Notes

Chapter 1 Introduction

1 The United National Development Programme (UNDP), one of the major proponents of both ‘sustainable human development’ (SHD) and ‘people-centred development’ (PCD) uses the two terms interchangeably. It defines the former as ‘the development of the people, by the people, for the people’, and the latter as ‘empowering poor people rather than marginalising them by enlarging their choices and providing for their participation in those decisions that affect them’ (quoted in Nicholls, 1996). For a lively critical debate on these terms between David C Korten, President of the People-Centered Development Forum, and Raff Carmen, see ‘Dialogue on David C Korten’s ‘Which Globalization?’ in Development, Vol 40, No 2, 1997, pp 55–66.

2 The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, Chapter 5, Section B, paras 85 c and e. It is worth noting that both the French and the Spanish versions in this and other UN documents — renforcer les capacités and fortalecer las capacidades — emphasise the idea that these capacities already exist; and that outsiders can only help to strengthen these. For this reason, some agencies have adopted the term ‘capacity-enhancing’ (Hudock, 1996). We agree with this position, but adopt ‘capacity-building’ here simply because of its wider usage by donors and development NGOs.


5 Deborah Eade and Suzanne Williams (1995), *The Oxfam Handbook of Development and Relief*, Oxford: Oxfam. While the present Development Guideline reflects Oxfam's own experience in capacity-building, for an account of its overall approach to development and relief *The Oxfam Handbook* remains the most comprehensive and detailed source.

6 Oxfam's Memorandum of Association defines its charitable purpose as '[the] relief of poverty, distress and suffering in every part of the world without regard to political and religious beliefs'.

7 See Rick James (1996), *Organisational Strengthening of European NGOs*, INTRAC (paper delivered at Development Studies Association Conference, September 1996). Interestingly, 'capacity-building' has gained favour among official donors during a trend of decline in official development assistance (ODA), though ever more of this assistance that is channelled through NGOs. For instance, ODA from OECD members dropped in 1995 by over nine per cent in real terms over the previous year, and was overall the lowest as a percentage of GNP since the UN established a target of 0.7 per cent. (German and Randel, 1996). Three possibilities come to mind: that NGOs are intrinsically associated with capacity-building (and hence are the vehicle of choice for donors interested in this approach), that donors regard capacity-building as a more efficient form of aid (allowing dwindling budgets to stretch further), or that their support for it may be more rhetorical than substantive.

8 These principles are discussed in Chapter 1 of *The Oxfam Handbook of Development and Relief* (1995).

9 There is a vast literature on both institutional and organisational development, and much ink has been spilt on the meaning of the terms, and how they relate to each other. The debate is not one in which many NGOs or other development actors have become centrally involved.

Chapter 2
Capacity building: where has it come from?

1 See the Annotated Bibliography in Eade (1996a) for further reading.

2 The Ford Foundation, for example, began to foster such analysis through its Women's Direct Action Program, thanks to which research institutes began to establish Women's Studies or Inter-disciplinary Studies Departments. (See Eade (1991) in Wallace and March (eds), 1991, pp 306-310.) However, few major NGOs were taking gender analysis seriously into account until the mid-1980s: Oxfam was a pioneer among British NGOs, establishing its Gender and Development Unit (GADU) in 1985.
I am grateful to Lilly Nicholls for drawing my attention to Sen's important contribution to the thinking of UNDP and others on capacity-building; and also for pointing to feminist critiques of Sen's work that stress the difference between capability building and capability use, and the immense changes that would be required truly to put people at the centre of development.

See Mary B Anderson, 'Understanding difference and building solidarity: a challenge to development initiatives' in Eade (ed), 1996a. Mark Duffield (1995) takes this further, arguing that 'libertine developmentalists' have contributed to undermining a belief in universal values and, by extension, a belief in the universality, indivisibility, and inalienability of human rights.


