to choose from included: 1) subordination; 2) contracting; 3)

supporting; and, 4) partnership. The purpose of this activity was to make explicit the underlying assumptions that each participant had regarding their relationship with the other. Organization A felt that the relationship was an “uneasy combination of subordination and supporting” and stated that the relationship was inadequate for both organizations and felt that this might be why they were encountering numerous difficulties (Billis 1993: 193). Organization A expressed the opinion that the partnership concept, defined by Billis as a relationship where “partners must be able to discuss and plan matters openly on the basis of trust and without danger of one side penalizing the other,” would be unrealistic given their current relationship with Organization B. Organization B made an interesting point when they defined partnership for themselves as a “formally agreed operating relationship between key authorities” (Billis 1993:195). This organization believes that regardless of the form the relationship takes (i.e., contracting, supporting, subordination, etc), and the resultant power imbalances that may be involved, it is still a partnership if the specific type of relationship has been agreed upon by both organizations. This organization states that, similar to its partner, it also feels that the relationship is a combination of Billis’ supporting and subordination models but feels it would be more beneficial for both partners if the relationship followed the supporting and contractual models. Billis’ research demonstrates how developing partnership models can help organizations to clarify the terms of their relationship with one another, and whether or not each organization is content with the current relationship. It is a starting point for introspective discussions on the realities of a given partnership and forces organizations to identify any assumptions they may have regarding their partnerships.

Leach (1997) also provides a useful framework of six models of partnership which describe those that he has encountered between Northern NGOs or as he terms them, International Private Voluntary Organizations (IPVOs), and Southern NGOs. The six models include: contracting, dependent franchise, spin-off NGO, visionary patronage, collaborative operations and mutual governance. Leach bases these models on the amount of shared governance that exists, listing them, as I have just done, from that with the least amount of shared governance to the model with the highest amount of shared governance. In doing this, his models have gone beyond the scope of my own models which are based on how the organizations form partnerships in order to reach their intended goals and not necessarily on the amount of shared governance that exists in each partnership. Leach's models contribute to my argument as they also identify the wide variety of relationships that exist between Northern and Southern NGOs which despite their differences are all considered to be partnerships by the Northern counterpart. Leach notes that an "unexamined commitment to 'partnership,' in the absence of a close analysis of the degree of shared governance each party is truly willing to accept, promotes cooperation in the short-term, but dissatisfaction and less-than-optimal performance in the long-term" (Leach 1997:11). This clearly shows how the use of models can be beneficial for NGO collaborations and development initiatives as a whole.

Conclusion: Models of Partnership

It is clear from my research that, in organizing to respond to the needs expressed by African NGOs involved with HIV/AIDS work, Canadian NGOs have created diverse types of relationships with their African counterparts. However, regardless of the

differences between these models, they are all referred to as partnerships by the Canadian NGO involved. Strength in the diversity of partnership models is vital as, clearly, differing types of partnerships are necessary given that different areas of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa need to be addressed in a way that will be most appropriate and effective – from researching and advocating for national policy changes in the North and South to enabling community home-care workers to access necessary resources. However, as the research by Billis and Leach has shown, there can be much value in highlighting the different types of partnership models that exist. Identifying which model each partner is interested in following can contribute a great deal to alleviating the discrepancies and misunderstandings between partner organizations.

Canadian NGO Perspectives on Partnership

Given that my primary research was carried out in the Canadian context, the information gathered is mainly a one-sided account of Canadian – African NGO partnerships from the Canadian (Northern) NGOs perspective. Consequently, the aim of my interviews was not to discover any concrete evidence of how closely a specific Canadian – African NGO partnership resembled an ‘authentic’ partnership as I acknowledge that any information supplied by a Canadian NGO regarding a partnership that they are invested in would be subjected to biases on the side of the interviewee. Instead, I attempted to discover the degree to which the discrepancies found in organizational partnerships, as noted by previous researchers, are supported by similar experiences that Canadian NGOs may have had in their own partnerships with African NGOs. Through these interviews I also intended to shed light on any efforts that these

NGOs have made to create and maintain partnerships that strive to listen to the needs of their African partners, promoting equal participation between both organizations. Finally, the interviews will help to highlight the extent to which the staff members of these NGOs feel that there are obstacles that prohibit them from creating and maintaining ‘true’ partnerships with African NGOs in the Canadian development sector and identify what these obstacles may be.

Partnership Issues Encountered

The discussions with Canadian NGO staff were useful in that many NGO staff members were able to validate and provide further insight into the issues surrounding “partnership” as discussed in the previous chapter. The main partnership issues identified in the interviews consist of the lack of an organizational definition for partnership; the use of alternate terminology for partnership; the recognition of inequalities between partners; capacity building as a central aim when forming partnerships with African NGOs; and the selective criteria used by Canadian NGOs when choosing partner organizations.

Presence of a definition

The existence of an accepted organizational definition for the term partnership came to light as an important theme in the interviews. Within the organizations of the interviewees there is a tendency to use partnership discourse within written documents for public audiences and internal purposes without regularly defining the term and how it is operationalized. I found it particularly difficult to extract a distinct organizational

definition for partnership from each interviewee, which gave me the impression that what exactly a partnership would entail was not always agreed upon or discussed within the organization or, more importantly, with the partner organization. Int2 claimed that he is “not sure” if his organization has an official definition for partnership. Int6 said that a definition is lacking in her organization but it has been recognized as a need. She further demonstrated the need for an organizational definition as she stated “if it is us entering into a partnership with an organization overseas often [the organization] may not have the same understanding of a partnership that we might have.” In stating this, she is noting that the presence of a definition that can be shared with partner organizations would help to clarify the terms upon which partners are agreeing.

The fact that multiple interviewees were not able to provide an official definition of “partnership” led me to believe that either their organization does not have one or perhaps they feel that their partnerships are not living up to the general definition of partnerships as egalitarian relationships, and they would prefer to refrain from acknowledging this outright. A definition for partnership could be devised when creating an agreement with a partner organization regarding what structure the partnership would take and, therefore, how much autonomy and influence both organizations might have in the relationship. Whether or not a given organization has an accepted definition for the term would also demonstrate the degree to which the creation of a definition is seen as a priority within the organization, and whether or not the NGO staff had explored what is meant or implied when they use the term partnership. The presence of an organizational definition would provide room for partner organizations to challenge any discrepancies that may be experienced between the definition and the reality of the partnership. In this

way, an organizational definition could also promote transparency and accountability between partner organizations. However, from the interviews, I was given the impression that since there was a lack of organizational definitions the potentially positive aspects of having a definition have yet to be recognized, and, therefore, having an agreed upon definition is not given the importance it deserves by the organizations of the interviewees.

The fact that NGO staff members were providing their own definitions for partnership where an organizational definition was lacking raises some serious implications for partner relations between NGOs. When individual staff members begin to mould NGO relationships along the lines of their own defined strategies, strategies which are not necessarily part of the organization's mission statement, the relationship becomes less likely to be sustained if the NGO staff member leaves the organization. On the other hand, the definition on which the individual staff member is basing the partnership relationship might not be one that facilitates the incorporation of SNGO input. This explains the need for an agreed upon and well-defined partnership definition which is incorporated into the NNGOs mission statement so that all staff members from both the Northern and Southern NGOs involved, as well as potential NGO partners, are aware of the type of relationship the NNGO wishes to pursue.

