

The rise and fall of donor funding for advocacy NGOs: understanding the impact

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NGOs in Asian countries often experience fluctuations in funding because of the constantly shifting priorities of their international donors. Without domestic sources, Asian NGOs are forced to re-align their priorities with donor interests in order to compete for funding. In the case of advocacy NGOs, the resulting asymmetry in donor–grantee relations often leads to a crisis of legitimacy and deteriorating effectiveness for the NGO. Because of the political nature of advocacy work, these NGOs must maintain a reputation for independence and legitimacy if they are to be influential in the political process. This article analyses the impact of fluctuating international donor assistance to advocacy NGOs in Cambodia, the Philippines, and Thailand, and offers recommendations for donors. While donors have spent significant resources on building the capacity of advocacy NGOs in South-East Asia, funding trends usually undermine the effectiveness of their grantees long before funding is ended.

KEY WORDS: Civil Society; Aid; East Asia

Introduction

In a recent conversation, the director of an influential Asian advocacy NGO¹ asked a remarkable question: ‘*Could our organisation ever attract the funding of the World Bank?*’² On the surface, the question is entirely reasonable. Like many advocacy NGOs in Asia, this organisation had recently experienced some funding shortfalls. The major bilateral donors and private foundations were shifting their priorities towards economic growth and other issues outside the traditional scope of this organisation. What was remarkable was where the question was coming from. For more than a decade, the NGO had been a leading advocate of government accountability, rule of law, and human rights. Over the previous 20 years, a number of bilateral donors and private foundations had eagerly provided funding, and the NGO regularly received international accolades. While the organisation never publicly criticised the World Bank, there were significant differences in their views on development. This advocacy NGO, like many others, believed in the centrality of human rights in development, an approach that was mostly incompatible with the economic-growth approach of World Bank programmes. The

director claimed, 'When we speak with Bank staff, we are talking different languages.' Yet the organisation was contemplating whether it could adjust its programme activities and clarify its objectives in order to find some common ground with the World Bank. This organisation is in fact in a much better position than the vast majority of Asian advocacy NGOs, because of its good leadership and a strong reputation. The questions being posed, however, are indicative of the rise and fall of donor funding and the implications for advocacy NGOs in South-East Asia.

When donor funding moves to new priorities or different countries, many of the advocacy NGOs that rely on those donors face a crisis. Do they continue to focus on their current priorities and activities, while risking a massive decline in their budget? Alternatively, do they adapt to new donor priorities, and find ways to re-invent themselves to be more attractive to them?

Two harsh realities bring Asian advocacy NGOs to this crisis. First, donor priorities are constantly shifting. For bilateral donors, the political, strategic, personnel, and economic factors that influence funding decisions are always changing, bringing inevitable shifts in funding levels among countries, programme areas, and recipient organisations. While private foundations are more insulated from these external factors, their funding also fluctuates in response to changing approaches, personnel, and financial realities. Second, advocacy NGOs in most developing countries are almost entirely dependent on foreign donors.

International donors cannot necessarily be blamed for the fluctuations in funding to NGOs resulting from the factors outlined above. However, there is growing evidence that the shifting priorities of international donor funding undermine the credibility and effectiveness of the very advocacy NGOs that they are trying to strengthen. As priorities move to new areas, the power relations between donors and their NGO grantees become increasingly asymmetric. Without alternative funding sources, most NGOs will be forced to change their activities and objectives to suit donor priorities, in an attempt to attract new funding. As a result, these NGOs will gradually lose their autonomy from donors. Within the domestic political environment, this trend exacerbates perceptions that the NGOs are representing donor interests above national interests, seriously damaging their credibility and effectiveness.

