

# Linking the levels?: The organisation of UK development NGOs' advocacy

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“Organising NGOs' Transnational Advocacy:  
Organisational frameworks and organisational effectiveness”

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**Dr. Alan Hudson**  
alanhudson@bigfoot.com

Research Fellow in International Political Economy  
Government and Politics Discipline  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
The Open University  
Walton Hall  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AA

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## **LINKING THE LEVELS?: THE ORGANISATION OF UK DEVELOPMENT NGOs' ADVOCACY**

**Over the last few years UK-based development NGOs have increased their advocacy and policy work. Most NGOs see the link between their micro-level operational experience and their advocacy as central to the legitimacy and effectiveness of their advocacy. This study examined the ways in which NGOs seek to make this link, and how they grapple with issues of legitimacy, accountability, governance, and evaluation. Questions are raised as to whether organisational structures which evolved for hands-on development work are suitable for a focus on advocacy. NGOs need to actively work at linking the levels, and to seek to mainstream advocacy within their overall activities.**

NGOs and other civil society groups are increasingly important and prominent actors in international development. 'Being international' is often seen as providing such organisations with a privileged perspective on the links between national and international policy decisions and on-the-ground developmental impacts. This study sought to unpack the idea of 'being international' through archival work and the use of systematic qualitative methods. Forty-four in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with UK NGO staff members and DfID officials, with computer-assisted qualitative data analysis techniques employed to systematically analyse this data. It was found that:

- Many NGOs have shifted their activities towards advocacy and policy-work, largely in an effort to scale-up their developmental impacts.
- The role of advocacy is often poorly-understood within NGOs, with tensions arising around its relationship to marketing, fund-raising and more traditional development work.
- NGOs enjoy good relations with DfID, although there are some concerns about NGOs' independence and autonomy.
- 'Legitimacy' is often used as a synonym for accountability, representation, effectiveness and expertise, making 'legitimacy debates' less than clear.
- NGOs claim legitimacy for their advocacy from a variety of bases. Only ten percent of the NGOs examined claim to represent the South, but legitimacy is most often claimed on the basis of links to, and experience in, the South.
- NGOs remain weakly accountable to the Southern groups whose interests they claim to promote.
- Whilst some effort is being made to develop suitable evaluation methodologies, most NGOs conduct very limited evaluations of their advocacy.

The policy-relevant lessons of the findings include:

- NGOs' must base their advocacy on clear understandings of the relevant policy processes, and work to make the link between operational experience and advocacy messages.
- NGOs must strive to demonstrate the value of advocacy and respond to doubts about their legitimacy and accountability.
- DfID must be clear about what it feels NGOs should do to increase their legitimacy and accountability, and should encourage NGOs' efforts to become more accountable and transparent.
- DfID must be clear and transparent in its relationships with NGOs to ensure that close partnerships do not compromise NGOs' independence.
- DfID should strengthen its support for UK NGOs' efforts to increase their development awareness and educational activities.
- DfID should continue to support the Southern capacity-building role of UK NGOs.

- DfID should promote the evaluation of advocacy work, and the development of innovative evaluation methodologies.

**Contributor and contact for further information**

Dr. Alan Hudson  
Government and Politics Discipline  
The Open University  
Walton Hall  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AA  
UK

**Tel** +44 (0) 1908 654435

**Fax** +44 (0) 1908 654488

**E-mail:** [alanhudson@bigfoot.com](mailto:alanhudson@bigfoot.com)

**Web-site:** <http://www.alanhudson.plus.com>

**Sources**

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NGOs + advocacy + legitimacy + governance + accountability + evaluation

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## **Linking the levels?:** **The organisation of UK development NGOs' advocacy**

### **1.0 Background and objectives**

The initial aim of this research project was to understand the relationship between the organisational frameworks which UK-based international development NGOs (NGDOs) adopt for their advocacy work, and the effectiveness of such advocacy, in order to inform their advocacy activities, improve their relations with target-groups such as the Department for International Development (DfID), and increase their effectiveness.

Theoretically, the research proposal was informed by a growing recognition of the roles of non-state actors in the workings of the international political economy, as part of a wider set of challenges – often termed globalisation – to state sovereignty as the key ordering principle of international relations (see, for example, Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton 1999; Higgott, Underhill and Bieler, 2000; O'Brien et al, 2000; Reinicke, 1998; Rosenau, 1997). More specifically, and more empirically, the research proposal was concerned to examine and understand the changing roles of NGDOs (Lewis, 1999). Over the past decade Northern NGDOs have become increasingly involved in advocacy and policy work in an effort to influence the policies of consumers, corporations, governments and international organisations. NGDOs have altered the mix of their activities in recognition of the fact that traditional 'operational' development activities are ineffective and unsustainable when poor communities find themselves in an unfavourable national and international policy environment which is beyond their control (Edwards and Hulme, 1992).

Many commentators have assumed that 'being international' gives international NGDOs a comparative advantage in their efforts to influence policy, enabling them to link grassroots experience with advocacy at national and global levels. However, little attention has been given to the problems of 'being international'. This research project sought to unpack the idea of 'being international', looking at the costs and benefits of different ways of organising transnational advocacy. Beginning with a simple conceptual framework which related 'organisational framework' to 'organisational effectiveness', the research project developed into a broader examination of the issues which NGDOs face in organising their transnational advocacy – including issues of governance, legitimacy and accountability – and the various ways in which NGDOs seek to deal with such issues. The research project was progressively developed in this way to take account of data availability issues, measurement problems, and the emergence of new themes during the course of the research.

## **2.0 Methods**

The research project was funded from April 1999 to March 2000, with initial research beginning in early 1998 (see appendix A2.1). There were five stages to the research process:

**Stage 1:** Literature review concerning non-state actors, the development and roles of NGOs, the advocacy and policy work of NGOs, NGOs' organisational structures, and ways of assessing the effectiveness of advocacy and policy work (See enclosed paper 1).

**Stage 2:** Meetings with a variety of individuals and groups from within the NGDO sector, to focus in on a useful and feasible research project (A2.2).

**Stage 3:** Finalising the research proposal and applying for funding. Funding applications to DfID's ESCOR (£8500) and the Nuffield Foundation (£5000) were successful.

**Stage 4:** Data collection, with research assistance, extending from May to October 1999. Employing a broad definition of 'development', individuals or departments at a wide range of UK-based NGDOs, and departments within DfID, were selected. Around 100 letters were sent out, explaining my research project and requesting a research interview (A2.3). Forty-four hour-long research interviews were arranged, conducted and taped (A2.4). Interviews were semi-structured, addressing a common range of issues but allowing the interviewee to shape the course of the interview (A2.5). In addition, supplementary documents such as Annual Reports were collected to provide further data about the activities and finances of the NGDO in question. Interviews were transcribed and data extracted from the supplementary documentary material.

**Stage 5:** Data analysis, taking a variety of forms. A first step was the construction of a 'results table' which compared the NGDOs in terms of 31 variables (A2.6), the plotting of NGDOs in terms of each of these variables, and the writing of summary pieces about how the NGDOs vary in terms of each of these variables. This process, and the construction of diagrams depicting the "organisational shape" (A2.7) of each NGDO, allowed the speedy comparison of NGDOs to identify similarities and differences, and develop a preliminary taxonomy of NGDOs (A2.8). A second step involved the use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis to facilitate the systematic analysis of qualitative data. Interview transcripts were imported into the software (Atlas.ti) and coded (A2.9). In this way all sections of the interviews which were about, for example, 'legitimacy', were compared, and their links to other codes, such as 'representation', explored. Codes were then grouped, enabling the development of ideas at higher levels of abstraction and helping me to make sense of the data (A2.10). A final step in the analysis involved writing pieces about codes (e.g. 'pressures to evaluate'),

and groups of codes (e.g. ‘evaluation motives’ which includes ‘pressures to evaluate’, ‘evaluation for whom’, ‘evaluation why’, and ‘evaluation impact’) as summaries of the research findings, which will form the basis of subsequent reports and papers (A2.11).

### **3.0 Research findings: UK NGDOs and advocacy**

#### **3.1 The growth of NGDOs’ advocacy**

‘Advocacy’ has a wide range of meanings for NGDOs. Most frequently, advocacy is seen as involving efforts to change institutions’ policies in ways which are expected to favour the poor and marginalised. Confusion about the meaning of advocacy arises from the fact that its central meaning is often confused with the range of approaches to advocacy, the mixture of activities which can be part of advocacy, the variety of target groups that advocacy can involve, and the diverse bases which advocacy programmes might be built on.

