

Constituencies for Reform: Strategic Approaches for Donor-Supported Civic Advocacy Groups

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February 1996

(PN-ABS-534)

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PREFACE

This report contains the findings and analysis of field studies conducted in five countries in 1994 to assess

issues involving donor investments in civil society as they relate to promotion of democracy. The assessment, the second in a series of inquiries in the democracy sector, was undertaken by the Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) of the Agency for International Development. As in the first assessment (which examined donor support for rule-of-law programs--see Blair and Hansen 1994), the objectives of CDIE's civil society inquiry are to examine and analyze the experience of USAID and other donors over the past decade with a view to informing future donor efforts in promoting democracy and good governance.

The five countries included in this study are Bangladesh, Chile, El Salvador, Kenya, and Thailand. All have received significant donor funding for activities related to civil society. ("Civil society" as used in this paper refers to nonstate organizations that can act as a catalyst for democratic reform.) All possessed authoritarian governments in the 1980s but have initiated in varying degrees a move away from authoritarianism. It is, however, still unclear in some cases whether this is a meaningful move to more democratic forms of governance. Chile and Thailand represent relatively advanced developing countries in which USAID is closing its Missions; therefore, it is important to draw lessons from this base of experience. The other three countries are much less developed but provide a solid foundation of experience with regard to donor investments in civil society. An explanation of the rationale for country selection and the methodology used for the study are in the appendix.

Given the newness of civil society as a sector for donor investment, this CDIE study should be viewed as exploratory and illustrative rather than definitive. Such a cautious approach befits a subject that lends itself to considerable theoretical abstraction and debate in the academic literature, even to the extent of provoking disagreement about how to define "civil society" and set its conceptual boundaries. This report takes a more operational approach in addressing civil society. It aims to assist senior managers and programmers in designing and evaluating civil society investments in the democracy sector.

Acknowledgments are in order for a number of people who assisted with the study. Harry Blair was closely involved from beginning to end. He did fieldwork and wrote the introductory section to chapter 3 and the section on human rights in chapter 4. He also provided material for the last section, on donor recommendations. Michael Calavan, chief of the Program and Operations Assessment Division in CDIE; Joel Jutkowitz of Development Associates; and Heather McHugh of CDIE's Research and Reference Service were also involved with the study from its inception. Mary Said and Malcolm Young of Development Associates offered much valuable help along the way. Others who worked on researching and writing the country case studies were John Booth, Ricardo Córdova, and Mitchell Seligson (El Salvador); Judith Geist and Frank Holmquist (Kenya); and Manuel Antonio Garreton, Jorge Guisti, and Philip Williams (Chile).

Drafts of this paper have gone through extensive review. In addition to several in-house USAID critiques, drafts were reviewed in a seminar with experts from the academic community, in an all-day workshop with representatives from major U.S. nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved in supporting overseas democracy programs, and, finally, in a seminar with some of the major multilateral funding agencies, including the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, United Nations Development Program, and European Economic Union.

A large number of Agency staff have provided helpful comments on the paper. John Harbeson, John Anderson, and Robert Asselin offered extensive written comments. The academic review included comments from Larry Diamond, Greg Gleason, Tom Carothers, Kelly Smith, Mark Garcelon, Peter Lewis, and Rhys Payne. Larry Garber has been a constant source of encouragement and deftly guided the review discussions.

The reviews were helpful in exploring different perspectives on the definition and role of civil society in fostering the growth of democratic governance. In particular, they helped to identify sections of the draft needing clarification and modification. Some significant changes include the following:

- A view of political reform as an evolutionary process that may or may not feature comprehensive elite agreements in the early transition phases
- Recognition that there are trade-offs in pressing for political reforms while a country is also undertaking major economic reforms, and that these must be considered when contemplating investments in civil society activities
- Use of the term "civic advocacy organizations" instead of the early draft term "civil society organizations," to highlight the activist and public interest nature of the organizations USAID seeks to support with democracy funds
- Greater emphasis on the importance of international mechanisms and arenas where developing-country civic advocacy organizations can voice their concerns or seek redress when such avenues are closed or unresponsive in their own countries
- Corrections of factual errors and changes in interpretation in the country case studies

Most important, the reviews helped distinguish, elaborate, and elevate a number of fundamental issues that will be subjects of continual discourse among donors and the NGO community as they go about their work in civil society.

Because some of the major issues raised in the review discussions center on the approach and conclusions reflected in the paper, it is appropriate to briefly highlight the most significant points of the debate.

What Is In and What Is Out?

Some reviewers objected that the paper's definition of "civic advocacy organizations" does not include political parties. With some exceptions, the scholarly literature on civil society excludes political parties, largely because they seek control of the state. In some cases, such as in totalitarian or single-party regimes, they even become indistinguishable *from* the state. The paper holds to the conventional notion that although effective and cohesive political parties are a main component of a healthy democracy, the

functions of a political party, particularly in its aggregation of interests and intentional quest for state power, set it apart from civil society.

SUMMARY

A core component of USAID's democracy and governance agenda is support for strengthening civil society. Interest in civil society, in USAID and among other donors, reflects a growing realization that sustaining newly emerging democracies will depend on building autonomous centers of social and economic power that promote accountable and participatory governance.

In 1994, CDIE undertook a five-country assessment of past and current USAID and other donor investments in civil society, with the intent of providing a more strategic perspective for future programming in this sector. The five countries are Bangladesh, Chile, El Salvador, Kenya, and Thailand. All have received significant donor funding for activities related to civil society, and four are undergoing democratic transitions.

The study looks at a subset of civil society organizations (referred to here as "civic advocacy organizations" [CAOs])--nonstate groups that engage in or have the potential for championing adoption and consolidation of democratic governance reforms. The study finds that these organizations can help generate public push for political reform, and they can work to consolidate reform by helping to hold the state accountable for what it does. Such organizations include labor federations, policy think tanks, business and professional associations, human rights and prodemocracy groups, environmental activist organizations, and the like.

They can perform a wide range of essential roles, including analyzing policy issues, advocating on behalf of the public, mobilizing constituencies in support of policy dialog, and serving as watchdogs in ensuring accountability in government.

The Role of CAOs in Democratic Transitions

In principle, civic advocacy organizations can contribute to the strengthening of democratic governance, but in practice their contributions have varied considerably among the five countries. Some have assumed a high degree of prominence, whereas others have had little involvement in the transition.

What accounts for these differences? It appears that earlier experience with democracy is critical. Chile has long experience with a relatively advanced democratic political system. That foundation provided lessons CAOs could draw on in mobilizing people for a "no" vote against continuation of the regime of strongman Augusto Pinochet Ugarte in the 1988 plebiscite. Thailand's adventures with democracy were more fleeting in the 1970s and the beginning of the 1990s, but they did provide enough practice that participants from those earlier experiences could combine in 1992 to spearhead a prodemocracy coalition.

For Bangladesh, Kenya, and El Salvador, experiences derived from very limited democratic openings of earlier periods failed to provide favorable conditions for CAO roles in the democratic transition of the early 1990s. In Bangladesh, popular organizations were much involved in the 1990 movement against dictator H.M. Ershad. These groups, though, were largely student, professional, and labor organizations closely connected to opposition political parties. They do not conform with the common definition of CAOs as operating independently of political parties.

In El Salvador much of the CAO mobilization effort of the 1970s was autonomous from both parties and government. That is especially the case with advocacy groups mobilized by the Roman Catholic Church in the late 1970s and the Christian-based communities that promoted grass-roots mobilization for social justice and political change. In the 1980s these and other groups representing non-elites became the targets of death squads and other direct government repression. Thus they were not in a position to influence the peace accords of 1992.

Finally, in Kenya, political freedom that existed after independence in 1963 was gradually swallowed up by the increasing movement toward one-party rule. That movement has lasted down to the present time. It has left little room for CAOs to organize on behalf of reform. Donor-initiated pressure to democratize the system did lead to a significant opening in 1991, but dissension among opposition parties and government manipulation in the 1992 parliamentary elections has inhibited progress in the democratic transition.

A Strategic Perspective on CAOs

The study provides certain insights into donor strategies in support of civic advocacy organizations. First, an assessment of civil advocacy and its role in democratic transitions should be integrated into a larger country assessment of the political economy and the major problems that must be addressed as part of a political reform agenda. At the strategic level the broader analysis seeks to identify ways to advance host country dialog on a reform agenda and ways to change the fundamental rules of the political game in moving toward more democratic governance.

At the tactical level the study shows it is important to identify issues animating public concern--issues that can energize the drive toward more strategic reforms. Often issues emanate from particular sectors, such as labor, environment, or women's rights. Such issues can generate spillover effects in support of major political reforms, as happened with the environmental movement in Thailand. It gained prominence in aligning itself with the prodemocratic campaign against military rule in the early 1990s.

Identifying issues involves, among other things, analyzing constituencies and civic advocacy organizations that have interests in supporting public dialog and advocacy. Especially promising are those that might share common interests and thus provide a basis for coalition-building. In Bangladesh and Thailand, for example, labor unions and women's organizations may in time find much in common with respect to the growth of industry in advancing the cause of both labor unions and women's rights. In both countries, key industries employ primarily women laborers.

The art and craft of the democracy strategist, then, lies in building and supporting coalitions of associations that are proreform at a particular point on the democratic path. For donors, such support will concentrate on enhancing a wide range of organizational capacities often lacking in many civic advocacy organizations. In particular, skill improvements are usually needed in networking, advocacy, strategic planning, media relations, coalition building, policy dialog, policy analysis, and resource mobilization.

Strategic Sequencing: Initiating and Consolidating Reform

The case studies indicate that the opportunity for civil society to organize and press for reform is conditioned by where a country is positioned in the transition to democracy. Thus, to determine how donors might appropriately tailor their support for civic advocacy organizations, it is important to understand the dynamics of the transition process. The study findings suggest that democratic transitions can be divided into four phases: pretransition, early transition, late transition, and consolidation.

Pretransition. In this period, CAOs generally operate in an environment of government repression and hostility toward calls for political reform. Donor strategies under these inhibiting circumstances can address a number of tasks. First, donors may need to provide support to safe havens where reformist groups take refuge and where internally exiled reformers can find employment, protection, and legal aid in the face of government harassment and persecution.

The second task is defending the autonomy of civic advocacy organizations in general. Authoritarian governments generally are aware, for instance, that nongovernmental organizations frequently shelter reformist elements, and there may be efforts to weaken and control these organizations. It is vitally important that donors support the CAO community in resisting excessive government intrusion. And donors must support the organizations in negotiating a governance regime that empowers the CAO community to regulate itself rather than submit to extensive government supervision.

The third order of business is to begin cultivating a dialog within the reformist community in developing coalitions, consensus on reform agendas, and strategies for political reform. In Chile, for example, civic advocacy organizations created forums and study circles where leaders from opposing factions were able to work together. The leaders succeeded in dispelling distrust and in finding common ground for collaboration in preparing for the early transition phase.

Early transition. This phase begins with a political opening in which an authoritarian regime concedes in some demonstrable way that legitimate rule depends on popular consent and in which rival political elites seek a new consensus for a more open political system. Regime acceptance of some political liberalization can open windows of opportunity for civic advocacy organizations to educate and mobilize public support for fundamental political reforms. These organizations must be prepared to act with vigor and speed, as events may move very rapidly in the early transition phase. This is most evident with respect to elections. Then civic advocacy organizations may need to engage in a wide range of labor-intensive voter education and registration programs. They may also monitor elections and even participate in election administration.

Another task in the early transition phase is to begin building a network of support for fundamental political reform beyond the small cadre of activist organizations that survived state repression in the pretransition era. Sources of support and alliances may exist in such quarters as labor or women's organizations, student unions, and professional associations. They may be found at local as well as national levels.

A third task is creating a more favorable enabling environment to enhance the growth, autonomy, and contributions of civic advocacy organizations and of civil society in general. Often a legacy of authoritarian controls has undermined the institutional mechanisms and arenas that serve as an avenue for civil society to engage the public and the state. Thus in the early transition phase donors should seek to enhance the autonomy of the media and universities; revitalize the judicial system, the legislature, and municipal councils; and introduce mechanisms by which civic advocacy organizations can seek representation in advancing the cause of reform. (Such mechanisms might include recall, referenda, the right to petition, and the use of public hearings.)

Late Transition. At this stage a fundamental redirection of a more open political system is under way. New rules for democratic governance have been agreed on in the early transition period. Now the major task is ensuring that political actors and governance institutions begin conforming to them.

Civic advocacy organizations play an important role in the late transition process. One of their major tasks is civic education. This involves educating the public on 1) the rules and institutional features of the new political order, 2) the means by which citizens can influence government, 3) how they can seek redress in the face of arbitrary government actions, and 4) in general how to take advantage of new opportunities in advancing community empowerment and governance.

A second task involves monitoring compliance with new rules for democratic governance. That will ensure that where noncompliance is discovered, the rules are enforced. Lack of enforcement is all too common in developing countries. Civic advocacy organizations can help by assuming a watchdog role in discovering and publicizing infractions by government and nongovernment actors.

A third task involves building partnerships between government and civic advocacy organizations. Thailand and Chile provide examples of such unions. There, business associations have been actively supporting governance reforms by financing improvements and streamlining procedures in a number of public agencies that service the business community.

Consolidation. In the consolidation phase, both basic and operational rules have been essentially agreed on, and the mechanisms to ensure political participation and government accountability are in place. This last phase is marked by a deepening of democratic governance within the culture and institutions of society. It also exhibits a growing capacity of society and government to adapt to change and deal effectively with major problems of reform.

An underlying issue concerns the sustainability of civic advocacy organizations (in particular public interest groups) in conducting the ongoing functions of monitoring rule enforcement and mobilizing citizens and communities in support of reform agendas. In most of the five countries few if any government incentives exist for corporate or individual contributions to public interest associations. Likewise, many such associations have not been in the habit of seeking funding from the corporate world or from the public in general. Donors will need to devote more attention to creating a supportive policy environment and building bridges between public interest associations and in-country funding sources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The four-phase transition scheme may seem to imply a linear progression to a democratic nirvana, but in fact the process is uneven, messy, and subject to setbacks. Indeed, many transitions may lead to some new hybrid form of authoritarian governance, and what initially appeared to have been a democratic transition turns out to be a false start. Given the nonlinear nature of change, the sequencing of civic advocacy tasks as envisaged for each of the phases may need to be changed to cope with unanticipated obstacles or to seize new opportunities.

The four-phase transition scheme provides a basis for advancing the following recommendations on priorities and the sequencing of donor investments.

1. Donors need to chart and follow a disciplined approach to ensure that investments in civil society do not lose their focus and relevance to the reform process. There is a risk that investments in civil society will be dissipated over a wide range of activities and will yield minimal results. The study findings suggest support for civil society should center on civic advocacy organizations as a means for advancing a reform agenda toward greater democratic governance. In this regard, a strategy for investments in these organizations concentrates first on attaining structural reforms within the polity and then sequencing in accordance with the transition process under way within a particular country.

2. Donors need to be prepared to exercise considerable leverage when supporting civic advocacy organizations engaged in fostering democratic transitions in the pre- and early transition phases. Many political reforms undertaken in the country case studies likely would not have made so much headway without outside donor pressure and support. During the pre- and early transition phases, civic advocacy organizations are often not strong enough alone to advance the reform process. In such situations the added weight of donor collaboration in the use of conditionality to pressure for political liberalization may well be critical to propelling the reform effort. It also may be critical to the survival of activist organizations. In the pre- and early transition phases they can be operating in a high-risk environment where they are vulnerable to government attack.

3. Donors need to exercise caution when investing in institution-building efforts in the CAO sector during the early phases of democratic transitions. Most civic advocacy organizations are small, having perhaps

only a few staff members and a charismatic leader. There may be little internal democracy or provision for leadership turnover. Links with potential coalition partners or constituencies may be tenuous. Most also are not membership organizations. Given the precarious nature of many civic advocacy organizations in the pre- and early transition period, donors need to be careful before investing major resources in these organizations as part of a larger and longer-term institution-building effort.

4. Donors need to devote more attention to building a favorable policy environment for the growth of civil society, particularly with respect to expanding in-country funding sources for this sector. Most civic advocacy organizations depend in great part on outside donor financing. Thus the need exists for strategies to promote greater financial sustainability. Creating an in-country enabling environment for individual and corporate contributions to public interest organizations--for instance, by changing tax laws--is one such strategy. Another, in which USAID has pioneered, is providing funds to establish host country endowments and foundations. A liberal or permissive regime for registering and regulating NGOs of all types is also important.

5. Donors need to be aware of potential trade-offs in countries undergoing political transitions while also engaging in fundamental economic reforms in the move from statist to free-market economies. Many countries are undergoing economic and political reform simultaneously, although often at different speeds. In these situations donors need to calculate whether pressing vigorously for reforms in one area could undermine the commitment to progress in the other. The need for calculation is particularly important with investments in civil society for major political reform.

6. To defend against premature termination, donors should develop policy guidance that establishes criteria for a country to graduate from receiving democracy aid. Some countries are moving rapidly toward self-sustaining economic growth. That, in contemporary donor thinking, often justifies cutbacks in or even termination of development assistance, even though many of these countries still may be in the early phases of a democratic transition. The potential for political regression and instability will persist in the early transition phase. It could undermine investor confidence and hard-won economic gains. It may make sense to continue some support for democracy efforts even though economic development programs have been terminated. Justification for democracy programs in all stages of transition can be strengthened if donors clearly outline the rationale and criteria for continuation and eventual graduation.

GLOSSARY

ADAB -- Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh

ALGAK -- Association of Local Government Authorities of Kenya

ALGE -- Association of Local Government Employees (Kenya)

Arena -- Nationalist Republican Alliance (Chile)

BGMEA -- Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association

CAO -- Civic advocacy organization

CCHRB -- Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh

CDIE -- Center for Development Information and Evaluation (USAID)

CED -- Center for the Study of Development (Chile)

COTU -- Central Organization of Trade Unions (Kenya)

CPD -- Campaign for Popular Democracy (Thailand)

FAP -- Flood Action Plan (Bangladesh)

FKE -- Federation of Kenyan Employers

FMLN -- Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (El Salvador)

FORD -- Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (Kenya)

ILET -- Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies

JPPCC -- Joint Public and Private Sector Consultative Committee (Thailand)

KAM -- Kenya Association of Manufacturers

KANU -- Kenya African Nationalist Union

MEA - Municipalities in Action (El Salvador)

NGO -- Nongovernmental organization

PDDH -- Solicitor for the Defense of Human Rights (El Salvador)

Sur -- South (CAO, Chile)

UCL -- Union for Civil Liberties (Thailand)

1. CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Among program initiatives in recent years, democracy and good governance represents a fundamentally new direction for USAID. It has been declared one of the core areas--along with economic growth, environment, population and health, and humanitarian assistance--in the Agency's overall goal of promoting sustainable development.

Under its *Guidelines for Strategic Plans*, in the democracy sector the Agency has identified four strategic objectives to guide its investments. They are 1) promoting meaningful political competition through free and fair electoral processes, 2) enhancing respect for the rule of law and human rights, 3) encouraging development of a politically active civil society, and 4) fostering transparent and accountable governance.

This study looks at the role of USAID and other donors in support of one of these strategic objectives: strengthening civil society. The guidelines state that a "vibrant civil society is an essential component of a democratic polity" and that the Agency will concentrate its support for civil society on that wide range of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in civic action and education, public policy advocacy, and the monitoring of government activities.

Civil society is assuming greater prominence with USAID's recently announced New Partnership Initiative (April 1995). Its goal is to mobilize U.S. nongovernmental resources to help build self-help capacities in three important areas: 1) local NGOs that support sustainable development efforts, 2) expansion of small business entrepreneurship, and 3) democratic local and community self-governance. In tandem with these goals the New Partnership Initiative emphasizes enhancing host country policy, regulatory, and resource environments favorable to the flourishing of community action.

The New Partnership Initiative reinforces the Agency's concern for strengthening civil society, both as an integral component of the democracy and governance theme and as a core element of activities that support social and economic development in general. This study concentrates on the role of civil society in enhancing democratic reforms, but it recognizes its place as a vital force for reform across a wide range of development sectors.

USAID is not alone in devoting increasing attention to the role of civil society in fostering democratic reforms. The Inter-American Development Bank has established a new funding program in support of civil society. And the Development Assistance Committee has enunciated a new policy of strengthening participation and good governance, which features an emphasis on civil society.

Many nongovernmental donors, such as the German *Stiftungs*, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (United Kingdom), and the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (Canada), are investing in civil society. All receive funds from their sponsoring home

governments. Finally, in the United States the National Endowment for Democracy and the Asia, Ford, and Inter-American Foundations have longstanding investments in this sector.

The emerging interest in civil society responds to current rethinking of state-society relationships. There are two dimensions to this interest: state accountability and citizen participation. With respect to accountability, one finds

- Growing realization that good governance requires strengthening the organizational capacity of society to demand greater accountability from political and bureaucratic institutions
- Recognition that strengthening newly emerging democracies depends on building autonomous centers of social and economic power that can resist the reemergence of authoritarian tendencies within the polity
- Recognition that the transition from statist to market-based economies can be more effectively consolidated with the growth of advocacy groups that champion such reforms

On the participation side, several themes also emerge:

- Greater interest in empowering poor, disenfranchised, and marginal populations (which may be the majority of the population) to enhance their collective voice in the political process
- Concern that divestiture of social and economic functions and decentralization of administrative and political structures will need to be accompanied by measures to empower local communities
- Growing awareness that host country action for addressing major development issues (such as environmental protection, effective management of natural resources, support for family planning, and protection and expansion of human rights) hinges on generation of indigenous social activism and advocacy

Investments in strengthening civil society can be viewed as a means for addressing these concerns through fundamental reforms in state-society relationships. What then is civil society and how does it contribute to reforms in democratic governance?