One crucial factor that will determine whether civil society can continue to have an influence in public life is the domestic funding environment. In some South-East Asian countries, after the inevitable fall in donor support, domestic institutions have emerged as a viable alternative. NGOs with established domestic reputations and good leadership will often be able to continue their role in public life with domestic funding. In Thailand, for instance, as external funding began to drop in the mid-1990s, the newly democratic government and various private donors began to support civil society, filling some of the gaps left by the departing donors. By comparison, the Philippines and Cambodia had very few domestic funding sources, leading to an uncertain future for civil society.

This article bases its recommendations for donors on several cases in South-East Asia. While experiences in Africa, Latin America, and the rest of Asia may be somewhat different, these cases provide some insight into the complex relationship between donors and advocacy NGOs in developing countries.

The rise and fall of donor funding for NGOs

Donor funding for Asian advocacy NGOs has experienced a cycle of dramatic rise and decline. In the 1990s, public and private donors enthusiastically supported the role of civil society in advocating policy reform and demanding government accountability (Golub 2000). Donor funding for civil society in Asia rose exponentially during this period, and Asian advocacy NGOs at the national and local levels were a major recipient of this new

influx of resources. Advocacy NGOs were established for all kinds of cause, including environmental conservation, rights of minorities and indigenous people, improving governance, anti-corruption, women's empowerment, and micro-enterprise development, among many others. According to Ottaway and Carothers (2000: 293), during the mid-1990s donors 'embraced civil society development as a necessary part of democracy promotion and launched hundreds, even thousands, of projects under that rubric'. In the Philippines, for example, increasing levels of funding combined with a more open political environment (after the fall of the Marcos regime in 1986) to produce an 'NGO boom'. Mary Racelis (2000: 160), the former director of the Ford Foundation in the Philippines, states that by 1999 the number of civil-society organisations had grown to 'anywhere from 60,000 to over 95,000 NGOs' – up from 27,100 in 1986.

The decline in donor funding began in the late 1990s. In the Philippines, it showed signs of tapering off in 1998 and 1999, as donor priorities began to shift and foreign aid budgets fell. The decline accelerated rapidly after 11 September 2001, as the Ford Foundation closed its office in the Philippines and many other donors shifted their resources to more strategically important countries. According to one Filipino NGO worker, the closing of the Ford Foundation office was particularly painful, as funding was cut for more than 200 local NGOs.³ In Cambodia, the decline began in the early 2000s, as some major bilateral donors became disillusioned with the lack of systemic political and economic change. After more than ten years of substantial funding to NGOs working on human rights, rule of law, and government accountability, the donors began to question the effectiveness of NGOs in accelerating reforms. Thailand followed a similar pattern: although the decline began in the mid-1990s,⁴ it was primarily a result of progress in economic and political development, which significantly reduced the perceived need for foreign donors. Thailand officially 'graduated' from US foreign assistance in the late 1990s, and USAID funding declined to a fraction of former levels.

Bilateral funding priorities change from year to year, leading to volatility in the allocation of overseas development assistance (ODA). Noting the seemingly arbitrary and unpredictable nature of ODA flows, Trumbull and Wall (1994: 876) claim: 'The criteria by which donors allocate ODA are not obvious and there is little agreement as to what they are'. UNDP describes ODA allocation as 'largely ad hoc and unpredictable' and determined by the 'fluctuating goodwill of the people and their parliaments in the rich countries' (UNDP 1992: 45). In their analysis of aid allocation to developing countries, Trumbull and Wall describe a number of factors that drive the level of funding given to specific countries; they include the level of poverty; political-civil rights; size of the population; geo-strategic value to the donor; colonial ties with recipient country; and proximity (1994: 881). Funding for advocacy NGOs is just one segment of the entire system, and volatility at any level (aggregate, country, issue area, or grantee type) can lead to dramatic shifts in funding to individual NGOs.

There are a number of scenarios in which an advocacy NGO can lose its funding for reasons beyond its control. Aggregate ODA levels may fall, forcing bilateral donors to reduce the scope of assistance. Donors may shift priorities to issues that are beyond the scope of the NGO. Donors may decide to support government or other sectors of civil society (such as business associations, labour unions, or service-delivery NGOs) rather than advocacy NGOs.

