DILEMMAS OF CIVIL SOCIETY AID: DONORS, NGOs AND THE QUEST FOR PEACE IN SRI LANKA

CAMILLA ORJUELA

ABSTRACT

It is increasingly recognised that civil society has an important role to play in conflict resolution by involving and educating grass roots and granting legitimacy to top-level peace processes. A growing interest among donor agencies to support peace has paved the way for an influx of funds to 'civil society', often to NGOs doing peace education and campaigning. This paper looks at the case of Sri Lanka, where an ongoing peace process attempting to end a twenty year old civil war fought along ethnic lines has made donor support for civic peace work a burning issue. The paper argues that civil society does not only need to be *constructed*, but also *deconstructed*, and the amorphous civil society concept analysed critically in its local context. Such a deconstruction reveals that civil society in Sri Lanka contains divides along ethnic and political lines, and is an arena where contradictory struggles are waged. People organise to promote peace and democratic values, but also to protest attempts at conflict resolution. Donor funding of peace NGOs feeds into the conflict between pro-peace and hard-line groups and risks accentuating social conflicts. The paper also discusses some problems in the relations between foreign donors and local organisations, that is, the bureaucratisation of peace work and the fact that NGOs are held accountable to donors rather than to the local population. It is argued that the interests of donors and recipients, and the difficulties involved in selecting whom to fund, need to be discussed and problematised to avoid pitfalls when supporting civil society peace work.

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, conflict resolution and peace building have become important components of development discourse and policy. The mandate of international donors has been widened towards increased focus on human rights, democracy, and support for peaceful settlements of internal violent conflicts. An increased awareness of the links between underdevelopment and insecurity and Western interest in promoting peace in poorer countries has encouraged Western development organisations to address conflict resolution, and thus involve more explicitly in politics (see Duffield 2001). Relief and development aid ought to satisfy emergency or development needs while also seeking to 'do no harm' (that is, not exacerbate conflicts). Aid is also increasingly seen as a means of providing incentives for a peace-promoting environment (Anderson 1999; DAC 1997).

There has also been increased donor interest in working with and through non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Non-state actors are brought forth as suitable partners in development when governments have proved to be corrupt, inefficient and even violent. It is estimated that more than 15 percent of all development aid is channelled through non-state actors today (World Bank 2003). With respect to peace building, NGOs are believed to be more efficient and suitable to work for peace than state actors, as they are less visible, less expensive and more flexible (Ross & Rothman 1999: 1). NGOs are perceived to be less constrained by narrow mandates, able to talk to several parties without losing their credibility and capable of dealing directly with the grassroots population (van Tongeren 1998). Apart

Ms. Camilla Orjuela is a Ph.D. scholar at the Department of Peace and Development Research, Goteborg University, Sweden. Email: Camilla.orjuela@padrigu.gu.se.

from using civil society actors as tools for development and peace building, 'supporting civil society' has emerged as a goal in itself, in the quest for peace, democracy and economic development. What exactly 'civil society' is and how it can contribute to peace is not always specified. This paper looks at the case of Sri Lanka, where an ongoing peace process, which attempts to end a twenty year old civil war fought along ethnic lines, has made donor support for civil society peace work a burning issue. The paper argues that civil society does not only need to be *constructed*, but also *deconstructed*, and the amorphous civil society concept analysed critically in its local context. The paper also points towards some problems with foreign assistance to civil society peace building, in donor-recipient relations, and in relations between groups within the recipient society.

The war in Sri Lanka has been waged between the government dominated by the Sinhalese majority and a guerrilla movement named Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fighting for autonomy for the Tamil minority in the north and east of the island. In February 2002, a cease-fire agreement was reached and currently a peace process is under way with Norwegian facilitation.

AIDING PEACE IN SRI LANKA

The flow of foreign development assistance to Sri Lanka has largely been influenced by the changing ideologies of development adopted by political parties in power, foreign interest and Cold War politics. Until Sri Lanka's economic turn towards market liberalisation in 1977, development aid was modest (Bastian 2003). Widespread ethnic violence and the onset of civil war in 1983 was another watershed towards increased foreign aid, now in the field of relief and rehabilitation.