What is Civil Society? A Generic Perspective

At the generic level, civil society can be referred to as the multitude of nonstate associations around which society organizes itself and which move in and out of the public realm of politics in accordance with their specific needs and agenda of interests. There are three tiers of civil society. The first tier consists of primary organizations, which are of a more ascriptive nature (kin, clan, ethnic, or religious). The next tier consists of secondary organizations. These tend to organize around functional interests (such as business, labor, and professional associations) or sectoral concerns (education, the environment, public health). The third tier consists of associations concerned with matters of general public interest that

enhance good governance. Such organizations include human rights organizations, civic education associations, and policy think tanks.

In any particular context, elements of civil society will play different roles in support of democratic reforms. Some may stand in opposition to or remain relatively neutral to reform efforts. For example, in resisting military rule, the business sector, religious institutions, or labor unions in some instances may move to the front lines in a prodemocratic movement, whereas in other cases they may remain relatively neutral. Similarly, after a democratic transition, it may in some settings be the professional associations that play a major role in keeping the polity on a democratic keel, while in others it might be sectoral advocacy groups such as environmentalists. *The art and craft of the democracy strategist, then, lies in building and supporting coalitions of associations that are proreform at a particular historical moment in the democratic path.*

What is Civil Society? An Operational Perspective

For the purposes of this report, "civil society" is defined as nonstate organizations that can (or have the potential to) champion democratic/governance reforms. They are the engines that can generate the public push for reform. They can work to consolidate reform by helping to hold the state accountable for what it does. Such organizations include secondary groups such as labor federations, business associations, and professional associations. They can also belong to the third tier previously mentioned. First-tier associations are perhaps less common in pushing the democratic envelope. They can nonetheless be strong participants here, as with those promoting rights for indigenous ethnic groups such as hill tribes in the Philippines and Bangladesh or ex-Untouchables in India.¹

These organizations perform diverse and vitally important roles. They can:

- -- Engage in public advocacy
- -- Analyze policy issues
- -- Mobilize constituencies in support of policy dialog
- -- Serve as watchdogs in ensuring accountability in performance of government functions
- -- Most important, act as agents of reform in strengthening and broadening democratic governance

In this report, nonstate organizations involved in reform are referred to as *civic advocacy organizations* (CAOs) because they advocate, educate, and mobilize attention around major public issues. The term "civic advocacy organization" is used to distinguish the advocacy function from the more conventional definition of "civil society organizations" (which in donor parlance are frequently referred to as nongovernmental organizations). The latter more typically engage in humanitarian relief or economic and social development activities either at the micro or macro level. They may take on more multipurpose activities, including public advocacy, in which case they would be referred to in this report as CAOs.

An Outline of the Report

The remainder of this report examines issues regarding the role and contributions of civic advocacy organizations in advancing the cause of democratic governance. Chapter 2 outlines a strategic logic for identifying investment priorities in the CAO sector. Chapter 3 analyzes the role of CAOs in democratic transitions in Chile and Thailand. Chapter 4 examines systemic issues and reforms that contribute to the growth of CAOs. Chapter 5 looks at the role of CAOs within particular sectors. Chapter 6 lays out a sequence of democratic phases through which countries pass and provides action guidelines for donors and civic advocacy organizations for the respective phases. Finally, chapter 7 offers recommendations on how donors can enhance their contributions in advancing democratic reforms through the medium of civil society.

2. A LOGIC FOR STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

If civic advocacy organizations can be a significant resource in establishing and advancing democratic reform, what kinds of investments should USAID be making in this area? [Figure 1](#) tries to answer this question by providing a *strategic logic* for determining investment priorities in civil society. The strategic logic is intended to assist in thinking deductively about civil society and political reform. The items contained in each column are illustrative and could be substituted with different elements to reflect particular country conditions.

It should be emphasized that the *strategic* logic needs to be complemented by a *tactical* logic. That is, the particular role and contributions of donor investments in civil society will be determined largely by the character of the regime, by previous historical experience with democracy, and by the nature of the transition process under way in particular countries. More attention will be directed to the dynamics and sequencing of the change process in chapter 6.

Five Steps Toward Reform

Steps 1 and 2

Moving from left to right, *problem identification* is step 1 in the strategic logic. It entails analysis of the major obstacles to democratic political development in a particular country setting. Step 2, the *reform agenda*, identifies the initiatives necessary to address and remedy these problems.

Problem analysis and formulating a reform agenda can occur at two levels: *systemic reforms* and *sectoral reforms*. Systemic reforms address the basic rules, incentives, and institutional parameters of the political system. They might include constitutional reform or reforms in local government, legislatures, judicial system, political parties, and the enabling environment supporting the growth of civil society.

The five countries included in the CDIE study all share a recent history of authoritarian governments. Four of the five countries have emerged into a democratic era of fairly open, multiparty politics (Kenya is the exception). Although each of these polities is adopting more democratic practices (primarily in the form of multiparty contested elections), a legacy of authoritarian structures cuts across a wide range of sectors. The legacy continues to thwart political liberalization. These structures are the target of systemic reforms.

In many instances, the state is simply not accountable. This is particularly so where constitutional checks and balances are not appropriately defined and maintained, enabling the executive to dominate other branches of government. Constitutional reforms may be a necessary first step in addressing this problem. In other instances, centralized bureaucracies undermine government responsiveness and stifle local initiative. In these cases, support for decentralization and for strengthening local government capacities and autonomy are essential. Efforts to liberalize the political/administrative milieu of NGOs may also be important.

Often political parties are controlled by narrow elite oligarchies that do not represent the interests of large segments of society. Reform within parties and in the national electoral system as well may be necessary to open the polity to broader participation. There are also instances in which political elites are so polarized as to require a concerted effort in building a new elite consensus on the rules of the political game. Such consensus is necessary for bringing about greater trust and stability within the polity.

Freedom of speech and assembly are needed for the growth and vitality of the public realm where political debate and deliberation must be openly conducted. But governments often severely circumscribe these freedoms. Such actions can easily extend to abuses and violations of personal freedom and safety. Indeed, in many cases large segments of the population may be politically suppressed or discriminated against by the ruling regime. In short, free speech and human rights are endangered and violated.

Sectoral reforms are the second level of activity in democracy and governance. Although such investments often are not specifically aimed at strengthening democracy, investments in sectoral areas such as environment and natural resources, private sector development and NGOs, may yield substantial multiplier effects for systemic reform in democracy and governance. That will become evident in chapter 5.

Sectoral reforms are important because they can expand the number and size of autonomous enclaves relatively well insulated from government predations. Such reforms can also be valuable in supporting more systemic changes--for example in Thailand, where spillover effects from the growth of environmental CAO activism strengthened the call for more fundamental democracy and governance reforms. In many instances, political reformers can operate more effectively and safely in advocating sectoral reforms than they can in taking on a more systemic agenda, largely because sectoral reforms are not seen as

threatening to regimes.

Higher levels of sectoral autonomy can serve as a shield against egregious political interference and as a buffer reducing the pernicious effects of turbulence emanating from instabilities in the larger political system. Such has been the case in Thailand, where gradual depoliticization of the commercial sector has allowed it to grow and prosper despite recent political instability. In large measure, the extreme neoliberal reforms undertaken in Chile in the early years of General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte were designed to depoliticize and thereby enhance the autonomy of not only the business sector but other sectors as well. In Kenya the opposite process occurred. Until recently nearly every sector came under the control or influence of the one-party state, thereby severely reducing room for growth of an autonomous civil society.

In brief, increasing sectoral autonomy to replace co-optation by government is critical to strengthening democratic rule. Conversely, it is important for the state to have some autonomy relative to civil society. In effect, when the autonomy of either state or civil society is eroded, and one manipulates, captures, and controls the other, the symptoms will likely show up in rent-seeking, excessive distributive pressures, or inordinately extractive public policies. These asymmetrical conditions can lead to political and economic decay.

Step 3

Step 3 in the strategic logic is to survey *CAO types* and those constituencies that have interests corresponding with the reform agendas identified in step 2. Part of this analysis also is to identify constituencies and CAOs that might share common interests and thus provide a basis for coalition-building. For example, in Bangladesh labor unions and women's organizations may find much in common with respect to the garment industry. It employs more than 800,000 workers, the overwhelming majority of them young women. Analysis may also suggest the need for creating entirely new CAOs for constituencies that heretofore have had no organizational representation. Urban migrants are an obvious example.

Step 4

Step 4 concerns *CAO functions*, concentrating particularly on assessing and enhancing organizational resources and skills required to advance a reform agenda. Skills in strategic planning and resource mobilization are critically important in setting longer term CAO priorities and objectives. Many CAOs are consumed with short-term objectives and contingencies and thus do not develop strategic-planning skills. The major labor union federation in Kenya, the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU) suffers from this deficiency. To address the problem, the AFL-CIO regional institute (African-American Labor Center) is seeking to engage the COTU leadership in a strategic-planning exercise that lays out a multiyear agenda of objectives and progress benchmarks for setting

organizational priorities.

Skills in resource mobilization are also a major CAO weakness. Few CAOs in countries where donors are active derive income from fees or member dues. Most depend on income from other sources, primarily grants from national and international donors. Accordingly, it is particularly important to develop organizational skills in raising funds from more diverse domestic sources (such as membership fees, corporate giving, and sales of goods and services).

Skills in policy and institutional analysis are of paramount importance. To arrive at a cogent and convincing reform agenda, CAOs must undertake the analysis necessary to prepare technically well-grounded proposals for policy and institutional changes they advocate, either of a systemic or sectoral nature. Again, many CAOs lack these skills.

Another facet of step 4 deals with organizational capacities to advance a reform agenda in the public realm. Skills in advocacy, networking, public education, and coalition-building with like-minded CAOs are important in mobilizing support for reform campaigns. In both Thailand and Chile, the strength of the prodemocracy CAOs was in large part attributable to their having developed these skills.

Also important are developing CAO capabilities in informing and handling the media. One reason for the growth and success of the environmental movement in Thailand is that USAID has made investments in developing the media skills of environmental CAOs and has helped journalists enhance their knowledge of relevant issues. As a result, journalists have developed an understanding and supportive relationship with CAOs. Similar developments are in train in Bangladesh (with support from the Ford and Asia Foundations) and in El Salvador (with USAID assistance).

Coalition-building is needed because most CAOs are small and need to join forces to become effective champions of reform. A survey of NGOs and CAOs conducted in Thailand in the late 1980s, for example, found that half had staffs of fewer than five people, and three fourths had annual budgets of less than \$40,000. Most organizations are not membership based and so do not raise funds from annual dues. To enhance their influence, many CAOs form coalitions around particular sectoral interests. Thus the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), an NGO umbrella group, has encouraged development of sectoral CAO and NGO alliances in the health, women's, and environmental sectors.

Another necessary skill is capacity for policy dialog. In Thailand, studies financed by USAID identified typical problems hindering CAOs from engaging government officials in dialog. They included inadequate information on the technical and social aspects of the issue being addressed, poor understanding of relevant laws and regulations, and poor planning. These deficiencies are found in CAOs in other countries.

A good example of the need for skills in negotiation and policy dialog comes from the recent efforts of Kenyan university faculty to campaign against government control and interference in university governance. Faculty formed a union in 1993 and called a strike demanding university reform. But it soon became apparent that the strike was hindered by major deficiencies: lack of sophistication in collective bargaining tactics, lack of strategic planning of strike goals, absence of a public relations campaign to enlist public sympathy, and the need for an outreach program to build supportive alliances with other sectors of society. To address these needs, the African-American Labor Center financed consultants from the American Federation of Teachers to work with faculty leaders in fashioning a more coherent strike strategy. However, despite improvements in the faculty's campaign strategies, the strike was unable to persevere against government opposition.

Part of the policy dialog process is learning the art of constructive negotiation. This is amply demonstrated in Bangladesh, where leaders of ADAB negotiated an agreement with the government and international donors to revise their proposed environmental and natural resource plan for the country. ADAB thought the plan had major shortcomings, but the group didn't put the government and donors on the defensive by attacking it. Instead, it proposed that a more grounded and comprehensive plan be devised by allowing ADAB to organize local and national forums to secure citizen input in forming a revised plan. Government and donors accepted the proposal. The episode highlights ADAB's achievement. Instead of taking an adversarial approach, the group sought to work out a win-win partnership solution.

A final set of organizational skills lies in monitoring and enforcing adopted reforms. Often a CAO reform agenda gets adopted by a government but is not fully carried out. The reason is that policy change is not accompanied by changes in the regulatory practices and institutional procedures necessary for effective policy implementation. CAOs all too often are unable to monitor policy implementation and ensure that policies are enforced in practice. In Bangladesh the Flood Action Program reforms reported on in chapter 5 are exemplary. Using both media relations and litigation skills, the Environmental Lawyers Association there is monitoring government compliance with new guidelines allowing community participation in the design of flood control infrastructure. A similar effort is being started by Thai CAOs to monitor government compliance in enforcing environmental protection policies.

Step 5

Step 5 involves assessing the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of the *institutional mechanisms and arenas* that allow CAOs to perform their reform role effectively. Elections, petition, initiative, public hearings, the right to recall, and the use of referenda--all are mechanisms potentially allowing CAOs to engage the public and government on public issues. But in developing countries these mechanisms are often nonexistent,

inaccessible, or severely hampered. In Thailand, for example, leaders in the Chiangmai Chamber of Commerce want more decentralized government but hesitate to advance the cause of democracy through elections of provincial governors. They justify their position by suggesting that incompetent and corrupt governors would be elected and that there would be few mechanisms in place (such as the right to recall) to hold them accountable.

Some institutional mechanisms may be in place but rendered ineffective through defective design. Thus in El Salvador the municipal code of 1986 provides for citizen referenda, the outcomes of which are binding on city officials. But since holding a referendum is left up to the town council in the code, it is not surprising that few if any have taken place. Municipal officials see no reason to limit their own power by encouraging such citizen participation.

Institutional arenas where public dialog on fundamental reform issues can be voiced may be suppressed or seriously compromised by government controls. (Such arenas include universities, the media, political parties, legislatures, local government, and administrative boards that include CAO representation.) In Chile hundreds of professors were purged from universities after the military takeover in 1973. Since the early 1980s, universities in Kenya have experienced a gradual erosion of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, with the government exercising greater control over faculty and student affairs. Viewing the universities as sources of political opposition, the regime has employed a wide range of repressive measures to ensure conformity and quash dissent.

Thailand presents an interesting case. There most universities are state institutions. But they have been able to expand their autonomy gradually to the point where they serve as important arenas where CAOs, citizens, and government representatives can meet and engage in dialog on important public issues. Indeed, many university faculty are actively involved in establishing, leading, and advising CAOs.

Another arena, the media, is an increasingly important vehicle through which CAOs can champion reform. In Kenya, the print media have been subject to considerable government pressure and harassment not to publish reports reflecting unfavorably on the regime. In both Kenya and Bangladesh, TV and radio are controlled by the government and thereby do not provide an outlet for critical reporting. However, increasing access to the electronic media through fax machines, the Internet, and satellite TV is opening vast new highways for information flows that transcend national boundaries and are beyond the control of authoritarian governments.

Other institutions that are more integral to the political system and government in general may not be effective vehicles for advancing CAO reform agendas. Political parties are often built more around personal factions than issue or policy differences, and that diminishes their importance as sources of support for reform. Legislatures may have little authority or input in the development of policy initiatives, and local governments lack the autonomy or resources necessary to encourage local problem-solving. The courts may be so politicized

as to render them ineffective upholders of the rule of law. Even when present, ombudsmen are all too often toothless, and advisory boards that include CAO representatives (who can use such a venue to discuss reforms and monitor their adoption) are infrequently utilized. Each of the five country case studies exhibited one or more of these institutional deficiencies.

In summary, CAOs are often faced with narrow and attenuated institutional arenas and mechanisms within which to pursue reform agendas. Under these conditions, they will need to emphasize as part of their reform effort enhancing arenas and mechanisms that can open up avenues for more effective CAO engagement with the public and the state.

National arenas may disable CAO action, but international arenas are another story. Through such avenues as meetings of donor consultative groups, they are displaying increasing promise as vehicles through which CAOs can garner support and apply pressure for reform in their respective countries. Many national reforms pursued by CAOs and reported in this assessment could have been consummated only with external donor assistance and international pressure applied on host country governments. This was certainly the case with the political openings that occurred in Kenya in the early 1990s. To some extent, it was the case in Thailand as well.

Environmental CAOs in Bangladesh found that linking their reform campaigns with like-minded groups in Europe (which could in turn lobby donor governments) could bring added pressure on the flood-control bureaucracy in Dhaka. In the future, international forums will in all likelihood be increasingly used by CAOs in mobilizing support for reform. This will soon be the case, for example, in negotiations (within the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) on protecting the rights of workers in the developing world to organize labor unions.

The Logic of Tactics

The initial five steps of the strategic logic outlined here are a device to guide analytical thinking in a *deductive* manner. The analysis should identify needed structural reforms, assess the supply of organizational resources in civil society to support a reform effort, and acquire some measure of the arenas and institutions within which civil society can exercise a reformist role.

Deductive logic is linear, orderly, and systematic. In a complementary fashion, *inductive* tactics need to be employed to build on opportunities and issues that arise in unique country situations. In this regard, tactically, the five case studies indicate that the opportunity for civil society to organize and press for reform is conditioned, first, by a history of democratic governance (chapter 3) and, second, by where a country is positioned in the transition to democracy (chapter 6). It is particularly important to understand the dynamics of the transition process in order to determine whether and how donors might appropriately tailor their support for civil society.

3. THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

Four of the five countries included in this study have undergone, or are undergoing, recent systemic reforms that have contributed to democratic transition. The role of civic advocacy organizations has varied in each. In some, the groups have been prominent; in others, they have had little involvement in the transition.

The role of CAOs in the transition process appears to be conditioned by a number of variables as indicated in table 1. The first concerns the degree of severity of the authoritarian rule that preceded the democratic transition. As recently as the mid-1980s, each of the systems labored under an antidemocratic regime, but the extent of oppression of political rights and liberties, and the duration and cycles of such oppression, varied considerably.

In Chile, the Pinochet government was extremely oppressive in its early years. Things eased considerably in the late 1970s and 1980s, but the government continued as a strong, authoritarian state. In El Salvador the antileftist governments of the 1980s were also oppressive, though the civil war of that decade meant that violence was perpetrated (but to a lesser extent) by the insurrectionary side as well. Bangladesh and Thailand offer a marked contrast to both Latin American countries. To be sure, the government imposed serious restrictions on political rights and civil liberties in both countries, but without the wholesale extermination of opposition elements that occurred in Chile and El Salvador. Kenya was somewhere in the middle--harsher than Bangladesh or Thailand but milder than the two Latin American cases.

The second variable is the experience each system had with earlier democratic openings. Some openings were extensive, but in each case an authoritarian government reestablished itself. It was not until the late 1980s or early 1990s that a new opening became possible. The previous openings varied greatly. Chile had enjoyed an essentially full-fledged democracy from the 1930s until the 1973 Pinochet coup. It was often held up as a model to which other Latin American countries could aspire. Thailand had a number of elected governments in the 1970s. Again at the end of the 1980s it appeared that democracy had taken root, but in each case military intervention, amid charges of political corruption, ended the democratic experiment.

The Bangladesh experience with democracy was thinner and briefer than either Chile's or Thailand's. Just after independence in 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's government was a popular one, and the political landscape was quite open before Mujib's experiment with repressive one-party rule in 1975. Later on, Ziaur Rahman eased his own authoritarian regime in favor of what amounted to a democratic polity in the late 1970s, before his assassination and the emergence of General H.M. Ershad's dictatorship in 1982. But throughout the period, elections at best were plebiscites, ratifying the mandate of the ruling party, rather than being open and competitive.

El Salvador labored through several political cycles. An expansion of political space and mobilization of previously excluded social strata into politics were followed by repression from the country's ruling elites. Sometimes the repression was severe, as in the 1930s and early 1980s; in other cycles it was more

contained, as in the 1940s and 1960s. But in no case was it possible for CAOs to advance much further than mobilization.

Kenya enjoyed some political freedom after independence in 1963, but it was gradually swallowed up by an increasing movement toward one-party rule that has lasted down to the present. Donor-initiated pressure to democratize the system did lead to a significant opening in 1991, but dissension among opposition parties and government manipulation in the 1992 parliamentary elections led to the return of a more closed, authoritarian polity. It was still in existence at the time of the CDIE field visit in the summer of 1994.

The third variable is the nature of the present democratic opening in the sample countries. For Chile this was a gradual and peaceful process whereby the Pinochet regime allowed discussion and debate leading up to the October 1988 plebiscite on the future of the dictatorship.

