

# Challenges to the effective operation of local NGOs in Cambodia

*Ownership, NGO-isation, Strategy and Knowledge of local NGOs in Cambodia*



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# Preface

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After a year of hard work and doing research in Cambodia, I am proud to hand in this thesis. When I started with the master Conflicts, Territories & Identities, I could not have thought what an amazing time it was going to be with interesting classes, great fellow students, negotiation games and a trip to Bosnia Herzegovina. Something which definitely formed the ice on the cake was my research in Cambodia. During my stay in this wonderful country, I was fortunate to get to know Cambodia and the Cambodian culture from the inside out and it was a privilege to do research into such an interesting topic as the relation between local and international NGOs. By doing this research and visiting the various local NGOs in Cambodia, I realised that these local NGOs can play an important role in improving the future of many Cambodians. I must admit that I have lost my heart to the 'Kingdom of Wonder'. I definitely miss the friendly smiles, the tuktuks at every corner of the street ("tuktuk ladyyyy?"), riding on my bicycle in Phnom Penh during rush hour, the delicious Cambodian dishes and the rain showers at exactly 4.30 pm.

I would like to thank several people who helped me with this thesis. First of all, I would like to thank Roger Henke for his guidance and good advice. I also would like to thank him for giving me the opportunity to take a closer look at the Programmatic Approach of ICCO and for introducing me to many local NGOs. I am very grateful to Roger and his family for letting me stay at their home during my research in Cambodia. The Henke family made me feel really at home in their house and country. Secondly, I would like to thank all my interviewees who were willing to talk to me about their NGO and the work they are doing for their country. Their stories gave me an interesting insight in their work and the NGO sector in Cambodia. I also would like to thank Dinus de Vries of ICCO, and the staff of DanChurchAid for giving me the opportunity to work at their office and joining them to the province of Ratanakiri.

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*Anne van de Sande*

*Apeldoorn, June 2010*

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

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Every year, an amount of over 150 billion dollar of official aid flows from western to developing countries (De Haan, 2009, 1). This money is spent and allocated by four main groups of institutions which are active in the international development industry. Most of the money is provided via bilateral channels, which is direct support from one government to another. The coordination of this process is mostly in hands of embassies of the donor country. The second group contains the multilateral organisations which include the United Nations agencies and the World Bank. The third group, which is the newest group, are private organisations. This group is characterised by organisations which are set up by some of the wealthiest people and companies in the world, such as Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, the Ford Foundation and Bertelsmann Foundation. The last group, which is the group this study will concentrate on, are the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This group has grown rapidly over the last decades and plays an important role in the international aid industry (Reijngoud, 2009, 116; De Haan, 2009, 21).

Development focused NGOs form a significant part of the development industry as about 15 percent of the total amount of international aid is allocated via NGOs (De Haan, 2009, 49). NGOs operating on the international level have a close relation with NGOs working on the local level, as these international organisations provide assistance and donor money to local NGOs. This study focuses on the relation between international NGOs and local NGOs, and local Cambodian NGOs in specific. Before looking at the relation between these two types of Non-Governmental Organisations, it is important to take a closer look at the history of the international development industry first.

In the international aid industry, different kinds of doctrines have played a central role. In the last fifty years of development aid, five periods with different philosophies can be distinguished (Reijngoud, 2009, 82-93; De Haan, 2009, 69-83). The 1950s and the 1960s were characterised by optimism. People were convinced that specific projects like building schools and digging water wells were the key to success in helping third world countries. The optimism derived partly from positive experiences with the Marshall plan in Europe, a growing world economy, and because of the rapid decolonisation especially in Africa. The 1970s were characterised by redistribution. People came to the conclusion that the last twenty years of development aid had not produced the desired results, as people in the Third World were still poor and the gap between rich and poor continued to get larger and larger. Marxist ideas became the dominant tone and a more explicit focus came on poverty and redistribution (both within developing countries and between developing countries and western countries). In order to achieve redistribution, food aid became less important and the aid industry started to pay more attention to agriculture, rural development and basic needs. In comparison to the 1950s and 1960s, developing countries became more aware of the interaction between rural and urban, and traditional and modern sectors.

During the 1980s, a more 'no nonsense' philosophy became central as during the period of government of Reagan and Thatcher liberal economical reforms were the key values. Focus came on structural economic problems in developing countries, such as weak economies and disastrous state finances, instead of incoherent development projects. This new focus was exemplified by the 'structural adjustment programmes' of the World Bank and the IMF, and meant that aid was provided along with a large number of conditions for developing countries concerning adjustments of their economy aiming to scale back the state intervention in the markets. In practice this implied for developing countries making drastic cutbacks on government expenses like salaries of government officials, teachers and doctors, but also putting a hold on building roads and (if existing) social welfare systems, a trend which matched perfectly with the neoliberal philosophy of Thatcher and Reagan (Reijngoud, 2009, 82-93; De Haan, 2009, 69-83).

During the beginning of the 1990s, international development came into a crisis. People realised that after almost fifty years, still many developing countries were poor or even had become poorer, and the developing countries that were doing better at that time did this on their own and not with the help of western countries. In addition, in Africa conflicts started to erupt one after another. However, during the mid-1990s a turnaround came which is, according to the literature, difficult to explain. One of the reasons mentioned is the fact of the reviving world economy, and even the approach of the year 2000 is mentioned as a turning point: a symbol for a new start, also in the aid industry. Since the mid-1990s, the international development discourse has been dominated by the philosophy or doctrine called 'ownership'. Ownership implies that developing countries are the so-called owners of their own problems and they have to come up with solutions themselves. The idea of ownership is to a large extent about who decides what is done. Donors should lay an emphasis on supporting developing countries and local organisations, instead of carrying out projects and activities (Reijngoud, 2009, 82-93; De Haan, 2009, 69-83). The idea of ownership was not just a grand philosophy for bilateral aid, also international NGOs started to work according to this idea when working with their partners and local NGOs in the South. Local partners needed to have more ownership over the work they were doing, and international donors should play a supporting role.

Although the international development discourse is at this moment dominated by the idea of ownership, literature suggests that local NGOs in developing countries still seem to have a lack of ownership concerning their activities and programmes. Whether and when one can speak of lack of ownership is difficult to determine. Perhaps full ownership is never possible as there is always a relation based on dependency when one organisation provides donor assistance to another. Also possible is that there may be different levels of ownership. Looking at the case of Cambodia, a country on which this study will focus, it is said that donors still have a big influence on what activities are carried out by local Cambodian NGOs. Besides, the literature distinguishes other issues which may challenge the effectiveness of local Cambodian NGOs, including NGO-isation, which means that local NGOs become organised as professional NGOs with western organisational structures and change their organisation towards donor standards in order to be the most likely candidate to receive donor

funds. As a consequence of this NGO-isation, and the upward rather than downward orientation of this organisation, some local NGOs become removed from their local constituency. Also a lack of strategy or strategic thinking which goes beyond short term level seems to challenge the effective operation of local NGOs. It is said that some local NGOs do not seem to consider how and in what way their projects and activities can contribute to reach the goal of the NGO as is mentioned in their mission or vision. Lastly, there seems to be a lack of knowledge or a difference in knowledge between local and international NGOs (for instance lack of knowledge of worldwide issues in the aid industry, lack of practical knowledge about writing reports, the English language, or analytical skills) which challenges the effective operation of local Cambodian NGOs (Derksen & Verhallen, 2008; Hughes 2003; Hughes, n.d.; Hughes & Conway, 2003; Henke, 2009; Scheper, 2005; Verkoren, 2009). The question is, however, whether the local NGOs in Cambodia endorse these problems mentioned in the literature.

Therefore, this study will try to find out whether local NGOs in Cambodia endorse problems as lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge, as is mentioned in the literature. In Part I of the present study, the following research question will be answered:

*'Do local NGOs in Cambodia endorse the problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?'*

A new paradigm called Civic Driven Change might serve as a handle to local Cambodian NGOs in order to overcome some of the mentioned problems which may challenge the effective operation of local NGOs. This new paradigm refers to and promotes a process of changes in society which is directly initiated, lead and owned by people themselves. It may serve as a new way to counter the in the literature mentioned problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge. The Civic Driven Change paradigm is fairly new. At this moment, it is more a theoretical paradigm which has not been brought generally into practise, and not much research has been carried out into this new paradigm. Therefore, it is interesting to find out what ideas practitioners working in the Cambodian NGO sector, both Cambodians and internationals, have about this new paradigm, and whether they believe that this paradigm might offer possibilities to overcome some of the earlier mentioned problems. Therefore, the following research question will also be answered in Part I the present study:

*'Does the Civic Driven Change concept offer inspiration or possibilities to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector for overcoming some of the problems like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?'*

In reaction to the mentioned issues which are considered to challenge the effectiveness of local Cambodian NGOs, various initiatives have taken place which may help tackle the problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge.

ICCO, a Dutch NGO, has implemented the 'Programmatic Approach'. This initiative prioritises ownership over a narrowly focused top-down programme conceptualisation (Henke, 2007). This new

approach could thus form an answer to problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation, as ICCO strives to change the current top-down relation between international and local NGOs by introducing a complete new way of working: the Programmatic Approach.

Another initiative is the NGO Forum in Cambodia. This forum is an example of an initiative where local NGOs share information and debate on issues that are affecting Cambodia's development, and jointly advocate NGOs' interests at government level and at other authorities. The NGO Forum might counter problems like lack of knowledge and lack of strategy as the NGOs involved in the forum share ideas, talk about current issues, and create joint strategies. This sharing can increase the knowledge of the involved NGOs and can make them aware of the importance of a well-considered strategy.

In Part II of this study, two evaluative case studies into the Programmatic Approach of ICCO and the NGO Forum will be carried out. In these case studies, a closer look will be taken at the goal, the strengths, and weaknesses of the initiatives. The two case studies will try to find out whether these initiatives help tackling the mentioned problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge, which are considered to challenge the effectiveness of local Cambodian NGOs.

# Chapter 2. Theoretical Background

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## 2.1 Overview

Before looking at the relation between international NGOs and local NGOs in Cambodia, it is necessary to take a closer look at concepts such as civil society, international donors and NGOs first. Therefore, this chapter will start with an introduction into civil society (paragraph 2.2), after which civil society building and the role of civil society in post-conflict situations will be discussed (paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4). In paragraph 2.5, the way of working of international NGOs and donor organisations will be discussed whereby issues as the top-down approach, instrumentalisation, ownership, back-donors, accountability and legitimacy (sub-paragraph 2.5.1) will be discussed. Hereafter, subjects such as lack of strategy (sub-paragraph 2.5.2), lack of knowledge (sub-paragraph 2.5.3), and NGO-isation (sub-paragraph 2.5.4) at local NGOs will be discussed. In paragraph 2.6 a closer look will be taken at the new paradigm Civic Driven Change.

In the second part of this chapter, literature focussing on Cambodia will be discussed. First of all, it will take a closer look at civil society before the Paris Peace Agreements (paragraph 2.7) followed by paragraph 2.8, in which political, social and cultural factors of the Cambodian society will be discussed. Hereafter, paragraph 2.9 will deal with civil society and NGOs after the Paris Peace Agreements. In paragraph 2.10 a literature overview will be given of subjects like lack of ownership and NGO-isation (sub-paragraph 2.10.1), and lack of knowledge and strategy (sub-paragraph 2.10.2) within local Cambodian NGOs, after which an explanation for the international dominance in the Cambodian NGO sector will be given (sub-paragraph 2.10.3). This chapter will be concluded by paragraph 2.11 in which the research questions of the present study are displayed.

## 2.2 Civil society

### 2.2.1 History of civil society

As much literature points out, there is not one clear definition of 'civil society'. The term civil society is however not new. It has a long history in political philosophy and different definitions have been given throughout history. Something which is important to realise when talking about the definition of civil society is the fact that not one school of thought or one definition is proved to be correct and others to be false. The definition that will be used in the present study reads:

*Civil society is a web of social relations, an organised society, or voluntary collective action around shared interests and values, that stands apart from the government, the market and private life of family* (Barnes, 2006, 19; Verkoren, 2009, 3; Scholte, 2001, 5; Pouligny, 2005, 497).

### Classical liberal school of thought

When looking at civil society in history one can distinguish different kinds of schools of thoughts. The first one is the classical liberal school of thought which can be divided in two important phases. The first phase dates from the Romans until the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, and tries to find answers on the question why and how human mankind should be governed, who should govern and under what conditions (Van Rooy, 2000, 7). The general idea of this classical school of thought is that civil society and the state are seen as indistinguishable. Both civil society and the state are in the classical thought referring to a “type of political association governing social conflict through the imposition of rules that restrained citizens from harming one another” (Edwards, 2004, 6). The ‘polis’ of Aristotle was “an ‘association of associations’ which enabled citizens [...] to share in the virtuous tasks of ruling and being ruled” (ibid.). The state represented the ‘civil’ form of society and ‘civility’ described the requirements of good citizenship. Civil society was thus more or less the same thing as a political society. It was not contrasted with the state, but with other kinds of society such as despotic empires. Civil society was a peaceful society in which people treated strangers with civility, this in contrast to other violent and rude societies (Kaldor, 2003b, 7). The late medieval thought continued this tradition by comparing civil society with “politically organised commonwealths” (Edwards, 2004, 6). This type of civilization was possible because the people at that time lived in law-governed associations which were protected by the state (Edwards, 2004, 6-7).

The second important phase of the classical liberal school of thought is the Enlightenment period in the eighteenth century. Between 1750 and 1850, the ideas about civil society took a new and fundamental turn, in response to the at that time perceived crisis in the ruling social order. This crisis stemmed from a couple of developments at that time, such as the rise of the market economy and the breakdown of the traditional ideas of authority as a consequence of the French and American revolutions. The important thinkers of the Enlightenment period all drew a line (which had not existed before) between the state and civil society, between the governed and the governors. The thinkers of that period believed that there was a state that needed to be defended against and they saw civil society as a “defence against unwarranted intrusions by the state on newly realised individual rights and freedoms, organised through the medium of voluntary associations” (Edwards, 2004, 7). According to these thinkers, civil society was seen as a “self-regulating universe of associations” (ibid.). These associations were committed to the same ideas and values, and these ideas and values should be protected from the state (Van Rooy, 2000, 8-9; Edwards, 2004, 6-8).

Locke, one of the thinkers of the Enlightenment period, saw each individual as being free and therefore, civil society was according to Locke a compromise: a (social) contract in which each individual gave up some liberty to ensure the liberty of others. Civil society was possible as long as all people would obey the laws under which they voluntarily placed themselves, and when these individuals subsumed their will under the public will. Adam Smith, another thinker of the Enlightenment school of thought, added another element to the ideas of the state and civil society, namely the economy. The economy defined, according to Smith, a dimension of social life in which the people

functioned as “a society potentially quite outside the ambit of politics” (Taylor, 1990, cited in Van Rooy, 2000, 9). In other words, Smith laid emphasis on the importance of the commercial society, and saw the market “as the condition for individualism and the existence of a civil society” (Kaldor, 2003b, 7). Another important thinker of the Enlightenment school of thought was Alexis de Tocqueville. According to de Tocqueville, even a democratically chosen government might suffocate civil society if citizen associations are not showing enough watchfulness. In his writings about the United States (written between 1835 and 1840), de Tocqueville identified the tendency of Americans to associate with one another around mutual interests. He also saw that these citizens would look to each other rather than relying on the government. He found that these people would persuade and convince each other rather than fight for the supremacy of their views in the name of the majority. Associations thus became in this way “a means of protecting the individuals from despotism and enabled freedom to survive” (Howell & Pearce, 2001, 43). Associations became institutions in which people learned and were able to argue their causes through peaceful means. Therefore could freedom of association prevent rather than encourage revolutionary action. De Tocqueville stated that in order to guarantee individual liberties, certain ‘democratic expedients’ are necessary, such as local self-government, the separation of church and state, indirect elections, independent judiciary, free press and most important what he thus calls ‘associational life’. De Tocqueville states that this associational life is necessary for freedom and equality, and provides a check on state power. In this line of thinking, civil society can thus act as a check or balance of the government and as a watchdog of citizens rights and interests. Therefore, civil society is seen as an indispensable element of democracy. In addition, de Tocqueville believed, together with other Enlightenment thinkers, that the greater the move towards a more material kind of equality, more equal access to resources and opportunities, the greater the chances for peace (Howell & Pearce, 2001 43-44; Edwards, 2004, 8; Verkoren, 2008, 35).

Still in the 1990s, the work of de Tocqueville was very influential and it formed the basis for the work of Putnam. The dominant theme in Putnam’s work was the value of voluntary associations in restraining the power of centralising institutions, protecting pluralism and nurturing constructive social norms. Putnam (2000) explained in his work that when individuals become more engaged and active in informal institutions of everyday associational life, they create and generate all kinds of networks and trust, called ‘social capital’, which enables them to accomplish certain social goals. Social capital can be seen as ‘social glue’ which can be described as “the strength of family responsibilities, community volunteerism, selflessness [and] public or civic spirit” (Van Rooy, 2000, 13). Social capital creates a common interest whereby people experience a certain connection. Because of the interaction in networks and organisations, political skills and a sense of citizenship are stimulated (Van Rooy, 2000, 13; Howell & Pearce, 2001, 47; Verkoren, 2008, 37). The impact of the work of Putnam has been huge. However, his work is also criticised on a number of counts. First of all, the phenomena described by Putnam, such as the creation of social capital, may stem from other explanations. An example is that not associations are the key factor behind the strong social capital that Putnam found during his study in Italy, but for instance the role of political parties in fostering secondary associations. The second critique on Putnam’s ideas is that there is a very narrow view of democracy underlying the

work of Putnam. The implications of his contributions “remain conservative, with an emphasis on the consensus and stability that clearly influenced the conceptualisations of state-market-civil society cooperation” (Howell & Pearce, 2001, 49) that had emerged among development institutions and among international financial institutions in the 1990s. The third critique is that Putnam does not make a distinction between democratic and antidemocratic values, norms and practices in different kinds of networks or associations. This implies that, according to Putnam, a fishing or handcraft club can contribute equally well to democracy because these clubs encourage collaboration and association, thus social capital, amongst their members (Howell & Pearce, 2001, 48-49).

### Liberal egalitarians

Of course, there were also thinkers that were critical about the ideas of the classical liberal school of thought. In contrast to this classical liberal school of thought discussed above, the liberal egalitarians “recognise the debilitating effects of unequal access to resources and opportunities on the health and functioning of civil society” (Edwards, 2004, 8). The critique of the liberal egalitarian school on the critical liberal school of thought focuses among other things on structural obstacles that prevent some groups from articulating their interests, and on the unreliability of the assumption about associations in society and the effect of these associations (ibid.). One of the critics of the liberal egalitarians is Hegel who was worried by the implications of a society unrestrained by the state. He argued in a writing in 1821 that it was necessary that the state would have a role in which it would harmonise competing interests in society. He stated that the problem of the freedoms that were gained in economic enterprises was that it allowed individuals to be freed from feudal relations, serfdom or family relations. In other words, the market place created “an atomised individual, rootless and unmoored” (Van Rooy, 2000, 10). Although civil society could form a second home, the danger was according to the liberal egalitarians that this civil society would not provide any guarantee of moral behaviour or service to the common good. Therefore, a state function with more ethical laws was necessary. For Hegel civil society became synonymous with “self-interested and egotistical society” (ibid.), and he was one of the first focussing on the conflicts and inequalities that could exist between different economic and political interests within civil society. Therefore he believed that constant surveillance by the state was necessary in order for the society to remain ‘civil’. In other words, the state was viewed as a mediator, resolving the conflicts of civil society. Also for Marx, civil society was a synonymous with a self-interested and egotistical society. Marx reduced civil society to class relationships and therewith, civil society became in effect a theatre of war and of class conflicts between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the society, and between the proletariat and the state (Howell & Pearce, 2001, 51; Van Rooy, 2000, 10; Kaldor, 2003b, 7).

By the end of the middle of the nineteenth century, the ideas of all the Enlightenment thinkers were completely overcome by the power of the industrialised revolution, and the debate on civil society felt out of favour. A hundred years later, however, Gramsci resurrected the debate about civil society while being imprisoned during the second World War. Gramsci described civil society quite different than it was done before as he saw civil society not as a part of society, but as a sphere in which battles for and against capitalism were fought. That sphere was “occupied by a struggle for material, ideological

and cultural control over all of society, including the state” (Van Rooy, 2000, 10). This idea of civil society was especially popular in Latin America in the twentieth century and has been used to fuel opposition to authoritarian regimes and their ideological incarnations (ibid.).

### **Critical theorists’ school of thought**

A third important school of thought is the critical theorists’ school of thought. Philosophers in the United States like Dewey and Arendt developed a new theory around the ideas of Gramsci. This theory entailed that ‘public sphere’ is an essential component of democracy. With ‘public’ they meant “the shared experience of political life that underpinned public deliberation on the great questions of the day” (Edwards, 2000, 9). Aspects in society that eroded the public sphere, such as commercialisation of the media or commoditisation of education, were to be resisted. An important thinker of this school, the German philosopher Habermans, took the ideas of the liberal egalitarian school and the Marxist tradition about domination in civil society, and combined this with the classical liberal school of thought that emphasizes the civil society’s role in guarding personal autonomy. He drew these different theories together with a complicated series of theoretical constructs that dealt with ‘communicative action’, ‘discursive democracy’ and the ‘colonisation of the life world’ (ibid.). Habermans studied the historical emergence of a bourgeois public sphere in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. He found that the significance of this period was that “for the first time private people came together as a public and through the use of reason engaged public authorities in a debate about the general rules governing the sphere of commodity exchange and social labour” (Habermans, 1992, cited in Howell & Pearce, 2001, 56). In other words, people could thus enter the public sphere and influence affairs of state and society. This ‘public communication’ was identified by Habermans as “a potential form in which the general and public interest could be rationally and critically discussed” (ibid). He distinguished his theory from that of de Tocqueville, as de Tocqueville saw this communication more as a compulsion towards conformity than as a critical and rational force. Unlike de Tocqueville, Habermans said that a public opinion could be reached through critical and rational public discourses (Howell & Pearce, 2001, 56). Habermans, and other critical theorists, thus thought that a healthy civil society is one that is “steered by its members through ‘shared meanings’ that are constructed democratically” (Edwards, 2000, 9), through the communications structure part of the public sphere.

Today, the ideas of the critical theorists can be found both on the left side of the political spectrum with those who see civil society as the site of progressive politics, “the social basis of a democratic public sphere through which a culture of inequality can be dismantled” (ibid.), as with political philosophers like John Keane who try to create a new vision of civil society “that respects differences between groups by promoting non-violent engagement ‘from above’ (through state authority embedded in national constitutions and international law) and ‘from below’ (by channelling violent tendencies into non-violent associational life)” (ibid.).

### *2.2.2 Definitions of civil society*

In the 1990s, a new focus came on civil society. There are various reasons for the resurgence of interest in civil society at that time. The modern western context for a new debate about civil society was the concern about “societal well-being at home, the decline of the welfare state, and triumph about the end of the communist experiment in East and Central Europe” (Van Rooy, 2000, 11). Besides, at that time developments came to the surface such as globalisation, post-industrialism and the information society, and people had the sense that the quality of society in industrialised countries was declining (Kaldor, 2003a, 4).

Kaldor (2003a, 6-10) distinguishes five different versions of the concept of civil society. These five versions are: *societas civilis*, the bourgeois society, the activist version, the postmodern version, and the neoliberal version. The first two versions are based on historical ideas of the concept of civil society, the last three versions are contemporary versions (Kaldor, 2003a, 6-7).

#### **Societas civilis**

The first version of civil society is based on the classical liberal school of thought and is described by Kaldor (2003a, 6-7) as the *societas civilis* or civil society as a set of values and norms. The *societas civilis* version sees civil society as “a rule of law and a political community, a peaceful order based on implicit or explicit consent of individuals, a zone of civility” (Kaldor, 2003a, 7). The emphasis in this version lies on the word ‘civil’, and civil society describes a well-behaved society where civil society is a synonym for a ‘good society’. The essence of this society is “trustful, tolerant and cooperative” (Van Rooy, 2000, 12) and this society is the goal of all our political and social efforts. According to this definition, civil society cannot be separated from the existence of a state, as civil society, the ‘good society’, is distinguished from non-civil societies (such as absolutists empires or states at war) instead of distinguished from the state (Kaldor, 2003a, 6-7).

#### **The bourgeois society**

The second version of civil society, the bourgeois society, is based on the liberal egalitarian school of thought and the ideas of Hegel and Marx. For these two thinkers, civil society “was the arena of ethical life in between the state and the family” (Kaldor, 2003a, 8). They drew on the ideas of Smith and Ferguson, who argued that “the advent of commercial society created the individuals who were the necessary condition for civil society” (ibid). According to this version of civil society, the markets, social class, civil law and welfare organisations are all part of civil society and according to this definition, civil society is contrasted with the state.

#### **The activist version**

The first contemporary version of civil society, civil society as the activist version (or by Van Rooy (2000, 19) called as ‘a space for action’) is often described as the post-Marxist or utopian version of the concept. This version is often used by sociologists to explain why and how people group together. In this description, civil society is used as a metaphor for a space in which social movements (which are “organisations, groups of people and individuals who act together to bring about transformation in

society” (Kaldor, 2003a, 82)) become organised (Van Rooy, 2000, 19-27). This form of civil society refers to active citizenship and a growing self-organisation. Through self-organisation but also through political pressure individuals can directly influence the conditions in which they are living. Instead of trying to change the state, the activist version tries to change the relation between the state and society, and to create self-organised institutions, independent of the state. This definition presupposes the presences of a state or rule of law and insists on restraints on state power but also on a redistribution of power (Kaldor, 2003a, 8; Kaldor, 2003b, 9).

Kaldor (2003a, 82-86) distinguishes two types of social movements; ‘old’ and ‘new’ social movements. Old social movements include the labour movements and movements for self-determination. These social movements were acting against the state using methods such as protests, petitions, strikes and demonstrations, and had large numbers of membership. The new social movements are the offspring of the students revolutions in 1968 (Kaldor, 2003a, 82-86). These new social movements are concerned with issues, e.g. human rights, peace, environment and gender, which are different from the issues of the old social movements. They express the concerns and political frustration of a group of people with a profession which is typically generated by post-industrialism and the existence of the welfare state described by Kaldor (ibid.) as the new educated middle class or brain workers (people working in the ICT sector, specialists or people with caring professions such as doctors and lecturers). Were the old social movements characterised by a hierarchical structure, these new social movements are horizontal organisations using new methods to show their protest, making use of media such as television and internet. Old social movements aimed at “persuading states to act, and in the process helped to strengthen them” (Kaldor, 2003a, 82) whereas the new social movements “are much more concerned about individual, autonomy, about resisting the state’s intrusion into everyday life” (ibid.).

### **The postmodern version**

The postmodern version departs from the universalism of the activist version (described above) and from the neoliberal version (described below). The activist version and the neoliberal version of civil society are based upon a western discourse. However, outside Western Europe and North America, the “civil society in the sense of individual rights and voluntary associations never extended much beyond a few capital cities” (Kaldor, 2003b, 10). Nevertheless, outside Western Europe and North America there do exist various traditional and neo-traditional organisations, which are often based on religion or kinship, that remain “autonomous from the state and offer alternative sites of power or autonomous spaces” (ibid.). These tradition or religious groups are often excluded from the concept of civil society. The postmodern version of civil society, however, argues that there cannot be an division between ‘good’ westernized civil society and ‘bad’ traditional uncivil society. Therefore, the postmodern version of civil society argues for a more culturally sensitive concept. This postmodern concept involves various national and religious groupings and a contestation of narratives, and emphasises multiple identities as a precondition of civil society (Kaldor, 2003b, 10; Kaldor, 2003a, 9).

### **The neoliberal version**

The last idea of civil society is the neoliberal version, or by Van Rooy (2000, 15) described as civil society as a collective noun. According to this version, civil society consists of associational life. It is a collective noun for the non-profit sector, or for all organisations working in the third sector (voluntary sector), such as advocacy groups, NGOs, human rights organisations, social movement agents and other organisations that want to achieve a certain change in society. These groups are often described as organisations that are not part of the state or the market sector. Civil society according to the neoliberal version does not only restrain state power, but actually provides also an alternative or substitute for many of the functions that are carried out by the state. For example, charities, voluntary associations or NGOs carry out functions which the state can no longer (afford to) perform, e.g. in the field of welfare (Kaldor, 2003a, 9; Van Rooy, 2000, 12-27).

The definition of civil society that will be used in this study relates to this last version of civil society, which sees civil society as a collective noun. The definition used in this study reads:

*Civil society is a web of social relations, an organised society, or voluntary collective action around shared interests and values, that stands apart from the government, the market and private life of family* (Barnes, 2006, 19; Verkoren, 2009, 3; Scholte, 2001, 5; Pouligny, 2005, 497).

Civil society according to the definition used in this study can take many forms. Organisations that are part of the civil society are called civil society organisations (CSOs) and are for instance trade unions, church organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or community-based organisations (CBOs). NGOs are part of the civil society because of the fact that they are not part of the government or the market (as they are non-profit organisations). However, civil society (and civil society organisations) is a broader concept than that of NGOs. The term NGO is used in a more narrow way and often refers to the humanitarian or idealistic goals and ideals of such an organisation. The term NGO differs from community-based organisations (CBOs) as NGOs generally work on behalf of a group of people to which they do not belong, and CBOs represent their own members and are part of that group (Verkoren, 2009, 3; Barnes, 2006, 19-20). Paragraph 2.5 will elaborate more on the concept of NGOs.

### **2.2.3 Critique on the definitions of civil society**

Of course, there is also critique on the various definitions of civil society. Below, a short overview of a couple of these critiques is displayed.

#### **Normative versus descriptive approaches**

The ambiguity of the concept of civil society lies partly in the fact that one can look at the concept in a descriptive or normative way, 'what is' versus 'what should be'. When using the descriptive way, civil society is a description of what exists, 'what is'. The normative description of civil society sees civil society as the 'telos', the end goal of human organisation and politically minded people, 'what should be' (Van Rooy, 2000, 29; Kaldor, 2003a, 22-27). Civil society tends to be used in a normative and

moral rather than a descriptive way. The problem with this normative lens is that it may not allow people to see all relevant events, actors and processes because they are not looking for them. This can be explained as follows: one can state that (according to this normative approach) civil society organisations are a necessary element for democracy. By using this normative approach one may not see that some of these civil society organisations (that are thought to be necessary elements for democracy) may not be that conducive to democracy. In other words, by using a normative lens when looking at (the role of) civil society, one may miss out on certain trends, events or actors (Bebbington, Hickey and Mitlin, 2008, 6; Van Rooy, 2000, 29).

#### **Boundaries of civil society, state and market**

Often civil society is drawn as a model of three circles representing the state, market and civil society. There are a couple of problems with this description. First of all, the circles around the three spheres are often drawn in even, egalitarian sizes which are neatly overlapping. The effect is that there seems to be a balance or segregation between the three spheres which may not exist in reality. Besides, the distinction that is made between the three spheres, state, market and civil society, is in practice not that rigid as is explained in the theory. The boundaries are in fact relative fluid and there seems to be a growing tendency of people moving back and forth between the different spheres. In addition to this, this description of these three circles divides the world by organisational type, rather than for instance by purpose, goal, vision, method, or function (Bebbington, Hickey & Mitlin, 2008, 6; Van Rooy, 2000, 20-21).

#### **Western and northern bias**

Critics like the French academic Le Roy see civil society as a historical moment. This implies that civil society, which is built upon Anglo-European and Enlightenment thoughts, cannot be created from the outside but is an outcome of history and is created from within a country. According to this definition, civil society is “the specific product of historical and cultural conditions, which result from both social and political practices and traditions” (Castiglione, 1994, cited in Van Rooyen, 2000, 22). This implies that civil society according to this critique is associated with “fundamental transformations in western society and economy” (Van Rooy, 2000, 22) which do not necessarily apply to for instance the African condition and therefore cannot be transferred in total to the southern societies. This because these historical and social conditions which are thought to be necessary for civil society are often not present in non-western countries.

#### ***2.2.4 Reflection on the definitions of civil society***

Although there are various versions and definitions of the concept of civil society, all these definitions have in common that civil society always means a rule governed society which is based on consent of individuals. Civil society is seen as a mechanism or a facilitator of a “process through which individuals debate, influence and negotiate an ongoing social contract or set of contracts with the centres of political and economic authority” (Kaldor, 2003, cited in Verkoren, 2009, 4). When looking at the earlier versions of civil society (the *societas civilis* version and the bourgeois society version) the concept of civil society referred to the whole of society including the state. According to Kaldor (2003b, 11) the

difference in meaning of the earlier versions of civil society lies in the different ways in which consent was negotiated and reproduced. In these earlier versions, civil society could be described as “those organisations, groups and movements who are engaged in this process of negotiation and debate about the character of the rules, it is the process of expressing ‘voice’” (Kaldor, 2003b, 11). In the nineteenth century it was the ‘voice’ of the bourgeoisie that was shaping the liberal state: civil society as a bourgeois society. With the rise of labour movements, the terrain of civil society moved to struggles of worker organisations in relation to the state and to the market. By joining a trade union or a political party, the voices of individual workers could be heard in the nineteenth century. Today, as Kaldor (ibid.) states, is civil society transnational. This because it is engaged in a process of debate and negotiation with governments, companies and international organisations. The difference between the three contemporary meanings of civil society lies in the different political perspectives about the goals of the process of negotiation. Kaldor (2003b, 11) states that the goal for neoliberals is to export the western model of governance. The goal of the activist version of civil society is “a radical extension of democracy in the west as well as the south” (ibid.), a goal that is linked to notions of global justice. The postmodernist version would like to see the “contestation that is currently taking place on a global scale as a way of breaking with grand narratives, teleological political projects that were associated with nation-states” (ibid.).

Nowadays, civil society seems to be ‘depoliticised’ (Harriss, 2002, 111-112; Kaldor 2003a, 86). Depoliticisation of civil society can be explained as the process of removing politics away from civil society or development issues (Prestegard, 2005, 38). According to Prestegard (ibid.), depoliticisation can be divided into two aspects: the technical approach and the harmony model. The technical approach implies that “political questions are represented as problems of technical or functional character by way of rhetoric” (ibid.). Depoliticisation of development according to this technical approach is explained by Ferguson (1990, cited in Harriss, 2001, 124) as follows: “by uncompromisingly reducing poverty to a technical problem, and by promising technical solutions to sufferings of powerless and oppressed people, the hegemonic problematic of development is the principal means through which the problem of poverty is depoliticised in the world today”. Development is thus seen as non-political and requires pure technical intervention. The second aspect of depoliticisation of development and civil society, the harmony model, is the idea that development or for instance poverty reduction can be achieved without any change in the social and economic structure of a certain society. This model contributes to depoliticisation as it facilitates the system in which one is able to create development planning and strategies on the basis of existing socio-political structures, without changing these structures (Prestegard, 2005, 39; Harriss, 2001, 11). This model has practical implications on how problems in a country are represented. Representing a problem in a certain country as ‘poverty’ (according to the harmony model) rather than representing it as ‘inequality’ has its consequences for tackling the problem. Tackling inequality implies that one should look at structural changes in a society. Poverty, on the other hand, is more a-political as tackling the problem of poverty does not necessarily involve any change in societal structures. Kaldor (2003a, 86) also recognises the current trend of depoliticisation and adds to this discussion that NGOs are nowadays

'tamed social movements'. She explains this by stating that in contrast with social movements, which are "organisations, groups of people and individuals who act together to bring about transformation in society" (Kaldor, 2003a, 82), in other words organisations who bring about change in society, NGOs are more institutional and professional than social movements, and are therefore tamed.

### 2.3 Civil society building

One term which is often used in the development industry is that of 'civil society building'. Biekart (2003, cited in Guijt, 2008, 154) describes civil society building as a capacity-oriented term which consists of four activities. First of all, it entails strengthening organisational capacities of formal and informal organisations which are (or if not existing yet, could be) part of civil society. Secondly, networks and alliances between social organisations have to be strengthened and built up. Thirdly, capacities for advocacy have to be build up and strengthened in order to strengthen the vertical channels between civil society, the state and the market. Finally, civil society building entails "strengthening citizenship, social consciousness, democratic leadership, and social and political responsibilities" (Biekart, 2003, cited in Guijt, 2008, 154) in order to increase the participation of the people in the public arena. Looking back at what was discussed above about the depoliticisation of development and civil society, it does not come as a surprise that the last two activities of civil society building (namely strengthening the vertical channels between civil society, the state and the market, and increasing participation of people in the public area) are not carried out in practise that often. In addition, civil society building is often limited to the support or establishment of (often apolitical) NGOs.

Strengthening of civil society has become an important issue for international donor organisations in the 1990s. There are three reasons that explain why civil society building has become an important issue for aid organisations (Biekart, 1999, 94-97). The first reasons for donors to focus on civil society building was their growing conviction that a strong civil society probably was one of the best conditions for an efficient market economy. USAID, for example, thought that the support of civil society would be an effective way to strengthen the transition from statist to market-based economies. Support for civil society building according to this economical (and essentially neoliberal) approach was synonymous with guaranteeing free markets, privatising public services and "meeting immediate needs of the poor to prevent social unrest" (Biekart, 1999, 95). A second reasons for international donors to pay more attention to civil society building was the fact that building civil society was part of newly emerging policies which were oriented at democratisation and 'good governance'. Because of the political changes at that time, such as the downfall of communism and the political transformations in Easter Europe, Central Asia and Sub-Sahara Africa, the traditional policies of democracy promotion of international donors were rephrased, and the emphasis shifted from security to development objectives. The new policy agenda of international donors had the aim to improve governance in two ways. The first way was to enhance the efficiency of governments in countries in the South. The second way was to make states more accountable to civil society. In practice, these new policies promoted the reform of civil services, decentralisation and the reform of judicial and constitutional systems, electoral assistance and the strengthening of political parties. In later policies, also the need

for building a pluralist and diverse civil society as a counterweight to the government was mentioned. These two reasons (economical and political) of official international donor agencies for strengthening civil society also influenced the agendas of private aid agencies. A third reason that made especially these private aid agencies to focus more on civil society building was the growing critique from outsiders about the poor performance of the micro-projects of these organisations and the lack of impact of these projects on macro-level. These organisations therefore decided to carry out interventions that would have a wider impact and indirectly promote changes in power structures and policy reform from below (Biekart, 1999, 94-97). In short, civil society building was thus triggered by three motives: to promote market-led development, to promote democracy and to enhance the impact of development (Biekart, 1999, 96).