Sri Lanka has been able to attract a relatively large volume of foreign development assistance – in the recent years about six percent of GDP (Bush 2001: 13), or an average of about US$ 600 million yearly (Ofstad 2002: 169; AP 2003). Donors have largely been unaware of the ethnic implications and sensitive nature of many development programmes. For example, large irrigation projects involved landless Sinhalese people being resettled in traditional Tamil areas. Donors responded to escalated political violence after 1983 by trying to 'do development as usual', noting the effects of the political violence on development projects, but failing to problematise how their development programmes related to and fed into the conflicts. In the 1990s, human rights and peace building entered the agenda of the donors. Largely in response to pre-1990 human rights abuses committed by the Sri Lankan government, Canada decided to channel all of its development aid through non-governmental actors. The 1994 change of government, and the subsequent peace attempt, was a dawn for increased 'peace aid'. Sweden and Norway reformulated their aid programmes to explicitly focus on peace building. This included efforts to support education and language reform, devolution of power and government campaigns for 'national integration.' The largest donors, such as the Asian Development Bank, World Bank and Japan, have sought since 1998 to include consciousness of peace and conflict impact in their programmes (Ofstad 2002). Donor threats to withdraw aid if the government failed to improve its human rights record, contributed to a reduction in human rights violations in 1990 (Wickramasinghe 2001: 53). However, no such pressure was used against the government when it escalated the war after the

breakdown of talks in 1995. Civil society organisations working for peace, human rights and democratic restructuring have increasingly received funding from Western governments since the mid-1990s.

In the current peace process, foreign aid plays a crucial role, pledging a peace dividend that motivates the parties to participate in the process. 'Normalisation', rebuilding and resettlement in the north and east have been high on the negotiation agenda and initially provided a space for cooperation between the government and the LTTE, which found a shared interest in attracting foreign funding to rebuild the war torn northeast of the country. Donors responded generously, pledging 4.5 billion US dollars at a donor meeting in Tokyo in June 2003. But as recently as July 2004, the peace process was stalled, and much of the aid money locked, due to an LTTE boycott of the peace talks.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND AID

The civil society concept has entered development discourse from political theory, and is commonly used to describe a realm where people organise voluntarily and separately from the state, market and family spheres, to protect their interests and values (White 1994: 379). Civil society is thus more than its organisations; it is the sphere of voluntary organisation, in which civil society organisations function. Policy makers have tended to subscribe to a normative theory of civil society – of civil society as 'civilised' and a strategic factor which creates social capital, i.e., trust, cooperation over ethnic, religious and other divisions, inclusiveness and open debate (see Putnam 1992; van Rooy 1998). With the existence of social capital, democracy, economic development, peace and harmony are commonly considered to be more likely to prevail. For instance, studies of civil society and social capital in India imply that inclusiveness in ways of organising and associating, and interaction over ethnic boundaries can serve to prevent violence (Varshney 2002). A strong civil society may thus be considered worth supporting and building up for its own sake and for its role in encouraging other development objectives. However, this paper understands civil society as an arena where contradictory forces are at play. People organise in the civil society sphere not only around 'civil' democratic and liberal values, but also around values that can be defined as 'uncivil' (see White 1994; Bastian 1999; Kaldor 2003).

Strengthening democracy has been a main aim for foreign assistance to civil society in 'developing countries'. An active civil society is seen to promote political participation and the articulation of group-based interests, to be able to counterweight the power of the state, hold governments accountable, as well as to create a democratic culture. But in practice, democracy aid has often been channelled to a narrow group of professional NGOs engaged in activities explicitly related to democratisation. As civil society organisations are frequently organised along ethnic lines, a strengthening of 'civil society' might contribute to increased ethnic polarisation (Söderberg & Ohlson 2002: 18ff). A well functioning democracy is in itself a mechanism to non-violently negotiate and solve conflicts between groups. However, in the case of Sri Lanka, where a democratic system (with regular regime changes) has been in place since the 1930s, majority rule has contributed to the political and economic marginalisation of the minority ethnic groups.

