VIII. Four thematic case studies of joint national NGO campaigns

8.1 Good governance and democratisation

Commission for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia

COMFREL is a network of twelve local NGOs that has been educating voters and monitoring elections since its official recognition as one of three independent observer networks by the National Election Committee (NEC) in 1997. Its mission is to help create an informed and favourable climate for free and fair elections. To this end COMFREL lobbies and advocates for a suitable legal framework, educates voters and monitors the election process to both discourage irregularities and provide comprehensive monitoring data to enable an objective, non-partisan assessment of the election process. COMFREL’s national network extends to the village level nation-wide, with 35,000 volunteer extension workers and observers covering almost 95% of polling stations. It uses the existing provincial and community infrastructure of member organisations that specialise in areas including human rights, community development, and women’s programmes. The volunteers are both local NGO staff and trained villagers. They engage in voter awareness and pre and post election monitoring on an ongoing basis.

The election monitoring network was initiated by three local NGO leaders. A training workshop was convened in Phnom Penh in 1996 with assistance of European NGOs and Forum Asia—a regional human rights organisation. NGO networks from Thailand, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh shared their experiences in national election monitoring and discussed organisational models, strategies and programmes currently used around Asia. The workshop resulted in the formation of both COMFREL and the Asian Network for Free and Fair Elections (ANFREL), which has become an authority in its own right through its election observing and support for local NGO networks around Asia.

COMFREL’s Board of Directors, which consists of the Executive Directors of the 12 member NGOs, supervises the work of the Executive Committee and Central Office that coordinates all communication, trainings and supply of materials to the NGO networks in the provinces. Provincial Executive Groups organise the work of the District Contact Persons and Commune Activists and conduct trainings with technical assistance from the Central Office. In addition, the Central Office runs national awareness campaigns and the media monitoring unit and monitors voting decisions of elected members of parliament. It produces press releases, monthly updates and, during elections, comprehensive reports. COMFREL receives funding from a variety of European and American bilateral aid agencies and international private foundations, including Japanese peace foundations.

To build a national network of 12 NGO partners that reaches all corners of the country, to protect it from external pressure and to keep the volunteers active and committed between elections, is an ongoing struggle that requires ample managerial attention and a charismatic leadership. Election monitoring is a labour intensive, ongoing undertaking, which makes partnering with existing NGO field facilities and staff indispensable. The multiple NGO involvement in turn raises issues of cross NGO quality standards and balancing programmatic priorities. Another challenge was to acquire professional skills to advocate for electoral law reform, and develop voter education and monitoring programmes, in order to meet the international standards of election monitoring and to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the government and the National Election Commission. To this end, European donors provided regular backstopping services by two senior EU election specialists in 1997 – 1998, who had done similar work in Russia, South Africa and the Balkans.
Since its inception, COMFREL has monitored three national elections. For the last exercise, the National Elections of 2003, the National Election Commissioner issued 30,793 accreditation cards to local COMFREL observers. The 2003 election was the least violent, allowed for more party dialogue and saw an increased number of female candidates, though unequal access to media remained problematic. Over the preceding five years the network membership was consolidated and COMFREL developed a good reputation, both nationally and internationally. To exploit the benefits of this well run, nationwide volunteer network, new programmes have been introduced, like the monitoring of the voting behaviour of members of parliament performance relative to their election promises and the strengthening of the decentralisation process.

The Commune (District) elections, held in February 2002, gave Cambodian citizens the first ever opportunity to elect their commune councils. Surveys revealed that although 50% of the people believe that the commune council affects their life more directly than the national government, the workings of the commune council were not clear. (COMFREL, 2002) As was to be expected, the first years of the newly elected commune councils were marred by numerous problems. Counsellors lack adequate knowledge of project planning and financial systems to manage commune development funds professionally, which delays dissemination of budgets and results in low quality development plans and non-transparent financial systems. Furthermore, the commune councils lack experience in monitoring and evaluating their projects, which prompts fears that contractors delivering poor quality work will not be held liable and commune corruption will flourish. Moreover, female representation in the commune councils is very low. 107

To strengthen the civic-mindedness and educate key stakeholders about the operations of the commune council, COMFREL convened twenty public forums around the country in 2002/2003, in which the Commune Councils, the Village Development Committees, local NGOs and citizens participated. The aim of the public forums is to promote public awareness and participation in the development planning process at the district level; improve the relationship and trust between the commune council and the local citizens; and explore local recommendations to resolve community conflicts. Local public forum officers were trained in commune council law and sub-decrees to serve as a knowledge source to both the local citizens and new commune councils. In 2003 an internal COMFREL evaluation concluded that local policy forums had been successful, but continued education about the ‘true meaning’ of democracy and monitoring of the decentralisation process is needed to strengthen the relationship between the council and its citizens. In addition, COMFREL aims to strengthen grass roots civil society to hold the commune council members accountable for addressing the local needs and to provide bottom up checks and balances to the decentralisation process. To this end, the village groups need training and cross-interest-group networking, which is usually the work of NGOs. But recent surveys indicate that only few community development NGOs have initiated decentralisation projects, because the majority admitted that their knowledge of commune council operations was “only fair or poor.”

