Civil Society, Public Policy and Governance in Two South Indian States, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract
It is often assumed that civil society influence on governance* has to be complementary to the state through conciliatory approaches. Contrary to that assumption, a study of civil society organizations in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh shows that the civil society can influence the governance process through multiple strategies. These include conciliatory approaches, adversarial approaches and a combination of these two, depending on the issue or policy on which the influence is sought to be brought. This paper illustrates the above while considering the examples of two intermediary NGOs: one from Karnataka and the other from Andhra Pradesh, India. The question this paper seeks to is, in the context of globalization and the supposedly prominent role of civil society, how effective are NGOs as policy advocates? This paper argues that they still happen to be subsidiary partners in the paradigm of ‘governance-through-networks’. A major chunk of public policy influence still rests with, first the state, and secondly, multilateral donor organizations and multinational companies. All the same civil society activism in itself should be a welcome presence and there need not be a cause for skepticism.

Introduction

Civil society is defined in various ways. In fact, the term has been so vaguely overused that it has almost lost its core meaning namely, the organizations and associations that are non-governmental in structure in addition to being in the realm of civic associations with a considerable distance from the state and the party system. There exist numerous definitions of civil society. In political theory, there are three broad streams through which ‘civil society’ is studied. First is the L-stream, that is, the Lockean notion of civil society in terms of state of nature. Many civil society protagonists take a cue from this notion in explaining that society is prior to state to mean that civil society is prior to state or political society. The second is the M-stream; the Montesquieu- de Tocqueville stream centred around the importance of civic associations and associational life particularly as it obtained in America at the time of de Tocqueville’s study. Here civic associations are strength to the civil society as also the democratic political culture. The third strand that can be discerned is that of the Hegelian tradition from which also follows the Marxian theorization. Hegel defines civil society as the a domain between the family and the state, while Marx incorporates the market and economic realm also into the definition.

When we speak of civil society, the one important aspect that needs to be kept in view is that the current theorization on civil society is significantly informed by
the 1989 events of the collapse of the Berlin wall and that of the erstwhile Soviet Union. As Kennedy and Galtz (1996) observe with respect to the then actually existing socialism, the velvet revolutions have crucially brought in the questions of spontaneous and voluntary assertion of civil society over authoritarian states.

The debate on the democratization processes in the third world during the 1980s also drew heavily from the above historical circumstances for considering the civil society as one of the chief sources of support for democratic governance. Therefore, the debate in the third world revolved not only around establishing democratic polities and societies as in the old modernization theory, but also focused on broadening the frontiers of democratic processes and deepening their reach to cover and include those hitherto left out from its purview.

As Shinchi Shigetomi (1980) writes the origin of developmental NGOs is most often owing to the failure of either the state or market or community or all the three. The NGOs also are officially non-political in nature, but their work has a considerable influence and implications for political systems. They can work on development issues while attempting to have policy advocacy wings that constantly engage the state at different levels. These NGOs particularly fall under the category of intermediate and State level NGOs that have deep connections with the grassroots level NGOs or work with non-state donors and funders such as the UNDP, UNESCO, Ford Foundation, CIDA, NORAD, SIDA, Danida, USAID, OXFAM, HIVOS, Action Aid and many such non-state, multi-national donors. Besides, these organizations also maintain strong solidarity networks. For example, The Voluntary Associations Network of India (VANI).

In this paper we use the term ‘civil society’ as connoting developmental NGOs. These NGOs This also present the most commonly striking image of civil society and is predominantly been come to be accepted as such. We use this category to connote non-governmental organizations that occupy the space of non-state and non-family associations. In other words, we use the term civil society as NGOs that are organized and recognized under the law. These are usually called non-governmental organizations or NGOs. Therefore we deal in this study with NGOs( Non-Governmental Organizations) that are organized and that have legality as one of their founding principles.

This paper deals with NGOs as defined above in their interface with public policy. What is sought to be explored in this paper is the relationship between NGOs and public policy and governance. The central concept of governance that we intend to take up to deal with in this study is that of governance-through-networks. The state and its governance is supposed to have changed from a ‘provider state’ in to one of a ‘facilitator state’. Besides, the state is supposed to be governing through networks with multi-national donors such as the World Bank and the IMF along with various donor organizations at different levels, and domestically with civil society as defined above and various other networks such as advocacy groups, research groups and so on. According to this paradigm, governance is no longer what the government does, but the governance through networks of which the state is only a component albeit *primus inter pares*. 
Against this backdrop the relationship between the state and the civil society is presented on the following lines.

**Civil society** ↔ **Public Policy** ↔ **Governance**

Fig: 1- Civil society, governance and public policy

The civil society is assumed to influence the governance process through influencing public policy. This relationship is examined in this study. Besides, there are also other paradigms of governance such as the World Bank notion of governance and the UNDP notion of governance. According to the World Bank, governance basically embodies ‘good governance’ meaning accountability, transparency, responsiveness, procedural simplicity and moral governance. The World Bank places an additional emphasis on the dimensions of accountability and responsiveness concerning governance. This notion also lays stress on the procedural simplicity and a smaller organizational structure of the state, and therefore its emphasis on computerization, electronic governance and mobile governance and so on. The World Bank stresses on a truncated and thinner state machinery while arguing for a roll back of the state and against big government and bloated bureaucracy. The presence of bloated bureaucracy is seen as synonymous with rent-seeking. On the other side, governance involving a limited though effective, efficient and economic role of the state is most suitable for accountable and transparent and responsive governance for the World Bank. Usually the third world state is seen as burdened with an over-bloated bureaucracy and therefore is the need for reducing the size of the state and downsizing of its bureaucracy.