Donors and international NGOs have in the late 1990s and early 2000s increasingly focussed on civil society support for peace in violence ridden countries. An active civil society, in the form of local associations and organisations, is promoted in its role as 'stabilisation points' or 'voices of peace' and in its capacity to promote dialogue and cooperation in divided societies, provide peace education, revitalise traditional methods of conflict resolution, and strengthen skills for negotiation (DAC 1997: 37ff). The notion of the close contact between civil society actors and the general population makes civil society a key component in efforts to build a peace constituency, which can legitimise top level peace initiatives or agreements.

WHAT IS CIVIL SOCIETY IN SRI LANKA?

The partisan and ethnic polarisation of Sri Lankan society leaves a relatively small space for civil society activity. Early democratization forced upper class politicians into an alliance with rural lower middle class, which gave way to political patronage (Stokke 1998). The expansion of the state sector and the creation of a welfare state in the 1950s and 60s made the state the dominant source of almost everything that the citizens desired – with politicians and state bureaucrats in control of its distribution. This also contributed to deeply rooted perceptions among ordinary people of themselves as passive receivers of what politicians deliver. When foreign aid and NGOs were brought in from the 1970s and onwards, they came to reinforce these same expectations (Hettige 2000: 10f).

The first modern civil society organisations were Christian, working in the social sphere. These were soon to be followed by similar Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim organisations (Saravanamuttu 1998). At a community level, traditional funeral and village societies remain important in local processes of social organisation around issues of common concern. Nevertheless, most locally based organisations have been established by and depend upon state resources or foreign aid. Markus Mayer compares the Sri Lankan weak civil society activity with the strong village-based social movements in the South Indian state of Kerala, which like Sri Lanka is characterised by high literacy rates and other favourable social indicators. He concludes that in Sri Lanka 'people have developed a passive "receiving-mentality" rather than the awareness to actively demand the fulfilment of certain needs from the respective authorities', i.e., political patronage substitutes for a demanding civil society (Mayer 2000: 167).

The years of war have further contributed to the weakening of civil society. The ethnic polarisation resulting from political and violent conflict impinges on civil society, which is ethnically divided. Many NGOs and civic groups are close to mono-ethnic, and contacts between the south of the country and the war affected northeast have been relatively restricted. This Sinhalese-Tamil division also marks the university system and mass media. Fear and violence in war zones have discouraged the taking up of leadership roles in civic organisations (Goodhand, Lewer & Hulme 1999: 21), and unnecessary cross-ethnic contact has been seen upon with suspicion. Displaced people have moved, resided and received assistance in mono-ethnic settlements, which has further accentuated ethnic polarisation (Forut 2001: 16; Rajasingham-Senanayake 1999).

'In Sri Lanka we don't have *civil* society – only *uncivil* society' is a remark I have often heard when telling about my research topic. This refers to the fact that voluntary popular mobilisation throughout history has often been along racist or sectarian lines, starting with anti-Christian agitations during British rule and evident much later in anti-Tamil campaigns in the 1980s. Several Sinhalese and Buddhist organisations continue to organise rallies and debates opposing peace negotiations and political concessions to the ethnic minorities.

Many non-governmental organisations concerned with peace, human rights and democratic reform were established in the 1970s in response to ethnic riots and government repression. Much of the influx of foreign relief funds after the 1983 anti-Tamil violence was handled by NGOs. There is an array of Sri Lankan organisations working for peace; professional conflict resolution organisations such as the National Peace Council, research institutions such as the International Centre for Ethnic Studies and Centre for Policy Alternatives, cultural groups like Centre for Performing Arts, women's organisations, the Movement for Inter Racial Justice and Equality, the large Gandhi and Buddhist inspired Sarvodaya movement, as well as a number of smaller organisations which have become increasingly interested in doing peace work. These actors have strived to build popular support for peace through education and media campaigns, pressure leaders to pursue a negotiated political solution to the conflict, protest against human rights violations, and provide space for people to meet and communicate across ethnic divides.