Power imbalance between partners and the use of alternate terminology

In place of an organizational definition, interviewees were ready to give what they clarified as their own understanding of the partnership concept as a definition. Int2 defines partnership as an equal relationship and he feels this sentiment is shared by most staff members of his organization. Int7 demonstrates the importance she places on

equality with her definition of partnership: “My understanding of partnership is bringing something to the table. For instance, [my organization] provides the development volunteer and the partner organization has to be able to provide the offices, local training, equipment and support for the volunteer. So they have to bring something to the table.” Although the interviewee’s personal definitions for partnership tended to stress equality between partner organizations, it is important to note the implications of individual staff members acting on their own definitions, which could very well differ widely, for lack of a clear institutional definition of partnership to guide them.

However, Int2 also stressed that a key part of having a partnership is “understanding the power dynamics that go along with this type of relationship with African organizations.” As identified by the interviewees, in realistic terms there are often inequalities that exist between partner organizations in Canada and their counterparts in African countries. These inequalities are not necessarily reflected in the definitions the interviewees provide. Int2 further noted that in a partnership it is important to “recognize where the inequalities lie before you can have the relationship.” However, recognition of a power imbalance by staff members that is not recognized at the organizational level and, therefore, not acknowledged by the organization as a whole, may be of little consequence if beneficial changes to the relationship cannot be initiated at the organizational level. Furthermore, although this power imbalance was acknowledged as an important issue in the formation of partnerships by Int2, there was no acknowledgement of the resultant incompatibility of the term partnership as a label for a relationship that does not strive to alleviate these inequalities. It is not enough simply to

identify these discrepancies and continue to refer to the relationship as a partnership without directly addressing and alleviating the imbalance.

It is precisely for this reason that it is important to decipher the degree to which the definition of partnership is regarded as an understood and agreed upon term used to describe the relationship between a Canadian and an African NGO by each partner. Several interviewees stated that, in general, they feel that the term partnership is misused and overused by the development sector as a whole with people using “the term very flippantly and so it’s one of a number of terms that are abused in the development sector” (Int2). Int2 likened the term to other development buzz words such as “empowerment,” which he felt also lose their meaning when overused within the development sector. Int6 felt that the term partnership may have become common rhetoric in the development sector as organizations increasingly began to recognize the importance of creating the type of egalitarian relationships with Southern organizations that the term partnership represents. She stated that “there was an attempt to have a relationship that is more equitable so people started to use the term [partnership] and after they were using the term they started to ask [if the relationship] is equitable” (Int6). She acknowledged that the change in practice may not have necessarily begun as soon as the term came into use because various limitations prohibited the rhetoric to match the reality of the relationships. Furthermore, government agencies impose the use of the partnership rhetoric on NNGOs who are seeking government support for their HIV/AIDS initiatives by encouraging NNGOs to find “partners” in order to receive funding.

Int6 admitted that partnership might be the term used in her organization for “lack of a better term.” With the recognition of these power imbalances some of the

interviewees provided alternative terms that could be used to describe their relationships with African NGOs instead of using partnership. Terms that certain interviewees felt might provide more realistic descriptions of their relationships include “twinning” (Int3 and Int4) and “accompaniment” (Int2). As Int2 explained, “the verb accompaniment – to accompany somebody – is a more accurate description of the relationship.” It is not clear if these terms had come into use because they were actively sought as alternatives to the term partnership. From the interviews it seemed more likely that they were not created specifically to replace the use of partnership as this term is still evident within these organizations alongside “accompaniment” and “twinning” and they are often used interchangeably.

Although, as the interviews show, there are currently other terms besides partnership in use to describe inter-organizational relationships, the benefits of using these terms can only be realized if they are used systematically with the intention of describing a relationship more accurately. If the terms are used interchangeably with “partnership,” and not used to clarify a more specific type of relationship, which may not be as egalitarian as the definition of partnership claims the relationship to be, then the terms will also assume the egalitarian ideals commonly used to define the partnership relationship. The additional terms would only continue to obscure the specific type of relationship to which they refer instead of highlighting differences. This, in turn, will allow the organizations involved to ignore the discrepancies that can exist between the commonly understood meaning of the term partnership and other related terms such as “accompaniment” and “twinning,” and the reality of the partnership relationship which may, in all likelihood, differ from the mutually agreed upon definition.

Capacity building as a partnership objective

Power imbalances stem from the fact that Canadian NGOs partner with African NGOs who are functioning in environments where the resources they hold are inadequate to effectively address the needs of their constituents. As a result, Canadian NGOs, who can supply some of these resources, hold some degree of power over African NGOs that must form partnerships with Canadian NGOs in order to access the specific resources that they seek. Building the capacity of these comparatively weaker SNGOs, by learning what a SNGO's needs may be and attempting to strengthen the organization, as a whole, becomes an integral part of a partnership relationship.⁷ The interviews with Canadian NGO staff members confirmed that capacity building is, indeed, one of the key aims of their partnerships with African NGOs, because it is regarded as an action that will help SNGOs to become more effective when carrying out their development activities in their focus communities. As defined by Int1, capacity building refers to strengthening the partner organization's ability to carry out certain activities that are necessary to reach its constituency. Examples of capacity building provided by interviewees included imparting skills to African NGOs: to help them to mobilize resources from their communities, government bodies and the international development community; to acquire further management skills, such as how to conduct a meeting; to write appropriate reports for donors; and, to keep accurate financial records.

⁷ The focus that NNGOs place on capacity building within a partnership effectively highlights the 'needs' discourse and the ethnocentric stance of NNGOs. The process of capacity building allows Northern development agencies to define the level of capacity that SNGO partners 'need' in order to become effective development agents (similar to their NNGO counterparts). The Northern development framework, specifically the requirements of Northern donor agencies, dictates what it is NGOs require in order to do development and, therefore, this framework shapes the capacity needs that SNGOs must claim to have in order to receive support from Northern agencies.

By acknowledging the fact that capacity development is required by their partner organizations, the staff of Canadian NGOs are acknowledging that the African NGOs they partner with do not have access to a similar amount of resources, and are, therefore, at a disadvantage because they are not equipped with the same organizational capabilities as Canadian organizations. The interviewees gave the impression that as long as there is a recognition of where the inequalities between partners lie, such as in the differing levels of access to resources, which is most often referred to as organizational capacity, the relationship can still be accurately labelled a partnership. Therefore, there appears to be very little acknowledgement of the fact that SNGOs that need to increase their capacity in order to be effective are, consequently, not equal counterparts to NNGOs, contrary to what the use of the term partnership would suggest.

In reality there are huge variations in the levels of capacity between Southern NGOs and Northern ones and therefore it becomes necessary to dispel the notion that all NNGOs have capacity while all SNGOs need to build capacity. As Leach's six models of partnership show, NGOs hold different skills and for this reason diverse types of relationships are created in order to make use of the differing levels of capacity NGOs in the North and the South hold for addressing a specific development issue. However, within the North – South NGO relationships, SNGO capacity can be limited in terms of access to resources while NNGOs will more readily obtain these resources from Northern donors. The implications of having NNGOs identify the capacity needs of SNGOs are great, as this would mean that NNGOs as gatekeepers of resources would have the power to define the ways in which a given SNGO partner should increase their capacity or, in other words, how they should operationalize their development initiatives within a

community based on Northern ideals. As will be shown later in this chapter, the constraints placed on NNGOs by Northern donors can create the necessity for identifying and building specific areas of capacity among SNGO partners, leaving NNGOs very little room to allow SNGOs to specify their own needs.