The practice of strengthening civil society by international donor organisations in a non-western context seems to be quite complex. When international NGOs are working in a non-western context, they tend to look for western structures and a civil society as it is in modern western societies. However, as is also explained in sub-paragraph 2.2.3, these western structures are not always present in non-western contexts. If these organisations cannot find this (western) form of civil society or NGOs, they tend to create one or they might find groups which are mirroring western society in such a way, that the international NGOs label them as civil society. However, this collection of groups is not as extensive as the civil society in western societies is, and moreover, these groups seem to have difficulties with establishing links on community level (Pouligny, 2005, 497).

## **2.4 Civil society in post-conflict situations**

In a (post-)conflict situation, civil society plays, or can play, an important role in preventing conflict and building peace. Civil society organisations (CSOs) can promote peace and security among their members. According to Barnes (2006, 32-76) civil society can play an important role in eight different ways. First of all, civil society activists can play an important role in detecting situations which may lead to future conflicts and bring about changes in a nonviolent way. In this way, conflict is used as a way of working to bring about change. Secondly, civil society has the 'power to resist' which implies that civil society is able to resist oppressive forces by mobilising non-violent movements for change. Thirdly, it has the power to expose, which implies that civil society is able to direct attention to a situation that is unacceptable but is not addressed by the public. Civil society can so to speak 'awaken' the moral conscience of the people involved in the conflict. Fourthly, civil society also has the power to persuade both the public and the decision-makers to choose for a more constructive response to conflict situations. Furthermore, civil society has the ability to shift conflict attitudes and to reframe the perceptions of 'the other' groups involved in the conflict. Sixthly, civil society can play an important role in envisioning a better future for the society and mobilise constituencies for peace by demonstrating that most people reject military (violent) approaches but rather prefer peaceful alternatives. Besides this, civil society can also play a role in promoting security and has the power to reduce violence and promote stability, for instance by civilian peacekeeping activities such as monitoring, protective accompaniment and inter-positioning. After all, security is necessary as it is difficult for people to

engage in peacebuilding and start acting in a non-violent way as their basic security is threatened. In addition, it can actively help in making peace by helping to reach (peace) agreements. Finally, civil society can play an important role in establishing 'pragmatic peace' on community level (ibid.). All these roles displayed by Barnes (ibid.) indicate that civil society indeed can play an enormous role in peace building in post-conflict countries and can be a source for innovative responses to conflict and post-conflict situations. Pouligny (2005, 496) agrees and indicates that there is an increasing recognition of the role of NGOs and civil society in both international and domestic peacebuilding activities.

Despite the important roles that civil society can play in post-conflict situations, there are limits to what civil society can achieve (Barnes, 2006, 77). Besides, the above stated roles of civil society and CSOs imply an assumption that there is any form of civil society present in the post-conflict country. Of course, in many cases civil society is weakened or is sometimes even barely existing which makes it difficult for CSOs to play these important roles during the post-conflict phase in the country. Civil society plays an important role in the post-conflict phase, because it is not possible to change society without stimulating changes at the community level. The initiatives and activities displayed by civil society and CSOs are often the motor for peace and contribute to the underlying transformation of the conflict and society (ibid.).

After having taken a closer look at civil society, the next paragraphs will zoom in on a group of organisations which are part of civil society and are the focus of the present study: NGOs.

## **2.5 International NGOs and donor organisations**

As was indicated in paragraph 2.2, NGOs are part of civil society and are characterised by their humanitarian or idealistic goals and ideals, and their concern with public affairs. The term NGO is an umbrella phrase for grassroots, intermediary groups or groups working at country level, and international groups and organisations (Van Rooy, 2000, 33). NGOs working on these different levels are referred to in different ways. NGOs working at grassroots or country level and run by local staff (in the South) are often referred to as 'local NGOs', while NGOs working on the international level are often called 'international NGOs'. Another distinction made between NGOs is the one of Northern versus Southern NGOs. Northern NGOs are the ones originating from western countries like the USA or from Europe who work in order to assist people and organisations in the South. Southern NGOs are those organisations that are run by local people in developing countries and can be compared with what is described above as local NGOs. International NGOs that provide donor assistance to local NGOs are often called 'donor agencies' or 'international donors'. Of course, these donor organisations in their turn also receive donor money from governments, private individuals and organisations, which in this context are often referred to as 'back-donors'. The present study looks at this financing chain from a local, southern NGO's perspective, and thus will use the terms donor agency or international donor as synonyms for the term international NGO.

### *2.5.1 Top-down approach, instrumentalisation and ownership*

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, globalisation gave rise to the importance of international NGOs. Especially in the 1980s and 1990s, the number of international NGOs grew considerably (Verkoren, 2008, 36). The position, but also the tasks and responsibilities of NGOs have changed over the years. In the 1960s and 1970s the NGOs were mostly marginal actors who worked to counter poverty and exclusion. At this moment, however, NGOs represent a significant sector in terms of resources as well as responsibilities (the latter much broader than just poverty reduction)(Derksen & Verhallen, 2008, 224).

Derksen & Verhallen (2008, 230) state that the NGO-world is dominated by a top-down blue print approach and 'upward accountability' of local NGOs towards international NGOs. In addition, there is limited co-responsibility or 'local ownership' by NGOs in developing countries (often called the 'South'). Of course, whether and when one can speak of (a lack of) ownership is difficult to determine. Perhaps full ownership is never possible as there is always a relation based on dependency when one organisation provides donor assistance to another. Also possible is that there may be different levels of ownership. Reich (2006, 6) explains that in order to create local ownership, local NGOs and actors should be integrated into the design and decision-making process of a project or programme. The domination by international NGOs does not only affect the local NGOs, it also affects the effectiveness and efficiency of the international NGOs themselves. First of all, this domination may lead to projects which do not fit the needs of local organisations or situations. Besides, a large amount of the project funds is spent on local accommodation, overhead costs and staff of the international NGO that is based in the countries in the South (Derksen & Verhallen, 2008, 230).

According to Derksen & Verhallen (2008, 230), partnerships with local and Southern NGOs have been the central concept of international NGOs for the last two decades. Partnership means that both parties in the North and the South share values and ideas and work together as autonomous organisations within their own society to bring about change. Of course, true equality between local and international NGOs is not easy to accomplish, but the notion of the partnership leads to a common central goal: change. There is, however, a difference between the idea of working in partnership and the reality. International NGOs seem to be constrained by the system they are working with (which demands for, among other things, upward accountability) and as a result local NGOs tend to be treated as 'subcontractors' who implement donors' policies (Derksen & Verhallen, 2008, 230). Verkoren (2008, 38) agrees by stating that over the past twenty years civil society and NGOs have been instrumentalised by donor agencies. The focus of donor agencies on the development and support of civil society and NGOs in order to build peace and democracy, has resulted in the fact that the idea of civil society has become instrumentalised in order to fulfil certain goals and priorities of the donor organisations. A practical consequence is that civil society or (local) NGOs do not form a check or balance towards their government, but are working as organisations who implement a certain policy or deliver a service. Thereby (part of) the social movement and engaged character of civil society is gone and replaced by a more service-oriented and businesslike character (Verkoren, 2008, 38; Van Rooy, 2000, 205). The power of international donor organisations can thus create a landscape in

which local NGOs fulfil the needs of the international NGOs more adequately than the needs of their own constituency (Reich, 2006, 14). The local NGOs have become implementers of the policies that are handed down via the so-called policy chain of (western) governments and back-donors, via international NGOs, eventually to local NGOs (Verkoren, 2009, 10).

### **Back-donors**

International donors have become increasingly dependent on official funds from their back-donors. These back-donors (governments, private investors and also intergovernmental organisations such as UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank) have a big influence on international NGOs and via them on local NGOs. The increased demands of these back-donors on NGOs policies and practices, have resulted in less willingness to operate in disputed areas. The demand for concrete and measurable results often leads to the decision of NGOs to operate in more 'safe' areas than in unstable areas where a marginal result can be obtained. This demand does not only result in the decision to operate in safe geographical areas but also to operate in thematically safe areas, as for instance installing water supply systems leads to more concrete results than changing people's attitude towards ex-combatants. As the demands of back-donors are increasingly passed on to local NGOs via the international donors, also the local NGO's policies and practises are shaped by the back-donors (Derksen & Verhallen, 2008, 229; Verkoren, 2009, 10). Government funding comes with more and more conditions and forces international NGOs to work in specific countries. Because of the increased dependency on government funding, the international NGOs have increasingly come to resemble government agencies instead of social movement organisations (Verkoren, 2009, 6).

### **Accountability and legitimacy**

An aspect that is intertwined with the term back-donors is that of accountability. Local NGOs are accountable to their donor agencies, and they are in their turn accountable to their back-donors. Why is this donor accountability so important? Bendell & Cox (2006, 111-113) indicate that there are various reasons why donor accountability is important. One of the reasons is that government funds are derived from tax revenues which makes that this kind of funding is a matter of public interest. In politics, e.g. in the Netherlands, development aid is often under debate and thus grows the demand for concrete and measurable results. Many NGOs are working on improving their own accountability. They either do this because it is a procedural necessity required by their back-donors or public criticism, or it is done as a strategic goal by which they show that they understand the necessity of accountability (Bendell & Cox, 2006, 121). Another aspect is the question of the legitimacy of international NGOs. How legitimate is an organisation whose board is not democratically chosen, and who do they represent? Most organisations claim to be working on behalf of grassroots people in the South. However, it is not these people that the NGOs has to give account to, but to their back-donors and their government in the North (Verkoren, 2008, 70).

### *2.5.2 Lack of strategy*

The predominant top-down approach is of course not only the result of the international donors and their policies and way of working. Something which also plays a role is the dependency of local NGOs on international NGOs, as these local NGOs are dependent on the money provided by the international NGOs. It has been argued that local NGOs lack strategy and are too much focused on their international donors. Although many of the local NGOs do have a mission or vision for their organisation, these missions and visions tend to be very vague and broad (Verkoren, 2009, 1-2). Besides, many local NGOs do not seem to consider how and in what way their small projects and activities can contribute to reach the bigger goal mentioned in their mission or vision. In practise local NGOs seem to work with concrete programmatic goals, and often assume that good programmatic goals for concrete programmes and projects will in some undefined way lead to or support the bigger goal that is envisioned (Anderson & Olsen, 2003, 10-13). This working with concrete programmatic goals also stems from the fact that it seems that local NGOs lack strategic thinking which goes beyond the short term level (Verkoren, 2009, 2). When a long term strategy is missing, local NGOs' agendas are easier influenced by preferences of donors, and as a result of that play donor organisations an important role in shaping the work of local NGOs (Hilhorst, 2003, 193).

### *2.5.3 Lack of knowledge*

In addition to this lack of strategy, local NGOs indicate that they are often not assertive enough towards their donor organisations, as being more assertive would imply to be strong enough to resist donor money from certain donor agencies. Furthermore, some local NGOs seem to have little interest in challenging the policies and 'wisdom' of international NGOs and donors (Verkoren, 2009, 13). This all seems to stem from a knowledge difference between local and international NGOs but also from a certain degree of dependency on (donor funds of) the international NGO. Although local NGOs seem to know what needs to be done in their country, they do not have the skills and means for research, or reflection on and learning from situations. In addition, some local NGOs seem to lack analytical and practical skills such as writing reports and audits. As a result, their local knowledge often stays intuitive and undocumented and therefore does not form an actual alternative to the policies of international NGOs (ibid.). In reaction to this lack of knowledge of practical and analytical skills at local NGOs, international NGOs have offered many training and capacity building programmes the last few years. However, as Fisher and Zimina (2008, 29-30) argue, staff from local NGOs need a range of skills which are often not thought through the trainings and programmes. They indicate that most of the courses are "inevitably superficial with little follow-through or tangible impact" (Fisher & Zima, 2008, 30) as they rarely go beyond introductory level and often take place alongside other courses without being integrated into the strategies and future plans of the NGOs that are attending the courses. Courses that go beyond this basic level and offer greater specialisation or a higher level are scarce (Fisher & Zima, 2008, 30-31).

#### *2.5.4 NGO-isation*

International NGOs have set up many rules and demands that local NGOs have to comply with before these local NGOs receive donor money. These system demands, which are often centring on accountability, partly originate back to the back-donors (Derksen & Verhallen, 2008, 229). According to Derksen & Verhallen (2008, 229), the funding policy of donor organisations stimulates competition among the local NGOs applying for it. It generates an atmosphere in which local NGOs want to be the best performer in delivering (quantifiable) results. As a consequence, projects with concrete (and rapid) outcomes are carried out, instead of more holistic, multi-actor projects which might have a bigger impact on the long term, or in which the outcome is less certain. The competition may also inhibit cooperation or information sharing among local NGOs which may result in a situation where there is a lack of joint action, activities and programmes are duplicated and local NGOs are not able to learn from each other's mistakes. Of course, not only local NGOs are applying for donor money. The competition for funds becomes stronger because of the internationalisation of the international aid industry in which locally based NGOs have to compete with larger internationally operating NGOs. Also the rapid growth of the amount of NGOs and the new trend of market-driven consultancy organisations in the industry makes the competition to receive funds bigger (Verkoren, 2008, 68).

Since many local NGOs are dependent on short-term funding, the actual fundraising and applying for funds becomes a time consuming activity (Verkoren, 2009, 10). The fact that local NGOs have to comply with many rules, policy frameworks and pre-set formats of the donor organisation in order to qualify for donor funds, has its repercussion on the way how local NGOs are organised. Local NGOs adapt their organisation, adopt corporate practises and standards, and become organised as professional NGOs with western organisational structures that ensure the earlier mentioned accountability towards their donors (Hilhorst, 2003, 62-63). This process of local NGOs (but also CSOs) changing their organisation towards donor standards in order to be the most likely candidate for donor funds is often called 'NGO-isation'. A consequence of this NGO-isation and the upward rather than downward orientation of this organisation, is that some local NGOs become removed from their local constituency and are more loyal to the donor organisation than to this constituency (ibid.). In line with what is called NGO-isation, Van Rooy (2000, 206) states that it seems that organisations that have structures or names that are similar to the structures or names of the donor are more likely to be funded. Also urban professionalised organisations that use 'donor language' (jargon including the use of 'civil society') are more likely to receive funds than rural based local NGOs. Hilhorst (2003, 193) agrees and states that local NGOs seem to echo notions of international donors.

The fact that many local NGOs have to comply with rules of international donor organisations also has its repercussion on more locally based society groups like church organisations, neighbourhood associations or other grassroots activists groups. These organisations are not qualified for donor assistance unless they organise themselves in a professional way according to donors' standards. However, as these organisations often have to rely on people working on a voluntary basis, it is for them difficult to comply with the donors' requirements and therefore to gain donor funds (Pishchikova,

2006, cited in Verkoren, 2008, 38). The question is, of course, whether these groups (but also other NGOs and CSOs) should want to receive donor funds and become NGO-ised.

Before looking at international and local NGOs in Cambodia, it is important to realise that not all NGOs are working according to the so-called top-down blue print which sometimes results in the fact that local counterparts become 'subcontractors'. One example is the Dutch NGO ICCO which is implementing a new way of working, called the Programmatic Approach in which the organisation tries to break out of the traditional top-down way of working. More about this approach can be read in Part II, Case Study 1. Another, more theoretical, initiative that tries to break with the current top-down oriented way of working of the international development industry is that of Civic Driven Change.

## 2.6 Civic Driven Change

Civic Driven Change (CDC) is a new paradigm that refers to and promotes a process of changes in society which is directly initiated, lead and owned by people themselves. The development of the concept of Civic Driven Change by a group of development and peace organisations in the Netherlands, comes from a number of observations. First of all, the initiators state that the main drivers of development and change in developing countries were always considered to be the state or the market. This vision has shaped the work of NGOs and development policies as the state continues to be the focal point: NGOs are helping developing countries, not the people who live in these countries. It seems that many donors still think in terms of states and governments, of who should provide services to the poor in developing countries, and how to make markets work to supply jobs for these poor. The NGOs that do focus on people, often work on the basis of giving the poor something they lack, either a school, business advice or a hospital, instead of helping them to find their own way in society. The initiators believe, however, that challenges and change in society cannot be resolved by only following the structure which is dictated by either the state or the market (Bieckmann, 2008, 10-11). Secondly, the initiators state that "both western and local NGOs have lost touch with reality" (Bieckmann, 2008, 10). In the 'real world' there seems to be a continual political struggle where people organise themselves in order to address and challenge local problems. The NGOs however "exist in a sort of parallel universe, controlled by a governing elite in global networks, with its own system of rules and order" (ibid.) where they "focus on specialised projects that are conceived and funded by well meaning professionals in the western and southern capitals" (ibid.). It seems that the NGOs still have the notion that they can improve conditions in developing countries by using 'technical' interventions such as training, consultancies and technical assistance (Bieckmann, 2008, 10). The initiators conclude that even though the NGO-world nowadays is aware of the earlier mentioned notions like 'ownership' and 'bottom-up approaches', the leading development activities are still dominated by an ignorance of the important role that citizens have played all over the world. Despite this important role throughout history (e.g. by anti-slavery or anti-apartheid organisations), citizens are reduced to consumers, clients and voters (Fowler & Biekart, 2008; Bieckmann, 2008; CDCdb, n.d.).

Aware of the fact that the current way of development thinking is heavily under fire both by the government but also by the back-donors and constituency of the international NGOs, some of the largest development and peace organisations in the Netherlands came together in order to think about a new paradigm, called Civic Driven Change (CDC). CDC is a paradigm that refers to and promotes a process of changes which is directly initiated, lead and owned by people themselves. To achieve this people-centred development, it is necessary that people take control and address the problems in their communities and surrounding. Therefore, people should acquire a stronger position towards the state and the market. Citizens must take control of their own lives and have to become co-creators of the democratic society instead of being solely voters and consumers. This idea is called 'deepening democracy' and should take place at all areas (the family, civil society, governance and the economy) and levels (local, national and global) of society (Fowler & Biekart, 2008; Bieckmann, 2008; CDCDb, n.d.).

The term 'civic' in Civic Driven Change is different from the often used word 'civil'. Civic implies a moral and political meaning. There is civic behaviour (e.g. pro-poor or democratic behaviour) and un-civic behaviour (e.g. racism or asymmetrical power relations). The word 'change' in CDC is used instead of the word development as the focus of CDC is not the idea of development, often supported by the aid industry and NGOs, but bringing about change in the society as a whole. CDC wants to assist people in their process of change, instead of creating projects and programmes after which people have to be mobilised to participate in these programmes (Fowler & Biekart, 2008; Bieckmann, 2008; CDCDb, n.d.).

Civic Driven Change might serve as a handle to NGOs in order to overcome some of the earlier mentioned problems which might challenge the effective operation of NGOs. It may serve as a new way to counter the in the literature mentioned problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge. When the development in a country is driven by civic actors, than it is these civic actors (which can be for instance citizens, communities, local NGOs or CSOs) who have ownership over the development and activities in their country. This implies that the strategies they create for the development of their country are based on their own local knowledge, ideas and visions. When these civic actors have ownership over their activities, organisations such as NGOs and CSOs become less NGO-ised as they have to comply less with requirements from donors concerning the organisation of the NGO or civic actor (unless they decided to become NGO-ised themselves).

Before coming to a research question with which can be found out whether Civic Driven Change might serve as a handle to overcome these mentioned problems, first a closer look will be taken at the NGO sector of the focus country of this study, Cambodia. The research questions of this study, and therefore also the research question on Civic Driven Change, can be read in paragraph 2.11.

## **2.7 Civil Society in Cambodia – Before the Paris Peace Agreements**

Before focussing on the current situation concerning civil society and NGOs in Cambodia, it is important to take a closer look at the history of civil society in this country. At the start of the 1990s, after decades of conflict, one could hardly speak of a civil society in Cambodia. However, looking at the history of many southeast Asian countries, civil society definitely existed in the pre-colonial period. The composition of these indigenous civil societies in southeast Asia were very variable but often meant free spaces for any kind of association (Lee Hock Guan, 2004, 10-13). During the colonial period the traditional, personalised Asian state and civil society were transformed into a western depersonalised one. This colonial-shaped administrative state led to a decline of the indigenous political forms and structures, and self-organisation was extremely discouraged under French rule. Civil society in the post-independence years was mainly shaped by the means and ways the European colonisers had initiated and instituted the social, economic, cultural and political transformations of the indigenous societies. In addition, the uprising of communism in Cambodia and its neighbouring states had a tremendous effect on the development of civil society, as it oppressed any form of civil society (Lee Hock Guan, 2004, 10-13). Also in the years after the Pol Pot regime, from 1979 until 1990 when the government was backed by Vietnam, no room was left for private initiatives by the one-party led regime. The economical and political boycott at that time by the United States and other countries that did not recognise the legitimacy of the new Vietnamese backed government, made people more isolated and dependent on their government (Scheper, 2005, 94). Due to two decades of conflict and social upheaval, the basis for any community identity was damaged, trust was destroyed, and the disruption of micro-scale connections that normally grow in stable communities encouraged an individualistic or at best family-focussed orientation and discouraged long-term planning (Hughes & Conway, 2003, 28-30). The years of conflict resulted in a remaining fear for authority, worries of a possible return of any conflict and a deep desire for political and social stability. As a result of this weakened trust and weakened social cohesion, low levels of associational activities exist, especially in rural areas (World Bank, 2009, 4). In conclusion, the three decades of conflict, but also the colonial period of Cambodia had damaged the basis for any form of community identity and resulted in a country with no indigenous civil society left.

## **2.8 The Cambodian context – Patrimonialism, political and social factors**

Besides conflict related factors, civic engagement in Cambodia was and is also framed and affected by other factors such as cultural, social and political factors, but also by the historical and present relationship between the Cambodian citizens and the state. The following sub-paragraphs will give more insight into these factors.

### *2.8.1 Political factors*

Political factors had and have an important influence of civic engagement and the formation of civil society in Cambodia. The Cambodian administration seems to be influenced by patrimonial traditions and relationships (World Bank, 2009, 4). This patrimonialism is not only present in the Cambodian

administration but, as will also be explained in the following sub-paragraphs, does also play an important role in the everyday social and cultural life of the Cambodians.

Patrimonial societies are characterised by “systems of patronage which are established through interpersonal relationships and obligations. When a person does a favour for another person, the latter owes a ‘debt of obligation’ to the former. The most fundamental obligation of the client is to keep the patron rich and powerful, and thus able to maintain his authority, so that he can dispense favours back down” (ibid.). Vertical power linkages of patronage appears both within the elite and the commoners parts of society. Elite leaders seem to create systems of elite patronage in order to have control over the population and to stay in power. One of the core reasons for commoners to take part in the system of patronage or kin provision, is that they see this as their responsibility and duty towards their family, as few expect a “social contract from the mistrusted, corrupt and exploitative state” (Roberts, 2009, 151). The state, in its turn, has little intention of providing such a social contract. In those societies, both the elite and the commoners do not see the state as public good but as a means to personal profit. Besides, these commoners often live “at the margin of subsistence” (Roberts, 2009, 153) and have to cope with amongst other things flood, drought, diseases and death. Patronage (also called ‘common social patronage’ (Roberts, 2009, 153)) is for these commoners essential to encounter the above mentioned crises, and when the family, state or market do not or cannot provide, these people turn to more powerful individuals such as their landlord or community leaders (Roberts, 2009, 151-153).

Cambodia has a strong history as a patrimonial society which goes back to the pre-Ankgorian period. Many prominent leaders in Cambodia built their own dynasties that were associated with a personalisation of power, and personal loyalty of clients towards their patron was crucial (Pak et al, 2007, 49). Personalisation of power and patronage were strengthened during the colonial period because the French strengthened the Cambodian monarchy, but also in the periods following this colonisation (Pak et al, 2007, 49-51). Nowadays, the Cambodian administration seems to continue to be influenced by the patrimonial traditions and patron relations that have been present for so many centuries in the country (World Bank, 2009, 4). The difficulties that the government is nowadays facing concerning corruption, improving the public service delivery and enforcing regulations are for a large part due to the informal power structures which have penetrated the formal bureaucratic system and institutions. Under this ‘neo-patrimonial’ system, in which the power of patrons and their networks of clients has merged with the formal government structure, public revenues such as natural resources or foreign investments are controlled as personal assets by the powerful patrons. In other words, political strength, which is the backbone of patronage, leads to economic power. It seems that in many cases the ‘informal’ accountability and relation between a patron and a client is even stronger than the official bureaucratic rules. This creates circumstances in which activities with little potential for benefits or rents are neglected, the motivation to be transparent towards citizens is undermined, and the development functions of the state are jeopardised (Pak et al, 2007, 57-59; World Bank, 2009, 5).

As is common in countries with a neo-patrimonial system, the power in Cambodia seems to be highly centralised and the real power is centred around a small number of elites in the capital city Phnom Penh (Pak et al, 2007, 58). As the decision-making power is largely determined by the social status of a person, and personal relations seem to be more important than the institutionalised roles and responsibilities, it is difficult for citizens to rely on and trust formal political, legal bureaucratic or administrative systems (World Bank, 2009, 5). In addition, the relation between civilians and the state (officials) was and still is characterised by a huge power distance which makes it difficult for civilians to claim their rights (Hughes & Conway, 2003, 28-30). These steep power differentials become clear when looking at the citizen-state relations. Many Cambodians, especially older people or people living in rural areas, have a highly paternalistic view of the government. These people often see the state as the 'parent' and the citizens as 'children'. Especially the people living in rural areas express feelings of being 'at mercy' of the state and its officials. This results in little notion of obligations that state officials have towards their citizens (World Bank, 2009, 7).

Currently, a multiparty system in Cambodia is said to be emerging but this kind of system is still very new for the Cambodians. The democratic institutions present in the country are not yet fully functional or effective as it seems that these institutions do not have the capacity to effectively perform the functions they are mandated for (World Bank, 2009, 4). Cambodian political parties have not yet fully integrated democratic practises and values within their party, such as downwards accountability, power-sharing, active citizenship, and democratic participatory decision making. However, the current process of political reform and the political decentralisation process may offer important opportunities for stimulating civic engagement as it allows citizens to become more active in the political system (World Bank, 2009, 4-5).

### *2.8.2 Social and cultural factors*

Besides political factors, also social and cultural factors have their influence on civic engagement and on the daily life in Cambodia. As Buddhism has been the most important religion in the country for the past centuries, Buddhist beliefs are interwoven in the social hierarchies of the Cambodian society. Buddhists believe in the notion 'karma' which concerns the sum of a person's good and bad actions in his current, present and future life. Pak et al (2007, 53-54) state that a strong belief in karma has an influence on the perception of the social order as it promotes the existence of unequal patron-client relationships in the rural areas of Cambodia. A persons position in society is explained by the merits accumulated in previous lives. Therefore, people with a lower social status accept their socio-economic position but expect from people with a higher status to be respected and tolerated. Poor families take their lower status for granted and think that any kind of social change is impossible as "those in power belong in power and those at other levels of society have been born to take orders" (Chandler, 1991, 4; cited in Pak et al, 2007, 54).

Also in family life, hierarchical social rules exist. Younger members of a family are not allowed to challenge or question an elder family member, and women are considered to be of a lower status than

men. Many Cambodian women are poor and under-educated and also gender-based violence is a major concern. Also the Cambodian language reflects the importance of hierarchical structures. E.g. the word 'you' has in Khmer at least four different translations according to the rank in relationship between the speaker and the person he is speaking with (Pak et al, 2007, 55-56; World Bank, 2009, 6).

Another important socio-cultural factor present in the Cambodian daily life is that of conflict avoidance and the fear of 'losing face'. It seems that Cambodians prefer to avoid conflicts and therefore choose to be humble and take the peaceful way to solve situations. Pak et al (2007, 55) state that Cambodians would prefer to be the 'loser' in a conflict in order to avoid further problems or a long drawn-out conflict, to ensure that their family can live peacefully. In this way, Cambodians keep their social interactions low-key (Pak et al, 2007, 55-56; World Bank, 2009, 6-7). Similar to this conflict avoidance behaviour is the fear of 'losing face'. Martin (1994; cited in Pak et al, 2007, 55) states that "to avoid loss of face means to persist in one's errors. Khmers do this with a great deal of elegance, concealing their feelings behind the facade of a charming smile directed at their interlocutor, Khmer or foreigner" (Martin, 1994, 14; cited in Pak et al, 2007, 55). The fear of losing face is also present in politics. When a state-official is discharged from his office, he will not be sent home or downgraded to a lower rank, but will receive promotion to a function which has less political or influential power. By doing this, the face of the official is 'saved'. This counts also for state institutions, as (older) institutions are never reformed, but new institutions are built as reforming or reorganising an institution would mean losing face for the people working at this older institution (Pak et al, 2007, 55-56).

The previous sub-paragraphs show that hierarchical, patrimonial relations are present in every aspect of the Cambodian daily life and shape the relationship between politics and society. It has not only its influence on politics, it is also present in the social and cultural life. These aspects are therefore not only important to explain the current civic engagement in Cambodia, but also important to keep in mind when looking at the relation between local Cambodian and international NGOs. The patrimonial attitude, conflict avoidance behaviour and fear of losing face of Cambodians may have their repercussions on the relation between local and international NGOs. Therefore, it is important to keep the above mentioned factors in mind when reading the following paragraphs.

## **2.9 Civil society and local NGOs after the Paris Peace Agreements**

After the Paris Peace Agreements were signed in 1991, there was an active presence of international NGOs in Cambodia, which supported and worked together with the UN mission 'United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia' (UNTAC, 1991-1993). The international NGOs helped UNTAC in repatriating the many refugees, and promoted human rights education. The development of civil society was seen as an "important guarantee against the recurrence of state repression in Cambodia" (Hughes, 2003, 138). The World Bank (2009, 8-9) distinguishes five principal categories of civil society organisations in Cambodia (of course, these five categories of CSOs did not emerge immediately after the Paris Peace Accords but slowly started to emerge). These five categories are, traditional

associations (committees and self-help groups, often linked to pagodas which represent the most common and widespread form of associational life for citizens), modern community based organisations (CBOs) (which intend to engage rural people directly in local development and bottom-up planning), youth organisations (which address issues of particular concern to young people in Cambodia, and help building capacity of young people in order for them to contribute to social development), trade unions, and local NGOs. It is this last group, local Cambodian NGOs, which this study focuses on.

After the Paris Peace Agreements, local NGOs started to emerge. The first Cambodian NGO, Khmerara, was founded in 1991 (Brown, 2000, 46). In 1992, the country counted a total of 12 local NGOs. In 1993, more than 90 NGOs were working in Cambodia, most of which were international NGOs (Hughes, n.d.). The number of local NGOs started to grow rapidly at the moment that international aid funds started to incorporate local NGOs in their policy, which resulted in already 231 local NGOs in 1996. After the elections in 1998, the total amount of local NGOs increased up to 360, and in 2002 there were 400 local NGOs and almost 600 associations officially registered with the Cambodian Government (Scheper, 2005, 94-96). A recent survey carried out by the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) supported by DANIDA (Danish International Development Assistance) in 2006 found that by the end of 2005, 1495 national NGOs and 337 international NGOs were registered in Cambodia (World Bank, 2009, 9). However, only 45 percent (668 in total) of these national, local NGOs are considered to be active. This in contrast to the fact that of the international NGOs registered 93 percent (314 in total) are considered to be active. About 100 local NGOs (of the total of 668 active local NGOs) dominate the NGO sector in Cambodia, of which 30 to 40 percent can be considered as strong. Of the total number of employees working at local and international NGOs in Cambodia, 24,000 employees are Cambodians and about 1,200 are international staff. The CDC survey indicates that the NGOs are concentrated in the urban areas and especially in the capital Phnom Penh (ibid.). The Cambodian Coordination Committee (CCC) reported in 2003 that the local NGO sector could be divided into four main categories. Most NGOs (64 percent) were at that time working in the field of community development. The second category, 26 percent of the NGOs, were active in the field of civil society building and peacebuilding, six percent in the field of humanitarian aid, and the last four percent were categorised as 'others' (Scheper, 2005, 94-96). Henke (2007, 18) divides the Cambodian NGO sector into four different categories, namely in NGOs that are community organisers, NGOs that are watchdogs, NGOs that are advocates, and NGOs that work as peacebuilders.

According to Scheper (2005, 94-95), one can recognise three main trends in the Cambodian local NGO sector. The first trend is that the Cambodian local NGO sector is divided in two groups: 'Expat-Khmer' NGOs and 'Khmer-Khmer' NGOs. The first group consists of people who went in exile and stayed many years abroad. After the peace agreements this group of, mostly highly educated, people came back to the country and started to establish NGOs. However, it is said that these NGOs have lost connection with the (rural) grassroots constituency in the country. Since the leaders of these

NGOs obtained education abroad and these NGOs are more backed by Diaspora governments, their programmes are more focussed on policy research and are operational at national level. The 'Khmer-Khmer' NGOs on the other hand, are organizations founded by people who stayed in the country and survived the horrors during the conflict. The leaders of the 'Khmer-Khmer' NGOs had little access to formal education and their funding comes mostly from international NGOs. This group is more focused on the rural areas and the problems that occur in these areas. These NGOs are active in community development work or mobilisation of specific groups such as sex workers, and are sporadically active in mid-level or national level advocacy. The second trend which Scheper (2005, 94-95) but also Henke (2009, 14-16) distinguishes is the fact that the NGOs and CSOs have such a small membership or sometimes even no membership. Although this seems to be very common and is also the case in many other countries, it makes NGOs and CSOs completely dependent on their donor partners. The small membership stems partly from the fact that the NGO and civil society history in the country is so recent, but also because of the fact that the state has still a great influence on people, especially in rural areas, which makes it hard for ordinary citizens to join civil organisations. The fact that these organisations have such a small group of supporters makes it difficult to find financial support. The third trend is that the NGO scene in the country is still dominated by international NGOs. How this exactly affects the work of the local NGOs will be dealt with in paragraph 2.10, where the relation between international and local NGOs in Cambodia will be discussed.

Local NGOs in Cambodia are said to be affected by two other factors, namely corruption and the competition between ministries and local NGOs. First of all, corruption is an enormous problem, not only in the local NGO sector but also in the entire country. Because of the high poverty rate, short term planning, and 'bad governance' by the government, corruption is more a rule than an exception by which also the local NGO sector is affected. Therefore, an 'NGO Code of Ethics' was developed in 1993. This code should create some sort of self-regulation which promotes quality and professional standards within the NGO community (Scheper, 2005, 97-98). The second factor is the competition between ministries and local NGOs. Local NGOs that work on the field of the ministries are often seen as competition which is not beneficial to the relation between the two parties. According to many local NGOs, Cambodian ministries are often incompetent and lack means like money, but also knowledge to do their job properly. The ministries, however, stress the need for cooperation between the state and NGOs in order to be able to reinforce the state. Most of the donor money, but also capacity building goes directly to local NGOs and not to the state. However, it is in the end the state that is supposed to take over most of the tasks of NGOs in the future (Hughes, n.d.).

## **2.10 Relation between international and local NGOs in Cambodia**

### *2.10.1 Lack of ownership and NGO-isation*

As was indicated in the previous paragraph, the local Cambodian NGO sector is still dominated by international NGOs. In 2002, 80 percent of the total international aid budget for NGOs was allocated to international instead of local NGOs (Scheper, 2005, 94-95). A World Bank report (World Bank, 2009,

8) states that the Cambodian NGO sector still has a donor-driven nature. Because of this donor-driven nature, most local NGOs lack grassroots links and are not socially embedded. The fact that many local NGOs lack links with grassroots and have almost no members undermines the NGOs' credibility and influence, and "has caused government officials to question their legitimacy and representativity" (World Bank, 2009, 8). The nature of the relationship between international and local NGOs is in most cases a hierarchical one. This relationship is said to emerge from material inequalities between the two parties. The international NGO possesses all the money and material that is needed for rebuilding the country, and the local NGO has almost none. This material inequality creates also a power inequality.

Literature shows that international dominance and western leadership styles became the norm for many of these local Cambodian organisations (NGO-isation), as they have to apply for funds according to the rules of donors, and in the language of these organisations (mostly English or the language of a specific NGO). As a consequence, if a local NGO does not have these skills, the chances for funds are very small. Besides, local NGOs in Cambodia have become each other's competitors in applying for these donor funds which undermines the trust amongst them (Hughes, 2003, 145-150; Hughes, n.d.; Verkoren, 2009, 9-15). The dependency of local NGOs on international donor funds makes the local NGOs financial sustainability uncertain, which may create challenges in terms of "reconciling foreign concepts and agendas with local (cultural, political and social) realities" (World Bank, 2009, 8). Local Cambodian NGOs have "strong incentives to cater to donors' programmatic priorities and reporting requirements, and weak incentives to respond and account to grassroots constituencies" (World Bank, 2009, 8). In this way, the local Cambodian NGOs have become implementers of the policies that are handed down via the earlier mentioned policy chain of international governments, via international NGOs, eventually to local NGOs. Meas Nee (cited in CDCDa, n.d.) agrees with the fact that the Cambodian NGO-world is dominated by a top-down approach. He explains that "aid often is implemented top down rather than bottom up, subsequently failing to reach its full potential. [...] I don't blame NGOs, but the approach isn't successful" (Meas Nee, cited in CDCDa, n.d.).

### *2.10.2 Lack of knowledge and strategy*

Because of the hierarchical way of working, it is said that local Cambodian NGOs experience a lack of space in which they can articulate their own vision. Literature shows that among local Cambodian NGOs feelings dominate that they lack capacity, are less assertive than they perhaps should be, and lack self-confidence. If they want to challenge the international NGOs, they find it difficult to come up with alternatives to the plans and projects that are put forward by their international colleagues. The literature thus shows that there also seems to be a knowledge difference between the local Cambodian NGOs and the international NGOs. Besides this, there is also a lack of strategic thinking that goes beyond short term level. As a consequence, the donor agencies have a very important role in shaping the work that local Cambodian NGOs are doing (Hughes, 2003, 145-150; Hughes, n.d.; Verkoren, 2009, 9-15).