Advocacy is widely seen as having grown rapidly over the last five years. Definitional problems, with some of the ‘growth’ being a re-labelling of pre-existing activities, make a clear assessment of the growth of advocacy problematic. However, advocacy is definitely a growth area. As with other development trends – such as participation, micro-credit, and gender-sensitive analysis – advocacy has rapidly diffused through the NGDO community, with only a few conservative NGDOs opting out of the trend, a trend that a small number of NGDOs saw as an unhelpful bandwagon.

Fashion and the demonstration effect across the NGDO sector is an important factor in the growth of advocacy, but many NGDOs see their shift towards advocacy in quasi-evolutionary terms. At a slightly abstract level some NGDOs see their shift to advocacy in relation to debates about the role of Northern NGOs (NNGOs) in an emerging global civil society. More concretely, many NGDOs see their shift to advocacy coming about in recognition of the limited and short-term impacts of traditional operational development work, and in an effort to “scale up” their impact. As one interviewee put it, it is felt that “advocacy work can deliver a bigger bang for your buck”.

#### **3.2 Doing advocacy**

NGDOs’ advocacy activities are based upon policy analysis, research, and the channelling of information. On these bases they engage in a range of activities from awareness-raising, through development education, networking, capacity-building, lobbying and campaigning, to, in a few cases, direct action. The sorts of issues which NGDOs advocate about range from general principles of inclusion and participation in decision-making, through macro issues such as reform of the WTO and the regulation of MNCs, to specific issues such as education, debt, child labour, food security, biotechnology and reproductive health. Many interviewees report that a tight focus on specific issues,

perhaps as a way in to wider themes, is key to successful advocacy. NGDOs' advocacy targets institutions at a variety of levels – international organisations, national governments and departments, corporations, trades unions and other NGDOs. The selection of target groups ought to be issue-driven, based on a clear understanding of the policy process, with messages tailored for particular target groups.

Approaches to advocacy are shaped by understandings of what advocacy is, by NGDOs' size and resources, and by the issue and target group in question. Many NGDOs, as well as DfID officials, value the diversity of approaches both within and between NGDOs. Thirty percent of NGDOs see themselves as technical specialists with a particular niche within the NGDO landscape, a position which shapes their relations with DfID and other target groups. Most of the NGDOs appreciate the benefits of having clear advocacy strategies, but very few have them.

Whilst a small number of NGDOs seek to “mainstream” advocacy, in many cases the role of advocacy departments is poorly understood, under-valued and seen as secondary to hands-on operational work. Internal legitimacy issues about the position of advocacy, and its relationship to activities such as fund-raising and marketing, create tensions and put advocacy workers under pressure to justify their activities.

### 3.3 DfID, Financing and funding

The large majority of NGDOs enjoy good relations with DfID. NGDOs have a broadly positive view of DfID, seeing it as “on the ball” and “ahead of the game”. DfID appreciates that it is the job of NGDOs to provide constructive criticism. Occasional tensions arise due to the styles of individual DfID officials, or from an NGDO's adoption of confrontational tactics. DfID is seen as open to input from NGDOs, although several NGDOs are unsure about who they ought to be dealing with within DfID, and also express some frustration with what are sometimes seen as rather tokenistic consultation exercises.

Although NGDOs rarely receive funding – from DfID or elsewhere – specifically for advocacy, their funding mix clearly shapes their identity, with balanced funding portfolios providing greater freedom. Few NGDOs experience problems as a result of DfID sometimes being both a donor and a target group for advocacy. This is because: NGDOs very rarely receive DfID funding for advocacy which might be targeted at DfID; DfID is a large and complex institution with compartmentalised funding and policy functions; and, NGDOs tend not to take a confrontational approach to DfID. However, the possibility of such donor/target tensions arising is appreciated, and there are some fears about (financial) independence, the “over-cosy” relationships which some of the larger agencies are seen as

having with DfID, and the implications of Partnership Programme Agreements and an emerging contract culture.

### 3.4 Legitimacy, representation and accountability

When the 'legitimacy' of NGOs' advocacy is discussed, the word often stands in for issues of accountability, representation, effectiveness, credibility, authority, expertise and comparative advantage. 'Legitimacy' debates need clarifying and disaggregating into, at least: legitimacy for what?; legitimacy to whom?; and, legitimacy on what basis? However, whilst legitimacy debates are muddled, NGOs keenly feel the pressures – from target groups, Southern partners, and funders - to establish their right to express their views, and to be listened to by DfID and other target groups.

NGOs claim legitimacy for their advocacy on a variety of bases. Ten percent make modest claims, or avoid the term/practice of advocacy as it is felt to be disempowering. Ten percent claim legitimacy in terms of organisational structures - staffing, governance, and formally democratic membership structures. Fifteen percent state that their legitimacy derives from/is illustrated by their history and institutional survival. Fifty percent claim legitimacy on the basis of links with the South which provide them with expertise and experience, with only a fifth of these claiming to be 'speaking for' the South. It is disingenuous to dismiss NGOs en masse as unrepresentative, as only ten percent of them claim legitimacy in terms of simplistic representation. That said, rather more of the NGOs do describe what they do in terms of promoting values or interests which come from their experience in the South.

Most NGOs see the quality of the relationship between their programmes and advocacy work as crucial to their legitimacy and effectiveness, and many are actively working to improve this connection. Work with Southern partner organisations is central to this, providing the evidence, legitimacy and rationale for advocacy. However, NGOs do lack formal or substantive mechanisms of accountability to their intended beneficiaries for their advocacy work. NGOs are confused by multiple accountabilities, and by questions about what they ought to be accountable for (inputs, outputs, outcomes or impacts?). In part, this is due to the complexity of advocacy work, involving a lengthy chain between the micro and the macro, which makes the tracing of connections of causality, responsibility, legitimacy, representation and accountability extremely difficult. NGOs which were established for 'hands-on' development work and the channelling of funds have not established organisational structures to ensure that they are accountable for their advocacy.

Micro-macro links are very important for the legitimacy and effectiveness of advocacy, but NGOs also argue that there are other bases for their advocacy work. In an emerging international division of



labour, UK NGDOs feel that they are able to add value on the basis of comparative advantages such as their: skills in policy analysis and the ability to spot threats to, and opportunities for, Southern partners; access to and knowledge of Northern and international institutions; access to resources and information; experience of international policy debates; and, large UK constituencies. Whilst NGDOs do see continuing roles for themselves in international development, targeting Northern institutions and raising awareness about international development issues as part of UK civil society, they are enthusiastically seeking to build the capacity of Southern NGOs (SNGOs) and communities to take control of their own advocacy and development. Although some concern is expressed that direct funding of SNGOs might weaken the link between NNGOs' operational and advocacy work, DfID's role in strengthening Southern civil society is widely supported.

### 3.5 Evaluation

NGDOs evaluate, or consider evaluating, advocacy for a variety of reasons. Firstly, evaluation is for learning: to advocate more effectively next time; to develop advocacy skills and capacities; and, to make more informed decisions about the allocation of resources. Secondly, evaluation is about demonstrating the value of advocacy. Thirdly, evaluation is about establishing just what it is that an NGDO can be accountable for. NGDOs are beginning to respond to increasing pressures to evaluate their advocacy, pressures which they see as coming from within individual NGDOs, from funders, and from the wider NGDO community. However, several NGDOs feel that there is less pressure to evaluate advocacy than they might expect, in part because they receive little funding specifically for advocacy, and because there is a lack of attention to issues of impact.

In general, NGDOs' evaluation of advocacy is very limited, with most NGDOs struggling to get to grips with it. NGDOs which do evaluate their advocacy tend to focus on activities/inputs or outputs, less frequently considering outcomes, and very rarely looking at impacts. Evaluation activities tend to take the form of "counting the shots" (meetings held, letters written, column inches), collecting anecdotes, and recording changes in policy wording. The cutting edge of evaluating advocacy involves efforts to deal systematically with qualitative data, and to map out the complex processes and multi-dimensional nature of advocacy with a view to developing indicators for different stages in the policy process, and in relation to advocacy at various levels. NGDOs at the forefront of evaluating advocacy recognise that the aims of evaluation and the nature of the specific advocacy campaign ought to shape the evaluation process. A pre-requisite for evaluating advocacy is the establishment of clear, although perhaps flexible, goals at the outset of an advocacy campaign. Whilst NGDOs are less anti-logframes than might be expected, there is some concern that the use of logframes might limit NGDOs' ability to seriously involve partners in evaluation, and constrain efforts to develop innovative evaluation methodologies.