Choosing African partner organizations

The interviews also shed light on the extent to which the Canadian NGO dictates the nature of its partnerships. According to the interviewees, the Canadian NGO sets the criteria for choosing a Southern partner organization, dictating the size of the partner organization, the length of the partnership and the degree of accountability the SNGO must provide. The interviewees acknowledge that they are in the position to select the African NGO partner whereas African NGOs, because of their limited access to resources, are not in a position to be as selective. Int6 noted that there is an overabundance of African NGOs that have expressed interest in working with her organization but, because of the high volume of potential partners, her organization is not able to partner with all of them. She claims that with this increase in the number of African NGOs requesting partnerships, the process of choosing partners has become “much more strategic, so it is much more [my] office that would identify which partners to work with based on what is our programming emphasis, based on who we think is doing good work in the field” (Int6). Int2 also takes a selective approach in that his organization has an “appraisal form” that the African partner must fill out providing details on the project that they wish to implement with the support of his organization. The information regarding the project is then evaluated by his organization based on the

NNGO organizational objectives, and used as part of the decision of whether or not to partner with the African organization. It is important to acknowledge that the specific process of evaluation for SNGO project proposals that are submitted to NNGOs needs to be explored more thoroughly in order to fully understand the selective processes that take place. However, I was not made aware of a similar form for the Canadian NGO to fill out and provide to the African NGO leading me to conclude that this process can be one-sided, contributing to the inequalities within a relationship in which the Southern organization is chosen as a partner organization by the Northern one.

Selectivity based on organizational size

Another decisive factor Canadian NGOs use when choosing a partner is the size of the African NGO. In the interviews, I encountered some differences when it comes to the size of the African NGOs chosen. Int1 and Int6 noted that they choose both smaller GROs as well as larger more established African NGOs in a strategic manner. Int6 states that her organization partners with typically larger, more “sophisticated” African NGOs in situations where her organization would benefit from the input and support of a large African NGO that has established legitimacy in a specific community. Other partnerships with GROs are made primarily to build the capacity of the African partner organization by attempting to provide the resources it is lacking (Int6). Int1 also claims that his NGO partners strategically with larger SNGOs who can help his organization build the capacity of the smaller SNGO partners and GROs by imparting the skills and knowledge gained over the years they have worked in the African context.

However, some interviewees claim to have difficulty when attempting to partner with GROs. Int2 stated that because it is often difficult for smaller organizations with weak organizational capacity to be adequately accountable to NNGOs, his organization often finds it more practical to work with larger organizations that already know the appropriate way to provide reports to NNGOs and are capable of doing so. As demonstrated in the interviews, accountability refers to the ability of the African NGO to supply the Canadian partner organization with specific reports which provide details on the projects being funded as well as financial accounts of how any financial resources given to the African partner are being used. The content of the project reports, the number of reports expected and the deadline for submission will vary depending on the stipulations of the Canadian organization involved. Regardless of the differences between reporting requirements, what remains clear is the fact that this accountability appears to be one-sided with African organizations expected to supply these reports to Canadian counterparts as part of their partnership agreements. However, one-sided accountability will not facilitate the creation of the egalitarian relationship expected within a partnership. Although it is apparent that Canadian NGOs are working with African NGOs of various capacities, my primary research demonstrates that the choice of partner organizations is dictated by the Canadian partner and the selective criteria that they use.

Regardless of the presence of these imbalances, the Canadian NGO staff members claim that interdependence exists between their organizations and African partner organizations. They firmly stated that they need African NGO partners in order to carry out their organizational goals. Int2 claimed that “we need good partners as much as good partners need us. We don’t [implement the projects] ourselves, it is the partner

organizations that do it so we need them as much as they need us.” Int6 had similar comments: “We don’t operate without partnerships at all – it is all partnerships.” As mentioned in chapter three, Fowler claims that building partnerships on a “premise of interdependence” will help to equalize the balance of power between partner organizations (Fowler 2002:250). However, as we will come to understand in the next sub-sections of this chapter, the interdependence that exists is often negated by the “chain of dependency inducing relationships” created between donor agencies, NNGOs and SNGOs which create an environment in which shared accountability at all levels is lacking (Sida 1996 as cited in Fowler 2002:250). Regardless of the fact that NNGOs require African NGO partners in order to implement their own programmatic measures, the imbalances in accountability and resource flow previously shown ensure that African NGOs remain dependent on their Canadian counterparts. As long as resources tend to flow one-way from donor agencies to Canadian NGOs then to African NGOs, and vice versa in terms of accountability, the possibility of equality within NGO partnerships remains minimal.

Addressing the Issues Identified

The interviews were also helpful in exposing some of the ways in which Canadian NGOs attempt to address some of the issues encountered within their partnerships. The interviewees gave examples of how they are addressing these issues which include attempting to create an organizational definition for partnership; increasing the input that African NGOs have within the partnerships, specifically the level of participation they have in the partnership process; focusing on fewer partnerships while increasing the

duration of the relationships; and attempting to work with smaller organizations such as GROs.

Creating a definition

In terms of addressing the lack of organizational definitions for partnership, only one interviewee gave examples of efforts being taken to create a definition that was agreed upon and understood by both partner organizations. Int6 stated that her organization is working with partner organizations to develop a memorandum of agreement which involves “having discussions around what partnership means, what we can offer, what [the partners] want, what [the partners] need.” In addition, the same organization is taking steps to make the terms of their partnerships more explicit for their partners. Emphasis is being placed on having a more open dialogue specifically on the partnership relationships. She said that her organization is attempting to facilitate discussions with potential partners regarding what the partnership relationship will entail instead of assuming that the term is equally understood by both sides.

So we might list a number of things that we can offer. We would have the discussion around what their needs are and we would see if there is any match. But it would also be about understanding what their struggles are, understanding what challenges they have and finding, jointly, ways to work through those so that we both – both parties learn. It is not just about giving something. It is about learning through solidarity. So that is the intent (Int6).

Her organization is also actively seeking the involvement of current partners in critiquing the criteria her organization uses to choose partner organizations and developing new criteria for this purpose. The main goal of this organization is to send volunteers to work at partner organizations in African countries and, therefore, providing social capital rather than monetary funds is the primary resource their partnerships are based upon. Social

capital is a resource that is more conducive to reciprocity between partners in comparison to funding since it is more likely that both partners have access to social capital that they may exchange in a partnership.⁸ To some extent, this potential for reciprocity may explain why this organization has recognized the need to provide room for discussion with partners regarding their relationship while other NNGOs have not.

Increasing African NGO input

Several of the interviewees commented on how development organizations, as a whole, are placing more of a focus on listening to SNGOs, and attempting to respond specifically to their needs rather than deciding for themselves what the SNGOs require. Int7 explained that there has been a change in the last few years regarding how her organization works with partners. Regarding the volunteers that her organization sends to work in African NGOs, she said that “selection of volunteers is based more now on the needs of the receiving partners instead of on the opinions of [my organization]” (Int7). One of the results of listening more closely to the needs of African partners is that her organization is now more selective when choosing Canadian volunteers, opting for those with more expertise and qualifications than those they used to send. Int1 emphasized that there is “more of a movement now to generate partnerships that are based on the needs of the Southern recipient partner as opposed to the Northern partner’s needs.” Int2’s organization is responding to the needs expressed by partner organizations by increasingly focusing their work on HIV/AIDS issues identified as priority areas by their

⁸ As described in chapter four, social capital refers to “the self-willed webs which connect individuals, groups, communities, societies and other forms of human association...It is the sum of trusted, reciprocal relationships between citizens and their associations at all levels of politics and economy” (Fowler 1997: 107).

partner organizations, such as how to deal with staff members who are affected by HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, Int1 claimed there is no primary focus given to knowledge transfer from North to South within his organization. Instead, they are “definitely trying to integrate a South – North transfer of knowledge with participation of [our] partners and representatives at conferences around the world where they can talk about their experiences and research” (Int1).