### 2.10.3 Explanation for international dominance

Different explanations can be found for the current situation of international NGO dominance, where in 2002 80 percent of the total international aid budget for NGOs was allocated to international instead of local Cambodian NGOs. The main reason why international NGOs choose to work with international NGOs above local NGOs is because they believe that there is a lack of technical capacity and management skills at local Cambodian NGOs. Another reason why the international community chose to work with internationals above locals is that, according to the international community, the local organisations lack transparency, which increases the risk of corruption (something which is, as explained above, quite common in Cambodia) (Scheper, 2005, 94-95). It is also said that international NGOs have been distrusting the Cambodian government in providing development aid in the country, and fear for political partiality if they let certain local NGOs do the work. Another reason for the international dominance is the fact that international NGOs working in Cambodia have the ability to attract large donations in comparison to their local Cambodian colleagues (Scheper, 2005, 94). An additional explanation for the dominance of international NGOs in the Cambodian NGO sector is given by Henke (2009, 16-18). Nearly all of the local Cambodian NGOs are localised international NGOs, as these organisations started first as a project or programme of the international NGOs after which they in a later phase became 'independent'. These NGOs are founded with strong foreign advisory support, and in addition most of these local NGO leaders have stayed outside the country for many years. These local NGOs are so-called 'donor-created' NGOs and are often 'donor-driven' and highly dependent on donor funds.

## 2.11 Research questions

The literature overview of the previous paragraphs shows that four main issues can be distinguished which form a challenge to the effective operation of local NGOs, and local Cambodian NGOs in specific. According to the literature, the NGO sector in Cambodia was and is dominated by international NGOs and donors, and there seems to be a great dependency on donor funds which results in the fact that the international NGOs are important players in shaping the work and projects of their local colleagues. This dominance affects the way of working and results in a *lack of ownership of local NGOs*. Secondly, because of the fact that local NGOs have to work according to donor standards and rules, local NGOs try to shape their organisation as an international NGO which is called *NGO-isation*. Thirdly, local NGOs seem to *lack strategic thinking* and planning that goes beyond short term level, and lastly, there seems to be a *difference in knowledge and capacity* between international and local NGOs.

The question is, however, whether local NGOs in Cambodia endorse these problems which are mentioned in the literature. Therefore, the following research question will be answered in Part I of the present study:

*'Do local NGOs in Cambodia endorse the problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?'*

As was explained in paragraph 2.6, Civic Driven Change is a new paradigm that refers to and promotes a process of changes in society which is directly initiated, lead and owned by people themselves. Civic Driven Change might serve as a handle to local Cambodian NGOs in order to overcome some of the mentioned problems which might challenge the effective operation of local NGOs such as lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge. However, the CDC paradigm is fairly new (it is more a theoretical paradigm which has not been brought generally into practise) and not much research has been carried out into this new paradigm. Therefore, it is interesting to find out what ideas international and Cambodian practitioners working in the Cambodian NGO sector have about this new paradigm. Therefore, the following research question will be answered:

*'Does the Civic Driven Change concept offer inspiration or possibilities to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector for overcoming some of the problems like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?'*

The answers to these two research questions will be discussed in Part I.

# Chapter 3. Method

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## 3.1 Research method

The data for this study were gathered using qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is especially useful when the researcher is interested in so-called 'rich data', which give more contextual details about objects, in comparison to data gathered via quantitative research methods. 'Rich data' seem especially important for the present study, as problems of lack of ownership, strategy, knowledge and NGO-isation amongst local NGOs are complex subjects. The complexity lies in the fact that ownership, strategy, knowledge and NGO-isation are comprehensive subjects which may have different meanings to the interviewees. Therefore, a qualitative in-depth research method seems to suite the present study the best as by using this research method, interviewees are asked for their underlying thoughts and motives about the subjects which are central in this research. Besides, the explorative nature of qualitative research seems to be very useful for the two case studies which are represented in Part II of this study.

The present study is divided into two parts. In Part I the research questions '*Do local NGOs in Cambodia endorse the problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?*' and '*Does the Civic Driven Change concept offer inspiration or possibilities to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector for overcoming some of the problems like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?*' will be answered. Part II represents the two case studies of ICCO and the NGO Forum. For both Part I and Part II, different qualitative research methodologies were used, namely theory testing and theory development.

### 3.1.1 Part I - Theory testing

In order to answer the research question '*Do local NGOs in Cambodia endorse the problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?*' and '*Does the Civic Driven Change concept offer inspiration or possibilities to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector for overcoming some of the problems like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?*' in Part I, a theory testing research methodology was used. This methodology is useful in the present study as it allows the researcher to field-test a certain theory or hypothesis. Before the theory could be tested, it was necessary to operationalise the concepts which were central in the theory: lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy, lack of knowledge and Civic Driven Change.

#### Lack of ownership

Ownership implies that developing countries are the so-called owners of their own problems and have to solve these problems themselves. The idea of ownership is to a large extent about who decides what is done. A lack of ownership at local NGOs implies that these local NGOs do not have the control over their own work and programmes because international NGOs are important players in shaping their strategy, work and projects.

### **NGO-isation**

Local NGOs have to comply with many rules, policy frameworks and pre-set formats of the donor organisation in order to qualify for donor funds. NGO-isation is the fact that local CSOs and NGOs become organised as professional NGOs with western organisational structures and change their organisation towards donor standards in order to be the most likely candidate to receive donor funds. As a consequence of this NGO-isation, and the upward rather than downward orientation of this organisation, some local NGOs become removed from their local constituency.

### **Lack of strategy**

Local NGOs have concrete missions and visions. Their projects and programmes ought to contribute to reach this mission and vision. One speaks of lack of strategy when it lacks local NGOs of strategic thinking which goes beyond the short term level, or when local NGOs do not seem to consider how and in what way their projects and activities can contribute to reach the goal of the NGO as is mentioned in their mission or vision.

### **Lack of knowledge**

When there is a knowledge difference between a local and an international NGO, and the international NGO seems to have more knowledge than the local NGO, one can speak of lack of knowledge within the local NGO. There can be a difference in knowledge on various fields, e.g. lack of knowledge of worldwide issues in the aid industry, lack of practical knowledge about writing reports, the English language, or analytical skills.

### **Civic Driven Change**

Civic Driven Change is a new paradigm in the development industry that refers to and promotes a process of changes which is directly initiated, lead and owned by people themselves. To achieve this people-centred development, it is necessary that people take control and address the problems in their communities and surrounding.

### ***3.1.2 Part II - Theory development***

After answering the two research questions about ownership, NGO-isation, knowledge, strategy and Civic Driven Change in Part I of the present study, Part II consists of two case studies: the Programmatic Approach of ICCO in Cambodia and the Cambodian NGO Forum. As was already indicated, the Programmatic Approach of ICCO could form an answer to problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation, as ICCO strives to change the current top-down relation between international and local NGOs by introducing this complete new way of working. The NGO Forum might counter problems like lack of knowledge and lack of strategy as the NGOs involved in the forum share ideas, talk about current issues, and create joint strategies. This sharing can increase the knowledge of the involved NGOs and can make them aware of the importance of a well-considered strategy.

A case study allows the researcher to do in-depth research and to get a clear understanding of complex cases. Case studies are characterised by a small domain with a small amount of research units, observation on location, and in-depth qualitative data (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2007, 43, 163). As little research has been carried out into the Programmatic Approach of ICCO and the NGO Forum, the case studies of the present study created context-related findings and insights into these two initiatives. These evaluative case studies served as a theory development tool as they tried to find out whether the two new initiatives form solutions to current issues like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge. In these case studies, a closer look was taken at the goal, the strengths, and weaknesses of the Programmatic Approach and the NGO Forum.

## 3.2 Research instruments

In the present study two different research instruments were used: desk research and interviews. First of all, a desk research was carried out into the two initiatives which were part of the case studies, the Programmatic Approach of ICCO and the NGO Forum, and into the NGOs that are operating in Cambodia. After obtaining information about these initiatives and Cambodian NGOs, interviews were held with Cambodians and internationals working in the Cambodian NGO sector. More information on the interviewees of the present study can be read in the next paragraph. For the interview questions used in the present study, see Appendix 1 to 4.

## 3.3 Interviewees Part I

In Part I of this study, the research questions '*Do local NGOs in Cambodia endorse the problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?*' and '*Does the Civic Driven Change concept offer inspiration or possibilities to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector for overcoming some of the problems like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?*' are answered. In order to obtain answers to these questions, two different groups were interviewed: the first group were local NGO staff members and Cambodian researchers, the second group were internationals working in the Cambodian NGO sector. These two different groups were chosen as it was expected that locals and internationals might have different views, and therefore interviewing these two groups would give a varied and interesting insight in how locals and internationals think about ownership, NGO-isation, strategy, knowledge, and Civic Driven Change. Both the Cambodian NGO staff and researchers, and the internationals were part of Part I and Part II of the present study.

### 3.3.1 Local NGOs and Cambodian researchers

In order to answer the research question '*Do local NGOs in Cambodia endorse the problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?*', twelve Cambodians, of which ten directors of local NGOs and two Cambodian researchers, were interviewed for Part I of the present study. These local NGOs were primarily chosen because they were also part of Part II, as they

attended workshops organised by ICCO within the framework of the Programmatic Approach. How these ten specific local NGOs were selected to be part of the present study can be read in sub-paragraph 3.4.1. The interviewed directors are working in NGOs which are active in different fields. Three of the involved local NGOs are active in the field of peacebuilding, whereby two have a specific focus on youth. One of the NGOs is active in the field of human rights, one in the field of rule of law and democracy, and one NGO is active in the field of building advocacy and problem solving capacity within Cambodian communities. Three NGOs focus their activities on the indigenous people of Cambodia and one NGO is working in the field of advocacy and policy. Besides these directors and executive directors of local NGOs, two Cambodian researchers were interviewed, both working at independent Cambodian research institutes.

In order to answer the research question *'Does the Civic Driven Change concept offer inspiration or possibilities to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector for overcoming some of the problems like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?'* in Part I, three of the above mentioned directors and one Cambodian researcher were interviewed. These directors and researcher were chosen because these people were acquainted with the new paradigm Civic Driven Change, and had various discussions about this paradigm in the past. Therefore, these four people would be able to answer the research question *'Does the Civic Driven Change concept offer inspiration or possibilities to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector for overcoming some of the problems like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?'*.

### *3.3.2 Internationals working in the Cambodian NGO sector*

For answering the research question *'Do local NGOs in Cambodia endorse the problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?'*, also seven internationals were interviewed. Of these seven interviewees, some are working in the NGO sector, others are working for research institutes in the field of conflict, peace and development. The internationals originally came from the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Australia. In order to answer the second research question of Part I, *'Does the Civic Driven Change concept offer inspiration or possibilities to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector for overcoming some of the problems like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?'* three of the seven mentioned internationals were interviewed. The selection of interviewing these three specific internationals was made because these three were acquainted with the concept of Civic Driven Change, and the other four internationals were not.

## 3.4 Interviewees Part II

In Part II of the present study, two case studies are described. The first case study is the Programmatic Approach of ICCO, the second is the Cambodian NGO Forum. For these two case studies, different target groups were interviewed.

### *3.4.1 Case Study 1: NGOs involved in the ICCO workshops*

Within the framework of the Programmatic Approach of ICCO, workshops were organised in order to create coalitions of local NGOs (more information on the Programmatic Approach and the workshops, see Part II, Case Study 1). During these ICCO Workshops ten coalitions were formed which were all working on different themes and fields within the NGO sector. Four of these coalitions were part of the present study, namely the:

- Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace
- Community Empowerment Group
- Peace Education Group
- Northeast Community Organising Group.

The coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO advised to select these four coalitions as these coalitions were thought to be the most interesting to take a closer look at. Of each coalition, three NGOs were interviewed. As the coalitions consisted of more than three NGOs, the selection was made on the basis of attendance of the NGOs during the workshops. The NGOs that had attended the most workshops and were present from the beginning of the coalition process were chosen to be part of the present study. The directors or executive directors of these NGOs were interviewed.

### *3.4.2 Case Study 1: Program Support Team and coordinator ICCO*

As will be explained in Part II, Case Study 1, the workshops were organised and supervised by a so-called Program Support Team (PST). This team consists of four individuals all working in a different field of the development sector, namely as peacebuilder, (legal) watchdog, community organiser and in the field of advocacy. The four PST members were chosen to be part of the present study as they are closely involved in the Programmatic Approach and the workshops. As these persons are the organisers of the workshops and are therefore always present at these events, they were able to give useful insights in the process of the events and the coalition forming. Two of these four members are also director of an NGO which is part of two of the coalitions in this study. Therefore, these two PST members answered questions as director of an NGO which is part of a coalition, and as a PST member.

Besides the PST members, also the coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO who initiated the Programmatic Approach and the workshops in Cambodia was interviewed. Since the coordinator was the initiator of the Programmatic Approach in Cambodia, and was acquainted with the general Programmatic Approach of ICCO, this interviewee was able to give interesting insights into the

new way of working of ICCO, the early stages of the process and the current status. Also two internationals working in the Cambodian NGO and research sector were asked about their ideas on the workshops and coalitions. These two internationals were not directly involved in the process but were therefore able to look at the Programmatic Approach from a wider perspective.

### *3.4.3 Case Study 2: NGO Forum*

For Case Study 2, the NGO Forum, four internationals were interviewed. These internationals were able to give a good insight into the Forum as they were (former) employees of the NGO Forum. There were two reasons why only internationals were interviewed at the NGO Forum. First of all, since there was a limitation on the amount of days that the researcher was present in Cambodia, it was only possible to interview internationals as most of the local employees were on training at the time that the researcher was present in the country. Secondly, the researcher was explicitly advised by one of the internationals working at the Forum to interview internationals, as they were supposed to be able to look at the NGO Forum from a wide perspective.

## **3.5 Procedure of data collection**

The interviews that were conducted were semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were determined in advance, but could be asked in random order according to the course of the interview. For each group of interviewees, different interview questions were made which resulted in sets of interview questions for the following groups: the interviewees working at the local Cambodian NGOs, the Program Support Team, the internationals and researchers, and the internationals working at the NGO Forum. The specific interview questions used in the present study can be found in Appendix 1 to 4. The interviews took place at the offices of the interviewees and all interviews were recorded with a voice recorder. Before the first interview question was asked, the purpose of this research was explained. This explanation was followed by a social talk in order to make the interviewee feel at ease.

## **3.6 Analysis of the interviews**

Before the interviews could be analysed, it was necessary to transcribe the interviews. To find answers to the interview and research questions, an Excel file was created to classify and categorise the transcribed interviews. As can be seen in Figure 1, the interviewees were represented in the upper horizontal bar of the spread sheet. The interview questions were reflected in the vertical bar of the file. In this way, a schematic outline could be made of the answers to the interview questions. As the transcribed interviews could not be entirely filled in into the spread sheet, the answers to the interview questions were represented in key words. This resulted in a schematic outline where the interview questions could be read in the utmost left column of the spread sheet, with next to this, the answers to the specific interview questions reflected per interviewee.

	A	F	G	H	I
			Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace	Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace	Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace
1					
11					
12	B. On which field(s) are these civil society organisations active/ what is their core business?				
13					
14	B. 1 On which field(s) is this CSO active?		Peacebuilding	Peacebuilding, peace education, leadership, reconciliation and democracy.	Peacebuilding, Democracy, human rights. This organisation wants to produce good citizens for a democratic society
15					
16	B. 2 What is the target group of this CSO?		Grass root level, middle level and higher level like ministries e.g. of education. Targeted on capacity building on peace; for government officials, NGOs who are working in peacebuilding and conflict transformation and human rights.	Youth between 14 and 24. Now we also developed projects working with vulnerable young people.	We work with youth and especially with university students. They are the future leaders and they can change the society by using their skills and knowledge.
17	B. 3 Which specific projects are set up/managed by this CSO?		Capacity building on peace, to get skills in conflict transformation, peacebuilding. Issue based.  3 main programmes: 1. Multiple approach to conflict transformation, skill and knowledge on peacebuilding and conflict transformation, provide trainings for police officer, civil servant, NGOs who are based in the provinces. 2. Interfaith initiative for peace in Cambodia. Capacity building for	Programmes providing history education, space for dialogue between the survivors and the Khmer Rouge. We have a project Young Leader for Peace, Training on Development, Critical Thinking, social analysis.	We have 2 main programme units. We have training unit and a youth empowerment unit. And we have another small unit, the publication and communication unit.

Figure 1: Representation of Excel file used for analysing the answers to the interview questions

### 3.7 Biases, limitations and validity

The present study has some limitations and possible biases which may have influenced the results. First of all, semi-structured interviews were used to gather the data. It is possible that some of the interviewees answered some of the interview questions using so-called socially desirable answers, which are answers given in order to gain a certain degree of social acceptance. The cultural aspect 'fear of losing face' which is present in the Cambodian culture (see sub-paragraph 2.8.2) makes the chance of socially desirable answers bigger. These socially desirable answers may have biased the results of the present study. By explaining the interviewees that there were no good or wrong answers to the interview questions, the researcher has tried to make the above mentioned bias as little as possible.

Secondly, the fact that the researcher was based at the ICCO office in Phnom Penh, and the fact that the researcher received the contact details of the interviewees via the coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO made that some interviewees saw the researcher as being part of ICCO. This perceived connection with ICCO might have biased some of the results as interviewees might have given socially desirable answers considering their donor-dependence relation with ICCO. In order to prevent the interviewees from seeing the researcher as being connected to ICCO, the researcher repeatedly stressed that she was doing an independent research and was not working for ICCO but was integrating ICCO as a case study into the present study.

A third limitation to the present study is the selection of local NGOs. Only those NGOs were selected who attended the ICCO workshop, and more specific, those who attended the most workshops. By using this selection criteria, those NGOs that did not attend all the workshops were left out. Besides,

NGOs that were not part of the ICCO workshops at all, were in any case not taken into consideration to be part of the present study. Especially this last limitation may have biased the results of the present study. The NGOs which were part of this research were, because of the workshops, already in a process of rethinking the relation between local and international NGOs and how local NGOs could cooperate together. NGOs that are not part of the workshops are not involved in this process. Attending the workshops may have influenced the ideas of the interviewees about the relation between local and international NGOs, as on the one hand they had become more aware of the perceived unequal relationship between local and international NGOs and were therefore able to give a well-considered opinion about the topic. On the other hand, the workshops may also have influenced their opinion in the opposite way as they may have become aware of problems of other NGOs which they perhaps never had experienced themselves. In other words, interviewing NGOs that were part of the ICCO workshop may have biased the results of this study in different ways.

Fourthly, the fact that the data concerning the opinion of Cambodians working in the NGO sector were gathered by solely interviewing the directors of local NGOs and not their employees may have biased the results and outcomes of this study. After all, it are the employees of local NGOs who may have to deal directly with possible rules and regulations for documents and applications of international NGOs in order to receive funds. Although this may have biased the results of this study, the researcher has the opinion that because of the fact that most NGOs part of the present study are relatively small, the interviewees were aware of all the ins and outs of their organisation.

Furthermore, the fact that at the NGO Forum, only international and no Cambodian employees were interviewed may also form a limitation to the present study. Although it was not possible to interview these Cambodian employees as they were on training, and although the researcher was advised by one of the employees to interview internationals only, the Cambodian employees may have had different insights and viewpoints concerning the NGO Forum which may had resulted in a different outcome.

Lastly, a relative small selection of interviewees was used to gather data for the present study, as only twelve Cambodians and seven internationals working in the Cambodian NGO sector were interviewed. As a result, the data and results of the present study may not be representative for all the Cambodians or internationals working in the Cambodian NGO sector.

The researcher has tried to limit the amount and impact of the biases in order to keep the validity of the data as high as possible. Therefore, the researcher tried to be aware of the above mentioned biases when analysing the data. The researcher has the opinion that despite the mentioned biases the results of the present study are still valid. First of all, the credibility of the interviewees which were part of this study is high as they all seemed to give genuine answers and were very interested in the results of the present study. Secondly, although the data were not representative for the complete Cambodian NGO sector because of the above mentioned biases, the researcher has the opinion that the results of

the present study are applicable to more local Cambodian NGOs than the ones that were part of the present study. This because many interviewees did not only answer questions on behalf of their own organisation, but also answered many questions in respect to the entire Cambodian NGO sector.

# Chapter 4. Part I - The Practice

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## 4.1 Overview

According to the literature displayed in chapter 2, the NGO sector in Cambodia was and is dominated by international NGOs and donors. The literature shows that local NGOs seem to be dependent on donor funds, and international NGOs are important players in shaping the work and projects of the local Cambodian organisations. According to the literature, this dominance affects the way of working and results in a *lack of ownership of local NGOs*. Secondly, the literature shows that because of the fact that recipients have to work according to donor standards and rules, local CSOs try to shape their organisation as an international NGO which is called *NGO-isation*. Thirdly, local NGOs are said to *lack strategic thinking* and planning that goes beyond short term level, and lastly, there seems to be a *difference in knowledge and capacity* between international and local NGOs.

In this chapter the research question '*Do local NGOs in Cambodia endorse the problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge*' will be answered. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Cambodians and internationals working in the Cambodian NGO sector were interviewed in order to obtain an answer to the research question. The answers to this question will be given in the next three paragraphs. Paragraph 4.2 deals with ownership, 4.3 with NGO-isation, 4.4 with lack of knowledge and lack of strategy.

The second research question of the present study '*Does the Civic Driven Change concept offer inspiration or possibilities to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector for overcoming some of the problems like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge*' will be answered in paragraph 4.5. In order to obtain an answer to this question, three internationals and four Cambodians working in the Cambodian NGO sector were interviewed. In the final paragraph of this chapter (paragraph 4.6), a conclusion and discussion are displayed.

## 4.2 Ownership

As was indicated in chapter 2 and paragraph 4.1, the literature shows that international NGOs are important players in shaping the work and projects of local Cambodian NGOs and these local organisations seem to be dependent on donor funds. According to the earlier discussed literature, this dominance affects the way of working of local NGOs and results in a lack of ownership of local NGOs. As can be read in the following paragraphs, the interviewees of the present study do not give one univocal answer to the question whether local NGOs in Cambodia lack ownership over the activities they carry out. The results of the present study show that fifty percent of the NGOs that were part of this study have full ownership over the activities and programmes they carry out. The results also show that some local NGOs lack ownership. Three out of ten of the local NGOs part of the present study do not have full ownership over their programmes and projects, as they first sort out on which

projects or topics money is available before making a proposal or applying for funding. The results of the present study also show that the international interviewees and one Cambodian interviewee believe that there seems to be an ownership problem at many local Cambodian NGOs, and that donors have a significant influence on the programmes of local NGOs in Cambodia. A Cambodian researcher questions whether ownership at local NGOs is possible at all, due to cultural and historical factors.

#### *4.2.1 No lack of ownership*

One of the Cambodian researchers and an international interviewee indicate that definitely in the past, donors had a lot of influence on what was going to be implemented or not by local NGOs in Cambodia. The situation was not entirely donor-driven as some projects and programmes were also initiated by local NGOs, but in the past the initiative came more strongly from donors than it is today. Five out of ten local NGOs part of the present study have ownership over the activities they are carrying out. The projects of these NGOs are created on their own initiative according to the strategy of the organisation. The NGO staff members of these NGOs say they first create a certain programme or project in response to the needs of the community, after which they try to look for donors to fund these projects. One of the interviewees, an NGO director, explains that there are donors who seem to drive his organisation in a certain direction or strategy (often the donor's strategy), but he and his staff decided not to work with these donors as they want their NGO to be an independent organisation. Donors like ICCO try to encourage NGOs to be independent by providing core funding instead of funding tied to specific projects, which is more common. This core funding enables the local NGO to be flexible and act according to the community's needs.

#### *4.2.2 Lack of ownership*

This study also shows that there are local Cambodian NGOs who first try to sort out on which topics or projects donor money is available, before making any proposal. One interviewee (who is director of an NGO that claims to have full ownership) states that the disadvantage of NGOs who try to look for funding first before making a proposal, or even finding out what the needs of the community are, is that these NGOs have lost their identity. In this way, he says, these NGOs become a contractor of the (international) donor organisation and not a development organisation working on behalf of their constituency. Three out of ten local NGOs part of this study indicate that they first sort out on which topics or projects donor money is available, before they apply for any funding. These interviewees explain that they look for projects and topics of donor organisations first, then check whether these topics or projects fit their organisations mission and vision, after which they apply for donor money. Although ensuring that the projects match the mission and vision of the NGO (and if the projects are not in line with the mission or vision, the NGO will not apply for this certain project), these NGOs are not having fully ownership over their programmes and projects. This because they choose their activities based on the money available by donors and not on the needs of the communities they are representing. In other words, the communities do not play a role in the process of creating projects and applying for donor funds. These three NGOs, however, do have the feeling that they have fully

ownership over their activities and programmes, because they only choose to apply for projects that are in line with their strategy, mission and vision.

Another Cambodian interviewee part of the present study sees his organisation standing in the middle between the community and the international NGOs, which is often difficult. He explains that his NGO sometimes needs to comply with the requirements of the donor and sometimes needs to comply with wishes of the communities they are working for. They do work according to the agenda of the community, listen to the community, go down to the field, and create a proposal with the input from the community. However, the NGO needs to be flexible to meet the donors' requirements but also the needs of the community. Therefore, he feels that they sometimes have to make compromises on certain aspects of their programmes.

An interviewee working at a Cambodian NGO indicates that to a certain extent the donors in Cambodia still decide for local NGOs what to do as donors have proposal guidelines and requirements with which local NGOs have to comply. The Cambodian interviewee explains that when he looks at other NGOs in the Cambodian NGO sector, he sometimes sees a lack of ownership at local NGOs in terms of programme issues, geographical area, and also the format of the programme. He explains that some donors also pay attention to or are involved in the management of the local NGO. The interviewee believes this can be both a favourable or unfavourable development for the local NGO, as it is good if the interest and assistance of the donor helps the NGO to do its work better. However, the interviewee believes that if the support becomes an influence on how the local NGO should be organised or developed, it may put the (ownership of the) local NGO into danger. He explains that this has not happened within his own NGO, but he has seen that some donors do pay attention or are involved in the management of other local Cambodian NGOs.

All the international interviewees part of the present study believe that there seems to be an ownership problem at many local NGOs. They do recognise that there are local NGOs that have ownership over their projects and programmes, but they believe that the number of NGOs that have full ownership is not very high. One of the international interviewees says that local Cambodian NGOs often lack ownership. He believes that donors have a significant influence on the programmes but also on the geographical area of these activities, for instance by indicating in which provinces or regions the activities should be carried out. Another international interviewees says that she gets the impression that local NGOs sometimes feel strong pressure from donor organisations to carry out projects in the fields of interest of the donor. She explains that at this moment, for example, donors seem to find it very important to work on climate change projects, especially since this topic received full attention because of the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009. The interviewee says that she gets the impression that local Cambodian NGOs feel the pressure of donors to start working on or creating projects which are linked to climate change.

A Cambodian researcher is also critical about the way of funding of international donors as he says that before local NGOs get a grant from major donors, the donors have in mind which and how many NGOs they want to fund and determine the area they want the NGOs to work in. Then, he says, they ask a couple of NGOs to formulate a budget programme or proposal to get the money. This situation is already donor-driven because the donor pinpoints who should do what. It seems that this way of working of donors described by the Cambodian researcher matches the way of working of the three local NGOs mentioned above, that first sort out on which projects or issues donor money is available before they write any proposal. In this way, both the international donors and the local NGOs that do not have full ownership maintain a donor-driven and top-down relationship. This thus implies that local NGOs that do have own visions about what development is needed in Cambodia, and that do create their own programmes according to the needs and wishes of their constituency (instead of first sorting out what projects the donor would like to fund), are at a disadvantage. This because the plans of the local NGO that has its own vision may not match the visions and plans of the donor, because the donor already has an idea or vision about how many NGOs or on which field it wants to give support. To a certain extent (some) donors thus enable and stimulate local NGOs to take less ownership and to react on the plans and visions of the international donor. This because they know in advance on which topics or geographical areas they want to support local NGOs, and the local NGOs that write proposals in accordance to these plans thus have more chance to get funding than local NGOs that write proposals according to their own vision and the needs of the constituency. In line with this, it is important to realise that not only a local NGO has to deal with two parties: its constituency and the international donor. Also the (international) donor has to take its back-donors into account as it is part of the in chapter 2 described financing and policy chain which runs from international governments, via international NGOs, to local NGOs. The fact that some international donors thus already have in mind on what topics and how many local NGOs they are going to support may stem partly from the fact that they have to comply with the wishes of their back-donors.

The Cambodian researcher also says that the concept of NGOs is quite new in the country and exploded in the 1990s. A lot of NGOs in Phnom Penh are run by a hand full of bourgeoisie or elite which are most of the time diasporas. They are mostly Khmer from overseas or Khmer that stayed in the refugee camps at the Thai border during the Pol Pot regime. These people know how to attract money from the international donor agencies, they can speak the language, and they know what internationals want to hear. Besides, Cambodian NGOs were created as very ad hoc emergency relief organisations in the early 1990s. That is why, according to this researcher, they lack a concrete institutionalised framework, and their work is based on a one-way and top-down direction from the North, full of assumptions and rationale from western countries.

An international interviewee indicates that when looking at ownership of local NGOs, an important distinction should be made between the people working at the top versus the people working at the bottom of the organisation. According to this interviewee, people working at the top of the organisation seem to take more ownership than people working at the bottom of the local NGO. She explains this

as follows: at the bottom of larger NGOs one finds many Cambodian university graduates who go after an NGO job because of the good salary, and not necessarily because they want to contribute to a higher cause in society. Especially when an international NGO becomes localised, many employees leave the organisation because they realise that when the organisation becomes localised they will not receive the same (high) salary as when it was still an international NGO. According to this international interviewee, most of the people that are working at the top of local Cambodian NGOs seem to work at the organisation because they feel strongly about a certain issue, irrespective of salary. She believes that this involvement stems from the fact that these people are often the founders of the NGO and started the NGO because they felt that a certain issue needed their attention, this in contrast to employees that came to work for the NGO in a later stage and the direction of the NGO was already determined. The people working at the top of the NGO seem to carry the NGO forward and are able to articulate towards the donor what the organisation stands for. This implies that these people working at the top of the local NGO thus take more ownership over the programmes and projects of the local NGO in comparison to their staff at the bottom of the organisation, as they work according to their own vision and the needs of their constituency instead of the vision of the donor organisation. Another international interviewee agrees and adds that the level of ownership at local NGOs also depends for a large extent on the individuals and leadership of an NGO.

When talking about lack of ownership within local NGOs in Cambodia, the results of the present study show that local NGOs staff often recognise that in other Cambodian NGOs there might be a lack of ownership, but not in their own NGO. The question is why the Cambodian interviewees see lack of ownership at other organisations and not at their own organisation, even though some only have partly ownership over their activities. First of all, it may be possible that these interviewees truly believe that they have ownership, even though they are influenced by the donor. This is in line with what the Cambodian researcher explained above. He says that local Cambodian NGOs lack a concrete institutionalised framework, and their work is based on a one-way and top-down direction from the North, full of assumptions and rationale from western countries. According to this vision, local NGOs are to such an extent part of the dominant top-down discourse that they may not realise how much they are influenced by the donor. A second explanation is that the interviewees may be aware of the fact that they have not fully ownership over their activities, but they do not want to admit this to, or share this with the researcher. This because they have the feeling that they have to give socially desired answers (in this case that they do have fully ownership) or because of the cultural factor which seems to have a dominant place within the Cambodian culture: fear of losing face. The interviewees may believe that they will lose face if they admit that they do not create programmes that are based upon the needs of the community they represent. In order to avoid losing their face, the interviewees may tell that their NGO has fully ownership and other NGOs not. Of course, a third possibility is that the local NGOs of the interviewees have ownership and that they truly recognise that some of the other NGOs in Cambodia lack (to a certain extent) ownership over their programmes and activities.

#### *4.2.3 A researcher's perspective: Is (complete) ownership possible?*

The Cambodian researcher part of the present study has his own vision on ownership at local Cambodian NGOs. He believes that because of cultural and historical factors, there is no general sense of ownership within the Cambodian culture. The interviewee says that because the public sphere is weak (which implies that people do not experience much space in which they can freely and openly discuss and identify societal problems and therewith influence political action and decisions), it is difficult for NGOs to create this sense of ownership. He explains this as follows: when looking at the term ownership, you first have to look at the vocabulary of ownership and how you would define this word in Khmer. This is necessary because if you do not understand the implicit meaning of the term ownership in Khmer, it is very difficult to understand the mindset of the Cambodian people. Yet, as the researcher explains, the term ownership as such does not exist in Khmer or at least does not have the same denotation as the English word. The word ownership in Khmer means 'to control' and not 'to own', which is a very different meaning. The fact that the word has such a different meaning has its implications on very practical situations. The researcher illustrates this as follows: a community centre in Cambodia is owned by the people who live in that specific community. The question is, however, who will maintain or fix the centre whenever something is broken. According to the Cambodian understanding of ownership (to control), the one that built the centre (often an NGO) is in control of the centre, not the one that owns it (the community). The NGO is thus responsible for fixing or rebuilding the community centre as this organisation 'controls' the building, and not the community. The community will not maintain the building, even though they use it, as they believe it is the NGO who should do that. This illustration shows that there is no general sense of ownership. If you want to enhance the quality of ownership, you have to understand what the grassroots perceptions, the system, and the structure on grassroots level are.

The fact that the Khmer word for ownership has a different denotation than the English word is an interesting finding. In the present study the term ownership is operationalised and thus did the interviewees know what denotation was used and referred to during the interviews. Therefore, the interviewees answered the questions accordingly. However, when international donors interact with local Cambodian NGOs, both the international and the Cambodian involved may not be aware of the difference that exists between the Khmer and English word and the fact that in Khmer it does not mean 'to own' but 'to control'. Therefore, the difference in denotation and the fact that both Cambodians and internationals may not be aware of the difference in denotation in the two languages might form an explanation for the fact that some local NGOs do not believe that they have an ownership problem while internationals and the literature say they have. This because local NGOs argue according to the denotation of 'to control', and therefore, applying for funding and projects which are made by the donor is still having ownership as the local organisations have the control over what projects they apply for and have the control over the execution of the projects. According to their international donor's (and the English) denotation, these organisations do not have ownership as they do not create programmes according to their own vision and the needs of their constituency.

The researcher also states that it is very difficult to build ownership in Cambodia. He says that Cambodia is a country where there is an absence of a social contract. This means that, historically speaking from the Angkorian period until now, Cambodia does not have a function of state institutions that deliver to the needs of its citizens and the citizens in their turn deliver something (often taxes) back to the state. That is why, according to the researcher, the population at large does not understand their own rights and the idea of citizenship. Cambodians do not have a sense of trust towards the public sphere, and lack a kind of social, cultural heritage about ownership. Looking at ownership in a western country where there is a welfare system and the standard of living of the people is quite high, people are willing to invest their own money for the sake of the public according to the social contract. In these countries people pay taxes so they have the right to claim something from the state. In Cambodia, because of the absence of social contract, this is very difficult. Because of the fact that this social contract between the state and its citizens does not exist in Cambodia, and because of the fact that citizens do not have a sense of ownership or civic agency (which is the capacity of people, communities and groups to act cooperatively and collectively on common problems), it is for local NGOs difficult to create programmes on behalf of these people or in accordance with the needs and wishes of the citizens and communities. Another effect of this lack of social contract, civic agency and ownership, is that the money from for instance donor agencies is just pouring without any kind of civil and social initiative or civic agency of citizens, because most Cambodians see NGOs as rich organisations (foreign owned or donor-driven) and as a giver. People thus expect something from NGOs, without any culture of reciprocal obligation or responsibility back.

What this researcher implies is that because of the fact that there is in Cambodia no general sense of ownership because of cultural and historical factors, and because there seems to be an absence of a social contract, it is thus difficult to build a sense of ownership in Cambodia, and in local NGOs in specific as it is difficult for local NGOs to create projects and programmes on behalf of their constituency. Of course, also the employees of a local NGO are Cambodian citizens, which implies that also these employees might have a general lack of reciprocal obligation or sense of ownership. This general lack of reciprocal obligation or sense of ownership in Cambodia and within local Cambodian NGOs has its consequences for the NGO sector and international donors. When international donors are changing their current top-down way of working into a more bottom-up approach, they cannot automatically expect from their local Cambodian partners to take more ownership. This because their Cambodian partners are not used to take and have ownership because of the cultural and historical factors, and because of the fact that it is for local NGOs difficult to create their programmes on the wishes and needs of a community that does not show civic agency or takes ownership.

#### *4.2.4 A perspective from an advisor: lack of ownership is part of a bigger problem*

One of the international interviewees working as an advisor at a local Cambodian NGO sees the ownership issue at local NGOs as being part of a bigger problem: it is not local NGOs that should have more ownership over their programmes and activities, it is the community that should have ownership. The interviewee states that Cambodia is stuck in what he calls 'stage 2' while the country should be in 'stage 3' right now. He explains these stages as follows: stage 1 was the period after the Pol Pot regime was removed and the country was opened to western relief aid. In the first five years after the fall of the regime in 1979, international NGOs were mostly focussing on disaster relief. In the mid-1980s however, people started to realise that this approach was disempowering the Cambodian communities. What was needed was to work more in partnership with communities and a new expression seemed to emerge, 'community based' development. The interviewee calls this period stage 2. He believes that at this moment the aid industry in Cambodia is still in stage 2, as there is a strong focus on community based activities. However, the development aid in the country should not be community based, but the community itself should be leading (stage 3), and should be involved at the strategic level instead of the programmatic level. This implies that instead of being involved in creating or executing the programmes that are carried out by NGOs in the communities, the communities should be involved at the strategic level which implies that communities create together with the local NGOs (or even on their own before any NGO is brought in) strategies and vision about how the situation in their community should change or what change the village together with the local NGO would like to achieve in the long term.