NGDOs face a variety of problems in their efforts to evaluate advocacy, many of which stem from the fact that advocacy is such a different sort of development activity from operational activities. Outcome-related problems include the fact that advocacy tends to have multiple objectives, a lack of baseline data, the relatively intangible nature of impacts, and, the fact that targets are unlikely to acknowledge that policy change came about as a result of NGDO pressure. As regards processes, evaluating advocacy is rendered problematic because of the complex, gradual and cumulative nature of advocacy for policy change, which makes the attribution of impact to advocacy by an NGDO extremely difficult. Finally, there is a paucity of methods for evaluating advocacy and it is difficult to know in advance what indicators might be suitable.

#### **4.0 Recommendations for policy and practice**

Through providing a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the state of play of UK NGDOs' advocacy, this research project has also generated some important points for policy and practice, for both NGDOs and DfID. As regards DfID, my recommendations for policy and practice are:

**a) Recognising the complexity of advocacy**

- DfID should continue to recognise the complexity of advocacy work, and appreciate that developmental impacts are likely to be (even) more gradual and less predictable than in more hands-on development work.

**b) Valuing the diversity of UK NGDOs and maintaining their independence**

- DfID should continue to value the diversity of UK NGDOs and – by being clear and transparent in its relationships with NGDOs - ensure that close partnerships do not compromise NGDOs' independence.

**c) Supporting NGDO-NGDO cooperation**

- DfID should support UK NGDOs which wish to co-operate in their research and policy analysis activities, reducing unnecessary duplication of effort and resource expenditure.

**d) Being clear about legitimacy**

- DfID should avoid using 'legitimacy' as a synonym for effectiveness, accountability, representation, credibility, authority, expertise or comparative advantage. If DfID has concerns around NGDOs' 'legitimacy' it must be clear about what it feels NGDOs should do to increase their legitimacy and accountability, and should encourage NGDOs' efforts to become more accountable and transparent.

**e) Direct funding and the micro-macro link**

- DfID should ensure that its efforts to increase direct funding of SNGOs do not weaken the link between UK NGDOs' operational and policy work.

**f) Supporting development awareness and education work**

- DfID should strengthen its support for UK NGDOs' efforts to increase their development awareness and educational activities.

**g) Supporting Southern capacity-building role of UK NGDOs**

- DfID should continue to support the Southern capacity building role of UK NGDOs.

**h) Promoting flexible frameworks for evaluating advocacy**

- DfID should promote the evaluation of advocacy work, whilst ensuring that efforts to develop innovative evaluation methodologies are not stifled by the imposition of frameworks which are poorly suited to the complexities of advocacy.

**5.0 Dissemination**

Dissemination activities are ongoing, and have been central throughout the research process. Research ideas and results have been presented and discussed at a variety of meetings and conferences, as follows:

a) July/August 1998: **Academic Council on the United Nations / American Society of**

**International Law, Summer Workshop** on "Globalisation and global governance: Changing roles for state and non-state actors"

- Initial proposal outlined and developed.

b) September 1998: **Development Studies Association Annual Conference**

- Presentation of literature review/research proposal.

c) January 1999: **NGOs in a Global Future Conference**

- Presentation of literature review/research proposal (Enclosed paper 1).

d) January-March 1999: **British Overseas NGOs for Development, Advocacy Workshop**

- Presentation of research proposal and participation in four day-long workshops.

- e) February 2000: **Centre for Civil Society, London School of Economics, Research Seminar**
  - Presentation of preliminary research findings paper.
  
- f) April 2000: **Association of American Geographers, Annual Conference**
  - Presentation of paper on “Advocacy across borders”.
  
- g) May 2000: **“Organising NGOs’ advocacy” discussion, National Council for Voluntary Organisations**
  - Half-day workshop organised by myself with 25 participants.

Most of the above presentations have involved the production of presentations and papers for the audience/participants. I have also responded to many requests from around the world for copies of working papers and preliminary findings. One such paper (see enclosed paper 2) is to be published as:

Hudson, A. (2000) “Making the connection: Legitimacy claims, legitimacy chains and Northern NGOs’ international advocacy” in Lewis, D. and Wallace, T. (eds.) *After the ‘new policy agenda’? Non-governmental organisations and the search for development alternatives*. Kumarian Press.

A further dissemination activity undertaken on the basis of the research was a contribution to an **Open University/BBC Programme** on “Power” for the “Ever wondered?” series of Saturday morning programmes. The contribution was to a piece on “Is people power really powerful?”

Future plans for dissemination include:

- Research reports for the NGDO staff members involved in the research, and other interested parties.
- Possible development of a web-site facilitating the dissemination of research findings.
- Publications in practitioner-oriented journals such as *Development in Practice* and *IDS Bulletin*.
- Publications in development and voluntary-sector academic journals such as *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *Third World Quarterly*, *Voluntas* and *World Development*.
- Publications in international relations academic journals such as *Alternatives*, *Global Society*, *Millennium* and *Review of International Political Economy*.

## Appendices

### Appendix A1.0 Bibliography

This short annotated bibliography provides reference to some of the most useful papers that have been consulted as part of the research process.

#### Items referred to in research report

Edwards, M. and Hulme, D. (eds.) (1992) *Making a difference: NGOs and development in a changing world*. London: Earthscan.

Held, D., McGrew, A., Goldblatt, D. and Perraton, J. (1999) *Global transformations: Politics, economics and culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Higgott, R., Underhill, G. and Bieler, A. (eds.) (2000) *Non-state actors and authority in the global system*. London: Routledge.

Lewis, D. (ed.) (1999) *International perspectives on voluntary action: Reshaping the third sector*. London: Earthscan.

O'Brien, R., Goetz, A-M., Scholte, J., and Williams, M. (2000) *Contesting global governance: Multilateral economic institutions and global social movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reinicke, W. (1998) *Global public policy: Governing without government?* Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution.

Rosenau, J. (1997) *Along the domestic-foreign frontier: Exploring governance in a turbulent world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

#### Additional literature about NGOs, the organisation of advocacy, and its evaluation

Atack, I. (1999) Four criteria of development NGO legitimacy. *World Development* Vol. 27, pp. 855-64.

Theoretical, but useful, discussion of what makes an NGO 'legitimate'.

Baranyi, S., Kibble, S., Kohen, A. and O'Neill, K. (1997) *Making solidarity effective: Northern voluntary organisations, policy advocacy and the promotion of peace in Angola and East Timor*. London: Catholic Institute of International Relations.

One of the few efforts to grapple with effectiveness - in terms of relative/comparative effectiveness of different campaigns.

Chapman, J. and Fisher, T. (1999) *Effective NGO campaigning*. New Economics Foundation.

Includes some useful tools for looking at NGO campaigning and its effectiveness.

Cleary, S. (1995) In whose interest? NGO advocacy campaigns and the poorest. An exploration of two Indonesian examples. *International Relations*, Vol. 12, pp.9-35.

Useful critique of NGO advocacy with case studies.

Coston, J. (1998) A model and typology of Government-NGO relationships. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 27, pp. 358-82.

Useful attempt to understand government-NGO relations.

Edwards, M. (1993) "Does the doormat influence the boot?": Critical thoughts on UK NGOs and international advocacy. *Development in Practice*, Vol. 3, pp.163-175.

Excellent discussion re UK NGOs and international advocacy, forms of advocacy, problems and possibilities.

Edwards, M. (1999) "Legitimacy and values in NGOs and voluntary organizations: Some sceptical thoughts", pp.258-267 in Lewis, D. (ed.) *International perspectives on voluntary action: Reshaping the third sector*. London: Earthscan.

Excellent paper on issues of legitimacy and values, institutional and developmental imperatives for NGOs.

Edwards, M. and Hulme, D. (eds.) (1995) *Non-governmental organisations - performance and accountability: Beyond the magic bullet*. London: Earthscan.

Papers from the second major UK NGOs conference - useful discussions of evaluating effectiveness.

Edwards, M., Hulme, D. and Wallace, T. (1999) NGOs in a global future: Marrying local delivery to worldwide leverage. *Public Administration and Development* Vol. 19, pp.117-136.

Background paper to the third major UK NGOs conference - about changing context for NGOs, changing roles etc.