Decreasing the number of African partners and increasing the duration of partnerships

Int6 felt that in order to be able to adequately listen to partners and discover their needs her organization has been lowering the number of African organizations with which they form partnerships. She states the reasoning behind this decision:

because then you get to know the partners right? You don't get to know them if you are working with twenty different partners in one country and you are just sending one volunteer to each. You don't understand what are their day to day struggles, what are the issues, you know, some of the challenges they face and why they face those challenges....So there is much more potential if you know the partners better, that you can identify ways of working together that will be more meaningful for both (Int6).

Her organization is also intent on increasing the duration of their partnerships for similar reasons. She states that they are trying to promote greater lengths of time for partnerships and to look at partnerships in a “broader sense” instead of simply for the purpose of placing a volunteer. In the past her organization created partnerships based on having a volunteer working at the partner organization for the period of two years. Now they are trying to lengthen that agreement to five years in order to deepen the relationship by focusing more on what resources the partner organization requires in terms of capacity

building in addition to the placing of a volunteer.⁹ The same organization has demonstrated efforts to branch out into different types of partnerships that seem to promote a more egalitarian relationship. This organization has partnered with an African NGO in order to aid them with the development of a proposal geared toward a Northern funding agency. The Canadian organization would provide advice regarding the experience they have gained over the years developing their own proposals for Canadian funding institutes instead of providing the funding themselves. As noted in chapter three, when funding is considered the primary link between partner NGOs this can lead to increased inequalities within the relationship since financial resources are not conducive to a reciprocal exchange between partners as readily as other types of resources given the power held by the organization who has the funding in comparison to the organization that requires it. Therefore, by decreasing the focus placed on financial resources within a partnership where possible can be an important step toward creating a more balanced relationship between Canadian and African partner organizations.

Size of African partner

An obstacle touched upon by several interviewees is their limited ability to partner with GROs because they are regarded as less stable organizations by Northern agencies. They note that it is much more difficult for GROs to provide adequate levels of accountability to their Canadian counterparts, which is a mandatory part of the partnership agreements as stipulated in part by donor agencies. Int2 feels that the push for

⁹ As spelled out in chapter three, the term resources can include ideas, international exposure, legitimacy, information, skills, material goods or funding. The specific type of resource depends on what is within the means of a given Canadian NGO to provide and what the needs of the African NGO are presumed to be from the information provided in the project proposal reports that must be submitted to Canadian partners.

more accountability from donors, in terms of specific progress reports regarding the projects and use of finances, a capability that some smaller African organizations may not have sufficiently developed in accordance with Northern specifications, has limited the ability of his organization to work with smaller organizations. Int6 said that her organization has also run into obstacles when attempting to partner with groups of people working in communities with high levels of need. Often these groups do not have the tradition of creating organizations, or the capacity to do so, making it difficult for her organization to identify a specific GRO with which to partner. The government funding stipulates that the Canadian NGO must “report on partner results,” therefore, identifying a partner organization is something that is necessary in order for her NGO to provide support to a specific community. To get around this obstacle in the past, her organization has identified the local government as their “partner” for a given project, and only then was able to work with a specific group of people in a rural community. She also goes on to state that working with “GROs, especially in the rural areas, can be more challenging but that doesn’t prevent us from working with them.” Clearly, her organization has found ways to manoeuvre around the limitations that are encountered when attempting to make partnering a beneficial process for both partners and the focus community.

Int1’s organization develops manuals specifically to instruct African organizations on how to remain accountable to Canadian organizations, giving them clear instructions on how to report on financial issues that follow the criteria for accountability of this organization which is based on government donor policies. His organization creates these guidelines with the intention of enabling African NGOs to become more efficient in their work by eliminating the guess work that they may encounter when

attempting to figure out how to create the reports that are expected from their Canadian partners. The provision of these types of manuals for African partner organizations does mark a step toward clarifying the terms of the relationship more accurately for the Southern partner by providing clarity regarding the steps they must follow if they wish to gain access to the resources involved in partnerships with NNGOs. However, providing manuals, which dictate proper report writing based only on the Canadian NGO requirements, is yet another way in which to promote imbalances in power. In an attempt to change this imbalance there needs to be room provided for the Southern partners to reflect on the efficiency of this reporting system from their perspective and to contribute to the development of the criteria for the report. However, given the donor requirements which dictate expectations for partner reports that NNGOs must adhere to if they are to receive funding, incorporating the SNGO perspective requires the flexibility of government agencies as well.

Obstacles to 'True' Partnership

The aims of a given partnership often prove to be much more difficult to realize in development practice, and, in part, this may be due to the various constraints placed on NGOs. Despite discovering some positive ways to deal with the difficulties that arise when attempting to address partnership issues as described in the previous section, staff members from the Canadian NGOs interviewed have clearly noted the existence of obstacles that prohibit them from acting on initiatives that they believe would respond more accurately to the needs expressed by their African partners. Most of the interviewees discussed feeling the effects of decreased government funding which many

say comes as a result of government shifting priorities more toward bilateral aid, including SWAps, with a resultant decrease in funding for Canadian NGOs.

Int2 discussed the overall detrimental impact that the cut in funding for the development sector during the 1990's had for Canadian – African NGO partnerships. He states that before his organization received cuts in funding, there was more of a two-way flow of resources, particularly information, between partners allowing room for both sides to listen and respond to each other. He claims that their relationships were “much more of a two-way street” in that more funding was available to allow his NGO to bring members of African partner organizations to Canada to inform Canadians about HIV/AIDS in the African context. He feels that the ability of his NGO to continue this two-way flow of information has been drastically limited by the cuts in funding to Canadian NGOs. However, other NGO staff members interviewed say that although funding cuts have decreased their overall ability to support a two-way flow of resources, some of them are still able to continue, admittedly to a lesser degree, two-way flow by bringing Southern partner members to Northern conferences. Therefore, in addition to fluctuations in donor funding, whether or not an NGO facilitates a two-way flow of resources within its partnerships may also depend on how much priority the organization places on this type of structured information exchange between partners.

Clearly the rules set by funding agencies can also strongly steer a partnership. Int6 stated that “the autonomy around funding is a challenging one because we are often restricted when we receive funds on how they can be used – we are auditable so we have to have the paper trail.” These sorts of stipulations can affect the types of organizations which Canadian NGOs choose to partner with, often encouraging them to partner with

larger, more established SNGOs and bypass GROs that have identified needs in a community that are not being addressed. As Int2 explained,

the push for increased accountability from Canadian donors in the last few years leads to a certain amount of GROs that cannot meet the criteria. So [Canadian NGOs] can't take as many chances as [they] could say fifteen years ago. This is negative for smaller unestablished [African] organizations and forces Canadian NGOs to focus more on larger, established organizations in Africa who may not need the money half as much as small NGOs.

He goes on to point out that a decrease in Canadian NGO funding for African GROs results in a “tougher” environment for these small organizations.

By partnering with well established SNGOs who may already be well versed regarding the requirements of NNGO partners from past experience, there is then less possibility of the SNGO providing an inadequate level of accountability as perceived by the Canadian NGO. This will mean less time is required from the Canadian NGO in terms of communicating and instructing the SNGO on necessary reporting strategies. However, in terms of dealing with HIV/AIDS in a development context, time should be allowed for communication to take place, because this can also provide space to share opinions on the partnership process, as the SNGO would undoubtedly have much valuable information to contribute which could be used to create a stronger partnership.

Int6 pointed out that often the government funding her organization receives does not provide the space that her organization requires to address the partnership issues identified. Since the funding her organization receives is often based on the number of volunteers they are able to place with partner organizations, she finds that a tension often exists between trying to keep the number of volunteers at an acceptable level to satisfy donor interests and being able to address partner concerns by altering ways in which her organization works with partners. In following government funding agreements, her

organization is expected to impose many of the stipulations set by the government donor agency onto the African partner. She said that much of the funding they receive ends up being used to help partner organizations “build the capacity to administer those funds and meet requirements that are very Northern...meaning receipts of a certain nature.”