Limited female participation in the political process and decentralised planning is another key issue. 108 With newsletters, radio/television spots, workshops and seminars about gender equity,

107 Women were elected to 954 councilor positions out of 11,261 (eight percent) in 1,621 councils across the country. Source McGrew, Laura et all (2004) - Good Governance from the Ground Up, p.20.
108 “It is clear from previous interviews and analysis of participation in democracy, that women must be included in the process. (…) The majority of Cambodians believe that women should vote in accordance with the advice that men in their lives give them. Communities and many families believe that men best perform the job of the commune government. This is because of the historical role of the commune councils often were involved in military decisions and traditional Khmer culture does depreciate the opinions and participation of women. Female independence in voting is an essential start to including women and increasing the wider concept of political participation by women. Without a strong, independent female voice half of the population will continue to be marginalized. The idea that men
COMFREL attempts to overcome the limited gender awareness that results from high illiteracy, to empower women candidates to create a political system that represents everyone. Its work is further hampered by the lack of ministerial efforts to mainstream gender at the commune level. For example, the Provincial Departments of Women and Veterans Affairs (PDWVA) did not visit commune councillors to assist in the selection and appointment of commune council gender focal persons (GFP), as the guidelines instruct. As a result, only a handful of GFPs were operational in 2003. Next to working with PDWVA to get the GFPs in place, COMFREL has been lobbying both the NEC and political parties in every National Election to set a quota of 30% female parliament members and to have the electoral law amended to that effect.

While COMFREL's work has received much praise, it continues to encounter serious problems with State officials. There is still a “deep-rooted suspicion and opposition to the legitimate, desirable and necessary involvement of civil society in elections” and its involvement in future elections is by no means guaranteed. Both during the Commune Elections of 2002 and the National Elections of 2003, COMFREL had to fend off attacks for four months running up to Election Day, to preserve their right to free expression and assembly and implement their voter education programme. Another major concern is the emergence of election monitoring NGOs with political party affiliations that wish to protect and promote their electoral interests. In 1998, local COMFREL observers at the polling and counting stations were almost replaced by newly formed NGO networks sympathetic to the ruling parties and the NEC. Only through the insistence of the international aid agencies that funded the election process, was the accreditation of politically affiliated organisations withdrawn. In 2003 a similar incident happened, when a collective of 76 pro-CPP local NGOs were registered to monitor elections.

In sum, local election monitoring in Cambodia has brought tense State-NGO relations to the fore. The network of 12 NGOs has a number of key advantages: it provides an efficient nationwide network, reduces the risk of political hijacking, adds to its legitimacy and public acceptance, and facilitates contact with horizontal and vertical constituencies. The NEC has repeatedly attempted to restrict the freedom of expression and assembly of local NGO monitors and international pressure was required to guarantee access to the polling stations. But the strategic choices of COMFREL to work on democratic inclusion, decentralisation and gender equity, along with political violence and abuse of political powers, makes its work extremely strategic.

Inherently have more knowledge and intelligence must be eradicated from the social norm.” (COMFREL, Annual report 2002)

110 The NEC’s Secretary General issued a letter (no. 07.1459/03 NEC, dated July 15, 2003) to stop COMFREL’s activities in monitoring the neutrality of the electoral authority at all levels, stating that those activities were affecting the electoral authority and violated the election law, regulations and procedures of the NEC and the Code of Conduct of Observers. It was not clear which articles were violated by COMFREL’s activities. As a result of this letter, electoral authorities at provincial and local levels obstructed COMFREL programmes in some provinces. For example in Svay Rieng the PEC issued a letter (no. 07.131/03) to end COMFREL’s activities and confiscate observers’ working papers (checklists) in five communes. The PEC Chairman in Kratie threatened COMFREL provincial staff and warned them to tear down their signboards. (COMFREL, 2003, chapter III)
111 The Eye of Justice” comprised four alliances and attended ‘unpublicised meetings with CPP Prime Minister prior to the election’. Other pro-CPP NGOs are known to exist, such as the “Pagoda Boys” who often attend counter demonstrations in support of the government. They often challenge demonstrations by trade unions or political parties and engage in violent action. COMFREL asks in their reports whether political leaders with deep suspicion of NGOs, are now opting for this strategy because direct opposition or suppression of local NGOs is no longer possible? And concludes these are disturbing signs for Cambodia’s democracy. (COMFREL, 2003-II)
People's Action for Free and Fair Elections in Sri Lanka