In the three other openings, events were more dramatic. Thailand saw a popular uprising in May 1992. It involved street demonstrations, police charges, and ultimately civilians being shot--a series of events that soon led (with some intervention from the king) to new elections and a democratic restoration. Bangladesh experienced a similar sequence of events in late 1990. It began with demonstrations and moved through shootings to culminate in a military decision to direct President Ershad to resign in favor of a caretaker government that soon supervised the first truly free election in the country's history. In El Salvador the process differed but was no less striking. The two combatant sides signed peace accords in January 1992 that brought to an end a dozen years of bitter civil war.

These first three variables--authoritarian severity, earlier democratic experience, and present opening--all appear to relate to the fourth variable: the roles that CAOs were able to play in contributing to the democratic transition. In Chile and Thailand, this role was prominent and will be presented in some detail later on in this chapter. In El Salvador, by contrast, CAOs played only a minor part in the peace accords that ushered in new efforts in democratic rule. Meanwhile, in Bangladesh, the human rights community involved itself to some extent in the anti-Ershad movement of autumn 1990, the development-oriented NGOs were virtually uninvolved until the last moments of the regime.

What accounts for these differences? The relative mildness of the incumbent regime in its later years could explain part of the CAO involvement in Chile and Thailand. Conversely, the continuing high level of violence and human rights suppression attendant on the civil war could account for much of the *lack* of CAO participation in the peace accords in El Salvador. But Bangladesh, where conditions were at least as propitious as those in Thailand, did not see such strong CAO participation.

It appears that earlier experience with democracy is the critical variable here. Chile's long experience with a relatively advanced democratic political system provided the framework CAOs could draw on in mobilizing people for a "no" vote in the 1988 plebiscite. Thailand's adventures with democracy were more fleeting in the 1970s and the end of the 1980s, but they did provide enough practice that participants from those earlier experiences could combine in 1992 to spearhead the prodemocracy coalition.

For Bangladesh and El Salvador, experiences derived from the limited democratic openings of earlier periods failed to provide favorable conditions for CAO roles in their democratic transition. In Bangladesh, popular organizations were much involved in the anti-Ershad movement of 1990. They were able to draw on knowledge gained in the wider political space that had existed for a time under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the early 1970s (before he established his own authoritarian rule) and under Ziaur Rahman in the later 1970s (as he eased his version of authoritarianism). But these groups were largely student, professional, and labor organizations closely connected to opposition political parties. They were not autonomous organizations operating independently of the parties and so do not meet our definition of a civic advocacy organization.

Organizations that *were* autonomous--in the case of Bangladesh, developmental CAOs--were almost completely uninvolved in opposing the Ershad dictatorship. Only in the 11th hour of the anti-Ershad movement in late 1990 did they finally join the protesters. For the most part, though, instead of pushing democracy, they had essentially accommodated themselves to authoritarian governments so as to facilitate pursuit of their developmental agendas and maintain their (government-defined) links to foreign donors.

In El Salvador, the civil society mobilization effort of the 1970s was largely autonomous from both parties and government. That is especially so for the advocacy groups mobilized by the Roman Catholic Church in the late 1970s--the so-called Christian base communities, which promoted grass-roots support for social justice and political change. In the 1980s these and other groups representing non-elites became the targets of death squads and direct government repression; thus they were not in a position to influence the peace accords of 1992. Other, more moderate CAOs were allowed to exist during the civil war but had no place in the peace accords. The accords were negotiated solely by the government and the insurrectionary forces, away from the public eye, in Mexico.

For both Bangladesh and El Salvador, in short, earlier CAO experience with democracy was limited and failed to inform CAO participation in the democratic transition. In the one case CAOs had become almost totally turned away from politics and toward development activity. In the other case CAOs were poorly situated to participate in a negotiated settlement of a civil war. The two cases (Chile and Thailand) where CAOs did play a role in the democratic transition (that is, systemic reform) deserve some analysis. A discussion of them finishes out this chapter.

Civil Society and Democratic Development in Chile

The event that defined Chilean politics in the latter part of the 20th century was the 1973 coup that overthrew the democratically elected government of President Salvador Allende. The military regime eliminated all the constitutional guarantees associated with the Chilean democratic process. The new leaders declared illegal the political parties that had constituted the leftist coalition Unidad Popular and pronounced "in recess" all other political parties. Academics who were not acceptable to the new government were removed from their university positions. University think tanks considered allies of Unidad Popular were closed. Many journalists, politicians, scholars, political activists, government functionaries, and labor leaders were imprisoned, exiled, or killed--or were "disappeared." In short, the Pinochet military regime destroyed both the freedom to undertake political activity and the freedom

spaces in which to think about politics.

The authoritarian character of the military's rule gradually moderated, and the regime's legitimacy eventually became undermined by a resurgent civil society. Thus in a 1988 national plebiscite, which the military thought it could win, voters gave their support to restoration of civilian, democratically elected government. This turn of events was in significant measure a product of CAOs working to rebuild the public realm. In particular it resulted from the groups' grass-roots effort to mobilize opposition to a continuation of military rule.

Rebuilding the Public Realm

The first step toward reopening the public realm and the possibilities of thinking about politics began with the establishment of the Academy of Christian Humanism in November 1975. The academy was the Catholic Church's response to the patterns of repression that had affected the church's own institutions of higher learning as well as those of the state. It received support from the Ford and Inter-American Foundations, Canada's International Development Research Centre, and a number of European donors.

The academy functioned as an umbrella organization that provided an institutional cover for donor agencies seeking to support the social sciences and related disciplines in Chile. It provided a direct source of employment for a significant number of social scientists, and its institutional umbrella permitted two other research centers to function in Chile in an adverse environment--the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences and the Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies (ILET). Their eight research programs provided employment for more than 320 academics.

The academy provided a meeting place for academic discourse, and one of its initiatives was to create study circles. The circles functioned in such subject areas as economics, jurisprudence, philosophy, international studies, and women's studies. Their meetings and seminars under the aegis of the academy led to critical analyses of the process of destruction of Chilean democracy, including evaluations of the actions of the Unidad Popular government. Gradually, the study circles began to convert themselves into institutions--some as professional societies and others as CAOs.

By the 1980s, repression, though still present and available as a political tool, had been relaxed. Newer research centers along with those already in place began to formulate proposals for alternative ways of returning to democracy. Institutions such as the Center for the Study of Development (CED) and the Center for the Study of Contemporary Reality held conferences that included international participants to discuss alternative roads for a transition to democracy. CED served as well as a site where political thinkers and political activists from different groups opposed to the dictatorship could come together to present their viewpoints and open dialogs with others.

In thinking through lessons learned from the experience of Unidad Popular and in examining changing relationships in the nature of political and economic development internationally and within Chile, opposition groups began to formulate alternative positions that were to lead to fundamental changes in the

way they engaged in politics. One important change was a revision of leftist thinking regarding the value of Marxist perspectives. Long before the Berlin Wall came down, the Chilean left had rethought its ideological position and adopted a more pragmatic approach to political action.

Another change was the commitment of all opposition forces to a view that compromise and strategic consensus rather than confrontation was an absolute necessity. These shifts in ideological orientations and a willingness to consider the possibilities of dialog among former political enemies made possible the formation of a new type of political alliance at a later stage.

As the decade advanced, it became clear that popular agitation would not lead to a change in government. The opposition turned to an examination of the options provided by the government itself. Secure in its belief that it controlled public opinion, the government had called for a plebiscite in 1988 to ratify an extension of its mandate to almost the end of the century. CAOs capitalized on this opportunity, providing the skills and the understanding to help make a "no" vote a real possibility. The relationship that developed and the roles played by three organizations illustrate the function of CAOs in aiding in the victory secured by the opposition in the 1988 plebiscite.

Innovative Social Science and Political Strategies

Much innovative and applied social science research began to take place in the early 1980s. Before the 1988 plebiscite, three political and social think tanks--ILET, CED, and a group called Sur (South)--came together to help the opposition develop a strategy and tactics appropriate to mobilizing public opinion in favor of a "no" vote.

ILET had previously brought together scholars from several disciplines to develop policy papers directed at influencing the future of the Chilean polity. Sur had done extensive work in surveying urban areas and also possessed communications skills. CED had, as noted earlier, served as a center for discussion among academics and political actors associated with various components of the opposition.

In 1987 the three institutions worked together using focus-group methods to test media strategies and messages communicating the meaning of a "no" vote. They carried out their work in the face of formidable obstacles put up by the military dictatorship. Other research centers contributed to these efforts with their own studies of public opinion, largely supported by external donors.

Another CAO role was to organize forums that would help build the intellectual underpinnings of a consensus among the opposition. That consensus eventuated in the Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia (Accord of Parties for Democracy)--a departure from political tradition. Historically, Chilean politics had been one of highly organized and well-disciplined political parties. These parties so deeply penetrated the discourse of Chilean life that a person was in many ways defined by his or her political affiliation. Party loyalty tended to impede coalition-building, and differences in political positions often spawned new parties. After the 1973 coup, this sense of partisanship persisted, so that a major concern in promoting a transition to democracy was overcoming the intensity of partisan identification.

The concertación represented an unprecedented coming-together of the principal opposition parties. In the new alliance, all worked cooperatively to secure political power, but each retained its own identity and liberty of action. The process of building the concertación was aided by discussion and research carried out in the academic centers. The academics engaged in those activities laid the groundwork for setting aside ideological differences; they developed a common set of strategies to end the dictatorship through instruments made available by that dictatorship (such as the plebiscite); and they created a political coalition appropriate to the highly partisan nature of Chilean politics.

The support needed to accomplish these tasks was provided largely by donor-assisted CAOs, ensuring that academic inquiry, and above all the social sciences and applied social research, could survive despite the desires and efforts of the military government. Thus there was a direct link between donor action, the existence of an institutional framework for thinking about politics, and the reestablishment of a Chilean democratic polity.

CAOs and Democratic Development in Thailand

Over the past several decades the Thai polity has vacillated between more-or-less authoritarian and open regimes. As in Chile, the 1980s were a period of expanding openness, a period that offered increasing scope for CAOs. A number of groups associated with environmental issues, an incipient AIDS epidemic, and problems of the rural poor were established or began operating effectively during this period. Thus Bangkok-based activists began working with farmers' groups in the northeast, even supporting them in confrontations with security forces. Also during this period, donors were eager to fund effective indigenous NGOs, and the government allowed it to happen. This was also a period when the press was given greater freedom. Moreover, controversial activist groups found journalist allies who were willing to publish, if not necessarily support, their policy positions.

The late 1980s brought further breakthroughs, providing greater legitimacy for CAOs and NGOs than Thailand had ever seen. The prime minister's son, a professor of political science, had worked actively with farmer groups in the northeast. His father asked him to set up a small advisory unit in the prime minister's office. Staffed by academics and CAO and NGO people, the office was to coordinate with NGOs and ensure their views were aired as part of the policymaking process. The group had two early successes: articulation of a decision and plan to release political prisoners, and a revamped forest act that recognized the legitimacy and value of community forestry. During this period, CAO and NGO leaders and other activists were for the first time given ready access to parliament and senior politicians.

The growth in social and political activism during the 1980s can be attributed to a cadre of academics who played a variety of useful roles as human rights activists, prodemocracy campaigners, and proponents of systemic reforms to strengthen democratic processes. They advised NGO leaders, wrote articles and press releases, drafted proposed laws and policies, carried out action research and policy research, and established CAOs, NGOs, committees, foundations, and working groups.

In brief, during the 1980s, organizing--generally around social and economic empowerment--was not

perceived as threatening to the government. The larger political agenda emerged unexpectedly in the coup of 1991. This catalytic event brought to a head the confrontation between democracy and more traditional authoritarian modes of governance. Proponents of democracy drew their leadership and strength from civic advocacy organizations.

Prodemocratic Activism

The military coup of 1991 did not meet with immediate public outcry. However, a confluence of events served to undermine the legitimacy of the military takeover. First, machinations of military coup leaders and their conservative allies in the political parties compromised the credibility of their promises to restore elected civilian government. That widened the opportunity for more political activist civic advocacy organizations to challenge the legitimacy of military rule as "informed" public opinion began to shift against the military. And that in turn emboldened other nonstate organizations to come to the fore and rally in opposition to the military.

One of the most conspicuous CAOs was the Union for Civil Liberties. UCL was founded during 1973-76 as a committee of activist volunteers. In a period when students were in the political forefront, this group of professionals and academics worked quietly, mainly in support of workers. They issued a few public statements against rural violence during a period when many headmen were being executed. After the military coup in 1976, their main office was ransacked. For the next few years, most members chose to be inactive.

With liberalizing trends emerging in the early 1980s, UCL decided to reactivate. During the three years it took to achieve full government registration, the organization sponsored paralegal training for those willing to advise others on human rights issues and public seminars. In the mid-1980s UCL began a campaign for amnesty for political prisoners. It finally succeeded in getting prisoners released in 1988-89.

UCL activists were unpleasantly surprised by the coup of February 1991. Five days after the coup, UCL issued a public appeal for an immediate end to martial law. Late in the year a group operating out of the UCL office formed the Campaign for Popular Democracy (CPD) to press the government to set an election date. The CPD proceeded to organize demonstrations around the country for early elections. Many NGO leaders, union leaders, and academics joined as individual members.

In early 1991 the CPD launched a campaign for constitutional reform. Between October 1991 and April 1992 the group sponsored demonstrations, workshops, and seminars nationwide. A rally in November 1991 drew 50,000 people. Proposed constitutional reforms, called collectively the People's Draft, were prepared by representatives of five CAOs and coalitions. The reforms were "ratified" by 270 people representing prodemocracy groups throughout Thailand, including UCL.

With pressure building from numerous sources, the government announced elections for March 1992. Soon after, the chairman of UCL developed the concept for a group called the Pollwatch Foundation and sold the idea to the prime minister. With government approval and funding, Pollwatch mounted a substantial voter education campaign in late 1991 and early 1992. Some critics felt activists sullied their

reputations at this time by working too closely with the government in voter education efforts, in effect making themselves an extension of the conservative Interior Ministry.

A major political crisis ensued in May 1992, soon after the election. Government leaders reneged on their promise that only an elected member of parliament would become prime minister--as distinct from a nominee from the military. Leaders also proposed a cabinet that included members who had been found to possess "excessive wealth" at the time of the 1991 coup. Many citizens saw this as a betrayal of trust, giving rise to a new surge of activism and political opposition from a cross section of society. CAOs capitalized on this discontent by organizing demonstrations and protests in Bangkok in early May. Other groups, loosely affiliated, were organizing demonstrations upcountry.

In mid-May, many of these groups came together to form a coalition calling itself the Confederation for Democracy. An action committee was selected, each member representing an informal constituency such as labor, medicine, academics, students, slum people, and teachers. The group was committed to leading direct social action in support of two goals: an elected prime minister and constitutional changes to make the Thai polity more democratic.

During May 14-17 the action committee was together constantly, developing plans and policies and organizing demonstrations. Members anticipated they would be challenged with water hoses, barricades, and tear gas. They did not anticipate shooting, though that's what happened from May 17 through May 20. Events of the period--demonstrations, water cannon, police charges, arrests, the famous TV sequence in which two top generals prostrated themselves before the king--received wide coverage in the international press. Ultimately, the military and its civilian allies acceded to public pressure calling for new elections in September 1992.

The Postcoup Era

The September elections brought to the fore a relatively progressive coalition government. In the aftermath, existing CAOs have broadened their agendas, new advocacy groups and coalitions have emerged, and service-oriented groups have begun to move into public advocacy. As a consequence, public discussion and debate on a wide range of policy issues has flourished more than at any previous time in Thai history. The CAO agenda converged on three items: constitutional reform, civic education, and decentralization.

Many constitutional reforms proposed by the government in early 1993 reflect those contained in the People's Draft, prepared in 1991-92 under the sponsorship of the Campaign for Popular Democracy. That organization is working closely with the Union for Civil Liberties and the Pollwatch Foundation on a civic education campaign. The Confederation for Democracy is now directing its attention at civic education through radio, television, and newsletters. It has also begun a training program for teachers and community leaders in getting more accountability from provincial politicians and a campaign against vote-buying (to be targeted on a single province in the next election).

Summary

In both Chile and Thailand, CAOs assumed a prominent role in organizing and spearheading initial moves toward democratic governance. In Chile, CAOs had a lengthy period of time to analyze problems and arrive at a reform agenda (steps 1 and 2 in figure 1). Several types of civic advocacy organizations (step 3) were involved in this effort. First were think tanks under the protective umbrella of the Catholic Church; later, other CAOs from other sectors, such as labor and women's groups, joined in the effort. These CAOs developed a wide range of skills (step 4): advocacy, policy analysis, public education, coalition-building. The arenas and institutional mechanisms in which they deployed their skills (step 5) centered primarily on elections and the political parties.

In Thailand, CAO involvement in the transition to democracy was more abrupt and chaotic. Problem identification and development of a reform agenda did occur, but much more quickly than in Chile, and without as broad a participation (such as the political parties, as in Chile). Still, a wide range of CAOs were involved in the Thai effort, with support coming primarily from prodemocracy groups but also from elements of the labor movement, environmental associations, and professional groups. Many of the CAOs in fact are still learning skills in a wide range of functions, particularly in public and civic education and strategic planning. The arenas and mechanisms within which they worked to promote the democratic settlement were more extensive but somewhat less effective than was the case in Chile.

In brief, Chile is further along in the transition process than is Thailand. Civic advocacy organizations in Thailand have much more work cut out for them to overcome the current inertia and resistance to further reform of a political system inbred with strong authoritarian tendencies.

4. CREATING THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Government structures and attendant regime behavior can either contribute to or inhibit growth of civic advocacy organizations. Within the five-country study there is considerable variation in conditions that favored growth of reformist activism within the CAO sector. Two of these factors figure in the following analysis: first, local government reform and, second, protection and expansion of the public realm.

Local Government Reform

In making autonomous local government accountable to its citizens, decentralization provides incentives and opportunities for local CAOs to engage in resolving local problems. Conversely, highly centralized systems tend to weaken incentives for local initiative, in part because of the transaction costs in transmitting local concerns to distant central authorities. In two of the case-study countries, El Salvador and Kenya, USAID and other donors have been investing in the local-government sector. Each country demonstrates the complex political and institutional dynamics involved in undertaking such activities.

El Salvador

By the late 1970s it had become apparent that some kind of reform was needed to revitalize local governments. They had so few resources and were so closed to citizen input that they were not viable institutions of democratic governance. A technical mission arranged by USAID brought a team of Brazilian experts to suggest reforms. It proposed a new municipal code that allowed for greater citizen involvement, but because of the outbreak of war in 1980 the code was set aside. In 1986, however, a new code, reflecting many of the Brazilian proposals, was passed into law.

The element of the new municipal law most important for development of civil society is the opening of local government to popular participation. The principal innovation comes in the creation of the *cabildo abierto*--open town council. This mechanism requires elected officials to inform the public of municipal decisions and provides opportunities for the public to raise concerns with those officials. By law, the mayor of each municipality must convene a cabildo at least once every three months. The law also specifies that all citizens of the municipality are to be invited, as well as community groups, cultural groups, and trade organizations.

Although these measures dramatically increased opportunities for civic advocacy organizations to interact with local government, it is unlikely any of them would have been widely implemented had there not been an important incentive to do so. That incentive came in the form of funds made available by USAID through its Municipalities in Action (MEA) program.

Begun in 1986, Municipalities in Action channels its funds through the government's reconstruction program. MEA stipulates that all projects eligible for funding must be proposed and approved in cabildos. By early 1994 Municipalities in Action had completed 8,600 projects, mainly roads, schools, municipal buildings, and water and electrical systems.

The effect of MEA on popular participation has been dramatic. Before the 1986 code reform, municipalities had no open town meetings. Once meetings began, however, both their number and the number of citizens attending rose steadily. In 1992 a total of 853 cabildos were held--about 80 percent of the minimum required by law (262 municipalities x 4 meetings a year = 1,048). That is a surprisingly large percentage, given the magnitude of the reform. Aggregate attendance increased from about 3,700 in 1988 (the first year figures were kept) to 208,000 in 1992.

Other programs also strengthen CAOs at the local level. The Ministry of Interior, through its Communal Development Organization, is promoting growth of autonomous local community development associations, helping them identify local needs for community improvement projects. Organization workers then encourage these groups to lobby their municipalities, through cabildos, to finance the projects. In another initiative, the Secretariat for National Reconstruction has a program soliciting project proposals from both local and national NGOs to work at the local level in social service areas such as health and education. This program complements the Municipalities in Action enterprise.

In summary, it appears that investments in local government and attendant civil society activities are

contributing to the larger reconciliation effort in bringing the former guerrilla-dominated areas back into the political system and in widening Salvadoran political space more generally to admit formerly marginal publics into political participation. This task is far from easy, though. Despite goodwill on all sides, a range of constraints emanating from the larger political environment and from host government/USAID policies work in some ways at cross-purposes to this effort. Indeed, a number of problems have emerged, some structural and others political.

First, reconstruction funds have been allocated more or less evenly across all the 115 (out of 262) municipalities labeled as "ex-conflictive zones." The allocation penalizes areas most devastated by the war--largely those dominated by the insurgent Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN)--while it benefits lightly damaged areas much more likely to have been progovernment.