Fowler, A. (1995) Participatory self-assessment of NGO capacity. *INTRAC Occasional Papers*, Vol. 10.

User-friendly guide to evaluation. Contains some useful conceptual frameworks, and ideas about indicators.

Fowler, A. (1996) Demonstrating NGO performance: Problems and possibilities. *Development in Practice*, Vol. 6, pp.58-65.

Discussion of some of the problems faced by NGOs in evaluating performance - multiple stakeholders, no bottom line etc.

Fowler, A. (1997) *Striking a balance: A guide to enhancing the effectiveness of non-governmental organisations in international development*. London: Earthscan.

Excellent book dealing with a whole range of NGO activities. Very user-friendly and addressed to NGO practitioners. Includes sections on North-South relations, and advocacy.

Fowler, A. (1999a) Relevance in the twenty-first century: The case for devolution and global association of international NGOs. *Development in Practice*, Vol. 9, pp. 143-151.

Useful paper about the ways in which NGOs might/should evolve.

Fowler, A. (1999b) "Advocacy and third sector organizations: A composite perspective", pp.242-257 in Lewis, D. (ed.) *International perspectives on voluntary action: Reshaping the third sector*. London: Earthscan.

Useful chapter on NGOs' advocacy activities.

Institute for Development Research (1999) *Building knowledge and community for advocacy*. A report of the workshop held January 14-15, 1999, Boston, USA.

Very useful report about IDR's work on advocacy.

Kendall, J. and Knapp, M. (1999) "Evaluation and the voluntary (nonprofit) sector: Emerging issues", pp.202-221 in Lewis, D. (ed.) *International perspectives on voluntary action: Reshaping the third sector*. London: Earthscan.

Up to date review of evaluation issues.

Koenig, B. (1996) The management of international Non-Governmental Organizations in the 1990s. *Transnational Associations*, February 1996, pp.66-72.

Useful research note about the tricky management issues which international NGOs have to grapple with.

Lewis, D. and Sobhan, B. (1999) Routes of funding, roots of trust? Northern NGOs, southern NGOs, donors, and the rise of direct funding. *Development in Practice* Vol. 9, pp.117-29.

Useful paper about the implications of direct funding.

Malena, C (1995) Relations between Northern and Southern NGOs. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 16, pp.7-30.

Interesting review of the issues facing Northern and Southern NGOs trying to develop partnerships.

Najam, A. (1996) NGO accountability: A conceptual framework. *Development Policy Review*, Vol. 14, pp.339-53.

Theoretical, but useful framework for thinking about accountability.

Najam, A. (2000) The four C's of Government-Third Sector Relations: Cooperation, Confrontation, Complimentary, Collaboration. Forthcoming in *Journal of Non-Profit Management and Leadership* .

Simple, useful model for understanding government-NGO relations.

Nelson, P. (1997) Conflict, legitimacy and effectiveness: Who speaks for whom in transnational NGO networks lobbying the World Bank? *Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Vol. 26, pp.421-41.

Useful discussion about legitimacy and impact of NGO networks lobbying the World Bank.

Nyamugasira, W. (1998) NGOs and advocacy: How well are the poor represented? *Development in Practice*, Vol. 8, pp.297-308.

Critique of NGOs' advocacy in relation to issues of legitimacy.

Rees, S. (1998) *Effective nonprofit advocacy*.

One of the few empirical attempts to assess effectiveness. Focus is on lobbying in US domestic politics, but is useful re operationalizing and studying effectiveness. Available at <<http://www.aspeninst.org/dir/polpro/nsrf/enpatoc.html>>

Roche, C. (1999) *Impact assessment for development agencies: Learning to value change*. Oxford: Oxfam GB.

Comprehensive review of and handbook for evaluation.

Roche, C. and Bush, A. (1997) Assessing the impact of advocacy work. *Appropriate Technology*, Vol. 24, pp.9-15.

Short article exclusively about assessing impact and effectiveness. Argues that evaluating effectiveness is very important and makes some suggestions for progress in this area.

de Senillosa, I. (1998) A new age of social movements: A fifth generation of non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) in the making. *Development in Practice* Vol. 8, 40-53.

Useful extension of Korten's generational model of NGOs.

Smillie, I. (1995) *The alms bazaar: Altruism under fire - non-profit organizations and international development*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.

Useful background about international NGOs.

Sogge, D. (ed.) (1996) *Compassion and calculation: The business of private foreign aid*. London: Pluto Press.

Fairly sympathetic critique of the NGO sector!

Taylor, M. (1999) "Influencing policy: A UK voluntary sector perspective", pp.182-201 in Lewis, D. (ed.) *International perspectives on voluntary action: Reshaping the third sector*. London: Earthscan.

Up to date chapter about advocacy in terms of the UK voluntary sector.

Uvin, P. and Miller, D. (1996) Paths to scaling up: Alternative strategies for local nongovernmental organisations. *Human Organisation*, Vol. 55, no.3.

Very useful attempt to provide some coherence and clarity to discussions of scaling up.



Wilkinson, M. (1996) Lobbying for fair trade: Northern NGOs, the European Community and the GATT Uruguay Round. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 17, pp.251-267.

Case study of the processes of lobbying, issues and problems.

World Vision (1997) Transnational NGOs and advocacy. *World Vision Discussion Papers*, Vol. 5.

Special issue providing background to transnational NGOs and advocacy.

Young, D. (1992) Organising principles for international advocacy associations. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Non-Profit Organisations*, Vol. 3, pp.1-28.

Discussion of problems for international advocacy associations, varieties of organizational structure etc.

Young, D., Koenig, B., Najam, A. and Fisher, J. (1999) Strategy and structure in managing global associations. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Non-Profit Organisations* Vol. 10, pp. 323-43.

Excellent paper looking at pros and cons of different organisational frameworks.

Zadek, S. (1996) Value-based organisation: Organising NGOs for value-based effectiveness. *New Economics Foundation Working Paper*.

Provides some interesting tools for thinking about NGOs and their effectiveness - basically, a stakeholder approach.

## **Appendix A2.0 The research process**

*This appendix is included to provide further information about the research process. It is a research process appendix, rather than a collection of data, for reasons of space and confidentiality.*

### **Appendix A2.1: Research activities**

*This is a record of meetings that took place as part of the research.*

#### **April 1998**

Research meeting with Michael Edwards, NGO practitioner and researcher

#### **June 1998**

Research meeting with Raj Thamotheram, Ethical Trading Initiative

#### **July 1998**

Academic Council on the United Nations/American Society of International Law Summer Workshop

#### **August 1998**

Research meeting with Richard Bennett, BOND

Research meeting with David Lewis, LSE

Research meeting with Elsa Dawson, Strategic Planning and Evaluation Department, Oxfam

#### **September 1998**

Research meeting with Rick Davies, Centre for Development Studies, University of Swansea  
Development Studies Association Conference

#### **October 1998**

Funding applications to DfID and Nuffield

#### **January 1999**

“NGOs in a Global Future” conference

#### **February 1999**

BOND Advocacy Workshop Session 1

BOND Advocacy Workshop Session 2

#### **March 1999**

BOND Advocacy Workshop Session 3

Research interview, Africa Resources Trust

BOND Advocacy Workshop Session 4

#### **May 1999**

Short presentation to UK Trade Network

#### **June 1999**

Research interview, Africa Resources Trust

Research interview, BOND

Attendance at DSA NGO study group on NGOs and Institutional Change

Research interview, Traidcraft Exchange

Research interview, Wateraid

#### **July 1999**

Research interview, Banana Link

Research interview, Marie Stopes International

Research interview, Christian Aid

Research interview, CAFOD

Research interview, Babymilk Action

Research interview, Population Concern

Research interview, Consumers International  
Research interview, Action on Disability and Development  
Research interview, ACORD  
Research interview, Commonwealth Medical Association  
Research interview, Help Age International  
Research interview, Healthlink Worldwide

#### August 1999

Research interview, Action Aid  
Research interview, Akina Mama wa Afrika  
Research interview, Anti-Slavery International  
Research interview, CIIR  
Research interview, Wateraid  
Research interview, Intermediate Technology  
Research interview, Minority Rights Group International  
Research interview, DfID  
Research interview, Christian Aid  
Research interview, Action Aid  
Research interview, DfID  
Research interview, Childhope UK

#### September 1999

Research interview, VSO  
Research interview, Tourism Concern  
Research interview, DfID  
Research interview, International HIV/AIDS Alliance  
Research interview, DfID  
Research interview, Action Aid  
Research interview, Tearfund  
Research interview, DfID  
Research interview, DfID

#### October 1999

Research interview, World Development Movement  
Research interview, World Vision  
Research interview, War on Want  
Research interview, Save the Children Fund  
Research interview, Oxfam  
Research interview, Oxfam

#### February 2000

Seminar presentation at LSE Centre for Civil Society

#### May 2000

“Organising NGOs’ advocacy” research findings meeting at NCVO

#### *Appendix A2.2: Preliminary meetings*

Preliminary meetings were held with:

- Michael Edwards – Former head of research at Save the Children Fund, and NGO commentator
- Raj Thamotheram – Former director of the Ethical Trading Initiative
- Richard Bennett – Director of BOND
- David Lewis – Centre for Civil Society, LSE
- Elsa Dawson – Strategic Planning and Evaluation Department, Oxfam
- Rick Davies – Centre for Development Studies, University of Swansea

Appendix A2.3: Interview request letter

*This is an example of the letter that was sent to request research interviews.*



Tel.: 44 (0) 1223 333364

Fax: 44 (0) 1223 333392

E-Mail: ach1005@cam.ac.uk

Mr. John Smith,  
Global Concern,  
London.