Along with the influx of foreign aid, a professionalisation of civil society organisations has taken place, and the division between paid NGO staff mainly concentrated in Colombo, and voluntary based groups in other parts of the country has widened. The gaps between an English speaking middle class NGO community and volunteers with a different background make it difficult for the peace NGOs to mobilise the masses. This difficulty is augmented by the fragmentation of the NGO sector. Attempts at cooperation between peace NGOs are obstructed by the competition between organisations, as well as by ethnic and partisan divisions. The rise of foreign funded NGOs in Sri Lanka paralleled the decline and weakening of the state. The relationship between the state and civil society organisations has in periods been tense. State repression of popular protests, and the attempt to control (or even restrain) NGOs have characterized this relationship, especially up to the early 1990s.

In the mid-1990s, the election campaign and victory of a political alliance, which promised negotiations and an end to the ethnic conflict, spurred optimism, increased civil society campaigning for peace and simultaneously gave rise to an increased interest among donors to support 'peace work'. The breakdown of the negotiations and the government's turn to a war-for-peace strategy was, however, met by silence by most peace groups, many of which had explicitly supported the government in its peace efforts, and like the President thought that violence now was the only remaining alternative. Civil society peace activities regained some of their strength at the end of the 1990s. The 2002 cease-fire and peace process have granted new optimism, although civil society organisations largely take on a low-key, supportive role as the government pushes the process forward.

In the war affected north and east of the island the military regimes of the government forces, the LTTE and other Tamil militants have not allowed for an

independent civil society. Local organisations do exist, for instance organisations linked to the Church, temple societies, farmers' organisations, cooperatives, trade associations and organisations involved in relief and development. But the space to voice political concerns has been severely limited, and civil society has not been able to play an active role in peace building (see Shanmugaratnam 2002: 11). The links to the south of the island and to other ethnic groups have been weak. Tamils and Sinhalese who have experienced different sides of the war due to logistical difficulties hold different views of what constitutes 'peace'. The opening up of the north, started with the peace process beginning in 2002, has paved the way for possibilities to (re)build links between northern and southern civil society, and increased communication with and understanding of the ethnic 'other' and his/her war suffering.

THE AID RELATIONSHIP

In spite of an increased awareness among donors of the potentially harmful or peace building effects of development projects, and the recognition of the need to 'mainstream' peace and conflict impact in development programming, there is a tendency to concentrate assistance to NGOs which explicitly do peace activities, e.g., conflict resolution training, peace education, media campaigning and research. The word `peace' has become a buzzword in unlocking funding opportunities. This has resulted in a rush among NGOs to do peace work. Instead of bringing in the peace dimension in all their programmes, donors tend to isolate peace work in different administrative units and specific programmes. By this, the opportunity to generate incentives for peace on a broader scale, in development projects, is not seized. NGOs involved in development work could for instance provide alternatives to the war economy, support demobilisation, cater to the needs of deprived and frustrated groups, and cultivate cooperation across ethnic lines around common development concerns (see Bush 2001).

The donor driven discourse on partnership between donors and their recipients does not erase the unequal relationship between the two. Although most NGO representatives interviewed in this study maintain that they have not had to adjust their programmes to meet the desires of donors, they have been drawn towards professionalisation and had to adjust to the bureaucracy of the aid agencies. The increased amount of paper work and curtailed flexibility is sometimes problematic, as described by one peace activist:

> The problem with the funds is that they always nowadays force you to be professional […] professionalism and voluntarism, and a social movement and professionalism are contradictions […] you cannot write a project proposal for three years […]; in a situation like Sri Lanka you will never know when you will have a good opportunity to direct your whole energy, your whole organisation into some kind of campaign. If there is a Sinhala extremist campaign, if there is an anti-Tamil riot, if there is prospects of peace…

At the same time, project (rather than programme) funding and the lack of institutional learning of aid agencies, which shift their personnel between countries on a two or three year basis, discourages long-term planning and makes the work piecemeal. The NGO dependency on the outside funding is in some instances

extremely high; professionalisation has come to replace voluntarism. Sometimes bureaucratic inefficiency causes NGO personnel to sit around waiting for project money to come through. The demands of donors of co-funding of projects sometimes trap the NGOs in a catch 22 situation when no donor wants to be the first one to promise financial support. Different directives of reporting and budgets between the different funders are another bureaucratic hassle. The necessity for donors to show quick and visible results in order to motivate spending is a problem in a field of activity, which does not allow for evident, short-term impacts.

