DRIVERS OF CHANGE PAKISTAN

Civil Society And Social Change In Pakistan

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Civil Society And Social Change In Pakistan

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Executive Summary

Introduction:

Civil society is an emerging arena for social and political change in Pakistan. It includes a vast array of organizations and associations that represent the interests of the country's population of 145 million to various degrees. Some of them have a long history in Pakistan, such as trade unions, bar associations, teacher's associations, peasant organizations, student groups, and charity organizations. In this discussion we focus on the organizations and coalitions working in civil society today that are explicitly addressing issues of poverty and human development.

Organizations that share certain characteristics, such as private, not profit distributing, self-governing and voluntary (to some extent) have been grouped by this study as Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs). Based on a nation-wide survey, the study found about 45,000 such organizations active in Pakistan. They have been classified according to the area that each organization termed as its most important service or activity. Religious education is the leading activity of the NPO sector as a whole.

Civil Society and Social Change

This paper sets itself certain specific tasks: a) we attempt to define pro-poor and social change; b) the activities of non-profit organizations (NPOs) are classified and discussed in terms of these definitions, with a view to understanding how their work has a vertical impact, both to the state and policy level and at the grassroots community level as well; c) the lateral linkages of NPOs are discussed in terms of how they both represent and signify further social change in the country.

We will define social change as a process that causes a transformation in the social, political and economic relations of power in a society. It is not necessarily pro-poor, or positive, depending upon one's political perspective. In our view those processes that lead to a more equitable distribution of power and resources among all members of society, that protect the fundamental rights of citizens of the state, and that empower state and other institutions to protect those rights, could be viewed as pro-poor processes of social change.

Having established this framework, we can then ask whether a given civil society organization (NPO) or association is doing *transformative* work or not, and if that work is pro-poor. If not, it is likely to be conducting *alleviative* projects or activities that mitigate the detrimental effects of existing relations of power but do not seek to alter these relations such that they can no longer continue to cause damage.

Civil Society and Development

The three categories of NPOs (here the term is used interchangeably with NGO) described in detail below are: a) welfare and charity-oriented, b) community development -oriented c) sustainable development and advocacy-focussed. The first category includes NGOs that are mostly alleviative, the third is mostly transformative, while the second is a bit of both.

Although the first generation or category of NGOs have immense credibility in the community and receive large donations, most of these organizations, as a conscious policy, remain distant from the state with minimum interaction. They do not engage the government in any policy

advocacy work. They also do not directly work for transformative socio-political change. However, the leadership of these organizations in their private capacity may be engaged in political or other issues and the government may invite them on different forums for advice or to enhance the credibility of the forum. There is a conscious effort by the leadership of these organizations to keep their organizations separate from their public or political roles.

NGOs that fall in the second generation/category are community development-oriented. This category of NGOs emerged in the 1980s to fill a vacuum left by the government's inability to provide basic services, which in turn was a result of the failure of the over centralized planning and top down approach. They may also provide alleviative services and in that way overlap with the first category of NGOs. However they differ from the first category because they are also providing a range of development services to communities that were traditionally the domain of the government.

The third category and youngest generation includes the sustainable development and advocacy NGOs (Smillie 1992) that are actively and overtly engaged in equitable development, community empowerment and transformation as well as leading advocacy campaigns and lobbying for social and economic change. A few of these groups originally emerged between 1985-95 as a fall-out of the policies of General Zia ul Haq's military government, which curtailed progressive trends especially in the media, art and culture. Comparatively less NGOs are found in the third category as it is more risky to function while taking adversarial stands against the government and local power elites and vested interests. (NGORC 2003) They require strong and enlightened leadership with a professional institutionalised approach.

Increasing horizontal linkages among organizations and groups in civil society are building upon the vertical linkages established by NPOs. This is changing the nature of NPOs'work, causing them to form coalitions between large NPOs and community groups based on issues, and causing them to support one another in resistance to hostility from the state. This process is being led, in large part, by those NPOs involved in transformative work.

Social Movements and Change in Pakistan

Our view of social change is informed by the observation of increasing horizontal linkages among civil society organizations in Pakistan, particularly those with a pro-poor agenda. Whereas traditional social movements in this country have been built upon local issues and remained at that level, despite evidence of public support, they have been unable to broaden their base and challenge the powers that be to great effect. We suggest that movements for social change are now nascent but nonetheless built upon a newer model of coalition building that may have potential in future to grow in size.

The NGO Movement

One such example is the NGO movement, a combination of loose alliances of a significant number of NGOs across the country sharing a common goal to support the existence and plurality of independent civil society organizations, especially development and advocacy NGOs. Those NGOs that are active in these alliances have managed to establish some common shared values and norms especially with respect to ensuring broad participation and consensus in decision-making. The primary focus of the NGO movement has been to create an enabling environment to develop into institutions and work in a broad spectrum of social, economic, and political issues facing the county.

NGOs have built loose alliances and networks on various issues such as child rights, women's rights, the environment, and more. The development of horizontal linkages among various

categories of NGOs and with other civil society organizations has been fostered by a hostile political environment. Meanwhile there has been a deepening of vertical linkages especially with the smaller rural based CBOs.

The Women's Movement

Another nascent but tenacious movement that has taken root is the women's movement, led in its current form by activists from the Women's Action forum, an informal coalition of individuals and organizations. The organizations led by WAF members in their individual capacity have a *transformative* agenda, ie to raise awareness about the oppression of women under patriarchy and to change attitudes that support it, while they also provide legal, counseling, or other services as part of their *alleviative* work. As a result there has been a significant and sustained organization of women and human rights groups in Pakistan since 1981 around specific issues that affect women, particularly constitutional and legal rights, violence, and political representation.

Environment and Sustainable Development

Unlike the NGO movement, the environment and sustainable development movement has been more geographically and thematically scattered as it is rooted to specific issues either in the ecology e.g. forestry and rangeland issues in the north, water issues in the south, government's international trade policies and agreements (WTO) etc. The people and NGOs involved in it are from across the country and work in a close but loose alliance. The National Conservation Strategy process played a significant role in consolidating and bringing together a number of scattered environmental and sustainable development issues under one umbrella consultative process and played a catalyst role in triggering an environmental movement in Pakistan. (Runnalls 1995)

Conclusion

The relationship between civil society organizations and the demands of the communities and people whose needs they seek to meet is deeper than common misconceptions would suggest. First, an organic linkage is evolving between the issues being addressed by larger NGOs and their partner CBOs, and also NGOs working at the community level are changing their agendas in response to the needs asserted by the communities themselves. Beyond these deepening vertical linkages, horizontal networking is underway for the first time, with NGO coalitions, national and provincial federations all firmly in place. This is in turn an outgrowth of the joint action committee format that loosely brought NGOs together, and still do, on the basis of activist issues.

The question of social movements in Pakistan is a serious one that merits further debate and research. Definitional issues aside, we assert that there are irreversible trends underway that have altered the development agenda and expressed the needs of the people in innovative ways. Their growth is supported by two factors: first, alliances and coalitions being built by civil society organizations, particularly those engaged in transformative work; second, changing human development indicators on the ground that suggest in the future women in particular will become more assertive and active members of civil society. Meanwhile it is clear that civil society organizations especially NGOs engaged in advocacy and sustainable development require strengthening and institution-building building support. It is the transformative nature of their work that will continue to challenge the state and the social status quo and potentially trigger long-term social change in the country.

1. Introduction

Pakistan's progress in human development has fallen short of its own policy goals, and has also been a source of disappointment for the development community and international donors. At the same time that the government's inability to move forward on basic indicators has become apparent, so too have both policy and programme efforts come to acknowledge that there exists another space in Pakistan that could potentially play an effective role in the development of this country. This space is termed "civil society", although what exactly it means and what it is expected to accomplish remains unclear. The following discussion is a preliminary effort at framing the debate around civil society in terms of certain categories of organizations and activities that have a direct bearing on human development, in particular the pro-poor change that is the concern of the Drivers of Change research project.

Civil society is an emerging arena for social and political change in Pakistan. It includes a vast array of organizations and associations that represent the interests of the country's population of 145 million to various degrees. Some of them have a long history in Pakistan, such as trade unions, bar associations, teacher's associations, peasant organizations, student groups, and charity organizations. The fortunes of these groups have fluctuated with economic and political circumstances, as indeed have the effectiveness of the newer types of civil society organizations. The latter are the ones we will focus on in the present discussion, that is, the organizations and coalitions working in civil society today that are explicitly addressing issues of poverty and human development. While other groups no doubt have an impact through their work on these issues in different ways, it is beyond the scope of this discussion to survey the full range of civil society's organized activities. Further, those organizations that define themselves in terms of their human development focus are of particular interest to us because they are growing in influence, not only in terms of the range of activities and issues that they are engaged with, but because of the impact they are having on social change in Pakistan.

These organizations both affect social change and influence a pro-poor agenda in ways that are measurable to some extent, and also in ways that are not quantifiable but have a qualitative impact on the nature of the development language and framework of the debate itself in Pakistan. We will discuss this in the pages below, and also present an analysis of the ways in which organizations are collaborating horizontally that suggest nascent social movements are active as well. While the maturity of these organizations and indeed social movements is still awaited, we

suggest that in a positive enabling environment allowing for institutional growth and freedom of association there is potential for them to strongly contribute to pro-poor change in Pakistan.