Second, groups that had operated in the former conflictive zones are at a disadvantage in applying for grants from the Secretariat for National Reconstruction, owing to their inexperience at writing proposals, gaining formal legal recognition, keeping formal accounts, and the like. USAID has assisted several umbrella NGOs in counseling these groups to acquire such skills, an effort that appears to have made some headway. But it has taken some time to bring these less experienced groups up to speed, and now that they are beginning to show some capability to compete for grants, the funding available for rural reconstruction is starting to run out.

Third, the winner-take-all municipal election system (in which the winning party gets all the council seats) disfavors minorities, making it harder to reconcile them.

Fourth, there is some indication that groups sponsored by the nationally dominant Nationalist Republican Alliance (Arena) may be crowding out less well prepared civic advocacy organizations at the local level. Arena has a foundation/think tank that facilitates access to government funds by establishing local foundations that compete with municipal mayors and councils for government funding (especially in areas where the opposition FMLN or Christian Democratic Party has won power).

These problems must be counted as serious ones that will make reconciliation more difficult. Nonetheless, the combination of local-government reform and donor support that has energized these activities has become a critical component in effecting both the reconciliation and the widening of the body politic that it entails. New elements and new publics are beginning to take part in local political life, and local government is becoming accountable to a broader constituency.

Kenya

The need to transfer much greater responsibility (and the concomitant resource base) to local government authorities has been discussed by the Government of Kenya and donor circles for almost two decades. It has yet to strike a responsive chord in the top circles of the Kenya African Nationalist Union (KANU--the ruling party since independence) or the government. The Ministry of Local Government--ultimately the minister himself--exercises tight control over this vital arena, and that in part accounts for the lack of

development of civil society institutions at the local level.

Kenya has not always been governed in such a highly centralized fashion. In the early years of independence, elected town and rural councils enjoyed a degree of autonomy. But by 1969 many local authorities had begun to bankrupt themselves. This situation stemmed from both financial mismanagement and tremendous pressure for establishment of schools. The demand for schools far outran the ability of local communities to provide them. It was a pressure that could not be resisted by local councilors, whose political fortunes depended on the perception by the electorate that their demands were being met. At the same time irresistible pressure was mounting to reduce the graduated income tax local authorities had collected, a tax that funded these services.

With the councils unable to meet their financial obligations, the central government assessed the situation as having deteriorated to an unacceptable point. In 1969-70 local authority over health, education, and road maintenance was transferred to the relevant central government ministries, together with the graduated taxes meant to fund them.

An equally important reason for the curtailment of local authority was the alternative political recruitment arena that local politics provided. The rising national political elite opposed the unfettered operation of alternative public sector institutions through which potential rivals could make reputations and build patronage networks. Local government institutions provided just such a vehicle, especially given the insignificance of political party structures in Kenya's independence and early postindependence periods. In this context, the diminution of local authority can be read as a struggle between locally based elites and a protonationalist political strata, with the latter emerging as the winner and removing as much political capital as possible from the grasp of the former.

With abolition of the single-party system in late 1991, the situation has become considerably more complicated. A great number of elected local authorities now represent political parties in opposition to KANU, which still controls the central government. This has led to even tighter supervision by the central government. It has also brought on attempts to oust council chairmen and mayors of opposition persuasion and have them replaced with KANU-oriented leaders.

The centralization of power has led to a condition in which local governments cannot make even the smallest decisions themselves. They cannot increase market fees or levy taxes independently but must have such measures approved by the Ministry of Local Government and frequently the Ministry of Agriculture or Commerce as well. They cannot assess property rates independently but must have approval. They cannot hire staff without approval of the positions by the Ministry of Local Government. Moreover, the top tier of administrative staff is posted to the councils by the Public Service Commission rather than chosen by the authorities themselves. Dissatisfaction with these senior staff is rife, and substantial conflict exists between them and elected members of the councils. That leads to further demoralization and suspicion.

Thus local government institutions are hollow shells, with few significant functions. They continue to operate at a much reduced level, tending to urban infrastructure, marketplace operation, development of

nursery schools, and some residual veterinary and water supply services. But these are viewed by many as "displacement activities" rather than the core of what local governments should be engaged in.

Because of the centralized nature of the system, civic advocacy organizations that operate in the domain of local government are relatively few. Missing are neighborhood associations, water user groups, "friends of the parks," ratepayers associations, and business associations concerned with urban services and infrastructure. Local hawkers, small traders associations, and chambers of commerce make frustrating efforts to influence local government staffs. They quickly learn that to have any effect they must take their case to the ministry or to the minister himself, or to other "allies" they may have at cabinet level or in the senior ranks of the civil service.

Despite such obstacles, USAID, over the past decade or more, has undertaken initiatives in decentralization in Kenya. The initiatives have aimed both at local government and at administrative decentralization of national government agencies. In local government, efforts have been directed primarily toward three areas: 1) developing local authority planning capacity, 2) training councilors in financial and management skills, and 3) providing infrastructure in a number of small towns (in an effort to stabilize rural populations and halt the inexorable drift to Nairobi). A project funded by the German Government continues the effort with local planning capacity, but organizational issues (such as ministerial overcentralization and lack of autonomy of individual authorities) have inhibited progress in this area.

In contrast, some progress was made on administrative decentralization writ broadly, through the USAID-funded Rural Planning project. This initiative contributed to capacity-building for district plan preparation (which nonetheless is still a central ministry-driven effort) and to elaboration of the District Focus policy and its steering committee, the District Focus Task Force. The project also made progress in disaggregating the central government budget and increasing local administrative authority with respect to budget decisions. However, major fiscal constraints that emerged in the latter half of the 1980s and persist up to the present have wiped out most of the visible signs of such gain. In addition, the political opening of 1992 and the emergence of opposition voices has dampened regime interest in and enthusiasm for even such a modest approach to decentralization.

There are two "official" civic advocacy organizations, ALGAK and ALGE, which could potentially be advocates for empowering local government. ALGAK, the Association of Local Government Authorities of Kenya, is composed of the local authorities themselves and represents them in policy forums. ALGE, the Association of Local Government Employees, represents employees of the authorities. ALGAK has been co-opted by the government, and ALGE is under firm government control. The German project is trying to resuscitate ALGAK and make it a true and autonomous representative of local authorities. Given that the authorities themselves are not autonomous, though, it seems unlikely much progress can be made without significant restructuring of the Local Government Act and the way the Ministry of Local Government does business.

Summary

With USAID's Municipalities in Action and programs of the Secretariat for National Reconstruction encouraging development of civic advocacy organizations as part of the national reconciliation process, El Salvador has gone far in devolving significant political functions to the local level. In Kenya, though, one can at most point to some district-level planning and budgetary initiatives that were largely temporary in nature.

El Salvador is not without problems, however. As indicated earlier, both national political and institutional factors have prevented the full range of civil society activity that one would have hoped for the ex-conflictive zones. In Kenya these factors have been so serious as to limit any serious devolution to local government; the basic problem appears to be that central elites simply do not want to relinquish any power to areas where opposition elements could gain a foothold.

It is noteworthy that in four of the five case-study countries, strong regional governments do not exist. Divide-and-rule tactics prevail both economically and politically, with subregional or local governments so small as to deprive them of an adequate financial base or the possibility of becoming sites of serious political opposition to the regime. In El Salvador 201 of the country's 262 municipal governments have fewer than 20,000 residents, and of those fully 143 have fewer than 10,000 residents. In addition, local tax rates are very low.

In Bangladesh union parishads (equivalent to townships in the United States) number 4,451. They are the only tier of representative government currently operating, with an average population of 21,000. Their taxing powers are modest and, to the extent that they do exist, are largely underutilized. The major function of local government over time has been to build a patronage-fueled support base for the state. By funneling development monies down to the local level, the regime has hoped to maintain the allegiance of local officeholders. The strategy worked reasonably well during the Ershad era, and the new government has been tempted to try it as well.

It is obvious that contemplated investments in local government require considerable analysis of the political dynamics that favor or undermine local empowerment. USAID learned such a lesson in Thailand. In the early 1980s the Agency sponsored a decentralization effort but terminated the project after receiving inadequate support from the national government.

Absence of local government autonomy and attendant incentives for development of civil society at the local level has obvious implications for civil society at the national level. Thus in Kenya, with few exceptions, national-level CAOs have few grass-roots connections. Consequently, most function without the broad base of organizational support that could enhance their strength and credibility. In El Salvador, by contrast, civil society can be said to have made a start at the local level, one that may find resonance at the national level as well.

Protecting and Expanding the Public Realm

Protecting and expanding the public realm is a systemic reform fundamental to easing the growth of civil

society. At the core of an open public realm is the protection of free speech and association, a necessary condition for citizens and communities to organize and voice their concerns in the larger political arena. CAOs must be able to exercise these rights if they are to advocate reforms effectively.

In most instances, the burden for protecting and widening the public realm falls to human rights CAOs. Their constant monitoring, publicizing, advocating, and intervening is a requirement for all democracies. Sometimes the need for structural reform is paramount, as in revising criminal procedure codes or rebuilding constabularies. At other times the major necessity is to ensure enforcement of the legal system already in place. In this section we will look at human rights and civil society in Bangladesh, El Salvador, and Kenya.

Bangladesh

The principal human rights organization is the Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB). It serves both as a monitoring and advocacy agency itself and as an umbrella organization for 39 member groups that range from legal rights organizations to development NGOs. Although some member organizations of CCHRB have human rights as their main concern, most are more concerned with development.

The CCHRB investigates and analyzes human rights situations, monitors elections, coordinates activities of member organizations, generates support for protests and campaigns, and promotes human rights and legal aid, especially for the poor and disadvantaged. To achieve these ends, CCHRB has tried to generate public awareness through a variety of activities. They include publishing newsletters and reports, conducting seminars and workshops, maintaining contacts with the press, and lobbying politicians and bureaucrats. The council is developing a documentation center that tracks human rights concerns through the newspapers and other sources. It has contacts with journalists who cover the human rights beat and views them as part of the national network. The newspapers and journalists who cover human rights matters serve both as a source to identify human rights concerns and as a means of communicating CCHRB's position on a given issue.

The council sees itself as responsible for the full range of human rights concerns. These could include, in a given year, women's rights, children's rights, tribal peoples' rights, and prisoners' rights. In pursuing these interests, CCHRB deals with broad issues and with single cases. It operates with limited resources (an annual budget equivalent to around \$87,000). The organization's support comes almost entirely from foreign donors: the Ford and Asia Foundations along with a Catholic NGO foundation in the Netherlands.

Member organizations follow similar methods of publicizing, lobbying, assisting, and organizing their particular constituencies. For example, one organization concerned with child and women's labor, the Commission for Justice and Peace, has begun to investigate child labor abuses in garment factories and to publicize the results of those investigations. Another organization, Ain O Salish Kendra, has developed a program of assisting street children in addition to legal-assistance programs for women.

With few exceptions, these member organizations have limited resources and therefore are likely to have

limited effect. Their major avenues of influence lie in their ability to sway elite opinion through the media and through lobbying and public relations. For the most part the state is not hostile to human rights, and so the CCHR and its member groups can operate in this area on a largely routine basis. But serious new challenges can arise, as has recently been the case with the rising rural violence perpetrated by some fundamentalist Muslim groups against rural development efforts aiming to empower poor rural women. The state initially showed some reluctance to repudiate this activity, so the CCHR and its member groups have begun to press publicly for protection of rural women's rights. This issue is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

El Salvador

At first glance the civil war of the 1980s represented another chapter in the repression of civil society. The military's main goal in the war was to defeat the armed opposition that had arisen mainly because of prior oppression of civil society's demands for participation and reform. But the war also involved a massive resistance at levels unprecedented in Salvadoran history. Instead of brutal state repression followed by a period of elite dominance and mass political passivity, this time the prolonged civil war and military stalemate led to a negotiated peace that promised a genuine political opening for non-elite participation.

The current human rights situation in El Salvador constitutes a measure of the political space available to civil society and of the freedom with which organized interests and individuals may participate. Virtually all observers contacted by the CDIE team found the human rights climate much better in 1994 than at the beginning of this decade, and vastly better than it was during the late 1970s and 1980s.

The end of the civil war in early 1992 has eliminated repression to the extent that CAOs now operate openly in efforts to influence public policy--organizing, lobbying, even mobilizing protests--without reprisal. The armed forces have returned to their barracks, and their numbers have been cut by half. Reform of the constabulary proceeds through continued training and deployment of the National Civil Police, an agency that appears (in contrast with its predecessor, the National Police) to enjoy both goodwill and an image of honesty from much of the populace. Parties of the left legally and openly contest elections. Members and former members of the FMLN and other leftist groups serve in the legislative assembly, on several municipal councils, and in myriad NGOs.

But these structural changes do not rule out the need for human rights agencies in El Salvador. The Solicitor for the Defense of Human Rights (PDDH), a national ombudsman agency, operates offices in many departments and investigates hundreds of allegations of human rights abuses each year. Also, the Catholic Church's Tutela Legal (Legal Guardian), the principal denunciatory and advocacy CAO for human rights throughout the civil war, continues to pursue its activities. More than the other organizations, it tends instinctively to assume that any incident involving former insurrectionaries and their sympathizers is politically motivated by a rightist state. And while other agencies may rightly think Tutela Legal to be shrill and reflexive in its denunciations, the organization in all probability provides a signal service to the cause of human rights. That is, it points with alarm to every conceivable wrongdoing and thereby creates more operating room for the more moderate human rights organizations to do their work. In other words, with Tutela Legal providing a degree of political cover, it is easier for the other

agencies to get on with the job by appearing to be more accommodating.

Several other NGOs that have promoted human rights also persist and are shifting their energies from primarily denunciatory to promotional activities by engaging in human rights education and training programs. Still, the Salvadoran human rights climate remains far from ideal. Human rights observers, monitors, and activists ranging from the PDDH to the El Salvadoran Organization of the United Nations to Tutela Legal all note continuing problems: some death squads continue to exist with the objective of destabilizing the peace process; the PDDH reports frequent violations of basic constitutional guarantees of due process by civil authorities; labor unions operate under severe organizational and legal constraints; several political activists, almost all with FMLN or other leftist organizational ties, have died violently--some obviously assassinated and others under unclear circumstances; and human rights violations still occur with impunity.

In summary, since the signing of the peace accords, political space for much of civil society has expanded, especially for citizens and for a plethora of NGOs dedicated to providing services and training and attempting to influence public policy. But the infrastructure for human rights violations still exists. In the words of Freedom House, "Although the 1992 peace accords led to a significant reduction in human rights violations, political expression and civil liberties continue to be restricted by right-wing death squads and military security forces that operate with impunity."

Kenya

In recent years the Kenyan Government has acknowledged more rights for organization and voice in civil society, but it has also shown itself more systematically hostile to all opposition than has any of the other governments in the five-country sample. Human rights violations have been a part of this hostility.

The regime appears to be adopting new strategies to maintain political control in response to the somewhat more open political atmosphere and closer local and international monitoring of abuses. According to a recent Africa Watch report, ". . . the government has relied on different tactics, such as extralegal intimidation and violence, to silence and disempower critics. . . . The chilling aspect of the violence is that the government usually denies any knowledge . . . or responsibility, . . . attributing it instead to unknown vigilantes." Ethnic clashes exemplify this pattern in which the turmoil appears to be simply a matter of neighbor fighting neighbor rather than the state-sanctioned (if perhaps not always state-initiated) action that it is.

Within the political and public security administration, there appear to be multiple hierarchies, rather than a single one. The regular police, the Special Branch in the president's office, and the Criminal Investigation Division, as well as what appear to be private paramilitaries run by important politicians--all seem to vie with one another to carry out in heavy-handed and abusive ways what they interpret as presidential wishes.

Some serious questions arise concerning the integrity of the judiciary and its autonomy from the state.

Regime influence over at least some judges appears to be effective. Special favors may be given in the form of scholarships for a judge's son or daughter, agricultural land, urban property, low-interest loans and mortgages, or a host of other perks of high office. Lawyers tell of practices such as calls to judges from high officials before important decisions are made, or required visits to the president's office. A handful of High Court judges have demonstrated real independence, but such judges are usually conspicuously absent from assignments to appeals panels in important cases.

One possible bright spot has been the attorney general's appointment of several special-issue task forces charged with recommending proposals for law reform in such areas as children's law, women's rights, and the press. The membership of most of the task forces includes a broad spectrum of experts and NGO leaders, some with strong credentials in opposition activism. Cynical observers will notice the possibility of subtle co-optation in this process, whereas optimists will note that a possible channel for negotiating broader reforms has been opened.

The number of organizations directly involved in human rights work is small. Among the more prominent is the Kenya Human Rights Commission, which began in 1991 and has a professional staff of one. It monitors and reports human rights abuses through its quarterly reports and other publications. In its *Quarterly Repression Report* for April-June 1994, for example, it noted that the practice of state-inflicted torture, which had apparently ended with the political opening in 1992, has begun again in and around Nakuru. The largest town in the Rift Valley, Nakuru is the site of most of the recent ethnic clashes. Plans of the Human Rights Commission call for developing a broad-based human rights constituency through grass-roots organizing attempts.

A more traditional style of organization is the Kenya branch of the International Commission of Jurists, begun in 1974. In 1993 it had 165 members (out of 1,200 lawyers in Kenya), a professional staff of two lawyers, and five nonmanagement staff, all financed by the Ford Foundation. The group has published a newsletter, established a legal-aid clinic, run material in the popular press, lobbied the government over particular issues, conducted seminars and workshops to educate people on their legal rights, and worked with others in a national effort to monitor the 1992 elections.

The Kenya chapter of the International Federation of Women Lawyers began in 1986. It aims to promote human rights and democracy, and it offers legal aid to women. The federation has a staff of two lawyers; volunteers offer their services without charge.

An organization with a long history of efforts to develop a mass-based constituency for human rights is the Kituo Sha Sheria (Legal Aid Society). The organization, now with a staff of 20, has a well-deserved reputation for successful coalition-building at the elite level. In particular, though, it is known for its efforts in issue identification and constituency-building at the community level, where it has worked to ameliorate and reverse the de facto loss of legal rights due to poverty and lack of power. Kituo has made at least 30 video features on various legal-rights topics that were originally designed for use on state-controlled media. That the government has programmed only a few of them highlights the obstacles state-run media can lay down. Even so, the organization has gotten its message out through other means, including churches that regularly extend invitations for Kituo representatives to speak.

Summary

Bangladesh, El Salvador, and Kenya all have serious human rights problems. Structural changes accompanying the advent of democracy explain much of the improvement in Bangladesh and El Salvador. Given the tendency for many governments to take liberties and shortcuts for acquiring political advantage or maintaining public order, it is probably safe to say that the human rights civic advocacy organizations in these countries played a significant role in keeping violations as low as they in fact were. And it is reasonable to assert that the continued presence and vigilance of these and similar CAOs will be essential to maintain and improve the human rights situation in these countries.

5. SECTORAL REFORMS

Sectoral reforms are important in three ways. First, they begin to carve out areas of autonomy and self-governance that are meaningful in their own right as countervailing power centers. Second, these islands of autonomy can begin to generate spillover effects in generating systemic reform. And third, in at least some cases during authoritarian periods, the autonomous sectors can serve as havens where reformers can take refuge, organize, and prepare to emerge later in more favorable environments to champion their cause.

The ensuing sections examine the role of CAOs in five sectors, assessing their potential influence and multiplier effects for systemic reform. Considerable variation exists among these sectors in their capacity for contributing to reform. Some are more threatening to regimes than others. Some have more potential for building cross-sectoral coalitions. Finally, as will be demonstrated in the final section, some can generate considerable backlash from elements in society itself, quite apart from potential regime opposition.

Environment

Each country surveyed for this report had some significant CAO activity under way in the environmental and natural resources area. At least four reasons can be adduced for this pattern. First, interest in environmental issues is worldwide and has proven exciting and attractive to idealists, especially younger people. Second, funding to support environmental initiatives is available from all the bilateral, multilateral, and nongovernmental donors. Third, host country governments often perceive environmental issues as less threatening than those arising from more volatile areas (such as minority rights or labor) and so have been more willing to tolerate CAO activism here than they would in more touchy spheres. Fourth, environment is perhaps an "easy" sector in that it is less difficult than in other areas to build organizations and coalitions of people attracted by what they see clearly as a "good versus bad" choice between saving nature and pillaging it.

In other sectors such as labor, business, or women's issues, it is generally a good deal harder to attract such widespread support. But this relative ease of action does not mean that environment as a CAO sector has no lessons for other sectors; on the contrary, the fact that success can come more quickly and more widely here offers lessons for other sectors.

Thailand

Environmental and natural resource CAOs in Thailand illustrate well the spillover into systemic reform. Many environmental CAOs aligned themselves publicly with prodemocracy forces or worked behind the scenes in supporting the May 1992 protest movement against the military regime. They now are closely associated with growing demands for greater democracy in the postcoup era. CAO calls for empowering community resource management are reinforcing the demand for governmental decentralization. Likewise, the government's proposed constitutional amendment to introduce a freedom-of-information act reflects persistent CAO pressures for public hearings on infrastructure projects and recognition that the public wants greater transparency in government proceedings--for example, environmental impact assessments undertaken for major development projects.