The international interviewee has the opinion that right now, communities are disempowered by NGOs and as a result there is no coordination over the various projects of NGOs in the communities. The interviewee gives an example of a village that had five different NGOs visiting on one single day. All these NGOs had different projects and did not have a clue of the projects of other NGOs since these organisations were all working with different groups of people within the village. As a consequence, the commune council did not understand anymore what was going on in their village. The interviewee says that this example shows that NGOs should not just work in partnership with the community, but that the Cambodian development industry should work with a community led and community coordinated model. The interviewee indicates that once you do get the communities to take their lead, the local NGOs need to take a step back. In stage 3 local NGOs should become brokers by working with communities and helping communities identifying which expertise is needed in the community. It is the local NGO's job to broker and help the community to get this service without trying to do it themselves. The interviewee says that taking a step back might be difficult, since a lot of local NGOs have made their business out of being an NGO. What this interviewee implies by 'making a business out of being an NGO' is that these NGOs see themselves as a sort of service related organisation without having the goal of dissolving the organisation after reaching their specific goals (a certain change in society) or having any exit strategy. When the community takes the lead, the right to exist for the local NGO (in the way it is at the moment organised) is taken away as their role changes from

an initiator role towards a broker role. The vision of this international interviewee has many similarities with the concept of Civic Driven Change. Both CDC and the stage 1-2-3 approach of the international interviewee make the assumption that the development industry should work according to a community led and community coordinated model. Paragraph 4.6 will elaborate more on the concept of Civic Driven Change and will also go deeper into the suggestions of the international interviewee.

### **4.3 NGO-isation**

In the previous sub-paragraph, the international interviewee says that local NGOs should be community driven instead of community based. The fact that local NGOs become or are removed from their local constituency may also be caused by NGO-isation. As was displayed in chapter 2, literature shows that because of the fact that recipients of donor money have to work according to donor standards and rules, local CSOs and NGOs try to shape their organisation as an international NGO which is called NGO-isation. A consequence of this NGO-isation and the upward rather than downward orientation of the local CSO or NGO is that, as can be read in chapter 2, some local organisations become removed from their constituency. The question that will be answered in this paragraph is whether local Cambodian NGOs endorse the fact of NGO-isation. As can be read in sub-paragraph 4.3.1 until 4.3.3, the results of the present study show that the local Cambodian NGOs that were part of the present study have to comply with different kinds of requirements, criteria and conditions of donor organisations when applying for donor money. It turns out that some international donors seem to be very strict concerning these requirements, other donors are considered to be more flexible. The results of the present study show that although the requirements change the work of the organisation, most local NGOs indicate that it does not change the organisation itself. Furthermore, it turns out that the requirements form a problem to most of the local NGOs. Only two interviewees say that it does not form a problem to them.

#### *4.3.1 Donor requirements for local Cambodian NGOs*

Local NGOs part of this study mainly depend on donor funds coming from international NGOs. All local NGOs have multiple donors varying from five up to thirteen donors. Most of the NGOs part of this study have around eight donors, of which about three to five are long term donors and the others short term donors. Short term donors fund for no longer than one year, long term donors are donors who give funding for longer than one year. This donor money can be solely for a certain project, called project funding (which can be long or short term), or can be core funding which implies that the donor gives money to the local NGO without connecting this money to a certain project. It is up to the NGO to decide on which project it will spend the donor money. The majority of the NGOs that are part of the present study are looking for more core funding as an alternative for their short term funding.

All donors have different requirements, criteria and conditions how to apply for donor money. There are donors that are strict in their requirements to receive funds and donors that are more flexible. The strictness or flexibility of a donor depends on the number or requirements and rules that the NGO has

to comply with in order to receive money, and whether it is core or project funding. Core funding is considered as a more flexible way of funding as the donor does not attach the funding to a specific project and therefore the local organisation can decide on which activities it spends the money in accordance with its own vision. The interviewees working at local Cambodian NGOs state that they have to comply with many rules and regulations. Donor organisations ask among other things for a concept note, a proposal, monthly reports, quarterly reports, financial audits, evaluation reports, log frames for projects, a strategy plan, detailed budget outlines, and sometimes staff evaluations. A number of donors lay restrictions on the number of words used in these reports.

Some donors seem to have a bad name because of their strictness regarding the requirements for funding. Especially USAID, but also EU-related projects seem to have a bad name. One of the international interviewees states that within these organisations there is per definition no flexibility. He explains that it seems that the bigger the donor organisation is or the more countries in which this organisation is operational, the more standardised and inflexible the organisation is towards local NGOs. Other donors, such as ICCO or DanChurchAid, are regarded by the Cambodian interviewees of the present study as flexible and these donors see the local NGOs as their partners. One of the Cambodian interviewees says that he and his colleagues working at other local NGOs, have the feeling that these organisations understand them and once there is a funding relationship between the donor and the local NGO, the relation focuses much more on the actual work of the local NGO and how the international donor can support this NGO. Besides, these donors ask for reports every three months instead of every month. Three local NGOs part of this study indicate that the more flexible donors understand what they are doing and after some discussion these NGOs are allowed to use their own format for the reports and audits. Core funding is easier to work with as in these cases not a project but the organisation is funded. Often the more flexible donors are the ones that provide core funding which makes that local NGOs prefer flexible donors over strict donors. The extent of flexibility and the good relation between the local NGO and international donor is usually based on individuals, explains one of the directors of a local NGO. If the personal relation is good, the donor knows the needs of the local NGO, and if both parties are willing to work on solutions, then it is possible to work beyond the system and frameworks. The interviewee explains that it is easier to establish a good personal relationship when the donor has a field office in the country of the local partner. It seems that the number of flexible donors is increasing. In the experience of one interviewee, there has been more two-way communication between donors and local NGOs and grass root organisations the last few years. He does not know why this change happened over the last few years, but he is very positive about it.

One of the international interviewees who is working at ICCO (which is seen by the local NGOs as a flexible donor) explains that for ICCO it is a deliberate choice to be a flexible donor. However, also this organisation has its organisational constraints as it works in more than fifty countries, uses a management information system, and has to deal with the conditions of their back-donors. Therefore,

as the interviewee explains, the organisation has to manoeuvre between being flexible and also meeting the management requirements.

#### *4.3.2 Do the requirements change the local NGO?*

The local NGO staff indicate that the requirements do change the work of their organisations. Because of the requirements for donor money, more time is spent on paperwork which sometimes results in hiring extra staff. Most interviewees say that the requirements change the work but not the organisation itself. One interviewee, however, states that the requirements concerning financial audits, outlines and evaluation reports change the organisations in the sense that the transparency of the organisation increases and more attention is given to monitoring and evaluation activities. All the local NGO staff members state that they keep on doing their work according to their own vision and mission.

Most Cambodian NGO staff thus indicate that because of the requirements the work of the organisation changes as more time is spent on paperwork and sometimes results in hiring extra staff, but that the organisation itself does not change. One should question whether it is only the work of the local NGO that changes, as hiring extra staff and shifting the attention from daily work to paperwork for donor funds has its repercussions on the organisation as well. Besides, as one of the interviewees also indicates, because of the requirements more attention is given to accountability towards donors and transparency of financial management within local NGOs. In other words, in contrast with what most interviewees say, the requirements of international donors do change the organisation. Furthermore, (although not stated by the interviewees) it seems plausible that because of the amount of time that is spent on meeting the requirements of the international donors and becoming NGO-ised, and because of the accountability towards the donor (and thus not towards the communities represented by the local NGO), the local organisations may become distant from their communities. This because there is simply less time to spent on meeting and consulting the communities because of the amount of time that is spent on paperwork in order to meet the requirements for funding, and because of the upward orientation which is created by the accountability requirements towards the donor. However, the fact that the local NGOs become distant from their communities is an assumption made by the researcher and not indicated by the interviewees.

One of the international interviewees explains that there have been some changes over the last years with regard to local NGOs changing their organisation towards donors' standards. When she first arrived in Cambodia in 1997 people would do whatever the funding party would say, even if it was something that they did not wanted to do. She says that this has changed, as the successful local NGOs nowadays are the ones that either can say 'sorry what you expect from us does not work for us, this would not be a suitable funding relationship for us', or have the capacity to negotiate those rules. This trend is new over the last three to five years. An example of this is the fact that local NGOs started to take less USAID money and less EU funding because of the guidelines, the strictness and the inflexibility concerning budgets. Also a Cambodian interviewee says that it seems that strong

NGOs know how to deal with the conditions and requirements and do not accept just any kind of donor funding. He says that just after 1990, there was a boom of new established NGOs. Because of the strict funding conditions, some local NGOs have dropped out and others got stronger. Those who got stronger managed to understand the way to work with donors in a more acceptable relation rather than a client-relationship. However, despite this trend, the international interviewee also states that there are also younger organisations that say 'yes we will take any money, no matter what conditions or requirements are attached to it' because these organisations have just started and have no experience or skills.

According to these two interviewees, the successful local NGOs are thus able to refuse donor money or negotiate the requirements of the donor if they do not agree with the requirements asked for, and the unsuccessful, younger, and less experienced NGOs (leaders) tend to take any donor money regardless the requirements. This implies that the individual capacity of the leadership of the organisation, mostly the director, and the maturity of the NGO itself are important elements regarding the extent of compliance of local NGOs with donors' requirements, and thus also regarding the ownership within the local NGO. If this is truly the case, it would imply that the extent of compliance, and thus the amount of ownership of a local NGO, is a natural problem connected to the maturity of an NGO or the directors of the NGO and this problem thus will go away after a couple of years when the NGO sector in a certain area has matured. For Cambodia, these arguments could make sense as indeed the NGO sector is relatively young and started to boost right after the end of the conflict situation in the country. The fact that the Cambodian NGO sector is relatively young could thus be (one of) the reasons why local NGOs comply with donors' rules and regulations.

#### *4.3.3 Do the requirements form a problem for local NGOs?*

The majority of the local NGO staff that were interviewed for the present study indicate that the requirements do form a problem to their organisation, two out of ten interviewees indicate that it does not form a problem to them. The ones that find the requirements problematic explain that the whole funding process is time consuming and takes a lot of paper, a lot of discussion and a lot of meetings. Waiting for feedback and writing proposals can delay the activities of the local NGO. It means that less time can be spent on working on the issues that should be addressed. One of the interviewees explains that as an organisation with an independent policy and an own strategy, dealing with the requirements is sometimes a hard debate which can be frustrating. It forms a challenge which the local NGOs have to deal with. Some local NGOs that are active at community level in the rural areas of Cambodia are unable to access the internet. This makes it more difficult for these organisations to apply for donor money or sending their reports via the internet. Although their projects may be good, they are missing the opportunity for funding because of the requirements. Also for rural communities who mostly communicate in their own native language, it is difficult to apply for funding in the language required by the donor. One of the interviewees working in the field of human rights explains that it is difficult for this organisation to comply with the rules and regulations of international donors as this NGO is expected to respond to emergent problems. For peace and human rights organisations the

risks and unpredictable situations are much higher than for other NGOs. Therefore, it is for these organisations difficult to plan financially, staff wise and programmatically according to donors' requirements. In line with this, an international interviewee also says that the strictness and inflexibility of some donors seems especially difficult in a context like Cambodia where things have to be a bit fluid. She explains that in particular organisations working on peacebuilding or conflict transformation issues do not know where their organisation has to focus on next year as the peacebuilding situation may change quickly. Therefore, these organisations need to have more flexibility concerning their budget than for instance organisations working on issues like women empowerment or HIV/AIDS education as their working area will not change that much the following years.

One of the directors of a local NGO explains that although she finds the requirements problematic as it takes a lot of time, and it is bureaucratic, the bottom line is that the donor money is tax money. The interviewee explains that therefore the local NGOs have to accept the requirements. She explains that the task for her and her colleagues is to get the donor funding procedure as simplified as possible, but retaining the transparency and accountability as this is in everybody's interest, not just the donor's.

Two out of ten interviewees working at a local NGO do not find the conditions for donor funding a problem. One of the interviewees explains that it is still their own decision to apply for funds, and therefore to comply with the requirements. Also because of the flexibility of some donors, the requirements do not form a problem anymore. Another interviewee indicates that there are also positive aspects about the requirements as the local organisations try to learn from the donor organisations and try to apply the high technical standards of project management regarding transparency of financial management and good governance of the international NGOs.

An international interviewee states that she does not consider the requirements for donor funding necessarily to be a problem. This is primarily because Cambodia is an example of a country where it is very easy to establish an NGO, relatively easy to get funding, and there is little oversight from the government. As a result, the international interviewee believes there are far too many NGOs which are very ineffective and inefficient in how they use donor funds as, for example, some NGOs operate in a way which is not adequately accountable to the communities whom they claim to represent. Therefore, the international interviewee thinks it is good for NGOs to become more professional, in order for them to be held accountable for the funds they use and the beneficiaries and partners involved in their projects. Obviously, the interviewee says, there is a limit to these requirements in terms of balancing the need for standards and reporting with the implementation of activities as there is a change that local NGOs become more distant from the communities they represent, as was also discussed in the previous paragraph. The interviewee believes that donors do need more help to be able to be more sensitive to this.

## 4.4 Knowledge and strategy

As was displayed in chapter 2, literature shows that there seems to be a difference in knowledge and capacity between international and local NGOs. The question is whether the interviewees of the present study endorse the fact that there is a knowledge difference between the local Cambodian NGOs and the international donor organisations. As can be read in sub-paragraph 4.4.1 and 4.4.2, the results of the present study show that there is a knowledge difference between local and international NGOs. It turns out that local Cambodian NGOs have good knowledge of local issues, local communities and indigenous people, but there also seems to be a knowledge challenge within local NGOs. There is a language challenge for local NGOs as reports and proposals need to be written in English. Furthermore, these organisations seem to lack analytical, reflection and organisational skills. The international NGO staff members are said to have better analytical skills and knowledge of global issues, and they are considered good in writing reports and analysing situations.

The literature in chapter 2 also shows that local NGOs are said to lack strategic thinking and strategic planning that goes beyond short term level. Also here the question is whether local Cambodian NGOs endorse this lack of strategic thinking and long term strategic planning. As can be read in sub-paragraph 4.4.3 until 4.4.5, the results of the present study show that most Cambodian NGOs use a three year strategy, which can be considered as medium term strategies. Besides, the strategies of local NGOs are very much project-based and result-based, and it seems that the connection between the strategy and mission or vision of local NGOs is missing. Therefore, one could carefully conclude that local Cambodian NGOs need more strategic thinking and planning so that they are better able to link the specific programmes and projects to their mission and vision. The results also show that local NGOs do not endorse the fact that longer term strategic thinking is needed within their organisation. Internationals on the other hand, do see the need for a longer term strategic planning in order for the local NGOs to become less project-driven and result-based.

### 4.4.1 Knowledge within the local Cambodian NGO

Both the internationals and Cambodian interviewees agree on the fact that there is a knowledge difference between local Cambodian and international NGOs. All interviewees indicate that local NGOs have a knowledge advantage in comparison to international NGOs concerning knowledge of local issues. Local Cambodian NGOs seem to have good knowledge of the situation at local level, and because some local NGOs work directly with communities and indigenous people and know what kind of problems these communities or groups of people have to face, their grassroots community work is very strong. Local NGOs know exactly how to operate in their country and culture and many international interviewees indicate that Cambodians are very good in assessing the (political) situation in the country. As several interviewees explain, the political situation in Cambodia sometimes requires to know what can be said to the government and what not. Since the local NGOs have good knowledge of local issues, they have a better understanding of political sensitive issues than international NGOs. One interviewee states that there is knowledge and capacity in Cambodia, however, it may not be completely visible to internationals as it may be different from what

internationals expect. He says that Cambodians are good at working in details and organising at the last minute. Internationals however expect, according to the Cambodian interviewee, knowledge concerning writing reports and analytical skills, something which (as will be explained below) forms a challenge to many local Cambodian NGOs. According to this interviewee, there seems to be a discrepancy between the internationals' expectations of knowledge within local NGOs and the actual knowledge within local NGOs. The interviewee also says that local organisations find it difficult to articulate what they know already and what they have already in terms of knowledge, something what internationals find very important.

The interviewees indicate various aspects which show that there seems to be a knowledge challenge at local NGOs. First of all, there is a language challenge for local NGOs. Reports, proposals and audits need to be written in English which is for most local NGOs a time consuming activity. Some interviewees state that the English language is especially difficult for small NGOs working at grassroots level in the provinces of Cambodia. Even though these organisations might do good work at local level, it may look like they are doing not so well when they cannot articulate their work properly in English. Furthermore, one of the interviewees indicates that most local Cambodian NGOs experience a lack of documentation of information about the country and of the activities they have carried out in the past, a lack of reflection on these activities, and a lack of tools to reflect and document these information. The interviewees also indicate that local NGOs do not have as much experience with financial controls as international NGOs have. The most important aspect mentioned by the majority of the interviewees is the fact that local NGOs lack analytical skills and critical thinking. One international illustrates this by the fact that not many Cambodians have an explicit opinion about subjects such as how things ought to be organised or what they want to accomplish exactly with their NGO. His experience is that Cambodians are often not a full opponent in a discussion in the sense that they do not stick to their opinion in case this opinion differs from the other party involved in the discussion (often the donor organisation). The international finds it very unlikely that people always agree with one another, and he has noticed that a difference of opinion and sticking to one's opinion is more common in South Asia than in Cambodia. Furthermore, it seems that there is a poor availability of highly educated people within the Cambodian NGO sector, although this is changing over the last few years as more and more university graduates are working in the Cambodian NGO sector. According to one international working in the Cambodian NGO sector, local NGOs are 'narrow-viewed' and 'close minded'. He explains these two phrases by saying that the local NGOs have not much knowledge of issues like the changing world, the economic crisis, or climate change. As a result they are unaware how much these issues are affecting them. The fact that local NGOs seem to be 'narrow-viewed' and 'close-minded' may have its repercussion on strategy forming within local NGOs. Sub-paragraph 4.4.5 will elaborate more on the relation between knowledge and strategy within local NGOs.

One Cambodian and one international interviewee indicate that parts of the challenges, discussed above, that local NGOs have to face can be explained by three aspects. The first aspect is the fact that the upper class of Cambodia was targeted during the Khmer Rouge. Secondly, because of the hierarchical structure in NGOs and in daily life, and thirdly because of the current educational system in Cambodia. During the recent conflict in the country, especially the upper class and highly educated people were targeted and killed. One of the interviewees states that because of the years of conflict seventy percent of the current Cambodian population is under thirty years old, and sixty-two to sixty-five percent is under twenty-five. Right now the society is imbalanced and a group of higher educated people, which should be senior staff by now, is missing. In many organisations there are no older staff members from the earlier mentioned upper class with many years of experience who can pass on their knowledge to a younger generation in the organisation. This results in the fact that there are people that are doing their best in organisations, but have no experience in running an organisation, knowing how to manage staff, handle a budget, or doing analysis.

The hierarchical structure and the Cambodian culture of fear of losing face (as was explained in paragraph 2.8) can form an explanation for the earlier mentioned example of Cambodians who do not easily give their personal opinion. According to one international interviewee, the fear of losing face also makes that some local NGOs do not take the capacity building support which is provided by the donors seriously, as they do not want to admit that they are lacking capacity in that specific field. The international believes that there is a level of arrogance within local NGOs which makes them think they have adequate capacity and competencies, and therefore do not need to take up additional assistance. However, these organisations may lack capacity but do not want to admit this because it implies losing face.

In the current education system at schools and universities no analytical or critical thinking skills are learned. Both Cambodian and international interviewees state that the education system needs to promote analytical and critical thinking because critical thinking stimulates people to learn to question things. The art of questioning is, however, difficult within the hierarchical structure in the country and Cambodian culture. One of the interviewees states that learning analytical and critical skills should be implemented in the education system and cannot, as he often sees, be learned by trainings provided by donors as these trainings cannot replace or take over the role of education.

Another international interviewee also sees that donors sometimes try to solve problems at organisational level at local NGOs by capacity building and trainings about management, analytical and organisational skills. She explains that often expatriates are placed within local organisations to provide capacity building on organisational level. However, it seems that the organisational change is only there until the expatriate is present in the local NGOs. Furthermore, the turnover of local staff members is very high as they move to better paying organisations, bilateral organisations, banks or consultancy organisation, whereby the knowledge provided by capacity building is gone. One of the international interviewees also states that because of the fact that Cambodian staff members have to

spend too much time attending special training workshops provided by donors, they do not have enough time to work on regular activities. The interviewee states that trainings take much time, but on the other hand, some of the initiatives by donors have been really good and have helped improve the performance of the local NGOs.

#### *4.4.2 Knowledge within the international NGO*

Both Cambodian and international interviewees endorse the fact that international NGOs working in the Cambodian NGO sector have high capacity and knowledge of global issues, human rights and project management. International NGOs are experienced in working in various countries all over the world, and have large knowledge about development issues and the operation of NGOs. Donors seem to pick up (global) issues quicker than local organisations. When they pick up a certain issue from another country, they tend to generalise it into a programme. Besides, the Cambodian interviewees state that international NGOs are a good source to learn from, as international NGOs produce new concepts so that local NGOs can learn from other countries. Some interviewees say that international NGO staff members have better analytical skills, and they are considered good in writing reports and analysing situations. One Cambodian interviewee also states that internationals working at international NGOs seem to have more opportunities to talk to ambassadors and have easier access to officials in Cambodia than Cambodian NGO staff members have.

However, the Cambodian interviewees also indicate that international NGOs are limited in knowledge of the local picture, and the international NGOs' skills and education are sometimes not useful when working with indigenous people in Cambodia. It seems that donors try to apply their western style in Cambodia which is sometimes not that successful. It is also stated that donors are so-called 'recyclers' as they work with their own expatriate staff which they replace every two or three years.

In short, the results of the present study show that local Cambodian NGOs have good knowledge of local issues, local communities and indigenous people. There also seems to be a knowledge challenge within local NGOs concerning the English language, and local NGOs seem to lack analytical, reflection and organisational skills. The international NGO staff members are said to have better analytical skills, and they are considered good in writing reports and analysing situations. Having this said, the question rises what 'good' or 'usable' knowledge is. Perhaps good analytical and organisational skills are indeed necessary within the international aid system, however, in order to achieve social change in Cambodia perhaps other skills are more useful. For instance local NGOs that are working in the provinces of Cambodia have good contact with the communities and know what is going on in these communities and what change is necessary in order to improve their living conditions. These local NGOs do excellent work but have, as some interviewees say, sometimes difficulties with writing reports, especially in English. This lack of knowledge concerning the donor's language and lack of analytical or writing skills does not imply that the knowledge they have of the community is not 'good' knowledge. Therefore, when talking about knowledge within local and international NGOs, one should be careful with automatically assuming that the knowledge of

international NGOs and donors is 'good' knowledge, as the knowledge of local NGOs can be very useful too. In fact, the knowledge of local and international NGOs are complementing each other as they are both necessary within the NGO sector. Therefore, a good, horizontal and equal relation between local and international NGO is desired when looking at knowledge exchange and the optimal use of the available knowledge within these organisations. As one Cambodian interviewee states, international and local Cambodian NGOs need to listen to each other and create a space in which they can listen to one another and not, as is often stated, the donor stepping in and saying 'I know all about your country, and this is how you should do it'.

#### *4.4.3 A three year strategy*

The results of the present study show that all the local Cambodian NGOs involved in this study have a three year strategy. The interviewees state that some other NGOs may have a longer strategy with five years as a maximum, but a three year strategy is the most common in the Cambodian NGO sector. All NGOs have a mission, vision and goal. The Cambodian interviewees say that they create the strategy, vision, mission and goals of their organisation themselves and are not influenced by donors.

The interviewees give various reasons for the use of a three year strategy. First of all, they state that a three year strategy is chosen because the time span is medium term. Three years is not too long and not short, and after three years it is a good time to evaluate the impact of the programmes. Besides, as one interviewee explains, a three year strategy can be reliable, controlled and managed. Another reason for the use of a three year strategy is the fact that most donors provide money for three years, and therefore it is difficult to have a strategy for more than three years as you cannot guarantee the level of funding. Another often heard reason for using a three year strategy is the fact that the country is developing fast and also the (political) situation changes quite fast. Looking back at the last two decades, Cambodia has experienced major changes such as UN presence, a transition period and elections. As a researcher explains, it is not wrong to have a longer strategy than three years, as long as you are aware of and able to adapt to the changes in the country. One interviewee states that also the space in which civil society can operate changes fast. She explains that right now it seems that the government approach is that if they are criticised, and this could be for anything, whether it is about the education system or corruption, the government denies the issue and shuts down. According to this interviewee, the space in which civil society can operate has changed. She explains this by giving the example of the World Bank, which presented not long ago findings about corruption and other controversial and sensitive issues. Right now it is for civil society organisations not possible to address these issues because the space in which they can operate has become smaller. The interviewee explains that she together with colleagues, local and international NGOs is trying to figure out how to build a bridge and open the door again with the government so that they can start having a dialogue with them because, as she explains, civil society organisations cannot operate in the current vacuum. A researcher and one of the internationals interviewed say that the Cambodian culture also plays an important role in choosing a three year strategy over a longer strategy. People in Cambodia find it hard

to think ahead sometimes more than one year, let alone three years. Also the education system does not promote thinking in long terms, a two or three year strategy is often long enough.

One of the internationals gives another reason for the use of a three year strategy within the Cambodian NGO sector. He explains that this timeframe of three years originates from the international NGOs. Cambodians who at first worked at international NGOs now have started their own NGO. Therefore, models that require a three year strategy come from the outside, from international NGOs, and are now also implemented in local NGOs. Another international interviewed agrees by stating that maybe the international NGOs have never trained the local NGOs to think bigger than or beyond three years.

#### *4.4.4 Is more or longer term strategic thinking needed?*

The present study shows that most Cambodian NGOs have a mission, vision and a three year strategy. These three year strategies can be considered as medium term strategies. A very important aspect of strategy forming within local NGOs concerns the relation between the mission or vision and the strategies of local NGOs. A mission or vision is often related to a grand vision about change or development in society. Strategies are often related to specific programmes and projects. Something which is very important and which is also discussed in the literature overview of chapter 2, is that the strategies of local NGOs should be connected to their greater vision of change in society, and that the activities that are outlined in the strategy contribute to the longer term vision or mission of the local NGO. The results of the present study show that the missions and visions of the local NGOs that were part of the present study indeed concern a greater vision on change and development in Cambodia. The strategies used by the local NGOs part of the present study are very much project-based and result-based. However, the connection between these missions and strategies seems to be missing. First of all, the missions and vision of the local NGOs that are part of the present study are so broad, that it is very easy to say that the strategy is indeed created in connection with the greater vision. Therefore, one could question whether the activities are really connected to the longer term vision and mission of the local NGOs. Secondly, something which is mentioned in the previous sub-paragraph also shows that the connection between strategies and missions or visions seems to be missing in local Cambodian NGOs. In the previous sub-paragraph, the Cambodian interviewees state that they use a three year strategy because of the fact that most donors provide money for three years. This makes it difficult to have a strategy for more than three years as the organisations cannot guarantee the level of funding for a longer period. In other words, the method of providing funding for three years has its repercussions on the strategies that are made within the local NGOs, as local NGOs conform to the funding period of international donors. The local NGOs use three year strategies which are often linked to donor money and are thus linked to certain projects. Because their strategy is linked to the three year donor money provision and is project-based, this strategy is not linked to a longer term mission or vision of the local NGO. This makes that, instead of creating projects and strategies that contribute to their mission, local NGOs keep on reacting on issues that are important at the moment of applying for donor money. When the funding stops after three years, the local NGO will sort out what

topic is important at that specific moment. In other words, the three year funding and the project funding of donors does not stimulate local NGOs to think about their own longer term mission or goal as they just hop from one project to another project which makes that their strategies stay very ad hoc and linked to donors' interests instead of linked to their own mission. The results of the present study thus indicate that often the connection between the strategy and missions seems to be missing, and therefore one could carefully say that local NGOs need more strategic thinking and planning so that they are better able to link the specific programmes and projects to their mission or vision. The question rises whether local Cambodian NGOs have the opinion that more or a longer term strategic thinking is needed.

The results of the present study show that most Cambodian interviewees indicate that longer term strategic thinking or a longer strategy is not necessary within the Cambodian NGO sector. They are satisfied with the strategies and time frames that they are using at this moment. The Cambodian interviewees indicate that although many local NGOs do work together on the practical level and are member of many workgroups, there is little cooperation on strategic level between local NGOs in Cambodia.

The internationals however are a bit more critical when it comes to strategic thinking within local Cambodian NGOs, as they do see the need for a longer term strategic planning in order for the local NGOs to become less project-driven and result-based. They believe that Cambodian NGOs should have more long term visions and strategies for the development of their country and the issues that the NGOs are working on in specific. This long term vision should interrelate (more) with the short term goals and activities of the Cambodian NGOs. Especially strategies concerning peacebuilding or human rights activities should be longer than three to five years. One international interviewee indicates that when looking at peacebuilding, she is a big advocate for a long term strategy. She argues for creating some kind of framework that says; 'this donor is going to accompany the local NGO for the next years on a certain kind of change, but the donor understands that the local NGO can only concretely say right now what is going to happen the next twelve months'. She explains that right now, the Cambodian NGO sector is locked into a result-based change, but the goal should be to try to invest in people and change over a long period of time in order to reach a long term change. Right now, there seems to be a tension between these two aspects because Cambodians do not look ahead very far and their strategy is only medium term. Another international together with one of the directors of a local Cambodian NGO agrees that especially in peacebuilding and human rights one should be flexible enough to react on the changes in the context of the country, next to a long term vision in which is stated where the organisation wants to go to and what the conceptual context of the NGOs is. One of the Cambodian researchers adds that using a five to ten year strategy can be more effective in terms of having a goal or vision, not necessarily knowing how to get there, but having a sense of where the NGO wants to go to.

#### *4.4.5 Relation between knowledge and strategy*

As was earlier discussed in sub-paragraph 4.4.1, the knowledge level within local NGOs is also related to strategic thinking and planning of local NGOs. As is said in the previous sub-paragraph, the international interviewees believe that the local NGOs are locked in a result-based idea and that more long term vision is needed. These long term visions should interrelate with the short term goals and activities of Cambodian NGOs. When looking at the knowledge level within local NGOs, it was earlier concluded that local NGOs especially have knowledge of local issues and communities, and, as an international working in the Cambodian NGO sector explains in sub-paragraph 4.4.1, that local NGOs are 'narrow-viewed' and 'close minded'. The international explains these two phrases by saying that the local NGOs have not much knowledge of issues like the changing world, the economic crisis, or climate change. As a result they are unaware how much these issues are affecting Cambodia and its people. Taking this into account, one should realise that creating a long term strategy and vision requires to take not only local but also worldwide issues into account. It thus seems that the knowledge level (and lack of knowledge of worldwide issues) of the local NGOs may influence the strategies that are made within these local NGOs. It seems that because of the fact that local NGOs seem to lack this broader knowledge the local NGOs' strategies stay result-based and short or medium term.

Also the fact that in the current education system in Cambodia no analytical or critical thinking skills are learned may have its repercussions on the development of strategies within local NGOs. Writing strategies requires an analytical way of thinking and assessing the current situation both in the country and worldwide, and after that linking these issues to strategies, frameworks, plans and log frames. It requires transforming something analytical and abstract into a practical strategy. The fact that local NGOs seem to lack analytical skills may thus influence the way in which their strategies are made.

### **4.5 Civic Driven Change**

The second research question of the present study '*Does the Civic Driven Change concept offer inspiration or possibilities to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector for overcoming some of the problems like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge*' will be answered in this paragraph. In order to obtain an answer to this question, three internationals and four Cambodians working in the Cambodian NGO sector were interviewed. As can be read in sub-paragraph 4.5.1, the results of the present study show that the interviewees are positive about the Civic Driven Change concept. They believe that this concept can indeed offer inspiration to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector. However, the interviewees also mention some remarks concerning the CDC concept, which can be read in sub-paragraph 4.5.2.

#### *4.5.1 Can Civic Driven Change offer inspiration to the Cambodian NGO sector?*

The four Cambodian interviewees who were part of the Programme Support Team of ICCO (see Case Study 1) and who are familiar with Civic Driven Change concept are positive about this concept. They see it as an innovative and good idea and would like to learn from the new concept. They all believe

that this concept can offer inspiration to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector. They also think that the idea of Civic Driven Change and a more community led way of working in the NGO sector might form a possibility to tackle problems of lack of ownership and NGO-isation as the emphasis of the CDC concept lies on the community and a bottom-up approach instead of a top-down way of working in which local organisations and communities might have less ownership. In line with this, one of the Cambodian interviewees states that especially in Cambodia, community empowerment and advocacy is needed. He believes that these activities might be part of the new concept of Civic Driven Change. He explains that community development and empowerment is about how the community can be empowered. In this process it is important that an NGO not only runs a project, but also lets the community participate from the beginning of the project and during the whole cycle of the project in order to help identifying issues, help planning, and implementing the project. He believes that the Civic Driven Change concept tries to analyse this process in detail by asking who can make a change and how they can do that. This is in line with what the international interviewee who is working as an advisor at a local NGO says in sub-paragraph 4.2.4. Although this interviewee is not familiar with the CDC concept, his vision shows many similarities with Civic Driven Change. This interviewee says that Cambodia is stuck in community based development. However, development aid and the Cambodian development industry should not focus on community based development, but the community itself should be leading and should be involved at the strategic level instead of the programmatic level of development aid. What this interviewee thus suggests is that, alike with the CDC concept, in Cambodia 'civic actors' such as communities, local governments and citizens, should have the ownership over any kind of development or change and that by doing this, these Cambodian civic actors can create their own strategy which is based on their own (local) knowledge.

One of the internationals interviewed sees the CDC concept as an interesting framework, but not more than just a framework. The concept can be used as a steppingstone for further debate within the (international) NGO sector. There are various aspects which he finds interesting about the CDC concept. First of all, he believes that there is a fundamental truth in the idea that when the NGO sector is talking about change within society, the government and the private sector are always mentioned as first without looking at the community or civil society. Besides, the international interviewee has the opinion that the CDC concept can be useful during further debate about the role of civil society in Cambodia which he finds to be very necessary. This because, according to this interviewee, many local NGOs do not really consider what an NGO or civil society is and what the core business of these organisations is. He believes that local Cambodian NGOs do not thoroughly consider what the difference is between civil action and community service, and believes that local Cambodian NGOs are providing more community service than civil action. Furthermore, the interviewee states that the original paper about CDC written by Alan Fowler contains a vision on social development which is not deterministic or teleological, but sees this development as a chaotic process. This implies that NGOs' approaches to social development in which a clear final destination is formulated and in which one believes that at the end of the process one has reached what was initially intended, are by definition not the right approaches. The interviewee explains that the CDC concept forces the NGO sector, both

internationally and in Cambodia, to rethink the role of the sector. However, this international interviewee states that because the CDC concept is at this moment not more than a framework, further debate within the international NGO sector but in particularly in the Cambodian NGO sector is needed before the concept could become more than just a theoretical framework.

#### *4.5.2 Critical remarks*

Both the Cambodian and the international interviewees have some critical remarks on the CDC concept. One of the most important comments concerns the fact how to alter the concept from a theoretical concept into a more practical concept, in other words, how to operationalise Civic Driven Change. Although CDC and the fact that change should come from the community is seen as a good idea, all interviewees state that the biggest problem in this concept is how to make it applicable. It will take a long time before the idea can be brought into practise, and to change the idea to a specific programme. In this line of thinking, a Cambodian interviewee states that although change driven by the community is necessary in Cambodia, the practical implementation is going to be difficult. He believes that in order for the community to be heard, it is necessary to set up a sort of network in line with the CDC concept in which the community can express their needs and concerns. Although he has the opinion that this network is necessary and a good way for the community to get heard, he fears that eventually the community might lose their representation. The interviewee explains that in the Cambodian NGO sector the last two and a half years there has been a lot of focus on the fact that it is necessary to build a wider network of community representation. He says that it turned out that as soon as the idea of a wider network was brought into practise, many NGOs and donors wanted to be part of this process and to be part in the funding opportunities that were involved with these projects. However, as the Cambodian interviewee states, the more funding there was available (by different donors), the more exhausted the people in the community (community representatives) got because they had to stay in touch with all these different NGOs involved. This resulted in a situation where community representatives sometimes had to spent one month in Phnom Penh, visiting all kinds of NGOs, without visiting and consulting their own community. It turned out that all these visits to different donors exhausted the representatives without them being able to do anything for their own communities. The interviewee states that it proved to be that the more the community representatives were dragged away from the community, the more representation of the community had been lost. He fears that the same would happen with the concept of Civic Driven Change. When the representation of the community is gone, it would mean that also the ownership of the community is gone. The network that was initiated by the community in the first place in order for them to express their needs, would slowly move into a new NGO. He explains that to avoid this, Civic Driven Change and the implementation of the concept has to be carefully looked at.

A second remark, mentioned by one of the Cambodian interviewees, concerns the three levels in which the Cambodian NGO sector is divided. The interviewee explains that the sector is divided in NGOs who are strong in working on local level (NGOs working with grassroots people, both on community or neighbourhood level), NGOs which are good in working with mid-level government

organisations such as community councils or districts, and NGOs that are good at working on national level. Especially for the NGOs working on mid-level or national level, working with the concept of CDC will be a challenge as they are not used to working with grassroots. In line with this, as is explained by the international interviewee in sub-paragraph 4.2.4, it will be difficult for local NGOs to change their work from being a community based organisation towards a community lead or community driven organisation.

