Civil Society in our framework includes the web of associations, social norms and practices that comprise social activity different from activities of the institutions of the state (such as political parties, government, agencies or norms about voting) or the institutions of the market (such as corporations, stock markets, or expectations about the honoring of contracts). Strengthening of civil society requires improving intellectual, material and organizational basis of the actors of civil society.

Civil Society may be defined as organized activities by groups or individuals either performing certain services or trying to influence and improve society as a whole, but that are not part of Government or business. We work with a model which divides society into three sectors: the state, the market or business sector and civil society. The background for these three sectors are the "private activities by individuals, families, households and communities i.e. educating children, supporting family members with no income, caring for the sick and elderly. Although these activities are closely connected with the three formal sectors,
and feed into them they are not part of them. Each of the sectors differs from the other in terms of their social function types of organization and financial resources. Very briefly, their fundamental functions are for the family or household to supply the fundamental requirements of companionship, and care, for the market to be an exchange of goods for the state to make and enforce laws, and for civil society to be a meeting place of debate and common endeavor.

In any society there is a need for activities not ordinarily performed by government or business, or serving as a corrective to government and business. Civil society allows the citizens of a country to act for what they think is the benefit of society, it gives room for debate on the direction of social development, it makes possible for people to influence government and business. The basis of civil society is the right of each individual to participate in the workings of society, and the recognition that periodical elections and referendums, if these are held at all are not sufficient.

In the model, the three spheres of business, government and civil society are shown as overlapping. In a well-functioning society, the three sectors supplement each other, working together, not against each other. Roughly speaking, the more legitimate and effective the state is the more it can allow a strong civil society and the business sector to develop and the more likely are instances of cooperation between the state and other sectors. Examples of overlapping between the state and other sectors are to be found. An example of overlapping might be an environmental problem, say the damming of a river, which would involve several government departments, private companies and environmental and citizens groups.
Civil Society and Social Empowerment

We will deal in more detail with the role of NGOs in a later section. CSOs offer their members and supporters a way of taking part in society or even to change and improve society as a whole or at least their own corner of it. They give people an outlet for the natural tendency to congregate and work together, to be part of a community, and they are a means to obtain many necessary services, from education of children to supporting the dying. David Korten summarizes the political function of civil society organizations.

In political roles, they supplement political parties as varied and flexible mechanisms through which citizens define and articulate a broad range of interests, meet local needs and make demands on government. In their educational role they provide training grounds for democratic citizenship, develop the political skills of their members, recruit new political leaders, simulate political participation and educate the broader public on a wide variety of public interest issues. In their watchdog roles they serve, along with the press as checks on the relentless tendency of the state to centralise its power and to evade civic accountability and control.

NGOs in civil society must navigate between the forces at play. Neither the state nor civil society are homogeneous and conflict-free entities. Any state is made up of heterogeneous and in some cases openly hostile forces, such as government (the non-political administrative structure the civil services) and regime (the elected officials), local and central government civilians and military behind-the scenes decision-makers and those in the trenches who have to implement policies and face the people who are affected by them. CSOs may find allies in different tiers of government depending on the matter in question sometimes seeking assistance from parties and
politicians at other times accessing the resources of the bureaucracy. Civil society itself is by no means a unified force. On the contrary civil society may be described as a meeting place sometimes a battleground—for people and organizations with widely different aims. Any organization entering public debate or trying to lobby government for policy changes has to seek out allies and will no doubt find opponents as well. Even organizations sharing basic values often find themselves in competition for funding or public support.

**MANY KINDS OF CIVIL SOCIETIES**

Civil society changes and adapts itself to the society of which it is a part. in any society, we may imagine a continuous give-and-take between the sectors: under a socialist government, the state may try to contain market forces in some areas and encourage civil society in others: in times of economic crisis, civil society will be forced to take on tasks previously performed by the state; in an ideological shift to the right, market may expand its role to buy into nationalized industries etc. Civil society is always historically specific ‘praxis’. This means that even though we may set down some general observations on the role of civil society, we cannot reduce the actuality of civil society to a few functions, nor describe the variety of civil societies as they exist in so many communities.
What is required for civil society to function? Are we to understand, as some theorists claim, that civil society can only come about in an industrialised 'modern' society and that 'less developed' societies must therefore achieve industrialization and modernization before they can hope for civil society? Or can one imagine civil society at different levels (or of different types), evolving with society?