The UNDP views the process of governance, which it calls ‘democratic governance’, differently. According to the UNDP the process of governance is to be carried on through a tri-sector model. In this tri-sector model, the state the market and the civil society happen to be the primary players. The state is not given a short-shrift in this model instead, is treated on par with the market. A more important addition is the civil society which the UNDP considers as the guarantor not only of governance but also democratic governance. Democratic governance is premised upon the existence of a civil society. In the absence of an autonomous and vigilant civil society, the state can become autocratic and markets unaccountable. This tri-sector model envisages the role of a watch dog for the civil society and more. Civil society is the guarantor of civil rights, democratic freedoms against societal tyranny and of human rights in general with respect to the state and markets. The paradigm also envisages that the three sectors work in concert with each other in terms of ensuring not just good governance but democratic governance. Liberal democracy is seen as fundamentally premised on an autonomous associational and civic life that guarantees social solidarity and social capital. Thus the UNDP paradigm of democratic governance has become an influential model for advocating democratic reforms all over the world.
In this paper, we try to examine the empirical relationship between civil society, public policy and governance. The model adopted here presumes that the civil society, public policy and governance share a linear relationship. That is the civil society influences the governance process by way of influencing the public policies of the state. That is by working on the public policies of the state, civil society attempts to influence governance. The civil society, as an autonomous actor, attempts advocate either for or against public policies thereby influencing the process of governance. The relationship envisaged between civil society, public policy and governance is linear in nature. Therefore, this paper attempts to examine as to how specific NGOs, at a certain level in the polity, try to influence the policies of the governments and thereby the governance process.

Recent trends emerging in the civil society activism in India have brought about different other concepts of influencing the public policy as well, such as directly appealing to the public at large and the voters. A recent Jan Lokpal movement led by Anna Hazare, a social activist, envisages a circular relationship where the civil society pressurizes the state to formulate policies via pressures built through a broad public appeal. This latter process, however, lies outside the purview of this paper.

In this paper, we try to empirically interrogate whether a linear relationship as posited above (i.e., Figure-1) has actually become a prominent relation between the state and civil society. Can the civil society succeed in influencing public policy? What are the empirical ways and means through which can civil society succeed in this process? This is the central problematic of this paper.

This study argues that the concept of civil society is a political concept since it is often defined contra state and family. Empirically too, civil society, as is often argued, does not just limit itself to non-political aspects but also explicitly or implicitly concerns itself with various aspects of politics and related aspects. Also in this context, how ‘the political’ is defined also matters enormously. A broader definition of politics envisages that many aspects of the civil society activism can be considered as political. For example, in the case of policy advocacy and civil rights, the issues raised by NGOs are explicitly and directly political in nature even as they deal with power and the powerful.

The concept of governance became prominent after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the state—socialist societies. The structural adjustment programmes in the late eighties and early nineties too led to a rethinking on the state. The argument was that the state needed reform: the big government and provider state had failed. The state needs to be rolled back from its role in general and that of economy in particular. What was advocated was a diminished but efficient state that could operate as a facilitator for capital. This also led to the theorization as to what were the emerging circumstances and, what the state and it’s functioning—governance—should be. This theory on the state was not just the making of political scientists but was also largely propagated by the Bretton Woods institutions to suit their lending policies. It was more than an academic theory. The theory of neo-liberal ‘good governance’ is also related to this change.
The neo-liberal good governance also focuses on various aspects of governance such as public-private partnerships, outsourcing of the public sector tasks to the private sector, privatizing the public sector and liberalizing of the economy. The neo-liberal governance reforms are accompanied by the neo-liberal economic reforms. Indeed the partnerships with the civil society are also often termed as public-private partnerships, though this is not a fully agreed idea by the civil society. The definitional battles on the civil society overshadow this particular way of characterizing the civil society. However, neo-liberal governance reforms do view civil society as one of the handmaids of neo-liberal governance.

In fact Munshi, Abraham and Chowdhuri\(^8\) clearly point out in their review of the criticisms of the concept of good governance that:

‘The discovery of institutional elements in market reforms led to a concern for good governance to make the neo-liberal economic programme efficient. A close look at the programmes supported by the World Bank under the heading ‘good governance’ shows that they are meant to shrink the state and make it more efficient and at the same time shift the balance of power in favour of private individuals and groups.’ (Italics in the original) (Munshi, Abraham, Chowdhuri: 2009, pp12-13)

This is in addition to focusing on ‘development management’ and governance principles that are devoid of political content which the above authors call ‘politics without politics’ (pp20-21). This involves fundamentally, applying of management principles for development and administration without considering the political aspects of governance that is, basically viewing state and developmental processes as apolitical or non-political in their essence.