2. Civil Society and Its Organizations

Civil society[1] is a term much-used in current development discourse in Pakistan, but among those who consider themselves active in this arena there has been little time spent on definitional issues. As a result, the term has become a catch-all phrase by development workers within Pakistan, and possibly by policy-makers and financiers of development to refer to non-state activities and associations that serve as a bridge somehow between the largely poor masses and the ruling establishment. The academic work on the subject reminds us to historicize the concept in the context of the evolution of the state, of capitalism, and of how relations between state and citizen evolve over time. (Pasha 2001, NGORC 2003) In other words, enthusiastic supporters of civil society operating within Pakistan could do well to examine the underpinnings of the concept and question what social or political agenda for change is being espoused.

For the purpose of this discussion, we will define civil society in Pakistan as an arena with certain characteristics: that is, it involves citizens collectively or in organizations, it is a public space positioned somewhat outside the state institutions (but still deeply engaged with and responsive to state actions), and its activities are outside the market and private for-profit sector. (Ghaus-Pasha et al 2002:1-2) In creating forums where citizens can actively work to meet their own needs, whether in terms of freedom of expression or in providing services for their own communities or members, civil society is potentially an arena in which state or market activities that negatively affect the poor can be challenged through organizations that give voice to their needs.

These activities have, often due to political reasons, been viewed negatively or positively by the state depending on the agenda of the government. One example is the attention paid to the trade union movement in Pakistan under the populist leadership of the Pakistan People's Party in the 1970s, and its virtual demise under the current military government. Another example is the recent violent confrontation between the military authorities and the peasant association in Okara, Punjab, which seeks to assert the tenancy rights of the farmers on land owned (or occupied) by the military.

[1] The role of "un-civil society" organizations in influencing government policies and political processes must have a significant impact on the poor in Pakistan that merits further analysis. These organizations include criminal networks, smugglers, drugs and arms traders and terrorist groups. See Mick Moore (2001) p. 14.

Some efforts have been made to map the terrain of organizations and associations in the civil society arena in Pakistan, focusing on those that are engaged in work in the social sectors and are development-oriented. It is important to note here that much of the activity taking place in civil society does not necessarily operate within a development paradigm and that what would be required for a complete analysis would be a far more extensive mapping than has been done thus far. But since the development-related activities of the civil society are the focus of our discussion we will draw on recent survey work (Ghaus-Pasha et al 2002) as a useful starting point.

Organizations that share certain characteristics, such as private, not profit distributing, self-governing and voluntary (to some extent) have been grouped by this study as Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs). Based on a nation-wide survey, the study found about 45,000 such organizations active in Pakistan. They have been classified according to the area that each organization termed as its most important service or activity.

Table 1. Composition of the Nonprofit Sector

Major Non-Profit Organizations*	**No. of Organizations**	**Percentage**
Culture and Recreation	2452	5.5
Education and Research	20699	46.4
Health	2700	6.1
Social Services	3704	8.3
Environment	103	0.2
Development and Housing	3264	7.3
Civil Rights and Advocacy	7815	17.5
Business and Professional Associations	1705	3.8
Religion	2184	4.9
Total	**44625**	**100.0**

*As per the International Classification of Non Profit Organizations.

Source: Ghaus-Pasha, et al. 2002 *Dimension of the Nonprofit Sector in Pakistan*. Karachi: SPDC.p11.

Since major, or primary, activity does not reveal the full range of work in this sector, another analysis was done to get a picture of the ranking of individual activities. This reveals that religious education is the leading activity of the group "Education and Research" and also of the NPO sector as a whole; therefore the category of "Religion" alone does not reflect the full extent of religious activity in the NPO sector. This too despite the fact that a number of madrassas, religious schools, are excluded from this table due to definitional issues. This has implications for our understanding of how extensive religious activity really is in Pakistan, and also how much foreign funding is being channeled into that work that may not have been documented by the table above.

According to the Ghaus-Pasha (2002) study, the most important activity in the NPO sector is education (religious, and primary, secondary or higher) providing the most employment. This is followed by health, which provides 11 percent of its employment. In the group "Civil Rights and Advocacy" about 15 percent of organizations said that "lobbying for civic amenities" is their main activity. Those who reported "civil rights promotion" as their main activity are only two percent.(p.13)

Other findings reveal that distribution of NPOs and their financial sources is unequal across NPO type. Most NPOs are in urban areas. Those active in rural areas are predominantly involved in education, and community and neighborhood improvement. Funding for the NPOs relies only six percent on government support. In 1998, citizens contributed Rs 41 billion and volunteered 1.6 billion hours of time to philanthropic activities. 94 percent of this went to religious institutions and causes. (p.7)

A key finding was that, contrary to public perception, foreign resources do not play a large role in overall nonprofit activities. The total cash and in-kind revenue of surveyed NPOs is Rs. 16,400 million annual cash revenue and Rs. 135 million in-kind revenues. Foreign philanthropy, which includes international donor agencies, for NPOs is only six percent of the total revenue generated by this sector in contrast to 34 percent from fees and user charges and 37 percent from indigenous (private) philanthropy.(20-21)

3. Civil Society Organizations and Social Change

Our primary concern in this discussion is to look at the work of NPOs and ask if and how they have any bearing on pro-poor change in Pakistan. Our answer to this question will come in three parts. First, we will attempt to define pro-poor and social change in this section. Second, in Section IV the activities of NPOs will be classified and discussed in terms of these definitions,

with a view to understanding how their work has a vertical impact, both to the state and policy level and at the grassroots community level as well. Third, in Section V the lateral linkages of NPOs will be discussed in terms of how they both represent and signify further social change in the country.

As Gazdar and Sayeed have noted in the first paper of this series, the poor are not a well-defined social category. They are certainly the subject of much research and policy inputs, the most important recent examples of which are the Pakistan Poverty Assessment report and the current Poverty Alleviation Strategy unveiled by the government. As poverty is on the increase, policy and programme planners are looking for solutions. Among these, working with the private sector to share the burden of health and education services, and closer collaboration with NGOs have been advocated and partially implemented for the last few years. This initiative began with the Social Action Programme scheme during the 1990s, an effort to coordinate and integrate social sector activities. Yet without measurable success, or possibly due to inadequate study of such efforts, it remains unclear just how effective civil society is in poverty alleviation in Pakistan.

But if one shifts perspective away from the national and policy level and begins looking at the issues pertaining to poverty and development from a civil society perspective, it appears that much is happening that would merit closer examination. The purpose of this is not to prove that civil society can or should shoulder the burden of basic service provision that remains firmly with the state. Rather, it is to look at how issues, strategies and linkages among organizations are evolving, understand how poverty is understood within civil society, and note where change is taking place.

We would suggest that the NPOs' understanding of the poor will depend on the kind of service, training, ideology, or empowerment they aim to deliver at the community or national level. For example, an organization delivering basic health care at the community level will locate the poor amongst the most needy in terms of nutrition, morbidity and mortality rates, and access to services, while a women's or human rights organization advocates with the community and state on behalf of what it views as the most vulnerable and marginalized in terms of access to basic rights and protection. Therefore pro-poor activities are diverse, do not follow a single approach, and affect various groups among the poor to different degrees.

But when issues of poverty and deprivation are linked with the dynamics of social change, it allows us to view civil society organizations within a certain framework. We will define social change as a process that causes a transformation in the social, political and economic relations of

power in a society. It is not necessarily pro-poor, or positive, depending upon one's political perspective. In our view those processes that lead to a more equitable distribution of power and resources among all members of society, that protect the fundamental rights of citizens of the state, and that empower state and other institutions to protect those rights, could be viewed as pro-poor processes of social change.

Having established this framework, we can then ask whether a given civil society organization (NPO) or association is doing **transformative** work or not, and if that work is pro-poor. If not, it is likely to be conducting **alleviative** projects or activities that mitigate the detrimental effects of existing relations of power but do not seek to alter these relations such that they can no longer continue to cause damage. Many charity and philanthropic organizations working in Pakistan do major and important alleviative work, such as the Edhi Foundation and numerous schools and hospitals run by philanthropic foundations. They fill a void by offering services where the public sector has proven unwilling or inadequate to the task, and they no doubt save lives and provide basic education where the alternatives for the vulnerable were bleak. It appears that these kinds of organizations meet with greater approval by the state; it encourages the services they provide and facilitates their registration and functioning with relative ease.

Whereas arguably education has a transformative effect on a population in the long run, that notion could be countered by the observation that quality of services, including the type of teaching and curriculum offered in these organizations, are often less of a priority than maintaining or expanding the service in the first place. We would argue here that even education services can have more of an alleviative than a transformative role to play in our society if the ideology and training offered in the schools reinforces the existing status quo of class, caste and gender relations in Pakistan.[2] Nonetheless, results may be mixed and unanticipated when schooling takes place. This leads us to another observation, which is that civil society organizations may be engaged in a combination of transformative and alleviative work, although not necessarily in a self-conscious manner.

In this discussion we cannot ignore the role of the madrassas, or religious schools, in Pakistan in seeking to play both an alleviative and a transforming role, although the latter is not of the kind that would comply with our definition of positive social change above. The madrassa has deep historical roots in South Asia, and has been an important source of education for people for generations. In today's context, its role is alleviative in that it attracts the poor by providing free

[2] See the work of Robina Saigol on the problem of patriarchy and curriculum in education in Pakistan.

education (focused primarily on the study of the Quran and Sunnah), boarding and lodging. Approximately one-third of all children in Pakistan in education attend these schools. Currently there are over a million and a half students in over 10,000 madrassas who are being schooled for a future in the religious sector. (International Crisis Group 2002: 2) This finding is supported by Table 1, which notes that religious education is the leading activity in the NPO sector.