In Table I we propose a categorization of three types of civil society. We are assuming that all societies do have some form of civil organizations at least on a community or grassroots level (which is much harder for a repressive government to stamp out than the higher forms). In their development they face not so much an either or situation but rather a question of degrees or thresholds between difficult or impossible conditions and an enabling environment. The more favorable the political and legal conditions, the educational standard, the access to means of communications etc. the stronger civil society will be able to grow. The development of middle-range and national civil society by no means replaces the grassroots initiatives, a highly evolved civil society on all levels at once.
Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'Grassroots' civil society</th>
<th>'Middle-range' Civil society</th>
<th>'National' civil society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associations in rural or urban communities.</td>
<td>Associations on district level or with limited national coverage.</td>
<td>National or international association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal or minimum organization.</td>
<td>Organizations with some professional staff, audited accounts.</td>
<td>Professional staff, large turnover, funding form several sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronting local government.</td>
<td>Confronting district government.</td>
<td>Confronting national government or international institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation between Organizations within the local community.</td>
<td>Cooperation between organizations nationally.</td>
<td>Cooperation between organizations internationally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with problems arising in the community.</td>
<td>Dealing with problems relevant to large groups of people.</td>
<td>Dealing with problems confronting whole social classes, national, the world.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NATURE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Composite characteristics

Civil society is not a thing that can be found in the same form in different countries; dissimilarity in ecological and social pre-conditions, historical trajectories and their interruptions ensure a rich variation. At best one can talk of features which are similar between certain countries or within regions. What is common to all, however, are three basic dimensions upon which variation occurs. These are: a material base, organizational expression and ideology or guiding values. It is the way in which these elements develop and inter-relate that lead over time to divergence and uniqueness of the constellations, which make up civil societies.
THREE SECTORS OF SOCIETY

Society has three main sectors and they mobilize their resources in three different ways. We can use a useful set of images developed by Marc Nerfin in IFDA Dossier to represent the three sectors as the Prince, the Merchant and the Citizen.

The Prince, who represents the First Sector-Government (and this includes the Armed Forces) in the final analysis mobilizes the resources that needs by command and coercion. Government distinctive role is to re-allocate the nation's resources to address needs as they define them and to set rules that limit its citizens' behaviour. This represents the First Sector.

The Merchant, who represents the Second Sector, Business, mobilizes the resources that it needs through producing goods and services for sale and making a profit.
Business developmental role is to mobilize private entrepreneurship to produce and distribute goods and services in response to market forces.

The Citizen, who represents the Third Sector, Civil Society, mobilizes the resources that it needs through voluntary action by persuading people who share a vision of how the world should be to contribute their time and money. The Third Sector mobilizes voluntary social energy.

It is true that in some cases both Government (the Prince) and Business (the Merchant) can be in part motivated by a shared vision of a better society, but by and large, a shared vision of a better society is the unifying feature of the Third Sector, the Citizen and Civil Society (see Table 4.1).

One methodological note: In the typology of civil society we have not included political parties, viewing them "Governments in Waiting", interested in power and coercion, rather than Voluntary Organizations interested in shared values and commitment.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Method of Resource Mobilization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>The Government including the Armed Forces</td>
<td>The Prince</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>The Business Sector</td>
<td>The Merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Private, Non-Profit (Civil Society)</td>
<td>The Citizen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Importance of Civil Society

Many people believe that the Third Sector—the voluntary sector, and legitimate existence, is insignificant beside the two behemoths, the Government and the Business sectors. A moment’s thought, however, will enable us to reflect that the Third Sector in Bangladesh embraces activities of religion, much of primary, secondary and some tertiary education, some health care facilities (like the Diabetic Hospital and the Cancer Hospital), much arts and culture, a great deal of social services through philanthropic organizations, developmental NGOs, and organizations for mutual benefit like cooperatives and trade unions. This is not a small part of the fabric of Bangladesh society. We are talking of a lot of people, and increasingly large amount of money.

If we look at the Third Sector, the civil society historically and internationally, we can see that the third sector has been on the leading edge of social movements which are now accepted as the norm long before Government or Business accepted them. Voting for women, abolition of slavery, human rights, civil rights—all of these accepted elements of the modern nation-state were originally initiated and carried out by organizations of civil society. Such organizations were, usually after long battles, able to persuade Government of the rightness of their cause, and new laws were passed which finally forced compliance on the Second Sector—the Merchants. Bangladesh has inherited through its colonial past, and through its membership of the United Nations, many of these valued elements of modern society.

If we look at the organizations of civil society in Bangladesh, there too we can see many that have been and are on the leading edge of present day social development.
Adhunik trying to reduce smoking, Mohila Samity trying to improve the lot of women, Sandhani trying to provide blood and eye bank, the Grameen Bank trying to provide credit to the poor.

Voluntary associations are very common in Bangladesh for all sorts of activities: the reader or his/her friends may belong to a District Samilty, to a Chamber of Commerce, a Service Club, a Professional Association, a School or University Alumni Association and many more. The reader may support the work of cultural organizations, welfare organizations, religious societies for orphanages, madrassahs, maqatabs, the work of voluntary organizations in health, family planning, literacy and many more. At the time of natural disaster, it is likely that the reader will have contributed something for those affected through any of the above organizations. It is possible that the richer readers belong to families that have set up schools through a waqf* endowment. In the villages, it is likely that a villager will belong to an informal savings group, a prayer group, a jatra group, a sports club, or a peasants association.