People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL) is a 15 member strong NGO coalition that aims to strengthen and expand democracy and good governance island-wide. The umbrella organization was formed by a group of community development and human rights NGOs in 1987 to monitor the Presidential Election of December 1988. Several other NGO election monitoring networks that emerged in the 1994 elections, when NGOs were deeply involved in developing alternative conflict resolution strategies, joined PAFFREL in the late 1990s. PAFFREL provides practical assistance to NGOs and citizens groups to advance democratic values in every district, build political and civic committees, safeguard elections and promote citizens' participation, openness and accountability in governance. The General Election of April 2004 was the 14th electoral process monitored by PAFFREL and for the first time, it included all but one district in the North East with a record 40,000 volunteers. Yet, it took PAFFREL 15 years and 13 elections to receive full accreditation from the National Election Commission in 2004.

The network brings together a unique set of NGO actors, ranging from well connected Christian NGOs and nationwide Buddhist and Muslim community organisations, to human rights groups and grassroots peasant movements united in the MFFE. Its Board of Directors and National Coordinating Committee are composed of representatives of the member NGOs, which delegate tasks to the District Committees responsible for the coordination of community activities. PAFFREL receives mostly short-term project grants from bilateral donors, including Japan, Australia, US, Norway, the ILO and a host of international NGOs. Special documentation grants have enabled PAFFREL to publish a small library of booklets on democratisation, codes of conduct, historic election overviews etc.

PAFFREL monitors have faced more subtle political challenges than in Cambodia, likely as a result of the country's long democratic tradition. However, during the violent National Elections of 2000 and 2001, voter intimidation reached historic proportions. Monitors were subjected to serious intimidation by party officials and had tires punctured, reports confiscated and their homes visited by armed supporters of contesting political parties. Impunity and political violence are central issues in PAFFREL's work alongside the restoration of democratic process in the war torn North East. Therefore, additional programmes were initiated to promote minority rights and peaceful co-existence and conflict resolution at the community level. In 2003 PAFFREL started a Women's Programme to promote participation of women in party politics. Although Sri Lankan women have been entitled to vote and be elected since 1931 and female literacy is among the highest in Asia, cultural values restricting mobility of women and a gender division of labour are often blamed for limited female participation in politics. During election monitoring visits, however, political parties explained that it is hard to attract female candidates because the culture of violence that has crept into politics puts women off.

112 PAFFREL coordinates its work with the Movement for Free and Fair Elections (MFFE) (a wide network of grassroots level organizations), the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, the National SEDEC, the Conference of Religious Major Superiors, National Conference on Religion and Peace (NCRP), Marga Institute, Conference of All Ceylon Young Men's Muslim Associations, Centre for Society and Religion, National Peace Council and Community Education Centre.


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Four thematic case studies of joint national NGO campaigns

To foster dialogue among stakeholders to seek consensus over federalism as a durable peace solution and to reverse the culture of violence, PAFFREL implemented the “Bridging the Gap between Conflict and Peace: A Stakeholders’ Perspective” project in 2003. Ten broad-based, provincial dialogues were convened to develop a constructive, participatory problem analysis and identify priority issues, and to strengthen capacity of civil society and of the government to engage in a pro-active and strategic dialogue. A national convention in Colombo concluded the series, in which a total of 859 grassroots leaders, women and youth NGOs, government officials, security personnel, religious leaders and political activists participated. The Convention adopted a declaration that included recommendations for a new peace agenda, a new political culture and the promotion of equity regardless of race and livelihood.

Similarly, the “Promoting Co-existence in Areas of Inter-ethnic Tension in a Democratic Process” project intends to facilitate a process of transformative change from protracted conflict and violence towards sustainable peace in the 12 districts most affected by the war. Grassroots networks of NGOs, women’s groups, religious leaders, youth and citizens are set-up and trained to promote peaceful co-existence. These groups are geared to intervene in violent conflict situations and build mutual confidence through shared efforts and activities. A last example of PAFFREL projects is the “Broadening Sri Lankan understanding of Federalism”. Although the ceasefire is tenuous, the LTTE’s apparent willingness to accept a federal solution to end the conflict is a major step forward that calls for a deeper public understanding of the concept of federalism. Launched to share examples of successful federal structures elsewhere and seek multi ethnic recommendations on federalism, human and minority rights, the project is to host 25 workshops and run national poster campaigns and radio broadcasts.