Another critical remark concerning Civic Driven Change in Cambodia mentioned by one of the Cambodian interviewees, is the Cambodian culture and the patronage system present in the country. He explains that within this patronage system, the tendency is that the powerful, rich and knowledgeable want to be the patron. This kind of culture still exists in the Cambodian system, and also within NGOs. It will therefore not be easy to implement Civic Driven Change, since the essence of the concept is change initiated by the community, the client. The interviewee believes that for this reason the patrons in the country will not be receptive to the ideas of Civic Driven Change. One of the international interviewees agrees and explains that one of the biggest factors in community development has been the hierarchical nature of the Cambodian society. The hierarchical structure has not gone away because the country has elections or democracy nowadays, it is still very strong. She explains that because of the hierarchical structure, the way the government works looks like a cross between a patrimonial and a communist old Soviet style wielding power of the state. The current government has a controlling influence on everything and is very good at it. She explains that the NGO sector does not like the fact that part of what the government is doing is taking power away from people, but the reality is that they have such a strong hold on the country that it would be very hard to change that. The interviewee fears that if people try to change this, it would result in a bloody revolution and then, she says, the country would be back where it was in 1975. These two interviewees thus say that Civic Driven Change as an idea or inspiration across the whole country might be difficult because hierarchical structures are part of the culture and political monopoly.

The international interviewee also wonders whether the Cambodian people are willing to step up and claim their rights in order to achieve change in society. Cambodians first and foremost take care of and operate only within their own family. They will trust their family, even if one of their family members cheats on them or steals money from them, they still operate within their family system. The interviewee explains that Cambodians will do anything for their family but outside of that there is much less loyalty or trust. Of course, this is exacerbated by years of conflict, but many people say that this social aspect has been in the country for centuries. There is no broad across the society solidarity as it is still not the right environment for Cambodians to feel that they can trust anybody outside of their little grouping. In addition, she says that Cambodia as a country for Civic Driven Change is fairly tentative because of its history. It is really easy as an outsider to forget how much the Cambodians have been through in the most recent past. The period of the Khmer rouge did not end in 1979, as it was followed by ten more years of uprisings and people struggling with each other, marching down streets, and having issues with trusting each other. And then the UN came to Cambodia, a period in which many

were fighting for power and positions all the way through to 1999 and 2000. The international interviewee explains that it is important to realise that it is really recent that the Cambodians do not have leaders calling them to follow, pick up arms, and give up their life for the sake of an ideology. And then the western NGOs come along and say that they have to change their country. It is not strange that the Cambodians say 'give us a break! We have done all this, we have been there'. The perception of the interviewee of the Cambodian family is that all they want to do is being able to send their children to school and have a quiet life. According to the interviewee, the expectation that civil society is going to lead a massive political or social change is not going to happen in the next ten or fifteen years. Interestingly enough, this international interviewee working in the Cambodian NGO sector thus sees the Civic Driven Change concept as another (new) ideology in which this time western people and international NGOs are the ones who come along and say that it is the people who should change their country. Since CDC is, according to this interviewee, a new ideology which follows a long list of ideologies which were passed in review in the last century, Cambodia is not ready for a new ideology and therefore, civil society is not going to lead a massive political or social change within the next ten of fifteen years.

#### *4.5.3 CDC in relation to lack of ownership, NGO-isation, and lack of knowledge and strategy*

In the concept of Civic Driven Change, all the aspects (ownership, NGO-isation, knowledge and strategy) that are dealt with in the previous paragraphs of this chapter are intertwined. First of all, (local) knowledge of communities and local NGOs play an important role in the CDC concept. As was indicated in sub-paragraph 4.4.2, one should be careful with automatically assuming that the knowledge of international NGOs and donors, about for instance writing reports and analysing data, is 'good' knowledge. In the CDC concept, it is especially this local knowledge of local NGOs that plays a central role because civic actors base their activities and strategies on this local knowledge and not on knowledge, requirements and demands of (international) donor organisations. When, in accordance with the CDC concept, civic actors and communities have ownership over the development or change in their country, and when strategies of local NGOs are based on the demands of these communities and local actors, and on the local knowledge of these people (instead of on the knowledge and demands of the international donor), the NGO-isation and top-down way of working of local NGOs can be tackled.

In the case of Cambodia, however, one should pay attention to what was discussed in sub-paragraph 4.4.5, that local Cambodian NGOs do lack knowledge of international issues and that the knowledge level (and lack of knowledge of worldwide issues) of the local NGOs may influence the strategies that are made within these local NGOs. As was indicated in sub-paragraph 4.4.5, because of the fact that local NGOs seem to lack this broader knowledge also the local NGOs' strategies stay project-based and result-based. Although the Civic Driven Change concept suggests that it is the knowledge of local issues and the local NGOs' strategies that are important to create a community driven change, one should realise that if one intends to work according to the new Civic Driven Change paradigm, one

should pay attention to the fact that knowledge of international and worldwide issues and long term strategic thinking is currently missing at local Cambodian NGOs. Therefore, it is important that a more horizontal relation instead of the current top-down relation is established between local and international NGOs so that these organisations can exchange and benefit better from each others' knowledge and strategic thinking.

## 4.6 Conclusion

The two research questions of the present study read: '*Do local NGOs in Cambodia endorse the problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge*' and '*Does the Civic Driven Change concept offer inspiration or possibilities to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector for overcoming some of the problems like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge*'. In this paragraph, the answers to the research questions that were given in this chapter will be summarised. In sub-paragraph 4.6.1 the first research question will be answered. The second research question will be answered in sub-paragraph 4.6.2. The discussion about these findings (and the discussion about the case studies which are dealt with in the next chapter) can be found in chapter 6.

### 4.6.1 Answer to research question 1

The first question of the present study read: '*Do local NGOs in Cambodia endorse the problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge*'. The results of the present study which are displayed in the previous paragraphs have shown that the interviewees part of the present study do not give one univocal answer to this research question. Often the international interviewees have different opinions than the local interviewees. Besides, also between the local interviewees opinions differ.

#### Ownership

The results of the present study show that five out of ten of the local NGOs that were part of the present study have full ownership over the activities and programmes they carry out. The results also show that some local NGOs lack ownership. Three out of ten of the local NGOs part of the present study do not have full ownership over their programmes and projects as they first sort out on which projects money is available, then check whether these topics and projects fit their organisations' mission and vision, after which they apply for donor money. The international interviewees, one Cambodian interviewee and a Cambodian researcher believe that there seems to be an ownership problem at many local Cambodian NGOs, and that donors have a significant influence on the programme issues, geographical area and format of the programmes and projects of local NGOs in Cambodia. The level of ownership also seems to depend for a large extent on the individuals and leadership of an NGO. The Cambodian researcher states that because of cultural and historical factors there is no general sense of ownership within the Cambodian. Besides, the researcher also states that Cambodia is a country where there is an absence of a social contract. These factors make it difficult to build a sense of ownership in Cambodia, and in local NGOs in specific.

### **NGO-isation**

The results displayed in the previous paragraphs show that the local Cambodian NGOs that were part of the present study have to comply with different kinds of requirements, criteria and conditions of donor organisations when applying for donor money. It turns out that some international donors seem to be very strict concerning these requirements, other donors are considered to be more flexible. Furthermore, it turns out that the requirements form a problem to most of the local NGOs. Only two interviewees say that it does not form a problem to them. The results of the present study also show that the requirements change the work of the organisation but most local NGOs indicate that it does not change the organisation itself. This can be called into question as it is likely that the requirements do change the NGO organisational wise and that the organisation becomes more distant from its local communities because of the amount of time that is spent on upward accountability towards the donor and not towards the constituencies. Two interviewees indicate that individual capacity of the leadership of the organisation and the maturity of the NGO (sector) are important elements regarding the compliance of a local NGO with donors' requirements.

### **Knowledge and strategy**

The results of the present study, displayed in sub-paragraph 4.4, show that there is a knowledge difference between local and international NGOs. It turns out that local Cambodian NGOs have good knowledge of local issues, local communities and indigenous people, but there also seems to be a knowledge challenge within local NGOs. It turns out that there is a language challenge for local NGOs as reports and proposals need to be written in English. Furthermore, these organisations seem to lack organisational, reflection, and analytical skills, as in the current education system no analytical or critical thinking skills are learned. The international NGO staff members are said to have better analytical skills and knowledge of global issues, and they are considered good in writing reports and analysing situations. One should, however, be careful with assuming that the knowledge of international donors and international NGOs is by definition 'good' and 'usable' knowledge, as the knowledge of local issues can be useful too. The knowledge of local and international NGOs are complementing each other and therefore a good, horizontal and equal relationship is necessary within the NGO sector.

The results of the present study show that most Cambodian NGOs use a three year strategy, which can be considered as medium term strategies. Besides, the strategies of local NGOs are very much project-based and result-based, and it seems that the connection between the strategy and mission or vision of local NGOs is missing. Therefore, one could carefully conclude that local Cambodian NGOs need more strategic thinking and planning so that they are better able to link the specific programmes and projects to their mission and vision. Local NGOs do not endorse the fact that longer term strategic thinking is needed within their organisation. Internationals on the other hand, do see the need for a longer term strategic planning in order for the local NGOs to become less project-driven and result-based. There seems to be a relation between the knowledge level and strategic thinking within local NGOs. Because of the fact that local NGOs seem to lack knowledge of worldwide issues (which is required for creating long term strategies), strategies stay result-based and short or medium term. Also

the lack of analytical and critical thinking skills may influence the way in which strategies are made within local NGOs.

#### *4.6.2 Answer to research question 2*

The second research question of the present study read: *'Does the Civic Driven Change concept offer inspiration or possibilities to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector for overcoming some of the problems like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge'*. The Cambodian interviewees that were interviewed about Civic Driven Change see the concept as an innovative and good idea and would like to learn from the CDC concept. They all believe that this concept can offer inspiration to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector. Also one of the internationals interviewed about CDC believes that this concept is an interesting framework. However, this interviewee sees it as nothing more than just a framework which can be used as a steppingstone for further debate within the (international) NGO sector. The interviewees all believe that especially in Cambodia, Civic Driven Change and empowerment of the community is necessary. The Cambodian development industry should not focus on being community based, but the community itself should be leading, and communities, local governments and citizens, should have the ownership over any kind of development or change in their country. By doing this, these civic actors can create their own strategy which is based on their own (local) knowledge.

The interviewees have some critical remarks concerning the CDC concept. The first comment concerns the fact how to alter the concept from a theoretical concept into a more practical concept. Another remark mentioned is that for NGOs that are currently working on mid-level or national level, working with the concept of CDC will be a challenge as they are not used to working with grassroots. Also the Cambodian hierarchical structure and patronage system may form a challenge to CDC in Cambodia as the tendency is that the powerful, rich and knowledgeable (the patron) take the lead, and not the community (the client). One interviewee sees the CDC concept as a new ideology and questions whether Cambodia is ready for a new ideology.

# Chapter 5. Part II - Case studies

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## 5.1 Overview

In reaction to the issues of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge which, as was shown in the previous chapter, seem to challenge the effectiveness of local Cambodian NGOs to a greater or lesser extent, various initiatives have taken place which may help tackle these discussed problems. ICCO, a Dutch NGO which is operating in Cambodia, has implemented the 'Programmatic Approach'. As will be further explained in paragraph 5.2, this initiative prioritises ownership over a narrowly focused top-down programme conceptualisation (Henke, 2007). This new approach could form an answer to problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation among local Cambodian organisations, as ICCO strives to change the current top-down relation between international and local NGOs by introducing this new way of working: the Programmatic Approach.

The second initiative is the NGO Forum in Cambodia. This forum is an example of an initiative where local NGOs share information and debate on issues that are affecting Cambodia's development, and jointly advocate NGOs' interests at government level and at other authorities. The NGO Forum might counter problems like lack of knowledge and lack of strategy as the NGOs involved in the forum share ideas, talk about current issues, and create joint strategies. This sharing can increase the knowledge of the involved NGOs and can make them aware of the importance of a well-considered strategy.

In this chapter, two evaluative case studies into the Programmatic Approach of ICCO (paragraph 5.2) and the NGO Forum (paragraph 5.3) will be carried out.

## 5.2 Case Study 1: Programmatic Approach in Cambodia

### 5.2.1 Overview

In this paragraph, a closer look will be taken at the Programmatic Approach of ICCO in Cambodia. Although ICCO has implemented this approach in its entire organisation, this case study will only focus on the Cambodian implementation. This because the researcher was only able to research the implementation, ICCO and its local partners in this specific country. As the data were gathered from April 2009 until July 2009, the following paragraphs represent the actual situation at that time.

As was stated in the previous paragraph, the Programmatic Approach of ICCO could form an answer to problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation among local Cambodian organisations, as ICCO strives to change the current top-down relation between international and local NGOs by introducing this new way of working: the Programmatic Approach. The Programmatic Approach in Cambodia strives to create coalitions of local NGOs that are working in the same field. It is expected that these coalitions could form an answer to problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation as by forming the coalitions, the current top-down relation is changed. The idea is that when local NGOs form coalitions,

they start thinking more about how they want to improve the development of Cambodia, and what they want to achieve with their own NGO and the NGOs that they are working with. When the NGOs in these coalitions are thinking more about these issues, one expects that the chances become smaller that local NGOs unquestioningly accept the international NGO's policy and strategy for their country and their NGO. This because, as being part of a coalition, the local NGOs take ownership over their activities and future plans and therefore become less NGO-ised and less led by international NGOs. Besides forming an answer to the problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation, it is possible that the Programmatic Approach could also form answers to the problems of lack of strategy and lack of knowledge within local NGOs. It is expected that the coalitions that are formed might tackle the problem of lack of (long term) strategy within the local NGOs. This because the NGOs that are part of the Programmatic Approach might form common strategies within their coalition and therewith create a long(er) joint vision on the development of Cambodia. It is also possible that the NGOs part of the coalition will share knowledge and learn from each other and therewith they may tackle the problem of lack of knowledge within local NGOs.

At the moment that the data for this case study were gathered, ICCO and the local NGOs that are part of the Programmatic Approach workshops, were still in the middle of the implementation of the Programmatic Approach and a coalition forming process. Therefore, it is in this case study not possible to come to final conclusions and answers to the question whether the Programmatic Approach of ICCO does form an answer to problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation. However, it is possible to form conclusions over the implementation of the Programmatic Approach, the process of coalition forming up to the moment that the data were gathered for this case study, and whether the Programmatic Approach has helped tackling the problems of lack of knowledge and lack of strategy. This case study will thus take a closer look at the coalition forming process up to July 2009, and will come with preliminary conclusions and answers relating to issues like lack of ownership and NGO-isation.

In the next three sub-paragraphs an introduction will be given into the Programmatic Approach of ICCO (sub-paragraph 5.2.2), the Programmatic Approach of ICCO in Cambodia (sub-paragraph 5.2.3) and the programming workshops in Cambodia (sub-paragraph 5.2.4). These sub-paragraphs are based on a Reflection Report of the coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO in Cambodia, Roger Henke (Henke, 2007). Sub-paragraph 5.2.5 gives an overview of the coalitions that are studied in this case study and is followed by sub-paragraph 5.2.6, in which the opinions of the interviewees about the Programmatic Approach are displayed. In sub-paragraph 5.2.7, a closer look is taken at the four coalitions that are part of the present study, and is followed by sub-paragraph 5.2.8, in which the coalition's visions, strategies and future plans are displayed. Sub-paragraph 5.2.9 represents the evaluation of the coalition forming process and the Programmatic Approach made by the PST members and the coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO. This sub-paragraph is followed by sub-paragraph 5.2.10, which forms the conclusion to this case study about the Programmatic Approach of ICCO in Cambodia.

### *5.2.2 ICCO and the Programmatic Approach<sup>1</sup>*

Development aid by Dutch NGOs is, like in other European countries, paid for by a mix of private and public funds. The public funds were channelled through the 'Medefinancierings' (MFS) budget that was, until recently, only accessible for a very limited number of organisations, among which ICCO. The NGOs that were members were selected based upon the 'compartmentalisation along socio-political lines' in the Netherlands: the 'polarisation' of society into Protestants, Catholics, Socialists and Liberals. Each of these traditional political communities had a representing NGO which received money via the MFS budget, with ICCO representing the Protestant community. However, the last decade the MFS budget has been opened up for competition beyond these tradition members. The call for the four-year proposal of 2007-2010 was opened up to all NGOs present in the Netherlands. Another change was that the government limited its contribution to 75% of the total budget plan. Especially for organisations like ICCO, which are nearly totally dependent upon the MSF money, there was a pressing need to stand out of the crowd of NGOs and applicants. ICCO's response was as follows:

- "It did not submit its own business plan but formed an alliance with five other (smaller) protestant development organisations and handed in an alliance plan;
- This plan commits ICCO to three major changes in the way it operates: a programmatic approach, co-responsibility of partners in the South for ICCO Alliance policy decisions, and a decentralised governance and operational structure" (Henke, 2007, 4).

All these decisions originated from earlier developments. First of all, forming an alliance with other Protestant NGOs was in line with an ongoing process of closer collaboration of the Protestant NGOs present in the Netherlands. Secondly, co-responsibility had been an intention for a longer time and is embedded in ICCO's partnership policy. A policy paper from 2003 and a Code of Conduct from 2004 outline this policy by emphasising shared goals, mutual respect (for each other's autonomy), and transparency and accountability. In the business plan of 2007-2010 this policy is taken onto the next level with "its commitment towards co-responsibility of the ICCO Alliance and its Southern partners for policy development" (Henke, 2007, 5). Lastly, the Programmatic Approach followed earlier choices regarding thematic foci of the ICCO activities. In 2000 choices were made for three thematic foci: "(1) sustainable economic development/aid and trade, (2) basic services, and (3) democratisation and security" (Henke, 2007, 5). These three themes are now labelled as "fair and sustainable economic development, (access to) basic services, and democratisation and security" (Henke, 2007, 5).

The question is, what is a programmatic approach. This term is explained by Frans (2007; cited in Henke, 2007, 5) as an approach which emphasizes a "comprehensive approach in a given sector or thematic area of intervention, coordinated planning and implementation involving a variety of relevant actors and a strong emphasis on local ownership" (Frans, 2007, 2; cited in Henke, 2007, 5). The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) defines the ideal typical programmatic approach as "an integrated set of activities designed to achieve a related set of outcomes in a relatively comprehensive way. A [programmatic approach] is a way of engaging in development cooperation

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Henke (2007)

based on the principle of coordinated support for a locally owned programme of development. The approach includes four key elements:

- Leadership by the host country or organisation
- A single program and budget framework
- Donor coordination and harmonisation of procedures
- Efforts to increase the use of local procedures over time with regard to program design and implementation, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation” (CIDA, 2003, 2; cited in Henke, 2007, 6).

There are three varieties of programmatic approaches applied in the NGO sector. The first variety is one of a large local NGO which is supported by a number of different donors. The policy decisions and strategies are developed and owned by the local NGO. The second one is one where several donors and several local actors are involved. This situation is close to a network arrangement with different kinds of relationships between the donors and local actors. In this variant, it may be difficult to identify the programmatic aims, objectives and achievements, and it may be difficult to attribute successes and failures to specific actors. A third variant is one of a single donor NGO moving from a project approach to a programmatic approach. This is done by bringing together a number of local partners who support a ‘programme’. The donor seeks to improve the impact of its activities by linking and synchronizing these partners. It is expected that this will lead to mutual learning, synergy and improved sustainability. This last variant represents the Programmatic Approach of ICCO in Cambodia: a single NGO donor moving from a project approach to a programmatic approach by bringing together a number of partners that it supports in a certain programme.

However, in this specific approach the ownership is with the donor. Henke (2007, 7) draws the conclusion that achieving the core elements of the above mentioned definition of a programmatic approach of CIDA (an integrated set of activities designed to achieve a related set of outcomes in a relatively comprehensive way, and support from a locally owned programme of development) is only compatible (in theory) within a government-to-government relationship or within the NGO variety of a large local NGO supported by a number of different donors. In other varieties, thus also in the one that is applicable to the Programmatic Approach of ICCO in Cambodia, there is an inherent tension between ownership and a programmatic approach.

ICCO has recognised the reality of these obstacles from the start, as internal documents about the Programmatic Approach always mention the tendency of programmes becoming top-down designed donor creations. This recognition is invariably dealt with by stating that the principle of co-responsibility safeguards against the domination of a top-down design. The inherent tension between a programme and ownership is real and programme concerns will overrule ownership unless one explicitly prioritises ownership and takes the process from that perspective. For Cambodia, ICCO made “such a conscious decision to prioritise ownership over a narrowly focused top-down programme conceptualisation” (Henke, 2007, 11).

### 5.2.3 Programmatic Approach in Cambodia<sup>2</sup>

The first step for programming in Cambodia was a decision by ICCO in 2004 to focus on democratisation and peacebuilding. In 2005 two in-country external consultants were hired for an identification mission which included a situation analysis and further suggestions for programme development and a programme focus. Based on the report of the consultants ICCO decided to have an in-country presence and the programming focus should prioritise ownership. The main consultant (R. Henke) was hired to become the ICCO in-country programme coordinator. The conclusions of the programme identification mission were taken on board by ICCO in January/February 2006 and were shared with ICCO's Cambodian partners during a partner meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2006. This partner meeting was the first time ever that ICCO consulted its partners in Cambodia. During this meeting, the partners were briefed and ICCO raised awareness on the imminent changes and asked for feedback. The meeting was positive but there was also a fair amount of worry and a lot of difficulty amongst participants to really understand what was presented. This stemmed mainly from the fact that there was a lack of understanding among the local partners of what the Programmatic Approach is about.

In the figure below, an overview of the presentation is given which was presented to the Cambodian partners during the partner meeting of April 2006.

#### **What does this mean for partners in Cambodia?**

- ICCO will continue to work with Civil Society Organisations in Cambodia.
- Stronger focus on the theme of Democratisation, Human Rights, Peacebuilding.
- A need for programmatic approach: collaboration for joint results.
- ICCO will consult with partners on how 'co-responsibility' can work out in Cambodia.

#### **Programme Development: a draft outline**

Overall goal: A Cambodia where there is social justice and equitable participation of vulnerable citizens in the conduct of public affairs.

#### Objectives:

- Improved respect for, awareness of and ability to demand social justice.
- Increased ability of vulnerable Cambodians to influence decisions affecting their lives through collective action.
- Increased political influence of national level rights' advocates.
- More policy and practice of ICCO and like-minded NGO donors and their partners is evidence-based.
- Better donor coordination.

#### **The programme management**

- Start in September 2006 with a 12-month start-up phase. Use a process approach to further define this programme with ICCO partners and other stakeholders. Validate programme focus and roles.

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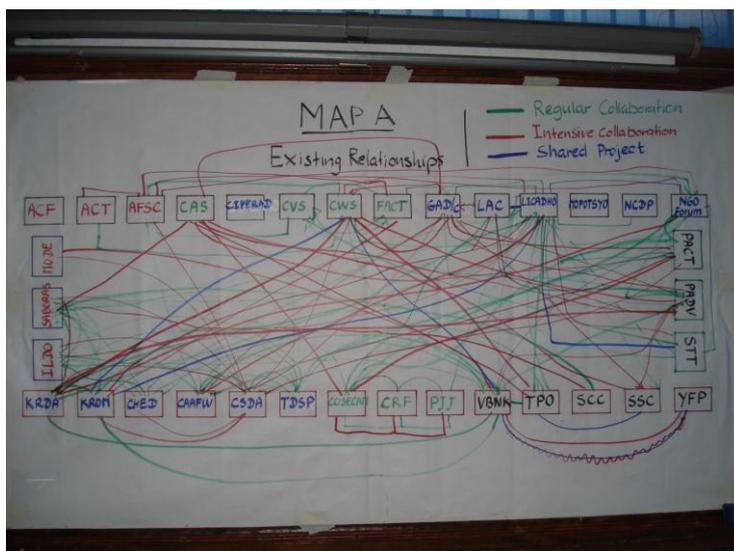
<sup>2</sup> Based on Henke (2007)

- Recruit a Democratization and Peace Building Programme Manager to facilitate this process. This is not an ICCO field office or representative, but a thematic specialist who can invest in network formation, knowledge management, and donor coordination.
- Grant management and monitoring will remain a head quarter function. However, this Democratization and Peace Building Programme Manager will have limited delegated funds for innovation and research.

**Figure 2: Power point outline partner meeting 5 April 2006 (Henke, 2007, 13)**

### 5.2.4 Programming workshops<sup>3</sup>

To implement the Programmatic Approach in Cambodia, various programming workshops were held with the local partners of ICCO. The first Cambodian programming workshop for which the local partners of ICCO were invited was held in November 2006. For ICCO it was important to find out more about the relationships between its local partners. Therefore, the focus during this workshop was on a partner mapping exercise in which the participants of the workshop could indicate with which partners they have a work relationship. ICCO chose for doing a partnership mapping exercise because they believe that when one asks the participants to think about partnerships, the participants are required to stay as close as possible to what they currently do, are interested in, and 'network' around. The second reason is that when one wants to create a programme which is collectively owned by its NGO implementers, this can only be done with NGOs which are collaborating with each other. Therefore, the mapping exercises was seen as a possibility for the partners to identify the existing relationships they have with other organisations that go beyond simply networking amongst current partners, and to identify relationships between partners and other NGOs which are not ICCO partners. This was especially important because although there is plenty of networking activities within the Cambodian NGO sector, structural collaboration is rare, problematic and described as one of the major weaknesses of the sector (Henke, 2007, 13). The figure below shows the results of the partner mapping exercises.



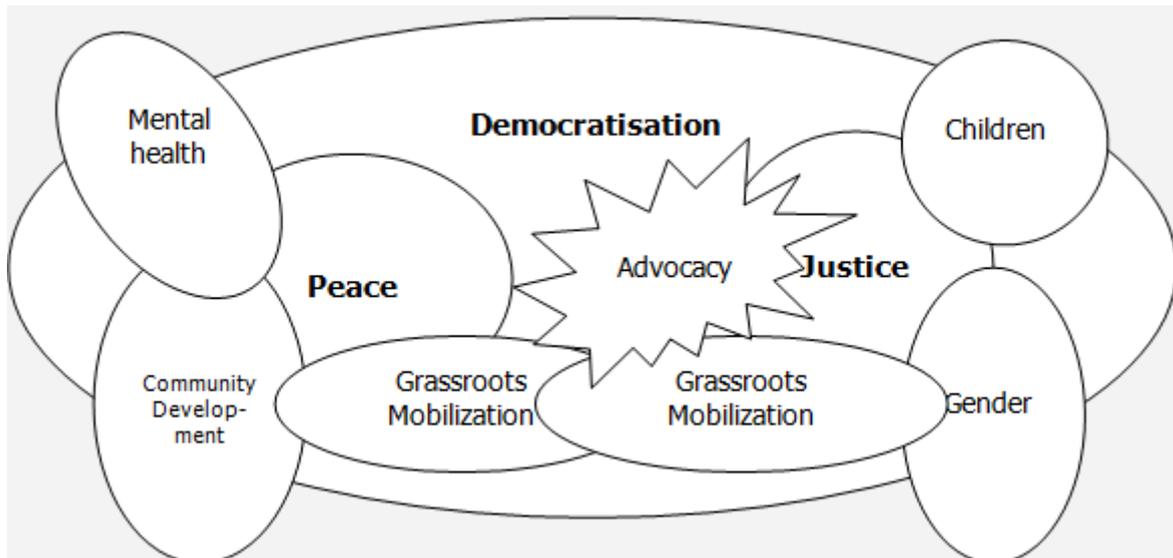
**Figure 3: Partner mapping exercise programming workshop November 2006**

<sup>3</sup> Based on Henke (2007)

During the workshop it became clear that the partners were not used to the openness of the programming process. The partners that were also part of programming processes of other donors described their participation in those programming processes as limited to discussing how their organisation could contribute to very specific, by the donor given, objectives or activities. The openness that ICCO displayed was new to them. During the workshop, it also became clear that many partners had difficulties with understanding the meaning of what programme objectives could be, beyond the current activities of their own NGO. Therefore, the coordinator visited the partners individually after the workshop, to explain more about programming. ICCO learned two lessons from this workshop. Firstly, it became clear that ICCO was trying something really new, and secondly, co-responsibility or ownership was going to stay a distant ideal if ICCO would not be able to identify a level or forum for discussion about shared objectives that made sense to the partners.

The partner mapping exercise had identified 'natural' clusters of NGOs based upon their organisational objectives. From this partner mapping exercise, some important lessons could be learned. First of all, when using network analysis software in order to create a visual representation of the relationships between NGOs in terms of their shared objectives, it appeared that only when organisational objectives of the partner NGOs were taken as an indication for a 'relationship', a coherent picture with clusters of NGOs emerged. When it was explicitly asked with which NGOs collaboration was necessary or on which issues shared campaigns were thought to be necessary, no such picture appeared. This indicates that there is not much overlap between the NGOs' individual activities and their analysis of what they consider to be important issues for development in Cambodia. This means that there is a disconnection between the so-called organisational-level thinking, and the ideas and thoughts of the broader Cambodian context. The second lesson learned was that when looking at collaboration between NGOs, trust and other 'relationship' related issues, choosing meaningful partners should be left to the involved NGOs themselves and not to others, because the NGOs are the best in indicating who their natural partners are.

Based on the results of the mapping exercise and the above mentioned lessons, a programme outline was made that conceptualised the contribution of the various NGO approaches and the thematic areas that were part of the existing ICCO Democratisation and Peace Building support. Figure 4 shows the programme outline that is built upon the partner networks. This programme outline "looks for bridges between community development, mental health and peace building organisations (the peace 'pillar') and human rights, legal aid, gender and child rights organisations (the justice 'pillar'), and between human rights, legal aid, gender and mobilisation and advocacy in order to strengthen democratic space" (Henke, 2007, 16).



**Figure 4: Programme outline build upon the current partner networks.**

These thematic areas or clusters formed starting points for identifying potential natural coalitions. After identifying these clusters, cluster meetings were arranged in collaboration with a local facilitator who facilitated the second programming workshop on 15 and 16 June 2007. For this workshop not only a sub-set of current ICCO partners, but also other organisations that the partners had identified as their natural allies and friends during the partner mapping exercise were invited. The idea behind this was that natural coalitions have memberships that are not limited to NGOs that receive support from ICCO.

The overall goal for ICCO was “to strengthen communities’ ability for collective action” (Henke, 2007, 17). The Cambodian facilitator designed for the second workshop a process that emphasised shared explorations of this particular goal. This resulted in lively discussions during the workshop regarding the overall goal as well as the need for, problems with, and lack of understanding about strategic collective action of NGOs in support of communities. Based on these discussions, ICCO rephrased its ambition because it turned out that all participants, including ICCO, had conceptualised the activities during the workshop as being part of the development of an ICCO programme. However, ICCO felt that this was a misleading conception as it was “looking to support collective action by natural coalitions of Cambodian NGOs (and other stakeholders), and this implies that their agenda should take priority rather than an ICCO programme framework” (Henke, 2007, 17). The coalitions should have objectives and goals that are independent from ICCO or ICCO support. At the closing of the second workshop, ICCO thus made the point that ICCO did not need to be convinced of the importance of a particular issue, but the NGOs need to convince each other of the need for collective NGO action regarding a certain issue.

The second workshop had learned ICCO three lessons. First of all, the workshop had learned that dividing the partner NGOs into two categories, to work with or on behalf of communities (community organisers and watchdogs), is too coarse. The workshop had learned that ICCO should better categorise them in four groups: community organisers, watchdogs, peace builders and advocates. The

second lesson for ICCO was that they need to rely more on pre-existing natural coalitions in order to have any chance of coalition objectives and goals that emerge from the bottom-up. The third lesson was that ICCO needed to start handing over the process to Cambodians in order to create more local co-responsibility. Therefore, a Program Development Team (PDT) was put into place to take charge of the activities that would follow, supported by ICCO's program coordinator (since this team was later called Programme Support Team to emphasise their facilitating and supporting role, the PDT will from now on be called PST). The PST contained four members all working in different fields of the NGO sector: a community organiser, a watchdog, a peacebuilder, and a member who was working for an advocacy organisation. These four individuals agreed to take on this role and to host the coming programme development workshops. The PST met several times to clarify their own understanding of coalitions and each member identified existing groups of NGOs that were already collaborating and could become potential NGO coalitions. The PST also decided to de-emphasize the context of programme development and to focus on exchange of experiences and shared learning during the workshops. This because they thought that when focussing more on 'action learning' instead of programming, there would be a lower risk of NGOs becoming engaged in the process primarily for continued or future donor support.

The main objective for the third workshop on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of November in 2007 was defined as "providing a platform in which NGO coalitions can learn from each other by discussing the objectives and strategies of their collaborations" (Henke, 2007, 18). It was also explicitly emphasised that being invited (or not) to the workshops was not related to present or future ICCO funding. This to avoid that not invited partners would fear for their donor relation with ICCO. During the two days of the third workshop, thirty-three NGOs participated of which eleven were receiving ICCO support and four had contract discussions with ICCO. This meant that only 45% of the participating NGOs could be called ICCO partners in the traditional sense. The other 55% of the NGOs present were NGOs that did not had a funding relationship with ICCO but were working together with one of the partners as the partner mapping exercise had demonstrated. The two days of the workshop were designed by the PST, the role of the ICCO coordinator was limited to opening and closing the two days, and to represent ICCO as the donor who made this learning event possible, but not as a donor who brought partners together around the table. During the workshop a brainstorm session was held which tried to take a closer look at ways of collaboration between NGOs, as there seemed no consistent labelling of different models of working together. The brainstorm session resulted in a shortlist of a common set of characteristics and principles of NGO collaboration, namely having:

- joint objectives
- joint perspectives
- joint strategies
- joint responsibilities
- shared interests
- and joint achievements.

During that workshop ten coalition groups were formed whose members unanimously expressed willingness to further develop their existing cooperation toward a more equipped and effective team of change agents. The coalitions that were formed are the:

1. Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace
2. Community Empowerment Group
3. Community Supporting Group
4. Community Empowerment and Development Group
5. Alternative Conflict Resolution Skills Training Groups
6. Northeast Community Organizing Group
7. Interfaith Initiative for Peace Group
8. Peace Education Group
9. Legal Aid Group
10. National Advocacy Group

At the end of the third workshop, the following reflections could be made: it seemed that “the journey towards identifying natural coalitions had finally hit home” (Henke, 2007, 19). Side-lining ICCO and the concept of programme development had proven to be a productive strategy, which also made it possible to conduct the workshop in Khmer. Having no plenary session (which needed to be translated into Khmer) shifted attention away from the donor representatives and seemed to underline that the workshop was primarily an exchange between Cambodian NGO groups. In addition, it seemed that the concept of coalitions was better understood than before but it became evident that this form of collaboration (with a specific strategic objective which is primarily based on existing resources with a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities and practical arrangements for coordination) is a rare model of collaboration in Cambodia. The workshop also showed that in the Cambodian NGO sector, strategic collaboration hardly exists and “will need explicit facilitation to grow” (Henke, 2007, 19).

After the third workshop, the PST continued to work jointly and separately with the ten coalitions. The PST had the following objectives: to keep on encouraging and strengthening the existing NGO coalition groups that were formed during the last workshop, and helping to bridge NGO coalition groups across sectors and provide technical support for them. Furthermore, they had the objective to work closely with ICCO to support cooperative initiatives and efforts that involve communities and grassroots participation, to facilitate discussions on cooperation strategies, and to provide technical support for active groups. They also wanted to bring together expertise for capacity building of members of coalition groups through training workshop and direct mentoring.

In follow-up of the third workshop in November, the ICCO program coordinator in Cambodia acted as a secretary to the PST and drafted a preliminary work plan based upon their suggestions. However, upon further reflection and discussion, the PST decided that they needed to position themselves more independently from ICCO and needed to take the process into their own hands. The PST felt they needed a shared conceptual basis, for which they would take the (in paragraph 2.6 mentioned) Civic

Driven Change concept as their starting point. Furthermore they felt that they needed an explicit mutual understanding of their own role, in relation to ICCO and in relation to the NGO coalitions. They also needed objectives for themselves based upon the shared conceptual analysis and role definition, and a work plan of activities following from that. Based on these elements, the PST developed a concept paper.

The third workshop was followed by a fourth workshop in June 2008 which had various objectives. First of all, ICCO briefed its partners and those that they collaborate with on its vision regarding its role as a development organisation and the ongoing organisational developments associated with that vision. Secondly, ICCO updated the participants on its relationship with the PST. Thirdly, the PST briefed the participants on the way they saw their relationship with ICCO and about their objectives and plans for the coming year. Their plan was that they would be available to help improve the coalitions and visit the following twelve months various discussions of coalitions in order to do an assessment so that each coalition could learn from each other, and find out what the successes and challenges are to the coalitions. Lastly, the NGOs and NGO coalitions were able to ask for clarification and it was possible to ask for feedback on their coalition work.

The last workshop was held in March 2009. In the months before this workshop, the PST had done an assessment of various coalitions and networks. Their findings were shared with the participants during the workshops and the participants were asked whether they recognised the observations. The findings of the assessment of the PST team were among other things that there are various reasons why organisations cooperate with other organisations and participate in networks or coalitions. Their assessment showed that some NGOs join a network or coalition because they want to cooperate with NGOs that are working in the same field, others because they have the feeling that they lack information and hope that within the network or coalition this information will be shared. There are also NGOs that join a network because they are interested in getting information from NGOs that are working in different fields than they are working in. Secondly, the assessment of the PST team showed that some coalitions that are part of the coalition forming process are working well together and can even find funding support for their joint activities, other coalitions seem to have only ideas yet. The PST team also found some challenges to the coalitions that were part of the assessment, such as decision making and leadership problems, or imbalanced capacity among coalition members. They observed that organisations that integrate the coalition work in their core organisations programme could overcome better many of the difficulties they found. The assessment showed that shared values are the core of a coalition and that coalitions should be learning groups. During the workshop further discussions were held on coalition and network development and the PST members explained about the concept of Civic Driven Change (CDC). There was also a possibility to answer questions relating to ICCO.

### *5.2.5 Evaluation of coalition forming*

As was explained above, ten coalitions which were all working in different fields within the NGO sector were formed during the workshops. Four of these coalitions were part of the present study, namely the:

- Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace
- Community Empowerment Group
- Northeast Community Organising Group
- Peace Education Group.

The Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace is formed by a group of NGOs that are working in the field of interethnic relations. The Community Empowerment Group is a coalition that is active in the field of community empowerment. The third coalition, the Northeast Community Organising Group, is working with communities in the northeast provinces of Cambodia, and the last coalition part of the present study, the Peace Education Group, is focussing on conflict resolution for young people in communities.