Realizing that there are discrepancies between the Northern funding requirements and what is appropriate within the time, resources and capabilities of African NGO partners, she finds that her organization often lacks the autonomy, time and financial resources to address this issue appropriately.

Int1 and Int3 noted a foreseeable decrease in government funding being directed to Canadian NGOs for the purpose of supporting Canadian – African NGO partnerships. Int3 claimed that the government prefers to channel aid to African governments or directly to African NGOs in order to “take out the middle man,” which refers to cutting out the Canadian NGO in order to be sure that all of the funding is used in African countries. In order to explain his dismay at this trend, Int3 described a number of benefits that partnership between African and Canadian NGOs can provide. These NGO partnerships, he said, are often the ones that go beyond funding by using partnerships as a means to exchange valuable lessons learned between AIDS organizations in Canada and Africa, encouraging a reciprocal attitude between partners. There is also more of a focus given to learning through solidarity between organizations and this is stated as one of the reasons why his organization felt it necessary to facilitate the partnering of AIDS organizations from Canada and Africa in the first place. He also observed that NGO partnerships are often not as completely “results based” as partnerships involving government agencies can be. Instead NGO partnerships are intended to focus on the

processes involved in partnering, by allowing more space for input and learning to take place on both sides. When the interview with Int3 took place, he was waiting to hear if the government funded initiative that his organization facilitates to provide funding specifically for partnerships between Canadian – African AIDS organizations would continue to receive funding for another 18 month period. He emphasized that all of the specific benefits attained by each NGO would be lost if this type of partnership does not continue to receive support.

In focusing on decreasing government funding and the limitations that donor stipulations place on NGO partnerships, I do not intend to insinuate that these are the only obstacles that may be prohibiting Canadian NGOs from adequately examining their own partnership relations with African counterparts, and acting on the discrepancies they may find. I fully recognize that there are a myriad of other extremely relevant obstacles that NGOs from the North and the South face when attempting to create viable partnerships. The first of which comes to mind is the often volatile political environment in many African countries in which Canadian - African NGO partnerships are working. However, in terms of the research gathered from my interviews, donor stipulations, such as the level of accountability African partners are expected to provide Canadian counterparts, the number and length of partnerships and the resources involved in a partnership, and the decrease in government funding were the most frequently cited obstacles by the interviewees.

In order to discover to what degree these obstacles are a result of various donor restrictions, further research must take a closer look at the specific links in the chain of relationships involved. Partnerships are often viewed as involving only the NGOs

referred to as partner organizations. However, the decisions made within a partnership are affected by more than the partner organizations directly involved. Ashman refers to this as “partnership chains” which can include governments, donor organizations, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), NNGOs, SNGOs, GROs and local communities, all of which have the potential to affect a given partnership to differing degrees (Ashman 2000:15). Following Ashman’s research, Figure 5.1 clearly highlights the degree to which the autonomy of an organization can be limited by the influence of donor organizations illustrating the fact that it is not simply the two partner organizations that shape the reality of a partnership. Donor organizations, such as government agencies, have a great deal of influence on the partnership because of the funds that they are investing in the relationship.

(Based on Ashman 2000:15)

Figure 5.1: An illustration of “partnership chains” highlights how various organizations have the potential to influence (as represented by the arrows) a given NGO partnership.

In terms of donor organizations, Ashman aptly states that “the terms with which they allocate funds to [NNGOs] directly influence the scope for negotiation and decision-making with Southern partners” (Ashman 2000:15). In recognizing the limits that the funding relationships can have on NGO partnerships, Ashman recommends that donors help to make partnerships more effective by altering the conditions of their funding in ways that would “increase the flexibility and responsiveness of [NNGOs] to Southern NGO realities” (Ashman 2000:15).

Interview Conclusions

There seems to be an overall lack of a systematic compiling of lessons learned by Canadian NGOs regarding their partnerships with African organizations. The interviewees were not aware of any systematic ways in which Canadian NGOs keep a record of the partnership issues they encounter and share them with each other. Gathering together Canadian NGO staff members who are directly involved with overseas partnerships specifically to discuss the partnership issues that they have experienced, and to develop ways to address these issues could prove beneficial in the long run. One NGO staff member recognized the benefits that could result from NGOs banding together with other NGOs who have identified similar obstacles. She feels that if presented as a coherent set of ideas their individual opinions would carry more weight when dealing with government funding agencies (Int6). As a group, Canadian NGOs could prove to be more successful when advocating for the necessary freedom they require from their donors to address the partnership issues that they encounter first hand. I do recognize that there are organizations, such as CCIC, PAC and the International Coalition of AIDS

Service Organizations (ICASO), that facilitate the sharing of information between NGOs and advocate on their behalf regarding issues relevant to their individual mandates. PAC has even written two reports specifically investigating the nature of NGO partnerships. However, given the personal nature of partnership to each organization and the individuals involved, this topic would do well to have its own forum within which experiences of NGO staff can be freely shared and lessons gathered in order to pursue the necessary changes to the relationship. I gathered from the interviews that there seems to be very little room given in the way of time and finances for gathering these experiences and sharing them among NNGOs since the staff of these organizations are already strapped for time and funds given their current workloads.

Interviewees refrain from placing blame on their respective NGO and are often careful not to personalize the issues, instead referring to NNGOs as a group when discussing the level of equity within partnerships. They say that “maybe” partnerships are not equitable today (Int6), or tend to discuss partnership in more general terms within the NNGO community, instead of taking a definitive stance on the issue from their own experiences within their organization. For the most part, they recognize that there are discrepancies within partnerships that need to be addressed. However, until individual NGOs take responsibility at the organizational level for the role that they play within partnerships these issues will not be systematically addressed. Taking responsibility would require staff members and organizations to take a share of the blame for the discrepancies, and admit to any mistakes that they have made in order to learn from them and change future organizational behaviour for the better. In reality there are numerous reasons for NNGOs and individuals to refrain from taking responsibility of the issues;

one such reason is that traditionally NGOs are not given room to admit their mistakes. The funding for their programs essentially depends on proving their success rate, that they have not made mistakes and that the programs they implement have achieved their stated goals (Smillie 1996:189).

For the most part, the interviews show that Canadian organizations involved in partnerships seem to be aware of the necessity of altering these partnerships in response to the needs of SNGOs. They recognize important steps that must be taken to do this including longer term funding to support partnerships, increasing the two way flow of resources, providing space for learning from other partnerships and discussing and creating agreed upon definitions for the use of the term partnership with their partners. However, the primary research also points to the fact that more proactive work needs to be done by NNGOs. It is simply not enough to identify these issues without trying to actively address them. More focus needs to be given to acting collectively in order to be able to overcome the obstacles identified and help donors to realize the importance of creating 'true' partnerships between Canadian and African NGOs which, after all, is the stated goal of these NGOs. Equal participation by NGOs within partnerships geared toward HIV/AIDS initiatives in Africa should be regarded with the utmost importance as it is the people in these African countries that are facing the personal struggles presented by the syndrome.

As evidenced in my primary research, the Canadian NGOs interviewed have met with multiple obstacles when trying to address partnership issues that they have identified; obstacles which are often related to funding stipulations. There were a wide range of partnership issues identified in the interviews and to deal with them properly

Canadian NGOs need room to acknowledge them as important aspects of their development work and to address them appropriately. The difficulties that Canadian NGOs meet when attempting to do this have the potential to negatively affect the ability of the SNGO partner to address the needs they are hearing from the communities they assist. When donor agencies do not provide Canadian NGOs with the space needed to listen to their Southern counterparts who are able to more accurately convey the needs of their constituents who are struggling with the effects of HIV/AIDS on a daily basis, there is a glaring lack of importance placed on exploring and improving partnership relations by these donors. Faced with these obstacles, NNGOs must create partnerships within the limits defined for them, making it increasingly difficult for them to create the type of partnerships that they believe are needed. NNGOs need to discover how they can best alleviate these constraints. One step would be to lobby for changes in donor stipulations in order to increase the degree of flexibility that is required within North – South NGO partnerships. However, this is a step that would most likely generate tension in the relationships between NNGOs and donor agencies.