The range of activities of civil society in Bangladesh is very large indeed and, as we stated previously, such associations or organizations have come about because of a voluntary shared vision of what needs to be done to make the world a better place. No one is forced or coerced into and makes a personal profit from the activities of civil society (unlike the Merchant/Business). Activities of civil society are based on values shared with your peers.
Organizations of Civil Society

Let us look at the typology of civil society, which we have developed. As you see, a fundamental distinction is between those organizations operating for the benefit of their members, and those operating for the benefit of others. The governance structure, the accountability, the access to resources, the links to outsider all depend on whether the organization is a creation of its members for itself or a creation of individuals for others.

a. Membership (help their members)
   1. Indigenous Community groups
   2. Induced Community
   4. Cooperatives
   5. Religious Societies
   6. Trade Organizations
   7. Professional Organizations

b. Non-Membership (help others)
   1. Local Philanthropic Institutions
   2. NGOs i.e. Private Voluntary Welfare and Development Organizations
   3. Area based Benevolent Societies
   4. Service Clubs
   5. Non-profit Companies.

c. Spurious (not helping)
   1. “NGOs” for personal profit
   2. Government organized “NGOs”
   3. Donor organized “NGOs”
   4. Business organized “NGOs”
As in many attempts to develop typologies, and put everything relevant into boxes, there are certain things which do not fit, or which need to be further explained. Let us take these in turn:

a. Membership Organization (helping themselves)

1. Indigenous Organizations of the Community: Gusthi and Samaj are organizations that people are born into and to some extent they do not reflect voluntarily chosen membership, but a person is always at liberty either to be active in such groupings, or let their “membership” slide and be inactive. Community clubs (welfare, culture, religion etc.) on the other hand require a voluntary commitment.

2. Induced Community Groups: Here outside (individuals, the Government, may be political parties) have suggested some from of association to community members, and they have decided to join because they can see some personal advantage in doing so. Often to be part of what is generally considered “Development” people have joined (for instance) mothers club in order to help each other and access services from others, associations of those receiving water from one irrigation source, associations of family planning acceptors, parent teacher associations for management of local schools etc.

3. Mass Organizations: Many mas organizations have their origins in political parties which develop mass membership organizations in order to further the political party's mobilization of votes for gaining political power. Many mass organizations have, however, grown beyond
their close affiliation to political parties, and are how mass organizations which include people of a variety of political shadings, or none at all. Cultural organizations like Sammilita Sangskritik Jote*, women's organizations like Bangladesh Mohila Samity, peasant organizations like Bangladesh Khet Majur Samity have all evolved from partisan political affiliation.

The most comprehensive typology of the Third Sector has been the work of Salamon and Anheier in 1991-who have mapped 12 categories of non-profit organizations in 9 countries. Salamon and Anheier have tried to develop a globally acceptable categorization, and they have checked it against a variety of countries with different legal systems, social traditions, and traditions of civil society. They have included 4 countries from the South (India, Egypt, Thailand and Brazil). Their background is of research sociologists and political scientists endeavoring to make sense of a hugely under-researched field of work. Those of us who are in the development business i.e those who work to improve the social and economic situation of the poor and disadvantaged of the Third World, we get a different perspective on the variety of Third Sector organizations: the field is dominated by "NGOs" a term well known to those in the development business, but not necessarily as well known to academics and sociologists in the North. The term "NGO" is so pervasive that many writers about civil society and the Third Sector in the South seem to equate NGOs with civil society or indeed that there are no organizations of civil society beyond NGOs.

**TOWARDS AN NGO SECTOR**

It may perhaps take a conceptual leap to consider that the vast numbers of NGOs including their tremendous diversity
add up to a sector in the same way that one understands the public and private sectors. The fact is that perhaps the only way to really understand the individual NGO is to place it within the framework of a system or to look at the NGO sector as an institution. As the state-sector is a composition of several institutions, so too is civil society, which in addition to NGOs includes the media, the church, popular organizations, professional associations etc. As discussed previously the NGOs sector extends from the primary level of popular or grassroots organization to intermediary or support organizations to the national level networks and consortia. What we observe among NGOs today as chaos, disjointedness and weakness are in fact characteristics of a young movement and one which is still emerging from decades of dominance by the state and centuries of subjugation under colonial and feudal rule. New relationships are being forged, roles are becoming differentiated, and responsibilities are being defined among NGOs in individual countries; and between this sector and those of the public and private. To the extent that we live in a global setting and now more so than ever the NGO “institution” extends to the regional and international levels as well. The point to be kept in mind then is that the case of NGOs is no different that any other sector, system or institution: while the whole may be greater than the sum of all its parts, it depends upon all the parts being able to mutually support each other.

The work non-government development organizations do is by definition the sector of civil society, although Northern NGOs may run projects aimed at strengthening Southern governments or private enterprise. We may tentatively suggest that an NGO is involved in four connected fields:
1. Maintaining itself as an organization, securing funding and other inputs, ensuring cooperation between leadership, staff and volunteers, planning for the future etc.

2. Implementing projects, working with the beneficiaries, finding the best working methods, cooperating with other organizations etc.

3. Building up a fund of knowledge, developing expertise in certain fields, doing research, cooperating with research institutes etc.

4. The social context, working to improve or sustain the enabling environment influencing the state or the business sector.