18<sup>th</sup> August 1999

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am in the process of conducting a research project concerning the advocacy and lobbying work of international NGOs and am writing to ask if you would be willing to meet up with me, or my research assistant, for a research interview

The research project is titled "Organising NGOs' transnational advocacy: Organisational frameworks and organisational effectiveness", and aims to inform NGOs' advocacy work to improve its effectiveness. I should like to stress that this is not just an "academic" piece of research; I am fully committed to producing practically-useful findings and welcome the input of practitioners to make this possible.

I am particularly interested in the ways in which NGOs organise their advocacy work, whether and how such work is linked to operational programmes, and how issues of accountability, governance and legitimacy are dealt with. In addition, I am interested in whether and how NGOs assess the effectiveness of their advocacy and lobbying work.

The research interview would be conducted at your convenience at sometime over the next few weeks, and would last for approximately an hour. I promise to respect the confidentiality of your responses and, if you wish, provide you with a summary report on the outcomes of my research.

If you are willing, in principle, to meet up with me for a research interview please drop me a line so that we can make arrangements. I would be extremely grateful if you would be prepared to meet up with me.

Thanks for taking the time to read this, and to consider my request. Please get in touch if you have any questions or require any clarification. I look forward to hearing from you - e-mail is best.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Alan Hudson

*Appendix A2.4: Organisations involved in the research*

*This is a list of the NGOs and other organisations which directly contributed to the research through research interviews.*

ACORD

Action Aid

Action on Disability and Development

Africa Resources Trust

Akina Mama wa Afrika

Anti-Slavery International

Babymilk Action

Banana Link

British Overseas NGOs for Development

CAFOD

Catholic Institute for International Relations

Child Hope

Christian Aid

Commonwealth Medical Association

Consumers International

DfID

Healthlink Worldwide

Help Age International

Intermediate Technology

International HIV/AIDS Alliance

Marie Stopes International

Minority Rights Group International

Oxfam

PANOS

Population Concern

Save the Children Fund

Tearfund

Tourism Concern

Traidcraft

VSO

War on Want

Wateraid

World Development Movement

World Vision

**Appendix A2.5: An interview agenda**

*This is an example of the sort of agenda that was used during semi-structured research interviews.*

**Introduction**

Where does Global Concern fit in the landscape of UK-based development NGOs? Similar organisations, competitors, collaborators?

How is Global Concern funded?

**Organising advocacy**

What does Global Concern understand advocacy to mean?

Does Global Concern have a stated advocacy strategy?

What is the position of advocacy within the organisation? Has this changed over the years? Why?

**Organisational structures: Targets, donors and partners**

Target groups:

What target groups do you advocate to? How do you do advocacy? On a day-to-day basis?

Is DfID a target?

Donors:

What are your relations with DfID like?

Do you receive DfID funding (for advocacy)?

How do relations with donors affect your advocacy work? Any constraints?

Partners and family:

Could you tell me a bit about the Global Concern family? How does it work?

How do you work with partners? Are they Global Concern partners or external partners? How does advocacy link with work with partners?

How do you decide which issues to focus on?

Do you consider yourself to be representing anybody when you do advocacy?

Where does your legitimacy as an advocate come from?

What happens when different parts of the family disagree?

## **Effectiveness, evaluation and accountability**

### **Effectiveness**

What factors make a campaign in/effective?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of Global Concern as an advocate?

### **Evaluation**

Do you do any assessment of advocacy impact and effectiveness?

If you don't, why not and any pressure to do so? (Internal and/or external)

If you do assess, why and how and for whom? Separate evaluation department?

Criteria of effectiveness? Clear goals? Output or process?

Do you think assessment is worth doing?

What do you do with the assessments? Do they have any impact?

Is evaluation necessary for accountability and legitimacy?

To whom are you accountable for your advocacy work? Upward and/or downward? Southern board members?

### **Futures**

How do you see Global Concern changing over the next 5 or 10 years?

What do you think the role of NNGOs will be in 5 or 10 years time?

Other issues?

Useful output?

Appendix A2.6: Initial results categories

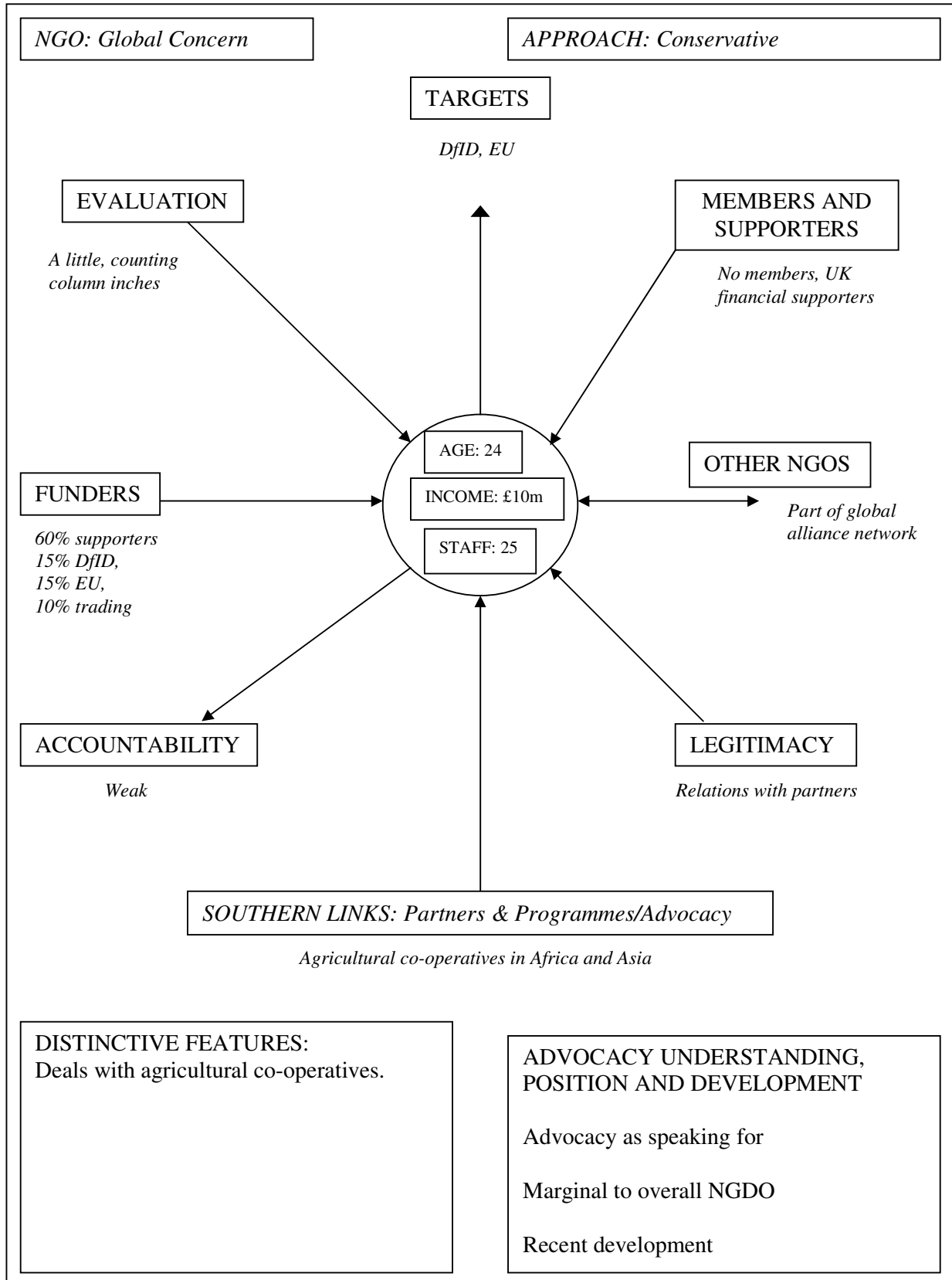
*These are the categories which were used in an 'initial results' table, to compare the NGDOs examined.*