The Sri Lankan society and polity is largely centralised around Colombo. This is true also for foreign funded civil society organisations. Donor agencies are heavily Colombo centred, and often circumscribed to contacts with English speaking elite. Thus, funding of civil society peace work is largely confined to Colombo, and only partly 'trickle-out' from the capital towards smaller organisations around the island. NGOs are thus often seen as representing an English speaking, educated elite. The hunt for funding has fostered a competitive environment among NGOs, and a need to prioritise the promotion and survival of the organisation over the overall goal of peace. However, with the increased influx of money for peace work in the early 2000s, the poor capacity of NGOs to make use of it has also been noticed. This while civic leaders in remote areas, for instance the war torn north of the country, observe great needs for reconstruction and reconciliation, but have heard of no prospects to obtain peace aid.

FOREIGN AIDED PEACE WORK AND CONFLICTS IN SRI LANKAN SOCIETY

Foreign funding to NGO peace work has been under harsh criticism in Sri Lanka, and there are reasons to listen to those critical voices. Firstly, some of the concerns they are raising are legitimate and important to discuss. Secondly, although these voices do not necessarily represent the general population, they indicate that important groups feel threatened or marginalised in society, and harbour frustrations that can spur conflicts.

The most vociferous opposition to peace NGOs and peace processes comes from Sinhalese nationalist groups that are often linked to Buddhist clergy and/or political parties in opposition. The Buddhist clergy has used involvement in voluntary associations as a means to stretch their power. These organisations trace their roots to the pre-independence nationalist movements, but change name and shape according to issues of the day. Preserving the unity and sovereignty of the (holy Buddhist) country is the key motivation for their mobilisation (see Schalk 1988). The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), today Sri Lanka's third largest political party, has similarly been efficient in mobilising public rallies against peace processes – the party has a background of ultra-violent rebellion against India's intervention to 'solve' the conflict in the late 1980s. It has traditionally been easy to gain political support for parties who play on Sinhalese nationalist feelings and fear of the foreigner and the Tamils, something that lies behind the breakdown of several attempts at Sinhalese-Tamil settlements in the past. In the 1994 elections, however, the popular support was for peace and negotiations, a pattern that was repeated in 2001 and gave way for the current peace process.

It is often those who are marginalised by the processes of economic and political transformation which come with market liberalisation and globalisation, e.g., non English speaking elite groups and religious leaders, who take on narrow nationalist positions and oppose peace processes. The NGO personnel and peace activists, on the other hand, tend to belong to the new open-minded elite, who takes advantage of the restructuring of society (Hettige 1998). Foreign funding to that group, and not to the 'losers of globalisation' might in this context increase the feeling of marginalisation and frustration of the latter, pushing them towards reinforced parochial views and intensified anti-peace protests.

The critics of peace NGOs argue that the NGOs do not have legitimacy, but are manipulated by foreign interests. Peace activists in foreign funded organisations are accused of 'working for money, rather than for peace', and the NGO sector is alleged to be corrupt. This might not be a totally unfounded accusation, but has to be seen in the wider context of a society where the police, the judiciary, politicians and bureaucrats are considered even more corrupt. The lack of transparency regarding what NGOs actually do and how they use their money contributes to the insecurity about their motives and honesty. Foreign funded NGOs also tend to direct their accountably towards donors, i.e., they put much effort into proving to the important foreigners that they are efficient and relevant, but fail to do so to people of their own society (see Hulme 1994).

Moreover, the support to NGOs to do politically sensitive peace work, involving the changing of attitudes, mobilising of people, large media campaign and advocacy work, has been described as a privatisation of foreign policy (Goonatilake 2001; Duffield 2001). Aid agencies are put in charge of foreign policy in countries too small and to far away to gain much attention at Ministries of Foreign Affairs, as has been the case of for instance Swedish policy towards Sri Lanka. Aid is used to pressure the state towards peace, but also to engineer a transformation of whole societies, including people's attitudes, the political system, and the power balance between different sections of society. By allowing foreign funded NGOs to work in the war zones and border areas, the government gives up some of its sovereignty (Wickramasinghe, 1997). Campaigning for a negotiated settlement to the conflict and third party involvement has (especially before the current peace process) been considered a surrender of sovereignty. The support to NGOs in the war zones is viewed by many Sinhalese as providing 'foreign' help to the LTTE, and the NGOs as 'a fifth column of the Tigers'.