In short, PAFFREL has managed where many NGOs have failed in present day Sri Lanka; it brought together a wide network of NGOs, multi-religious and -ethnic stakeholders and volunteers, and has monitored elections even in the most troubled communities in the North East. Charismatic leadership, accurate framing of messages and ample foreign assistance have contributed to this remarkable achievement. “To agree to disagree” is another vital strategy that has helped to keep this network together. Consequently, quality standards are not met equally across the country and managing the network is a serious burden on the small central management. Furthermore, as one’s strength is often one’s weakness, this unique good governance network risks being seriously overburdened with multiple conflict resolution and peace building training programmes. Several prominent international aid agencies are now partnering with PAFFREL to this end, including the National Endowment for Democracy, Berghof Foundation, International Labour Organisation. PAFFREL scores high on all seven success indicators: horizontal and vertical networking, charismatic leadership, foreign networking, alternative framing of the peace with justice messaging and joint national campaigns that include State actors. PAFFREL’s horizontal networks include a more varied constituency than COMFREL, but to keep this wide audience in line. PAFFREL’s workshops and training focus more on principles and skills, unlike COMFREL where for example the commune council issues are framed in more practical, grass roots oriented messages, which are de facto more critical of the State. This is another example of the need to frame messages and strategies to suit local circumstances.

Masa Depan: national scenario building dialogue for Indonesia 2010

The transition process from an authoritarian to a democratic government is full of loopholes that can result in a return to authoritarianism if it is not successful. In late 1998, shortly after the political transition of power to Interim-President Habibi, a group of ten individuals with various
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academic, NGO and political backgrounds formed the Masa Depan Working Group to convene a national scenario building dialogue. The initiative was inspired by the South African scenario building process of 1991, which raised public consciousness and is believed to have been the key to South Africa’s success in resolving prolonged conflict within the country. In recent years, national scenario planning exercises have been undertaken in Canada, Japan and Singapore, hence technical assistance was obtained through the Singapore Scenario Planning office and the company that advised them (Castle Group). Komnas Ham agreed to play the role of the independent host and a well-connected Steering Group managed to obtain both financial and technical support from various international aid agencies and companies (including USAID, Novib, the Singapore Government and Scenario Planning office and two mining companies: Rio Tinto and Yayasan Sosial Chevron & Texaco Indonesia).

The choice for the scenario formulation methodology was based on the wish to facilitate a wide public dialogue among key stakeholders in society. The Working Group firmly believed that such discourse, which had been absent for decades, would form the basis of a strong civil society and would improve State – civil society collaboration. Scenario building, Masa Depan (2000) explained, is a good instrument better suited as it develops an understanding of what can happen and how different planned and unplanned events will influence outcomes. In this process, the consciousness of future choices among the participants and their role in it grow. Four of the nine steps of the scenario building process are crucial: identify the key stakeholders, identify and select the critical driving forces and design a matrix of probabilities, which leads to the composition of a scenario narrative. Unfortunately, the Working Group scenarios did not foresee the sudden turn of events and the final scenario presentation remained largely unnoticed amidst the political turmoil.

In the pre-dialogue phase, twenty Indonesian facilitators were trained (including the initiators), 14 cities and districts were selected and the plan was introduced to the different actors in these districts/cities to solicit their feedback and convince them of the importance of participating in the initiative. The Masa Depan dialogues brought seven stakeholder groups together: government, military, business sector, academics, political leaders, NGO activists and ‘marginal groups’, including victims of relocation, former political detainees and the handicapped. They were given three days to formulate agents of change, plot the matrix and formulate four scenarios. The dialogues became rewarding but emotionally intense exercises, as they brought together actors who had not talked to each other for decades (military, former political prisoners, religious leaders, feminist activists, local government and NGO leaders). A third of the trained facilitators dropped out in the process, because they could not cope with the emotions brought to the fore in the dialogues, which further increased the burden on the Working Group. From May 1999 till June 2000, 14 dialogues and 6 colloquiums were convened around the country. In July, the Working Group compiled and synthesized all 64 scenarios into a draft document with four core scenarios. A major challenge was to summarize the wealth of information into a brief document without losing the local nuances. Some participants felt the end report was too technocratic and blamed the foreign experts advising the Working Group for this. While the dialogue participants appreciated the process and gained insight into other stakeholders’ perspectives, the scenario

114Driving forces or agents of change are defined as conditions or situations that could develop with a range of positive and negative potentials. In all, 12 critical driving forces were identified, each of which influences the four scenario’s in a unique way: 1) political system; 2) law; 3) economic policy orientation; 4) public attitude towards pluralism; 5) balance of power between centre and regions; 6) role of military in non-military affairs; 7) orientation of education system; 8) gender ideology; 9) public response to globalisation; 10) governments’ attitude to religion; 11) community involvement in democracy and 12) people’s bargaining position with government.