The madrassas are linked with fostering the ideology of jihad, particularly in Kashmir and Afghanistan. They have been supported by religious political parties, intelligence agencies and both military and civilian governments which seek to manipulate for their own ends the intent of the madrassas to transform Pakistan into an Islamic state and society. Thus, madrassas do engage in transformative work within civil society, yet the distinction between this and the interests of the state and political parties is blurred, and the means that they advocate rely mainly on the use of violence. Further, the kind of social and political transformation they envision does not appear to engage with many of the complex economic, gender and other issues that produce poverty in Pakistan in the first place. The state has been reluctant to curtail the activities of madrassas, despite international pressure to do so. In contrast, the state has a hostile relationship with many other NPOs that work for positive social change. This is effectively demonstrated by its repeated attempts to curtail the transformative work of NPOs that advocate more equitable gender relations in society. (Ispahani 2003, Asghar Khan 2001, Ghaus-Pasha et al 2002b)

We have established, then, that social change is driven in civil society through a variety of activities and organizations, and not all of them positive. There is also a close relationship between the state and civil society, of which the madrassas are only one example, that supports or contains what kind of transformative activity takes place. Further in this discussion, we will show that the relationship with the state has not been one way, and that civil society organizations have also managed to positively influence the state's policies and programmes in social development.

We will now turn to the activities in the development sector, organized in terms of community-based NPOs or self-termed non-government organizations (NGOs) that work for local or national-level improvement in social indicators. The discussion in Section IV will provide a framework for assessing NGOs and pro-poor social change in terms of their vertical linkages; that is, their work with communities and how this work has evolved and matured in recent years.

4. Civil Society Organizations in Development

One description of NGOs in Pakistan in terms of three generations or categories (Smillie 1992) is still apt today. The three categories described in detail below are: a) welfare and charity-oriented,

b) community development -oriented c) sustainable development and advocacy-focussed. The first category includes NGOs that are mostly alleviative, the third is mostly transformative, while the second is a bit of both.

Accurate data on the number of active organizations under the three categories is not available, especially in the first category as this includes registered and unregistered groups. There are rough estimates that give a breakdown of registered NGOs working in specific social sectors. (Ghaus Pasha et al 2002a: 5-12) From these estimates it appears the largest number of NGOs fall in the first category, while the smallest number is in the third category. This data suggest that NGOs are evolving in their activities from alleviative to transformative. The categories represent generations as well, with the third category representing both the youngest and the most transformative NGOs at the same time.

4.1. Welfare, Charity Based NGOs:

These NGOs have been in existence since Pakistan came into being. They provide exclusively alleviative services, including large and small trusts that fund charity hospitals and education institutions, and orphanages. They include small community-based mosque and graveyard committees, neighbourhood schools, and more. They may service a particular community or the public at large. The mosque committees are loosely structured while others, such as the trusts, are more formal bodies. These organizations thrive primarily on community donations (zakat, khairat, sadqa, and even government resources from the Zakat Fund/Bait ul Maal). The members of such organizations have credibility in the community and are entrusted with funds and the raising of funds for community welfare projects.[3]

The work of a number of successful welfare oriented NGOs, that were essentially doing alleviative work, is in recent years expanding to take up community development work. For example Edhi Trust, which is largely a welfare NGO, overlaps with the second category in this respect as it fills an essential gap in government services by providing emergency relief, ambulance, water supply and health services to needy communities. Similarly, the Leyton-Rahmatullah Benevolent Trust, a public trust, is the largest non-profit service provider for eye treatment after the government and provides quality reliable services compared to government health services in this sector.

[3] The discussion on the first and second category of NGOs is based on Asghar Khan (2001).

Although the first generation or category of NGOs have immense credibility in the community and receive large donations, most of these organizations, as a conscious policy, remain distant from the state with minimum interaction. They do not engage the government in any policy advocacy work. They also do not directly work for transformative socio-political change. However, the leadership of these organizations in their private capacity may be engaged in political or other issues and the government may invite them on different forums for advice or to enhance the credibility of the forum. There is a conscious effort by the leadership of these organizations to keep their organizations separate from their public or political roles.

4.2. Community Development NGOs

NGOs that fall in the second generation/category are community development-oriented. This category of NGOs emerged in the 1980s to fill a vacuum left by the government's inability to provide basic services, which in turn was a result of the failure of over-centralized planning. They may also provide alleviative services and in that way overlap with the first category of NGOs. However they differ from the first category because they are also providing a range of development services to communities that were traditionally the domain of the government. The Shaukat Khanum Trust for treatment and research on cancer, and The Citizen's Foundation schools are examples of NGOs that have mixed welfare/alleviative approach as well as community development approach that is contributing towards filling a major gap in government services. They are formally organized and professionally managed, their services are directed towards all of civil society especially the poor and disadvantaged. They are engaged in fund raising and in some cases they may apply to the government for donations and grant of funds.

The Family Planning Association of Pakistan, the largest non-government organization providing reproductive health services in the country, has evolved from being primarily a contraceptive service provider to offering a community-based multi-sectoral approach to women's development with reproductive health services at the centre of its package of services. Since it does have strong links with government, with its President having held the Ministry for Population Welfare on two occasions, it has played a strong role in the national population policy and programmes over the years. (Khan 1996) Although those within the organization, as would many in the family planning field, understand that the services provided have a major transformative impact on clients, nonetheless they prefer to downplay the social outcomes of their work in order to remain operative and hold their detractors, both within and outside of government, at bay.

The second category of NGOs, whether they are the community development based and/or service delivery organizations, number a few thousand only (Ghaus Pasha et al 2002a) and are linked to national and local NGO networks to the extent that they share information and development practices and collaborate where necessary. These organizations also experiment with innovative models for development, some of which the government has attempted to replicate, such as the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) and the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) models.

The AKRSP model pioneered in Pakistan's Northern Areas has reached close to a million people in 1,100 villages. Through its community development work AKRSP has been able to make a difference at the village level but has not affected the work of the government line departments, the private sector, or provincial and national policy making forums. AKRSP is not a viable alternative to the government. In the event AKRSP closes its operations, the communities that have benefited from AKRSP's work may be able to sustain some of the development initiatives over a period of time, however there will be a large institutional gap created in the Northern Areas as the government line departments are not well equipped to respond the development needs of the region (World Bank 2002).

NGOs such as AKRSP, OPP and other NGO support organizations project a philosophy of self help and broader involvement of the community they are partnering with. Although the aims of these organizations are beyond alleviative and are self-consciously aimed towards poverty eradication, some form of local empowerment and self governance, nonetheless their approach is narrow and hence it has limitations. These organizations are not following any overt political agenda for social change or transformation, however they by the nature of their services to local CBOs are involved in facilitating the limited empowerment of local communities. The awareness created on development issues within communities or CBOs has not been channelled into the support NGOs or RSPs programs for advocacy at the organizational level to engage government and other stakeholders at larger policy making forums (World Bank 2002).

Based on the success of AKRSPs program in the Northern areas, the government was instrumental in the creation of a number of community development Rural Support Programs (RSPs) as NPOs in the latter part of 1980 and during the 1990s. They operate in all the provinces. Along with these NPOs, the government was also instrumental along with foreign donor in creating NGO Support Organizations, which emerged in the latter part of the 1980s and

1990s[4]. These organizations are providing community development services by providing small grants to registered CBOs/NGOs, setting up local community organizations or upgrading skills of members of existing CBOs and smaller NGOs. These organizations are responding to the absence of effective local government institutions as well as full filling a need for development resources at the local level, adult continuing education and skill enhancement programs.

The government-supported RSPs and NGOs Support organizations are channelling through local CBOs various development inputs, for example credit for productive infrastructure and micro enterprise, or capacity building of community members in micro enterprise, technical and organizational management skills. They continue to receive government and donor support and are involved where relevant in partnering with government in local level development.

Similar to the first category of NGOs, the second category of NGOs are not actively involved in lobbying for replication of these models at a broader level by the government. However, in some instances the donors have lobbied with the government for replication of these models and the government has picked up on them with limited success. (Zaidi 2000) The government has sent its officers to these NGOs to get training and learn their methodology of operation. It has also hired individuals from these organizations who have worked with government and other agencies as experts and consultants in their private capacity. The government has also been supportive of such organizations and has in some matters abdicated from its responsibility for providing effective services for health, sanitation and education. It has in many instances granted lands and funds to them to facilitate their functioning. (Ministry of Finance, May 2003)

4.3. Sustainable Development and Advocacy NGOs:

The third category and youngest generation includes the sustainable development and advocacy NGOs (Smillie 1992) that are actively and overtly engaged in equitable development, community empowerment and transformation as well as leading advocacy campaigns and lobbying for social and economic change. A few of these groups originally emerged between 1985-95 as a fall-out of the policies of General Zia ul Haq's military government, which curtailed progressive trends especially in the media, art and culture. This perpetuated a rising intolerance against women and minorities, which to some degree was sanctioned by the state through its discriminatory Hudood and blasphemy laws. This military government actually undertook a purge in universities against

[4] Two examples are the Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO) and Trust for Voluntary Organization (TVO). The government has also established NATPOW to support family planning organizations. PAVHNA is another example in the reproductive health sector, of an NGO that provides support and training to others in the same field across the country.

progressive and socially committed faculty members. (Asghar Khan 2001: 276) The faculty members who were social activists then articulated their concerns about the negative trends in civil society by forming or joining NGOs that are now involved in advocacy.[5]

In their initial years, the advocacy NGOs were mostly urban-based groups. They were working on diverse issues from the environment to women rights, human rights, child rights, labour rights, and governance. Some have taken on multiple agendas over the years in response to the needs and issues faced by the communities they serve e.g. Shirkat Gah , Sungi Development Foundation (Sungi 2001), Aurat Foundation ((Aurat Foundation 2002).