In part, the growth of the Thai environmental movement reflects investments made in this sector over the past decade by the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, the Ford Foundation, and the World Council of Churches. USAID began working with environmental advocacy groups in 1990. The Agency initiated as part of its new democracy program a five-year \$1.6 million project to strengthen environmental CAOs in environmental conservation, land use, community forestry, and environmental health. This effort has concentrated on improving CAO skills in coalition-building, strategic planning, media relations, fund-raising, and policy advocacy.

Many USAID-assisted environmental CAOs in Thailand were active in organizing forums to protest against the military regime. Then a few months later they helped educate the public on election issues and monitor the election process.

Chile

Similarly, in Chile, environmental CAOs became active in supporting the democracy movement toward the end of the Pinochet regime and as part of the coalition of CAOs that promoted the plebiscite. They helped promote the "no" vote campaign, organized civic and voter education efforts, and trained election monitors. In the past decade USAID and other donors have supported environmental CAOs in Chile, particularly in sponsoring national forums on environmental policy issues.

Bangladesh

Important governance reforms are also emanating from the environmental sector in Bangladesh, where as recently as the late 1980s little concern existed for environmental issues. By 1994, however, a vigorous environmental movement was in place. It was characterized by several active (even aggressive) CAOs

and links to like-minded counterparts abroad. The movement put considerable pressure on the government, particularly with regard to governance reforms. What inspired the movement to emerge over these few years was the government's Flood Action Plan (FAP), an ambitious program to control and manage floods in the country's major river systems.

Led by the World Bank, the major donors put together the plan. It consisted of 26 component regional studies, sectoral analyses, and pilot projects, most of which had commenced by 1991. Assuming that the studies and experiments went well, major flood control works were anticipated to begin at some point in the 1990s at a cost of \$5 billion or more.

Initial efforts included a pilot project in one area to test controlled flooding, as opposed to flood control. The idea was to manage the gradual influx and drainage of annual floodwater through a series of subcompartments to maximize use of a command area for agriculture, fishery, and general use. The pilot was intended not to prevent floods but rather to manage the water. Most important from the civil society development viewpoint, the pilot was also designed to solicit popular participation in successive project phases from analysis and design through to implementation. It was hoped, particularly by some donors, that this would become a model for other FAP projects. Popular participation in large water-management projects typically had been either minimal or altogether absent, especially during the design phase. The pilot project was intended to change that. The affected population was to be included right from the beginning.

During the early survey and design phase, the Flood Action Plan pilot team drew in a large sampling of local opinion, but in May 1992 it provoked what turned out to be a critical source of discontent. A group of women associated with an NGO in the pilot area organized a protest march when they felt their opinions, although formally solicited, were being ignored. In September 1993 a much larger demonstration took place (a number of NGOs participated). It drew people from outside the area as well as local citizens. This demonstration received some media coverage, and a videotape of the event made by a Dhaka-based NGO received some circulation.

But well before the September 1993 demonstration, concern about the FAP in general and the pilot effort in particular had spread to European NGOs. Especially concerned were environmental NGOs in the Netherlands, which along with Germany sponsored the controlled-flooding pilot project. Dutch NGOs successfully pressured the Dutch parliament to launch an investigation into the FAP, with special scrutiny of the pilot activity.

In addition to NGO pressure both in Bangladesh and Europe, the donor community exhorted the government's implementing agency, the Flood Plan Coordination Organization, to build more participation into the FAP process. One result of this pressure was a series of meetings from April through November 1992. The meetings involved government officials, donor representatives, and others, who eventually drew up a set of guidelines for popular participation in flood control efforts. Appearing in March 1993, the guidelines called for community participation in all phases of flood control project activity, from feasibility studies to operations and maintenance. CAOs also pushed for publication of the guidelines, but their involvement was less direct than that of others.

To help ensure compliance with the new guidelines, the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association has stepped in to monitor government performance. The association has involved itself in both class-action and public-interest suits against the government. In early 1994 it protested the apparent exclusion of several participation-focused paragraphs of the prime minister's speech from official proceedings of a government-sponsored conference on the FAP. The lawyers demanded a recall and the reprinting of all copies as well as an official apology. A second public-interest sortie saw the association threatening legal action against the FAP for carrying out infrastructural activities in violation of the government's own water sector statutes, many dating back to the 19th century.

In short, environmental CAOs in Bangladesh were able to mobilize their own efforts to demand sectoral reform. They were also able to establish links to donor-country CAOs that could press their own governments into action and begin initiatives to hold the government legally accountable for what it does in flood control.

Summary

Evidence presented in this chapter suggests that investments in environmental and natural resource civic advocacy organizations have high potential for yielding substantial multiplier effects in democracy and governance. Environmental issues often draw popular support across a wide spectrum of ideological and political interests. Likewise, international and host country activism on environmental and natural resource issues are often less threatening to insecure regimes than is the case with other types of issues.

Growing public demand for environmental improvements and controls is producing a corresponding supply response from the CAO sector. Capitalizing on the wide public appeal of environmental issues, in 1989 several Thai CAOs initiated an annual environmental forum to discuss issues and proposed recommendations for action. The meeting that year was attended by representatives of 18 CAOs; by 1993 the meeting included 122 CAOs and well over a thousand participants. In Chile the number of CAOs concerned with some aspect of the environment has expanded in the last few years from 22 to almost 300.

The potential for using environmental issues to build coalitions and alliances with other sectors is high. Thus, in Thailand, environmental alliances have been formed with monks, academics, student associations, and local communities. Of particular significance is the evidence of growing support for environmental concerns within the business community. The Thailand Environmental Institute is an autonomous research organization established by business leaders and financed through annual corporate subsidies from the Thai business community. But despite these origins and connections it remains independent in setting its research and action agendas.

In Chile, environmental groups have been able to build alliances with some important sectors of the business community. Most notably they have engaged businesses involved in export activities that are especially concerned with environmental conditions that might affect their markets. One fourth of the attendees at the 1992 national environmental forum were from the business sector. In El Salvador one of the more advanced environmental CAOs is the Ecological Foundation. Linked to the Salvadoran business

community through its board of directors, the foundation is concentrating on "green" (forestry and conservation) issues but is gearing up to engage in "brown" (pollution and toxic waste) agendas as well.

Thus the environmental sector scores high on a number of fronts with respect to its potential contributions to democracy and governance. In particular, it is one of the few sectors that have shown they can draw support from the business sector. This becomes important given the need to tap new sources of funding in building a CAO financial base from domestic sources. The issue of CAO financing and sustainability will be discussed further in chapters 6 and 7.

Business

The business sector represents an important potential element of civil society largely because of the ease of organizing business into associations, the clarity of collective action goals to possible participants, and the resources the sector can marshal behind a reform effort. These characteristics are not so common in other sectors of civil society where organizing skills are far less developed and the incentives and resources for collective action are generally in much shorter supply.

A key issue regarding the role of business associations in civil society is the extent to which their advocacy agenda contributes to improved governance and democratic reforms. The following three country cases exhibit considerable variation with regard to this question. At one end is Bangladesh, where long-standing patterns of hostility and rent-seeking behavior relative to the private sector (particularly foreign investment) are deeply embedded in the government bureaucracy. This environment has not lent itself to development of vigorous and progressive business associations.

Kenya is somewhere in the middle of the continuum. It has more broad-minded and reformist business associations. They are just now beginning to gain some recognition from a government that has until recently refused to entertain any of their reform proposals.

Finally, in Thailand, business and government have developed over the past 15 years a working relationship that is reaping significant benefits for both sectors and has helped bring about significant improvements in governance.

Bangladesh

After the wave of nationalization that occurred during the early 1970s, business came to consist largely of traders and a sprinkling of manufacturers. Most had a vested interest in maintaining the protectionist, regulatory state that Bangladesh had become (with concomitant opportunities for rent-seeking that such a state inevitably both demanded and provided).

By the early 1990s, however, this equation was beginning to change. Led by an explosive growth in finished-garment exports (but also including domestic economic expansion), the business community has emerged as a player in the political arena. It is concerned with formulation of state policies on regulating

exports and imports as well as administration of existing regulations through licensing, quota allocation, import-duty collection, and the like. The business community has become a player principally by contributing to the major political parties and directing money to individual rent-seekers within the various state and political sectors.

The garment industry has emerged as a dominant sector largely because of its rapid growth and paramount importance to the national economy. Along with this growth have come a number of problems that have impelled the industry to form the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) to lobby for its interests. The most important function of BGMEA is assisting the government in negotiations with the United States on quotas assigned to Bangladesh. The association also assists bureaucrats in assigning the allotted quota to its members.

A third function is the association's role in labor relations, both nationally and (with respect to such issues as child labor) internationally. Domestically, BGMEA and individual factory owners have developed close relationships with key officials in the Ministry of Labor. These relationships have helped bring about a strong management influence over potential labor problems. For instance, it is reported that some unions not well regarded by factory owners have had difficulties registering with the ministry or have been denied registration altogether, perhaps as a result of collusion between owners and bureaucrats.

BGMEA brings some interesting civil society issues to the forefront. On the one hand, the organization adds an important voice to the political economy of Bangladesh. It has helped loosen restrictive regulatory practices and has had a say in implementing current rules (especially quota allocations). On the other hand, through these very same efforts it has helped provide rent-seeking opportunities to bureaucrats supervising the bonding system and allocating the quotas. Moreover, it has likely suppressed another sector of civil society by using its connections with the Labor Ministry to curb labor organizing.

Efforts by civil society promoters to strengthen the business community's policy role, then, may well have mixed results. Such efforts can improve governance through liberalizing government regulations, but they can also impede democratic growth by providing new opportunities for corruption and exploitation and by denying access to the political arena to other groups.

Kenya

In Kenya, the political opening of late 1991 allowed the business sector to assume a more assertive stance in advocating basic economic and governance reforms. Before 1991, business leaders were often hesitant to voice their criticisms of public policy for fear of government retaliation. The government could deny access to import licenses and foreign exchange or call in bank loans prematurely, causing great hardship or even sounding the death knell for some firms.

In the post-1991 era, pressure from the donor community has eliminated many of the cudgels the government used to hammer dissident business leaders. Import licensing and foreign exchange controls have been abolished. A freer atmosphere exists for discussing economic reforms in business and government. In this changed setting, business associations have become more prominent in articulating

reform agendas.

The most important associations are three apex structures, each representing a wide and diverse range of business sectors: the Federation of Kenyan Employers (FKE), the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM), and the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Until recently, the chamber came under the patronage of the president and in effect served as a mouthpiece for government policies. In contrast, the FKE and KAM have substantially maintained their autonomy from government interference and have positioned themselves to assume leadership roles in representing the policy interests of their membership.

The Federation of Kenyan Employers is the most all-embracing representative of business interests in Kenya. With few exceptions, all major business and employers associations, 1,095 in all, and another 2,000 individual employers are federation members. The FKE has a large professional staff, some of whom serve as the secretariat for individual member associations. Staff also offer a wide range of membership training programs in such areas as small-scale enterprise development, export promotion and management improvement.

As early as 1990 the FKE advocated economic liberalization. It proposed reduced government involvement in the economy and elimination of the morass of regulations that fetter private enterprise development in agriculture, industry, and commerce. But the FKE policy agenda goes beyond the economic arena. It supports major reforms that will enhance governance and enable business to function in a predictable, open setting.

In particular, the FKE criticized the lack of transparency and accountability in government agencies and pointed out the need to address issues of corruption. It has called for establishment of a special court with powers to investigate and prosecute corruption cases. The federation has directed attention to other political-development issues as well. It has, for example, urged the government to stop meddling in the affairs of the union movement, with the aim of allowing unions to develop as an independent sector.

What has been the effect of the federation in championing these policy prescriptions? Very minor, according to federation leadership. Until 1992 the federation had to walk a fine line in voicing its concerns; a more aggressive or confrontational approach would have been counterproductive, perhaps ending its entree and membership in the councils of government. By taking a more muted approach the FKE survived without being co-opted by the government. Despite this cautious approach, it is true that the government has adopted many of the policies from the FKE reform agenda. But the federation attributes this change to pressures from donors rather than to its own direct influence. It should be noted that few reforms on the FKE agenda for good governance have actually been instituted.

Many policy reforms the FKE has advocated, including calls for improvements in governance, can also be found in policy statements of the Kenya Association of Manufacturers. Given the group's central role as spokesman for the industrial sector and its evident interest in pressing for reform, USAID has sought to strengthen its capacity for policy dialog with the government. In 1987 KAM was given a five-year grant

to undertake policy studies on such topics as parastatals, export incentives, rural industrialization, price controls in manufacturing, and financing needs of the industrial sector. Each study included recommendations for government policy changes.

The policy advocacy efforts of the two groups, buttressed by USAID assistance, represent an effort to build a constituency for support of policy reform. In this regard, the most notable achievements of KAM and the FKE have been in their ability to build and sustain a dialog with the government on economic and governance issues. This dialog is being carried out primarily with the Ministry of Finance and the central bank, where technocrats have assumed a major role in championing structural reforms. The manufacturers association, in particular, has access and is listened to by policymakers, in part because of the quality of the data and analysis in policy papers financed by the USAID project.

In brief, the Kenya Association of Manufacturers, the Federation of Kenyan Employers, and similar business associations can provide valuable inputs not only in policy analysis but more important in *policy implementation and governance*. Although the Kenyan Government has adopted export-led growth policies, many administrative obstacles still thwart effective implementation of this policy. For example, the investment approval process is time consuming and often nontransparent. Similarly, application procedures for manufacturing under bond and for value-added-tax remission for exporters require multiple clearances and excessive documentation. All these hurdles create opportunities for rent-seeking, not to mention pervasive corruption and delays in the customs service. All add to export and import costs.

Thailand

Over the past 20 years business associations have emerged as a powerful and affluent segment of Thai civil society. They have advocated and built a cooperative relationship with the government and used their influence to achieve adoption of probusiness and proexport public policies. These associations have also pressured government bureaucracies to become more responsive, efficient, and accountable in implementing policies. In great measure the partnership that has evolved between business and government accounts for the rapid and steady economic advances of the past decade. It accounts as well for the investment boom that has swept over Thailand the last several years.

Unlike some of the Asian tigers, where governments have taken the economic lead (often suborning and repressing civil society while doing so), in Thailand a vigorous civil society in the form of strong business associations has been a significant player in fostering growth. This has allowed Thailand to follow a less authoritarian path in its quest for economic growth. An examination of how this came about is worthwhile.

It took two decades for business to organize itself into effective groups for advocacy and reform. Until the 1970s many business organizations did not represent and advocate the collective interests of their members in government policymaking. Rather, individual businessmen employed traditional clientelist tactics, building personal networks in the government and military bureaucracy to secure favors and special treatment in advancing their commercial ventures. Business associations remained weak in their capacity to prepare and articulate interests.

In the 1970s a more educated and activist leadership emerged in the business community. In 1977 the three dominant business associations (the Association of Thai Industries, the Thai Bankers Association, and the Thai Chamber of Commerce) established the Joint Standing Committee on Commerce, Industry, and Banking. It serves as a forum for discussion and for working out common positions, particularly for meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on industrial and trade relations. In addition, the committee began courting senior bureaucrats, urging establishment of a joint government-business committee to address major economic issues.

The government established such a committee in 1978, but it was disbanded after several unsatisfactory meetings. Business leaders felt their proposals and issues were not given serious attention. For their part, government representatives viewed business leaders as (in the words of one bureaucrat) "impatient and fond of accusation rather than consultation." In 1979 another informal government-business committee was established, but it too fell into disuse, for similar reasons.

A new government assumed power in 1980. Again, with the urging of the Joint Standing Committee, the prime minister established the Joint Public and Private Sector Consultative Committee (JPPCC) to formalize cooperation in national economic matters. This was a turning point in Thailand's economic and political evolution, as the JPPCC assumed significant leadership in the adoption of export-led growth policies. It also led the government to perceive the value of business associations and to promote the spread of provincial chambers of commerce and JPPCCs throughout the nation.

At least three factors accounted for growing cooperation between business and government. For one thing, major trade deficits and inflationary pressures forced the government to reconsider its past commitment to import-substituting policies and reach out to the business community for new solutions. For another, important changes were occurring in the structure of ruling coalitions, with growing numbers of business leaders occupying seats in parliament and the cabinet. And third, major business associations were careful to remain outside partisan politics. This helped them preserve a degree of autonomy and credibility that could have been put in jeopardy given the changing fortunes of politics in Thailand.

Other factors expanded and strengthened the organization of the business sector as a reformist constituency. In particular, the associations received major USAID funding. In 1983, USAID initiated a four-year \$3.5 million project helping the central JPPCC upgrade its secretariat as well as the policy research capabilities of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, the Bankers Association, and the Federation of Thai Industries (which replaced the Association of Thai Industries in 1986). In 1987 the Agency provided \$300,000 to strengthen provincial JPPCCs and other business associations. USAID also gave \$1 million to the Institute of Management Education for Thailand, which trained businessmen in modern managerial techniques and in the value of business associations. In addition, the National Endowment for Democracy, through its affiliate the Center for International Private Enterprise, provided a \$97,000 grant to support provincial chambers of commerce.

The effects of business association advocacy and the promotion of export-led growth policies have generated considerable spillover effects in improving government performance and accountability. The

associations have been effective in pressuring the bureaucracy to reduce red tape, liberalize government regulations, and reform tax and tariff codes. It was through their lobbying that customs and export formalities, which had been major barriers for exporters, were simplified. In addition, associations often pressed for improvements in infrastructure (particularly roads and air and land terminals) to make the conduct of business and trade easier. Some of these reforms came about through policy studies contracted out by the associations with USAID funds.

Summary

The Thailand study shows that strong business associations can contribute to reforms in governance. Taken together, the three studies suggest too that more encompassing apex associations may be more progressive in their reform agenda. This appears to be the case with the Federation of Kenyan Employers, which represents all the major business sectors and is calling for basic governmental reforms. By contrast, the garment association in Bangladesh has a more narrow and self-interested agenda centered on import and export regulations.

The FKE may also demonstrate another principle: associations that have independent sources of income, such as fee-based technical and training services, are less dependent on membership fees and tend to be in a strong position to advocate agendas that transcend the narrower interests of their members. For example, some members of the FKE have not sympathized with the neoliberal reforms advocated by the federation's leadership, but the federation has sufficient financial autonomy to be able to take positions that run contrary to those of some members.

The role of business associations with respect to democratization (as opposed to improved governance) is more problematic. As one would expect, business associations tend to be inherently conservative: instability associated with efforts in political reform can have a disconcerting influence on economic calculations. Business associations can support improvements in governance--for example, greater transparency, enforcement of contract and property rights, and reduced government interference in the economy. But the uncertainties associated with broadening participation and empowering citizens may be greeted with opposition, particularly when it comes to strengthening the rights of labor.

Finally, in countries such as Chile, Kenya, and Thailand, the business sector will have to become a prime source of corporate giving in support of public interest CAOs. Thus, many CAOs in these countries will need to cultivate relationships with business. It's something they may find difficult, given their frequent leftist antipathy toward capitalism.

Labor

Like business, labor should be one of the easiest sectors to organize because of the commonality of interests in the work force and the benefits that arise from collective action. But for various reasons, the opposite is the case. Governments, often in alliance with business, have been able to thwart the growth of labor as an organized constituency. Such has been the case recently in Chile, Kenya, and Thailand, where

labor movements are in the process of recovering from earlier government repression. In these countries, and in Bangladesh, many barriers still stand in the way of labor's effort to expand membership.

Governments often have sought to undermine dissident leaders aspiring to greater union autonomy. In Kenya, for example, elections of new union leaders are sometimes not certified by the Ministry of Labor if there is some indication the new leaders will not toe the regime's line. Similarly, in Bangladesh and Thailand, the governments continue to use restrictive regulations to obstruct formation of new unions. Union agents are at risk of abuse and violence when seeking to organize nonunion firms.

Aside from opposition by government and business, efforts to build a unified union movement have been further weakened by internal conflicts between affiliate unions. Such conflict undermines efforts at building strong apex associations and provides opportunities for some union leaders to be co-opted and bought off by government and business.

The internecine conflicts that bedevil the Kenyan union movement and their manipulation by the government exploded on the public scene in May 1993. That's when the duly elected officials of the main union federation, the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU), were overthrown in a coup undertaken by a competing union faction acting in league with the government. After a long court battle, the elected leaders were eventually restored, but the event left a legacy of ill will in the union movement and generally had an enervating effect on COTU.

In some instances the union movement is deeply divided along fractures within the larger polity. In Bangladesh, many unions are extensions of political parties and are manipulated by political leaders to advance their own agendas. Until recently, the same was true in Chile, where union leaders were identified with one or another of the political parties.

The social base for union organizing does not currently lend itself to development of a strong union movement in countries such as Bangladesh and Thailand. A rapidly growing urban industrial work force is generally populated by first-generation laborers (mostly young women) from rural areas who have little knowledge of unions and what they might have to offer. These workers often seek employment for several years in an urban industrial setting with the intent of returning to their home villages. They have little incentive to join a union and little or no sense of worker identity or consciousness.

In brief, union leaders face formidable obstacles in their efforts to expand membership and influence. They are subject to a vicious circle: government and business opposition limits union membership, thereby depriving unions of dues; lacking dues, unions are unable to provide services to members as an inducement for them to join and pay dues.