TAKING ON CIVIL SOCIETY

If NGOs believe that the function of civil society is an important one in the social development of a country and that they themselves can contribute a special knowledge from their grassroots contacts and development project experience, they must be prepared to develop their own practices. Looking at the list of strengths and weaknesses above we may conclude that NGOs are stronger in organization and project implementation than they are in gathering knowledge and dealing with the social context. If NGOs wish to become stronger civil society actors, they must strengthen their capacity in research and analysis and in the use of their knowledge in relation to the state and business sector.

John Clark puts it well: For most NGOs maximizing influence requires new skills and new ways of working. They
must overcome their tendency to insularity, become more confident with analysis and research and learn to locate their grassroots programmes in a macro context. They must learn the skills of dialogue, communications and strategic planning. Some NGOs of course have been engaged in works of this nature for years.

**A Brief History of NGOs in Bangladesh**

NGO involvement in Bangladesh dates back to the 1970 cyclone that devastated the coastal areas of the country and the War of Independence in 1971. Northern NGOs (NNGOs), such as Oxfam and CARE, undertook extensive relief work in partnership with a few local organizations as Bangladesh attempted to reconstruct its shattered economy following a war that destroyed virtually all of the country's infrastructure as well as having caused massive social upheaval. As it became clear that Bangladesh's problems ran deeper than simple relief, organizations such as BRAC began to re-orient work to have a stronger and more long-term development focus.

**A Brief History of NGO Movement of Bangladesh**

Bangladesh has always had a strong tradition of community-based assistance and philanthropy. However, the modern NGO sector can trace its origins to two key events—the 1970 cyclone that devastated the coastal belt of the country and left over half a million people dead and the 1971 War of Independence. With the government of the newly-independent Bangladesh struggling to overcome the legacy of twenty five years of Pakistani misrule and a war that destroyed virtually the entire infrastructure of the country, much or the onus for rebuilding the country fell on local
people and small community based organizations. With assistance from international NGOs such as Oxfam and CARE, organizations such as BRAC began providing basic relief and welfare services to poor and marginal comminutes in rural Bangladesh. However, these same organizations quickly realized that the needs of the country ran beyond the provision of basic relief and began to re-orient their efforts to have a more long term development focus. Initially, under the influence of the work of Paulo Freire, local NGOs began to analyze poverty not simply in terms of a lack of access to resources, but more as a product of a system of unequal distribution and a lack of power. The focus of NGO interventions shifted to social mobilization and conscientization aimed at empowering the poor to effect genuine changes in their life circumstances.

PEOPLE'S EMPOWERMENT IN BANGLADESH: NGO STRATEGIES

NGOs emerged on a large scale in Bangladesh during and after the Liberation War of 1971. In the early period they were engaged in relief and rehabilitation activities but during the late 1970s a number of NGOs initiated new participatory development strategies focusing on the rural poor with the ultimate objective of alleviating poverty.

During the 1980s and 90s the role of NGOs in development activities has increased considerably, not least because of the policy of donors who channel an increasing proportion of their development aid through NGOs. There are several reasons for the interest of donor agencies in cooperating with NGOs in Bangladesh as well as elsewhere in the Third World. Donors are dissatisfied with the inability of Third World governments to implement development projects and it is believed that the NGOs are better at reaching the
poor. Development NGOs "which mobilize the poor through education and conscientization to develop their own organization and create demand for their social rights and distributive justice and provide various support services to help them achieve a sustainable, people centered development". Development NGOs are also termed private voluntary development organizations (PVDOs).

There are two overlapping debates on the role of NGOs in the development process. The activities of the NGOs are often regarded as alternatives to the official programs not least because of their emphasis on poverty alleviation. One debate thus concerns the record of NGOs with respect to service delivery to the poor. Most studies seem to indicate that the activities of NGOs in Bangladesh have in fact benefited the poor. Their coverage is however limited and by and large they have not been able to reach the poorest of the poor.

Another debate concerns the role of NGOs in the process of democratization. In this context it should be mentioned that after the overthrow of quasi military rule in 1990, Bangladesh is going through a shaky transition to democracy. Given the fact that by and large the major political parties do not have a political agenda for the rural poor, I would argue that NGOs have a potential for being their advocates within civil society. I look at NGOs in the way Kothari has discussed grassroots movements and non-party formations in India, i.e, as part of a "search for new instruments of political action when vacuums in the political space are emerging". He sees them as "attempts to open alternative political spaces outside the usual arenas of party and government, though not outside the State...
It is, however, primarily concerned with the role of NGOs in civil society, and the focus is on the impact of different empowerment strategies among NGOs.

Concepts such as empowerment, self-reliance, conscientization and sustainability reoccur in the strategy papers of most development NGOs. But organizationally, their approaches are quite similar. All are built around group formation at the village (and sub-village) level. Most groups have some form of management committee with elected officials such as chairperson and secretary. Institution building includes the holding of weekly and monthly meetings, the creation of awareness, establishment of group discipline, including savings, participatory decision-making etc.

Most development NGOs pursue a dual strategy, one involving credit provision and other service delivery programmes, the other involving conscientization and empowerment. Some are against credit and service delivery programmes as they believe such programs increase the dependence of the poor. Instead, they stress conscientization and empowerment through social and political mobilization of organized groups of poor people.