More recently, in the area of economic rights and women's empowerment, new NGOs have emerged that are taking up issues of fair wage and access to credit for the poor marginalised groups and for women's empowerment[6]. A handful of NGO Support Organizations also can be counted in the third category, most of these have recently been set up by indigenous efforts[7] and are providing human resource support, institutional strengthening and multidisciplinary development issues to members of NGOs, CBOs and development workers.

Some of the third category of NGOs started off as (second category) development NGOs, however, over a span of 10 to 15 years they have developed strong links with the communities they serve. These linkages have transformed the NGOs themselves into progressive organizations due to the political realities on the ground. (Ghaus Pasha et al 2002a). In addition, some rural-based CBOs and NGOs that started off as welfare and community development organizations can also be counted in the third category. They are now picking up broader and strategic issues facing their societies and working on a transformative agenda. The Sanjook Development Network is an organization set up by over 15 CBOs in Lodhran District in South Punjab, one of its objectives is to be a watch-dog on the local government as well as make local CBOs more active in provincial and national policy forums. They have begun to look internally as well as beyond their own community for the causes of their poverty, degradation and deprivation. These small groups have strong vertical linkages with the urban-based NGOs and NGO Support Organizations and in a number of cases influence the agendas of these urban groups (Sungi 2001).[8] The urban based

[5] e.g. of NGOs in this category are HRCP, Aurat Foundation, ShirkatGah, AGHS legal Aid Cell, Sungi Development Foundation, ASR, Ajoka Theatre Group
[6] examples are Kashf Foundation, Damen, Sungi Crafts Program
[7] e.g. IDSP in Quetta, OAKCHD in Abbottabad, Micro Finance Network in Islamabad.
[8] e.g. Sungi Development Foundation's advocacy program on a) deforestation, community rights to forest resources and campaign against the local timber mafia, b) large dams and resettlement issues with special reference to affectees of the Ghazi Barotha Power Project.

development NGOs look to their rural based partners for providing the legitimacy and support for socio-economic issues being raised at various forums. (Aurat Foundation 2002).[9]

The rural based NGOs are beginning to participate in advocacy forums and undertake advocacy awareness raising and lobbying either jointly with urban NGOs or independently. More recent examples are the formation of Sustainable Agriculture Action Group (SAAG) to protect small farmer rights against WTO policies. Urban-based NGOs have formed Joint Action Committees to deal with specific socio political issues, while NGOs such as the Aurat Foundation have facilitated the setting up of Citizen Action Committees in a number of Districts that have dealt with several incidents of violence and other customary crimes against women at the local level.

Recently an organization (Micro Finance Network) has been set up by NGOs providing micro finance services. In addition to providing training and other micro finance related institutional development, it is a lobbying arm of the micro-finance NGOs. It is advocating with the State Bank of Pakistan, Ministry of Finance and other related government agencies to make the Bank's rules for all micro-finance banks and services more sensitive to the needs of marginalised groups and to distinguish them from the rules and requirements for other commercial banks.

The third category of NGOs are the smallest in number among the three categories (a few hundred). In terms of size, their annual budgets may vary from millions of rupees to a few thousands. Comparatively less NGOs are found in the third category as it is more risky to function while taking adversarial stands against the government and local power elites and vested interests (NGORC 2003). They require strong and enlightened leadership with a professional institutionalised approach.

As compared to the first two categories of NGOs, that have relatively better access to indigenous and government grants, many third category NGOs have erratic flow of funds. They remain to a large extent financially dependent mostly on foreign and some local[10] donor funds for institutional and also project support. Some international donor funds have been affected by Pakistan's political situation and thereby been cut off or reduced when sanctions are imposed. However, since they have been in operation for over 10-15 years[11] a number of organizations now

[9] Recent examples include the Aurat Foundations campaign on mobilizing women to participate in the local bodies election and HRCP's advocacy campaign against bonded labour which has resulted in preparation of a draft law on bonded labour.

[10] Local donors include individual philanthropists, institutions e.g. Trust for Voluntary Organizations (TVO) and more recently the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund.

[11] Sungi Development Foundation (evolved in early 1990s), Khawenda Kor (evolved in mid 1990s, Strengthening Participatory Organizations (early 1990s) are some examples of this category

have small endowments and investments to sustain them in lean periods. There have been instances where funding constraints have led to curtailment of some NGO programs, however they have continued with their core activities and have survived these lean periods thus far.

As a result of the erratic flow of funds and to some extent personalised management styles of some of the leaders of such NGOs, the process of institutionalization of systems and policies in many of these organizations has been relatively slow. Despite such weaknesses these NGOs have so far proved to be sustainable insofar as they have maintained their original missions and objectives and also survived despite an often hostile political or social environment. As the issues they are raising and working on now are rooted increasingly in the communities they serve, this provides them the outreach and legitimacy to continue and be supported. Further, the increased networking and coalition-building among development NGOs has strengthened their positions on advocacy issues and also lend credibility to their work through the creation of a growing NGO community.

The transformative work of the third generation of NGOs continues for the most part alongside the service provision they also conduct. However, there are small organizations that do purely transformative work, in keeping with their vision of social change, and nonetheless develop links with local communities. One such example is SEHAR, a recently-formed organization whose members travel among the poorest villages they can identify in Balochistan to mobilize them to resist the causes of their poverty.

One factor that has contributed towards the sustainability of the third category of NGOs is the diversity of institutional support funding they receive. Now donors have exhibited a willingness to provide institutional grants, human resource development support, and institutional development and management review support. This type of assistance to the management of these NGOs has allowed them to remain focussed and be less influenced by donor agendas[12]. This positive change is strongly determined by the strength of leadership and clarity of vision of specific NGOs as well as the level of maturity among some donors in understanding the development context in Pakistan.

5. Social Movements and Change in Pakistan

Those who live in Pakistan are aware that our society is a dynamic place, in which activities of all sorts take place and change is either imminent or happening, yet this sense is difficult to articulate

[12] E.g. AKRSP, OPP, Aurat Foundation, HRCP, ASR, ShirkatGah.

in terms of tangible outcomes. Certainly there are trends in society, and they sometimes appear to be engaged in a tussle as to which direction Pakistan should take – an Islamist or a secular one. International attention tends to focus almost exclusively on the Islamist trends, particularly the rise in religious fundamentalism, the madrassa boom, and the linkage with international terrorism.[13]

We will use as a starting point in this section a basic definition[14] of social movements and then try to link it specifically with movements that have a pro-poor or potentially pro-poor agenda. A social movement is a collective enterprise, with a common goal and shared values, but it is not a formal institution. There is a loose sense of membership in the collective, and the numbers may be large or limited to a few hundred. The goals may be reformist, revolutionary or conservative, but they all espouse a positive change in the order of things. There is an important distinction to be made between violent and non-violent movements, although a given movement may shift between these poles as it evolves. We acknowledge that social movements can exercise more influence on poverty and political issues if they take place in a country that has at least a minimal level of institutions and public and welfare systems. This influence can be exercised through people organizing themselves around demands to improve services, and in the context of a less repressive system of governance. (Mick Moore, p17)

But what does this mean in the context of Pakistan? Some movements that come to mind at first include the mass mobilization in the northern district of Malakand to enforce Shariah Law in recent years, which has a history of asserting itself every fifty years or so. More modern in form is the al-Huda religious education movement for women, which has gained the membership of middle and upper class women throughout the country over the last decade. Both of these movements have support from some sectors of the disenfranchised in Pakistani society, the latter being women who have historically been excluded from organized religious training.

In Pakistan people have organized themselves around basic livelihood issues as well, although not necessarily to demand improved public sector services. Instead, the social movements that we have seen historically and most often are built upon local conditions and struggles for power and access to resources at sub-national levels. Thus peasant movements have sprung up and been suppressed by the state or been incorporated into the agenda of populist political parties such as the Pakistan People's Party. The difficulty historically has been that sporadic and isolated

[13] Ispahani (2003) The author points out that other activity among liberals in this country threatens to be overwhelmed by right-wing forces if it is not given enough support. (37-38)
[14] This description is based on the discussion of social movements in Encyclopaedia Britannica 2002.

movements have found themselves in direct conflict with the state, or its interests at the local level, and have been unable to resist their suppression.

The more recent development, in our view, is that now when such movements emerge they are creating the conditions for an inevitable link up with those who lead advocacy and lobbying with the state at the national level to address the same issues. One example is the Okara peasant movement that in fact calls itself a social movement and claims that over time it will succeed in mobilizing one million peasants in the Punjab to support its vision of justice.[15] Representatives of human rights organizations, particularly the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan are openly supporting them at the national level. The occasion when the HRCP along with NGOs working on labour issues linked up with disgruntled haris in interior Sindh and brick-kiln workers in the Punjab won international acclaim. The problem of bonded labour was brought on the national agenda, and in the first public interest litigation case brought to the courts in Pakistan, a lawyer from HRCP succeeded in getting bonded labour officially banned.