- 1) Aims
- 2) Year of establishment
- 3) Annual Report: Do we have one? If so, what year?
- 4) Income: Year and source of information
- 5) Expenditure: Year and source of information
- 6) Staffing size: Tiny (<10), Small (<30), Medium (<71) large (>70): and total/UK split
- 7) Funding mix: Public donations, NGO grants, private grants, Govt. grants, income generation
- 8) International structure: Self-contained, loose network, tight network, federation.
- 9) Advocacy?: Understanding of advocacy
- 10) Position of advocacy within the NGDO: none, marginal, important, central
- 11) Experience of advocacy: new (2 years), recent (5), established (12), long-standing (22), always (23+)
- 12) Advocacy issues: Permanent, cyclical; Key issues or products.
- 13) Key target groups
- 14) Advocacy strategy: none, vague, clear, precise
- 15) Donor constraints: No, maybe, sometimes, yes
- 16) DfID relations: none, poor, OK, good
- 17) Partners: type
- 18) Programmes and advocacy connection: unconnected, loose link, integrated
- 19) Legitimacy sources
- 20) Accountability, downward: weak, moderate, good
- 21) Southern board members: no, token, yes
- 22) Evaluation of advocacy: none, a little, some, lots
- 23) Evaluation for whom: self, partners, donors
- 24) Evaluation why?
- 25) Evaluation, what?
- 26) Self-reflexive: a learning and thinking organisation? Yes or no?
- 27) Useful output: what would be useful in terms of research output
- 28) Strict advocacy?: representing or not?
- 29) Membership organisation: no or yes (types)
- 30) Approach: conservative, progressive, radical
- 31) Importance of channelling funds: none, marginal, important, central



**Appendix A2.7: “Organisational shape” template**

This is an example of the template which was developed and used to summarise the “organisational shape” of individual NGOs.



**Appendix A2.8: A typology of NGDOs**

*This is a simple typology which was used to help me to make sense of the range of NGDOs.*

**Appendix A2.9: Codes and definitions**

*These are the “level 1” codes which were used in the analysis of the qualitative data within Atlas.ti, with brief descriptions of what they referred to.*

**Accountability:** The extent and nature of reporting and information provision to Southern partners about what’s being done and why.

**Activities:** The activities (especially advocacy) of the NGDO.

**Advocacy approach:** The approach of the NGDO to advocacy.

**Advocacy development:** The ways in which the position of advocacy within the NGDO has developed.

**Advocacy initiation:** How and from where advocacy issues and positions arise.

**Advocacy position:** The position of advocacy within the wider NGDO.

**Advocacy strategy-clear:** Instances where the NGDO has a clearly stated advocacy strategy.

**Advocacy strategy-none:** Instances where the NGDO does not have an advocacy strategy.

**Advocacy strategy-precise:** Instances where the NGDO has a precise advocacy strategy, with indicators of success and failure.

**Advocacy strategy-vague:** Instances where the NGDO has a vague advocacy strategy.

**Advocacy tension:** The possibility/existence of tensions between advocacy and other NGDO activities such as marketing and fund-raising.