For a short, sharp overview of what these trends mean, see Powell and Seddon (1997). The authors argue that 'the shift to a pro-NGO policy, often justified — at least by the NGOs themselves — on the grounds of getting closer to the poor, has not been accompanied by any lessening in the centralised Northern control of the industry but rather by the reverse. Northern NGOs are imposing tighter parameters on their local in-country staff and in turn are increasingly obliged, in seeking funding for their work, to operate through highly structured bureaucratic procedures. Once such procedures become the norm, then not only are the much vaunted flexibility and cultural appropriateness of the NGOs denied expression but they are vulnerable to strong pressure that NGOs should now recognise the desirability of competing for development contracts with other organisations, including private sector consultancy companies.'

Between 1990 and 1995, official spending on relief assistance rose fourfold, to nearly US$2 billion. Yet the proportion of emergency assistance allocated by the EC to governments fell from 95 per cent in 1976 to only six per cent in 1990. See Macrae (1996), pp18–19.


Chapter 3 What is capacity-building?

1 Similarly, agencies often manage their bilateral dealings with their counterparts in isolation from the cluster of relationships in which these may be involved. For instance, as Oxfam was preparing to wind down its programme in Southern India, local organisations complained that since other funding agencies were pulling out at the same time, their work would be seriously damaged (Parasuraman and Vimalanathan, 1997). The cumulative impact of the rapid withdrawal of external support may be far greater than any one of the funding agencies might have imagined or intended. That similar problems have been reported in Central America (Ardón, 1997) and South Africa (Pieterse, 1997) suggests that this is not an isolated phenomenon.

2 This section follows an internal ‘Discussion Paper on Modelling Oxfam’s Ways of Working’, 23 October 1995 by Chris Roche, who leads Oxfam’s Gender and Learning Team.

3 For a brief account of Kebkabiya, and the difficulties in implementing a transfer of management responsibilities, see Strachan, 1996: 208–216; and for a fuller description, see Strachan, 1997. For a background to ALIN, see Graham, 1993: 83–91.

4 Parasuraman and Vimalanathan (1997: ii) also found, for example, that the planned withdrawal of funds ‘meant loss of employment of several hundred middle level and grassroots level workers, most of them receiving subsistence income of between Rs 200 to Rs 600 per month. These workers had neither a redundancy package nor job-search assistance’. The authors proposed in such cases that Northern funders should consider continued assistance to enable the organisations and individuals concerned to make alternative arrangements.

Chapter 4 Whose capacities?

1 An obvious example is gender, where development agencies (official and non-governmental) that employ gender equity criteria in assessing requests for funding seldom reflect this commitment in terms of their own management or staff structures. Such divergence between rhetoric and practice exposes them to accusations of hypocrisy — both from those who view such policies as a form of imposition from outside, and from those (inside and outside the agency) who are genuinely committed to gender equity. See, for example, Longwe (1997).

2 For reasons of space, this is a highly abbreviated discussion. For a fuller account, see Eade and Williams (1995), Chapter 2.
3 Some people within the disability movement take issue with these definitions, arguing that impairment implies the loss or abnormality together with its effect on a particular function, such as the loss of an eye as well as the blindness this entails. They see disability or handicap as the social construct placed on the impairment; thus, the denial of particular educational options to blind people constitutes the disability or handicap. Since no languages make identical semantic distinctions, it is more important to be sensitive to the issues than dogmatic about the terminology.


5 This is true not only in the context of development. Social policy is often based on assumptions about, for example, why women work or have children, normative myths that may never have been correct for most families, and/or which have ceased to be representative of the social fabric. This may be to do with the lack of available data, or with the delay in translating this into policy terms. Often, it has to do with denying or refusing to legitimise certain changes.

6 In fact, women's income generation projects (IGPs) have a high rate of failure. A group whose activities increase its members' workload without material benefits is unsustainable and damaging. This will be discussed further in Chapter 6. Since IGPs are often supported instrumentally as a means to enable women to organise, increase their self-confidence, and bring them respect, this poor record raises questions about what kind of development they are thought to represent.