In conclusion, I do acknowledge that it is not accurate or fair to declare the reality of partnership relationships as one of Southern dependency at the mercy of Northern development whims, given that development co-operation on an international scale has become extremely complex and there are many different ways to create partnerships for many different reasons. Clearly, the existence of differing types of partnerships and the attempts being made by NGO staff members to alter partnerships where necessary illustrates an important point; that the effort and stamina needed to find an adequate way to successfully address HIV/AIDS issues in the South is present in the Canadian

development sector. Nevertheless, more importance must be given to openly investigating partnerships in order to uncover the specific benefits and drawbacks that may exist in each. These findings must be shared with the NGO community in order to prevent duplicating mistakes and to promote partnerships that can be supportive to both partners. The findings may also encourage the reworking of a particular partnership model or, where necessary, the creation of a new model which may be better suited to address the needs expressed by the African NGO partner. David Korten's "mutual empowerment" framework is a useful guideline for NGOs striving to create egalitarian relationships. The framework will be discussed in the concluding chapter in order to highlight the key concepts that are essential for the creation of viable transnational NGO partnerships.

6 : Drawing Conclusions

Introduction

As shown in the previous two chapters, North – South NGO partnerships do not always strictly follow the idealistic definition of the term partnership in practice. Regardless of this, Northern NGOs, and more specifically Canadian NGOs, continue to use the term partnership to describe a relationship that does not always resemble the egalitarian principals it suggests. According to the primary research in the previous chapter, Canadian NGO staff members have acknowledged areas in which partnership in practice does not resemble the ideologies commonly associated with partnership. The interviewees also contributed their ideas as to why it proves to be difficult for partnerships between Northern and Southern NGOs to be ‘true’ partnerships as defined in chapter three. This chapter will draw conclusions by first looking at David Korten’s “mutual empowerment” framework as a guide for international cooperation such as North – South NGO partnerships. It is intended that a discussion of this framework will elaborate on the areas in which development institutions may be limiting the mutual empowerment of NNGOs and SNGOs involved in partnerships. The next section will highlight the potential for partnerships to promote the participation of Southern NGOs which is essential to tackling HIV/AIDS in African communities. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research in this area.

NGO Partnership: A step toward “Mutual Empowerment”?

Korten’s framework of mutual empowerment provides guiding principles for relationships between development agencies of the North and the South based on their equal participation, reciprocity and solidarity in order to create a “system of mutual empowerment” for international cooperation geared toward development issues (Korten 1990:146). Korten believes that “through cooperation and information-sharing, progress is made toward increasing individual and collective capacities to make better use of available resources to meet the people’s self-defined needs on a finite planet” (Korten 1990:146). However, in reference to my primary research, the degree to which the partnership models, currently in use by Canadian NGOs, promote a mutually empowering relationship between Canadian and African NGOs varies greatly. I will discuss the relevance of this “mutual empowerment” framework for the Canadian partnership models identified, exploring the specific areas of the partnerships that need to be addressed if Canadian NGOs are to create a mutually empowering relationship between the Canadian and African NGOs involved. By emphasizing the valuable aspects of this framework, and how it relates to North – South NGO partnerships, it is hoped that Canadian NGOs will find it a useful guideline with which to consider their own relationships with Southern counterparts.

The “system of mutual empowerment” is built on a number of extremely valid key concepts regarding development cooperation. The specific concepts of primary relevance to North-South NGO partnerships include placing emphasis on information, not money, as the main resource in the relationship; increasing the two-way flow of resources to make the relationship more reciprocal; acknowledging that development

problems to do not belong to a specific geographic area of the globe or a certain group of people but, rather, they know no boundaries and, therefore, should be addressed through solidarity; and finally, that relationships at all levels, from government-to-government to people-to-people and all levels in between, are equally relevant in addressing development issues (Korten 1990).

The first element deals with the type of resource that is involved in development cooperation between agencies of the North and South. Typically, these relationships place a priority on the exchange of funds between partners. However, the framework takes this priority off of monetary resources and redirects it to information which Korten emphasizes is more conducive to an egalitarian two-way flow. This would reduce the dependency and unequal nature of partnerships that can develop when money flows one way from those who have to those who do not. Furthermore, a two-way flow increases the ability of people to cooperate and coordinate efforts, making “better use of their own resources to create the foundation on which the use of supplemental external assistance resources can build” (Korten 1990:146). As government development agencies become more interested in following SWApS to address development issues, this can include an increase in aid flow from government to government. As discussed in the previous chapter, some NGO staff anticipate that with this increase in bilateral relationships there will be less support given to NGO partnerships. This could result in continued priority placed on one-way flow of resources, especially monetary, and, therefore, less of a reciprocal flow of resources that is necessary for a more egalitarian, participatory relationship between Northern and Southern agencies which is another key element that Korten includes in his framework (Korten 1990:146). As Korten points out, all too often

the focus of international assistance is on the transfer of finances from Northern agencies to Southern ones (Korten 1990:144). He states that this can limit the effectiveness of Southern development initiatives as monetary assistance will not be a long lasting sustainable solution to Southern needs. Korten states that we need to move beyond international assistance, which is primarily based on the provision of funds, to international co-operation, where both Northern and Southern perspectives have equal merit (Korten 1990:146). If more value is placed on an exchange of knowledge between North and South regarding the needs of those with HIV/AIDS and how best to address them this would contribute a great deal to reducing the power imbalances that are often present in NGO partnerships. The increased importance of Southern NGO input would enable them to be regarded as equal partners whose opinions are considered as an integral part of the solutions to development issues.

I recognize that it is not entirely realistic to suggest that funding is an unnecessary part of development relationships, which is why I refrain from doing so while agreeing with Korten in that funding should not be the primary focus of partnership relationships between Northern and Southern NGOs. The consequences of having NGO relationships based on one-way funding transactions from North to South is extremely limiting to the potential of these relationships, not to mention misleading when these relationships are referred to as partnerships. The increase in bilateral aid and the use of SWAps may not entirely limit the potential of NGO partnerships if these partnerships can gain importance in the eyes of the funding institutions. Given the NGO need for flexibility within partnerships, it seems more fitting, if, instead of being weighted down by the bureaucracy that can exist when working with government agencies within a SWAp framework,

NNGOs were given support by donor agencies in order to complement the initiatives that take place within the SWAp framework. NNGOs can provide additional support to SNGOs in the form of resources conducive to two-way flow and, therefore, promote the concepts of “mutual empowerment.”

Similarly to the “one world” framework discussed in chapter three, Korten claims that in order to mutually empower both North and South it must be recognized that the development issues being addressed do not belong to a specific country. On the contrary, these issues know no boundaries and are therefore shared problems which require cooperative efforts to solve (Korten 1990:146). Therefore, relationships which condone top-down efforts in which Northern agencies determine how HIV/AIDS issues in Southern communities will be addressed will not facilitate equal input and participation from the South. Specifically, with an issue such as HIV/AIDS much can be gained when sharing ideas on a disease which is prevalent, albeit to varying degrees, in both Canada and Africa. Korten emphasizes that organizations should strive to create “vertical communication linkages” which provide space for information to flow from national levels to community levels and vice versa (Korten 1990:147).