In the following sub-paragraphs the outcomes of the evaluative interviews which were held with the Program Support Team, the coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO, and the four coalitions will be presented. Of each coalition, three directors or executive directors of the member NGOs were interviewed in order to find out more about their experiences concerning the workshops and the (possible) activities of the coalition they are part of.

In sub-paragraph 5.2.6, the opinions of the interviewees about the coalitions and Programmatic Approach are displayed. In this sub-paragraph, the positive aspects of, and the difficulties about the programming workshops and coalition forming process are discussed. In sub-paragraph 5.2.7, a closer look is taken at the four coalitions that are part of the present study. Topics such as, is this coalition active at the moment, how often do they meet, and how is the relation between the coalition members are discussed in this sub-paragraph. In sub-paragraph 5.2.8, the coalitions' visions, strategies and future plans are displayed. In sub-paragraph 5.2.9 the evaluation of the coalition forming process and the Programmatic Approach made by the PST members and the coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO is displayed. This sub-paragraph is followed by sub-paragraph 5.2.10 which forms the conclusion to this case study about the Programmatic Approach of ICCO in Cambodia.

### *5.2.6 Opinions about Programmatic Approach and forming coalitions*

In this paragraph, the interviewees opinions about the Programmatic Approach and the coalition forming process are displayed.

#### **Coalitions are not new**

All the interviewed members of the coalitions that were part of the present study say that the idea of coalitions was not completely new to them. Many of the members of the collations were already

involved in other coalitions or networks. However, as the members of the Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace say, before the Programming workshops of ICCO they did not think so much about the effectiveness of a coalition. Besides, a member of the Northeast Community Organising Group says that the coalitions and networks that he was already part of before the workshops were not formulated as formally as the Northeast Community Organising Group. Also for the PST members the idea of forming coalitions was not new. One of the PST members explains that networking and forming alliances started in the early 1990s. Since then, many NGOs became fed up by the idea of coalitions and alliances because they always seem to fail. He says that the Programmatic Approach, however, tries to learn from how NGOs work together because existing relations can be useful for future coalitions.

### **Positive aspects of the programming workshops and coalition forming process**

Many members were already part of various networks and coalitions before they started with the programming workshops and coalition forming process. However, as is stated above, many of these networks seemed to fail or did not last for a very long time. Therefore, the members part of the coalition forming process indicate that they are very positive about the programming workshops because the workshops showed them what a good approach is to maintain and sustain a coalition, what the advantages and disadvantages of a coalition are, and how important it is to have a strong coalition.

The interviewees indicate several positive aspects of the programming workshops and the coalition forming process. All the coalition members that were interviewed say that because of the workshops, they have a much clearer understanding of the concept of coalitions and the various ways to sustain a coalition. The workshops enabled the members to speak with various NGOs and have given them a tool to understand what other NGOs are doing and experiencing so that they can learn from each other, something which never happened in other networks or coalitions they were already member of. They also indicate that when working in coalitions, the impact of the activities of NGOs can become bigger as they are stronger and more effective. As one of the members of the Community Empowerment Group says, the discussions during the programming workshops have made the members of the coalitions more conscious about the strength that coalitions can have. A member of the Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace explains that before the workshops, he did not find coalitions to be very important. However, during the workshops, after discussions with his coalition members and finding a way how to develop a strategy for the coalition, he finds the concept of coalitions of great importance. Another member of the Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace also says that he learned what advantages and disadvantages a coalition has, and how to develop a long term coalition as many coalitions that he was part of have died in a short time. One of the interviewees also indicates that the workshops proved to be very useful and important for his entire organisation as he always tried to summarise the workshops for his staff in order for them to learn from the workshops as well.

One of the members of the Community Empowerment Group explains that the workshops have given them a roof and walls when it comes to coalition forming. The walls and roof are provided by the workshops and represent the process of bringing NGOs together in a coalition. However, what the coalition puts into that house, in other words how they organise the coalition, how often they meet, what activities they are going to carry out, is up to the coalition members themselves. The interviewee explains that it gives them confidence to take ownership and responsibility.

One of the interviewees of the Community Empowerment Group also states that she finds the workshops and the way how the coalitions are formed very unique. The Program Support Team and ICCO allowed them to choose their own partners to form a coalition with. Normally, as this interviewee explains, donors choose the partners with whom the NGOs should work. In this case, all the participants were asked to make that choice themselves. During this process of choosing partners for the coalitions the members were asked to indicate which partners they trust the most. The interviewee explains that she found this a very interesting and useful way to identify potential partners. She states that when the organisers would have asked the participants to choose partners with whom they would like to work, people would have chosen the most famous and most wanted partners. However, with the method that was used in the coalition forming process, choices were made based on trust and these choices proved to be very natural as they were not based on a calculated decision, as the interviewee says.

The members of the Program Support Team are happy to be part of the coalitions forming process and to be part of the PST team. As one of the members explains, the members take the team seriously and want to learn from this process. At first, the Program Support Team was called the Programme Development Team. However, as the members of the team did not want to give the wrong impression to the NGOs involved, they changed their name from 'development' into 'support' team as they feel that they are not the ones who develop this new approach and the coalition process, but are there to support and facilitate all the involved parties. The four PST members were all eager to learn from the Programmatic Approach and the formation of coalitions, and they indicate that this learning process is sometimes even more important than the goal of forming coalitions. The members wanted to see and learn from the different coalitions and the different ways in which NGOs work together. One member explains that he had positive expectations about the process because he believes that working together can make NGOs stronger. He says that working together within the NGO sector is necessary because in spite of limited capacity the need for addressing problems in the country is big. He is happy that all the different NGOs involved in the workshops have become more conscious about coalitions and that because of the workshops the involved NGOs and the PST members started to reflect on the concept and see different ways how one can establish and sustain a coalition.

### **Difficulties in the understanding of the coalition forming process**

The members of the coalitions that were interviewed all indicate that at first, there were some difficulties in understanding the Programmatic Approach, the coalition forming process and the programming workshops. One of the interviewed members of the Northeast Community Organising Group expresses that he had many doubts about the idea of coalitions. At first he wondered what a coalition exactly is, how one should facilitate a coalition, and how members can become closer to each other. For the interviewed members of the Community Empowerment Group, it was at first not completely clear what was different about ICCO's Programmatic Approach of forming natural coalitions, in comparison to other kinds of networks and coalitions in which most of the members of the Community Empowerment Group were already active. After attending more workshops, the idea of the Programmatic Approach and forming coalitions became clearer.

One of the PST members says that indeed, during the workshops, some participating NGOs had difficulties in understanding the concept and terminology of coalitions and networks and how these differ from already existing networks and alliances. He says that the fact that there is not one clear description of different coalition forms that shows differences in strengths or weaknesses, makes it for the involved NGOs sometimes difficult. The PST member explains that the participating NGOs need to understand that this coalition forming process is a learning process in which they have to draw lessons from each other and each other's coalitions. This because every coalition is different and the understanding of the concept of coalitions also depends on the nature of the work of the involved NGOs. One of the PST members explains that for instance an NGO that works in the field of community rights needs to have more structure in its coalition than NGOs working in other fields. He says that this specific NGO needs to have more structure and guarantees from its coalition members because their work can be risky as they sometimes need to act against organisations (or the government) that are more powerful than themselves. Therefore, the members of such a coalition need to make clear agreements and guarantees because of the risk that comes with their work. One of the PST members also indicates that he feels that some NGOs still do not understand the analytical and learning idea behind the workshops. They just come to the workshops because they are invited by ICCO, not because they want to learn from other NGOs and other coalitions.

The PST members, the coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO, and some coalition members state that at first there was some misunderstanding about forming coalitions and donor money. During the first workshops, many NGOs had the idea that if they would form a coalition and create a joint proposal, they would receive donor money from ICCO. This conception is, however, wrong and during other workshops the PST members and the coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO informed the NGOs that forming a coalition was not attached to receiving donor money. To make that even more clear the coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO established the Program Support Team. By forming this PST it was for ICCO possible to take a step back and show that the PST members were the ones who would facilitate the workshops and ICCO would just follow the developments.

### *5.2.7 A close-up: four coalitions that were formed during the workshops*

In this sub-paragraph, a closer look is taken at the four coalitions that are part of the present study. Topics such as, is this coalition active at the moment, how often do they meet, and how is the relation between the coalition members, are discussed in this sub-paragraph.

#### **Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace**

The Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace is formed by a group of NGOs that are working in the field of interethnic relations. This coalition was already active before the workshops started and had six members at that time. Since the workshops, the already existing coalition revised its membership policy and at this moment the coalition has twelve members.

The coalition tries to meet every month and if there is a need from one of the members to meet sooner, they try to organise an urgent meeting. At first the role of being the facilitator of the coalition rotated every six months. The last two years, however, one of the members has coordinated the coalition and provides permanent office space in his NGO's building for the meetings. During the meetings, most of the members are very active. Sometimes some members are less active during a meeting but this is only because the work of these NGOs does not focus on the issues that are discussed during that meeting, not because they are not interested in the coalition or do not want to be part of it. There seems to be a strong personal relationship between the members of this coalition.

#### **Peace Education Group**

The Peace Education Group is focussing on conflict resolution for young people in communities. However, as the interviewed members of the Peace Education Group explain, this coalition is not active at the moment. The reason why this coalition is not active is because this coalition has the same members as the Council for Inter Ethnic Relations for Peace. Since these two coalitions are overlapping, the members decided not to continue with the Peace Education Group until further notice. The members still need to decide whether they will put the two coalitions together or whether they will keep two separate coalitions.

#### **Community Empowerment Group**

The Community Empowerment Group has five members and is active in the field of community empowerment. Before forming a coalition, the members had already an informal bond with each other as they had worked together before. Therefore, forming this coalition went very natural. The coalition meets every month, but if necessary, they also meet in between. During these meetings, they talk about current development related issues in Cambodia and the world. Within the Community Empowerment Group each of the members has a different role. One is the facilitator, one has the role to call and remind the members of meetings, another to take minutes. The members try to take turns in hosting the meeting in their offices.

The structure within the coalition is very informal. If one of the members needs help from the others, they just send each other text messages to discuss issues or plan a meeting. As one of the members

explains, the members complement each other and ask each other for advice. They are all committed, and respect and trust each other. All the interviewed members of the Community Empowerment Group explain that collaboration within the coalition is working so well because they already had a bond with each other before they started the coalition process. Besides, as one of the members indicates, there is no competition between the members because the members are not jealous of one another and do their best to help each other. He explains that where some coalitions seem to be busy with concentrating on what kind of structure the coalition should have, the members of this coalition seem to focus on the quality of the relation of the members of the coalition.

#### **Northeast Community Organising Group**

The Northeast Community Organising Group seems to be in-active at the moment. As one of the members says, there is little action within the coalition as after the workshops the members of this coalitions tend to be quite, there is no further action, and no clear roles are divided amongst the members. The fact that the coalition is relatively in-active is endorsed by the fact that one of the other members interviewed, at first did not remember that he was part of the Northeast Community Organising Group. When answering questions about networks and alliances and the Northeast Community Organising Group in particular, the interviewee did not immediately realised what coalition was meant and whether he was part of this coalition or not. The third member interviewed indicates that he is really interested in the idea of coalitions and the Programmatic Approach of ICCO, but right now feels that it is not the right time to put effort in the Northeast Community Organising Group. He indicates that he learned a lot from the concept, likes the idea of networks, and will be working with this idea in the future as he wants to see strong coalitions in order to support the mobilisation of communities and strengthen the capacity building in these communities so that they can take ownership. However, the interviewee feels that they had to put the coalition on hold for a while, and right now he is more available to be part of the learning process of the different coalitions in order to find out what all the participants can learn from each other.

#### *5.2.8 Coalitions' visions, strategies and future plans*

In this sub-paragraph, the coalitions' visions, strategies and future plans are displayed.

#### **Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace**

The Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace was able to formulate future goals and activities for the coming three years, and has created a master plan in which the goal and the vision of this coalition are stated. The common vision or goal of this coalition is that all ethnic groups in Cambodia can live in peace and harmony next to each other. The members of the coalition realise that they cannot reach this goal unless they cooperate with each other. In order to create a common goal and vision, the members of the coalition organised a three day workshop in which they made a problem analysis of the current situation concerning ethnicity problems in the country, and discussed the future activities of the coalition. Also after this workshop, they kept on discussing the goal and vision of the coalition. There are sometimes differences in perspectives within the coalition but the members agree on the general goals, vision and activities of the coalition. Something which is more a challenge is time

management. Lack of time of the members involved makes it difficult to make decisions as sometimes a director of one of the involved NGOs cannot attend a meeting. Then another staff member of this NGO is sent to attend the meeting but this person is not allowed to make a decision. In that case, the staff member first has to give feedback to his director so that the director can make the decision, which takes a lot of time. Because of a lack of time, some members are not that active as other members but at least, as one of the interviewees states, these less active members always support the coalition, even if they do not have time to attend meetings.

One of the interviewees states that the Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace tries not only to meet in order to share experiences, but also to support each other in terms of skills and internal issues. As one of the interviewees says, the coalition's mission and vision are not just on paper. The coalition wants to create a programme which demonstrates that this group is there for supporting each other, and that the coalition is also having its own ideas and programmes. The coalition has decided to start on a small project and started doing a joint research into ethnicity in Cambodia. Another plan is to integrate the coalition's strategy into each of the member organisations and into the strategy of these organisations. At this moment, creating programmes is for the Council for Inter Ethnic Relation for Peace not a problem. However, they would like to find funds for carrying out the programmes but this seems to be difficult, as one of the interviewees says. In line with this, the Program Support Team (PST) has advised the coalition to revise their plans for the future in reflection to the resources and financial support they currently have as a coalition.

#### **Community Empowerment Group**

The Community Empowerment Group started off with developing a statement of values and principles. The coalition has not yet formed a common strategy because, as one of the interviewees explains, they do not want to rush into that. The members feel good about what they have reached so far and the fact that they share common values and principles. However, as the members state, they do think that they will create a common strategy in the future. This strategy will be a holistic strategy and will concentrate on a better service for the community in order to establish effective community empowerment. In the future, the members of the coalition would like to exchange staff, so that they can 'lend' for instance a layer whom is working at one of the NGOs to another NGO which is part of the coalition. Another future plan is to set up a joint office, a 'one-stop-shop' where all the services provided by the members are under one roof. However, at this moment there is no agreement yet on whether this office should be in a place or region where all the members are already present or in a place or region where none of the members is present.

#### **Northeast Community Organising Group & Peace Education Group**

As the Northeast Community Organising Group seems to be in-active at the moment, the members of this coalition have not created a vision, strategy or future goals. Also the Peace Education Group is not active at this moment and has not created future plans as the members of this coalition still have to decided whether they want to put the Peace Education Group and the Inter Ethnic Relations for Peace coalition together or whether they will keep two separate coalitions.

### *5.2.9 Evaluation by PST members and ICCO's coordinator*

#### **Why do some coalitions work together and others not**

Looking at the process of forming coalitions, the PST members see that some NGOs managed to form a coalition and others are still working independently. One of the PST members explains that there are some coalitions with a more rigid structure, and some are more loose groupings. Most of the coalitions that are active are not in the stage of creating a common strategy yet. These coalitions share ideas and views which are not official strategies yet. In general there is an effort to build coalitions and to mobilise and expand the membership of these coalitions.

The PST members believe that the most important reason why some of the NGOs work together is because of good personal relationships between the representatives or directors of the different NGOs. It seems that in the coalitions that are working good together, there was already a personal relation between the members of the coalition (the directors of the involved NGOs) or because of the fact that these NGOs were already working (together) in the same field. The coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO says that another reason why some coalitions are working together more than other coalitions, is because of the interest of the involved NGOs in working in coalitions. The coordinator explains that there are quite some NGOs who are not really interested in working together in any kind of coalition and of which the management thinks that as long as their organisation is doing their job they are doing fine. The coordinator says that this is a reality which they have to deal with and therefore, he says, can ICCO nor the PST force these NGOs into any kind of coalition or network. One of the PST members also indicates that according to his view, the most effective coalition is the one that is able to balance between a very rigid and a loose structure, because the ones that care more about structure tend to become too bureaucratic and the ones that are too loose seem to forget about what they intended to do in the first place. Another PST member explains that one should be sure that coalitions do not create a long list with activities which could be done by individual NGOs. He believes that the idea of coalitions is that they should do activities which they cannot do on their own.

One of the international interviewees who was part of the present study, is closely associated with the PST members and attended some of the workshops. This international interviewee explains that underneath the process of forming coalitions and setting up a PST, there are also other dynamics going on. During the workshops there were all kinds of individuals present who have a history and a relationship with each other. They know everything about each other, for instance who fought for what political party in the past, who was a soldier, who helped whom. These people representing the different NGOs share a history as individuals, which is of course not part of the discussions during the workshops but may play a role under the surface when forming coalitions. This makes it very difficult to fully understand as an outsider all the dynamics going on of whom wants to cooperate with whom. The interviewee explains that personal relations are very important when forming coalitions. The fact that the PST members are coming from such different backgrounds makes it, according to the international interviewee, extraordinary that this group was formed. She explains that for a long time it

was said that at least the peacebuilding and human rights organisations in Cambodia cannot understand each other or work together. Therefore, having a PST with four recognised leaders from advocacy, human rights, peacebuilding and development all sitting side by side is quite special. She believes that what ICCO has done is fairly interesting and creative.

### **The role of the coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program**

The coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO explains that his role in the process of implementing the Programmatic Approach in Cambodia is twofold: he is involved in all the activities in Cambodia but, and this role is as big as his role in Cambodia, he has also his responsibilities towards the headquarters of ICCO. He describes his contribution to the Cambodian situation more as one of 'not doing things himself' but letting the PST do their work without interfering so that ICCO as a donor organisation would not hold a prominent place during the process and the workshops. His contribution towards the headquarters of ICCO is to facilitate the internal debate within the organisation about the Programmatic Approach by giving feedback to his colleagues in the Netherlands and using Cambodia as a case study. Because also ICCO was in the beginning of the process not completely sure how and in what way they wanted to introduce the Programmatic Approach in Cambodia, the coordinator and his colleague in the Netherlands choose to work and talk very openly about the project so that people from different fields in the development industry could give their ideas and opinion on this new concept.

### **From programming to learning**

The PST members emphasise that they are still in the middle of the process of forming coalitions and creating strategies and that at this moment, they feel that the learning aspect (NGOs learning from other coalitions how they form a coalition and work together) is more important than creating a common strategy. The initial idea of the PST members was that coalitions will make the NGOs stronger as together they can achieve more. During a recent reflection, the PST members came to the conclusion that at this moment, the coalitions are more groups of people who cooperate and share information, but that the coalitions as such do not have strength yet. The workshops and coalitions have created a relationship and a better understanding between NGOs from different fields. One of the PST members indicates that perhaps strength as such is not necessary as with a strong coalition comes tension and pressure to deliver. He believes that the personal bond between coalition members and sharing experiences within the coalition has more added value than forming a strong coalition.

In line with this, the coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO says that the initial intent of the Cambodian Programmatic Approach has shifted from forming coalitions as being the goal of the process towards looking at and learning from cooperation between NGOs. In the beginning, the attention during the workshops was completely focussed on forming coalitions. When time went by, the emphasis came more on who sets the NGOs' agendas, how are the already existing coalitions working, and if NGOs work together how effective are their common plans and strategies. In the end, the workshops had the function of raising awareness about working together as NGOs, and learning from each other's way of working in coalitions. The coordinator believes that it is crucial that

NGOs at local level think about who they are and what they want to achieve. He finds it not a big problem that the workshops have not resulted in clear or strong coalitions, but at least because of the learning aspect of the workshops they have led to some sort of reflection by the participants. In short, all PST members and the coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO have the opinion that the learning process about coalitions and about how NGOs work together is seen as the most important aspect of the Programmatic Approach and the workshops that were organised.

The coordinator says that the Programmatic Approach and the forming of coalitions are unique in the sense that no other donors do something like this. Cambodia was one of the first countries where the Programmatic Approach was implemented, and also for ICCO itself the activities in Cambodia are a bit different than the organisation is used to. The fact that there are no donor funds attached to the process of forming coalitions is different, because as with many other donors, ICCO's management information system is based on financing programmes. The coordinator states that, whether ICCO wants it or not, it is a 'money distribution machine' in the sense that the organisation distributes money from its back-donors to local partners in the South. He explains that ICCO's management information system expects, in line with the Programmatic Approach, to fund more and more programmes instead of individual organisations. Therefore, not attaching donor funds to the implementation of working with coalitions in Cambodia is quite an experiment, and is unusual within ICCO and especially unusual when looking at other donors. The coordinator states that whatever the results of the implementation of this approach in Cambodia will be, at least they have given this idea a chance and have given people in Cambodia the space to work according to this idea.

### **Programmatic Approach in Cambodia: future plans**

A couple of weeks after the researcher left Cambodia, the coordinator Democratization & Peace Building Program of ICCO also left the country and ICCO. During the interview the coordinator talked about the future of the Programmatic Approach in Cambodia and stated that he hopes that the PST will continue the work they are doing when he has left ICCO and Cambodia. The coordinator explains that because of his departure at ICCO a follow-up plan is more quickly implemented. This plan entails that the office of one of the PST members will become an administrative host or secretariat of a flexible small-scaled fund. This secretariat will have different workgroups who will manage the means and activities. The members of these workgroups will do this completely voluntarily as individuals and not as representatives of an NGO, and the money can be spent on a (small scale) project, activity or research. The coalitions will be able to apply for these funds, however, the money is not meant for financing large-scale programmes but for more flexible activities without log-frames. Of course, besides this new plan, the individual financing of ICCO towards its partners will continue. This new construction will not be without risks, the coordinator explains, as there may be a chance that these workgroups and secretariat will become a new NGO. Therefore, the idea is to create an administrative host or secretariat with various workgroups who manage the means and activities completely voluntarily. It is important to choose a working method that can be as flexible as possible, but is still formal enough to fund certain projects. Also the fact that the involved parties had to rush into this plan because of the departure of the coordinator is a bit risky. Because they had to rush this process, there

have been some conflicts and misunderstandings among the PST members but these have been cleared up already. As the coordinator states, time will learn what will happen to this ambitious plan.

#### *5.2.10 Conclusion: from programming to action learning*

This conclusion contains two sections: in the first section, an evaluation will be given of the programming workshops and the coalition forming process up to now. The second section will discuss the Programmatic Approach in relation to topics of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, knowledge, and strategy.

#### **Evaluation of the Programmatic Approach and the coalition forming process**

The concept of coalitions, alliances and networks was not new to the participating NGOs and the PST members. However, at first it was for many difficult to understand what was meant by coalitions and how this was different from other coalitions, networks or alliances in which the NGOs were already active. Also the fact that forming coalitions was not attached to receiving donor funds was for the participants difficult to understand at first. After having this thoroughly explained by both the coordinator of ICCO and the PST members, and after having a brainstorm sessions about what characterises collaboration between NGOs, there was much more understanding of the concept of coalitions. The outcomes of the interviews show that the interviewed coalition members especially like the aspect of learning from each other's ideas and activities during the organised workshops. They like the fact that there is now more understanding of what a coalition is and how one can make it a successful one. The PST members are happy to be part of the coalition forming process and have positive expectations for the future, as working together within the NGO sector is necessary when one wants to address the problems in the country.

From the four coalitions that were part of this study, two coalitions are active and two are not. The coalitions that are active have formed common goals and visions. One of these coalitions has also carried out joint activities and a research, and is planning on integrating the (future) strategies of the coalition into the member NGOs' strategies. Also the other active coalition does not seem to be in a stage yet where they have formed a common strategy that can be implemented. Although creating a common strategy is certainly a future plan for this coalition, at this moment the focus lies more on the personal relations within the coalitions. It seems that there are various reasons why one coalition works better than the other. The most common answer to the question why the two coalitions part of this study are working so well is because of the fact that the members of this coalition had already a personal relationship with one another or had worked together before. Another reason why some coalitions are working together more than other coalitions, is because of their interest in working in coalitions. According to ICCO's coordinator there are quite some NGOs who are not really interested in working together in any kind of coalition. Furthermore, also other dynamics such as the history and the relationship that representatives of NGOs have with one another may play a role under the surface when forming coalitions. This makes it very difficult to fully understand as an outsider all the dynamics going on of whom wants to cooperate with whom. There seem to be various reasons why the other

two coalitions that were part of the present study are not active. First of all, the Peace Education Group has the same members as the Council for Inter Ethnic Relations for Peace. Although the latter is active on a different field than the Peace Education Group, the members decided not to put effort in the Peace Education Group. The members of the Northeast Community Organising Group have different feelings and ideas about their coalition. One of the members seems to be willing to put effort into this coalition. However, the other two interviewed members do not give priority to this coalition.

For both the PST members and the coordinator of ICCO, the whole process of organising workshops and forming coalitions has been primarily a learning process. It turns out that coalitions as such are not the goal of this process, but to try something new and to learn from each other. As far as this latter concerns, both the PST members and the coordinator have the opinion that the learning process is definitely successful and has given all the participants new insights. The implementation of the Programmatic Approach of ICCO could be described as 'from programming to action learning'. The project started off with an emphasis on programming where the forming of coalitions was seen as the goal. As the process continued, the action learning aspect become more and more important.

#### **Programmatic Approach in relation to ownership, NGO-isation, knowledge, and strategy**

As was explained in sub-paragraph 5.2.1, the Programmatic Approach of ICCO and the coalition forming process could form an answer to problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation among local Cambodian organisations, as ICCO strives to change the current top-down relation between international and local NGOs by introducing this new way of working: the Programmatic Approach. Besides, it was stated that it is possible that the Programmatic Approach could also form an answer to problems of lack of knowledge and lack of strategy within local NGOs.

Because of the leaning aspect which became prominent in the process of forming coalitions and implementing the Programmatic Approach, it can be said that the coalition forming process definitely has helped tackling one of the discussed problems in the literature: the fact that local NGOs seem to lack knowledge. The members that are part of the coalitions share knowledge, talk about issues they run into in their daily work, and share experiences. This sharing of knowledge does not only occur within the coalition itself or about specific topics within the work field of the NGOs. Because of the workshops, in which the NGOs talk with other NGOs from other coalitions who are working in different fields of the development industry, they also extend their knowledge on issues that are not related to their specific field of work. Besides exchanging knowledge on development related issues, the involved NGOs also extend their knowledge on organisational matters, such as how to cooperate with other NGOs, what makes a good coalition or network, and how do other NGOs organise their coalition. It could thus be said that the implementation of the Programmatic Approach and the coalition forming process have contributed to tackling the problem of lack of knowledge within local Cambodian NGOs.

It could be expected that the coalitions that were formed might tackle the problem of lack of strategic thinking within the local NGOs. This because the NGOs that are part of the Programmatic Approach might form common strategies within their coalition and therewith create a long(er) joint vision on the

development of Cambodia. As is also discussed in the previous section of this conclusion, although the active coalitions do have joint missions, visions and goals (and one coalition even has carried out joint activities) at this moment most coalitions have not reached the point in which they have formed a common strategy that can be implemented within the coalition or within their own NGO. Although creating and implementing a common strategy is certainly a future plan for the two active coalitions that were part of this study, at this moment the focus lies more on the personal relations within the coalitions. When looking ahead, one could say that it is likely that the coalitions that are active, are indeed going to create and implement common strategies or at least become aware of the importance of creating a long term vision on development in Cambodia, together with their coalition members. Although this cannot be said with certainty, it is likely that the Programmatic Approach and the coalitions indeed help to create joint strategies between NGOs and therefore help tackling the problem of lack of strategy within local NGOs.

The Programmatic Approach of ICCO could also form an answer to problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation among local Cambodian organisations, as ICCO strives to change the current top-down relation between international and local NGOs by introducing this new way of working. The idea is that when NGOs form coalitions, they start thinking more about how they want to improve the development of Cambodia, and what they want to achieve with their own NGO and the NGOs that they are working with. When these coalitions and NGOs are thinking more about these issues, one expects that the chances become smaller that local NGOs unquestioningly accept the international NGO's policy and strategy for their country and their NGO. This because, as being part of a coalition, the local NGOs take ownership over their activities and future plans and therefore become less NGO-ised and less led by international NGOs. However, whether the Programmatic Approach and the coalitions indeed have lead to more ownership and less NGO-isation is hard to say at this moment. This because the coalitions are still in a stage where they are figuring out how to form a good coalition, and establishing good personal relationships has the priority at this moment. Therefore these coalitions have not reached the stage yet where they jointly take ownership over the activities they are carrying out.

## 5.3 Case Study 2: NGO Forum

### 5.3.1 Overview

As the literature in chapter 2 has shown, local Cambodian NGOs seem to lack knowledge and are said to lack strategic thinking and strategic planning that goes beyond short term level. The NGO Forum is an example of an initiative where local NGOs share information and debate on issues that are affecting Cambodia's development, and jointly advocate NGOs' interests at government level and towards other authorities. The NGO Forum might counter the problems of lack of knowledge and lack of strategy within local Cambodian NGOs as the NGOs involved in the Forum share ideas, talk about current issues, and can create joint strategies. This sharing of information and debating about development can increase the knowledge of the involved NGOs and can make them aware of the importance of a well-considered strategy within their own NGO or a joint strategy of multiple local NGOs.

As will also be explained in sub-paragraph 5.3.4, the NGO Forum is an umbrella organisation which has a secretariat, 73 member organisations and two associate members. This case study tries to take a closer look at the NGO Forum's secretariat and its members, and especially at the relation between the secretariat and the members. In this case study three questions will be answered. The first two questions read: '*What are the strengths of the NGO Forum*' and '*What are the problems that the NGO Forum is facing*'. Answers to these questions can be found in sub-paragraph 5.3.5 and 5.3.6. Since the NGO Forum has a secretariat with 36 staff members (such as advisors, coordinators and project officers) and is therefore almost an NGO itself, it is interesting to take a closer look at the relation between this secretariat (hereafter called the NGO Forum) and its member NGOs. Especially in relation to earlier discussed topics of ownership, knowledge and strategy it is interesting to find out who has the ownership over the topics that are discussed in the Forum (the members or the NGO Forum's secretariat), how is the participation level and the commitment of the members, do members or the NGO Forum create strategies, and has the NGO Forum an initiating or a facilitating role when working with its members. These questions all have to do with one central theme: the relationship between the NGO Forum and its members. Therefore, the third question answered in this case study reads: '*How is the relationship between the NGO Forum and its member organisations*'.

In order to obtain the information for this case study, various documents, strategic plans and an evaluation report of the NGO Forum were studied. Besides, four (former) employees of the NGO Forum were interviewed. More information on these interviewees can be found in chapter 3, sub-paragraph 3.4.3. The structure of this case study is as follows: in sub-paragraph 5.3.2 the mission, vision, and goal of the NGO Forum are displayed. Sub-paragraph 5.3.3 gives an overview of the history of the NGO Forum, and in sub-paragraph 5.3.4 the structure of the NGO Forum is explained. In sub-paragraph 5.3.5, the strengths of the NGO Forum are displayed, and sub-paragraph 5.3.6 gives an overview of the challenges that the NGO Forum is facing. Sub-paragraph 5.3.7 discusses the relationship between the NGO Forum and its members. This sub-paragraph is followed by sub-paragraph 5.3.8, which forms the conclusion of this case study.

### *5.3.2 NGO Forum's mission, vision and goal*

The NGO Forum is an umbrella organisations which has a clear vision: "The NGO Forum is made up of local and international non-governmental organizations grounded in their experience of humanitarian and development assistance to Cambodia. The NGO Forum exists for information-sharing, debate and advocacy on priority issues affecting Cambodia's development. The NGO Forum has an important role to highlight the impact of development processes and economic, social and political changes on Cambodians" (NGO Forum, 2007, 3).

The vision of the NGO Forum is that "Cambodia will have a well-informed and empowered population participating in a strong and vibrant civil society, to the benefit of poor and vulnerable people in Cambodia" (NGO Forum, 2007, 3). Alongside this vision, the goal of the NGO Forum is that "the rights of poor and vulnerable groups in Cambodia are recognized and supported by the policies and practices of Cambodia's government and donors, and by the wider community" (NGO Forum 2007, 3).

To accomplish the mission, vision and goal, the NGO Forum believes in working together for:

- "economic and social justice;
- respect for human rights and democracy;
- gender equality;
- peace and non-violence;
- sustainable use of natural resources;
- respect for cultural diversity; and
- development with equity" (NGO Forum, 2007, 3).

### *5.3.3 History of the NGO Forum*

The NGO Forum is one of the longest standing NGO umbrella organisations in Cambodia. It is the only multi-sectoral advocacy-focussed membership organisation in the country which has members from both Cambodian and international NGOs. The NGO Forum brings many organisations together for dialogue, debate and advocacy policies and has a unique role in helping NGOs to contribute to multi-sectoral policy discussions, especially when dealing with cross-cutting social and economic rights issues. Its work is respected among its international network of supporters (international NGOs and other development organisations) and it has presence with Cambodian government officials (NGO Forum, 2006, 3; NGO Forum 2007, 2-3). The NGO Forum is seen as the primary point of contact between Cambodian NGOs and the Cambodian government, aid agencies and development banks (NGO Forum, 2007, 12). The members of the NGO Forum expect that the Forum represents the Cambodian NGOs on different development policy issues, and that the NGO Forum facilitates "NGO participation in multi-sectoral development policy dialogue" (NGO Forum, 2007, 12). In order to balance advocacy demands with the maintenance of respectful relations with the government, the NGO Forum needs a diplomatic and skilful representation. The NGO Forum's collaborative advocacy approach has ensured a space for the NGO Forum and civil society "in high-level coordinated meetings and discussions involving the Royal Government of Cambodia and the donor community"

(NGO Forum, 2008, 8). The NGO Forum finds this an important achievement as it believes that this would not be possible if the NGO Forum “were perceived by the government and donors as being adversarial in its advocacy approach” (NGO Forum, 2008, 8).

In the 1980s an international NGO campaign to advocate the end of the then existing aid embargo on Cambodia formed the beginning of the NGO Forum in Cambodia. After the full restoration of development aid in Cambodia in 1993, the NGO Forum became more Cambodian based and began to work on several more issues, such as the creation of a permanent tribunal for crimes against humanity, concerns about the impact of (international) development aid in the country and an international ban on landmines. Although being based in Phnom Penh, the NGO Forum was still dominated by expatriates at that time (NGO Forum, 2006; NGO Forum 2007, 2-3). An international Steering Committee was in charge of the Forum until 1996, but in that year, a local Management Committee was established to become the decision making body. From 1997 until 2001, the NGO Forum started to have a much more Cambodian character as meetings were predominantly in Khmer and Cambodians started to play a dominant role in the Forum’s activities. This shift from international to Cambodian dominance “reflected the growing level of responsibility taken by Cambodians in both local and international NGOs” (NGO Forum, 2007, 2). The NGO Forum started to hire more staff members, it began to cooperate more with NGOs based in the Cambodian provinces, and helped NGOs to build advocacy-linkages from grassroots level to the national level. The number of issues that the Forum worked on also expanded as, besides the earlier mentioned issues, the NGO Forum also dealt with issues like the environment, the impact of development banks, civil society and democracy, woman’s rights, and strengthening NGOs’ advocacy skills. From 2002, the NGO Forum focussed on strengthening its work on a limited number of priority issues namely development issues, environment issues, and land and livelihood issues (NGO Forum, 2006; NGO Forum 2007, 2-3).

#### *5.3.4 Structure*

The NGO Forum currently has 73 full member organisations and 2 associate members. The full members are NGOs that are working in Cambodia and that participate in Management Committee elections, contribute to discussions at the Quarterly Members Meetings and the Annual General Meeting. These full members also contribute to specific advocacy activities. The associate members are organisations other than NGOs that want to contribute to the Forum, and these members do not have a right to vote during the meetings. The NGO Forum receives its direction from its member organisations and has a Management Committee which is the decision making body of the Forum. This Management Committee is a group of seven individuals who are elected from among the full member organisations. Every member has a two years term and can be re-elected for another period of two years.

The NGO Forum’s secretariat has 36 staff members. In figure 5, which can be found below, the organisational chart of the NGO Forum is displayed. As can also be seen in figure 5, the NGO Forum has currently three permanent forums: the ‘Development Issues Programme’, the ‘Environment

Programme’ and the ‘Land and Livelihood Issues Programme’. These three forums, which all have their own goal created by the NGO Forum’s secretariat, promote information sharing and debate among the member NGOs on issues which are important for the development of Cambodia. The forums may suggest plans and activities and their membership is relatively open. Each of the forums carry out a programme which has multiple projects. These projects are carried out in smaller, more focussed working groups or networks. The forums, networks and working groups are not limited to member organisations of the NGO Forum. Their membership are nevertheless subject to the approval of the Management Committee. In short, the NGO Forum has thus a secretariat, three forums, and the projects of these forums are carried out in smaller working groups or networks.