Chapter 5 Investing in people

1 Several reasons explain this decline. Some of these relate to whether the original statistics were reliable — for instance, nationwide illiteracy may not have been as high as was thought, and CNA achievements may therefore not have been quite so impressive. For example, some of the adults who enrolled in the Crusade had already had some previous schooling — and so were technically literate. However, the Crusade was only meant to be a stop-gap measure as the Sandinista Government was committed to universal primary education. The real reason for the lapse back into illiteracy is because many social investment policies were undermined or abandoned because of the contra war throughout the 1980s. Thus, there was little opportunity for many poor people to consolidate new literacy skills. In addition, under the centre-right Chamorro government, primary and secondary schools began to charge parents registration and exam fees.
Chapter 6 Investing in organisations


2 The growth in the NGO sector is almost matched by that of the literature on NGOs, a sample of which is listed in Further Reading.

3 All of these arguments were variously expressed by certain NGOs whose health promoter training programmes Oxfam funded in Honduras and El Salvador during the 1980s, in order to block the formation of national associations of community health workers, who would then become independent affiliates of the Regional Health Committee. What these NGOs did not say was that they feared that their own primacy in the Committee would then be challenged from below. Fortunately, the ‘beneficiaries’ showed greater political acumen than they, and simply organised themselves without waiting for permission to do so — and Oxfam phased out support for the NGOs in question.

4 Chris Roche comments that since hierarchy, ‘old boy’ networks, and compartmentalisation are increasingly seen as inefficient within the more dynamic private sector organisations, NGOs should learn from this rather than repeating the mistakes of an earlier and less flexible form of management (personal communication, May 1997).

5 A related tool is the ‘organisation ranking grid’, which seeks to identify and analyse how different stakeholders construct their assessment of an organisation, in order to develop the basis for mediating between them. (Zadek and Evans, 1993).

6 In the early 1990s, strategic planning (SP) became fashionable among Northern NGOs. As they faced challenges to their *raison d’être* and traditional ways of working, as well demands for ever greater ‘transparency’ and accountability, they saw SP as a means to review their basic assumptions and directions, and often their organisational structures. Restructuring, decentralisation, delevelling, and downsizing entered the NGO lexicon, even as ‘scaling-up’ was still in vogue. The incursion of such boardroom language should not be surprising, since SP emerged from the Northern private sector, within which it was a tool for setting and monitoring the central direction and ‘competitive edge’ of an enterprise. Indeed, one of the main criticisms against it is that in practice, SP has been associated with top-down and rigid systems of upwards accountability at the expense of the more flexible, diverse and ‘bottom-up’ approaches that Northern NGOs claim to favour.

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7 The ‘user evaluation’ that formed part of Oxfam’s participatory review of its Ikafe programme revealed differences among the various users, specifically the Ugandan host population and the Sudanese refugees (Neefjes and David, 1996). Even though it may not be within Oxfam’s scope to overcome these conflicts, the review helped to lay bare some of the underlying tensions.

8 In 1996, the Geneva-based secretariat of one international NGO had to resort to cutting salaries, and then laying off staff, when its expected grant-funding did not materialise — a situation that objectively reduced the organisation’s capacity, and significantly undermined staff morale (personal experience). Voluntary sector organisations often have no provision for pensions, life assurance, or redundancy — a major problem when social security systems are also weak or absent.

9 All development agencies in a sense live off the poor (Hancock, 1989). Nevertheless, many would distinguish between living off money that is raised (largely in the North) for the eradication of poverty, and adopting a ‘user fee’ approach which expects the poor to pay for services they need but cannot afford. Whether, given the resources, people would ‘buy’ the services of the development agencies is a moot point.

Chapter 7 Investing in networks


2 According to The Economist, October 19—25 1996, congestion on the Internet is caused by the huge growth in non-text transmission, such as making telephone calls or viewing film clips: ‘to send 15 seconds of high quality video munches as much bandwidth as the text of a 700-page book’. Many users are now opting to bypass ‘the Net’ and set up private ‘intranets’ within single locations and ‘extranets’ with branches and partners. A group of US research universities plans to build Internet II, ‘dedicated to academic traffic and free of commercial users, very much as the Internet itself was just a few years ago’.