The “mutual empowerment” framework also places importance on establishing “mutual assistance relationships,” or by definition partnerships, at various levels (government, NGO, people’s organizations etc) and geographic regions (North-North, North-South, South-South links) recognizing that a variety of opinions and resources are required to address development issues adequately (Korten 1990:146). Furthermore, NGOs are given an important position within this framework as “catalysts, mobilizers, feedback facilitators, analysts and advocates” who are expected to aid in the realization of

the key concepts discussed (Korten 1990:147). However, from the research data compiled in the previous two chapters it is clear that NGO partnerships have some issues to address before they are able to adequately support this system of mutual empowerment.

The definition of the term partnership as explored in chapter three shows that the ideology behind partnerships is similar to Korten's framework in that it promotes equality between the parties involved. If one were to take this definition literally, it would seem as though the creation of NGO partnerships marks a break between providing charitable aid to the South and working with Southern organizations, giving increased attention to Southern input while stepping away from the top-down mentality that has traditionally been embedded in development initiatives. The rhetoric of partnership is clearly misleading and serves to promote an ideology that may not be possible in reality given the set up of the donor aid system in the Northern context, which creates obstacles for NNGOs and perpetuates power imbalances between Northern and Southern development agencies. By effectively hiding the realities of NGO partnerships, the discourse of partnership will only delay or prohibit the potentially positive impact of North-South development relations on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa.

Although the primary research shows that major discrepancies exist between the definition of partnership and how NGO partnerships work in practice, with regard to the specific Canadian partnership models encountered there does seem to be some potential for Canadian NGOs to attempt to address the issues they encounter if they wish to follow the mutual empowerment framework and are given room to do so by donors. Since the main resource of VSOs is the placement of volunteers and not distribution of funding

they are already in a favourable position to realize a more egalitarian relationship with their partners, perhaps one in which the placement of volunteers is a reciprocal process. If Canadian NGOs whose primary work revolves around advocacy, networking and facilitating partnerships realized the necessity of creating ‘true’ partnerships and were given space to actively promote the concepts that need to be present in order to have this type of relationship, they could help to provide the enabling environment that other Canadian NGOs require in order to address their own partnership issues. The knowledge and experience that these NGOs hold regarding advocating and networking on specific issues of relevance to the Canadian NGO community could be quite beneficial if put to use to address partnership issues, increasing the relevance and importance of ‘true’ partnership and the accurate description of relationships in the eyes of Canadian NGOs.

Other development researchers have also made critiques of development relationships similar to the concepts of Korten’s mutual empowerment framework.

According to Allan Kaplan, in “conventional” development thinking

development practitioners are not required to pay attention to their own development as part of effective practice; there is little or no reciprocity in the relationships between ‘developer’ and ‘developee’. A ‘conventional’ development approach is fundamentally about *the delivery of resources* – finances, equipment, technical skills, political clout, even a particular approach to life – from those who have to those that do not. (Kaplan 2000: 30, emphasis added)

In much of the literature discussing NGOs they are portrayed as having surpassed this traditional development style, and, therefore, are capable of addressing development issues in ways that are more appropriate to the Southern context. Clearly, this is not entirely the case given the restraints that exist for Canadian NGOs, which contribute to their limited flexibility. Kaplan speaks of a “new paradigm” that focuses on “facilitating resourcefulness” in the South by Northern agencies instead of focusing on the one-way

transfer of resources to the South (2000:33). He goes on to state that unless development relations between the North and South are based on an interactive, reciprocal nature “then categorically the result is not development work; it becomes at best a patronizing collusion, at worst a cynical manipulation” (Kaplan 2000: 33).

Michael Edwards et al speak positively about the potential for transnational relationships between NGOs to be a viable alternative for global development.

The gradual replacement of foreign aid by a wider agenda of international cooperation makes it easier for NGOs and other civil society organizations to work together without distorting effects of contracts, conditions, and unequal access to funding. The most interesting and potentially powerful cases of transnational civic organizing are those in which funding is a secondary consideration, leaving participants to focus on exchanging complementary roles and resources that are equally valued in support of broad but common goals (Edwards et al 2000: 7).

However, various obstacles, such as those emphasized by the primary research, may prohibit NGOs from pursuing a shift from foreign aid to international cooperation and ‘true’ partnership. Furthermore, the attention that needs to be given to the process of partnership formation, and ultimately drawing lessons from experience, is limited by the traditional development framework in which NGOs are entangled. Traditional development practices tend to focus on the transfer of monetary resources which, in effect, can suppress local initiative by dictating how the funds are to be spent while increasing Southern dependence on Northern resources (Korten 1987:145). Numerous researchers stress the fact that difficulties within North – South development interactions most often arise when money is involved and, therefore, the organizations involved should strive to find common ground on which to base their partnership (Fowler 1997; Korten 1987, 1990; Edwards et al 2000; Harrison 2002:605). Korten explains his reasons for this by stating that “demands to keep the money moving divert [donor/NGO] attention

from the careful coalition building and learning processes through which micro-policy reforms are developed and institutionalized” (Korten 1987:152). Contrary to traditional development, mutual empowerment within a partnership is not based on the one-way transfer of primarily monetary resources but on a two-way flow of ideas and experiences which promotes equal interaction from partner organizations involved so that mutual benefits may be realized. Therefore, Northern development agencies should strive to create an environment that will facilitate the creation of transparent, mutually agreed upon relationships between Northern and Southern agencies while steering away from concepts of the aid relationship that promote inequalities within North – South relationships.

The potential of partnership: Making room for Southern participation

Based on the primary characteristics which describe the partnership ideology, North – South NGO partnerships hold the potential to encourage the increased participation of Southern development agencies in addressing the African HIV/AIDS epidemic. Providing room for Southern viewpoints and the active participation of Southern NGOs in HIV/AIDS issues that are directly affecting their communities is crucial to combating the syndrome. Community members and the organizations they create are directly affected by the syndrome, and are the first to react to the needs they perceive within their communities. For this reason, they are in the best position to accurately identify needs and develop appropriate ways to address those needs if given the necessary support by Southern NGOs and Northern counterparts. Learning how partnerships are facilitating or prohibiting participation with Southern development

organizations that have a direct link with local communities is, ultimately, vital to the sustainability and effectiveness of the initiatives for which these partnerships are created.

The importance of partnerships is also evident given the current volatile political environments of many African countries which limit the ability of Southern governments to adequately address all aspects of the syndrome on their own. When NNGOs do not encourage the equal participation of SNGOs in decision making processes, SNGOs are forced to redirect their energy to follow the priorities of the NNGOs which may not include addressing the issues that SNGOs deem most important (Smillie 1995:185). If SNGOs are not able to direct the resources provided by NNGOs to areas they feel need to be urgently addressed the effective use of these resources will be diminished. Furthermore, unlike NNGOs and other donor agencies, “a Southern NGO is directly responsible, face to face, for what happens to the people it has encouraged to attend classes, to save money and take loans, to change jobs and farming practices, to alter old habits and accustomed ways” (Smillie 1995: 193). Therefore, listening to SNGO opinions and keeping them active in decision making processes will increase the likelihood that the people that the partnership aims to help are benefiting from these initiatives.

The increased control and influence SNGOs have within partnerships will “foster their managerial control and effectiveness in carrying out development programs for African communities,” building their capacity to lead development efforts over the long-term (Ashman 2000:9). Power imbalances between North – South partners can prevent grassroots perspectives from reaching NNGOs, impeding mutual learning. These power imbalances can also suppress the discussion of differing viewpoints, allowing inappropriate development initiatives to be implemented in a community (Leach 1997:4).