115Dialogues were convened in Bogor, Berastagi, Mataram, Batu, Samarinda, Pekanbaru, Bedugul Kupang, Semarang, Jakarta, Celebes, Palimkaraya, Pontianak and Yogyakarta.
process did not provide venues to continue the dialogue among diverse stakeholders. The national workshop in Bogor reviewed the draft and added information on Aceh and Maluccu in July 2000 and presented the following four scenarios:

Table 25 A quadrant of four possible scenarios for Indonesia 2010 (Source: Masa Depan, 2000, Annex F)

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<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>Into the crocodile pit</td>
<td>&quot;Indonesia in 2010 is like the Tanjun tree with withered blooms. Its leaves yellow and soon to fall, its boughs are dry and brittle its twigs.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Indonesia in 2010 is like a teak tree that sprouts slowly but grows stronger as time goes by. Sometimes it sheds its leaves but is boughs and twigs remain sturdy and withstand all changes in weather.&quot;</td>
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| On the edge | "Indonesia is a setting sun. The sky is red as if soaked in the blood of Indonesian people, the victims of government and military cruelty. Indonesia is like a ship shattered in a storm." | "Afraid that the disintegration of Indonesia would result in major bloodshed, all parties agree to come to the negotiation table. The result is broad regional autonomy and complete democratisation. Economic development pushes ahead."

Interestingly, the two dominant drivers of this model translate into vertical social capital and the State organisational integrity, with the horizontal axis representing the continuum from authoritarian to democratic governance and the vertical axis the continuum from pro-growth economic development (fast but exploitative and unequal) to pro-equity (slow but based on participation and inclusion). The final scenario document was launched on August 1, 2000 with its submission to the Annual MPR meeting (the Indonesian Senate) and simultaneous dissemination to the wider public through a well planned media campaign. Unfortunately, the launch coincided with the major political crisis and all attention went to the impeachment process of President Wahid, which became effective two weeks later. The Masa Depan (2001, p. ) pre-amble “the risk is higher when the direction of the transition is unclear and when recurring crises can not be effectively solved, and the uncertainty, frustration and pessimism about the future increasing” became reality within two years of its inception and momentum for the dialogue process was lost.

The initiators of the Masa Depan dialogues made a conscious decision to run the initiative as a group of individuals, in an effort to ensure institutional dependence and maximum participation of all stakeholders. While this “non-aligned” group indeed managed to get a highly diverse stakeholder turn out at their 14 dialogues, it also implied that the dialogues would be one time events, leaving an eventual future dialogues to the initiatives of participating stakeholders. However, the complicated nature of the subject matter, the diverse actor backgrounds and the political turmoil in the country, prevented such spontaneous follow-up. When the much-awaited national presentation coincided with the impeachment process of the President, the Masa Depan scenarios received very little attention. The absence of organisational safety nets and institutional ownership prevented the re-launch of the scenarios at a later stage. During my interviews with officials and bilateral agencies only two years later, very few people had heard of the initiative.

In sum, even though the Masa Depan dialogues score high on horizontal and vertical social capital and alternative framing of the message, it could not sustain these gains because of the deliberate absence of an institutional context. In this respect Masa Depan looks institutionally more like a peace movement than the previously described good governance networks. Its major asset was the multi actor dialogue in such a decisive, early stage of the political transition. Would it have fostered continued government - civil society dialogues if President Wahid had remained in office? Or could the scenarios have been ‘rescued’ if they had been anchored in civil society? One of the interviewed initiators did not think these were relevant questions. The purpose of scenario building was to start a multi stakeholder dialogue that stimulated self-reflection and new ideas; the 14 dialogues proper achieved that goal.
8.2 Independent conflict resolution mechanisms

Land Dispute Settlement Commissions and Independent Forest Crime Monitors

At the end of the 20th century access to land has become problematic for the first time in Cambodia's history. Land tenure conflicts put a heavy strain on rural livelihoods and result in increasing social discontent. The management of natural resources is unsustainable and land disputes are one of the major sources of conflict in Cambodia today. Most peasants had to abandon their land during the Khmer Rouge revolution and upon return a decade later disputes arose with new occupants. Legislation did not (and does not) recognise the pre-1979 land rights and many returning farmers have found their land occupied by military claiming titles or by people who have bought the land from the military. Boua (2001) poses that due to the Khmer Rouge legacy and UNTAC's inability to disarm and demobilise the warring parties, the armed forces were able to keep control over vast areas of land in 1993 and even expanded their land possessions until the last KR fraction finally surrendered in 1999.\(^\text{116}\)