Fluctuations in donor priorities are driven by a number of factors. Geo-politics and national strategic considerations have been a major consideration, especially during the Cold War. Bilateral donors will often shift funding between countries or regions as new international threats and opportunities emerge. Multilateral donors and private foundations will also change their focus to countries of greater strategic importance. After 2001, many donors, including the Ford Foundation, increased their funding to Indonesia and other Muslim countries, which led to declines in funding everywhere else.

According to Ravi Kanbur (2003: 4), geo-political considerations and the evolution of development thinking have been the two most important factors in determining aid doctrine since the 1940s. However, he argues that the 'evolution of development thinking has been more complex and non-linear in nature', compared with geo-politics. Funding for certain issue areas – such as health, education, economic growth, governance, democratisation, and human rights – can change dramatically as thinking evolves. For example, the wave of democratic transitions in the late 1980s and early 1990s brought a surge in funding for democratisation and governance programmes (Carothers 2000: 4). As donor strategies change, donors will occasionally shift funding from one type of beneficiary to another. The rapid rise in funding to NGOs in the 1990s was partly a shift away from government to civil society, as donors became disillusioned with government programmes.

Volatility in bilateral donor priorities is also driven by political developments in their home countries. In most cases, bilateral foreign-assistance allocations are determined each year by domestic political processes. Election results and shifts in party politics have implications for ODA allocations. For example, from 2001 to 2006, the Republican-controlled Administration and Congress in the USA introduced a number of changes in development strategy, including an increased focus on democratic development; a sharp reduction in population programmes; and an entirely new approach to development through the country-selectivity model of the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA). The MCA, for example, will concentrate the flow of ODA resources through government, while the role of NGOs remains uncertain.

Bilateral donors and private foundations will often change their funding patterns in response to the perceived need (or lack of need) of a given country, relative to other countries. As countries or regions become more economically developed, donor funding tends gradually to fall off. For example, US funding to Asia (excluding the Middle East) represented 54 per cent of global US ODA allocations in 1954. After decades of economic growth in several East Asian countries, the perception arose among donors that the needs in Asia were less acute than those in Africa and other poor regions. By 1995, ODA allocations to Asia had fallen to six per cent of US ODA funding (US CBO 1997: 10).

The variability of bilateral donor funding is also a product of the rise and fall of overall ODA levels. According to Thorbecke (2000: 2), 'The decade of the 1990s was marked by a strong and lingering case of "aid fatigue", influenced by the rising fear that foreign assistance was generating aid dependency relationships in poor countries'. This decline was also a product of the end of the Cold War. As the threat of the Communist bloc faded, Western populations (especially in the USA) became less concerned about external issues. Interest in foreign problems declined, and ODA funding consequently dropped.

Finally, the increasing fragmentation of development assistance has added greater volatility to aid flows. According to Knack and Rahman (2004), the number of bilateral and multilateral development agencies has grown exponentially since the Marshall Plan of the 1940s, when there was only one major donor. Foundations, corporations, and other private international donors are also expanding their funding to developing countries in unprecedented numbers. For example, in 2002, 'there were 25 official bilateral donors, 19 official multilateral donors, and about 350 international NGOs in Vietnam. . . accounting for over 8,000 development projects' (Knack and Rahman 2004). Each donor has its own set of priorities and interests, which are constantly evolving, but often in different directions. The sheer number of donors multiplies the effect of the volatility of their funding to NGOs.

With all of these factors in mind, we can expect that donor funding will continue to be in a state of flux for years to come, and that entire sectors of civil society will emerge and disappear as a result.

Power relations between donors and NGO grantees

The constant fluctuation of donor funding allocations has important implications for relations between donors and advocacy NGO grantees. Donors often refer to their grantees as 'partners', implying a relationship of relative equals. Does this characterisation reflect reality?