As Helen Jackson is quick to point out, “one of the limitations of the responses to AIDS has been the failure of others to learn effectively and in time from those most impacted” (Jackson 2002:ix). Given the recognized predominance of HIV/AIDS in Africa and the consequent well deserved importance it is given within development circles at all levels, it is of extreme importance that any relationship created with the intention of addressing the effects of the syndrome on a given community involve the participation of the SNGO, which is more closely tied to the focus community in order to be most effective.

The next step

I recognize that my research was merely able to scratch the surface of NGO partnership issues that need to be addressed. Future research would do well to ethnographically focus on a specific North – South NGO relationship which would enable the researcher to explore a specific partnership model more thoroughly in order to gain further insight into its potential to promote “mutual empowerment” and encourage the increased participation of Southern NGOs within partnerships. Donna Murdock (2003) aptly suggests that anthropologists take a “practice approach” to the study of NGO processes, which would focus on “social actors, their own interpretations of their experience, and the dialogic construction of their social realities” (Murdock 2003:525). Instead of treating NGOs as fixed entities, we should delve deeper into the experience and viewpoints of individuals working within NGOs and the processes that constitute a given NGO. She further states that “rather than asking whether NGOs are ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ we should ask after the practices that tend to make NGOs more or less able to do certain things” (Murdock 2003:525). There is a tendency for NGOs to be perceived in a

positive light; however it is imperative that further research acknowledge and continue to explore the limitations placed on NGOs and the processes at work within the international development arena and in a political economy context which can affect the direction of NGO operations. Fisher also supports these views and makes a call for anthropological research focused on three sets of issues:

- a) how discourses about NGOs create knowledge, define sets of appropriate practices, and facilitate and encourage NGO behaviour defined as appropriate;
- b) how complex sets of relationships among various kinds of associations, the agencies and agents of the state, and individuals and communities have had an impact in specific locales at specific times; and
- c) how we can avoid reductionist views of NGOs as fixed and generalizable entities with essential characteristics and contextualize them within evolving processes of associating (Fisher 1997:441-442).

My own research has touched on these issues, but clearly a great deal more research is needed.

More exploration must be done regarding the limits placed on NGO partnerships by donor organizations in order to fully comprehend the extent of these limits and the ability, and, therefore, responsibility that NNGOs have in promoting equality in the partnerships they create. Studies, such as those done by Billis and Leach, could be usefully carried out with regard to Canadian NGO partnerships with African NGOs with the aim of increasing the transparency of relationships and dialogue regarding the partnership. This research could potentially provide a strong basis on which NNGOs can advocate for changes to donor stipulations in order to increase their flexibility within partnerships. Donor organizations must also be made aware of how necessary it is that they provide NGOs with the space they require to share lessons learned in the partnership process with other NGOs, the development sector as a whole and the general public who can support partnership initiatives directly or indirectly through their tax dollars.

Conclusion

With this thesis I have strived to bring to light the inaccuracy that the term partnership can involve when used to describe a multitude of NGO relationships which differ to varying degrees as well as the clear differences that are evident between the partnership ideology and partnership relations in practice. When commencing my research I did not fully realize the extent of the issues that can exist for NGOs or, admittedly, the degree to which these NGOs can be limited in their autonomy by complex relationships with donors and each other. Both the secondary and primary research gathered contributed to a stronger grasp of the limitations that NGO partnerships are faced with when stripped of protective rhetoric.

The overall purpose of this thesis is to encourage further research of North – South co-operative development strategies in order to promote open and transparent relationships which make every effort to support the equal participation of Southern counterparts in addressing the development issues that they experience first hand. The importance of making Southern participation a reality within development initiatives cannot be underestimated, especially when it comes to accurately addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS in African communities. Given the potential of NGO partnerships to facilitate Southern participation in addressing the syndrome, NNGOs must acknowledge the responsibility they hold by striving to create mutually beneficial relationships with SNGOs. However, this task cannot be accomplished by NNGOs alone. The answers to multiple questions must be sought by all organizations and individuals involved in “partnership chains.” In order to discover the future viability of NGO partnerships broader questions must be explored. How will changes in government policy affect

NNGOs? Are North – South NGO partnerships compatible with the increase in bilateral aid and SWAps? Given these changes in policy, what role should NNGOs pursue for themselves? Furthermore, what degree of autonomy do NNGOs hold within specific partnership relations and, therefore, what types of changes to partnerships are realistically attainable? Clearly anthropological research can play an important role in addressing these questions by highlighting the reality of development processes and, therefore, anthropologists must accept the responsibility to do so.

APPENDIX 1: NGO INTERVIEWEES

M=Male, F=Female								
Int# M/F	Type of NGO	Mission (as quoted on their websites)	Position in the Organization/ Age Group	Age of Organization/ Basic Structure	Date of Interview	Number of Years in the Organization/ in Field of Development	Number of Staff Members	Annual Budget (Approx)
Int 1 M	Program focusing on HIV/AIDS in Africa supported by national health NGO. Program soon to become a free-standing NGO.	Support the community response to HIV and AIDS through partnerships in African countries and wider networking, skills exchange and lesson sharing.	Program Officer 35-45	14 years Headquarters of program based in Africa	Oct 22/03	2.5 years 15 years	1 Canada 32 Africa	4 million 100% gov't
Int 2 M	National NGO linked to International NGO (INGO)	Work with allies in Canada and around the world to change the policies and practices that perpetuate human suffering. Support organizations in poor communities overseas in their struggle to secure basic rights.	Southern Africa Coordinator 35-45	40 years -Board of Directors -Membership	Oct 20/03 Nov 3/03	13 years 20 years	52 Canada 15 Overseas	15 million 40% gov't 37% private donors 17% INGO 6% other sources
Int 3 M	NGO focusing on HIV/AIDS advocacy and networking	A network of 111 Canadian international development non- governmental organizations (NGOs), AIDS service organizations and individuals who are concerned about global HIV/AIDS issues.	Director 45-55	15 years -Network of 111 NGOs -Membership	Nov 10/03	4 years 25 years	2 plus occasional interns	600,000 90% gov't 10% other sources
Int 4 F	NGO focusing on international health issues	Facilitate and support health and development activities around the world through the mobilization of Canadian and other resources.	Director of Special Projects and Programs 25-35	27 years -Board of Directors -Membership	Nov 10/03	4 years 14 years	21	5 million 75% gov't 25% other sources
Int 5 M	Coalition of Canadian and African NGOs	A coalition of Canadian and African NGOs working together on issues of human rights, human security and sustainable development.	Director 55-65	18 years -Board of Directors -Membership	Dec 5/03	13 years 30 years	3 Canada 1 Overseas 5 contract	600,000 52% gov't 48% other sources

APPENDIX 1: NGO INTERVIEWEES.....continued								
Int# M/F	Type of NGO	Mission (as quoted on their websites)	Position in the Organization/ Age Group	Age of Organization/ Basic Structure	Date of Interview	Number of Years in the Organization/ in Field of Development	Number of Staff Members	Annual Budget (Approx)
Int 6 F	Volunteer Sending NGO	Work with partner groups and individuals seeking to foster equality and freedom, safeguard cultures and communities, and protect the environment.	Project Development Officer for Africa 35-45	65 years - Board of Directors - Membership	Dec 16/03	5 years 20 years	25 Canada 71 Overseas	2.7 million 44% gov't 14% private donors 42% other sources
Int 7 F	Volunteer Sending NGO	Link governments, non-governmental organizations and institutions, and community-based organizations with Canadian expertise, services, and resources to strengthen capacity and develop local potential.	Program Officer for Southern Africa Region 35-45	43 years - Board of Directors - Membership	Dec 17/03	15 years <15 years	65 Canada 12 Overseas	20.6 million 57% gov't 43% other sources

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