In effect we are seeing horizontal linkages among organizations and groups in civil society that are building upon the vertical linkages established by NPOs. This is changing the nature of NPOs'work, causing them to form coalitions between large NPOs and community groups based on issues, and causing them to support one another in resistance to hostility from the state. This process is being led, in large part, by those NPOs involved in transformative work. We will now provide examples, beginning with details of how organizations are building these horizontal linkages.

The NGO Movement

The NGO movement is still young and fast evolving in Pakistan. It is being termed a movement as it is a combination of loose alliances of a significant number of NGOs across the country sharing a common goal for the existence and plurality of independent civil society organizations, especially development and advocacy NGOs. Those NGOs that are active in these alliances have managed to establish some common shared values and norms especially with respect to ensuring broad participation and consensus in decision-making. The primary focus of the NGO movement has been towards ensuring that all NGOs have legitimacy[16] and are provided protection or an enabling environment to develop into institutions and work in a broad spectrum of social, economic, and political issues facing the county.

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[15] See their website at: www.anjumanmuzareen.com.pk
[16] Article 17 of the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the fundamental right of freedom of association.

There are some positive characteristics of community development and advocacy NGOs that have helped to foster loose alliances and networks of NGOs on various issues such as child rights, women's rights, the environment, and more. These characteristics are: 1) the development of horizontal linkages among various categories of NGOs and with other civil society organizations which have been fostered by a hostile political environment. These linkages include ties with labour unions, journalists associations, nurses associations, teachers associations and lawyers associations. 2) The deepening of vertical linkages especially by the smaller rural based CBOs. 3) Political and social activist have found the space through NGOs to articulate and pursue a non-partisan common agenda of promotion of democracy, improved governance, human rights and freedom of association and speech. 4) NGOs have provided direct input into policy making. 5) NGOs and their discourse on these issues have filled an intellectual gap created by repressive governments, a rise in militancy and intolerance among sectors of civil society..

The alliances or coalitions of NGOs have at various points converged to act as a movement from time to time to deal with specific issues threatening the NGO community. Some of the external threats that were initial reasons (NGORC 2003) that mobilized the NGOs towards a movement still remain alive. In addition there are some issues that are internal to the movement and they threaten to fragment and weaken it. NGOs have internally discussed these issues and are seeking solutions, as follows:

a) A new law for regulation of NGOs has still not been promulgated, while previous governments have tried to curtail NGO activities and arbitrarily deregister NGOs. A draft bill has been prepared[17]. NGOs will have to mobilise themselves once this Bill is presented in Parliament to monitor the proceedings and lobby so no clauses are included that are detrimental to NGO interests.

b) In the absence of an autonomous regulatory body as proposed in the new draft NGO Bill, the Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy (PCP), itself an NGO, has proposed that NGOs register with it. This proposal is being deliberated among NGOs under the umbrella of the Pakistan NGO Forum and its provincial chapters, with the progressive NGOs questioning the legitimacy of an NGO aspiring to play a regulatory role over its peers. However to avoid fragmentation and divert the focus of the movement, there is a proposal that registration with the PCP be a voluntary decision of individual NGOs and not an imposition.

[17] This Bill was prepared through a consultative process by the Pakistan Centre for Philanthrophy, however there may be many changes to it once it is tabled in Parliament.

c) The NGO movement through its alliances remains a critical shield and support for progressive NGOs whether urban or rural community based. This movement also overlaps with the Women's Movement and the Environment Movement to provide that broad shield. Many progressive NGOs are not popular with those wielding power at the local level, since they have lobbied against the oppression of women, rights of the landless, customary practices that promoted inequity, and the protection of local resources from commercial plunder. Efforts to intimidate and curtail these NGOs, especially by conservative and right wing politicians, have been strongly resisted with the backing and support of the larger NGO movement. (Asghar Khan 2001).

Some other examples are as follows: In recent months a question was raised in the Punjab Assembly by a member who demanded that NGOs[18] be investigated to determine if they are engaged in anti-state activities. This was circulated to all District Coordination Officers in the Province for a report on the activities of these NGOs. Meanwhile the right wing governments in NWFP and Balochistan have declared that they support community-based NGOs. However, they do not see progressive NGOs playing a constructive role in society as these NGO are advocating for women's liberation, which they believe is a western agenda and anti-Islam. Despite such declarations the activities of progressive NGOs have so far not been restricted. Prior to the last elections, when the MMA was not in power, the political wings of their religious groups had openly harassed NGO workers to the extent that AKRSP had to shut down its program in Chitral District in 2000. Similarly in recent years resistance is building up amongst civil society organizations and NGOs against the government's decision to join WTO and signing of the TRIPS treaty, its impact on the environment, small farmers and right of rural communities to do subsistence agriculture. The NGO movement and its coalitions (NGORC 2003) are providing some cover, legitimacy and strength to carry on despite strong resistance and harassment to these groups.

The existence of a broad based leadership among NGOs especially in rural areas is still in a nascent stage. The NGO movement through coalition building and networking is providing the space for nurturing of smaller NGOs/CBOs. It has not only provided a space and platform for the smaller NGOs to participate in mainstream NGO and other development issues, it is providing encouragement through establishing a participatory culture for information sharing and consensus building. Members of NGO coalitions are nominated to participate in joint fact finding missions

[18] These NGOs included SPO, Aurat Foundation, Shirkat Gah, and Kavish, all of which could be termed transformative in their work.

to provide credibility to complaints by NGOs, particularly smaller ones in remote rural areas, facing harassment from local elites as well as a show of support to their peers.

The NGO movement has been strengthened not only by its coalition-building but by the fact that this process has given it a platform in which to take up issues internal to NGOs, such as creating procedures for transparency and accountability for use by NGOs, donors and government alike. (Asghar Khan 2001). However, the very issues that have provided strength to the NGO movement may be lost if they are not consistently disseminated among new groups that are emerging. These include a) maintenance of minimum internal accountability standards, b) focus on issues that affect the socioeconomic spectrum of civil society and c) focus on the need for NGO institutional strengthening. (NGORC 2003)

There is a significant number of community based groups or CBOs, both urban and rural, that are members of NGO coalitions at the National and Provincial level. The NGOs have managed to formulate a process of membership and representation that differs in each province. The best-organized provincial coalition is in the NWFP and it has national representation in the Pakistan NGO Forum. They have developed a system of information sharing, networking, accountability and conflict resolution between NGOs. This loose body is now consistently providing a platform for NGOs to voice their concerns as a community as well as on major threats facing specific NGOs like those working on gender, violence and environment issues.[19] Through these coalitions the CBOs and small NGOs are aspiring to become professionally managed organizations like the development NGOs. They are also recipients of foreign donor funds and in many instances have partnered with urban-based NGOs.

There are a number of examples of collaboration between government and NGOs as a wider body or movement. The latest of these was on the support and intellectual input provided for the government's Devolution Plan. The NGO movement has played a major role in supporting the setting up of local level governance mechanisms, their composition and scope of powers, as well as mobilising women to take part in the local body elections. This input has for the first time enabled local government to be effectively headed by the District Nazim while the District Coordination Officer (bureaucrat) provides the support function. Previously this was not done effectively, hence the roles used to be reversed. Many local NGO/CBO members are being

[19] E.g. support to Aurat Foundation on exposing customary practices of Wani in NWFP, HRCP in the Saima Imran case, support to Sungi Development Foundation on deforestation against the timber mafia, support to Shehri against the builders mafia.

nominated to Community Citizen Boards that have separate non-lapsable financial allocations at the union, tehsil and district levels for community development projects.

There is a need for a more detailed study on the various NGO coalitions/networks, their strengths and weaknesses, and results achieved.

Role of Media in the NGO Movement:

The media, especially the print media has played a mixed role in the NGO movement. There are sharp differences between support for the movement in the Urdu and English Press. The Urdu press has generally been negative towards NGOs, while the English newspapers seem to be less negatively biased. (NGORC 2003) There is generally a sceptical attitude towards NGOs and suspicion that NGOs are following foreign agendas and lack accountability. However over the years journalists have been sensitized through NGO awareness meetings and there has been improved reporting and follow up on crimes against women especially on cases of rape. However, there is still a lot of work required in sensitizing/educating journalists and decision makers from the media especially on NGO issues and their work, in addition to other development issues.

Welfare NGOs have mostly engaged the media for fund raising purposes, while advocacy NGOs have used media channels for press releases when launching advocacy campaigns. The regional language press e.g the Sindhi language newspapers and columnists have demonstrated more progressive approaches and report on local issues and work NGOs are doing in their area. A more extensive study on NGOs and the media is required to get accurate data on media's role in the NGO movement.

Future Trends and Current Challenges for the NGO Movement:

a) The NGO movement appears to have an element of sustainability for the following reasons: 1) it is picking on issues that are closer to the poorer and marginalized communities 2) it is also collectively addressing issues closer to its own existence and independence as well as for the plurality of civil society groups, 3) the movement is led by advocacy and sustainable development NGOs that have demonstrated their survival in financially lean and politically difficult periods.

b) This movement may in the future develop a close proximity to the local bodies and the Community Citizen's Boards being set up under the Local Bodies Ordinance, especially if the local bodies face a threat of elimination by the Provincial or Federal Governments.

d) Continued pressure on government to improve NGO registration laws and procedures will help NGOs/CBOs especially in rural areas from arbitrary action of local bureaucrats and government agencies. This will facilitate their receiving grant funds from government and other donors who have a bias towards registered NGOs.

e) The external challenges/threats faced by the NGOs have led to the strengthening of the NGO movement. NGOs have put aside their individual differences and banded together for collective survival, e.g. on the issues of the NGO bill.

f) However there are a number of internal challenges that have a tendency to cause fragmentation, for instance in-fighting among NGO leadership in some provinces, e.g Sindh, that restricts the space for other leadership to develop and take responsibility. Another challenge is the dependence on donor support, with a major part of these resources being diverted to urban based, larger NGOs. There are also differences among NGO leadership on the degree of collaboration with government. This recently led to some fragmentation and diversion of focus when the military government inducted NGO leaders into the federal cabinet. The intention of the move, as perceived by its detractors among the NGO community, was for the new government to gain legitimacy for usurping power and curtailing democracy, as well as for seeking NGO support for its devolution plan.

g) The strength of the movement is also dependent on having a large number of institutionally strong, sustainable and credible NGOs in its membership. So far NGOs that come up to or close to this requirement number not more than a 100 only (NGORC 2003). NGO institutional strengthening is an area which is a challenge for NGOs and CBOs and requires more concerted attention by NGOs within the movement and its supporters.