**Second generation strategies**

However, this experience quickly ran into problems as NGOs found themselves being drawn into conflicts between target group members and local elite groups over access to common property resources. As Sattar and Howes note with reference to the BRAC experience, while some significant gains were made during this time, they were rarely sustained. Furthermore, BRAC found it increasingly difficult to maintain
group cohesion at a time when members continued to find themselves economically marginalized. As a result, by the beginning of the 1980s, most NGOs adopted a new approach to development that concentrated on individual economic empowerment as the first step on the road to poverty alleviation. NGOs began to concentrate on the provision of basic services to the poor, along with the use of micro-credit as a means of supporting income-generating projects. This is not to say that the experiment with social mobilization was a total failure. Many of the lessons about working with and through local communities would prove to be very valuable when it came to developing the high quality, cost-effective delivery mechanisms for which the sector is now acclaimed.

This model of integrated development began to attract the attention of the international donor community that was becoming increasingly frustrated by what it perceived as the inability of the government in meeting the basic needs to the poor. In contrast, local NGOs with limited technical and financial support from northern NGOs had demonstrated that it was possible to deliver high quality, yet at the same time cost effective services to poor rural communities. For many or the more enlightened members of the donor community, the NGO model offered a means of reaching and working with the rural poor that was potentially revolutionary. Local NGOs were challenging the conventional wisdom that the poor were somehow unable to learn or to effect meaningful changes in their lives, and with the assistance of Northern NGOs, were achieving results that most governments failed to achieve. Thus, in 1982 the first donors began to tentatively explore funding local NGOs directly in order to enable them to scale up micro-level projects.
First among Equals?

However, there was also a major downside associated with direct funding, namely the creation of a hierarchy within the NGO community. The growing gap between the small NGO elite and the remainder of the community who continue to operate under very precarious circumstances is obvious to even the most casual observer. Bangladesh has an NGO sector in which the 25-30 largest NGOs receive over 80% of all the resources being channeled to the sector, with the remaining 20% being shared by the 1100 or so other NGOs registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau. Organizations such as BRAC and Proshika operate annual budgets in excess of US$100million, employ thousands of staff and occupy highly modern office premises in the capital. The senior staff of these organizations are now regularly consulted by the government, donors and policy-makers and wield considerable influence in the international development community as well. Yet at the same time, these organizations work alongside a plethora of small CBOs working in one or two villages or communities on a shoestring budget.

This wide disparity in access to resources and influence, however, makes it impossible to talk in generalities about the NGO experience in Bangladesh. This disparity has many important consequences for NGOs both at the organizational level and in terms of relationships with the State, private sector and civil society. Thus, while the leading NGOs are increasingly being able to participate in national policy making and to collaborate and work with the government, the vast majority of NGOs continue to work in relative obscurity, vulnerable to arbitrary changes in government policy and donor outlook. Similarly, at the organizational level the major NGOs seem to be able to tap into a seemingly bottomless
reservoir of donor funding to support a range of activities and projects, many aimed at helping them grow as institutions. For the majority of NGOs, however, existence continues to depend on the ability to attract project funding from an increasingly different donor community. The reluctance of donors to make resources available to these organizations to develop the managerial and professional skills has merely reinforced the gap within the sector. It should be noted however, that there is evidence that many of the smaller NGOs are now looking to enter into a form of partnership with the big NGOs that would enable them to continue to exist, while providing them with access to training and other capacity building opportunities. This has led to concerns that this homogenisation will result in a loss of diversity, responsiveness and innovation that used to be an essential part of the NGO experience (Sobhan, 1997).

PRIP TRUST

1. BACKGROUND

In this very complex and matured NGO sector where NGOs are playing a major role focussing on poverty alleviation, PRIP TRUST emerged as a new concept. PRIP is a shift from stertotyped BLUE PRINT NGO DEVELOPMENT MODEL. This venture was a very risky intervention, which was against the mainstream NGOs. Initial 5 years were very difficult. I am going to present the PRIP TRUST case as a paradigm shit of development model, which today has built bridges between the Government, Corporate Sector and Civil Society. PRIP is a different kind of species which has the mandate to move and interact with 3 sectors.
PRIP Trust is basically a development NGO. In common with other development NGOs in Bangladesh, it recognizes that the condition of the disadvantaged people of this country is amongst the worst in the world. It shares a vision with its partner organizations of a better nation, a more vibrant and equitable economy and empowered people.

PRIP Trust asserts that it has a unique position in the wide spectrum of development organizations. PRIP is a supra-support organization; that is to say it supports the NGO community as a whole by supporting sectoral and regional support organizations, NGO networks and forums and a number of strategic organizations. It works to build a strong and vibrant non-profit sector by supporting strategically important development initiatives and organizations. A strong sector made up of highly effective organizations is better able to serve the needs of the poor people of this country. PRIP fosters linkages and build coalitions between different civil society actors to promote coherent development policies. It builds organizations around new themes and initiatives and nurtures them to maturity by giving them the flexible support they need to establish their own niche in the sector. For established capacities so that they are more able to effectively support their own constituencies.