**Advocacy understanding:** What the NGDO understands advocacy to be.

**Advocacy why:** How the NGDO justifies doing advocacy.

**Board members:** Who is on the Board? Any Southern members?

**Capacity building:** The importance attached to doing capacity-building.

**Chain of advocacy/legitimacy:** The link between the micro and the macro.

**Channelling:** The importance or not of channelling funds to the South.

**Civil Society:** The importance of civil society.

**Comparative advantage:** The comparative advantages of Northern NGOs.

**Confusion:** Uncertainty about who to deal with in NGOs or DfID.

**Constituency:** Public supporter base.

**CSCF:** Views about the Civil Society Challenge Fund.

**Decentralisation:** Reorganisations of NGDOs.

**DfID:** General comments about DfID.

**DfID-NGOs symbiosis:** The symbiosis between DfID and NGDOs.

**DfID relations:** General comments re NGDO relations with DfID.

**DfID relations-good:** That DfID-NGDO relations are good.

**DfID relations-OK:** That DfID-NGDO relations are OK.

**DfID relations-poor:** That DfID-NGDO relations are poor.

**Direct funding:** Changes in the funding regime, implications and views.

**Division of labour:** Roles of Northern and Southern NGOs.

**Donor constraints:** Possibility that a target group also being a donor might introduce tensions.

**Donor constraints-maybe:** Recognition that it might be an issue.

**Donor constraints-no:** Declaration that it is not an issue.

**Donor constraints-sometimes:** Acceptance that it is sometimes an issue.

**Donor constraints-yes:** Experience of it having been an issue.

**Effectiveness:** Things which contribute to effective advocacy.

**Evaluation-what:** What is done in terms of evaluating advocacy.

**Evaluation-whom:** Who evaluations are done for.

**Evaluation-why:** Why evaluations are done.

**Evaluation criteria:** What criteria or indicators are used in evaluations.

**Evaluation impact:** What impacts evaluations have.

**Evaluation participatory:** Arguments for more participatory evaluations.

**Evaluation pressure:** What pressures – internal and external – there are to evaluate advocacy.

**Evaluation problems:** What problems there are with evaluating advocacy.

**Evaluation process or impact:** Whether evaluation is/should be about evaluating process and/or impact.

**Financial independence:** Importance of financial independence (from DfID) and having a range of funders.

**Flexibility:** That flexibility (or lack of strategy) is a good thing.

**Funding:** Funding sources and how they make a difference to the NGDO's activities.

**Goal clarity importance:** The importance of having clear goals.

**Governance:** How the NGDO is governed.

**History:** What the history of the NGDO is.

**Impact:** Examples of advocacy impact.

**Influencing:** That influencing is what should be done, rather than advocacy.

**International advocacy:** Advocacy about issues in both North and South.

**International-federation:** That the NGDO is part of an international federation.

**International-loose:** That the NGDO is part of a loose international family.

**International-tight:** That the NGDO is part of a tight international family.

**International-organisation:** What the international organisation of the NGDO is.

**Issues:** What issues the NGDO advocates about.

**Legitimacy:** Comments about the legitimacy of the NGDO's advocacy.

**Legitimacy-internal:** Questions about the legitimacy/value of advocacy, from within the NGDO.

**Legitimacy or mandate:** A distinction between legitimacy and mandate.

**Legitimacy sources:** Where NGDOs (claim) to get their legitimacy as advocates from.

**Logframes:** The use of logframes in planning and evaluation.

**Membership:** Whether the NGDO is (part of) a membership organisation.

**NGO competition:** Competition between NGDOs and its impact.

**NGO cooperation:** Instances of cooperation between NGDOs, and constraints to it.

**NGO future:** The future direction of the individual NGDO.

**NGO identity:** The NGDO's identity, and how/why its maintained.

**NGO niche:** What the NGDO considers its niche to be.

**NGO sector future:** Comments about the future of the NGDO sector.

**NGO subcontracting:** Reasons for subcontracting from larger to smaller NGDOs.

**NGOs to listen to:** How DfID decides which NGDOs to listen to.

**NNGO value:** Comments about the value which NGDOs add to international development.

**North-South:** North-South issues and tensions in advocacy work.

**Organisational structures:** How the NGDO is organised – issues and problems.

**Partner selection:** Ways in which Southern partners are selected (for advocacy).

**Partners:** Relations with partners and the importance of these.

**Programmes and advocacy:** The link between programmes and advocacy.

**Representation:** Whether or not the NGDO (claims to) represent Southern communities.

**Restructuring:** Restructuring of NGDOs and the position of advocacy.

**SNGO advocacy:** Understanding of, and calls for, Southern advocacy.

**Social audit:** Comments about the use of social audit.

**Specialism:** That the NGDO is a (technical) specialist, and what difference this makes.

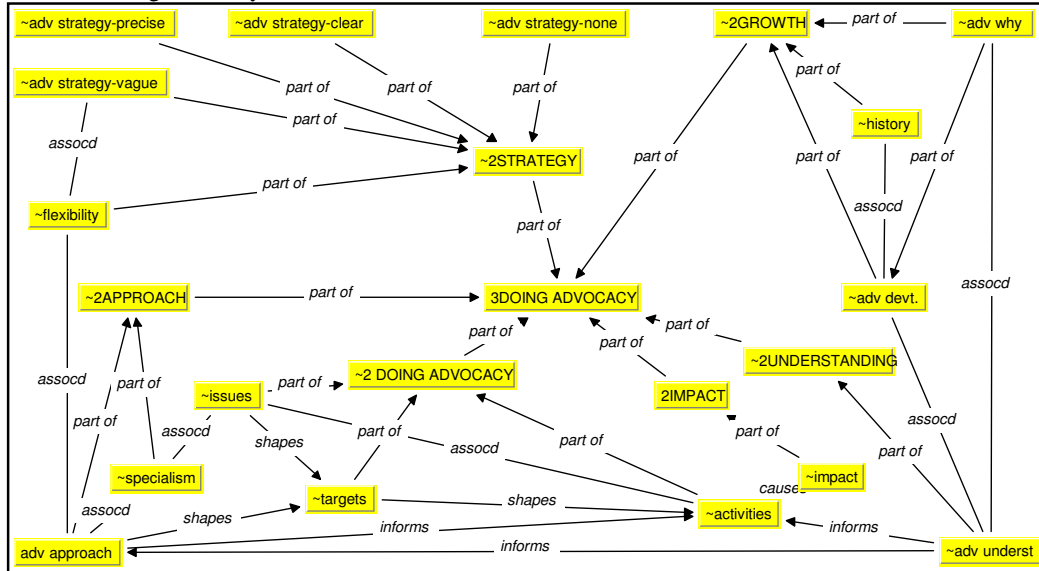
**Targets:** Different ways of relating to target groups.

**Values:** The values of a specific NGDO, or the role of values in general.

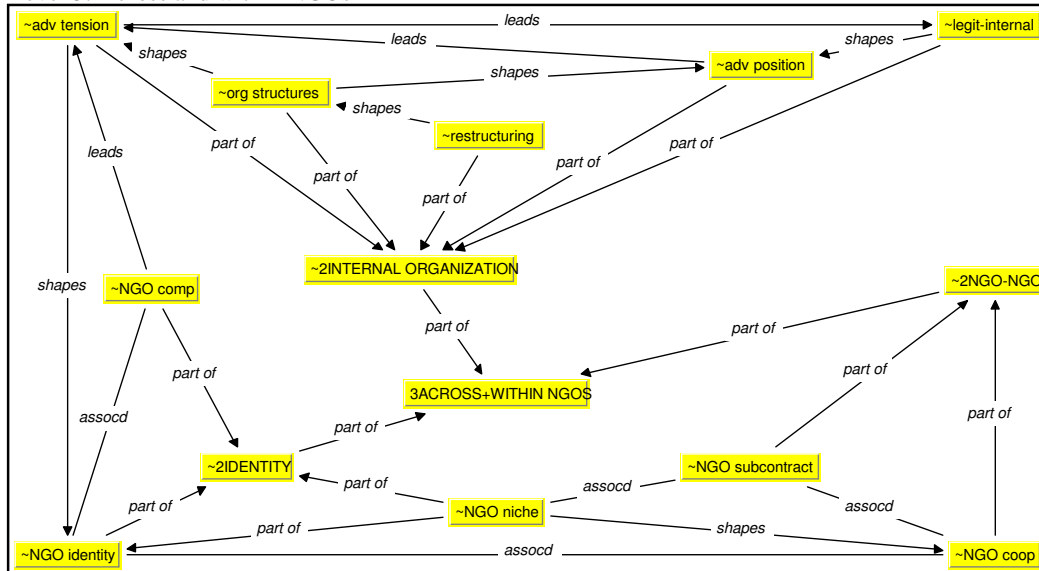
**Appendix A2.10 Code groups diagrams from Atlas**

These diagrams, generated from Atlas.ti, show the ways in which codes and code groups were built up.

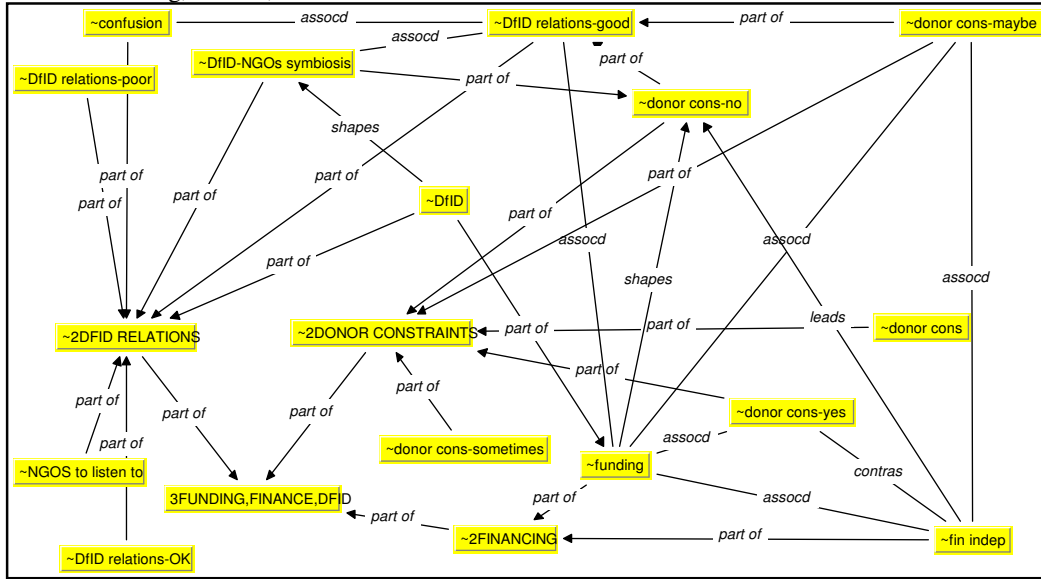
**Level 3: Doing advocacy**



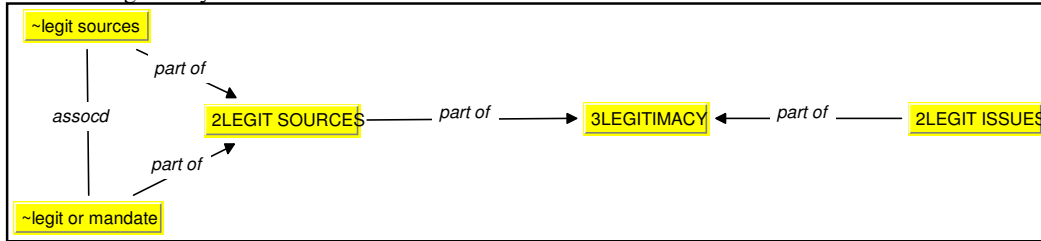
**Level 3: Across and within NGOs**



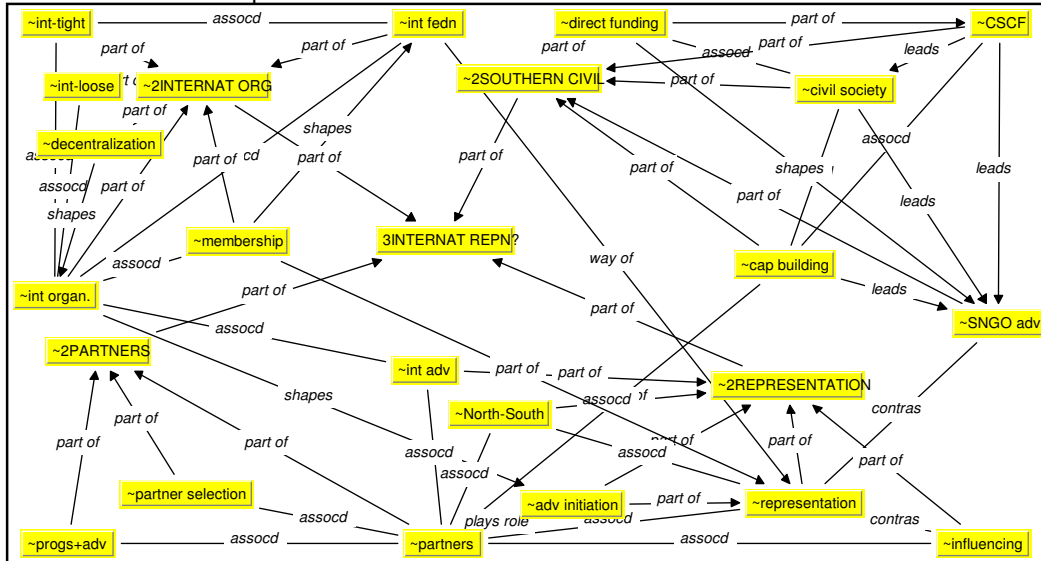
Level 3: Funding, finance, and DfID relations