While the UNTAC safely repatriated some 360,000 refugees to Cambodia before the general elections in 1993, their re-integration in society was far less successful. Large numbers of mostly rural refugees did not receive land titles as part of the repatriation process and most were rendered landless shortly afterwards. A recent Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) report (2004) describes how in 1992 the first land registration provided every claimant (there were 4.5 million applicants) with a receipt as proof of a fulfilled claim. People often treated this receipt as a land title and used it as collateral, which resulted in numerous disputes. The poor technical quality of land administration, overlapping land titles, absence of an independent judiciary and low legal literacy among the rural poor created an ideal context for land grabbing by powerful people. The land insecurity negatively impacted overall economic development performance over the last 10 years, left poverty levels unchanged and led to further concentration of land in fewer hands.\(^\text{117}\)

One in every thirty Cambodian households is involved in a land dispute, including some very large disputes that are the result of granting agri-business concessions over thousands of hectares on which hundreds of families live and farm.\(^\text{118}\) LAC reported that 80% of land cases handled by its lawyers in 2002 involved land grabbing by high-ranking officials, members of the armed forces, and businessmen. Furthermore, there are currently 15 timber concessionaires in Cambodia, which operate 21 concessions and effectively control 4,239,528 hectares of land or 26% of the country. Three million Cambodians reside within 30 kilometres of a logging area and rely in some way on a forest-based product. Illegal logging and tendering of forest concessions are largely controlled by the armed forces without proper transparent regulatory frameworks. (Global Witness. July 2002)

\(^{116}\) To this day, the Royal Armed Forces (RAF) control vast amounts of land along route 4 (Phnom Penh to Kompong Som) where they were based in the 1990s. The same is true for FUNCINPEC officials in the north-west and the Khmer Rouge cadre in Anlong Veng and Paalin. (Source: IFAD, Social Assessment of Land in Cambodia, A Field Study, prepared for the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction by the Cambodia Development Resource Institute, July 2001, p. 31)

\(^{117}\) The average land holding, which used to be around one hectare per family, is getting smaller. The top 23% of people, who own more than one hectare, own 70% of Cambodia's cultivated land. The bottom 40% of people, who own less than one hectare collectively own only 10% of cultivated land.

\(^{118}\) In December 2001, the total area under agricultural concessions leased to 40 companies was 809,296 hectares or roughly one-third of the land under agricultural production. The latest government policy and reform package (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Socio-Economic Development Plan I and II) calls for an increase in export oriented agribusiness, which will lead to further concentration of land in a few hands. (Boua, 2001, p.3)
Four thematic case studies of joint national NGO campaigns

In an agrarian society where 85% of the population are farmers with little or no land and no off-farm income opportunities, many rural families are forced to migrate to urban areas or to send their children to work in factories or the sex industry. In the absence of State support or protection poor peasants are forced to seek protection elsewhere and it is not surprising that traditional patron-client relations have reappeared in the 1990s. Since 1991, land tenure and natural resource exploitation (eco-violence) problems have been among the main concerns of the many NGOs working on rural livelihood and basic rights. In the mid 1990s the CCC/NGO Forum (see 8.4) established a special working group on land and sustainable development issues and lobbied the government and international donors to create independent dispute resolution mechanisms. In 1997 a smaller group of international agencies initiated the Cambodia Land Study Project, coordinated by Oxfam GB. Two major NGO campaigns are presented below: 1) the 'forest crimes' monitoring unit and 2) advocacy for land dispute settlement committees.

Independent Monitor of the Forest Crimes Monitoring Unit

On the 25th January 1999 Prime Minister Hun Sen issued a 17 Point Declaration outlining actions to crack down on illegal logging in Cambodia. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and the Ministry of Environment (MoE) were to implement the Declaration and report back to Cabinet. However, the annual Consultative Group Meeting a month later, under pressure from NGOs and the international community, expressed the need for an independent monitoring unit to institutionalise systematic detection and reporting. The establishment of the Forest Crimes Monitoring Unit in December 1999 was heralded by the government, international donor community and NGOs as a huge step forward in the battle against illegal logging in Cambodia. The Forest Crimes Monitoring and Reporting Project was the world's first to audit independently the performance of two government agencies in charge of monitoring forest crimes. It received global praise at environmental forums as a potentially effective model to combat forest crimes involving State and non-state actors. Global Witness (GW), a London based NGO specialised in the role that natural resources play in conflict and corruption, was chosen as Independent Monitor, because it had monitored the Cambodian forestry sector since 1993 and its work (e.g. to end the conflict diamond trade in Africa) was internationally renowned.

The main responsibility of GW as Independent Monitor was to conduct field inspections of concession operations to gauge the level of illegal logging and report to the Prime Minister and the international donor community through the Focal Point at the Council of Ministers. The information was then passed on to the MAFF for appropriate action. Unfortunately the MAFF did little to persecute forest crimes. Still some positive results were achieved over the first three years, like the cancellation of forest concessions held by companies involved in illegal logging, like the Malaysian GAT. As the Global Witness reports grew increasingly critical and tension rose, MAFF Minister Chan Sarun terminated GW as independent monitor in February 2003. The main justification given was GW's criticism of the government's handling of peaceful village protests against the Forest Action Plan on 5 December 2002, in which one protestor died. In March 2003 the tensions escalated when the Cambodian government filed a criminal complaint.