2. PRIP TRUST'S NICHE IN DEVELOPMENT

2.1 PRIP TRUST'S SOCIETAL VISION, MISSION AND STRATEGIES

Societal Vision:

A productive rural economy in which the poor fully participate.
Mission:

To build the capacity of Bangladeshi NGOs support organizations so that they in turn can build the capacity of the Bangladeshi NGOs to help the poor and disadvantaged.

Strategies:

- To increase the capacity and impact of NGO support organizations and networks in sectors already identified.

- To identify new and emerging trends and issues around which NGO support organizations and networks could be promoted.

- To support dialogue and mutually supportive coalitions between NGOs and between NGOs and government, business and other actors in civil society.

2.2 PRIP TRUST'S MILESTONES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PRIP has worked in a number of program areas that include institutional and organizational development, strategic coalition building, improved programme sustainability. The services supported by PRIP include training, curriculum development, study tours, technical assistance, documentation, research and documentation, communication, advocacy and lobbying and core funding.

PRIP has pioneered an approach to development that is founded on three key organizational strengths:
First, PRIP has succeeded in building a relationship of trust, mutual access and approachability and joint ownership of results with its partner organization that enables PRIP to dove-tail its own organizational strengths to those of partner organizations.

Second, PRIP has developed a unique strength of choosing strategically important initiatives on a wide canvass of development NGO work.

Third, PRIP has developed a network of relationship with a number of international resource institutions that operate at the leading edge of their respective domain. The domestic and international networking has become a unique operational strength of PRIP over the years that enables it to straddle a diverse range of development action. In cooperation with these organizations PRIP has facilitated the transfer to organizational technology to Bangladesh through a process of action learning and adaptation.

The past reviews have noted that PRIP has been unusually successful in three aspects:

- First and most significant it helped generate and facilitate the introduction of new ideas and approaches into the Bangladesh development context.
- Second, PRIP carved out a niche as a “supporter” as distinct from an implementers, to SO and N/Fs in particular and the NGO sector in general.
- Third, PRIP has learned to extend financial support for partner's activities in a flexible, responsive and timely
manner that is unique and distinct from the mode of other providers of financial support/donors.

Specifically, PRIP's accomplishments include:

(a) Promotion of issue based forums/networks i.e. CAMPE, FORAM, CUP, EDN ILD, CDF, NASGAF and support organizations i.e. BD is PC, CDS

(b) Promoting clear and stronger role for NGO association vis-a-vis Government (in particular through ADAB's relationship with NGO Affairs Bureau and Government NGO Consultative Council (GNCC).

(c) Identifying and supporting long-term institutional development needs of Bangladeshi NGOs through innovative approaches to capacity building including pioneering the use of the Participatory Organization Assessment Process (POAP) in Bangladesh and other organizational development tools such as Strategic Thinking and Participatory Management.

(d) Early identification and articulation of key issues facing the Bangladesh NGO.

(e) PRIP has worked extensively to build horizontal linkages among NGOs and hence sector solidarity and to improve sector relations with central government, the private sector and the donor community.

(f) One of the most important services PRIP has provided for the NGO sector has been its concepts and innovations in a wide range of areas including disaster management, micro-credit, entrepreneurship, urban poverty alleviation,
corporate philanthropy, advocacy and lobbying and alternative strategies for financial self reliance. In this regard, PRIP served as either the originator or facilitator of new ideas. PRIP assessed these innovations for their potential impact and then popularized them within the larger community. What distinguishes PRIP from a mere resource center collecting and disseminating information has been its ability to institutionalize these ideas through its use of flexible funding to support workshops, research training, training, study tours and foreign technical assistance.

PRIP has strategically targeted a combination of training, TA and core funding to permit these organizations to increase their capacity to provide to their partner development NGOs (Support Organizations) or member development NGOs (Networks/Foras) a defined set of services. In the case of many Networks/Foras, PRIP services have served as a catalyst to bring together development NGOs with common interests and problems in order to advance both individual NGO as well as technical sectoral objectives. Strategically, PRIP has played the role of a catalyst.

PRIP's philosophy has always been to persuade NGOs with good experience and good ideas to share these with other NGOs for the greater good of the sector. PRIP has been and continues at different times to be a trainer, teacher, catalyst, cajoler, funder, networker and initiator. The most accurate description is however catalyst: PRIP has helped valuable things to take place which would not have been possible without its presence.
3.2 PHASES OF PRIP

Pioneering and in its earliest days experimental, the Private Rural Initiatives Project started operations in January 1989. The Project was the result of a search by the USAID Mission in Bangladesh for a mechanism outside of its support for NGOs active in family planning, that would involve the agency more deeply with the varied, wide ranging and increasingly important community of development NGOs.

David Korten contributed significantly to the conceptualization of PRIP which represented a third generation organization according to Korten's four generation model. That is to say PRIP would be an evolution of first generation approaches to relief and welfare and of second generation approaches of community development and would concern itself with development of sustainable organizations and systems.

The project was designed to support collaborative intersectional efforts by building up the strategic management capacities within the community. PACT, itself at that time an international NGO membership organization, was selected by USAID to take up this challenge.