There have been several studies of power relations between donors and NGOs, most of them arguing that relations are asymmetrical. As the controller of funding decisions, the donor sets the terms of the relationship. A few studies, however, have analysed the nuances in donor–NGO relations, looking at changes over time as well as reputational factors. In her analysis of donor–NGO power relations, Dorothea Hilhorst (2003) argues that power relations between a donor and an NGO depend on a dynamic and multi-layered history of interactions between them that are coloured by political and ideological differences, competition between organisations, and disagreements over the concept of 'partnership'. 'Funding agencies vary in their approaches, policies, and styles of intervention, and therefore in the extent to which they can and want to impose on NGOs. Diversity among NGOs regarding their size, leadership, country and fields of work further accounts for large differences in the room for maneuver of NGOs vis-à-vis their funding agencies.' She points to the arguments made by David Hulme and Michael Edwards (1997) that these relations can be regarded in terms of 'bargaining and negotiation, although at times marked by coercion'.

It is rare to find a perfect alignment of vision and interests between donors and the NGOs that they are funding. As a result, they engage in a process of negotiation over what to do, and towards what ends. This negotiation is heavily influenced by the relative power of the two actors. There are times when NGOs hold an advantage. If there are only a few NGOs in the country with the reputation and capacity to implement programmes that donors value, then these NGOs tend to have some leverage in relations with donors. For example, in the early 1990s, very few Cambodian organisations could implement effective programmes in the relatively chaotic post-war environment. Donors converged on Cambodia in large numbers and with sizeable budgets to support the transition from war to democracy. While the number of Cambodian NGOs increased rapidly in response to funding opportunities, many of these new organisations lacked capacity and experience. Some were just trying to make money. Within a few years, a small group of NGOs emerged with a good reputation and a reasonable track record of achieving an impact, such as the Cambodian Defenders' Project, ADHOC, Legal Aid of Cambodia, and LICADHO.⁵ These NGOs became the favourites of international donors, and managed to diversify their funding and strengthen their reputations for autonomy. By the early 2000s, however, as the funding for advocacy NGOs declined, they began to lose the upper hand in relations with donors. By 2005, even the most respected Cambodian advocacy NGOs were under intense pressure to follow donor priorities in order to maintain their funding.

Over time, donors will increasingly gain the advantage *vis-à-vis* NGO grantees. Volatility in donor priorities will inevitably lead to a squeeze in funding available for advocacy NGOs, regardless of their area of focus or country. Local NGOs increasingly need to compete for less and less funding, while donors make increasing demands for quantifiable short-term impact. The usual result is that many NGOs will close, and those that remain will be much more closely aligned with donor priorities and interests. Hulme and Edwards conclude that 'there is a process of convergence towards donors' in terms of setting priorities and determining programme strategy, which 'results in increasing upward accountability at the expense of the relationship of the NGOs to their constituencies among the poor' (cited in Hilhorst 2003: 280; see also Buiter 2005).

Advocacy NGOs: the decline of credibility and influence

What are the implications of asymmetric donor–NGO relations? On the surface, there may be some positive outcomes. Competition among NGOs may help to improve NGO accountability and performance. Proponents of this view will contend that NGOs have often been criticised for their lack of accountability and limited impact. Competition for donor funding creates incentives for NGOs to work harder, cut unnecessary costs, and resist temptations to misappropriate funds. In theory, a highly competitive NGO sector would improve the overall influence and effectiveness of civil society within the domestic political environment. The high-performing NGOs will thrive, while the ineffectual organisations fade away.

This logic may be appealing to donors, but it is misleading in the specific case of advocacy NGOs, whose autonomy matters a great deal in domestic political dialogue and advocacy activities. If the NGO becomes so closely affiliated with the donor that it loses credibility *vis-à-vis* the government, other political actors, and the rest of civil society, then how can it possibly increase its influence in the political process?