119 The UN Human Development Report of 2003 calculated that 55% of the men and 75% of the women had not completed primary school.

120 In the first year, the research team worked with the Cambodian Bar Association to have pro-poor articles included in the new Immovable Property Law; with local human rights NGOs and journalists building a data base of land disputes and a system of monitoring; and with a few international donor agencies funding four case studies on different causes of landlessness: 1) abuse of power, 2) dysfunction within the legal system, 3) poverty trap, and 4) large scale development projects. This body of research was well received. In community and national level dialogues during and after the research, issues relating to the rule of law and the abuse of power were the prominent factors.
against GW’s Co-ordinator in Cambodia on charges relating to the 5 December incident. The case was withdrawn following strong pressure from the international community. The independent forestry monitoring mandate was endorsed and funded by the FAO and ADB, but international aid agencies could not protect Global Witness when it clashed with the authorities. GW was replaced by a commercial monitoring company with no Cambodian experience later that year. The illegal logging continues.\(^{121}\)

**Land Dispute Settlement Commissions**

After years of NGO land tenure studies, land law reform proposals and international lobby for alternative policies and practices, Prime Minister Hun Sen included resolving land disputes as one of the main target areas in the 1999 reform agenda. Provincial Commissions for Resolving Land Disputes were established to deal with land tenure complaints, under guidance of the National Commission and Hun Sen’s personal chairmanship. The provincial commissions were supposed to bring together key government actors at the provincial level (governor, police, military, cadastre, MAFF and the courts) and provide a ‘rule of law platform’ for civilians and NGOs to have their land complaints heard. While hopes were high at first and NGOs like CDRI/CDP, LAC and ADHOC worked closely with the commissions to develop this new system and the local capacity to do investigations and rule in complicated cases (CDP gave conflict resolution training to two commissions), the commissions met irregularly and have taken very few decisions. Three years later frustration has set in and NGOs fear that this land conflict resolution mechanism is destined to share the Forest Crime Unit fate. In the interviews we tried to analyse what went wrong and concluded that two sets of problems exist: the composition and the agenda setting of the provincial commissions is thwarted and the two local authorities in charge of dealing with land tenure cases, the court and Cadastral Commission, are not performing their duties.

In an Oxfam survey of five provinces, military and provincial officials dominate the Provincial Commissions, which likely discourages complaint submissions as very few cases are resolved in favour of farmers (IGC, 2000). ADHOC’s provincial reports tallied 1,485 land disputes cases involving 4,943 families in 2003. ADHOC lawyers handled 148 larger cases in 2003, involving land disputes between poor peasants and the armed forces (31%), local authorities (29%), private companies (25%), and commune leaders (22%). These land disputes covered thousands of hectares and thousands of displaced families.

Disputes can be divided into those over land titles and those over unregistered land for which no official certificates exist. The latter are to be dealt with by the Cadastral Commission that has offices in all districts and provinces. ADHOC research revealed that of the 722 land dispute cases before the Cadastral Commission in 2003, only six cases saw resolution with 174 families receiving compensation. Most cases before the Cadastral Commission face delays and inactivity because of limited budgets to conduct land dispute investigations, lack of clear procedures and political pressure. Land disputes involving legal certificates issued by the Cadastral Commission need to be resolved in court. None of the cases ADHOC lawyers filed and defended in provincial and municipal courts in 2003 were resolved by December. A number of 2002 land dispute cases defended by ADHOC saw court decisions late 2003 by which date the families were already

\(^{121}\) Earlier that year on April 30th the Coordinator was physically attacked outside the Global Witness' office in Phnom Penh by two masked-men armed with sticks. Meanwhile the forest crimes continue. In a press release of July 9, 2004, Global Witness deplored the Cambodian Government's decision to authorise the Cambodian-Chinese company Green Rich to initiate a plantation project of 18,000 hectares inside the Botum Sakor National Park in South West Cambodia. This commercial concession blatantly violates Cambodian legislation, notably the 2001 Land Law, the 1993 Royal Decree on Protected Areas and the 1994 Ministerial Decision on Protected Areas.
evicted and had migrated to Phnom Penh. Most ADHOC and LAC lawyers wrote in their case reports that court rulings are commonly in favour of land certificate holders, because the courts do not investigate cases, nor do they verify the legality of certificates with the Cadastral Commission. Furthermore, they note that court decisions are influenced by corruption in court proceedings and result in violent evictions upon court ruling. The lawyers stress that these unjust evictions not only violate the peasant families’ right to an income, but also their right to housing, right to food and right to live in dignity.