**Role of Civil society in Governance**

One view of the relationship of civil society with governance invokes the same arguments of velvet revolutions in the context of developing countries as well. And this approach sees the state as an inadequate institution to meet the demands of the present times. For this, the civil society and the market are to fill the gap that state has evacuated. These arguments view the situation of the state itself in the present context. For example, Ezra Mbogori ane Hope Chigudu\(^9\) say in their ‘Civil Society and Government: A Continuum of Possibilities’ that:

‘The state is no longer the final arbiter of all decisions, and brute force is yielding to an enlightened approach that values the continual engagement of citizens. Even in the more democratic states, many people expect more from democracy than simply the right to enter a voting booth every five years.’ (pp111-112)

These protagonists of civil society often hold that in the context of a changed constellation of circumstances, the role of civil society is prominent in governance: That civil society holds the state, and, to a lesser extent the market,
accountable; and intervenes in policy making; advocates new policies; or holds in
abeyance the policies that are not in favour of public good; and finally helps the
state implement its policies. This view sees the state not just as collaborating
with the governments but also as the one locked up in contestation when and
where necessary. For example, two quotations from the above authors Mbogori
and Chigudu make this quite clear:

‘Civil society makes a unique contribution to the democratic
process through advocacy campaigns and, on occasion, outright
opposition to government. In the past two decades, civil society has
played an essential role in literally toppling governments from
Philippines and Panama to South Africa and Czechoslovakia’
(pp115-116)

As mentioned earlier, this paper focuses on the relations between the civil
society and public policy. This is done by considering two empirical instances,
where we attempt to see whether the civil society can influence public policy
either through collaboration or contestation. The civil society influence on the
government need not be just that of cooperation and collaboration alone; civil
society organizations can employ a repertoire of processes of which contestation
and conflict too are significant.

Here we try to examine state-civil society relationships at the State level. The
empirical sites of research include two southern Indian states Karnataka and
Andhra Pradesh. Major intermediary level NGOs i.e., NGOs with a considerable
capacity to carry out the advocacy for public policy have been selected both in
Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. These are called intermediary because they
work both with international and national donors above and with grassroots
partner and network-NGOs below. These often operate at the State level and
have personnel and wherewithal to interact with governments.
A question may arise as to whether we can extrapolate the two comparative case
studies so as to generalise for the entire country. But the point is, every Indian
State has such large intermediary NGOs that operate from the State capitals.
Samarthan, for example, is such a case in Madhya Pradesh; Centre for Youth
and Social Development (CYSD) in Orissa is also an example of such large scale
NGOs that operate from the State level. Similarly, Unnati in Rajasthan and
Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra (SSK) of Uttar Pradesh are conspicuous examples of
such State level intermediary NGO much like the Samarthan and CYSD
mentioned above. In this paper, therefore, we consider NGOs and civil society
organizations of similar nature at the State level. We have chosen the two south
Indian States for that purpose and the NGOs from each of the south Indian
States Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are: MYRADA (Mysore Resettlement and
Development Agency) from Karnataka and CWS (Centre for World Solidarity)
from Andhra Pradesh. These two are long established and highly respected civil
society organizations with a long standing experience in policy advocacy and
interface with governments. In the following sections, we examine the relationships of civil society organizations as mentioned above, in their attempts to foster policy change and influence the governance process. First we examine MYRADA’s experience in the State of Karnataka and then, we examine the experience of CWS in Andhra Pradesh; and later, we make an attempt to look at these case studies together from a comparative case study perspective.

**Karnataka**

As mentioned above, this section deals with the experiences of MYRADA in the State of Karnataka in terms of its efforts to influence the public policies and the governance process. Prior to that, however, a brief look at the nature of NGO sector in Karnataka is necessary. Historically, NGOs have evolved in Karnataka out of religion-based institutions and freedom movement. Many religion-based organizations apart, there are also a number of Gandhian NGOs that are involved in constructive work in terms of focusing on illiteracy, Dalit upliftment and welfare and poverty eradication. Religion and freedom movement, much like in many other parts of the country, are two sources of voluntarism and NGO work in Karnataka. So far as NGOs’ relationship with the State government is concerned, it has evolved tangentially with that of the approach of the central government in respect of plan documents. However, Karnataka holds a special place in the sense that the GOK (the Government of Karnataka) was the first to enter into an equal partnership with a bilateral donor Swiss Development Agency, and one of the oldest and highly respected NGOs of the state, Myrada. This happened as far back as 1986, when the discourse on civil society and state and the relation between them had not yet reached the Indian shores. The NGOs in Karnataka largely focus on three aspects: development, social service and health care; and spatially, a majority of them are situated in Central and South Karnataka.

There is a lively discourse available on the issue of partnership between government and NGOs in the literature with respect to Karnataka. The Karnataka Human Development Report of 2005 has an entire chapter devoted to the NGO-government partnerships and is upfront about the advantages as well as limitations of such partnerships. In the first place, the Report acknowledges that there is a role for partnerships with respect to human development of the state, while noting that Karnataka was the first state to enter into such partnerships in the country.