PACT's innovative approach to the task was to use its resources, both financial and personnel to seed activities that would bring people and agencies together around particular themes, and encourage further interest and collective action. PACT/Bangladesh staff had no particular blueprint against which to move. It had a process for working among the NGO community as a member of that community.
Initially in Phase 1, PRIP had to clarify what was needed to strengthen the NGO sector. It then had to test its assumptions, and to verify what it had to offer was indeed acceptable to the NGOs. From early on it was helped by an Advisory Committee of eminent Bangladeshis. Its first 24 months were spent identifying what was needed and what it could offer and this culminated in an external evaluation which corroborated its approach and urged its contribution.

**Moving into phase 2, PRIP clarified its mission which was:**

to help active development NGOs in Bangladesh build up their technical, strategic and management capacity to benefit the rural poor, especially women.

Phase 3 saw the clarification and crystallization of the underlying theory and approaches of PRIP. In particular the concepts of support organizations, networks and forums were established and examples of such organizations were either created or strengthened through PRIP strategies. It was during this period that plans for Indigenisation began.

In phase 4, PRIP was able to more carefully select its tools which came to be known as the trio of training, technical assistance and flexible funding. The indignation process was started in phase 4. This phase involved a number of complex and difficult changes in PRIP which began to emerge from its project status to a fully fledged organization. These transitions included:

- foreign to local entity.
- project to organization.
• white expatriate male leadership to Bengali female leadership.

• single to potentially multiple and different donors.

Indigenisation of foreign NGOs or their projects is uncommon but appears set to increase as the division of labor between Northern and Southern NGOs changes with the former becoming less directly operational. In this sense, PRIP's process of rooting in Bengali society is an important experiment.

The sector perspective: Supporting ADAB

At the same time, the project also provided critical support to a series of different sector-based networks and forums with the aim of improving mutual cooperation and learning in the sector. This strategy was complemented by efforts to strengthen the sector as a whole by providing support to ADAB (the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh- the largest umbrella organization for the sector) and a number of key sector networks. In the case of Bangladesh, this represented an important challenge because while the country is blessed with a large number of strong and influential NGOs traditionally they have not worked very effectively as a collective or sector. The project aimed to draw on the strength of NGOs to generate the external economies of scale that would greatly increase the over-all impact of NGO interventions (especially at a time when it is becoming clear that the volume of development assistance to South Asia will be decreasing).

Over the years, the project has also played an important role in helping ADAB to clarify its mission and role within the sector. Technical assistance has been provided in the form of
OD training and a clear delineation of responsibilities between the two bodies has helped ADAB to better serve the needs of its members who do not have a high profile among the donor community. The last area of attention was providing logistical support to efforts to bring the NGO sector into closer contact with the government, private sector and civil society. In this regard, PRIP Trust has once again provided important support to ADAB in discussions with the government on the shape and role of the GNCC. PACT/PRIP has played an important role in transforming ADAB into a voice for the small NGOs. More recently, PRIP Trust has agreed to work with the members in the 16 ADAB District chapters and will carry out a series of OD/ID training and workshops designed to improve the capacity of these organizations to work more effectively with [local] government, donors and civil society.

Supporting the development of networks

Within the framework of providing support to ADAB, PACT/PRIP also took the lead in initiating and supporting the development of several key theme-based networks. Thus, PACT/PRIP provided vital logistical support to CAMPE (the literacy network), helped to co-ordinate the work of the disaster-preparedness network and initiated similar dialogues aimed at getting NGOs to work together around common themes. Similarly, it also provided the impetus for the formation of the Credit Development Forum (CDF), the Coalition for the Urban Poor (CUP) among others. These networks have played an import role in helping NGOs to learn how to work together around common themes and has enabled the sector to interact more effectively with the government on a range of different policy issues. The support to networks has the potential to evolve into another variant of the cascade model. The CDF in particular has been able to...
reach out to a large number of smaller NGOs and CBOs running micro-enterprise projects to provide guidance and coordinating. Ultimately, many of these networks were absorbed under ADAB, but would not have survived were it not for support from PACT/PRIP. More recently, PRIP Trust helped to initiate the first contacts with the private sector and invited the Prince Wales Business Leaders Forum (PWBLF) to Bangladesh. At a time when donor funding is on the decline, NGOs will have to increasingly look to domestic sources for assistance and will have to work much more closely with both the government and private sector and PRIP Trust is once again playing a leading role in these discussions.