3 The Director of the Centre for Communication and Human Rights, Professor Cees Hamelink, observes that the ‘democratic’ nature of the Internet may be more significant than most realise: ‘The pluralism of a market-driven [Global Information Infrastructure] may indeed reflect Athenian democracy: a highly exclusive system that left most people (such as slaves and women) out’ (Hamelink, 1996)
4 The People’s Communication Charter ‘articulates a shared position on
communication from the perspective of people’s interests and needs;...and
[sets out] people’s fundamental right to communicate.’ Some of the rights
listed in the Charter are the right to freedom of expression; the right to
receive opinions, information, and ideas; to be informed about matters of
public interest; the right to gather information, including the right of access
to government information; the right to distribute information; the right to
reply; the right to express themselves in their own language, and to protect
their cultural identity. The Charter affirms that people have the right to
acquire the skills necessary to participate fully in public communication,
which requires programmes for basic literacy and critical education about
the role of communication in society. Journalists should be accorded the
full protection of the law in carrying out their professional duties. The
media should be accountable to the general public and submit to firm
ethical principles.

5 Two examples are:

The Essential Internet: Basics for NGOs: a how-to directory that explains
key terms and concepts, and offers simple instructions on how to access
the Internet. From: InterAction, 1717 Massachussets Ave NW #801,
Washington DC 20036, USA.

At ease with e-mail: A Handbook on using electronic mail for NGOs in
developing countries UN-NGLS and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1995. A
question-and-answer publication designed to introduce newcomers to e-
mail by explaining basic terms and concepts, offering advice and contacts,
listing existing computer networks and service providers, and suggesting
ways to benefit from these. From: NGLS, Palais des Nations, CH-1211
Geneva 10, Switzerland.

Chapter 8 Building capacities in crisis

1 Hugo Slim (1996), ‘Planning Between Danger and Opportunity: NGO
Situation Analysis in Conflict-Related Emergencies’, paper based on 1995
training presentations for ActionAid and VETAID.

2 Some observers attribute less noble motives to international aid agencies,
accusing them of seeking the television lime-light in order to raise their
own profile and fund-raising capacity. The criticism has also been made
that aid agency representatives, newly arrived on the scene themselves, are
not always knowledgeable about the situation in which they find
themselves. The relationship between humanitarian aid and the media is
examined in Rotberg and Weiss (eds), 1996.
Chapter 9
Building the capacities of others: questions for donors

1 NGOs may have created a rod for their own backs, in that if they spend more than they claim on necessary overheads — and informed sources suggest that spending is more in the region of 25 per cent than the 15 per cent or less they commonly claim — then they may be accused not only of inefficiency, but also of dishonesty (Sogge et al, 1996:88).

2 Of course, not all grant-funding is of this 'stop-go' type; and even within the annual grant framework, there are many examples of longer-term 'accompaniment' of local counterparts (see for instance, Ardón, 1997; Thompson, 1996). Oxfam has also experimented with moving in practice from a project to a programme approach, for example in its attempt at joint-planning with local organisations in Nicaragua, known as PROF. However, such experiments can only thrive if the resources are assured over a period of years — something that very few funding agencies are able or willing to guarantee.

3 The Gender and Development Pack evolved into the journal, Gender and Development (formerly Focus on Gender). While some of the advantages of flexibility have been lost, benefits include: reaching a wider audience, being subject to peer-review, and recovering some of the editorial and production costs through subscriptions. It is a myth, however, that informal means cheap. 'Exchanging Livelihoods' cost as much to compile, produce, and translate as a formal publication would have done; but with no means of recovering these costs. It may well be that truly 'informal' publications are better handled as electronic conferences.

4 Davies, Rick (1996), Donor information demands and NGO institutional management, paper delivered at workshop entitled 'Institutional strengthening of Southern NGOs: What is the role for Northern NGOs?' at Centre for Development Studies, University of Wales, Swansea, 3–5 July 1996, summarised by Chris Roche.

5 Chris Roche, personal communication, 30 May 1997
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