A question that arises is if it is indeed possible to build a peace movement in Sri Lanka using foreign aid money. This matter is brought to a head in the mobilisation of grassroots people. In Sri Lanka, it is not feasible to talk about a massive people's movement for peace, in which the public actively involves. This can, among other things, be traced to the fact that most Sinhalese are more concerned with daily survival and raising costs of living than with peace, while for the Tamils, publicly voicing their views has been a security risk. NGOs organising mass rallies or meetings for peace often have to provide donor funded transportation and lunch packets for villagers to attend meetings, e.g., in Colombo. This has provoked questions about the genuineness of the peace movement, whether such a movement can, or at all should, be created from the outside, and about the ethics of donors making this type of mobilisation possible. One critic of the peace NGOs described the

mobilisation to a peace convention thus: 'the participants are "targets", they are selected, "educated" in the ideology and then paid to attend these meetings' (Goonatilake 2001: 32). Although this is an exaggerated picture, it points at the problem of legitimacy and the question of who the peace NGOs represent – the will of the people or of donors and elite groups.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Civil society actors have an important, but complementary, role to play in peace building (see Orjuela, 2003). Much of their work, e.g., efforts to build peace constituencies and raise awareness of the roots of conflicts and need for resolution, bridge ethnic cleavages, lobby political leaders and the international community, as well as relief and development work in the war areas, has been made possible through foreign aid. But what can be done about the dilemmas involved in the foreign support for such civic efforts; with the difficulties to define and support 'civil' actors, the unequal aid relationship and the risk of exacerbate conflicts within the recipient society? The dilemmas analysed in this article are relevant not only to the case of Sri Lanka, but is part of a global pattern of post-colonial relations between rich and powerful donor agencies and poorer governments, organisations and peoples. It is easy to see how donors, being in control of the money, are in charge of setting the agenda, designing the rules and initiating changes in the societies they intervene in. However, the power relations are not as simple as those of dominator and dominated. A multiplicity of interests is involved and make up the field of interaction.

The donors are not merely after control, but work also with the ambitions to 'do good', satisfy tax payers at home, spend their allocated money, gain international prominence and shares of the aid market, e.g., by claiming expertise in an area, and by being first in a new field, and enhance the aid industry, and thus secure and expand employment and advancement opportunities. The recipient states, on the other hand, are interested in foreign aid as a way to fund or support their programmes, to increase wealth (personal or for the people at large), and legitimacy. Aid, which circumvents the recipient states and goes directly to non-governmental actors, may however work to decrease legitimacy of those governments and to present NGOs as more potent than their weak host governments. The NGOs strive simultaneously to support peace, give a voice to their members or target groups, acquire resources, secure livelihood for their staff, and to market and sustain their organisations. The numerous and shifting interests that govern the relations between these different actors can provide openings for a renegotiation of the rules of the donor-recipient relations. But the different interests need to be made explicit, in order to make possible a dialogue about the impact of foreign aid, the triggering of social conflicts and the aid relationship. I will here suggest four issues that need to be brought into this crucial debate.

Firstly, when researching or supporting civil society peace work it is important not to confine the understanding of civil society to certain NGOs doing peace work or other work seen as useful by donors, but to also take into account the civic organisations and movements that mobilise against peace initiatives. The challenge for both donors and NGOs is to invite these vociferous groups to the discussion about their future society, to unveil the positive contributions they can make and see to that they are not further alienated and increasingly frustrated in peace

processes. It is important that those who strive to foster attitudes conducive to peace distinguish between ideas and people; that they marginalize parochial nationalist ideas, but not the groups and persons that tend to hold those ideas.