The Women's Movement

Women's activism at the national level, in direct confrontation with the state at certain times, has deeper roots in South Asia than is commonly appreciated in modern Pakistan. Elite Muslim women lobbied hard at the turn of the century for the right to female education and to resist the mobility restrictions imposed by purdah. After the creation of Pakistan, the All-Pakistan Women's Association was formed, again by elite women, to care for refugees coming from India and later to lobby successfully for increased legal rights. (Khan 1999, Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987)

Activism entered a new and more radical phase with the creation of the Women's Action Forum in 1981. It brought together a platform of individual women, again from the upper middle class, as well as organizations to protest against discriminatory legislation against women and a host of other policy and social issues that negatively affected them. Activists and supporters of WAF believe that this work constitutes the start of the modern women's movement in Pakistan that continues to this day. (Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987) It was in fact the first example of the horizontal coalition-building around social and human rights issues that has characterized our view of how social movements are evolving in Pakistan[20]. It was also the introduction of feminism into women's activism in Pakistan, as critiques of patriarchy and its forms in Pakistan became part of the language of the movement.

While the informal coalition that is WAF still remains, its momentum has been decreasing since the end of General Zia's military rule and the onset of the first civilian government led by Benazir Bhutto in 1989. Parallel to this, WAF evolved an institutional face. That is, many of the original activists channeled their women's rights agenda into the work of the development or research NGOs that they have founded and run. These organizations include Shirkat Gah, Aurat Foundation, Applied Socio-Economic Research (ASR), AGHS Legal Aid Services, Simorgh, Rozan, Bedari, War Against Rape, and more. These organizations have a *transformative* agenda, ie to raise awareness about the oppression of women under patriarchy and to change attitudes that support it, while they also provide legal, counseling, or other services as part of their *alleviative* work. As a result there has been a significant and sustained organization of women and human rights groups in Pakistan since 1981 around specific issues that affect women, particularly constitutional and legal rights, violence, and political representation.

But while this process of creating NGOs was taking root in the 1980s, WAF chapters, numbering four across Pakistan, met and worked out a WAF charter for women's rights that its members even in their NGO activities still seek to uphold. In terms of numbers, these authors estimate that WAF members are four hundred nation-wide and its supporters, that mainly include men and women working in the NGO sector, also number in the hundreds. As we will demonstrate in this section, a key feature of WAF activism has been that its impact on media, policy and programmes has been greater that these numbers would suggest.

[20] Anis Haroon, a leading women's activist, has written that "The movement does not refer to isolated and sporadic actions or any one group or forum. A movement has a coherent ideological base which is involved in guiding all its actions and underlies its positions. When defining strategies are formulated, based on a well thought-out ideological stand, it becomes a movement." (as quoted in Khattak and Bari, 2001: 219-220)

While they continue to lobby with the state for legal and policy measures in favour of their rights-based and feminist approaches to women's issues, they have been critiqued on many counts. Criticisms include the charges that donor-funding has de-politicized their agenda, that the upper class bias of these activist women has prevented them from achieving grass-roots support (Bari and Khattak 2001). Another criticism is that some members and their NGOs have collaborated with a fundamentally repressive state by playing advisory roles with government departments and thereby legitimized illegitimate governments (particularly the current military regime) and anti-women attitudes of political leaders. Women's NGOs have also been the specific targets of accusations of being un-Islamic or anti-Pakistan, particularly when their work clashed with the political interests of religious parties. The harassment of women's NGOs in Lahore during the last government of Nawaz Sharif is one such example.

There are secular trends currently underway at the grassroots and broad public domain that are creating the conditions for wider support for a coherent women's movement. They need to be taken seriously when considering the natures of the changes underway and future trends. These changes could result in large numbers of women emerging as fully active citizens of the state, no longer allowing themselves to be marginalized or second-class citizens. (Bari and Khattak 2001: 221-2) This would enable them to participate in strong civil society institutions that mediate with the state on behalf of the people, and thus coalesce the nascent and sporadic developments of the last twenty-five years into a full-blown women's movement.

First we will examine how, due to the work of women's activism in combination with the political and legal landscape, spaces have opened up for dialogue, for conceptual or paradigm shifts, and for practical work to benefit women, that were not previously a part of government or even the people's discourse. We will then look at the some of the human development trends that may provide the women's movement with greater momentum in years to come.

Women and Government

a) Direct input on policy-making. The examples of this relationship abound.[21] They included assistance to the Ministry of Women Development by women's organizations for preparation of the CEDAW report, National Plan of Action for Women after the World Conference on Women held in 1995, and appeal to the courts to prevent the privatization of the First Women's Bank. A most recent one is to be found in the 1997 Inquiry Commission on the Status of Women, whose

[21] A few other examples include women activist and NGO input into the country preparation for the UN Conference on Population and Development, 1994, and the World Conference on Women, 1995. Also see Khan (1998) and Zia (1998).

mission it was to recommend measures the government could take to remove discrimination against women in Pakistan. Its membership included leading women activists. One of its key recommendations was the establishment of a Permanent Commission on the Status of Women to monitor the implementation of its other recommendations, which included the repeal of the Hudood Ordinances. Under the military government of General Parvez Musharraf, the Permanent Commission was established, and recently it has indeed recommended the repeal of the Ordinances. However, the Commission has no implementing power, leading some women activists to argue that collaboration with the government and support to its initiatives does not reap tangible gains, only further rhetoric.

b) Resisting discriminatory legislation, The women's movement has been galvanized in large part around major legislative issues that continue to haunt women today. These are the Hudood Ordinances (1979), the Qanun-e-Shahdat (1984), and the Shariat Act (1991). Joint action committees and intensive lobbying by women activists are credited with creating enough pressure to let the proposed legislation remain buried, and instead a watered down version was passed. (Zia 1998) In October, 2003, the Supreme Court has taken up the issue of whether a woman above age 18 may marry without the consent of her guardian, and leading women's rights activists Hina Jilani and Asma Jehangir, whose legal aid services are directly implicated by those who charge a woman may not have that right, are largely responsible for ensuring that the matter has been pursued to the highest court in the land. While WAF and its supporters cannot claim that they have managed to get these laws repealed, they argue that discriminatory legislation has become a national issue and an important part of gender-related development work in the NGO sector. The media and government are well aware of the arguments against these laws, and there has been growing debate in the media, most recently on television, about them. The issue has remained at the forefront of women's activism for over twenty years, and arguably worse legislation may have been avoided due to the demonstrations, lobbying, and advocacy work conducted by them.

Women's Activism and Civil Society

a) Intellectual capital – The women's movement has historically contested the orthodox view of the role of women in Islam, most recently the customary and politicized interpretations that were promoted by the state under General Zia's martial law regime. It has resisted discrimination on the basis of sex and opened debates in civil society forums on feminism, Islam and women, and gender and development issues such as employment, agriculture, reproductive health, and violence. The NGOs run by women have created the language in which gender issues are

understood now in Pakistan, within civil society, in the media, among donors and increasingly in government circles as well. Key activists issues that have been raised and taken up at all of these levels are particularly discriminatory legislation, violence against women, increased political participation of women, and the mainstreaming of gender in development planning in Pakistan. Individual organizations work on particular or multiple issues pertaining to gender and have thus established an unprecedented resource base of information on women in Pakistan.[22] The level of influence of this input has varied with different governments, and probably peaked during the years when the PPP was in power. The result of this on-going input, however, is that the Ministry for Women's Development has a working relationship with women's NGOs, whose conceptual input has over the years placed women's issues firmly on the agenda in Cabinet, the Planning Commission, and other high-level government decision-making bodies.

Most interestingly, perhaps, is that much of the conceptual work over the years on feminism and its meaning in the Pakistani context was undertaken in collaboration with women research and activists across South Asia. Due in no small part to donor support, women across the borders have been engaged in dialogue over the last twenty years and collaborated intently to develop an analytical framework for viewing women's issues across the ethnic and religious barriers within the region. As Kamla Bhasin and Nighat Said Khan, leading activists of India and Pakistan respectively, wrote in a joint document explaining feminism in South Asia, "Feminism is an awareness of women's oppression and exploitation in society, at work and within the family, and conscious action by women and men to change this situation."[23] The ability to work together as women in the region who are challenged by similar problems has helped to form the basis of a regional understanding of gender issues and spawned numerous collaborative efforts at the field and advocacy levels. In the 1990s it was many of these women from both India and Pakistan who had traveled and interacted extensively across borders who helped to form the people to people dialogues to promoted peace between the two countries.

b) Opening up of the media – the consistent pursuit of certain women's issues by activists, and their lobbying with media along with the support of many women journalists, has resulted in the media, electronic and print, reporting them for the first time. Violence against women, particularly police brutality, rape and disfigurement (even within marriage), stove burnings,

[22] This includes the library collections of NGOs such as Aurat Foundation, Shirkat Gah, and ASR, to name only a few, and also the Institute for Women's Studies Lahore established by ASR as the first of its kind devoted to gender studies alone. Women activists have also assisted universities in all four provinces to establish Women's Studies Centres and participated in planning, of the curriculum and lecture series at these Centres.