There are at least two views regarding the Government-NGO partnerships in Karnataka in the related literature: first by Rajasekhar and Birader (2004) viewing the NGO-GO partnerships as ‘reluctant partnerships’; and the second view (Kudwa, 2008) conceptualizes these collaborations as ‘uneasy’ and fluid. One interesting fact Kudwa notes is that although most of the NGOs in Karnataka focus on rural areas, it is not limited to rural areas alone. Of late, there is a burgeoning sector of NGOs focusing on urban issues. Many of them, for example, CIVIC and Janaagraha are concentrated in Bangalore; similarly, the
urban issues in other cities in the state too are becoming agendas for NGO action. Kudwa, while presenting the diversity of NGO sector in Karnataka, thinks that it is not fruitful to categorise NGOs in Karnataka either as adversarial or collaborative. According to Kudwa both are possible simultaneously. Below we consider the more specific case of MYRADA in Karnataka.

**MYRADA:**

MYRADA\(^\text{15}\) (Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency) was founded in 1968. Myrada is one of the largest, most longstanding and highly respected NGOs of Karnataka. Myrada works in three States—Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu across 20 backward and drought prone districts in these three States. In 2010 Myrada had total staff strength of 231\(^\text{16}\). Initially, the efforts of MYRADA were directed towards the resettlement of Tibetan Refugees in Karnataka. Later, it focused mainly on building self-help groups for women in rural areas and watershed and natural resource management work in rural areas of Karnataka and close by districts in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Myrada’s approach towards rural development is unique in the sense that Myrada believes that building institutions of and for poor people is the most important aspect of poverty alleviation and rural development. For this, Myrada invests all its energy towards building micro-finance, natural resource management and gender empowerment institutions in rural areas. Myrada sees itself primarily as a field based NGO.

While focusing on building the institutions for poor people Myrada sees itself primarily as an ‘actionist’ NGO in contrast to ‘activist’ NGOs or NGO activism. Myrada also works with PRIs but mainly to provide governance linkage between public health, primary education and AIDS/HIV issues vis-à-vis PRIs. Myrada works with sex-workers and their struggles towards human dignity and rights. Poverty eradication, natural resource management and gender are the three core areas around which most of the activities of Myrada are concentrated. Myrada carries out its actionist strategy through creating sustainable institutions of the poor in the areas of thrift and micro-finance, sustainable watershed and natural resources management and gender\(^\text{17}\). Influencing public policies in favour of the poor in the areas mentioned is also one of the objectives of Myrada.

Senior officials of Myrada say that Myrada has been working with the government since 1979; Myrada is also engaged with NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development—a government undertaking) since 1987. Myrada and NABARD have a strategic partnership with RBI (the Reserve Bank of India) since 1987. They feel that it is not possible to influence policy changes through advocacy alone. Field experiences lead to policy advocacy. Two aspects are important in this regard: a) concrete ground level experience; b) credibility of NGOs pursuing advocacy. Higher officials of Myrada feel that policy advocacy is often a matter of power game. They say that Myrada tries to influence the government through its network of institutions at the grassroots level. Policy pertaining to the grassroots can be advocated if the NGO in question is able to
articulate policy changes by demonstrating its grassroots level work. They feel that Myrada can influence the government policies in sectors such as primary education. Thus sector-wise advocacy in which the NGO is working is possible rather than affecting the macro or national policy of the India state. It is even difficult not only at the national level but also at the State level too.

Another point they mention is that governments understand their own language and that they do not often understand the language of the grassroots level NGOs. In this context, the intervention by middle level NGOs such as Myrada can be more helpful. However, regarding the overall attempt to advocate policies to the government, Myrada officials are skeptic and feel that ‘policy advocacy is difficult’. They feel that successes in effective policy advocacy by NGOs such as the enactment of Right to Information Act was possible more because of the individual linkages between the NGO sector and the political elites rather than a standard well-laid out policy advocacy.

Officials with Myrada see themselves as ‘actionists’ on ground and also while conducting advocacy. They think that activists only do action while ‘actionists’ develop institutions to do activism as well as lobbying. The officials of Myrada also feel that political parties at the State level do not matter in this regard; ideologies too do not matter either. For Myrada, it is the local politicians at Mandal and Zilla (District) levels that matter. It is local politicians, politicians and contractors—broadly the local political elite—at the Zilla level and downwards that matter. This is so because Myrada believes in building institutions at the rural, local level. It is ground level politicians and street bureaucrats that matter for them.

Going by this view, Myrada is not really worried about the higher level politicians or bureaucrats. The officials of Myrada say that they have good relations with higher level politicians and bureaucrats—for instance, the Executive Director of Myrada is a retired officer from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS); and most of the progressive IAS officers have worked with Myrada at one point or the other. The IAS officers are happy with Myrada because the organization delivers on the commitments taken from the government.

In view of the above functional background of Myrada, there is a need for considering some of the aspects of NGO’s relationship with the state. The KHDR (the Karnataka Human Development Report) insists on the need for partnerships between the two actors on the principle of mutual respect. The argument is that the state should not attempt to see the NGOs as contractors but as equal partners in the development process. The Report, for instance, points out quite clearly that if the NGOs become contractors of the state’s programmes, they lose the critical capacities to question the content and meaning of the programme being implemented. Not all NGOs do have the ability or capacity to question the state and, therefore, the questioning NGO requires to have: a) credibility; b) requisite scale and reach; c) ability to negotiate differences and manage
confrontations, if any. All these do not exist always. Of all the questions the ability to influence policy is most important and NGOs can not do this if they are reduced to mere contractors; or, rather they should not reduce themselves to contractors and enter a bidding process for government programmes.