Secondly, the issue of legitimacy and representativity of civil society organisations warrants more research and discussion. It is not unproblematic that donors, who have the power to select whom to fund, are in power of defining who are 'the good guys' and to distinguish the 'civil' from the 'uncivil' in societies such as the Sri Lankan one. Support to certain groups, with certain attitudes, political opinions and contacts, gives signals of social engineering and involvement in 'internal affairs'. Transparency when it comes to the criteria for, and interests behind, civil society funding is important to counter rumours and calumny. A more open funding process, which make possible also for organisations from areas far away from the capital, which need only smaller amounts of money, and to which English is not known, would be a good option. Moreover, it is the responsibility of NGOs to direct their accountability more towards their own society than towards funders. Donors can encourage this by being more flexible when it comes to their demands on NGOs for reporting and administration. More efforts can also be taken to make reports available, and readable, to the public.

It is also important to initiate a discussion, among academics as well as donors and actors in recipient societies, about 'the political economy of aid', i.e., the interests behind foreign involvement in peace building in countries like Sri Lanka. Western business interests, including those of the 'aid industry', the trends in development policy and the need to show results, the need for stability, as well as the inherently unequal power relations embedded in development assistance need to be openly discussed. This so that recipient societies as well as donors can be better prepared to deal with them.

Thirdly, the focus on NGOs as peace builders risks outshining other important actors. Mass based organisations, such as trade unions or political parties, have so far received little attention from donors, in spite of their potential to both reach and mobilise grassroots people. Institutionalising peace work in government structures, e.g., through juridical reform and law enforcement, and in the field of education, provides large potentials to make a difference. Much of the competence that currently exists in the NGO sector could be used in a more sustainable way if tied to and systematically used in the education system. For instance, instead of supporting patchy NGO projects, special positions in universities could be offered to political analysts and conflict resolution trainers, who could continue their work from that more stable platform.

Finally, the focus on explicit peace projects threatens to direct the attention away from the peace and conflict impact of other projects, and of development policy in general, and make NGOs formulate specific peace activities in order to acquire funding. Two measures could be taken against this: (a) The analysis of what is peace work should be broad, and can be done by academics and donors, who need to be well informed of the local context. NGOs doing various kinds of development work should be able to receive support and be recognised as doing peace building, for instance in their efforts to strengthen marginalised groups, without having to reformulate or redirect their programmes according to trends in the donor

world. (b) The issue of how development work can augment conflicts by building in inequalities, or contribute to equality and cooperation if designed in a sensitive way, can be further explored by researchers and donors, and an awareness of this can be spread to NGOs and other actors.

REFERENCES

Anderson, Mary B. 1999. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace - or War.* London: Lynne Rienner.

Associated Press. 2003. Sri-Lanka-Reconstruction Tokyo aid confab. *Associated Press*, February 5. Accessed at www.theacademic.org.

Bastian, Sunil. 1999. *The Failure of State formation, Identity Conflict and Civil Society Responses – the Case of Sri Lanka.* Working Paper 2. Bradford: Centre for Conflict Resolution, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford.

Bastian, Sunil. 2003. Foreign Aid, Globalization and Conflict in Sri Lanka. In Markus Mayer, Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake & Yuvi Thangarajah (ed) *Building Local Capacities for Peace: Rethinking Conflict and Development in Sri Lanka.* Delhi: Macmillan.

Bush, Kenneth. 2001. *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) of Swedish Development Cooperation with Sri Lanka.* Stockholm/Colombo: Sida.

Development Assistance Committee (DAC). 1997. *DAC Guidelines on Conflict, Peace and Development Cooperation.* Paris: DAC/OECD.

Duffield, Mark. 2001. *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security.* London/New York: Zed Books.

FORUT. 2001. *Capacity Building of Civil Society in the Most Conflict Affected Areas of Sri Lanka.* Unpublished report. Colombo: Forut.

Goodhand, Jonathan, Nick Lewer & David Hulme. 1999. *NGOs and Peace Building: Sri Lanka Study.* Bradford and Manchester: Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, and Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester.

Goonatilake, Susantha. 2001. *Foreign Funded NGOs Privatizing Foreign Relations.* Paper presented at the International Sri Lanka Studies Conference, Jaipur, November 2001.