[23] As quoted in Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre, 2000: 30.

honour killings, arrests under *zina* laws, women's political participation, citizenship and marriage laws, are all issues that the press, particularly the English-language press, has taken up in response to years of protests and lobbying by Women's Action Forum and women's NGOs that work on these issues individually. A key turning point was a series of rapes committed by law enforcement agencies in the fall of 1991, that inspired large protests bringing together women of different political parties as well as women activists. The result was that rape became a leading story in the English press for the first time, and a barrier was broken that has remained down to this day. While the English language press took the lead in printing articles and press statements on these issues, regional language newspapers also began to publish stories as a result of community-based networking with women's groups. The Urdu press and regional presses do cover issues, particularly those of violence, but at the same time continue to sensationalize and present sexist portrayals of women. (Uks 2002)

c) The phenomenon of horizontal linking between women activists, particularly in WAF and NGOs that engaged in activist work on issues such as women's rights, environment, religious minority rights, blasphemy laws, and more, through the creation of Joint Action Committees was initiated by WAF. This revealed an important alliance among activists working for a broad range of social and political rights in Pakistan, and showed that women were from the outset establishing linkages between their issues and those of other disenfranchised sectors of society. Now the JAC phenomenon has matured into NGO federations across the country, but nonetheless on specific issues JACs are still formed. Some JACs have developed into independent lobby groups with membership drawn from NPOs as well as individual initiatives. These include the Pakistan Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy, an initiative spear-headed by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan with strong support from the women's movement that works for peace and understanding between Pakistan and India.

d) Creating vertical linkages with local communities: The leadership of the women's movement is seen to be elitist and primarily focused on lobbying with the state, however, the evolution of the movement suggests the opposite trend. While WAF peaked in its activities during the 1981-1989 era, it suffered a lapse in motivation and visibility when martial law ended and civilian governments achieved power. The belief was that civilian rule would promote the interests of women, and that the women's movement should support the government's efforts in this regard. Meanwhile WAF-based women activists focused more intently on the young organizations they had founded, all of which pursued the ideals of democracy, gender equity and empowerment that had been espoused by WAF.

The NGOs grew into national organizations that work consistently with local CBOs on these issues. For example, Aurat Foundation has developed a focus on political empowerment of women, and is currently working with women elected representatives at the local level in districts all over Pakistan. The Applied Socio-Economics Research organization (ASR) has opened an institute dedicated to the training and teaching of gender issues within the country, and Shirkat Gah has a range of projects focusing on women and law, environment and reproductive health in communities throughout Pakistan. (Naheed and Iqbal 1998) Parallel to this development, in the 1990s the civilian governments, in particular the PML-led civilian governments, embarked on a series of measures to curtail the activities of these NGOs and the myth that women's activism would thrive under more democratic rule was shattered. But the key feature of these NGOs activities remains the same, that is that their work is fundamentally transformative, motivated by the ideals of the women's movement that seek to transform the foundations of an order that oppresses women, and many men in its wake as well. There is a younger group of NGOs, formed later by what could be termed the "daughters of the women's movement", that have expanded the transformative agenda to include areas such as sexual health, issues of sexual abuse, and women's personal self-empowerment.

e) Lobbying with Political Parties. WAF was slow to develop its relationship with political parties, however after 1988 with the return to civilian rule it shared its Charter with political parties in an effort to evolve some consensus among political parties on women's issues and include them in the party manifestos. It met with the greatest success within the PPP, which promised to sign CEDAW (a promise kept) and was the only party to devote a chapter to women in its manifesto. WAF and NGOs led by WAF members (such as Shirkat Gah, ASR and Aurat Foundation) learned slowly the importance of engaging with politics and lobbying for reform in the political system, despite their on-going demand for an increase in women's representation. (Shaheed and Warraich 1998) Ironically, it was only with the arrival of military rule that not only were reserved seats for women in national and provincial assemblies reinstated, but the proportion of 33 percent, a long-standing activist demand, was met at all levels.

While the women's movement is still evolving the process is firmly in place.[24] We argue that if viewed in the long-term, this process and indeed the momentum of the women's movement is likely to gain support from changes taking place broadly within Pakistani society. These changes are certainly not lacking in contradictions, and no doubt many changes are also spawning support

[24] For an analysis of strategies employed by the movement to date and a summary of the major dilemmas faced by it, see Zia (1998).

for some social transformation agendas that may not be viewed as pro-poor in the long run. However, here we identify some developments that could specifically contribute to creating a groundswell of support for a fundamental transformation in gender relations that could benefit all the women of Pakistan in years to come.

At the family and community level, changes in women's access to power are underway (Weiss 2001) despite the fact that gender development indicators remain unacceptably low. This suggests a trend that may reap real benefits in the next few generations. Weiss suggests that gendered power relations within the family are being renegotiated mainly out of necessity, ie market economy pressures forcing women to work, the effects of school and media, and increase in transport options for women. The changes also bring about a pressure that may be one cause of increased domestic violence, (73) or they conversely produce a family that encourages its daughter to study.

There is also a documented change in aspirations among young women. The first-ever survey of adolescents and youth in Pakistan found that gender inequalities are still deeply embedded, and young people's attitudes about gender roles also remain traditional. But almost all males and females had high education aspirations than their parents, and they want to be educated either to secondary or university level. There has also been an increase in paid work among females currently aged 15-19, whereas there is no equivalent trend for males Advantages in terms of delayed age at marriage, access to education, health, and family planning services, and employment opportunities substantially increase for girls in urban areas.(Sathar and Lloyd et al 2003) We have already mentioned the potential transformative power of increased education, and this is possibly true to a larger degree when girls receive education and begin to challenge restrictions imposed upon them. Further, as Pakistan becomes more urbanized, we can expect that the advantages mentioned above will only enhance, not hinder, a broadening of traditional female roles and a reduction of women's invisibility in the public sphere.

There are other specific developments that have the potential to contribute to the coalescence of a cohesive women's movement in this country, particularly one that articulates the needs of women in poverty. We mention them here without going into detail, but with the suggestion that they merit further study and analysis. One such development is the sudden surge in women's political participation. The long-standing demand of women activists at the national level for 33 percent reserved seats for women was met in the last election, resulting in the election of x thousand women from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds into local, provincial and national representative bodies. Another development is steady trend towards later age at marriage for

women, although rural women still lag behind, and a lower fertility rate. The improvement in these reproductive health indicators will create tangible time and space for women to avail of educational and employment opportunities, which in turn increase the chances of them participating in the public sphere more fully as active citizens of the state.

The Environment and Sustainable Development Movements

Unlike the NGO movement, the environment and sustainable development movement has been more geographically and thematically scattered as it is rooted to specific issues either in the ecology e.g. forestry and rangeland issues in the north, water issues in the south, government's international trade policies and agreements (WTO) etc. However it does constitute a movement insofar as the people and NGOs involved in the movement are from across the country and are in close alliance albeit of a very loose nature. Members of this movement have consistently supported one another on their respective issues, which includes information sharing and awareness-raising among their respective constituencies. There is a strong belief among members of this movement that there are cause and effect linkages in all regional ecological and sustainable development issues. Hence an ecological disaster in the north will ultimately impact people in the south and vice versa so the need to build alliances and an understanding on issue being faced by the sub groups so that strategies developed are mutually reinforcing.

The National Conservation Strategy was approved by the Cabinet in March 1992. The environmental movement in Pakistan precedes the official recognition provided through this document to strategies for environment conservation and sustainable development. The NCS process played a significant role in consolidating and bringing together a number of scattered environmental and sustainable development issues under one umbrella consultative process and played a catalyst role in triggering an environmental movement in Pakistan. (Runnalls 1995)

The NCS document was prepared by a team of experts who had to go through a rigorous consultative and peer review process that went on for a period of three years. This was the first time in Pakistan that the government had undertaken a broad based consultative process that involved at least 3000 people through workshops, comments on drafts and consultations. Participation of key community stakeholders included NGOs representatives, academics, senior bureaucrats, representatives of line ministries, members of the business community, internationals experts, journalists and politicians. These consultations were undertaken at the provincial levels as well. In addition, a number of awareness raising workshops were also held with these stakeholders.

Communities[25] and other civil society organizations played a major role, in addition to government departments such as agriculture, forestry and water and power, in contributing towards environment conservation and sustainable development. As a result of the NCS a number of government institutions were set up and empowered to act on the strategy. These included the Ministry of Environment, Environment Protection Agencies (federal and provincial), and ENERCON. New laws were formulated to work on a range of environmental issues and set standards. In addition, two provincial governments, NWFP and Balochistan, have prepared their provincial conservation strategies and a handful of district conservation strategies have also been prepared on an experimental basis. Pakistan's consultative experience was replicated in Nepal for preparing a conservation strategy.

A mid-term review of the NCS finds that despite success in institution-building and awareness-raising on environment, the NCS has been weak in linking environment to sustainable development in terms of strategies. (PNCS et al 2000) The strategy has also been weak at the implementation level. The momentum and awareness created among the government agencies to work in this area has waned, because there has been no proper implementation of NEQS and the monitoring agencies have been ineffective.