The autonomy and independence of the civil society in the form of NGOs are not only circumscribed by the state but are also limited by the increasing competition for donor funds. This competition ‘squeezes out the smaller NGOs’21. In addition to this, the expectations of donors in terms of deliverables are often qualitatively different from those of governments and sometimes perhaps of the concerned NGOs themselves. All the above can lead to the question of the mandate and accountability of the NGOs. In this context, the KHDR observes that ‘NGOs must be very clear about who they derive their mandate from and to whom they are accountable’ (pp283).

Senior officials with Myrada22 report that in three cases with respect to policy advocacy Myrada has been successful. These are:

1. SHG policy of the Union and State governments
2. The watershed policy of the Union and State governments
3. Appointment of Panchayat Development Officers (PDO) at the Gram Panchayat (village council) level by the State government and the acceptance of the same policy by the Union government.

Senior officials at Myrada have taken all the initiatives to make this policy advocacy a success at the State level; and now the policy of appointing PDOs is being taken up for implementation all over India by the Union government.

Myrada has been successful in the above three instances because officials from the government also have shown keen interest in NGO work in general and Myrada led work in particular. These officials also were, and remain, associated with Myrada and other NGOs in different capacities. Therefore, the success regarding the above mentioned aspects can be attributed to the support of the selected set of officials of the government in advocating these policies. In the following section, we examine the same process with respect to Andhra Pradesh.

**Andhra Pradesh**

In the following section, we examine the efforts of the NGO CWS (Centre for World Solidarity) in Andhra Pradesh in fostering policy change and influencing the governance process as part of the efforts of the civil society in influencing public policy in Andhra Pradesh. The Centre for World Solidarity was founded in 1992 as a Public Trust with its head quarters in Hyderabad. The Centre for World Solidarity is modeled after the Berlin-based Action for World Solidarity; and its vision and principles of action have been designed on the lines of Action for World Solidarity.23 It is an intermediate level civil society organization that operates in more than two States namely in Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Jharkhand and Bihar. The organization works on a range of issues from child rights, women’s rights to rights of Dalits, and the forest based communities and
minorities. The organization also focuses on decentralization, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and other broader governance issues. The Centre for World Solidarity functions mostly through its network of grassroots level NGOs while providing thematic, financial and advocacy support for the network of NGOs.

Besides focusing on its own activities, the CWS has also founded very active and influential solidarity organizations such as WASSAN: Watershed Support Services and Activities Network, that focuses on watershed development; CSA: Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, focusing on sustainable agriculture; CPF: Centre for People’s Forestry, focusing on forestry, Dalit network called National Dalit Forum (NDF) and Centre for Adivasi, Dalit Bahujan Initiatives (BODHI) . These solidarity organizations work on their own, though they are founded by, and operate in solidarity with, CWS.

It is useful to consider the perceptions of the NGO sector regarding policy involvement at the very outset before stating the specific cases; but before moving on to the specific cases, we may take an overview of the interaction of CWS with the government and policy making. When asked on whether he thinks the policy making in AP is open to interventions by NGOs, the founder and Honorary Secretary of CWS responds that the answer is a ‘qualified yes’. He feels that the GO-NGO committee of the GOAP headed by a senior administrator is precisely meant for this. He opines that the Programme Monitoring Committees of different development departments and the social auditing of programmes such as Comprehensive Land Development Programme and also the involvement in programmes such as NREGA are examples of the openness of government in AP to the NGO interventions.

Responding to a question on the nature of the interaction CWS has with the government, the higher functionaries of CWS say that their involvement is mainly through particular bureaucrats in the government, who involve NGOs in the development programmes and invite them to participate. Sometimes, however, the initiative is taken by NGOs themselves. CWS continuously seeks to interface with the government and also attempts to avail of the opportunities with a view to having such interface.

Regarding the aspect as to whether there is a common agreement among the CWS partner grassroots NGOs regarding working with the government, the higher officials of CWS say that the grassroots NGOs, though small in scale, cannot be taken for granted and that while they participate in networking and solidarity building, the process is not easy. This is particularly in respect of intermediary level organizations such as CWS. The officials of CWS feel that working through a network of NGOs is of a mixed experience—both fascinating and frustrating. Broadly, CWS higher functionaries feel that the state, for various reasons articulates at times issues which they can not, as NGOs, take exception to. CWS tries to work around or with these spaces and persons in the state. As for WASSAN and CSA there was a specific favourable constellation of circumstances that facilitated their coming into existence.
CWS higher functionaries view that both ‘person and policy’ should be favourable to the civil society in order to negotiate with any government regarding any policy. They believe that there exist spaces within the state as well as within the policy. For example, regarding WASSAN’s coming into existence in 1994, the ground work with regard to the watershed development programme had already been done in the light of the watershed policy enunciation by the government. The CWS higher functionaries feel that generally, government and civil society view each other with suspicion; but the presence of powerful individuals having connections with government and standing in support of the civil society allays such suspicion.