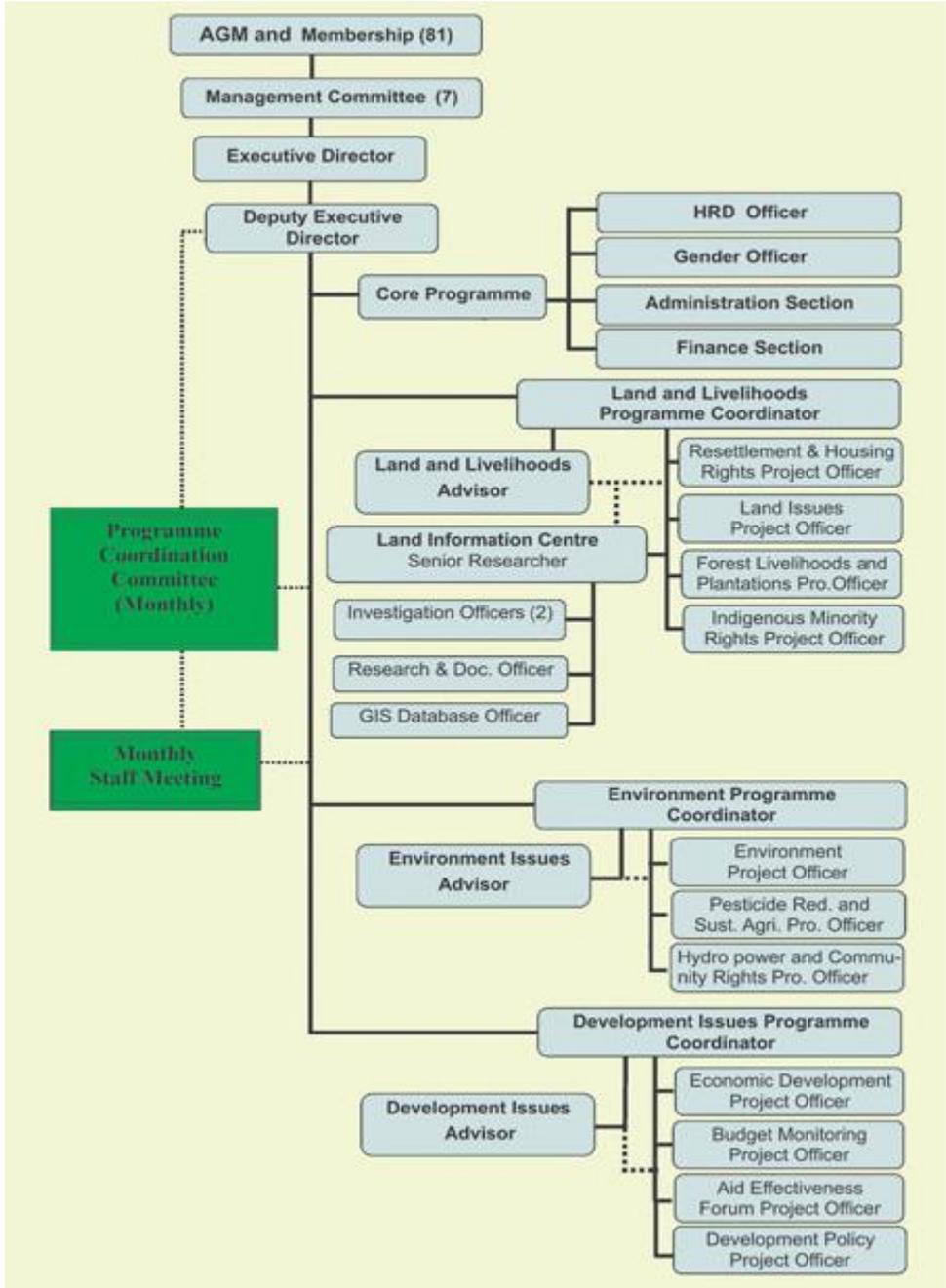


Figure 5: Organisational chart of the NGO Forum

Each of the three programmes or forums (the Development Issues Programme, the Environment Programme and the Land and Livelihood Issues Programme), has different projects. The Development Issues Programme has three different projects: the 'Development Policy Project', the 'Gender Project' and the 'Trade and Economic Development Project'. The second programme and forum, the Environment Programme, has also three projects, namely: the 'Environment Awareness and Protection Project', the 'Mekong Basin Community Rights Project' and the 'Pesticides Reduction and Sustainable Agriculture Project'. The last programme, Land and Livelihood Issues, has four different projects: the 'Land Reform Project', the 'Resettlement and Housing Rights Project', the 'Forestry Livelihoods and Plantations Project' and the fourth project is the 'Indigenous Minority Rights Project' (NGO Forum, 2007, 4).

### *5.3.5 Strengths of the NGO Forum*

In order to answer the first question of this case study '*What are the strengths of the NGO Forum*', several documents and strategic plans of the NGO Forum were studied and four (former) employees of the NGO Forum were interviewed.

The most important strength of the NGO Forum that came out of an analysis in the NGO Forum's Strategic Plan 2006-2011 (NGO Forum, 2006, 10-15) is that as a multi-sectoral issues-based membership organisation the NGO Forum is able to bring many organisations together for dialogue, debate and advocacy. It has credibility and has the ability to negotiate and make recommendations to donors and the government (NGO Forum, 2006, 10-15). In line with this, one of the interviewees states that the NGO Forum has the reputation of being very constructive. This because the NGO Forum is trying to be diplomatic and a bit milder in its criticism against the government or other authorities than some NGOs are. The interviewee explains that the NGO Forum has the opinion that it has to stay in touch with the government because if it stops talking with them, it will not achieve anything. The interviewee also states that within the NGO Forum, there is a willingness to take on issues of which other NGOs are afraid to address. An evaluation report of the NGO Forum (NGO Forum, 2008, 48) shows that the NGO Forum has done well over the past three years in coordinating advocacy needs of their members (local and international NGOs). The evaluation shows that the NGO Forum's advocacy approach has helped the organisation "to develop good working relations with Cambodia's bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors and foster relationships with relevant government departments" (NGO Forum, 2008, 48). Besides, the collaborative approach to advocacy of the NGO Forum has "ensured a space for the NGO Forum (and thus the NGO community [which it represents]) in high-level donor and government coordination discussions" (NGO Forum, 2008, 48).

Another strength of the Forum is that, because of the large number of members, the NGO Forum has a high public profile. Because of this high public profile it is therefore able to bring more controversial issues to the attention of the government, donors and wider communities (NGO Forum, 2006, 10-15). In line with this, one of the interviewees says that because of the fact that the NGO Forum has a large number of members and has a high profile, the credibility of the Forum is very high which makes that it

is quoted often in the newspapers, media and is invited to many events. The interviewee also says that the strength of the NGO Forum is its mandate to speak on behalf of its members, its ability to engage with local levels, national levels, and international policy-making levels.

Furthermore, one of the interviewees states that the NGO Forum is an organisation which sets its own agenda before searching for donor funds. It has complete ownership over its programmes and has qualified staff and strong commitment. The interviewee says that the NGO Forum is always trying to improve cooperation among NGOs by stimulating the member organisations to work together, in order to prevent that the NGOs are working by themselves. An analysis in one of the strategic plans of the Forum shows that the collaboration and network approaches have been a success and that the information dissemination within the Forum has been helpful to the member organisations (NGO Forum, 2006, 10-15).

### *5.3.6 Challenges to the NGO Forum*

The second question of this case study reads '*What are the problems that the NGO Forum is facing*'. The NGO Forum has to face some challenges, which are displayed below.

#### **Advocacy strategies**

One of the interviewees states that it is a challenge for the NGO Forum to meet all the requests from their members concerning advocacy strategies. There is a diverse range of advocacy strategies which the members of the NGO Forum ask for: some member NGOs are very confrontational in their advocacy strategy, others very diplomatic, and it is a challenge meeting all these requests. One interviewee gives an example of how difficult it is for the NGO Forum to manoeuvre between the different advocacy strategies of its members. One time a network took a few months to organise a press conference. They had planned everything out to the last minute, and then one of the core members of this network backed out, perhaps because they thought the content of the press conference was not diplomatic enough. Because this core member backed out, every other member had to back out, and they lost this great opportunity. The interviewee says that this example shows that it is difficult but also very important to keep every member in its comfort zone.

Another problem mentioned by one of the interviewees is that that the NGO Forum has to deal with the fact that some government ministries consider the NGO Forum to be too confrontational. This is in contrast to their own analysis of being very diplomatic and mild. That the government ministries consider the NGO Forum to be too confrontational may be explained by the fact that the government shows low interest to solve problems or issues which are raised by the civil society organisations (NGO Forum, 2006, 11). It seems that high-level officials are not interested in change as advocacy issues often hurt to some key government officials (NGO Forum, 2006, 11).

### High staff turnover

As is indicated by both the interviewees and the evaluation and strategy documents of the NGO Forum, forms the high staff turnover within the NGO Forum a substantial problem. In 2007, eleven staff members left the organisation and three left in the first months of 2008 (NGO Forum, 2008, 11). In the first months of 2008, twelve new staff members have joined the organisation (seven as replacements for the departed staff but also five new staff members to fill newly created positions), which is a third of the total number of employees (NGO Forum, 2008, 11). One of the interviewees explains that the high staff turnover is amongst other things due to the salaries that are paid by the NGO Forum. Although, according to an evaluation report of the NGO Forum (NGO Forum, 2008, 17), the salary scale of the Forum appears to be very competitive against other local NGOs, and quite competitive against international NGOs, the evaluation report shows that employees of the NGO Forum feel that they are expected to do more in their positions than they would have to do in other organisations when fulfilling the same position (NGO Forum, 2008,17). As is both indicated by one of the interviewees and the NGO Forum's evaluation report of 2008, the NGO Forum is often viewed as a good 'training place' as other organisations highly value the experience that employees gain at the NGO Forum (NGO Forum, 2008, 17). Another interviewee states that the nature of the work at the NGO Forum also makes that people change jobs. He explains that many staff members do not feel very comfortable when lobbying the government, and believes that this might stem from cultural factors such as fear of losing face and the patrimonial system within the country. On the other hand, many new staff members are willing to lobby the government because they sincerely believe that the government is obliged to explain their policy to them. Another interviewee adds that because of the rapid change of staff, the NGO Forum loses organisational memory. She explains that the organisation is relying on project officers who learn from the network members about current issues in the country. When a staff member leaves the organisation, this knowledge is (partly) lost. As is stated in an evaluation report of the NGO Forum (NGO Forum, 2008, 5), both the NGO Forum staff and the network members say that the high staff turnover has affected the project and network memory which has resulted in some lost opportunities for action (NGO Forum, 2008, 5). Another challenge is the fact that, as one of the interviewees believes, many people, not only within the NGO Forum but also at other NGOs, work for personal benefit and not because they really care about an issue in the first place. She states that there seems to be less commitment by part of the staff in comparison to other staff members. An advantage of the high staff-turnover is that since the NGO Forum still is in a good relation with its former employees, it has good connections at various institutions like the World Bank, the government and donors.

### Staff attending trainings

Another challenge to the NGO Forum, which is mentioned by the interviewees but cannot be found in the official documents of the NGO Forum, is the fact that many staff members attend various trainings offered by donors. As one of the interviewees says, often many staff members attend trainings and are not at the office which delays the work that should be done at the NGO Forum. Another interviewee adds that some staff members have four times a year one week of training of a certain donor. The staff

member is thus a whole month per year away of the office to attend this training. At those weeks, part of the NGO Forum is at a standstill.

### **NGO Forum becoming too large**

The last challenge mentioned by two interviewees is that there is a danger of the NGO Forum becoming larger and larger with much more members. They fear that the more members the NGO Forum has, the less active these members will become. One of these two interviewees also states that already at this moment there seems to be a lack of ownership by the networks. The networks seem to rely too much on the NGO Forum staff to take the lead. The next sub-paragraph (sub-paragraph 5.3.7) will go more deeply into this fear of the interviewees that members are less active or have a lack of ownership.

### *5.3.7 Relationship NGO Forum and its members*

The third question of this case study reads: *'How is the relationship between the NGO Forum and its member organisations'*. In this paragraph this question will be answered by focussing on aspects such as the initiating versus facilitating role of the NGO Forum, strategy forming within the networks, ownership and participation of members in networks and forums, and membership's commitment.

#### **Initiating versus facilitating role NGO Forum**

All the interviewees indicate that the NGO Forum, besides having a facilitating role, sometimes also has a initiating role. In some networks, the staff members of the NGO Forum suggest several topics from which the NGO members can choose to work on as a network. At other times, the NGO Forum has a facilitating role and in those cases the initiative comes from the network members themselves. For instance, members ask the NGO Forum to provide support on a specific topic. This support could be forming a team to do an investigation at local level, helping with contacting the media or raising cases at national level, the government or donors.

One of the interviewees says that the initiating or facilitating role of the NGO Forum also depends on the topic of the specific forum or network. The interviewee explains that for instance the Development Issues Programme has a clear agenda as it reacts on the agenda of the government. The government writes a national plan and the NGOs that are part of this forum try to have influence on this plan. Every three months a meeting is held between the government and donors at which NGOs have an independent monitoring role. At each of these meetings, the NGOs display a joint statement. It is the Development Issues Forum's task to coordinate and combine the NGOs statements. This forum thus has a clear agenda which repeats itself every few months. The interviewee says that this forum is easy to sustain and its members are always willing to cooperate as the topics are of their interest. Other networks sometimes have a bit more difficulties in identifying their issues and agenda. One of the interviewees states that he has come to the conclusion that the agendas of the networks need to be linked closely to the agenda of the government. Although there are many other issues which could be carried out by the NGO Forum that are not linked to the agenda of the government, the initiation of

these issues in new projects or networks requires high capacity and persistence, and especially the latter is difficult when having such a high staff turnover as the NGO Forum has.

### **Strategy**

The initiating role of the NGO Forum is also displayed in the way how the goals and strategies of the NGO Forum are created. Each of the three programmes (or forums) of the NGO Forum have a clear goal and each of its corresponding projects have project purposes. These goals are created by the secretariat of the NGO Forum (and thus not by its member organisations), and can be found in the policy documents of the NGO Forum (NGO Forum, 2007, 3-5). Strategies or goals that are formed within the networks (which are part of the three programmes that have a goal created by the secretariat) are thus not outlined or created by the NGO Forum's secretariat, but should be created by the member organisations alone, or in cooperation with the NGO Forum. One interviewee says that most of the networks that are part of the three programmes have terms of references, but only in some of these networks the members organisations have created a common strategy. One of the interviewees explains that some of these networks have a short term goal relating to specific advocacy issues, but no long term goal. Other networks have a clear long term goal, statute, vision and mission but are weaker in terms of how they work on everyday activities. Another interviewee says that she has sat down with one of the networks and worked on a three year strategy and strategic issues that they want to address for the next three years. This strategy was made by the members, together with the NGO Forum. She explains that creating a strategy is a big thing because it took a lot of time to do. However, the fact that this network was able to create such a strategy was influenced by the fact that this network was already a network before it became part of the NGO Forum, there was already more involvement within the network, and there was a real need to address the specific issue.

### **Ownership, participation and members' commitment**

When looking at the participation of members and members' commitment within networks, it shows that some of the networks of the NGO Forum have a large membership base and these networks are quite active. Other networks are small and lack focus (NGO Forum, 2008, 4). According to an evaluation report of the NGO Forum, the NGO Forum staff "expresses concern over low network ownership in some networks" (NGO Forum, 2008, 4). This report shows that of the member organisations, 30% is not active as these members do not participate in regular members' meetings (NGO Forum, 2008, 48). In addition, also part of the group of members that do attend these meetings show poor participation as many members attend meetings but do not take ownership. There are concerns over the low network ownership in some networks and about the fact that some networks are controlled by few, vocal and more powerful members (NGO Forum, 2008, 48-49). The NGO Forum is worried by the lack of participation as it believes that "weak membership participation translates into weak participation of various advocacy networks" (NGO Forum, 2008, 48). Because of lack of ownership of members, there is a perception that the NGO Forum is becoming independent of its members (NGO Forum, 2006, 11; NGO Forum, 2008, 4).

One of the interviewees also states that there seems to be a lack of ownership by the networks because the networks seem to rely too much on the NGO Forum staff to take the lead. This interviewee explains that one of the criteria for becoming a member of the NGO Forum is proven commitment and activism within an existing network. This interviewee states that in her perception, members' commitment ranges from being deeply involved in the activities of one project, to serving on the Management Committee, to just attending quarterly and annual general meetings. However, as this interviewee explains and also a strategy paper and an evaluation report of the NGO Forum indicate (NGO Forum, 2006; NGO Forum, 2008, 19), generally speaking the Forum prefers that its members are more active in determining direction of the Forum and the networks. Two other interviewees say that some networks are more reactive than proactive because they for instance cannot see the importance of a certain issue for Cambodia. This again demonstrates the lack of ownership of certain members. The interviewees give the example of the hydropower network. The members that are the most active within this network are the ones who are dealing with communities that are impacted by dams. The other members of the network are less willing to work on the topic because they do not see the importance of this specific issue or because their constituency is not directly affected by this issue. The two interviewees state that if the sense of ownership and understanding of the topic is less, than the members are less active. Also the energy level within a network plays an important role. Right now, the energy level in the hydropower network is at a low point. The interviewee believes that the network members are getting a bit disheartened because, as with advocacy work in general in Cambodia, they do all this work and they are not really seeing any results.

### **Reasons for weak participation and lack of ownership**

A reason for weak participation, given by an evaluation report of the NGO Forum, is that some network members "report difficulties with getting support from their superiors to participate in network activities, as these are viewed (by their superiors) as being peripheral to their real work" (NGO Forum, 2008, 48). An additional reason might be that the staff of the membership organisations changes frequently and therefore, the rationale behind the membership organisation's initial engagement with the NGO Forum may be forgotten (ibid.). In other words, these organisations may be member of the NGO Forum just because they have been member for quite a few years. Besides, the NGO Forum has no formalized uniform process for updating membership information and contact details. According to the evaluation report, some information and contact details are even out of date and this results in lost opportunities for the NGO Forum in reaching its members (ibid.).

An additional reason for weak participation and lack of ownership within networks is the fact that many members send junior staff instead of senior staff to meetings. Both the evaluation report of the NGO Forum (NGO Forum, 2008, 19, 48) and the interviewees say that the extent of involvement of the members within networks also has to do with the fact whether senior or junior staff of a member organisation are attending. One of the interviewees explains that not enough senior staff from member organisations are attending important meetings. Often they send junior staff or even volunteers. Frequently different staff come to each meeting and there appears to be little coordination between

staff prior to coming to a meeting which results in the fact that they come unprepared. The reason behind this is that members are busy and do not always prioritise meetings of the NGO Forum. One of the interviewees explains that some of the networks have found a way of having a leadership group within the network, a steering committee, made up of leaders of key organisations who do come together irregularly and make key strategic decisions, whereas lower level staff attend the monthly meetings. Another interviewee agrees that networks with directors are easier to make decisions with. These people know more about advocacy and are in the position of making decisions whereas network members that are junior staff have to take ideas back to their boss.

### **Factors for an effective network**

The question rises what aspects determine how a network can be operating in an effective way. One of the interviewees indicates that the NGO Forum has analysed this and came up with four factors that determine how effective a network is operating. The first factor is why members join the networks, for a burning 'hot' issue or for a long term goal. When members join a network for just a burning hot issue, chances are big that these members will not be very active on other issue than the one that they became member for. The second factor is the extent to which member organisation's activity plans are in line with the activities and long term plans of the network. It seems that the more the organisation's activities are similar to the long term plans and activities of the network, the more active the members are and the more effective the network becomes. Another factor is the extent to which the network itself is organised: has it got a flexible, open approach which responses to broader issues, has it got a clear mandate, membership, strategic plan, vision or statute. And the last factor is the quality of facilitation by either NGO Forum staff or by members. All these factors seem to determining how effective the networks within the NGO Forum are operating.

### **5.3.8 Conclusion**

This case study has shown that the NGO Forum has the following strengths: the NGO Forum is the only multi-sectoral advocacy-focussed membership organisation in Cambodia and is able to bring many organisations together for dialogue, debate and advocacy. The strength of the Forum is its mandate to speak on behalf of its members and its ability to engage with local, national and international levels of policy-making. The NGO Forum has the reputation of being very constructive and the advocacy approach of the Forum has helped the member organisations to develop good working relations with donors and the government. Because the NGO Forum has a high number of members, it has a high profile and credibility.

The case study has also shown some challenges that the NGO Forum is facing. First of all, it is a challenge for the Forum to manoeuvre between the different styles of advocacy that their members would like to use. In addition to this, some government ministries consider the NGO Forum to be too confrontational, whereas the NGO Forum finds its own advocacy work very diplomatic and mild. Secondly, the interviewees indicate that the staff turnover is quite high within the organisation. This may be caused by the fact that employees feel that they are expected to do more in their position than they would have to do in other organisations when fulfilling the same position. Also the nature of the

work may cause the high turnover of staff as some of the staff members do not feel comfortable when lobbying the government. Because of the high staff turnover, the NGO Forum loses knowledge and organisational memory. Another challenge is the fact that many staff members attend trainings offered by donor organisations and therefore some work at the NGO Forum is delayed or parts of the NGO Forum are at a standstill. The last challenge mentioned is the danger of the Forum becoming larger and larger and that because of this, members become less active.

When looking at the relationship between the NGO Forum and its member organisations, there are a couple of conclusions that can be drawn. First of all, there seems to be an ownership problem within some of the networks and with member organisations of the NGO Forum. This is shown by different aspects. First of all, the NGO Forum has besides its facilitating role (which should be its core activity) also an initiating role towards its members. The choice between a facilitating or initiating role depends on the topic that is dealt with and differs per network. That the NGO Forum sometimes has a initiating role is an indication for the fact that in those cases, the members are not taking initiative. Furthermore, 30% of the members is not active and does not participate in regular members' meetings. The members that do attend the meetings often do not take ownership over the activities that are carried out within the networks. Because of the lack of ownership and participation of some members, some networks are controlled by few vocal and more powerful members as the inactive members enable these members to take control over the network. That some members do not take ownership and are not actively participating is demonstrated by the fact that some staff of member organisations have difficulties with getting support from their superiors to participate in network activities, and that some members send junior staff and sometimes even voluntary staff to meetings. This shows that these members do not prioritise participating in the NGO Forum over their daily work. One could question why these organisations are member of the NGO Forum. This is, according to the evaluation report, sometimes even not clear to the member organisations themselves as also in these organisations staff changes frequently and therefore the rationale behind the initial engagement in the NGO Forum may not be clear. The NGO Forum is worried about the lack of participation and the fact that many member organisations do not take ownership, as they are afraid that this translates in weak participation of various advocacy networks. As two interviewees already experience in the networks they are working with, if the sense of ownership and understanding of a certain topic is less, than the members are less active.

When looking at ownership within the NGO Forum and the networks of the NGO Forum, one may conclude that many member organisations (which are local NGOs) lack or do not take ownership. The relation between the member organisations (local NGOs) and the NGO Forum shows many similarities with the relationship that many local NGOs have with international NGOs. In the NGO Forum a (relative small) group of member organisations takes ownership in the networks of the NGO Forum, just like there is a group of local NGOs that do take ownership over their projects. In addition, also at the NGO Forum there is a group of member organisations that do not take ownership, just like there is a group of local NGO that do not take ownership over their projects and activities. This implies that

lack of ownership at some local NGOs is thus not only a trend which can be seen within their relation with international NGOs and donors, this can also be seen in the relation with the secretariat of the NGO Forum.

The second conclusion that can be drawn is that indeed, as was stated in the first sub-paragraph of this case study, the NGO Forum is an organisation where joint strategies can be created and member organisations can become aware of the importance of joint strategies. However, one may conclude that the strategies that are formed within the NGO Forum are mostly created by the NGO Forum itself and not by its member organisations. The NGO Forum has created a strategy for the organisation and for the three programmes of the Forum. Although some networks have created a strategy or long term goals, this does not seem to be common. Although the NGO Forum is thus an organisation where there is a possibility for creating joint strategies, and where this is also promoted, the case study shows that this does not happen very often. When looking at the earlier discussed problem of lack of (long term) strategic thinking within local NGOs, one may thus conclude that, although the opportunity for formulating strategies within the various networks is given, the participating local NGOs often do not create such a strategy or goal for their network. This thus implies that the NGO Forum does not seem to help much in tackling the problem of lack of (long term) strategy and strategic thinking within the local NGOs, as the local NGOs part of the networks often do not create (joint) strategies.

The third conclusion that can be drawn is that the NGO Forum is an organisation where knowledge can be shared and member NGOs can extend their knowledge on various development issues. During (network) meetings, the member NGOs exchange and extend their knowledge on the topics that their NGO is working on. In that sense, the NGO Forum thus helps tackling the problem of lack of knowledge within local NGOs as the member organisations are able to talk with various other NGOs, discuss topics that are related to their work field and therewith extend their knowledge and thus the knowledge level within their local NGO. However, one should also conclude that to a certain extent it is the NGO Forum's knowledge that members rely on within the networks. This is shown by the fact that the high staff turnover within the NGO Forum forms a substantial problem to the Forum and its networks, because with change of staff the knowledge of the network is (partly) lost, and has also resulted in lost opportunities for action. This thus implies that the driving spirit within the NGO Forum concerning the knowledge exchange is the NGO Forum's secretariat and not its members. This is also caused by the fact that often not the same representatives of member organisations are sent to meetings. Because these representatives often change, they have not much knowledge about what was discussed in previous meetings. Therefore, although the NGO Forum does seem to form an answer to lack of knowledge within local NGOs, the networks and member organisations seem to rely predominantly on the knowledge of the NGO Forum's secretariat.

When looking at the ownership within the networks of the NGO Forum, at the strategies that are made within the NGO Forum and at the knowledge exchange within the NGO Forum, one could conclude that the NGO Forum's secretariat plays a very important role. One could even carefully conclude that

the NGO Forum has become in some aspects a new NGO itself, because the member organisations rely very much on the NGO Forum staff to take the lead. However, this does not change the fact that the NGO Forum is still a unique initiative in which local Cambodian NGOs and international NGOs come together for dialogue, debate and advocacy.

# Chapter 6. Conclusion & Discussion

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## 6.1 Overview

According to the literature discussed in the present study, the NGO sector in Cambodia was and is dominated by international NGOs and donors. The literature shows that local NGOs seem to be dependent on donor funds, and international NGOs are important players in shaping the work and projects of the local Cambodian organisations. According to the literature, this dominance affects the way of working and results in a *lack of ownership* of local NGOs. Secondly, the literature shows that because of the fact that recipients have to work according to donor standards and rules, local CSOs try to shape their organisation as an international NGO which is called *NGO-isation*. Thirdly, local NGOs are said to *lack strategic thinking* and planning that goes beyond short term level, and lastly, there seems to be a *difference in knowledge and capacity* between international and local NGOs. The question is whether Cambodians and internationals working in the Cambodian NGO sector endorse the issues discussed in the literature. Therefore, the present study tried to find and answer on the following research question: *'Do local NGOs in Cambodia endorse the problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?'*

As was also explained in the present study, Civic Driven Change is a new paradigm that refers to and promotes a process of changes in society which is directly initiated, lead and owned by people themselves. Civic Driven Change might serve as a handle to local Cambodian NGOs in order to overcome some of the mentioned problems which might challenge the effective operation of local NGOs such as lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge. The CDC paradigm is fairly new (it is more a theoretical paradigm which has not been brought generally into practise) and not much research has been carried out into this new paradigm. Therefore, it is interesting to find out what ideas international and Cambodian practitioners working in the Cambodian NGO sector have about this new paradigm. The present study tried to find an answer on the following research question: *'Does the Civic Driven Change concept offer inspiration or possibilities to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector for overcoming some of the problems like lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge?'*

In reaction to the issues of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, lack of strategy and lack of knowledge which seem to challenge the effectiveness of local Cambodian NGOs to a greater or lesser extent, various initiatives have taken place which may help tackle these discussed problems. This study took a closer look at two initiatives: the Programmatic Approach of ICCO and the Cambodian NGO Forum.

The first case study took a closer look at ICCO, a Dutch NGO which is operating in Cambodia, that has implemented the 'Programmatic Approach'. This initiative prioritises ownership over a narrowly focused top-down programme conceptualisation (Henke, 2007). The Programmatic Approach in Cambodia strives to create coalitions of local NGOs that are working in the same field. It was expected

that these coalitions could form an answer to problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation as by forming the coalitions, the current top-down relation is changed. The idea is that when local NGOs form coalitions, they start thinking more about how they want to improve the development of Cambodia, and what they want to achieve with their own NGO and the NGOs that they are working with. When these coalitions and NGOs are thinking more about these issues, one expects that the chances become smaller that local NGOs unquestioningly accept the international NGO's policy and strategy for their country and their NGO. This because, as being part of a coalition, the local NGOs take ownership over their activities and future plans and therefore become less NGO-ised and less led by international NGOs. Besides forming an answer to the problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation, it is possible that the Programmatic Approach could also form answers to the problems of lack of strategy and lack of knowledge within local NGOs. It was expected that the coalitions that are formed might tackle the problem of lack of (long term) strategic thinking within the local NGOs. This because the NGOs that are part of the Programmatic Approach might form common strategies within their coalition and therewith create a long(er) joint vision on the development of Cambodia. It was also expected that the NGOs part of the coalition will share knowledge and learn from each other and therewith they may tackle the problem of lack of knowledge within local NGOs.

The second initiative part of the present study, which was discussed in Case Study 2, was the NGO Forum in Cambodia. The NGO Forum is an example of an initiative where local NGOs share information and debate on issues that are affecting Cambodia's development, and jointly advocate NGOs' interests at government level and towards other authorities. The NGO Forum might counter the problems of lack of knowledge and lack of strategy within local Cambodian NGOs as the NGOs involved in the Forum share ideas, talk about current issues, and can create joint strategies. This sharing of information and debating about development can increase the knowledge of the involved NGOs and can make them aware of the importance of a well-considered strategy within their own NGO or a joint strategy of multiple local NGOs.

In paragraph 6.2 of this chapter, a conclusion and discussion is given regarding the two research questions and the two case studies that were part of the present study. Paragraph 6.3 discusses the policy implications of the results of the present study. In paragraph 6.4, questions and recommendations for further research are given.

## **6.2 Conclusion and discussion**

### *6.2.1 Ownership*

#### **Ownership in the narrow sense of the word**

When doing research into lack of ownership within local NGOs, the question that rises is whether full ownership at local NGOs is really possible. Because of the funding that local NGOs receive from international NGOs, there is a funding relationship between these two organisations. This implies that the relation between these two organisation is based upon dependency of the local NGO on (the money of) the international NGO. In addition to this dependency of local NGOs on international NGOs,

local NGOs have an accountability towards the donor, which is in itself logical as the local NGO is spending the donor's money. However, because of the fact that these two organisations have a funding and dependency based relationship and because local NGOs will have to be accountable to the donor, one could conclude that full ownership is per definition not possible. This because if the local NGO can be judged on their spending pattern and the outcomes or effect of their activities, and if this is not according to the donor's wishes or standards, the local NGO might lose its funding. Therefore, the funding based relationship between local and international NGOs makes that local NGOs do not have full ownership over their activities.

However, the fact that because of the funding relationship local NGOs cannot have full ownership seems a very narrow definition of ownership. According to this narrow definition of ownership, local NGOs can only have ownership if they do not receive money from donors but generate their own money. This is, of course, quite a task for a non-governmental and non-profit organisation and a sector that is built on the so-called called policy chain or financing chain which goes from (western) governments and back-donors, via international NGOs, eventually to local NGOs. Ownership in the narrow sense of the word is thus difficult to obtain and one may conclude that local NGOs in Cambodia do not have ownership according to this definition because of the fact that they have this funding relationship with international NGOs.

#### **Ownership in the broader sense of the word**

However, the fact that according to the narrow definition of ownership local NGOs cannot have fully ownership because of the funding relationship, does not imply that these local NGOs cannot create ownership within the limitations of the funding relationship. One can also look at ownership in a broader sense of the word and when looking at ownership according to this broader definition, one accepts the fact that there exists a funding relationship between local NGOs and international donors and that this funding relationship cannot be changed, simply because of the fact that the local NGOs need the donor's funds and therefore the dependency based relation thus exists. Taking this relation as a given, it is still possible for local NGOs to gain (various degrees of) ownership in the broader sense of the word. Local NGOs can aim for having ownership and can create their own programmes and projects which are based on the wishes of their constituency and not on the strategy or project topics of the donor. A local NGO that is having ownership according to this the broader definition (thus within the limitations of the funding relationship) implies that although being accountable to the donor, the local NGO is able to shape its own programmes and activities and thus decides for instance on what topics or geographical areas programmes are carried out.

In the present study, this broader definition of ownership was used and when looking at ownership in the broader sense of the word, the present study shows that half of the local Cambodian NGOs that were part of this study have ownership. Other NGOs part of the present study do not have full ownership over their programmes and projects as they first sort out on which projects money is available, then check whether these topics and projects fit their organisations' mission and vision, after which they apply for donor money. Another interesting finding of the present study is the fact that

many Cambodian interviewees indicate that they see that other NGOs (than their own NGO) lack ownership. The question that rises is why the Cambodian interviewees see lack of ownership at other organisations and not at their own organisation. The present study suggests that there can be a couple of answers to this question. First of all, it may be possible that these interviewees truly believe that they have ownership, even though they are influenced by the donor. This is in line with what a Cambodian researchers explained in chapter 4, that local Cambodian NGOs lack a concrete institutionalised framework, and their work is based on a one-way and top-down direction from the North, full of assumptions and rationale from western countries. According to this vision, local NGOs are to such an extent part of the dominant top-down discourse that they may not realise how much they are influenced by the donor. The second explanation discussed in the present study is that the interviewees may be aware of the fact that they have not fully ownership over their activities, but they do not want to admit this to, or share this with the researcher. This because they have the feeling that they have to give socially desired answers (in this case that they do have fully ownership) or because of the cultural factor which seems to have a dominant place within the Cambodian culture: fear of losing face. The interviewees may believe that they will lose face if they admit that they do not create programmes that are based upon the needs of the community they represent. In order to avoid losing their face, the interviewees may tell that their NGO has fully ownership and other NGOs not. Besides, (as will be explained later in this sub-paragraph and also in paragraph 6.3) the present study also shows that the term ownership as such does not exist in Khmer or at least does not have the same denotation as the English word. The word ownership in Khmer means 'to control' and not 'to own', which is a very different meaning. This may have its influence on the interviewees perception of the degree of ownership within their own NGO and the degree of ownership at other organisations. Paragraph 6.3 will go deeper into the practical implications of this difference in denotation. Lastly, it is of course also possible that the local NGOs of the interviewees have ownership and that they truly recognises that some of the other NGOs in Cambodia lack (to a certain extent) ownership over their programmes and activities.

Another finding of the present study is the fact that there is a difference in opinion between local and international interviewees when looking at ownership at local NGOs. This study shows that all the international interviewees (together with one Cambodian interviewee and a Cambodian researcher) believe that there seems to be an ownership problem at many local Cambodian NGOs, and that donors have a significant influence on the programme issues, geographical area and format of the programmes and projects of local NGOs in Cambodia, this in contrast with what local NGOs say. The international interviewees do recognise that there are local NGOs that have ownership over their projects and programmes, but they believe that the number of NGOs that have full ownership is not very high.

When looking at ownership and the extent in which local NGOs comply with rules and regulations of donors, the present study has some interesting outcomes. First of all, local NGOs have to comply with many rules and regulations of the donors and this often forms a problem to these organisations. More

interestingly, however, is the fact that the extent of local NGOs unquestioningly following donors' rules and regulations seems to stem from the maturity of the organisation (leadership) and the maturity of the NGO sector. The present study shows that there have been some changes over the last years with regard to local NGOs changing their organisation towards donors' standards. In the first years after the conflict, when the Cambodian NGO sector was just starting, local organisations would do whatever the funding party would say, even if it was something that they did not want to do. Nowadays, this has changed, as the successful local NGOs nowadays are the ones that either can say 'sorry what you expect from us does not work for us, this would not be a suitable funding relationship for us', or have the capacity to negotiate those rules. The present study shows that it seems that strong local NGOs know how to deal with the conditions and requirements and do not accept just any kind of donor funding. These organisations managed to understand the way to work with donors in a more acceptable relation rather than a client-relationship. However, despite this trend, there are also younger organisations that say 'yes we will take any money, no matter what conditions or requirements are attached to it' because these organisations have just started and have no experience or skills.

The present study thus shows that the successful local NGOs are able to refuse donor money or negotiate the requirements of the donor if they do not agree with the requirements asked for, and that the unsuccessful, younger, and less experienced NGOs (leaders) tend to take any donor money regardless the requirements. This is a very interesting finding as it implies that the individual capacity of the leadership of the organisation, mostly the director, and the maturity of the NGO itself are important elements regarding the compliances of local NGOs with donors' requirements and thus regarding ownership within local NGOs. This implies that the extent of this compliance and ownership of local NGOs is a natural problem connected to the maturity of an NGO or the directors of the NGO and that this problem will go away after a couple of years when the NGO sector in a certain area has matured. For Cambodia, these arguments could make sense as indeed the NGO sector is relatively young and started to boost right after the end of the conflict situation in the country. The fact that the Cambodian NGO sector is relatively young could thus be (one of) the reasons why local NGOs comply with international donors' rules and regulations, and one of the reasons why lack of ownership occurs within this sector.

### **Three trends that do not promote ownership**

When looking at ownership, this study shows that there are different trends in the Cambodian NGO sector and in Cambodia itself that do not promote that local NGOs take more ownership. First of all, the present study shows that some international donors already have in mind which and how many NGOs they want to fund and determine the area they want the NGOs to work in before they have consulted the local organisations. Of course, it is not a problem if international donors do have a strategy and a specific area in which they operate and provide donor money to, but this does not imply that they should already have a certain amount of local NGOs in mind that they want to support. This study shows that these international donors ask a couple of NGOs to formulate a budget programme or proposal to get the money. This situation is thus already donor-driven because the donor already

pinpoints who should do what. As was described in chapter 4, this way of working of donors seems to match the way of working of the three local NGOs part of the present study that first sort out on which projects or issues donor money is available before they write any proposal. In this way, both the international donors and the local NGOs that do not have full ownership maintain a donor-driven and top-down relationship. The fact that some international donors already have in mind on what topics and how many local NGOs they are going to support, stems of course also partly from the fact that they have to comply with the wishes of their back-donors.

However, this way of working implies that local NGOs that do have own visions about what development is needed in Cambodia, and that do create their own programmes according to the needs and wishes of their constituency (instead of first sorting out what projects the donor would like to fund) are at a disadvantage. This because the plans of the local NGO that has its own vision may not match the visions and plans of the donor, because the donor already has an idea or vision about how many NGOs, or on which field it wants to give support. To a certain extent (some) donors thus enable and stimulate local NGOs to take less ownership and to react on the plans and visions of the international donor instead of the wishes and needs of the constituencies. This because the local NGOs that write proposals in accordance to the plans of the donor have more chance to get funding than local NGOs that write proposals according to their own vision and the needs of the constituency. One may conclude that this trend does not promote that local NGOs take more ownership.