Often union leaders also face difficult political calculations when it comes to identifying with and supporting democratic reforms in the larger polity. The union movements were divided in their reaction to the political openings that occurred in Kenya and Bangladesh in the early 1990s. Some union leaders, at great risk to themselves, supported democratic change. Others were more tepid in their response and sometimes stood with the old order.

It is in this disorderly and uncertain context that AFL-CIO regional institutes (which receive funding from USAID) and other donors (particularly the Friederich-Ebert-Stiftung) are attempting to nurture the growth of viable, democratically inclined union movements. In Bangladesh, Kenya, and Thailand these sources of external support are often met with indifference if not outright opposition by the host governments. Nevertheless, the groups do continue to function.

The first task of the donors is to protect the existing base of labor organization from being further eroded by government encroachments. When, for example, the COTU coup occurred, the AFL-CIO African-American Labor Center immediately went into action, urging its international affiliates to insist that the Kenyan Government honor international labor conventions by restoring COTU leaders to their elected positions. This was eventually accomplished, in part because the International Labor Organization was obliged by virtue of its conventions to warn the Kenyan Government that all UN-sponsored programs could be suspended in the absence of corrective action.

In Thailand, the government abolished state enterprise unions in 1991 and banned this sector from affiliating with private sector unions. With most union organizers and trainers coming from the state enterprise unions, the ban cut off a lifeline of support for the private sector union movement. The ban has since been lifted, in part because an AFL-CIO petition to the U.S. trade representative alerted the Thai Government that its trade privileges under the General System of Preferences might be removed unless the ban was rescinded.

A second task is strengthening the capacity of unions to pursue reform agendas, which include primarily liberalization and enforcement of labor laws. This involves enhancing the skills of union leaders in advocacy, negotiation, problem analysis, public relations, and communicating and networking with coalitions in and outside the union movement. Investments of this kind are beginning to yield some results in Thailand. That country has seen the emergence of a union-led women's movement that in the past year conducted a successful campaign in passing legislation to increase maternity leave. The effort was led by union officers and rank-and-file members along with a coalition of nonunion women's CAOs. It employed a broad spectrum of advocacy tactics through the media, demonstrations, and seminars with parliamentarians.

A third task involves enhancing membership services to strengthen the union base among rank-and-file workers. The AFL-CIO has assisted the growth of cooperative credit unions and day-care centers. Other union services such as pursuing worker grievances offer a more difficult challenge, largely because of the time and expense involved in pursuing litigation through labor courts.

Summary

Labor is one of the few sectors of civil society that have the potential to emerge as a powerful political force. But obstacles standing in the way of achieving this potential are formidable. Many unions are still not autonomous actors and are struggling to emancipate themselves from regressive government controls.

The very existence of unions and their leaders is often at risk; hence their contributions to democratic reform will vary in accordance with the real hazards and dangers of supporting reformist coalitions.

Two forces are converging that may elevate the status and power of Third World labor movements. The first is a rapidly growing industrial labor force in such countries as Bangladesh and Thailand, a work force that consists mostly of women. Over the next decade this labor force will begin to mature and take on an identity and solidarity that has become evident in more advanced developing countries such as South Korea. It was South Korean women labor leaders who helped spearhead the prodemocracy movement. In this regard, the massive growth of women in the urban labor force in such places as Bangladesh and Thailand offers an opening for women's activist organizations in building constituencies and coalitions for reform.

The second force is the growing demand from the industrial West for improvements in and compliance with international labor codes in the Third World. This includes protecting the rights to organize and engage in collective bargaining and issues involving working conditions, such as the explosive question of child labor. Some of these issues assumed prominence in the debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement. They will loom large in the future agenda for the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. In brief, labor rights will likely become a more integral component of international agreements. If enforced, they should have profound implications for the growth of labor organizations and democracy in many developing countries.

Civic Advocacy Organizations and Nongovernmental Organizations

A lack of advocacy muscle at the national level characterizes many developing countries. Where strong agricultural, labor, and other economic-based interest groups are rare, and where newly liberated political parties have yet to find a mass base and "policy feet," CAO/NGO networking and apex associations take on special significance. Strong CAO/NGO federations at the national level and subsidiary regional and sectoral networks may provide the necessary structure, the effective attentive public, and a key mobilizing force needed to pressure government and political parties to pay more attention to reformist policy matters.

NGO apex organizations that begin to advocate a reformist political agenda pose some difficulties for member NGOs that wish to remain on the sidelines of the political arena. The problem is compounded by the fact that many of the members' fellow NGOs are taking on reformist and activist roles. More conservative NGOs may worry that political activism among some members of the NGO community will invite meddling by political parties and eventual imposition of even more intrusive government controls. That could undermine the autonomy of the entire NGO sector.

The stresses and strains associated with the evolution of the NGO sector are well illustrated in the cases of Kenya and Bangladesh. In each country, NGOs individually and collectively are struggling to define their identity and interests with respect to advocating reforms in democratic governance.

Kenya

In the postcolonial era, increasing amounts of money from governments, foundations, and international CAO/NGOs have flowed into Kenya. For much of this period a fairly stable relationship existed between an atomized CAO/NGO sector and the government. For several reasons, however, by the mid-1980s the relationship began to deteriorate. A fiscal crisis was growing, and state administrative capacity was becoming progressively weaker. At the same time, and sometimes in response to state decay, the number of Kenyan CAO/NGOs increased steadily to the point that there are now well over 400 registered groups above the community level. Meanwhile, donors turned their attention away from the faltering and increasingly corrupt state and toward these CAO/NGOs as vehicles for advancing key donor values. These included efficiency, probity, pluralism, and democracy. As muffled political dissent arose in the repressive single-party context, it was inevitable that some CAO/NGOs would acquire an air of "opposition."

Responding to these trends, the government began to compromise CAO/NGO autonomy. In 1986, CAOs and NGOs were required to submit project proposals to the relevant level of the development council hierarchy, which was dominated by government personnel. The government was arguing for coordination, which CAOs and NGOs saw as control. The government also wanted CAO/NGO external funding to be channeled through the treasury. Most worrying of all, the Kenyan president warned of "subversives" in the world of CAO/NGOs--signaling that the sector was in political disfavor. That perception immediately radiated throughout the political arena and bureaucracy.

These trends gave rise in 1990 to a government-sponsored NGO Coordination Act. It was pushed through parliament along with several measures the CAO/NGO community objected to. They included creation of an NGO Board, weighted in favor of government representation, to supervise the CAO/NGO sector; a provision that authority over the CAO/NGO sector reside in the offices of the president and of internal security and not with an economic ministry; a requirement that CAO/NGOs renew their registration every five years; and a provision that NGO board decisions could not be appealed to the courts.

The government initiative caught the CAO/NGO community off guard. The coordination act prompted CAO/NGOs to "find each other." Up to that point the organizations were an unwieldy grab bag of interests and philosophies. They operated without a legal framework, were registered under a variety of rules and regulations, and had little awareness of one another, let alone of their collective interests. Over the next two years the CAO/NGO community organized itself into a network, chose a representative group of leaders (called the NGO Council), and bargained with the government--in particular the office of the president and, later, of the attorney general.

The group found the negotiations difficult. Agreements members thought they had struck with government about the specifics of implementation and of amendments to the act tended to break down. That led the network to evolve new tactics, including lobbying donors who had also become upset at the government response. Eventually, believing it could not function under the act, the network threatened a boycott of the NGO registration process.

Bargaining and negotiations were ultimately concluded. The CAO/NGO network could claim some success, although several leaders remain uneasy. Parliament passed amendments that allowed for redress in the courts from NGO Board decisions; the need for registration renewal every five years was dropped; and the NGO Council was gazetted as the self-governing arm of the CAO/NGO sector.

The success of CAO/NGOs in wringing concessions from the government can be attributed to a number of factors: support of major donors, actual and potential attention of the international press, momentary vulnerability of the single-party regime under siege from democratization forces in the early 1990s, and the dedication and organizational and tactical sophistication of a core of NGO leaders. In addition, CAO/NGOs had considerable financial leverage. Collectively they commanded a large amount of development funds--\$200-\$230 million in 1989 plus \$150 million through international religious organizations. The money assumed a large role in particular communities and sectors. As a result, government could alienate CAO/NGOs only at the loss of a major resource stream for the country's development.

What then is the future for the CAO/NGO sector? Can the NGO Council become the instrument for additional CAO/NGO collective action in support of a more ambitious reform agenda and also defend the community from expected government opposition? The council's plans are ambitious. One prominent CAO figure would like to see the council evolve into nothing less than a national forum on good governance. Some on the council would like to lobby against an important but politically sensitive aspect of the government-imposed disabling environment for CAO/NGOs--namely, the requirement that despite registration NGOs still require meeting permits. Council leadership would also like to mount a lobbying campaign for tax breaks for individuals and organizations that contribute to CAO/NGOs.

This agenda would identify the CAO/NGO community as a reformist group, even though the community itself represents a diverse range of member organizations. At one end of the spectrum are human rights organizations; at the other end, NGOs concerned primarily with community development and humanitarian relief. Fissures are likely to develop if the council takes on a more reformist orientation. Differences could arise over such matters as ethnic makeup of the council, ways of dealing with the government, and how much effort should go into advocacy as opposed to service delivery.

In taking on a more ambitious agenda, the council will face the problem of inadequate financing. Membership fees are charged to CAO/NGO members, but membership is voluntary, and roughly half of member NGOs are behind on their dues payments. The council has drafted a financial plan that would include such things as fund-raising campaigns, income from sales of publications, and fees from membership services such as training in project design and evaluation and provision of legal services. Although some donors have expressed an interest in supporting the council, it currently has no funds to begin these activities.

In summary, the council faces an uncertain future. Virtually all major CAO/NGO leaders believe the council could and should play a central role, but they admit there will be ongoing debate over definition of that role. If it includes greater emphasis on issues that spill over into the political realm, government opposition can be expected. Already suspicious of CAO/NGO intentions, the president in mid-1994 called

for the vetting of seminars to screen out those with political agendas that are disguised as nonpolitical.

Bangladesh

The evolution of the CAO/NGO community in Bangladesh parallels that of Kenya in the sense of having to defend its autonomy against government predations. But whereas in Kenya most NGOs are hesitant about taking on issues involving democratic governance, in Bangladesh many NGOs are less abashed about entering the realm of politics.

Since Bangladesh achieved independence, development-oriented NGOs have become large both in number (reputed to be more than 13,000 when both local and national organizations are counted), in coverage (now believed to be perhaps half the villages in the country and around 15 percent of all rural households), and in foreign funding. Given their size and prominent role in development, the relationship with the government has at times been uneasy, with government periodically wanting more control over the NGO community. The autonomy problem has given the NGO community a powerful incentive to act in concert to fend off government efforts at direction and control.

It is in this setting that the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) has come into prominence as the primary intermediary between NGOs and the government. Today ADAB has almost 700 member NGOs and 14 regional chapters. In recent years it has received funding from USAID through Private Agencies Collaborating Together (a U.S. NGO) and from the Ford Foundation, the Norwegian Agency for Development, and the Swedish International Development Authority, among other donors. ADAB works mainly in three areas: 1) providing service and building capacity (largely through training activities), 2) representing the NGO community as its bargaining agent with government, and 3) building sectoral coalitions of NGOs (for example, linking environmental NGOs with those concerned with water-and-sanitation issues).

Largely through ADAB, the NGO community has mobilized itself and the international donors to protect NGO autonomy. The most recent government threat came in March 1993 as an order forbidding NGOs to engage in any political activity (thus apparently extending an earlier prohibition on NGOs from forming alliances with political parties). The order further stated that NGO activities must not hurt religious sentiment. Moreover, it empowered any government official to cancel an NGO's registration--its license to operate as an organization--on his personal finding of improper activity, without recourse to the courts for the offending NGO.

ADAB and the NGO community marshaled their forces, protested to the government, and pressed their international supporters. The matter was reportedly raised at a Paris donor meeting, and the government backed down in July 1993. It issued a new set of procedures for foreign-funded NGOs (a category that includes all the major organizations). Although the NGO community succeeded in fending off the government, the effort to curtail NGO "political" activities may signal official uneasiness with growing NGO activism on issues of democratic governance.

Over the past decade or more, a number of NGOs in Bangladesh, especially larger organizations, have

become true CAOs in the sense that they are seeking to empower their members or beneficiaries. The emphasis on empowering people to take control over their own lives has changed over the years, ebbing and flowing within the programming of different NGOs. For some organizations, empowerment has been seen more as an individual goal (whereby a person becomes enabled to function economically and socially on an independent basis). For others it is more group related, as activist NGOs have entered the political arena at the local level, encouraging their chapters to demand accountability of the state in providing services (such as public health) and guaranties (such as legal sharecropper rights).

The latter approach to empowerment, exercising influence on government, spilled over into the 1992 union parishad (township) elections, as many local NGO members vied for local office. Sometimes this was with the blessing of the national-level organization; at other times the local unit of an NGO took part in the election without the support of the national organization, perhaps even without its knowledge. Most commonly, national NGOs advised their members they could run for office as individuals but could not receive any organizational support at any level for their candidacies.

Several hundred NGO members did get elected to the union parishads, perhaps as many as 1,200. This is a small fraction of the 43,000 union parishad members and chairmen returned to office in the country as a whole, but it is significant for what may be the beginning of a trend. Indeed, as NGOs have an ever greater influence on rural life over time, it should be anticipated that more of their members will get elected to local office. And this in turn is sure to affect the nature of local politics.

Empowerment approaches taken by a number of the larger NGOs in local rural areas are beginning to spill over into national politics. Thus one organization, Gonoshahajjo Sangstha, among the largest of rural development NGOs in Bangladesh, is attempting to assemble a political advocacy program that embraces both microlevel *and* macrolevel campaigns. One aspect of the program organizes and champions the causes of a wide number of constituencies, including women, sharecroppers, and landless laborers.

Summary

The foregoing cases illustrate some of the issues NGOs and their umbrella associations face in defining their position on political reform. In most instances NGOs are moving into uncharted waters and testing how far they can go without drowning in a storm of political reprisals.

Events may prove that Gonoshahajjo Sangstha is pushing the advocacy envelope too far for the present political order to sustain. It is worth noting that Proshika, another large NGO, is not taking the more adventurist route of constituency organization. Rather, it is establishing a policy advocacy center aimed at decision-makers in Dhaka.

The jury is out on the Gonoshahajjo Sangstha initiative and the Kenyan NGO Council enterprise, for they are just getting under way. What is clear, though, is that some NGOs oriented to local empowerment in the social and economic sectors can naturally and quickly mutate into CAOs that champion political reform agendas. Such advocacy, however, can also produce a conservative backlash as in the case of

women's empowerment. This is discussed in the next section.

Gender

The past decade has seen steady growth in women's organizations with distinct reformist agendas, in contrast to more conventional social or service agendas. Women's CAOs can make an important contribution to systemic political reforms. The following cases, however, also point up the kinds of constraints that can severely limit their development as constituencies for reform.

Kenya

NGOs operating in the women's movement in Kenya are of two basic types. One is the older, service-oriented organizations. They are just beginning to develop, cautiously, an advocacy agenda and are handicapped by vulnerability to political interference. The other is newer, issue-oriented groups with explicit advocacy goals but little in the way of organizational capacity. They are handicapped by the personalization of their leadership. The first set, the older network, has built a series of communications links and operating relationships with the government and is accepted as legitimate. However, the cost is the extreme caution and the lack of autonomy these organizations manifest and the constant threat of politicians using them for their own purposes.

Strong differences of opinion exist between the groups. The newer groups do not trust the older ones at all, and differences over the appropriate approach to dialog with the government tend to divide the groups into hostile camps. The newer organizations generally lack an institutional base, and sometimes they take aim at a multiplicity of issues without having any clear strategy for addressing them. These groups have a high capacity for advocacy, but their ability to influence public dialog productively is low. Government officials are adept at tarring their well-aimed and articulate efforts with the brush of "radical feminism." That automatically sets the male establishment against them.

The premier older NGO, Maendeleo ya Wanawake, formed in 1952, has directed its efforts at supporting women's self-help and income-generating activities. It has nationwide programs down to the district level and in most areas down to the local level. Maendeleo started as a launching pad for mobilizing women. It has experienced a great deal of politicization, largely because the governing party, the KANU, in its efforts to remold itself in the mid-1980s into a more credible mass party, unilaterally affiliated Maendeleo to itself. Maendeleo thus became in effect a women's wing of the party.

In the last two years, after the formal inauguration of multiparty politics, Maendeleo has reportedly dissociated itself officially from KANU, making the case to the government that it is not partisan but an organization for *all* Kenyan women. But major suspicions remain on the part of women active in the newer women's groups that Maendeleo continues to be a tool of the government used for explicitly political purposes. Autonomy in these circumstances is problematic. Other older institutional organizations are similarly vulnerable to political interference.

In contrast to the service orientation of the older groups, the newer women's groups are motivated by a reformist political agenda. Some, such as FemNet, serve both as an informal network and as an advocacy-cum-service-provision agent, training institutions on methods of gender sensitization. They assess policies of public sector agencies--ministries, parastatals, universities, and the like--for their effect on women.

Other new organizations, such as the Kenya chapter of the International Federation of Women Lawyers and the National Council of Women of Kenya, have successfully undertaken advocacy. They have, for example, lobbied for reform of civil service regulations that were discriminatory to women civil servants. And they have taken part in nonpartisan but explicitly political activity, such as monitoring and assessing the 1992 elections.

Many new organizations tend to suffer from a major organizational defect--personalization of leadership. Leaders are not regularly replaced, and that tends to exaggerate identification of the organization with a *person* and a *political perspective*, whether fairly or not. That ultimately can be misinterpreted by the government as a political agenda. Unchanging leadership also frustrates the generation of new ideas essential to organizational growth and maturity.

A few newer institutions, such as the Kenyan League of Women Voters and the Center for Women in Politics (the latter with assistance from the National Democratic Institute), are grappling with issues of membership and recruitment and with the perception by the government that they are the political opposition. The League of Women Voters, for example, is headed by a woman member of parliament from FORD-Asili, the hybrid party most feared by KANU. (FORD stands for Forum for the Restoration of Democracy.) The league has 2,000 members but has no representation from KANU-dominated areas of the country.

The league has been unable to obtain permits to hold rallies aimed at teaching women about their rights and responsibilities as voters. Consequently, the organization has had to work through the Catholic Church, which has assisted it in calling public meetings and then inviting the women to speak. It appears at present to be operating most effectively in response to requests from other women's organizations (local women's groups, the Mothers' Union of the Kenyan Anglican Church, the Kenyan Catholic Church women's network) and in conjunction with other human rights groups (International Federation of Women Lawyers, the Human Rights Commission, the National Council of Churches of Kenya, Kituo Sha Sheria [Legal Aid Society]) rather than as an organization in its own right. The league has funding at a modest level from several donors, including the Canadian International Development Agency, the Swedish International Development Authority, and the International Republican Institute.

The Centre for Women in Politics has funding from the National Democratic Institute and is meant to provide assistance to women candidates for parliament. Kenya now has 6 women members of parliament, out of 19 who ran. Three of the six are from one of the four political parties and have captured all the leadership positions in the centre. National Democratic Institute staff have made substantial efforts to attract other women to the organization, but it seems to have even more serious organizational problems than the League of Women Voters. Personalization of leadership and (in this case) an explicit political agenda make it a difficult vehicle for nonpartisan reform efforts it was designed to pursue.

Kenya's KANU government appears to have decided that infiltration and takeover of newer, more politically active organizations is not a useful strategy. They are perceived as "opposition" and treated as "the enemy," their ability to meet the public being restricted or prevented altogether in preference to attempts at co-optation. It is possible some of the opposition parties will begin to see value in having a women's auxiliary and target one or more of these groups for co-optation, just as KANU did with Maendeleo in the mid-1980s. But none of the groups has the grass-roots network and accessibility to the electorate Maendeleo has, so it is difficult to see this happening. The organizations are likely to remain autonomous but personalized and competitive, lacking organizational plans or focus over the short term.

In summary, major differences exist within the women's NGO sector with respect to the political content of the various groups' reform agendas. Older, service-oriented women's organizations foster participation around family and village concerns for income generation, family health and welfare, and access to education.

Some of these NGOs are beginning to take on a more activist orientation. Recently, Maendeleo decided to engage the issue of female circumcision. Likewise, the churches have been using the Mothers' Union network to reach women on a variety of political issues. They conducted a civic education campaign before elections and by-elections in 1992. It is possible these older organizations have a large, untapped potential to sustain much more in the way of advocacy; it is not clear they have the motivation to undertake it. At the same time, the vulnerability of their networks to political manipulation and potential reprisals in the form of the cutoff of government development funding cannot be ignored.

Newer women's organizations are committed to advocacy but have limited effect, given they are perceived within the KANU-led government as politically motivated supporters of the opposition. They have tended to take on a plethora of issues but have not found a viable method for advancing a reform agenda with respect to them. The most conspicuous example is the lack of progress on the issues of marriage/affiliation and inheritance. These are the issues Kenyan women consider important. Yet the women's movement has not been able to mount a credible campaign to convince parliamentarians they will face a unified and dissatisfied female half of the electorate if they fail to support reforms.