On the positive side Pakistan Government has become a signatory to a number of international conventions for the conservation of environment and maintenance of biodiversity and identification/maintenance of protected species. Several sites in the country have been now listed as National Reserve Parks for nature conservation and maintaining biodiversity. However the government has been weak in ensuring the sanctity of these areas and species from exploitation. Two private non-profit institutions were created directly as a result of the NCS. One is the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, a think tank that provides research and policy input to government and also engages in advocacy. It is playing a major role in providing the government extensive input to prepare it for negotiations on TRIPS and WTO. The second NGO, Piedar, is working primarily on water conservation and irrigation management in Punjab.

Prior to initiation of the NCS process, at the community level there were several scattered incidents of people facing and dealing with livelihood issues that had a close link to the environment but were not being understood within the frame work of environment or sustainable development . For example, the Russian occupation of Afghanistan and waves of Afghan refugees into NWFP caused a major strain on the mountain ecology and livelihood of local

[25] Nine out of 14 program areas of the NCS relied on community organizations for their implementation and the 10th could only be implemented by community organizations supported by catalytic agencies.

village women who now had to share limited capacity of rangelands for fuel wood and fodder with the refugee population. The natural resources were fast depleted and in some cases the regenerative capacity of the rangelands and forests was significantly reduced. Forestry officials were looking at the ecological aspects of this disaster without taking into account the impact on local populations whose livelihoods were closely linked to these rangelands. Attempts by forestry officials to salvage rangelands by closing access of local populations proved to be unsuccessful.

During the NCS preparatory process and subsequently in the NWFP the SPCS process, awareness was created on environment conservation and its link to sustainable development among government, academic institutions, civil society, small CBOs and NGOs. This led the government Forest Department in the NWFP to experiment with moving away from its policing role to other methods of conservation, which are termed social forestry and involved community participatory development programs. New methods by NGO coalitions were also applied for ecological conservation included community management of forests and rangelands which proved to be more successful.[26]

The international environmental NGOs IUCN and WWF played a significant role in assisting the NCS secretariat in terms of advice and assistance. They had set up country offices in Pakistan and IUCN had strategically selected locals to head and manage the country program. This proved to be a major reason for the success of the consultative process as they played the role of a bridge between civil society and government, facilitated access to international experts. Local leadership in the international organization also helped in developing closer links and familiarity with the working of key government functionaries, increasing credibility with civil society organizations, at the same time ensuring availability of donor funding.

These international NGOs along with other NGOs and civil society groups have generated a lot of public opinion and debate on several environment issues facing Pakistan. These have at times played a neutral role when civil society has been pitched against government and other vested interests. Invariably it is the government that has ended up in compromising its position. Examples include the activism against the hunting of the houbara bustard, an endangered bird species, and protests against oil exploration contracts given by the government to multi-national companies in the Kirthar National Park[27].

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[26] Examples include the Malakand Social Forestry Project, Kalam Integrated Development Program, and NWFP's NGO Forestry Working Group consists of six organizations working on sustainable development.
[27] See websites on Kirthar National Park, BBCi 2001, www.bbc.co.uk/nature/news/173news1

Sensitization of the English media and press through the NCS, especially by IUCN, has demonstrated the effectiveness of the media in the promotion of environmental issues. They now consistently report on environmental issues and follow- up when required. One recent example is the coverage of the oil spill on Karachi's coastline. The judiciary, on the other hand, has played a mixed role in the support of environmental causes. However, strong environmental movements have resulted in judges taking the time to get educated on the issues and making a more informed decision. For instance the Sindh High Court has issued a number of decisions to stop the construction of multi-story buildings that have been in violation of zoning laws especially in the Clifton area of Karachi. These violations have been brought to the notice of the court by Shehri with the support of other NGOs.

A recent development in the environment movement is compensations for victims of environmental disaster. The oils spill on Karachi's coast in July 2003 exposed the governments lethargy in several ways, the most callous was its total neglect in taking any measures to ensure that compensation was provided to fisher folk living on the coast and small vendors whose livelihood suffered tremendously for over three months as a result of the oil pill. Private citizens have initiated a lengthy legal process through courts to get compensation for the victims of this disaster.

There are a number of groups working on improving the urban environment of which Shehri, a Karachi based NGO, has taken on the builder and land mafia against violation of zoning laws. This NGO in particular has faced death threats and its Chief Executive was actually attacked and injured.

Currently most environment and sustainable development issues are being carried by community based NGOs working on sustainable development. There are very few specifically environmental NGOs in Pakistan. These NGOs are well networked and lobby at various forums. For instance the most recent coalition, SAAG, is working for small farmer rights and environment conservation. It is raising awareness on the damaging effects of TRIPS and WTO on the poor small farmers and agriculture workers. The Advocacy Development Network, a coalition of national NGOs engaged in advocacy work, has focussed on a number of environmental issues, related to deforestation and the timber mafia, large dams and water rights.

Local NGO networks on sustainable development have forged links with international and regional networks and coalitions around issues such as green economics and food security. These links have fostered learning between groups, such as the exchange between local male and female

farmers on indigenous farming practices, storage of indigenous seed varieties and setting up seed banks with farmers in Nepal, India and Bangladesh. This one to one sharing is limited due to scant resources and travel restrictions, especially with India. Such interaction has provided new ideas, approaches and diversity of issues to be raised at the local level and has provided a source of motivation to the environment and sustainable development movement.

A number of rural Sindh based NGOs have been lobbying against the damaging effects of the World Bank funded LBOD project and the environmental disaster caused by large dams to the Indus delta. They also lobby for the water rights of small farmers. The movement against large dams has once again been reignited by the government decision in principle to build the Kalabagh dam; the sensitivity of the issue is revealed by the government announcement that it will not act without a national consensus. In addition to the NGOs, ethnic political parties and forces in opposition to the government are strongly opposing this decision. This is leading to a major threat of national fragmentation as there are strong anti-Kalabagh Dam sentiments in Sindh and the NWFP.

Future Trends and Challenges to the Environment and Sustainable Development Movement:

The environment movement appears to be increasingly focussing on regional issues that have been politicised by the government, most potent of which are the water sharing issue and large dams. The movement will also be forced to address green economics issues such as the threat to the ecology connected with rising poverty among the agricultural workers, government plans to attract foreign investments into the agriculture sector and introduce corporate farming. Another area that the movement is taking up is lobbying with the government on taking preventive measure to avoid ecological disaster.

The challenges to the environment and sustainable development movement are in its size. There are still very few NGOs working in this area, although they are scattered across the country. There are numerous and complex issues to be dealt with in this area which range from local communities, ecology to economics. There is very little expertise available and the NGOs are already over burdened dealing with a number of issues on multiple fronts. There will be a greater need to build and forge links with regional and international environmental and sustainable development institutions so that local knowledge and leadership is enhanced.

6. Conclusion

This analysis of civil society, its organizations, and its activities that may bring about pro-poor change in Pakistan has resulted in some useful insights. In our definition of civil society, and our classification of civil society organizations, we have focused on those directly engaged in some form of development work while still leaving broad room to incorporate a range of groups and activities. We avoid arriving at firm conclusions regarding the efficacy of these organizations in terms of impact on poverty or policy, institutional sustainability, and outreach in the population, because our view is that they all represent different phases in the evolution of civil society organizations. From the perspective of pro-poor change, we note the significant transition from alleviative to transformative work underway among these organizations, particularly among the second and third "generation" of NGOs.

The relationship between civil society organizations and the demands of the communities and people whose needs they seek to meet is deeper than common misconceptions would suggest. First, an organic linkage is evolving between the issues being addressed by larger NGOs and their partner CBOs, and also NGOs working at the community level are changing their agendas in response to the needs asserted by the communities themselves. Beyond these deepening vertical linkages, horizontal networking is underway for the first time, with NGO coalitions, national and provincial federations all firmly in place. This is in turn an outgrowth of the joint action committee format that loosely brought NGOs together, and still do, on the basis of activist issues.

The question of social movements in Pakistan is a serious one that merits further debate and research. Definitional issues aside, we assert that there are irreversible trends underway that have altered the development agenda and expressed the needs of the people in innovative ways. These include the women's movement, the environment movement and the NGO movement that are discussed here in some detail. Their growth is supported by two factors: first, alliances and coalitions being built by civil society organizations, particularly those engaged in transformative work; second, changing human development indicators on the ground that suggest in the future women in particular will become more assertive and active members of civil society.

While social movements in Pakistan do not have the easily identifiable characteristics of mass membership organized around collective goals for reform, nonetheless there is an identifiable pattern to how process for social change are setting in. We have noted the vertical work of civil society organizations, reaching both to the policy levels and local communities that appears to be evolving a transformative face with a clear pro-poor agenda. It is their horizontal work, the

coalition-building, advocacy and awareness-raising that is coalescing in ways that we can term nascent movements. While we are optimistic about the potential growth of these movements in years to come, the issue requires further discussion.

Meanwhile it is clear that civil society organizations especially NGOs engaged in advocacy and sustainable development require strengthening and institution-building support. There is a need to develop a space and an enabling environment that allows these organizations to grow in number and develop as independent self-sustaining institutions. It is the transformative nature of their work that will continue to challenge the state and the social status quo and potentially trigger long-term social change in the country. This potential may also be their weakest link, however, as they remain vulnerable to political and social backlash and the dependency on outside financing.

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