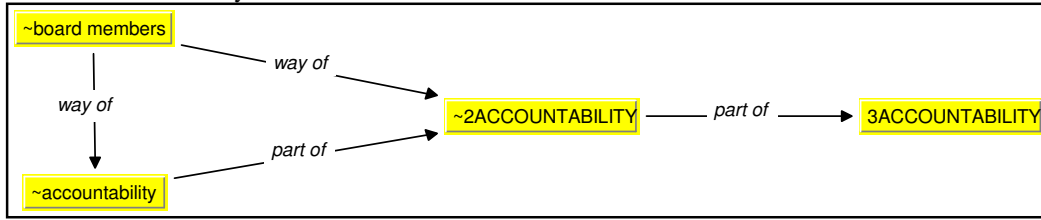
Level 3: Legitimacy



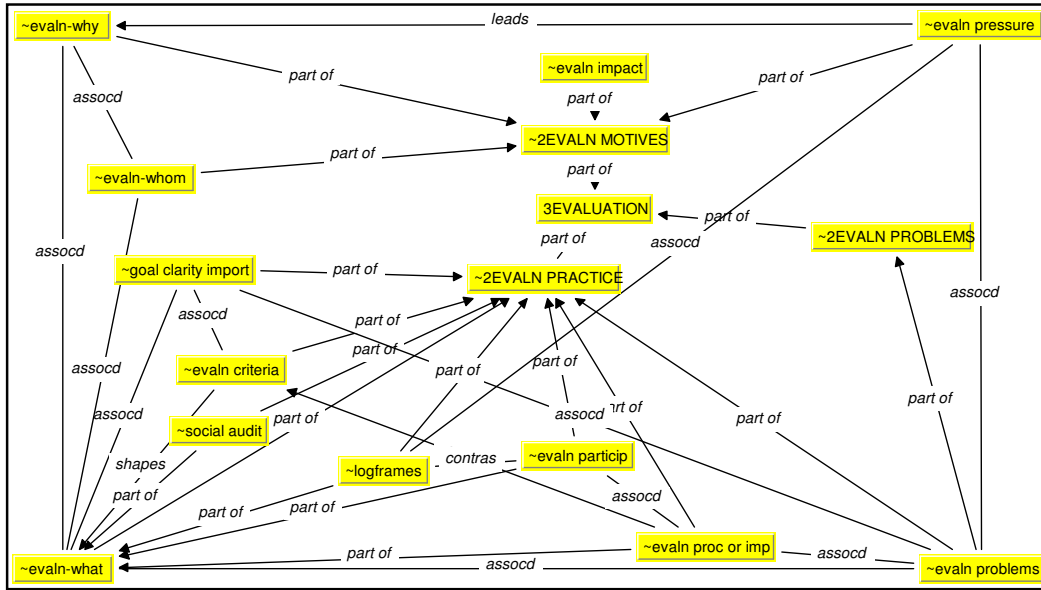
Level 3: International representation?



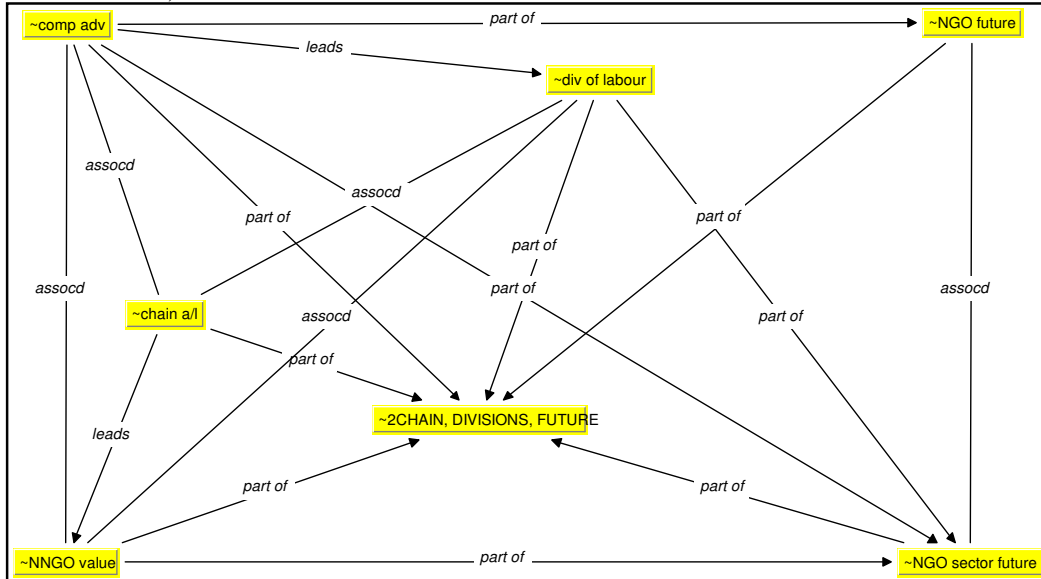
### Level 3: Accountability



### Level 3: Evaluation



### Level 2: Chains, divisions of labour and NGO futures





**Appendix A2.11: Code groups written about and definitions**

*This provides brief descriptions of the “level 2” code groups which have been written up and how they feed into “level 3” codes.*

**Level 3: Doing advocacy**

Level 2: Understanding: - what NGOs understand advocacy to be

Level 2: Growth – extent, ways in which, and reasons why, NGOs have moved further towards advocacy.

Level 2: Doing advocacy – how the NGOs go about doing advocacy in practice.

Level 2: Impact – examples of impacts of advocacy.

Level 2: Approach – the diversity of NGO approaches to advocacy, including being a ‘specialist’ NGO, the value of such diversity, and how approaches shape relations with targets including DfID.

Level 2: Strategy – whether the NGOs have advocacy strategies, how clear they are, and implications of this.

**Level 3: Across and within NGOs**

Level 2: NGO-NGO – NGOs working together, either through co-operation or sub-contracting.

Level 2: Identity – that NGOs have identities or niches, how and why they are built and maintained, and what the implications of this are.

Level 2: Internal organization – position of advocacy within NGOs and its relationship with other parts of the NGO – misunderstandings, marginalisation, justification, relations with fund-raising.

**Level 3: Funding, finance, and DfID**

Level 2: DfID relations – DfID-NGO relations, their form and quality, and changes in the relationship.

Level 2: Financing – funding, funding sources, financial independence.

Level 2: Donor constraints – the dual-role (target/funder) issue, experiences of it, reasons why it’s not such a big issue, wider issues and the future.

**Level 3: Legitimacy**

Level 2: Legit issues – issues around legitimacy

Level 2: Legit sources - where NGOs (claim) to get their legitimacy as advocates from.

**Level 3: International representation?**

Level 2: Internat organization – the international structure of the NGO, really global or not, decentralisation trends

Level 2: Representation – whether and how the NGOs represent anyone, what they do if they don’t represent.

Level 2: Partners – programmes-advocacy link, the role of partners, and partner selection.

Level 2: Southern civil – NGOs’ and DfID’s efforts to develop Southern civil society.

**Level 3: Accountability** – why accountability is an issue, whether NGOs are accountable, to whom, how, and problems of accountability.

**Level 3: Evaluation**

Level 2: Evaln motives – reasons for, and pressures to evaluate advocacy.

Level 2: Evaln practice – what evaluation of advocacy takes place.

Level 2: Evaln problems – problems around the evaluation of advocacy.

**Level 3: Chains, divisions of labour and NGO futures** – the fact that there is a chain of advocacy, with emerging divisions of labour, which are based on comparative advantages, including the ability of NNGOs to add value, which in turn shape the future of NNGOs and the NGO sector.