Hettige, S T. 1998. Global Integration and the Disadvantaged Youth: from the centre stage to the margins of society. In S T Hettige (ed) *Globalization, Social Change and Youth.* Colombo: German Cultural Institute and Centre for Anthropological and Sociological Studies, University of Colombo.

Hettige, S.T. 2000. Dilemmas of Post-Colonial Society after 50 Years of Independence: A Critical Analysis. In Siri Hettige & Markus Mayer (ed) *Sri Lanka at Crossroads: Dilemmas and Prospects After 50 Years of Independence.* Delhi: Macmillan.

Hulme, David. 1994. Social Development Research and the Third Sector: NGOs as Users and Subjects of Social Inquiry. In David Booth (ed) *Rethinking Social Development: Theory, Research and Practice.* Harlow: Longman.

Kaldor, Mary. 2003. *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War.* Oxford: Polity Press.

Mayer, Markus. 2000. Life Opportunities and Youth Conflict in Sri Lanka. Challenges for Regional Development Planning. In Siri Hettige & Markus Mayer (ed) *Sri Lanka at Crossroads: Dilemmas and Prospects After 50 Years of Independence.* Delhi: Macmillan.

Ofstad, Arve. 2002. Countries in Violent Conflict and Aid Strategies: The Case of Sri Lanka. *World Development*, 30 (2): 165-180.

Orjuela, Camilla. 2003. Building Peace in Sri Lanka: A Role for Civil Society?. *Journal of Peace Research*, 40 (2): 195-212.

Putnam, Robert D. 1992. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Rajasingham-Senanayake, Darini. 1999. The Dangers of Devolution: The Hidden Economies of Armed Conflict. In Robert I Rotberg (ed) *Creating Peace in Sri Lanka: Civil War and Reconciliation.* Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Ross, Marc Howard & Jay Rothman. 1999. *Theory and Practice in Ethnic Conflict Management: Theorising Success and Failure*. London: Macmillian Press.

Saravanamuttu, Paikiasothy. 1998. Sri Lanka: Civil Society, the Nation and the State-building Challenge. In Alison Van Rooy (ed) *Civil Society and the Aid Industry*. London: Earthscan Publications.

Schalk, Peter. 1988."Unity" and "Sovereignty": Key Concepts of a Militant Buddhist Organization in the Present Conflict in Sri Lanka. *Temenos: Studies in Comparative Religion,* 24: 55-87.

Shanmugaratnam, N. 2002. *Challenges to Peacebuilding and Development in the Interim Phase: A Political Economic Perspective*. Paper presented at the Conference on The Role of Transitional Arrangements in Negotiating a Political Settlement in Sri Lanka, 2nd Workshop of the Locarno Process, Murten, Switzerland, April 2002.

Söderberg, Mimmi & Thomas Ohlson. 2002. *Democratisation and Armed Conflicts in Weak States*. A Report to Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University.

Stokke, Kristian. 1998. Sinhalese and Tamil Nationalism as Post-Colonial Political Projects from "Above", 1948-1983. *Political Geography,* 17 (1): 83-113.

van Rooy, Alison, ed. 1998. *Civil Society and the Aid Industry.* London: Earthscan Publications.

van Tongeren, Paul. 1998. Exploring the Local Capacity for Peace: The Role of NGOs. In *Prevention and Management of Violent Conflicts: An International Directory*. Utrecht: The European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation.

Varshney, Ashutosh. 2002. *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

White, Gordon. 1994. Civil Society, Democratization and Development (I): Clearing the Analytical Ground. *Democratization,* 1 (3): 375-390.

Wickramasinghe, Nira. 1997. Rethinking Sovereignty: The State, NGOs and Humanitarian Relief. *Lanka Outlook*, Winter 97/98.

Wickramasinghe, Nira. 2001. *Civil Society in Sri Lanka: New Circles of Power*. New Delhi: Sage.

World Bank. 2003. *The World Bank and Civil Society.* http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/ essd/essd.nsf/0/169bd0c0c6d6c918852567ed004c5114?OpenDocument. Accessed September 22, 2003.