Donor funding for politically engaged NGOs is accompanied by many inherent risks for the recipient organisation. International donor funding, especially from foreign governments, raises suspicions among domestic political actors and makes NGOs more vulnerable to accusations of foreign manipulation, which in turn undermines the NGOs' credibility. Advocacy NGOs are often accused of representing the ideals and interests of donors in the policy process in order to ensure the continuation of donor funding, and hence their own survival. As Asian NGOs have grown in influence and capacity – often as a direct result of international donor funding – they have increasingly become the target of criticism from other domestic actors. Powerful groups in government, political parties, private sector, and even other civil-society organisations (CSOs) have attacked the legitimacy and accountability of NGOs receiving foreign funding. Domestic critics may use these arguments to label NGOs as agents of foreign interference in national politics, and have often sought to undermine the legitimacy of civil society as an imposter in the reform process. In addition, domestic and international critics have pointed to the lack of sustainability and the powerful incentive for institutional preservation that turns even the most altruistic NGOs into fundraising operations and implementers of foreign donor agendas.

In local politics, an NGO must establish its credibility by demonstrating that it represents the interests of a particular constituency or the national interest. NGOs that receive foreign funding already face a significant challenge in proving that they are politically independent and not unduly influenced by the donor. As the relationship between donor and NGO becomes increasingly asymmetric, it becomes more difficult for the NGO to maintain its autonomy. Advocacy NGOs that have re-aligned their activities and objectives to follow donor priorities (in order to survive funding cuts) are particularly vulnerable to accusations that they are representing foreign interests.

Of all the potential recipients of international funding, advocacy NGOs are the most negatively affected by asymmetric power relations and the volatility of donor funding. Their work is highly political. Their influence, and thus their effectiveness, is a product of local perceptions and politics. In other sectors, when donor funding dries up, the programmes simply taper off. With advocacy NGOs, however, their effectiveness diminishes even while their funding continues, because of the gradual deterioration of their autonomy *vis-à-vis* donors. In fact, the expectation that NGOs will gradually lose their funding and independence may have serious implications for their effectiveness throughout their existence. Governments and powerful supporters of the status quo have an incentive to reject compromise today, as the NGO advocates for reform will almost certainly be weakened in the future.

NGO autonomy and the domestic funding environment

In the early years of civil-society development, donor funding allows NGOs to remain autonomous of powerful domestic interests and to pose a challenge to the power of entrenched elites. In most developing countries in Asia, foreign donors are the only significant source of funding for advocacy NGOs, for three reasons. First, low incomes or high levels of poverty, and the lack of a substantial middle class, mean that the resources needed to support civil society are scarce. Second, if domestic sources exist, they are usually hesitant to fund advocacy NGOs. Domestic government agencies and local private-sector donors are wary of funding organisations that could be perceived as partisan or anti-government. Third, many advocacy NGOs are active in challenging the discretion of powerful ruling elites in government. These elites usually have a broad network of influence, which can effectively cut off domestic groups that are working against their interests. In the early stages of their development, if local CSOs were to rely solely on local resources, they would be hard-pressed to find adequate funding from the general public, and would be vulnerable to attempts by elites to undermine their funding base.

Once advocacy NGOs have become established on the basis of donor funding, however, it is only a matter of time before the resources are re-allocated to other countries, issues, or grantees. The key question is whether these organisations can develop a domestic funding base within this limited window of time. In the Philippines and Cambodia, local NGOs continue to be almost entirely reliant on foreign donors. In the Philippines, where there has been modest economic development, advocacy NGOs have unsuccessfully sought funding from local sources.⁶ In Cambodia, where the economy has struggled for decades, domestic sources of funding are practically non-existent. Thailand is the exception that proves the rule.