THE DECISION TO INDIGENIZE

By the time of the 1993 mid-term review, both USAID and PACT had come to the conclusion that the project had exceeded the goals laid out in the original project document. In a relatively short space of time, PACT/PRIP has developed a profile within the NGO community for providing support for non-operational work. NGOs knew that they could look to PACT/PRIP for assistance with staff capacity-building and organizational development. A study carried out in 1994 identified the following areas where PACT/PRIP had clearly positioned itself as a pioneer or leader within the local NGO community. The first of these was the ability of the organization to step back from the day to day concerns of most operational NGOs and to promote a sector-wide view. Thus, the support to networks (especially ADAB) and forums, its work with support organizations who wished to assist small NGOs and CBOs in capacity building; and second, supporting linkages with the government, private sector and civil society was seen as a crucial contribution to the growth of a sector. PACT/PRIP had also developed a reputation as an
honest broker able to bridge the gap between the different groups within the community and to bring them together around common purposes and activities. Lastly, the work PACT/PRIP has done with small NGOs and CBOs filled a major gap within the community where virtually all the funds for NGO activities (including institutional strengthening) went to a few large organizations (Fox, 1994). PACT/PRIP was also one of the few donors who specifically opted to work with small NGOs to provide the resources for capacity building, to enable staff to participate in training and seminars. This assistance was as an important means of bridging the gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots' in the NGO community.

FROM INTERNATIONAL PROJECT TO NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

The decision to indigenize is by no means new to Bangladesh. As early as 1974, CIDA and CUSO spun off part of its work and helped to create Proshika, which is the second largest NGO in Bangladesh. Similarly, in 1978, the International Voluntary Service (IVS) spun off the operational part of their project into what is now Friends in Village Development in Bangladesh (FIVDB). More recently, various European donors have begun to move away from direct operational work and have begun to look at indigenization as one possible option (see Holloway, 1997:77). These donors have begun to concentrate their efforts on advocacy and networking both locally and internationally and to leave the day to day operation of projects to local organizations. More recently, PRIP Trust has been collaborating with Rangpur-Dinajpur Rural Development Services (RDRS) on study that looks at the entire process of indigenization.
ESTABLISHING A TRUST

The governance structure of PRIP constitutes a significant departure from the normal way in which NGOs are organized in Bangladesh. First, when it came to re-registering the PRIP Trust as a local organization, a decision was taken to register it as a Trust as opposed to an organization under the Societies Act. The main impetus for this decision came from the Executive Director of BRAC who advised the PRIP Trust that this new form of governance would allow the organization greater flexibility and space to evolve as the needs to being a pioneer in the sector, it was felt that registering as a trust could act as model for other organizations considering similar changes at some point in the future. Perhaps more important, as a Trust, the Board was required to assume both ownership and added responsibilities for the functioning of the organizations.

CONCLUSION

In Bangladesh 'Civil Society' is large, vibrant and interesting. Most of the activities of Civil Society are very valuable in improving the lives of the poor, and improving the quality of life generally.

I come from the NGO sector, and I have given an overview of the role of NGOs on the issue of social empowerment. NGOs strictly fall under the category of 'CIVIL SOCIETY', because they cannot be part of the STATE OR CORPORATE SECTOR, that is the only space where NGOs can be fitted in.

All the mass movements in this subcontinent were led by Civil Society actors. It is a very rich and solid tradition. The
history is known to all of us. The birth of Bangladesh in 1971 is a product of civil society movement. Most of the NGO workers and leaders were part of the liberation movement. After liberation many of them chose to do voluntary work for the devastated country through some groups, which ultimately took the shape of NGOs since 1972-1973. The new informal group emerged in the sector of Civil Society as NGOs. Basically the NGOs concentrated within the grass-roots marginalized population of the country. They region goes through periodical political, social and national turbulence. It is only the civil society which responds to resolve the crises. Bangladesh is no exception to the context. The NGOs concentrated to work with the grass-roots in a continuous process, without any break. It has a ‘snow ball' effect in the rural society today. NGOs as part of Civil Society has managed themselves to mobilize for development.

There has been a tremendous social and political power shift in the Upazillas. In last Upazilla election 12,000 women members were elected. Most of these elected members are active group members of different NGOs. Many grass-root NGO group members were also directly elected in the Upazilla election. This brings a clear picture of the hard work for two and a half decades of the NGOs, towards social mobilization and empowerment. The socio-economic and political power structure are rapidly changing. This has given birth to a new generation, which is taking the lead today for change in rural power structure and plan and decide for their own. NGOs played the role of a 'Catalyst' to bring this change for this major shift.

The NGOs have the mechanism to reach grass-roots directly, they can talk in their language, they can understand each other, they have the same wave length of
communication, which helps both the groups to build a solid base for the change within the society. In the recent period most of the disputes on land, water problems of the grassroots people, with the local powerful, social, political and economic elites, are resolved by the members of the groups of different NGOs. They are so empowered that they do not compromise with anybody, unless the issue is resolved on their terms, which I consider as a big achievement and a landmark of the work of the NGOs.

Women can decide their lives. They play a major role in changing the society. They take lead in many movements, they are recognized as a workforce today. They are changing norms of the stereo-typed conservative society. The are coming as elected members, leaders, spokesperson for the local people. They are in a position to bargain with local elites and bureaucracy. A major shit has already taken place. It is a gradual and very complicated process. Empowering the poor can be done by that group only, which does not have any political agenda, it can be only done, who does not have a stake within that same power structure. The NGOs have been successful only because they are the force behind the scene without any agenda of their own. In conclusion, I want to mention, that we NGOs do not want to claim for the change taken place in the social power structure only, it has only happened because they showed the path, and we NGOs walked with them and learnt a great deal to be real partners of the continuous process of empowerment.
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