Chile

Political repression and economic deprivation under the Pinochet military dictatorship spurred the organization and growth of a women's political movement. One of the first such efforts was creation of the Association of Democratic Women. Established shortly after the coup in order to provide support for political prisoners, the group by the late 1980s had expanded its role to become a part of the effort to secure a return to democratic rule, through political education.

A stronger feminist consciousness also developed under the dictatorship, leading to establishment of the Women's Studies Circle. Organized under the wing of the Academy of Christian Humanism, the circle had its roots in a group of middle-class professional women researching the condition of women and trying to raise women's consciousness about their status. Three NGOs emerged out of the group. All of

them, along with other women's organizations, participated in promoting the transition to democracy.

The plebiscite in 1988, called by an overconfident Pinochet, turned the dictator out and handed victory to a coalition of opposition parties, Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia. Intent on assisting in an electoral victory for the coalition in the 1989 elections, women throughout the country formed a loose-knit coalition of their own known as Concertación de Mujeres por la Democracia (Women's Accord for Democracy). The idea was not to form a ladies auxiliary to the democratic coalition, but to promote an agenda of women's concerns. The group called for a 30 percent share of decision-making posts to women, creating a national women's office with ministerial rank, developing educational and hiring practices to promote equality, eliminating sexist education and advertising, and ratifying the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

This represented a significant political advance because, like the Concertación de Partidos, it brought together a broad spectrum of women in a single political effort outside the constraints of party allegiance. Receiving support from the Swedish and Norwegian governments, the organization operated a campaign of civic education around its issues and provided support for the women candidates within the Concertación. But the organization defined its purpose in limited terms: to assist in the electoral victory of December 1989. It disbanded after Pinochet stepped down in January 1990.

Pinochet was succeeded by the Concertación de Partidos' candidate, the civilian Patricio Aylwin. The Aylwin government made good on its promise to establish a National Women's Service headed by a woman with cabinet rank. Overall, though, there has been little progress in expanding representation of women in key positions, either elected or appointed. Nor, for that matter, have those years seen much progress on women's issues in general.

Civic advocacy organizations that had pressed for a women's agenda through reestablishment of democracy have, since the transition, all experienced a sense of crisis and the need to reestablish priorities. Part of the crisis is a shortage of human and financial resources. Key personnel from many organizations have moved over to positions in government or taken advantage of new opportunities in other fields. Some CAO programs have been taken over by the state or the universities. International donors that sustained CAOs during the dictatorship have dramatically reduced their support. Some CAOs have been able to maintain financing sources at reduced levels. Several are engaged in becoming technical assistance and consultative resources for the state, with the necessary learning curve in organizing, writing proposals, charging for services, and effectively implementing consultative tasks. All are engaged in evaluating their institutional plans, resources, and structures.

A second level of crisis concerns a shift in the organizations' role as advocates of women's issues. CAOs can no longer count on the strength that comes from being part of a mass mobilization to promote democracy, win a plebiscite, and elect a democratic government. Initially, in fact, many CAO personnel were exhausted from the effort to foster democracy. It took time to reestablish an agenda and restore a willingness to push forward. A recent effort to provide a Chilean CAO position paper for the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women helped rekindle interest in gender issues.

Some leaders of women's CAOs are trying to find ways to participate more effectively in the political process. They emphasize, in particular, increased incorporation of gender concerns in the operations of the state and its policies. At the national level this is not an easy task. The general attitude of men toward women in politics and the specific limitations of women's defined role in Chilean society are stumbling blocks in promoting women's participation in politics. An alternative route is to begin with an effort at securing power at the local level within municipal government and through neighborhood organizations such as local road pavement committees.

Another alternative is networking around specific issues such as divorce. Currently in Chile, a network is developing to support a change in the divorce law, a change that is a priority for the women's movement but not for the concertación government. In brief, many women's civic advocacy organizations in Chile are still defining their identity and role in the post-Pinochet era.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, CAOs have been pursuing grass-roots empowerment strategies over many years. They have built large organizations with memberships numbering well into the hundreds of thousands. Many groups aim at empowering women. The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, for example, has scaled up its education program to 20,000 primary-level alternative schools (roughly one for every three villages) that now have 80 percent female teachers and 70 percent female students. Empowerment of women is showing up in many spheres at the local level--for example, in employment and income-generating activities and in politics. Women are running for office, and in the last union parishad elections about 600 were reported elected to local government positions.

But a backlash has developed against the rising status and power of women and CAOs supporting their cause. In many areas of the country, *mullahs* (Muslim village clerics) have issued *fatwas* (religious sanctions) against rural development NGOs. Female education, say the mullahs, is contrary to the Koran, and working with an NGO is an evil act for which penance is required (or divorce mandatory). The mullahs assert only "infidels" go to NGO medical facilities and those who are employed by NGOs are "satans." In many cases the anti-NGO impetus has gone further, with property being damaged. In particular, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee reports more than 1,400 of its 20,000 schools vandalized, with a good number of them burned. The Grameen Bank, the internationally acclaimed rural credit organization, also came in for a share of harassment from Islamic militants. Of its two million-plus members, most are female.

Two factors seem to explain the rise in religious opposition to CAO activities. First is the general resurgence of devotional worship in recent years throughout the Islamic world, a development that can be expected to have some consequence in a country that is 85 percent Muslim. This is evident in the resurgence of the fundamentalist Jama`at-i-Islam Party in Bangladesh.

Second, the reaction to NGOs appears to be a specific response to their success in providing opportunities to the poor--especially to women--for income and empowerment. Some response to these developments in a culture long characterized by hierarchy and control is to be expected. Traditional village power

structure has long benefited from the patron-client relationships that customarily kept the lower orders poor and illiterate. Elites may be perturbed that women are earning their own incomes. Landowners and moneylenders in particular may be distressed that so many of their former clients have begun to gain freedom from their control. Those at the top of the hierarchy have made common cause with mullahs who are unhappy with increasing numbers of women ignoring the dictates of *pardah*, the traditional Muslim seclusion of women.

The backlash has been a source of concern in Bangladesh in both CAO/NGO and donor communities and in national politics in general. CAO/NGOs affected and their umbrella organization, the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh, have pressed the government to take a strong role in preventing violence. Donors have raised similar concerns. The press has also become involved, publishing numerous analyses of the issue.

The government has not been unresponsive. For example, a senior government representative to a donor coordinating meeting heatedly argued that violence against women is unacceptable. But the government is no more monolithic on the subject of Islam in local politics than on any other issue. The bureaucracy harbors some anti-CAO/NGO elements, of whom at least a few might well be willing to see CAO/NGOs roughed up a bit.

Summary

The foregoing cases present some dimensions of the issues women's CAOs face in defining their role and achieving influence in the political arena. In Chile, and to some extent Kenya, women's organizations contributed to and identified with growing popular demand for the transition to democratic governance. But when these same organizations turned their attention to championing a feminist reform agenda--for example, regarding marriage law and inheritance--they found little support from a male-dominated political establishment.

Efforts by women's CAOs to overcome indifference or opposition regarding gender issues in the larger political arena have been weakened by regime co-optation, by divisions within the women's movement, and by the kind of backlash evident in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is the one case where grass-roots empowerment of women and their organizations is growing. In Kenya, by contrast, women's organizations with a grass-roots basis have yet to really take on a reformist agenda. Finally, in Chile, for lack of generating any success at national-level reform, women's CAOs are thinking of trying to build a grass-roots effort, in which there might be more hope of achieving success.

Prospects for advancing a gender reformist agenda would probably be enhanced through alliances with other sectors of society in which women's issues have the potential for generating more widespread support. An obvious sector is labor unions. In some developing countries, among them Thailand and Bangladesh, hundreds of thousands of women are joining a rapidly growing industrial labor force. Their potential for mobilizing reformist pressures remains an important, but slowly emerging, resource.

6. STRATEGIC SEQUENCING: INITIATING AND CONSOLIDATING REFORM

What do the five country case studies tell us that might suggest a sequence of investment strategies to foster democratic transitions? In the growing literature on regime transition, it is apparent that some types of undemocratic regimes are more amenable to democratic transitions than others. Some research, for example, indicates that military regimes tend to be more apt to change than patrimonial regimes based on one-party rule or governments with a history of totalitarian rule. The latter regimes may take on the trappings of a democratic order, but the basic authoritarian structures of society and government often remain in place. For these countries, the trajectory of the transition process remains unclear and problematic.

Certainly the sample used for this assessment fits into such a pattern. Bangladesh, Chile, and Thailand (all of which have made considerable progress along the democratic path) emerged from military regimes. Kenya (which has yet to make a democratic transition) has been a one-party patrimonial state for quite some time. El Salvador, with its civil war, has followed a somewhat different route with regard to both its powerful military-Arena party axis and its progress toward democracy since the 1992 peace pact.

To acquire a better understanding of the role and sequencing of CAO activities, let us divide the transition process into four phases:

1. In the *pretransition phase*, civic advocacy organizations generally operate in an environment of government repression and hostility toward political reform. Rights of association and assembly are severely limited, and civic advocacy organizations may be subject to government harassment or worse. There may be important enclaves--for example, religious institutions, the NGO community, or universities--that provide a limited space within which CAOs can take refuge and build a larger network of reform constituencies.
2. *Early transition* is a process of political liberalization. In this phase, space opens for CAOs to educate the public, mobilize debate, and advocate fundamental political reforms. During this period the regime concedes in some demonstrable way that legitimate rule depends on popular consent based on widespread participation. Rival political elites build a new consensus for a more open political system. Free elections are held and constitutional reforms adopted that provide the legal basis for a new democratic order.
3. In *late transition*, political parties and elites are testing limits and learning to comply with a new set of rules that rest on principles of democratic governance. New democratic institutions may be under stress and at times unable to ameliorate and contain elite competition and conflict that are not consonant with democratic practices.
4. Finally, during *consolidation*, democratic institutions and practices acquire wider legitimacy with elites

and the broader public. Democratic institutions function with a sufficient degree of autonomy to enforce the political rules of the game, and ruling political parties willingly surrender power when defeated in elections. Still, reform continues to be needed, as old solutions wear out and new problems arise for the polity.

This scheme may seem to imply a linear progression to a democratic nirvana, but in fact the process is uneven, messy, and subject to setbacks. Indeed, many transitions may lead eventually to some new hybrid form of authoritarian governance, and what initially appeared to have been a democratic transition turns out to have been a false start. In some situations systemic reform of larger political structures may meet with considerable resistance. That would require a shift in priorities and perhaps concentration on achieving more intermediate gains through sectoral reforms.

Probably none of the five systems is completely and exclusively in one particular category. In any given country, some components of the polity (say, education in El Salvador) might be in a consolidation phase, whereas others (such as the criminal justice system in the same country) still await the sorting out of basic rules. But estimates of the *central tendencies* of the sample countries would place Kenya in the pretransition phase. Bangladesh, El Salvador, and Thailand are still in the early transition phase. Chile is dealing largely with issues of the late transition phase.

As with any model, the four-phase transition scheme oversimplifies reality. Still, as a good model should, it provides a useful way to start thinking about the priorities and sequencing of CAO investments. It offers at least some tentative responses to such basic questions as, Where are we in the democratic process? What should be happening now? What should be our priorities as a donor in any particular phase?

The following analysis draws out some action guidelines for donor and civic advocacy organizations for each of the four phases. These are summarized in table 2.

Pretransition

The first major task in the pretransition phase is to preserve and expand CAO organizational resources. Assuming that the regime is willing to tolerate the bare existence of those interested in reform, repression still can be so severe as to force them to seek refuge in safe havens such as the Catholic Church in Chile or the NGO community in Thailand and Kenya. At a minimum, internally exiled reformers need employment, protection, and legal aid in the face of government harassment and persecution.

The second task is defending the autonomy of safe havens. Authoritarian governments generally are aware, for instance, when the NGO community harbors reformist elements, and they may try to weaken and control these organizations. As demonstrated in Kenya and in Bangladesh, it is vital that the NGO/CAO community stand together in resisting excessive government intrusion and that it negotiate a governance regime that empowers the community to regulate itself rather than submit to extensive government supervision.

The third order of business is to begin cultivating a dialog within the reformist community in developing coalitions and consensus on reform agendas and strategies for political reform. The Chile case illustrates how CAOs created forums and study circles in which leaders from opposing factions were able to work together to dispel distrust and find common ground for collaborative action. To a lesser extent Thailand illustrates this as well. It is important to begin identifying progressive leaders ("soft-liners") within the regime who are inclined toward reform and are undertaking initiatives to open channels of communication with the CAO community.

Finally, the fourth task is to sponsor forums in which open public discussion of social and economic development takes place and, if possible, aspects of political reform can legitimately be raised. In some instances, to defuse possible government opposition, such forums are best sponsored by international donors within a regional multicountry context. In Kenya, international donor efforts to organize national forums have often been vetoed by the government. Forums on a regional basis might have been more acceptable.

The pretransition phase is filled with uncertainty. All the actors harbor distrust. Hard-line CAOs that stand firm against the government may reproach CAO activists who reach out to initiate constructive dialog. Government initiatives for dialog may be greeted with scorn and contempt by some CAOs.

The problems of building constructive dialog and collaboration between CAOs and the government also beset efforts to build coalitions in the CAO movement itself. Some CAOs may have a history of government co-optation and thus are viewed by others as being tainted. There are also worries about CAOs being infiltrated by government informants, *agents provocateurs*, and the like. In sum, the pretransition phase can be a period during which the motives of actors are suspect and where distrust impedes progress toward mutual support and open dialog.

Early Transition

The early transition period is characterized by government tolerance of open debate on political reform, free elections contested by political parties, and efforts on the part of elites in opposing camps to reach a new consensus. Those efforts are often in the form of constitutional revisions of the basic rules of political competition in a democracy.

The move from pretransition to early transition is usually a response to pressures and events generated from national as well as international sources. In Thailand, for example, a groundswell of public outrage surged against the heavy-handed and self-serving military regime of the 1991 coup, which the international community also roundly condemned. In 1992 the country turned toward democracy. In Kenya domestic unrest and pressure from the international community forced the government to reluctantly begin easing its repressive grip on the political system in what appeared to be a democratic transition leading up to the 1992 election. But thereafter things returned to the way they had been, and the transition was, in effect, halted.

Regime acceptance of some political liberalization can open a window of opportunity for CAOs if they

are prepared to respond with vigor and speed. Such was the case in Chile and to a significant degree in the other countries as well. In this regard, the nature of the early transition phase requires CAOs to engage in a set of tasks quite distinct from those of the pretransition phase, tasks for which they are often unprepared and hard pressed to undertake.

In Chile seven elections took place over a five-year period--all of them crucial in laying the foundations for the restoration of democratic governance. Two CAOs, the Crusade for Citizen Participation and its successor organization, Participa, both of which received support from USAID, provide excellent examples of the kinds of tasks and challenges CAOs face, particularly with regard to elections.

Under the umbrella of the Catholic Church, the Crusade for Citizen Participation was organized in 1988 to launch a voter education campaign in the plebiscite that year on whether to continue the Pinochet regime. During the preelection campaign, the organization concentrated on four main objectives: 1) voter registration, 2) informing citizens, 3) citizen control of the electoral process, and 4) stimulating a climate of peace and understanding during the campaign itself. In pursuing these goals, Crusade trained 250,000 volunteers to work directly with voters. It launched a mass communications campaign through radio and TV promoting voter registration and education. And it organized seminars to train more than 5,000 electoral officials and political party representatives working in voting centers.

Pinochet's defeat in the October 1988 plebiscite opened the way for elections on constitutional reforms that same year, presidential and legislative elections in 1989, municipal elections in 1992, and another round of presidential and legislative elections in 1993. In response to these election opportunities Crusade, with USAID support, transformed itself into a new organization, Participa. This organization then educated voters for the upcoming elections, employing the same methods used by Crusade during the plebiscite. All together, over these seven national elections, the voter education campaigns sponsored by Crusade and Participa, along with the complementary efforts of other CAOs, contributed significantly to Chile's peaceful democratic transition.

Another CAO task is to begin building a network of support for fundamental political reform beyond the small cadre of activist organizations that survived state repression in the pretransition era. Sources of support and alliances may exist in labor or women's organizations, student unions, professional associations, and the like. They may be found at both local and national levels. Mobilizing such groups behind a common reform agenda can provide the kind of public visibility and weight needed in negotiations with government that might otherwise be diluted when leaders and constituencies outside the government are divided. As an example, in Thailand the People's Constitutional Assembly, organized by a group of civic advocacy organizations in 1992, was able to hammer together a unified platform. Some of its elements were later reflected in the government's proposed constitutional amendments.

In El Salvador the main initial CAO task in the early transition phase was different--to begin efforts to realize the promise of the peace accords to bring previously marginal strata into the active body politic. The accords provided the opportunity for elements outside the traditionally dominant elites to participate in political life, but they did not guarantee such participation or set up mechanisms to promote it. Here USAID-assisted initiatives at the local level have provided the funding to enable FMLN-oriented CAOs

to take part in rehabilitating the country (through the Municipalities in Action and Secretariat for National Reconstruction programs). They have also provided training to help these CAOs compete to obtain this funding.

Building CAO alliances can be difficult in the early transition phase. Some groups may have been radicalized by previous repression and therefore are unwilling to cooperate with CAOs of more moderate inclinations. Likewise, some groups may be viewed as beyond the pale of acceptability because of their collaboration with or co-optation by past authoritarian regimes. In Kenya, for example, some human rights organizations were disinclined to associate with the labor union movement because of its previous close connections with the government.

Nonetheless, the early transition phase does offer opportunities for groups previously suborned by authoritarian regimes to assert their independence and rejoin civil society as more autonomous actors. This process is often evident in union movements, with some affiliates distancing themselves from federations closely associated with the old order. In Kenya the Central Organization of Trade Unions and one of the foremost women's organizations (Maendeleo ya Wanawake) are trying to restore their autonomy after years of government control.

Conversely, many CAOs that may have had some autonomy in the pretransition process may be co-opted by previously repressed but now reviving political parties that are broadening and deepening their penetration throughout society. This seems to be the case in Chile, where in the past a citizen's very identity often was a function of political party membership; the phenomenon shows signs of becoming more potent in Bangladesh as well. If they continue, such trends foreshadow a possible weakening of civil society and constitute a danger that could become particularly marked in the late transition period.

Late Transition

The late transition phase sees a further shift in CAO priorities. At this stage a fundamental redirection to a more open political system is under way. New rules for democratic governance have been agreed on in the early transition period, and now the major task is ensuring that political actors and governance institutions begin conforming to them.

CAOs play a critical role in the late transition process. One major CAO task is civic education. This involves educating the public on the rules and institutional features of the new political order, the means by which citizens can influence government, how they can seek redress for arbitrary government actions, and in general how to take advantage of new opportunities in advancing community empowerment and governance. Civic education should create and strengthen public expectations that hold government and political actors accountable to higher standards of behavior.

A second task for CAOs is to monitor compliance with the new rules for democratic governance, ensuring that when there is noncompliance, the rules are enforced. Lack of enforcement is all too common in developing countries, but CAOs can help remedy the problem by assuming a watchdog role in

discovering and publicizing infractions by government and nongovernment actors.

Enforcement is the heart of ensuring accountability, and CAOs have many ways of engaging this task. The task is easier when the institutional mechanisms and arenas (such as ombudsmen, public hearings, and representation on government review panels) listed in step 5 of the strategic logic (see figure 1) are accessible and operable. In Thailand, for example, NGOs and government sit together in reviewing environmental impact assessments.

Monitoring and enforcement often require building such capacities in local communities. In Thailand the Occupational and Environmental Medical Association, the Environmental Engineering Association, and the Law Society have joined other NGOs to enhance community capacities in monitoring and invoking new rules for enforcing regulations in industrial pollution and waste management. Organizers hope their coalition will develop into a public interest organization with income generated from an endowment.

Bangladesh and El Salvador are still grappling with basic governance rules. They have not yet entered the late transition phase. In Bangladesh, for example, local government structure has yet to be formulated, even three years and more into the present government's electoral mandate. In El Salvador certain rules for municipal representation (such as the electoral winner-take-all rule for councils) are likely to be significantly revised.

But even though these systems may not have reached the late transition phase, civic advocacy organizations do concern themselves with rule compliance and accountability. In both Bangladesh and El Salvador, CAOs have become active in monitoring environmental matters. In a boost to this effort, at least one segment of the media in both countries has proven enthusiastic about reporting on environmental matters.

Consolidation

In the consolidation phase, both basic and operational rules have been essentially agreed upon, and mechanisms to ensure participation and accountability are in place. This last phase features a deepening of democratic governance in the culture and institutions of society and a growing capability of society and government to adapt to change and deal effectively with major problems of reform. An underlying issue concerns the sustainability of CAOs as actors in monitoring rule enforcement and mobilizing cooperation of citizens and communities in support of reform agendas. The role of public interest organizations is particularly important in this context.

Public interest CAOs are organizations that advocate reform and address issues of the larger collective good at both the systemic and sectoral level. They are needed for society to engage in effective problem solving. Public interest organizations take up issues of collective action, issues that may not get addressed if left to individual initiatives. That's largely because the costs for the individual to take such activist initiatives often outweigh the individual benefits to be accrued. Similarly, CAO sustainability is a collective-action problem in the sense that unless society establishes incentives to support CAO growth, it is unlikely this sector will be able to make an effective contribution in activating and sustaining societal

problem solving.