In countries with viable domestic sources of funding, NGOs with a good reputation and perceived autonomy can attract national donors. Even in situations where foreign donors are the only major source of funding, some NGOs have succeeded in establishing their reputations for autonomy and independence. These NGOs tend to seek funding from multiple donors, as this diversification makes them less vulnerable to individual donor pressures and volatility. For example, one influential Filipino advocacy NGO that focuses on environmental and indigenous rights maintains an internal rule that no single donor may account for more than 20 per cent of its budget, which forces management to diversify funding sources.⁷ The presence of alternative donors can alter the landscape for local NGOs and give them more incentive to maintain autonomy from foreign donors, while focusing their activities on local priorities.

Thailand provides a good illustration of how a domestic funding environment can transform the prospects for civil-society longevity. After the major international donors began to reduce funding to Thai NGOs in the mid-1990s, the government and several local charitable foundations emerged as important new sources of funding for civil society. According to Rosana Tositrakul, an influential and widely respected NGO director of a health-service and advocacy NGO, the shift from foreign to domestic funding has taken less than 20 years.⁸ In the 1980s, almost all Thai NGOs were reliant on foreign donors. In the mid-1990s, it became increasingly difficult for Thai NGOs to obtain grants, and several closed down. At that time, many organisations began to fundraise domestically, with some success. In 1990, the Ministry of Public Health set up a fund to assist NGOs that were providing services in health-related sectors. In recent years, a new government fund has been established with proceeds from a new two per cent tax on cigarette sales, which is funding grants to NGOs in the health sector. Today, very few Thai NGOs receive funding from foreign donors, and yet civil society continues to be very active and influential.

A 1997 anti-corruption case demonstrates the continued influence of NGOs in Thai politics, despite the significant decline in donor funding. A corruption scandal at the Ministry of Public

Health over the procurement of medicine for rural health facilities led a number of NGOs to organise a campaign. Ms Rosana became the *de facto* leader of this movement. Known as the '30 NGOs', this coalition organised publicity for the case, demanded the removal of several senior politicians and civil servants, and organised a petition of 50,000 signatures to pressure the government to respond.

When NGOs receive funding from their own government, new complications arise. For instance, they may be less inclined to engage in political activities that might upset the government. Governments are much more likely to provide funding to non-political NGOs, such as service-delivery or educational organisations. As a result, the number of NGOs focused solely on advocacy tends to drop when international funds decline. However, this trend does not necessarily lead to the end of civil-society advocacy. In the Ministry of Health corruption case, all of the NGOs involved in the campaign were primarily focused on the delivery of health-care services and health-related education to rural and minority populations. According to Ms Rosana, none of the NGOs involved was focused entirely on policy advocacy and government accountability. Despite the risks to their funding – most of the organisations were receiving funds from the Ministry at that time – the 30 NGOs decided that the issue was too important to ignore. The rising price of medicines directly affected their work in rural areas. In subsequent years the Ministry of Health cut the funding to these NGOs, but most have managed to continue their work with funds from other donors.

In the Philippines and Cambodia, by comparison, the absence of domestic donors poses significant challenges for local NGOs. Without even the possibility of locally generated funding, advocacy NGOs in these countries must continue to compete for foreign assistance, and they face growing pressure to sacrifice their autonomy.

Recommendations for donors

The lack of domestic funding and the volatility of international donor funding are beyond the control of most donor agencies and private foundations. However, donors often exacerbate these problems unnecessarily by their actions and public statements. Donors are in a position to mitigate the impact of these larger forces on advocacy NGO grantees, as long as they avoid a few common mistakes.

Donors must be especially careful about taking credit for reforms or political changes in recipient nations that may result from funding to advocacy NGOs. Bilateral donors are under increasing political pressures to demonstrate impact, in order to justify their budget allocations. This creates a powerful temptation for donors to claim publicly that their interventions were instrumental in the adoption of a new law, or a successful reform movement. However, such claims can lead to a political backlash against advocacy-NGO grantees. Political opponents of reform in the recipient nation can use such claims to justify accusations of foreign interference, and quickly derail the reform movement.