However, not all international donors apply this way of working as there are also international NGOs and donors that do encourage local NGOs to create programmes in accordance with their own vision and the wishes and needs of their constituency. Especially core funding (instead of project funding with which the donor only supports a certain project) can stimulate a local NGO to take more ownership as core funding implies that the donor gives money to the local NGO without connecting this money to a certain project. It is thus up to the local NGO to decide on which project it will spend the donor money. The present study shows, however, that although there seem to be more and more donors who provide core funding, there are still many international donors that do not work according to this core funding method, but use the method described above.

The second issue that came up in the present study concerning lack of ownership, is the fact that there does not seem to be a general sense of ownership within the Cambodian culture. This study shows that because of cultural and historical factors, there is no general sense of ownership within Cambodia. Besides, there is an absence of a social contract in Cambodia. This means that, historically speaking from the Angkor period until now, Cambodia does not have a function of state institutions that deliver to the needs of its citizens and the citizens in their turn deliver something (often taxes) back to the state. That is why, according to the Cambodian researcher, the population at large does not understand their own rights and the idea of citizenship. Cambodians lack a kind of social, cultural heritage about ownership. Looking at ownership in a western country where there is a welfare system and the standard of living of the people is quite high, people are willing to invest their own money for

the sake of the public according to the social contract. In these countries people pay taxes so they have the right to claim something from the state. In Cambodia, because of the absence of a social contract, this is very difficult. Because of the fact that this social contract between the state and its citizens does not exist in Cambodia, and because of the fact that citizens do not have a sense of ownership or civic agency (which is the capacity of people, communities and groups to act cooperatively and collectively on common problems), it is for local NGOs difficult to create programmes on behalf of these people or in accordance with the needs and wishes of the citizens and communities. Another effect of this lack of social contract, civic agency and ownership, is that the money from for instance donor agencies is just pouring without any kind of civil and social initiative or civic agency of citizens, because most Cambodians see NGOs as rich organisations (foreign owned or donor-driven) and as a giver. People thus expect something from NGOs, without any culture of reciprocal obligation or responsibility back. On top of that, the present study shows that when looking at the term ownership, it turns out that the term ownership as such does not exist in Khmer or at least does not have the same denotation as the English word. The word ownership in Khmer means 'to control' and not 'to own', which is a very different meaning.

Because of the fact that there is in Cambodia no general sense of ownership because of cultural and historical factors, and because there seems to be an absence of a social contract and civic agency, it is difficult for local NGOs to create projects and programmes on behalf of their constituency. Of course, also the employees of a local NGO are Cambodian citizens, which implies that also these employees might have a general lack of reciprocal obligation or sense of ownership. In other words, the historical and cultural factors described above do not contribute to increasing or promoting the extent of ownership within local NGOs. These findings have some implications for the Cambodian and international NGO sector. These implications can be found in paragraph 6.3. Also the fact that there is a difference in denotation of the word ownership in English and Khmer has some practical implications. These implications can also be found in paragraph 6.3.

An example of the fact that there is a lack of a general sense of ownership within Cambodia is displayed in one of the case studies of the present study: the NGO Forum. This case study showed that when looking at ownership within the NGO Forum and the networks of the NGO Forum, one may conclude that many member organisations (thus local NGOs) lack or do not take ownership. The relation between the member organisations (local NGOs) and the NGO Forum shows many similarities with the relationship that many local NGOs have with international NGOs. In the NGO Forum a (relative small) group of member organisations takes ownership in the networks of the NGO Forum, just like there is a group of local NGOs that do take ownership over their projects. In addition, also at the NGO Forum there is a group of member organisations that do not take ownership, just like there is a group of local NGOs that do not take ownership over their projects and activities. The case study thus shows that the general lack or sense of ownership in Cambodia (and a lack of ownership at some local NGOs) is a trend which can be seen within the relation between local and international NGOs,

but can also be seen in the relation between the secretariat of the NGO Forum and the member organisations.

The third trend that came across in the present study that does not promote local NGOs to take ownership concerns the effect of the strategy policy of local NGOs on their ownership. According to the literature discussed in chapter 2, it is important that the strategies of local NGOs are connected to a greater vision of change in society, and that the activities that are outlined in the strategy contribute to the longer term vision of the local NGO. It turns out that the strategies used by the local NGOs are very much project-based and result-based. The results of the present study indicate (as can also be read below) that the connection between the strategy and missions and visions of local NGOs seems to be missing. Therefore, one could carefully say that local NGOs need more strategic thinking and planning so that they are better able to link the specific programmes and projects to their mission or vision. The local NGOs part of this study do not endorse the fact that a longer term strategic thinking or planning is needed within their organisation. Internationals on the other hand, do see the need for a longer term strategic planning in order for the NGOs to become less project-driven and result-based.

As can be read in chapter 4, most local NGOs use a three year strategy and mention several reasons for the use of a three year strategy such as the fast changing situation in the country and because a three year strategy is manageable. Something which the present study also shows (and which forms the third trend that does not promote that local NGOs take ownership) is that often a three year strategy is used by local NGOs because most of their donors provide money for three years. The local NGOs that were part of the present study indicate that this makes it difficult to have a strategy for more than three years as the organisations cannot guarantee the level of funding for a longer period. In other words, to a certain extent the donor thus plays an important role within the local NGO, because their method of providing funding for three years has its repercussions on the strategies that are made within the local NGOs, as local NGOs conform to the funding period of international donors. This influence that international NGOs apparently have on the strategy policy of local NGOs has its repercussions on the ownership within local NGOs. This works as follows: the local NGOs use three year strategies which are often linked to donor money and are thus linked to certain projects. Because their strategy is linked to the three year donor money provision and is project-based, this strategy is not linked to a longer term mission or vision of the local NGO. This makes that, instead of creating projects and strategies that contribute to their mission, local NGOs keep on reacting on issues that are important at the moment of applying for donor money. As this study shows, climate change seems to be a 'hot' issue within the NGO sector at the moment. So, local NGOs will create a three year strategy based on that specific issue because there is money available for projects concerning this issue. When the funding stops after three years, the local NGO will sort out what topic is important at that specific moment. In other words, the three year funding and the project funding of donors does not stimulate local NGOs to think about their own longer term mission or goal as they just hop from one project to another project which makes that their strategies stay very ad hoc instead of linked to their own mission. This implies that they keep on reacting on the donor, which in its turn makes that the

local NGOs take less ownership. This study thus shows that the three year funding and also project funding provided by the donor, does not stimulate local NGOs to take more ownership as it does not stimulate or trigger them to think out of the project-based-box.

Of course, one could also state that although the funding is provided for only three years, this should not restrain local NGOs from linking their strategies more to their longer term mission and vision instead of reacting on the donor. In that sense, local NGOs choose to conform to the three year provision of international NGOs by using three year strategies that are project and funding-based. This study shows that there are local NGOs that do take ownership and have programmes which are not created in reaction to the donor but are created in accordance with their own mission and vision. Apparently these local NGOs are able to think out of the three-year-donor-funding-box. However, the fact that many local NGOs indicate that they do create a three year strategy because of the funding policy of the donor, and the fact that there are local NGOs that indeed create their programmes in reaction to the donor, implies that the three year funding policy at least does not promote and stimulate local NGOs to create a longer term vision or strategy, and therefore this third trend does not promote local NGOs to take more ownership.

#### **Is the theory about lack of ownership within local NGOs validated in the present study?**

According to the literature discussed in chapter 2, there seems to be an ownership problem at local Cambodian NGOs. The present study has shown that most local NGOs that were part of this study do consider themselves to have full ownership over their projects and programmes. However, they do recognise that other local NGOs than their own organisation lack ownership. Furthermore, all the international interviewees together with two Cambodian interviewees believe that there is an ownership problem at many local NGOs, and that donors have a significant influence on the programme issues, geographical area and format of the projects and programmes of the local NGOs in Cambodia. Furthermore, as can be read above, there are three trends that do not promote that local NGOs take more ownership: some donors and local NGOs maintain a donor-driven and top-down relationship because the donor has in mind what issues and how many local NGOs it wants to fund, and some of the local NGOs write in their turn proposals in line with this. Secondly, in the Cambodian culture, there is no general sense of ownership or civic agency. This makes it difficult for local NGOs to create programmes and projects in accordance to the needs of their local constituency as these people often do not take any form of social responsibility. Lastly, the maximum of three year funding and also project funding provided by donors does not stimulate local NGOs to take more ownership as it does not stimulate or trigger them to think out of the project-based-box.

Considering the following facts: a. internationals believe there is an ownership problem, b. the three trends that do not stimulate local NGOs to take more ownership, and c. because local NGOs do recognise that other local NGOs (than their own organisation) have an ownership problem, the conclusion can be drawn that indeed as the literature suggests, there seems to be an ownership problem at local NGOs in Cambodia.

### **Civic Driven Change and community-led development**

When looking at ownership within the Cambodian NGO sector, there is actually an underlying problem which is mentioned in the present study by one of the international interviewees and is also covered in the Civic Driven Change paradigm. The underlying issue is that not only the local NGO should have more ownership, also the communities that are represented by these local NGOs should have more ownership. The reason why these communities should have more ownership is explained by one of the interviewees as follows: right now, the aid industry in Cambodia has a strong focus on community based activities, which implies that local NGOs base their projects and activities on the wishes of the community. However, even though some local NGOs try to work according to the wishes of the community, this way of working often results in a situation in which communities are disempowered by NGOs. This is explained in the present study by the example of a village that had five different NGOs visiting on one single day. All these NGOs had different projects and did not have a clue of the projects of other NGOs since these organisations were all working with different groups of people within the village. As a consequence, the commune council did not understand anymore what was going on in their village. This example shows that even though these local NGOs are trying to work with a community based method, in which they consult the local communities when creating and executing their projects, the community becomes disempowered because there is no coordination over, or cooperation between the various projects of NGOs in the community. Therefore local NGOs should, according to the international interviewee and the CDC paradigm, not just work in partnership with the community, but the Cambodian development industry should work with a community led and community coordinated model. In other words, development aid in the country should not be community based, but the community itself should be leading, and should be involved at the strategic level instead of the programmatic level. This implies that instead of being involved in creating or executing the programmes that are carried out by NGOs in the communities, the communities should be involved at the strategic level which implies that communities create together with the local NGOs (or even on their own before any NGO is brought in) strategies and a vision about how the situation in their community should change or what change the village together with the local NGO would like to achieve in the long term.

The fact that the NGO sector in Cambodia should be community driven endorses the need for a concept like Civic Driven Change which entails that the development industry should work according to a community led and community coordinated model. The present study shows that a concept like Civic Driven Change could indeed offer inspiration to people working in the Cambodian NGO sector. However, this study also shows some obstacles which will make it difficult to work according to this new approach. One of the most important comments concerns the question how to alter the concept from a theoretical concept into a more practical concept, in other words, how to operationalise Civic Driven Change. Besides, this study shows that especially for the NGOs working on mid-level or national level, working with the concept of CDC will be a challenge as they are not used to working with grassroots. Furthermore, the Cambodian culture and the patronage system present in the country will also make it difficult to work according to the Civic Driven Change concept as within this patronage

system, the tendency is that the powerful, rich and knowledgeable want to be the patron. As this kind of culture still exist in the Cambodian system, also within NGOs, it will therefore not be easy to implement Civic Driven Change, since the essence of the concept is change initiated by the community, the client. For this reason, the patrons in Cambodia will not be receptive to the ideas of Civic Driven Change. Lastly, the present study shows that Cambodia is not ready for a new 'ideology' and therefore, civil society is not going to lead a massive political or social change within the next ten of fifteen years. This is explained in the present study as follows: CDC is a new 'ideology' (this time brought by western people and international NGOs) which follows a long list of ideologies which were passed in review in the last century in Cambodia. It is thus really recent that the Cambodians do not have leaders calling them to follow, pick up arms, and give up their life for the sake of an ideology. Given this history, an interviewee part of the present study explains that Cambodians are not ready for a new ideology. Since the Cambodians are not ready for this new ideology, civil society is not going to lead a massive political or social change within the next ten of fifteen years.

### *6.2.2 Knowledge and strategy*

This study shows that, in accordance with what is stated in the literature in chapter 2, there is (to a certain extent) a lack of knowledge within local NGOs, as these organisations seem to lack organisational, reflection, and analytical skills. There is also a language challenge for local NGOs as reports and proposals need to be written in English. Besides, the results show that local NGOs have strategies that are project-based and result-based and that these strategies could indeed interrelate more with the local NGOs' long term vision and mission. This study also shows that (lack of) knowledge and (lack of) strategy within local NGOs is very intertwined as it turns out that the knowledge level within local NGOs is related to strategic thinking and planning of local NGOs. The international interviewees of the present study believe that the local NGOs are locked in a result-based idea and that more long term vision is needed. These long term visions should interrelate with the short term goals and activities of Cambodian NGOs. When looking at the knowledge level within local NGOs, it turns out that local NGOs especially have knowledge of local issues and communities, and have not much knowledge of issues like the changing world, the economic crisis, or climate change. As a result they are unaware how much these issues are affecting Cambodia and its people. The present study shows that this lack of knowledge of worldwide issues has its repercussion on strategy forming within local NGOs as creating a long term strategy or mission requires to take not only local but also worldwide issues into account. The knowledge level (and lack of knowledge of worldwide issues) of the local NGOs may influence the strategies that are made within these local NGOs. Besides this lack of global issues, this study shows that also the fact that in the current education system in Cambodia no analytical or critical thinking skills are learned may have its repercussions on the development of strategies within local NGOs. Writing strategies and missions requires an analytical way of thinking and assessing the current situation both in the country and worldwide, and after that linking these issues to strategies, frameworks, plans and log frames. It requires transforming something analytical and abstract into a practical strategy. The fact that local NGOs seem to lack analytical skills may thus influence the way in which their strategies are made.

### *6.2.3 Programmatic Approach and NGO Forum*

In the present study, the assumption was made that both the Programmatic Approach and the NGO Forum might form answers to the problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation, and lack of knowledge and strategy. As can be read in chapter 5, both the initiatives do form an answer to one of the problems that is stated in the literature. Both the Programmatic Approach and the NGO Forum help tackling the lack of knowledge within local NGOs. To the other stated problems (lack of ownership, NGO-isation, and lack of strategy) these two initiatives do not form an answer (yet). This study shows that it is possible that the Programmatic Approach will tackle the problem of lack of strategy in the future, as it is likely that some coalitions will create joint strategies. However, most coalitions are not in a stage of strategy forming yet. Besides, it is not yet possible to find out whether the Programmatic Approach forms an answer to the problem of lack of ownership and NGO-isation as at the moment that the data for this case study were gathered, ICCO and the NGOs that are part of the Programmatic Approach workshops, were still in the middle of the implementation of the Programmatic Approach and the coalition forming process. Therefore, it was in Case Study 1 not possible to come to final conclusions and answers to the question whether the Programmatic Approach of ICCO does form an answer to problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation. The present study also showed that, besides the fact that the NGO Forum helps tackling the problem of knowledge, the NGO Forum does not form an answer to the other stated problems of lack of ownership, NGO-isation and lack of strategy.

When looking at the Programmatic Approach, the present study shows that at this moment the learning aspect has a central place in this approach and the corresponding workshops. The project started off with an emphasis on programming where the forming of coalitions was seen as the goal. As the process continued, the action learning aspect become more and more important. This study shows that the coalition forming process definitely has helped tackling lack of knowledge within local NGOs. The members that are part of the coalitions share knowledge, talk about issues they run into in their daily work, and share experiences. This sharing of knowledge is not only within the coalition itself or about specific topics within the work field of the NGOs. Because of the workshops, in which the NGOs talk with other NGOs from other coalitions who are working in different fields of the development industry, they also extend their knowledge on issues that are not related to their specific field of work. Besides, the involved NGOs also extend their knowledge on organisational matters, such as how to cooperate with other NGOs, what makes a good coalition or network, and how do other NGOs organise their coalition. This approach of knowledge sharing is different (and one could say therefore more effective) than standard capacity trainings provided by donors as it is a process whereby the members learn by sharing and experiencing (action learning), looking at each other and discussing, which is different than just amass knowledge during a training. Besides, participants had to choose coalition partners that they trust. The fact that the participants have good relationships with their coalition partners and trust each other stimulates the knowledge exchange within coalitions. After all, you are more willing to share knowledge with partners that you trust than with partners that were chosen by the donor.

The present study also shows that the NGO Forum seems to form answers to the problem of lack of knowledge as the NGO Forum is an organisation where knowledge is shared and member NGOs can extend their knowledge on various development issues. During (network) meetings, the member NGOs exchange and extend their knowledge on the topics that their NGO is working on. In that sense, the NGO Forum helps tackling the problem of lack of knowledge within local NGOs as the member organisations are able to talk with various other NGOs, discuss topics that are related to their work field and therewith extend their knowledge and thus the knowledge level within their local NGO. However, one should also conclude that to a certain extent it is the NGO Forum's knowledge that members rely on within the networks. The driving spirit within the NGO Forum concerning the knowledge exchange is the NGO Forum's secretariat and not its members. This is also caused by the fact that often not the same representatives of member organisations are sent to meetings. Because these representatives often change, they have not much knowledge about what was discussed in previous meetings. Therefore, the NGO Forum does form an answer to lack of knowledge within local NGOs but the networks and member organisations seem to rely on the knowledge of the NGO Forum's secretariat.

### **6.3 Policy implications**

As was discussed in paragraph 6.2 of this chapter, it seems that there is in Cambodia no general sense of ownership because of cultural and historical factors, and there seems to be an absence of a social contract. These factors make it difficult to build a sense of ownership in Cambodia, and in local NGOs in specific, and make it difficult for local NGOs to create projects and programmes on behalf of their constituency. This general lack of reciprocal obligation or sense of ownership in Cambodia and within local Cambodian NGOs, has its consequences for the NGO sector and international donors. When international donors are changing their top-down way of working into a more bottom-up approach in which the local Cambodian NGO will have more ownership over its projects, and the policies and strategies of the international donor are not automatically implemented in local NGOs, international NGOs should be aware of the fact that there is no strong sense of ownership within Cambodia. This implies that the international NGOs cannot automatically expect from their local Cambodian partners to take more ownership, because of the fact that their Cambodian partners are not used to take and have ownership because of the cultural and historical factors, and because of the fact that it is for local NGOs difficult to create their programmes on the wishes and needs of a community that does not show civic agency or takes ownership. Even though the international NGO is giving the local NGOs the opportunity to take more ownership by using a more bottom-up approach in their relation, one should not automatically expect local NGOs to take ownership.

The fact that the denotation of the word 'ownership' is different in Khmer than it is in English has its implications for both international NGOs and local NGOs. When international donors interact with local Cambodian NGOs, both the international and the Cambodian involved may not be aware of the difference that exists between the Khmer and English word and the fact that in Khmer it does not mean 'to own' but 'to control'. Therefore, both international NGOs and local NGOs need to be aware of

the fact that this difference in denotation may be confusing as some local NGOs believe that they have ownership while internationals have the opinion that they have not. This because local NGOs argue according to the denotation of 'to control', and therefore, applying for funding and projects which are made by the donor is still having ownership as the local organisations have the control over what projects they apply for and have the control over the execution of the projects. According to the international donor's (and the English) denotation, these organisations do not have ownership as they do not create programmes according to their own vision and the needs of their constituency. Therefore, both international and local NGOs need to be aware of this difference in denotation in order to avoid confusion.

The present study also shows that the knowledge of local and international NGOs are very much complementing each other. It turns out that local Cambodian NGOs have good knowledge of local issues, local communities and indigenous people. International NGO staff members are said to have better analytical skills and knowledge of global issues, and they are considered good in writing reports and analysing situations. Besides, the conclusion was drawn that one should be careful with indicating which of these different 'types' of knowledge is 'good' or 'useful' knowledge. An important implication of these findings is that instead of international donors giving capacity building in order for local NGOs to gain more analytical skills and knowledge of global issues, knowledge *exchange* between local and international NGOs should have more priority. In this way, local NGOs can profit from the knowledge and skills of international NGOs, but at the same time the international NGOs can learn from the knowledge of local NGOs concerning local communities, indigenous people and the (political) situation in the country.

In the present study, various handles have been mentioned which enable local NGOs to create more ownership. If a local NGO believes that it does not have enough ownership and if this local NGO wants to increase its ownership it could take the following aspects (which were discussed in the present study and will only be summarised here very briefly) in consideration, as these handles could have a positive effect on the extent of ownership within local NGOs. First of all, creating programmes, strategies and visions based on the needs of their constituency instead of the wishes of the international NGO will increase the ownership of the local NGO. Secondly, in line with the first aspect, a local NGO will achieve more ownership when strategies are created in accordance with the long term vision or mission of the organisation. It is important that the strategies and projects of the local NGOs are created in order to contribute to achieving these long term vision and mission, instead of being created in reaction to the funding policy of a donor. Thirdly, local NGOs will increase their ownership when they are able to negotiate the rules and requirements attached to donor funds. If they can create a suitable funding relationship (suitable for both the local and international NGO), it will be more easily to negotiate the often strict rules and regulations attached to donor funds. This makes that local NGOs can work more according to their own vision instead of the donors', which will lead to more control and thus more ownership. Finally, core funding instead of project funding will have a positive effect on the ownership within local NGOs. This because core funding (instead of project funding with

which the donor only supports a certain project) enables a local NGO to take more ownership as core funding implies that the donor gives money to the local NGO without connecting this money to a certain project. It is up to the local NGO to decide on which project it will spend the donor money.

## **6.4 Questions and recommendations for further research**

### *6.4.1 Questions and recommendations for further research*

In Part I and Part II of the present study, some questions were not possible to answer and new questions arose. These questions form a good point of departure for further research.

#### **The effect of the Programmatic Approach**

One of the questions that was not possible to answer in the present study is whether the Programmatic Approach of ICCO does form an answer to problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation. This because at the moment that the data for this case study were gathered, ICCO and the NGOs that are part of the Programmatic Approach workshops, were still in the middle of the implementation of the Programmatic Approach and the coalition forming process. Therefore, it was in Case Study 1 not possible to come to final conclusions and answers to the question whether the Programmatic Approach of ICCO does form an answer to problems like lack of ownership and NGO-isation. However, an answer to this question can be very useful for the Cambodian and international NGO sector. This because in the case that the Programmatic Approach leads to more ownership and less NGO-isation, other NGOs and donor organisations might want to learn from the Programmatic Approach and in their turn implement something alike in their organisation and relation with their partners. In this way more international NGOs, together with their local partners, can create a new approach in which they try to change the current top-down way of working of international NGOs towards their local partners.

#### **Cultural factors**

As was mentioned in chapter 2 of the present study, cultural factors such as hierarchical and patrimonial traditions, fear of losing face, and the strong Buddhist influences play an important role the Cambodian daily life. A very important question, which might form an interesting point of departure for further research and should bring interesting insights, is to what extent the Cambodian culture of hierarchical and patrimonial traditions, fear of losing face, and the strong Buddhist influences in the Cambodian daily life form a basis for or help maintain the top-down way of working of international and local Cambodian NGOs. As could be read in paragraph 2.8, Buddhist beliefs are interwoven in the social hierarchies of the Cambodian society. Also hierarchical social rules and fear of losing face play an important role as it seems that Cambodians prefer to avoid conflicts and therefore choose to be humble and take the peaceful way to solve conflicts. Although the relation between international and local NGOs concerns a business relation, it might be possible that under the surface, these cultural and social traditions play a role for the Cambodians involved. Therefore, it is recommended to do further research into the question to what extent patrimonial attitudes, conflict avoidance behaviour

and fear of losing face of Cambodians may have their repercussions on the relation between local and international NGOs and may form a basis for or help maintain the top-down way of working.

The fact that culture plays a very important role when looking at the relation between international and local NGOs is of course not surprisingly as international and local NGOs have by definition different cultural backgrounds as they are located in respectively the North and the South. In order to get a better understanding of these cultural dimensions and the way in which they influence the relation between and the work of local and international NGOs, it is recommended to take Hofstede's (2001) theory on cultural dimensions into account in further research. Hofstede (2001) distinguishes in his work five main cultural dimensions to describe and compare different cultures in different countries. The first dimension is the power distance index (PDI), which is the extent to which the less powerful members of for example organisations accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The second dimension is individualism (IDV) versus collectivism, which is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. The third dimension is that of masculinity (MAS) versus femininity, which refers to the roles between genders. The fourth dimension is the uncertainty avoidance index (UAI), which has to do with a person's or organisation's tolerance to uncertainty and ambiguity. The last dimension is that of long-term orientation (LTO) versus short-term orientation. The values in this cultural dimension are based upon the teachings of Confucius. The values associated with long term orientation are both thrift and perseverance, whereas the values associated with short term orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and to protect one's 'face' (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions might form a handle for further research when trying to understand the role of culture in the relation between local and international NGOs and the way how they organise their work and organisation.

### **Historical factors**

Besides cultural factors also historical factors have its influence on everyday life in Cambodia. As was indicated in the case study about the Programmatic Approach of ICCO, the assumption is made that the process of forming coalitions may be influenced by the fact that many of the members at the workshops share an individual and organisational history. They know who fought for what political party, who was a soldier, who helped whom or which organisation. Although these issues are not part of the discussions during the coalition forming process, it is interesting to find out to what extent the conflict history of Cambodia still plays a role in daily life, and therefore also in the coalition forming process. This question is especially interesting as these dynamics may explain why certain coalitions work or do not work together.

### *6.4.2 Methodological recommendations for further research*

As was explained in paragraph 3.7, a limitation to the present study is the selection of local NGOs. Only those NGOs were selected who attended the ICCO workshops, and more specific, those who attended the most workshops. By using this selection criteria, those NGOs that did not attend all the workshops were left out. Besides, NGOs that were not part of the ICCO workshops at all, were in any case not taken into consideration to be part of the present study. As can be read in paragraph 3.7, the

selection criteria of the present study may have biased the results in different ways. The NGOs which were part of this research were, because of the workshops, already in a process of rethinking the relation between local and international NGOs and how local NGOs could cooperate together. NGOs that were not part of the workshops were not involved in this process. Attending the workshops may have influenced the ideas of the interviewees about the relation between local and international NGOs, as on the one hand they had become more aware of the perceived unequal relationship between local and international NGOs and were therefore able to give a well-considered opinion about the topic. On the other hand, the workshops may also have influenced their opinion in the opposite way as they may have become aware of problems of other NGOs which they perhaps never had experienced themselves. In other words, interviewing NGOs that were part of the ICCO workshops may have biased the results of this study in different ways. Therefore, it is recommended for further research to select other NGOs than only the ones that were part of the ICCO workshops. The researcher of the present study would also recommend for further research to interview, besides directors of local NGOs, other employees. This because after all, it are the employees of local NGOs who may have to deal directly with possible rules and regulations for documents and applications of international NGOs in order to receive funds.

When interviewing different NGOs than the ones that were only present at the ICCO workshops, and when also interviewing staff members next to directors of NGOs, the problem of the present study of a relative small selection of interviewees will be taken away and as a result, the data and results of a future study may be representative for all the Cambodians or internationals working in the Cambodian NGO sector.

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# Appendix 1

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## Interview questions local Cambodian NGOs

The following interview questions aim to discover:

### **A. Which civil society organisations in Cambodia are involved in the four coalitions that are part of this research?**

1. What is the name of your NGO
2. Organisation structure
  - How many people work for this organisation?
  - Where is the organisation based?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

### **B. On which field(s) are these civil society organisations active/ what is their core business?**

1. On which field(s) is this NGO active?
2. What is the target group of this NGO?
3. Which specific projects are set up/managed by this NGO?
4. In which other projects is this NGO involved?
5. How does this NGO fund its projects?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

### **C. Do the civil society organisations endorse the following problems:**

- a. **NGO-isation of NGOs**
- b. **Lack of local ownership**
- c. **Lack of overall strategy NGOs**
- d. **Lack of knowledge NGOs**

### **Do the participants believe that initiatives such as the Programmatic Approach help tackling these problems?**

1. It is said that there is a problem of NGO-isation in the NGO world (having to organize in a professional way according to donor standards). Looking at your organisation, do you have the feeling that you need to comply with standards of the donor organisations?
2. Does this form a problem for you?
  - If so, in what way?
3. If not, why not? What is required to receive funding?
4. Do, and if so how do these requirements change organisations?
5. Is that a good thing?
  - If so, in what way?

- If not, why not?
- 6. What could be a possible solution for the mentioned problems?
- 7. Do you feel that you have sufficient influence in deciding what activities you will carry out in your organisation (ownership)?
  - Why/why not?
  - Can you give an example?
- 8. What could be a possible solution for the mentioned problems?
- 9. It is said that many Southern NGOs and NGOs in Cambodia focus too much on the micro level, lacking a bigger and longer-term strategy. Do you see this in your organisation as well?
  - If so, in what way?
  - If not, why not?
- 10. Do you have a mission statement or a vision for your organisation? How do you want to reach this mission statement?
  - If so, in what way?
  - If not, why not?
- 11. Do you have the feeling that more of a strategy is needed?
  - If so, in what way?
  - If not, why not?
- 12. Do you have the feeling that NGOs who are working in the same field cooperate with each other?
  - If so, in what way?
  - If not, why not?
- 13. Do NGOs talk about a common strategy?
  - If so, in what way?
  - If not, why not?
- 14. Do you feel that your organisation lacks knowledge in comparison to your donor organisations?
  - If so, in what way?
  - If not, why not?
- 15. What could be a possible solution for the mentioned problems?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

**D. What is the opinion of the civil society organisations about the ‘Coalition Workshops’?**

**a. Was it their own choice to become part of the ‘Coalition Workshop’?**

**b. Expectations**

1. Was it your own choice/the choice of the organisation to become part of the workshops?
  - If so, what were the reasons to become part of the workshops?
2. How many workshops did you attend?
3. What is your overall impression of the workshops?

4. Is there something which was or is completely new for you in this approach?
5. Is there something you find difficult in this approach?
6. What role do you give yourself in this process?
7. What were your expectations when you started this process?
8. Did your expectations come true?
  - o If so, in what why?
  - o If not, what expectations did not come true, and why do you think so?
9. Did you see any changes in the process throughout the years that the workshops have been held?
10. What is your overall opinion about the Programmatic Approach workshops?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

**E. Did the workshops lead to any (provisional) coalitions?**

1. Did the workshops enable you to speak with NGOs you never spoke with before?
2. Were you able to form some sort of coalition with other NGOs?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

**E1. If so,**

- a. **Why was chosen for this kind of coalition?**
- b. **On which field is the coalition formed and on which field not?**
- c. **Why was chosen for this field?**
- d. **What goals does the coalition want to achieve in the future?**
  1. Which NGOs did you form a coalition with?
  2. On which field is this coalition active?
  3. Why did you choose for this specific coalition?
  4. Was there a reason why you did not form a coalition with other NGOs or on other fields?
  5. Was it difficult to form a coalition?
  6. Have you already been able to work according to this coalition/did you have meetings with this coalition yet?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

**F. Did the coalition lead to a common strategy?**

1. Have you been able to formulate future goals for the coalition?
2. Have you been able to form a common strategy?

**F1. If so,**

1. What is the common strategy of the coalition?
2. Was/is it difficult to create a common strategy

3. Is this strategy only on paper or are you also implementing the strategy in your coalitions and in your own organisation?

**F2. If not,**

1. Why did you and your coalition members not manage (yet) to come up with a common strategy?
2. What (change) is necessary in order to form a common strategy?
3. Do you think it is likely that you will create a common strategy in the near future?
4. If so, what kind of strategy will that be?

# Appendix 2

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## Interview questions Program Support Team

The following interview questions aim to discover:

### **A. Who is involved in the Program Support Team meetings, and on which field are these participants active?**

1. What organisation are you working for?
2. On which field is this organisation active?
3. How did you get involved in the ICCO Programmatic Approach Workshops?
4. Do the team members meet on a regular basis?
  - o How often?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

### **B. Do the participants endorse the following problems:**

#### **a. NGO-isation of NGOs**

#### **b. Lack of local ownership**

#### **c. Lack of overall strategy NGOs**

#### **d. Lack of knowledge NGOs**

1. It is said that there is a problem of NGO-isation in the NGO world (having to organize in a professional way according to donor standards). Do you see this in Cambodia as well?
  - o If so, in what way?
  - o If not, why not?
2. Do you feel that NGOs in Cambodia lack local ownership?
  - o If so, in what way?
  - o If not, why not?
3. It is said that many Southern NGOs focus too much on the micro level, lacking a bigger and longer-term strategy. Do you see this in Cambodia as well?
  - o If so, in what way?
  - o If not, why not?
4. Do you believe that NGOs in Cambodia feel that they lack knowledge in comparison to their donor organisations?
  - o If so, in what way?
  - o If not, why not?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

### **C. What is their opinion about the Civic Driven Change Approach?**

1. What are your expectations and ideas about the Civic Driven Change Approach?

2. What are (possible) positive aspects about this approach?
  - Why do you think so?
3. What are (possible) negative aspects about the approach?
  - Why do you think so?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

**D. What is their opinion about the Programmatic Approach Workshops?**

1. Was the Programmatic Approach completely new for you?
2. What were your expectations when you started the process of the Programmatic Approach workshops?
3. Did your expectations come true?
  - If so, in what way?
  - If not, what expectations did not come true, and why do you think so?
4. Is there something you find difficult in this approach?
5. What role do you give yourself in this process?
6. What obstacles have you already overcome?
7. What obstacles still have to be overcome?
8. Did you see any changes in the process and the PST throughout the years that the workshops have been held?
9. When looking at forming the coalitions, did that go according to plan?
10. Are some coalitions working better/more together than other coalitions?
  - If so, in what way and why do you think so?
11. Are the involved coalitions able to come up with a common strategy?
12. Do you believe that the workshops are a good way to create a common strategy?
  - If so, in what way?
  - If not, can you come up with other ways by which NGOs can create a common strategy?
13. Do you believe that the workshops have reached (will reach) their goal?
14. What is your overall opinion about the Programmatic Approach workshops?
15. How would you evaluate the Programmatic Approach Workshops so far?

# Appendix 3

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## Interview questions internationals & researchers

The following interview questions aim to discover:

### A. Do the participants endorse the following problems:

- a. **NGO-isation of CSOs**
  - b. **Lack of local ownership**
  - c. **Lack of overall strategy CSOs**
  - d. **Lack of knowledge CSOs**
1. It is said that there is a problem of NGO-isation in the NGO world (having to organize in a professional way according to donor standards). Do you see this in Cambodia as well?
    - If so, in what way?
    - If not, why not?
  2. Do you feel that NGOs in Cambodia lack local ownership?
    - If so, in what way?
    - If not, why not?
  3. It is said that many Southern NGOs focus too much on the micro level, lacking a bigger and longer-term strategy. Do you see this in Cambodia as well?
    - If so, in what way?
    - If not, why not?
  4. Do you believe that NGOs in Cambodia feel that they lack knowledge in comparison to their donor organisations?
    - If so, in what way?
    - If not, why not?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

### B. What is their opinion about the Civic Driven Change Approach?

1. What are your expectations and ideas about the Civic Driven Change Approach?
2. What are (possible) positive aspects about this approach?
  - Why do you think so?
3. What are (possible) negative aspects about the approach?
  - Why do you think so?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

**C. What is their opinion about the Programmatic Approach Workshops?**

1. What are your expectations and ideas about the coalitions workshops of ICCO and the PST?
2. What are (possible) positive aspects about this approach?
  - Why do you think so?
3. What are (possible) negative aspects about the approach?
  - Why do you think so?
4. Do you think that coalitions can create more ownership?

# Appendix 4

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## Interview questions internationals working at the NGO Forum

The following interview questions aim to discover:

### A. How is the NGO Forum organised?

1. When was the Forum founded?
2. Could you tell me something about how the NGO Forum is structured?
3. In which sectors is the NGO Forum active?
4. How many NGOs are member of the NGO Forum?
5. How many people work for the NGO Forum?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

### B. Does the NGO Forum endorse the following problems:

#### a. NGO-isation of NGOs

#### b. Lack of local ownership

#### c. Lack of overall strategy NGOs

#### d. Lack of knowledge NGOs

1. It is said that there is a problem of NGO-isation in the NGO world (having to organize in a professional way according to donor standards). Do you see this in Cambodia as well?
  - If so, in what way?
  - If not, why not?
2. Do you feel that NGOs in Cambodia lack local ownership?
  - If so, in what way?
  - If not, why not?
3. It is said that many Southern NGOs and NGOs in Cambodia focus too much on the micro level, lacking a bigger and longer-term strategy. Do you see this in Cambodia as well?
  - If so, in what way?
  - If not, why not?
4. Do you believe that NGOs in Cambodia feel that they lack knowledge in comparison to their donor organisations?
  - If so, in what way?
  - If not, why not?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

**C. What is the goal of the NGO Forum**

1. What is the goal, mission and vision of the NGO Forum?
2. Do you believe that initiatives like the NGO Forum help tackling the problems we just discussed before (lack strategy/ownership etc)?
3. What are the strengths of the NGO Forum?
4. What are the problems the NGO Forum is facing right now?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

**D. The NGO Forum**

1. What are the strengths of the NGO Forum?
2. What are the problems the NGO Forum is facing right now?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

**E. Relation NGO Forum & their members**

1. When looking at the relation between the NGO Forum and their members, how would you describe the role of the forum: as an initiator or a facilitator?
2. Are members involved in the work the NGO Forum and the networks are doing?
3. In what way are they involved? Is it mainly because it is for their own benefit, or because of a 'greater cause'?
4. Does the position of a certain member play a role in their involvement?

The following interview questions aim to discover:

**F. Networks & Strategy**

1. Are some networks working better than other networks? If so, what could be an explanation for this?
2. Do the networks have a strategy or future goal?

**F1. If so,**

1. who created this strategy? The members, the NGO Forum, or together?
2. What is the common strategy?
3. Was/is it difficult to create a common strategy?
4. Is this strategy only on paper or are the members implementing the strategy also in their own organisation?

**F2. If not,**

1. Why did the members not manage (yet) to come up with a common strategy?
2. What (change) is necessary in order to form a common strategy?
3. Do you think it is likely that they will create a common strategy in the near future?
4. If so, what kind of strategy will that be?