Case studies of policy interventions

In this section, we consider three aspects of the work of these ensemble of institutions: First, the decentralization work of CWS—particularly the work on PRIs and Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA); secondly, the work by two of its solidarity organizations CSA –Centre for Sustainable Agriculture on organic or Non-chemical agriculture and the policy interface of WASSAN: Watershed Support Services and Activities Network. Here, we attempt to explain how policy advocacy has been carried out in all three cases not only in the context of Andhra Pradesh, but also the Union government. It is interesting to see that all the above three organizations have had different experiences as far as policy advocacy is concerned. WASSAN has a continuous positive interaction with the government, while CSA had both positive interactions as well as critical relationship with the government; however, the PRI programme of CWS has been quite critical of the successive governments that have marginalized PRIs.

CWS work related to Panchayati Raj Institutions

CWS programme on PRIs began in 2000 and since then the organization has been working in 13 out of 23 districts of Andhra Pradesh with the help of 15 grassroots NGOs. CWS feels that the PRI policy advocacy is most frustrating because MLAs (Members of Legislative Assembly) and political leaders are indifferent, if not opposed, to the promotion of PRIs; this, despite the same party being in government at the state level and the Union level. Out of 29 items in the 11th Schedule of the Constitution the items devolved are only nine by the first term government of Late Y.S.Rajasekhar Reddy (i.e., 2004-2009). This is also because elections were round the corner in 2009. PRIs were an electoral issue. From 2004 to 2009 nothing was done. APARD—Andhra Pradesh Academy of Rural Development — carried out activity mapping for different tiers of PRIs long ago, but the Government Orders (G.O.s) related to the devolution of powers are not found in tune with the activity mapping.

Currently CWS is a nodal agency for implementing PMEYSA (Panchayat Mahila Evam Yuva Shakti Abhiyan) of the Government of India. As part of this programme, CWS holds meetings of women representatives of about 500 from all the three tiers of PRIs. One of the major demands of the CWS has been that within six months of the PRI elections, all the women representatives should be
provided with capacity building trainings. And CWS has been successful in this with separate trainings organized for women representative coming from all over Andhra Pradesh. The Andhra Pradesh Academy of Rural Development has conducted one session of trainings for all the elected representatives coming from all parts of the State, besides conducting separate trainings for women representatives from all over the State. CWS considers this as one of its success stories vis-à-vis the government. The scale at which trainings were required inevitably needed the government to take up the work.

Another success story of CWS in influencing the government has been relates to PESA (Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas) draft rules. The advocacy for this began when CWS held a long meeting of 1000 tribals on PESA, which was attended by senior State level officials. Advocacy for pro-tribal PESA rules began with this meeting. Ultimately, the rules were accepted by the government of AP. Draft Rules, as of 2010, have been sent by the GOAP (the Government of Andhra Pradesh) to all the Departments and now they need to be finalized after receiving the inputs from all the departments concerned. This work brings the point to one’s notice that in the case of PRIs, the advocacy is difficult, arduous, painstaking and slow; the results are not dramatically visible and the role of civil society does not come out clearly in the final instance. Third aspect of successful work of CWS relates to the restoration of powers to Panchayat Sarpanches for issuing cheques. In this case the Sarpanches Association along with CWS held protests, sit-ins (Dharnas) and demonstrations and, as a result of this the cheque issuance powers were restored to the elected representatives.

By way of summing up, we should say, in the first case, the CWS has been successful to get the women elected representatives trained in respect of PRI laws and rules by the Andhra Pradesh government. In the second case, CWS has considerably influenced the PESA rules of Andhra Pradesh government. This they have achieved with the help of a partner NGO called Layā and also by taking professional legal help. In the third instance of PRI work, the advocacy was related to the restoring of power to the Gram Panchayat (Village Council) Presidents for issuing cheques. Though these three success stories appear as relatively fair successes, given the context of Andhra Pradesh policy environment, they can be considered major successes. But overall, CWS perceives PRI advocacy as extremely difficult because it directly deals with political power. In the words of the CWS higher officials, PRI policy influence is ‘the toughest nut.’

Advocacy Efforts of the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA) : Work on WASSAN (Watershed Support Services and Activities Network—a solidarity institution founded by CWS) and Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA) also was started by CWS and later the work branched out into full organizations. CSA was born out of Non-Pesticidal Management (NPM) work at CWS. The work which began at CWS as NPM desk in 1989 branched out as CSA in 2002. The initial work showed that limited work on one single crop was not enough and that the work had to be extended. Later, organic agricultural
production and marketing of organic agricultural product were taken up. The CSA’s work evolved in the following stages:

1. Promotion and advocacy in respect of Non-Pesticidal Management of farming (NPM)
2. Promotion of Organic farming and marketing of organic farm produce.
3. Advocacy of changes in seed policy of the Union government.

One crucial fact about the work of CSA is that it has not only been aimed at shaping the government policy, but also at educating the public and raising public consciousness about the positive outcomes of organic agriculture and negative impact of GM (Genetically Modified) foods. Both these go hand in hand as far as the work is concerned. The advocacy on Bt.Brinjal has become very popular. The attempt of CSA to raise the level of public reason on specific issues related to the above aspects has been considerable. And it must also be noted that the CSA made its advocacy after having conducted field trials of non-pesticidal management of agriculture; after experimenting with organic agriculture; and after sowing and examining the growth patterns of GM seeds.