The problems of CAO sustainability are twofold. Internally the initial dynamism ebbs, and externally foreign funding wanes. The internal problem can emerge relatively early in the overall transition process. The sector may flourish in the pretransition and early transition phases, when citizen activism, pent up after years of repression, surges. But soon comes a rapid deflation as citizens return to their private interests and become generally unavailable for CAO reformist efforts. The CAO sector is further diminished as many of its leaders and staff move into government positions or assume political careers in new or resurgent political parties. Externally, CAO funding may fall off as international donors scale back or terminate programs.

Civic advocacy organizations in the four countries making the democratic transition are experiencing such a depletion of their earlier dynamism. Some observers believe CAOs in Chile and Thailand are experiencing a public decline in activism and external donor funding that is compelling them to mobilize domestic sources of support to survive. Some organizations such as Participa are developing and marketing themselves as service-oriented agents in hopes of securing government contracts. A serious risk looms here in that the organizations may lose some of their autonomy by avoiding controversial issues that could jeopardize government funding.

In Thailand, before USAID's recent closeout, an Agency-funded project was working with a group of prominent Thai leaders from the NGO, university, and corporate worlds to establish the Thai Foundation. Its mission is to mobilize sources of domestic funding and serve as a grant-making mechanism to NGOs. Grants would be targeted largely to NGOs addressing cutting-edge development and policy advocacy issues. Supporters hope to attract major domestic corporate and external donor contributions toward an endowment.

Civic advocacy organizations in El Salvador have only recently begun to think even tentatively about how to deal with the impending rapid decline in donor funding. By contrast, Bangladesh, as one of the world's least developed countries, can look forward to generous levels of international aid for the foreseeable future. In Kenya sufficient corporate affluence could generate contributions to support public interest CAOs. But fear of government reprisals has made business wary of associating with organizations that address controversial public issues.

In all five countries, few if any government incentives or tax write-offs exist for corporate or individual contributions to CAOs. These policies may reflect government ambivalence about, or antagonism or indifference toward, civic advocacy organizations. Such attitudes are reinforced by long-standing cultural traditions and public attitudes that have yet to recognize the value of public policies supporting the growth of a public interest sector.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The four-phase transition scheme provides some guidelines for donors and civic advocacy organizations in supporting democratic transitions. This report concludes by highlighting a broader set of recommendations on how donors in particular might enhance their contributions to democratic transitions through the medium of civil society.

1. Donors need to chart and follow a disciplined approach to ensure that investments in civil society do not lose their focus on and relevance to the reform process. There is a risk that investments in civil society will be dissipated over a wide range of activities that may yield minimal results. To avoid this pitfall, support for civil society should be viewed less as an end itself and more as a means for advancing a strategic reform agenda toward greater democratic governance. Investment strategies for civil society should aim at attaining structural reforms within the polity. Then they should be calibrated and sequenced tactically in accordance with the transition process under way within a particular country.

2. Donors must be prepared to exercise considerable leverage when supporting civic advocacy organizations engaged in fostering democratic transitions in the pre- and early transition phases. Many of the political reforms undertaken in the country case studies likely would not have made as much headway as they did, without outside donor pressure and support. This was the case in Kenya, when bilateral and multilateral donors pressured the government to undertake the political reforms of 1992 (even though they proved to be short-lived). In Chile and El Salvador, without diplomatic pressure on the host country government, less progress would have occurred in protection of human rights.

During the pre- and early transition phases, civic advocacy organizations are often not strong enough to advance the reform process alone. In such situations the added weight of donor coordination in using conditionality to pressure for political liberalization may well be critical. It also may be critical to the survival of activist organizations, which in the pre- and early transition phases can be operating in a high-risk environment in which they are vulnerable to government attack.

3. Donors need to exercise caution and not expect too much when investing in institution-building efforts in the civil society sector during the early phases of democratic transitions. Many civic advocacy organizations are small, having perhaps only a few staff members who are inspired by a charismatic leader. There may be little internal democracy or leadership turnover, and links with potential coalition partners or constituencies may be tenuous. Most also are not membership organizations. Because of their fragile base in the early transition phases, these organizations may either cease to exist as their leaders move into government positions, or affiliate and be submerged in resurgent political parties.

Given the precarious situation of many civic advocacy organizations in the pre- and early transition period, donors need to exercise caution before investing major resources in these groups as part of a larger and longer term institution-building effort. Such efforts seek to enhance organizational capabilities, introduce greater internal democracy, and reach out to broader funding sources. There will be exceptions to this rule, but generally donors need to wait a sufficient period to determine which organizations are prepared to engage seriously in such changes.

4. *Donors need to devote significant attention to building a favorable policy environment for the growth of civil society, particularly with respect to expanding in-country funding sources for this sector.* Most civil society organizations depend in great part, if not entirely, on outside donor financing. Thus there is a need for strategies to promote more financial independence and sustainability. Creating an in-country enabling environment for individual and corporate contributions to public interest organizations by changing tax laws is one such strategy. Another, one that USAID has helped pioneer, is providing funds to establish host country endowments and foundations.

Creativity has a place in designing financing mechanisms for public interest organizations. In Thailand, for example, the Asia Foundation is helping establish a "green" mutual fund. It will invest only in Thai companies that have a record of observing environmental standards. Part of the earnings will be earmarked for distribution to environmental causes, including CAOs that are part of Thailand's environmental movement. In effect, the mutual fund joins an incentive for private profit with that of supporting public interest organizations.

5. *Donors need to be aware of potential trade-offs in countries undergoing political transitions while also engaging in fundamental economic reforms in the move from statist to free-market economies.* Many countries are undergoing economic and political reform simultaneously, although at different speeds. In these situations donors need to calculate whether pressing vigorously for reforms in one area could undermine commitment to making progress in the other. The need for calculation is particularly important with investments in civil society for major political reform.

When a ruling coalition demonstrates genuine commitment to painful economic reforms, it may be more appropriate to complement this effort by supporting civic advocacy organizations that can help champion and consolidate these reforms. Such an approach may delay addressing more systemic political reforms. But sectoral reforms in the economic arena can contribute to development of an autonomous commercial sector, which (if organized collectively) can advocate and advance the cause of good governance (though not necessarily more democracy).

6. *To defend these programs from premature termination, donors should develop policy guidance that establishes criteria for a country's graduation from receiving aid in support of democracy.* Some countries are moving rapidly toward self-sustaining economic growth. In contemporary donor thinking, that often justifies reducing or even terminating development assistance, even though many of these countries may still be in the early phases of a democratic transition. The potential for political regression and instability will persist in the early phases and could undermine investor confidence and hard-won economic gains. In brief, it may make sense to continue some support for democracy efforts even though economic development programs are terminated.

Given that the costs of democracy programs are generally small, gains from such investments may yield large benefits both politically and economically. Justification of democracy programs in the later stages of transition and consolidation can be strengthened if donors clearly outline the rationale and criteria for continuation and eventual graduation.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY AND COUNTRY SAMPLE

This assessment had its genesis in 1992, when the CDIE office was in the midst of conducting its rule-of-law evaluation. In May 1992 a team from the Program and Operations Assessments division (POA) canvassed democracy officers in USAID's regional bureaus in Washington, asking what they thought would be the most productive areas to evaluate in the Agency's democracy initiative. Civil society emerged in first place.

The present assessment proceeded in two waves, the first involving two countries (Bangladesh and Thailand) in March-April 1994. Field teams were sent to the remaining three countries (Chile, El Salvador, and Kenya) in the summer of 1994.

The Country Sample

Given a maximum of five countries that could be analyzed, the POA team wished to compose a sample that would include a wide range of settings and facilitate in-depth study. Specifically, we wished to include the following:

- The Latin American/Caribbean region and Asia, where USAID support for democracy has been the most long-standing and extensive
- The Africa region, where USAID assistance for democracy is still new
- Some more advanced developing countries, and some less developed countries
- Some countries where democracy has made more progress, and some where it has advanced less
- Some countries where the Agency was preparing to phase out its activities, in order to assess sustainability challenges for civil society initiatives (challenges that in the future will doubtless become a more common experience as USAID ends its programs in more countries)

In the end, the POA team chose two countries in the Asia region, two in Latin America/Caribbean, and one in Africa. The team had hoped to include an Eastern European country as well, but this proved impossible in the time frame adopted for the assessment. And it would have enriched the study considerably to have taken up a francophone African country (in addition to anglophone Kenya), but this was likewise not a possibility.

It is true that a five-country sample must be considered at best illustrative of the universe presented by the developing world, for it cannot be a scientifically representative sample. But we believe the sample

chosen is broadly representative of the universe of political systems other than former communist-bloc nations that are presently struggling toward democracy.

Methodology

Each of the five field studies involved a team of two to three expatriate evaluators supplemented by in-country experts. The studies each took between three and five weeks of work in the field, plus time to write up the findings later on. The primary methods employed were key-person interviews (at least 60 such persons in each country visited) and extensive document reviews (of USAID and other donor materials as well as CAO-generated documents and much unrelated matter such as academic analyses and local newspapers). People interviewed included members of CAOs, representatives of various international donor agencies, and host government officials.

In several countries, evaluators took field trips out of the capital city to observe civic advocacy organizations at work in rural settings. In El Salvador (where a principal aim of the CDIE assessment was determining how successfully the populations of ex-conflictive zones have been brought into the political mainstream), 13 rural localities were visited. In Bangladesh day trips were made to three locations outside Dhaka. The team in Thailand undertook a field trip of several days to Chiangmai. In Chile the evaluators visited several major cities outside Santiago.

The wide variation in donors, projects, and forms of assistance meant that there was no single best way to account for or add up donor contributions, in either monetary or personnel terms. Nor was there any standard way to quantify CAO activities, personnel, or, for that matter, even the total number of CAOs or NGOs at work in any particular country. As a result, our analysis, as with CDIE's earlier rule-of-law assessment, has necessarily had to be descriptive, illustrative, and impressionistic, rather than rigorously quantitative in the positivistic social science tradition.

APPENDIX B: REVIEWERS COMMENTS

Ends or Means?

Some reviewers took exception to the paper's view of investments in civil society as a means to a larger end rather than an end in its own right. They insist that a vibrant and dense civil society--particularly at the local level, where people are engaging in collective problem-solving and organizing for self-governance--forms the building blocks for a healthy democracy. Thus, investments in such activities as agricultural cooperatives, irrigation associations, and community forestry management should be considered part of civil society and merit corresponding priority in a democracy strategy.

Conceptually, the view that a strong civil society constitutes the foundation for a strong democracy is unassailable, although the growth of civil society is not always the primary cause for the emergence of

democratic regimes or for their sustainability. Nevertheless, it needs to be stressed that in many developing countries the structures of governance either limit or repress the growth of civil society. Thus, this paper takes the position that donors ought to invest in those civic advocacy organizations that seek to bring about a democratic transformation in the basic structures of governance. As these structures are liberalized, the incentives and opportunities will grow for civil society to emerge as a vital force in the polity.

This more instrumentalist view of civil society explains the order of presentation in the paper. Some reviewers felt it should be reversed, with the four-stage transition model moved to the front. To do so, however, would negate the paper's basic purpose. That is to diagnose structural deficiencies and formulate reform agendas, with civil society (depending on the transition stage and the robustness of the sector) assuming a variable role as an agent working on behalf of reform.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the paper's more utilitarian approach to civil society is driven by the hard realities of having to allocate a donor agency's limited resources. The emphasis on transforming the structures of governance in the polity is the functional equivalent of structural adjustment programs in the economic arena. In this sense, the paper reflects a priority on building both elite and public dialog on issues of macro policy change, as configured around such issues as constitutional and electoral reform or changes in the structures of governance that produce greater transparency and accountability. In this regard, the four phases are of value only to the extent that they illuminate opportunities for engaging in structural reform.

Although civil society is viewed in a more derivative sense, the paper does stress that part of the structural transformation is building an enabling environment that supports the growth and sustainability of the sector. Thus, at this level it does become an end in itself, with the paper urging donor agencies to devote more attention to creating favorable enabling environments and building government, private sector, and civil society partnerships in strengthening democratic governance.

Transitions Framework: Normative or Empirical?

Some reviewers raised concerns about the validity of the four-phase transition model. They suggest that the model underestimates the complexities of the transition process and that, indeed, transitions may lead to something other than democracy. Although the paper acknowledges the limitations of the model, there is a need for some kind of framework that brings a sense of order, classification, and progression in our understanding of political change. From an empirical perspective, the model rests on the assumption that there are patterns in social life and that they can be studied as a science. If not a science, then models can be represented as normative statements of desired objectives. The model in the paper can be justified on either of these rationales.

Logic Framework: An Open or Closed System?

Some reviewers expressed reservations about the intent of the strategic logic matrix diagrammed in figure 1. Some held that it was too closed and should be open to differences in problems and reform agendas

other than those listed in the initial columns. In response to this concern, it needs to be emphasized that the model is a heuristic device and that the items included in the columns are illustrative and can be changed, added to, or subtracted from in accordance with the conclusions of assessments undertaken in a particular country.

In brief, country variations should be accommodated; the logic is not a Procrustean bed. The model is designed to emphasize the deductive order of precedence (the centerpiece of the paper), moving from structural reforms to how civil society can contribute to and participate in the reform process.

Progovernment or Antigovernment?

Some reviewers felt the paper was too antigovernment in tone. They maintained it should be more balanced in reflecting the fact that constructive interactions and partnerships between government and civil society are achievable and desirable. As a subtheme, some felt the paper was either too political or, conversely, gave insufficient recognition to the nature of politics--that is, the self-serving struggle for power, and its frequently ruthless and violent character.

In principle, the paper was written with no intended pro or anti orientation. But since a good portion of the paper dwells on issues concerning the pretransition period, when governments are hostile toward civil society, the reader could come to the unintended conclusion of a bias against government in general. In this context, the paper does demonstrate that the survival of civil society is often at risk largely because of the highly partisan and conflictive nature of the political process.

Regarding the need for closer partnerships, this criticism is well taken and an effort has been made in modifying the text to emphasize this need.

External Versus Internal Democracy

Some reviewers felt the paper should devote more attention to the need to encourage greater internal democracy in civic advocacy organizations. For several reasons, the paper does not stress this need, particularly for the early phases of democratic transitions. First, during this time many civic advocacy organizations operate in an uncertain and hostile environment. That circumstance frequently inclines these organization to be more closed than would be case if they functioned under more benign conditions.

Second, reforming the internal dynamics of these organizations may be a difficult task and detract from their being able to exercise a significant role in the early transition phases. Nevertheless, the point is well taken. There is a need for internal democratization if some of these organizations are going to grow and become less dependent on external donor funding. In this regard, a section has been added to the recommendations chapter. It addresses the issue under the rubric of institution-building in the civil society sector.

The concern for internal democratization relates to a larger set of issues involving the role of individual

and organizational motivations: can civic advocacy organizations and leaders contribute to democratic reforms even though their motives may be driven more by self-serving power urges and less by democratic principles? Some of the discussion suggested a negative answer to this question. The paper takes the opposite position. Individuals and organizations undertake actions for many different reasons. Some of those reasons are narrowly self-interested, others more public-interested. What matters is whether these groups can negotiate a set of institutional rules (democratic in character) that brings about some degree of congruence between self-interest and a more encompassing national interest.

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NOTES

¹The definition of "civil society" in this assessment does not include political parties, primarily on the grounds that their primary goal is to *take over* state power rather than *influence* it as with the organizations that are the subject of this report.

Figure 1. CAO Strategic Logic

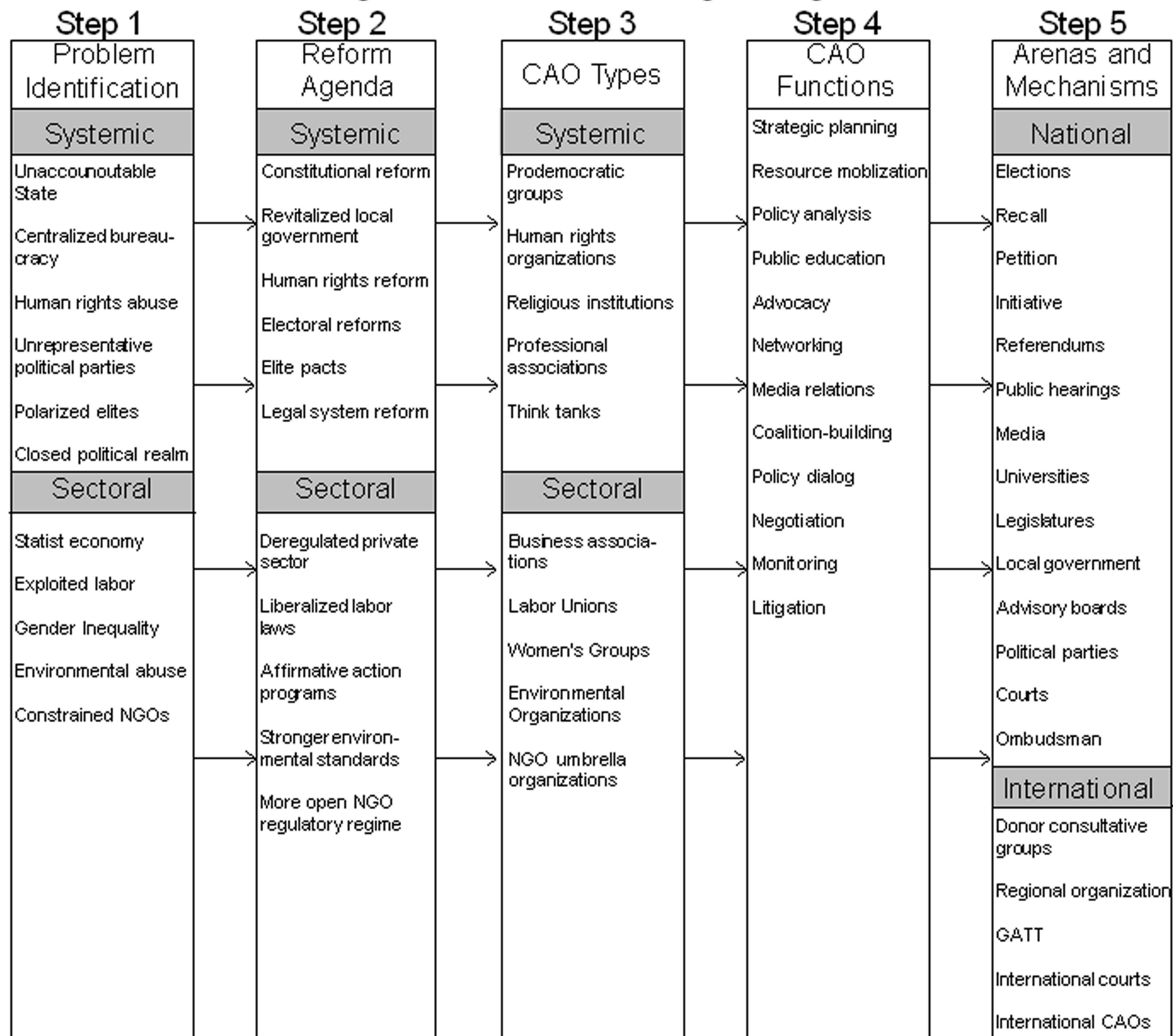


Table 1. Democratic Transitions in Five Countries

Variable	Bangladesh	Chile	El Salvador	Kenya	Thailand
Severity of previous authoritarian regime	Most severe in mid-1970s and early 1980s	Very oppressive in 1973, then gradually milder through 1980s	Most oppressive in early 1980s, then gradually less so	Increasing severity during 1970s and after	Cyclic severity in early and late 1970s and early 1990s
Earlier democratic openings and their fate	Early and late 1970s openings suppressed by coups	Viable democracy 1930s until 1970s, ended by coup	Cycle of openings and suppressions, 1930s-80s	Donor-initiated 1991 opening later closed	Mid-1970s, late 1980s openings ended by coups
Present democratic opening	Anti-Ershad movement, December 1990	Plebiscite, October 1988	Peace accords, January 1992	Partial opening in 1991	Democratic uprising, May 1992
CAO role in opening public realm	Little developmental CAO involvement	CAO think tank safe havens	Largely precluded by civil war	Limited involvement	Contribution to 1992 democracy movement

Table 2. Recommendations for Donors and Civil Society Organizations

Pretransition	Early Transition	Late Transition	Consolidation
<p>Support safe havens</p> <p>Strengthen nonpartisan CAOs</p> <p>Enhance NGO/CAO enabling environment</p> <p>Facilitate elite dialog on reform agenda</p> <p>Support sectoral reform</p> <p>Foster national and international communication linkages</p> <p>Increase donor coordination</p>	<p>Launch voter education campaign</p> <p>Undertake election administration and monitoring</p> <p>Facilitate elite consensus on systemic reforms</p> <p>Support creation of NGO/CAO sector self-governance</p> <p>Protect nonpartisan CAO base</p> <p>Create incentives for CAO financial sustainability</p>	<p>Institute civic education</p> <p>Build CAO-government partnerships</p> <p>Enhance CAO watchdog roles</p> <p>Expand CAO nonpartisan base</p> <p>Strengthen CAO organizational capacities</p> <p>Support reforms in training sectors</p>	<p>Strengthen CAO links to international community</p>