Donors should also minimise the pressure on advocacy-NGO grantees to adopt priorities and programme activities that are outside their core mission. As donor priorities expand into new programme areas, NGOs may feel compelled to pursue funding even in areas where they have no experience. In some cases, donors will approach their favourite local NGOs and encourage them to accept new funding, even if the activities are outside the NGOs' stated mandate. As the scope of NGO activities broadens in response to shifting donor priorities, the autonomy and independence of the NGO will suffer. Certainly, NGOs must take some responsibility for avoiding this scenario and resist the temptation to follow the funding. However, donors can help by reducing the pressure on NGOs to expand their scope.

Finally, donors could improve the consistency and sustainability of funding through longer-term grants or managed capital endowments for local NGOs. For example, the Ford Foundation established a number of modest capital endowments for NGO grantees in the Philippines before closing its office in September 2003.⁹ By reducing the short-term threat of a drop in funds, donors improve the chances for NGOs to maintain their autonomy and possibly find alternative donors in the future. Furthermore, donors should attempt to accelerate the development of a domestic funding environment by encouraging and co-operating with prospective local donors.

Donors can often prevent the credibility dilemmas and accusations of foreign manipulation that are likely to hurt advocacy NGOs. When donors allow the NGO to maintain its autonomy, the grantee is likely to improve its influence in the domestic political environment, and eventually be more effective at fostering reforms and improving government accountability.

Conclusion

The volatility of donor funding is an unfortunate fact which is not likely to change in the future. Furthermore, the reliance of local advocacy NGOs on international donors is similarly unavoidable in most South-East Asian countries, unless there emerge viable domestic sources of funding. The implications of this situation can be seen in the cases of Cambodia, the Philippines, and Thailand, where the rise and fall of donor funding have led to very different outcomes. In Thailand, civil society continues to play an important role in the political process, despite the major drop in foreign funding a decade ago. In the Philippines and Cambodia, the once-dynamic NGO sectors are in the midst of a decline. Competition among NGOs is leading to increasingly asymmetric relations with donors and growing pressure to re-align themselves according to donor priorities.

Substantial policy changes would be required to reduce the volatility of donor funding, and these are beyond the scope of this article. However, international donors can minimise some of the problems and challenges created by this volatility. Asymmetric relations can have negative repercussions for both donors and advocacy NGOs. However, donors do have the ability to minimise such damage if they can effectively treat the NGO as a 'partner' in both word and deed.

Notes

1. In this article, 'NGO' generally refers to organisations operating at the national or sub-national level. Transnational NGOs are outside the scope of this analysis. Advocacy NGOs are those whose core mission is to promote a political cause, pressure government for reform, represent marginalised and poor communities in the policy-making process, or monitor and expose abuses of government and politically powerful groups.
2. Interview with advocacy NGO director, Asian country, 2 November 2005.
3. Interview with former staff member of advocacy NGO in the Philippines, 7 December 2005. Throughout this period (late 1990s to 2005), the interviewee worked for an NGO that lobbied for the rights of indigenous people and environmental conservation in the Philippines. Its work was very political, and was frequently challenging the government and major economic interests in court and policy debate. The organisation was a beneficiary of Ford Foundation funding until the Foundation's office closed in 2003.
4. Interview with Rosana Tositrakul, Secretary General, Thai Holistic Health Foundation, former leader of NGO coalition to address the 1997 Ministry of Public Health procurement corruption scandal, 29 November 2005.
5. LICADHO is the acronym of the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights.
6. Interview with anonymous informant, Philippines, 7 December 2005.

7. Interview with anonymous informant, Philippines, 7 December 2005.
8. Interview with Rosana Tositrakul, 29 November 2005.
9. Interview with anonymous informant, Philippines, 7 December 2005.

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