Another important point is that the engagement of CSA with the governments at the State and union levels has not just been that of a collaborator. It has been that of a critic of the government policies too. CSA is opposed to GM crops as also chemicals and Pesticides based agriculture; and in this context, it is continuously engaged in battles with agricultural and environment ministries of State and Union governments. Therefore, it is wrong to assume that the role of civil society is always playing the second fiddle to the government. Besides being critical of the government policies, CSA has also been opposed to the multinational corporations such as Monsanto, Cargill, Mahyco and others that produce and sell GM seeds. These seed companies have been at the forefront of promoting GM seeds in the agricultural sector on non-food crops such as Bt.Cotton and food crops such as Bt.Brinjal.

The attempt to advocate a Non-Pesticidal Management of Agriculture

Scaling up of ecological farming/organic farming has been one of the main achievements of CSA. Basing on the CSA work in the agricultural field, and the documentation of it, the Prime Minister of India has granted Rupees 180 crores for up scaling organic agriculture in Andhra Pradesh. The Andhra Pradesh government implemented the CSA recommendations on organic farming and over the period 2004-2008.

The advocacy against GM crops including food crops

With regard to the GM crops, the efforts of CSA were particularly directed to putting breaks on the policy process of uncritical adaptation of GM crops in general and food crops in particular. CSA also did considerable work with regard to Bt. Cotton. The attempt was to contest the official claims and enrich the dialogue on GM food and non-food crops. Consequent upon its field trials of Bt. Brinjal during 2009-2010 CSA has been consistently critical of the adaptation of Bt.Brinjal. In this case, the GM seeds were sown by CSA and their growth examined and then a position on the crops was taken to advocate policy against the adoption of GM crops.
The advocacy to influence the Seed Bill of the Union government
The third aspect on which policy advocacy was done related to the Seed Bill of the Union government: CSA engaged fully with the State and Union governments both on First Draft Seed Bill and the Second and final Draft Seed Bill. The bill was prevented from being adopted by the government mainly because of the efforts of CSA.

Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN)

The preparatory work for establishing Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN) was carried out by CWS in 1994 and WASSAN was formally registered as a Public Trust in 1999. The organization has been actively involved in working with the government at the level of policy ideas and policy formulation. WASSAN is called to present its view point whenever the government initiates a new programme on the watershed front. Especially the Rural Development Department of the Government of Andhra Pradesh (GOAP) considers the views of WASSAN quite regularly. WASSAN is a member of ‘Watershed Committee’ of the GOAP and also one of the members in designing watershed related guidelines. WASSAN is also involved in designing new programmes for rural development for the Department of the Rural Development of GOAP and has contributed to the NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) work by way of suggesting the inclusion of the activities related to common property resources management, land development and wage provisions. WASSAN has also contributed to the work related to wage provisions of GOAP’s Employment Guarantee Scheme.

As part of the Andhra Pradesh Drought Adaptation Initiative (APDAI) of the GOAP, WASSAN has suggested several activities to the Government. Also WASSAN is part of NREGS programme for the development of rain fed lands. WASSAN, for instance, has provided several suggestions of agronomic and conservation nature, such as (under the NREGA) compost manure preparation, green manuring and several soil and water conservation activities. WASSAN also designed an entire programme for the government in 2008-9 namely ‘The Rain fed-Land Development Programme’. The rain fed-land development programme is to be implemented by the GOAP in 100 villages across 10,000 hectares of land through the Rural Development Department.

Discussion
The above study of two civil society organizations, one in Karnataka and the other in Andhra Pradesh, shows that while Myrada has all along adopted a more conciliatory approach towards the state, CWS in Andhra Pradesh has adopted both conciliatory and adversarial approaches. These NGOs engage the state at various levels. The CWS approach vis-à-vis PRI-empowerment has brought the organization directly into a combination of conciliatory and conflicting roles. At the same time, CWS and CSA approach towards genetically modified food and non-food crops have forced the central-state and the local state quite at loggerheads. The point is also that CSA’s approach has also been critical towards multinational seed companies such as Monsanto, Mahyco and Kargill. Therefore, the question is, in the context of globalisation and the supposedly prominent role
of civil society, how effective are NGOs? The point, however, is that they still happen to be subsidiary partners in the paradigm of ‘governance-through-networks’. Major influence on public policy of the state still happens to be in the hands of the multinational donor organizations as well as multinational companies.

Notes


‘It is difficult to see socialism as an empirical or positive reference or marxism as theoretical tradition alive in East European intellectual debate today. Sometimes marxism is discussed by East European scholars to demonstrate its ideological rigidity and inflexibility….More often it is ignored.’ (pp 448-9) And they write:

‘There are occasions when marxism is engaged, but these attempts often appear as part of a bygone era, when the Communist Party still mattered to marxism. Konrad Weiss[East European scholar] felt obliged to address marxism only when asked to discuss the survival of utopias; and though he still identifies himself as a socialist, he believes marxism could only inevitably degenerate into dystopia… In Russia, specifically, which is so often located as both the heart of communism and the heart of its failure, vibrant academic engagement with marxism is all but dead in any discipline…’ (pp449-50). Of course Kennedy and Galtz also quote Michael Burawoy as saying ‘ “….Marxism still provides a fecund understanding of capitalism’s inherent contradictions and dynamics…[Thus] the longevity of
capitalism guarantees the longevity of Marxism" (Buroway, 1990 p792)‘
(Kennedy and Galtz: 441)]

Analytical Framework’ in Shigetomi, Shinchi, (ed) The State and
NGOs: Perspectives from Asia , (Singapore: Institute of South East
of market, state and community fail to perform their resource-
distributing functions properly, there is room for NGOs to emerge
as fourth category of agents to distribute resources on their own or
to interfere with the existing distribution systems, making up for or
correcting their shortcomings’ (Shigetomi:pp10-11).

6 Various definitions of public policy and the non-positivistic usage of the term are
Anthropology of Public Policy’ Annals of the American Academy of
Political and Social Science, Vol. 600, The Use and Usefulness of the
Social Sciences: Achievements, Disappointments, and Promise July, 2005
pp30-51.

7 Goran Hyden, Julius Court and and Kenneth Mease (2005) Making Sense of
Governance: Empirical Evidence from Sixteen Developing Countries, New
Delhi: Viva Books.

8 Munshi, Surendra, Biju Paul Abraham and Soma Choudhuri (2009) ‘The
Concept of Good Governance’ in The Intelligent Person’s Guide to Good
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(Connecticut: CIVICUS & Kumarian Press).

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Paper-39. (Bangalore: Myrada).

11 ‘Voluntarism and NGOs’ in: Investing in Human Development: Karnataka
Human Development Report (KHDR) 2005, (Bangalore: Government of
Karnataka).


13 Rajasekhar, D and R.R.Birader (eds)(2004), Reluctant Partners Coming
Together? Interface between People, Government and the NGOs, (New
Delhi: Concept).

15 The abbreviations MYRADA and Myrada are used interchangeably in the text.


17 Interview with Mr. Aloysius Prakash Fernandez, Member Secretary, Governing Body of Myrada on 12-10-09.

18 Interview with Mr. Aloysius Prakash Fernandez, Member Secretary, Governing Body of Myrada on 12-10-09. He said 'you can not change policy through bhashan [ i.e., through a lecture to the government].

19 Interview with Mr.Aloysius Fernandez at Myrada on 13-1-2010.

20 Interestingly Neema Kudwa quotes from one of the publications of Myrada in which Aloysius Fernandez categorizes government officials into three categories : levels A,B and C. Level A officials are the IAS and IFS level officials who are often in synergistic relationship with the NGO sector; Level B officials who operate at the district and taluk levels at the supervisory level, and are often uncomfortable with NGOs; and Level C officials who directly interact with the citizens and are the ones who “normally relate well with the NGO staff”. Kudwa: 131-2.

21 KHDR, op.cit.

22 Interview with Dr.S.S.Meenakshi Sundaram at Myrada on 29-11-2010.

23 CWS' vision is stated in the following words: ‘[CWS] envisions a society of resilient, inter-dependent small communities, vibrant with the consciousness of their rights and duties ad sensitive to the rights of Dalits, indigenous people and minorities, to women’s rights generally and to gender equality, to the rights of children and to eco-friendly development processes that cohere with the rights of these sections’ CWS: 'Partnering With People' (2009).
This section and also subsequent sections are based on views of individuals belonging to the organisations concerned and are absolutely important for this study as some of these individuals are founders of the institutions or are key individuals heading the institutions; or are holding key positions within the institutions; therefore, the views expressed by them represent the crystallized experience of the organizational memory and therefore of significance.

Interview with Shri M.V.Sastri dtd.26-10-2009, Hyderabad; Shri M.V.Sastri besides being the founder of CWS and all the solidarity organizations is also the doyen of the NGO sector in Andhra Pradesh and as such these views are fairly representative of the views of the broader NGO sector in AP.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Interview with Shri M.V.Sastri dtd.26-10-2009.

More about these below.

This section is based on interviews with officials of CWS, Dr.C,Vijaya Shyamala; Mr.N.Sambashiva Rao and Shri M.V.Sastri of CWS during 20th to 26th July, 2010.

There are a total of 9 Scheduled districts in Andhra Pradesh namely Adilabad, Khammam, Warangal, Mahabubnagar, East Godavari, West Godavari, Srikakulam, Vishakapatnam, and Vijayanagarm. CWS work covers all the nine districts through grassroots partners and these have also formed into a state level PESA network by CWS.

CWS and Laya have taken help of a lawyer called Mr. Trinath Rao to draft rules for the PESA Andhra Pradesh Act and these have been accepted by the AP government for incorporation.

The information on this is based on interviews with Dr.G.V.Ramanjaneyulu, Executive Director of CSA and with Shri MV.Sastri, Honoary Convener CWS and the other staff members of CSA and the documents provided by them.

The work of CSA has been documented in Down to Earth, The Ecologist, Economic and Political Weekly and the journal Seedling and widely in the News papers and national TV channels such as NDTV.

This section is based on the Interview with Dr.M.Vanaja, Programme Manager, WASSAN, Hyderabad, October 30, 2009.
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