Clearly, neither of natural resource nor the land conflict resolution mechanism that were set up within the government structures after years of active NGO lobby and international pressure, has managed to provide protection and legal recourse to the poor. This made many NGO respondents conclude that it is hard to make lasting contributions to building sustainable horizontal social capital as long as State integrity remains problematic and basic human rights are violated. In ADHOC’s words:

“Land is a basic right for farmers and is a necessity for survival. Failure of land rights was a defeat for poverty reduction, especially considering that it was made a priority by the Royal Government in its second mandate (1998-2003).” (ADHOC, 2004)

Internally Displaced Persons and the International Committee of the Red Cross

Sri Lankan NGOs have long been active in providing constructive inputs to finding a peaceful resolution of the armed conflict. On the recommendation of human rights NGOs in Colombo, an older case in which NGOs played a crucial role is presented here, namely the joint agreement by the national NGO lobby to a permanent in-country presence of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The lobby was coordinated by the Civil Rights Movement, a human rights NGO with a wide membership of lawyers active in government, universities, civil society and human rights NGOs with a focus on monitoring the rule of law and constitutional reform. Over a period of eight years, CRM coordinated three national ICRC advocacy campaigns at crucial stages of the armed conflict to raise public acceptance for the adherence to principles of humanitarian law in civil combat. The first campaign was launched in July 1987, at the time of the signing of the Indo Lanka Peace Accord. The aim of the campaign was to “persuade governmental authorities and the general public of the importance of accepting the ICRC’s offer to perform its traditional humanitarian functions in our country” (CRM, 1990). A second campaign followed in July 1990, when the JVP uprising had ended in the South and the ceasefire in the North East that resulted in the withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces and the abolition of the Provincial Councils ended and the war resumed. This campaign emphasised the role of ICRC in “confronting acts of violence against defenceless persons”. Lastly, in September 1995, when the third ceasefire was broken and the war intensity reached new levels, a third ICRC-related campaign was launched to bring attention back to the internally displaced it sought “to persuade all parties to the armed conflict to observe basic humanitarian principles” (CRM Briefing No 2 of 1995).

122 Initially another case was chosen. In 1994 a progressive alliance of political parties entered the elections with a strong peace agenda (the People’s Alliance) and worked with a group of human rights NGOs on a set of law reforms that would form the basis for a major constitutional amendment to allow for regional autonomy and acknowledge a degree of self determination to the Tamil people of the North East. In a related initiative by the Law and Society Trust a global comparative project was launched to study 12 successful confederate solutions to minority peoples’ conflicts (including Spain, Australia, Canada and South Africa) and to come up with practical recommendations for the Sri Lankan situation. Unfortunately, this process of NGO law reform, research and advocacy was poorly documented and two key NGO coordinators passed away in 1999, making it impossible to write the case as part of this study. The ‘devolution package’ was adopted by the PA government late 1994, but failed to obtain the mandatory 66% majority in parliament required for constitutional changes in August 1995.
Preventing Deadly Conflict in Divided Societies in Asia

Human rights advocacy in a country at civil war, where extra judiciary killings were commonplace, required carefully positioning and framing of the issues. Working on constitutional reform and introducing international law and good governance practices proved a constructive means to table sensitive human rights issues locally and internationally. The Sri Lankan government has been more susceptible to global public opinion and international law, because it has a long democratic tradition and was never caught up in the Cold War dynamics that supported autocratic regimes in Cambodia, Indonesia and Myanmar.

The July 1987 campaign took off with the CRM report entitled “The Geneva Conventions and the International Committee of the Red Cross: the Relevance to Sri Lanka”. Its purpose was to raise the awareness on the Geneva Conventions, International Humanitarian Law and the role of the ICRC in “monitoring the application by signatory States of the Geneva Convention”. Great emphasis was put on the neutral and private nature of the ICRC, with its staff of Swiss citizens, its responsibility to “offer services to belligerents (a party engaged in war) for the benefit of the victims of conflicts” and its mandated confidentiality implying that it would not publicly expose human rights violations and it would only report to the government. It made the case that humanitarian law equally applies to intrastate conflicts, as armed opposition groups are bound by humanitarian standards and stressed that inviting the ICRC did not imply an international recognition of the LTTE or other armed groups. This report legally countered most of the State arguments used to turn down repeated ICRC’s requests over the prior five years to open a permanent office. CRM called for immediate humanitarian assistance to Tamil civilians caught in the cross fire in the North and East, displaced in ill provisioned refugee camps or detained under humiliating circumstances, and for an investigation into the large number of people reported missing or disappeared. CRM mounted a national campaign to promote public discussion about the Geneva conventions in government, civil society and universities and international aid agencies were lobbied for support.

In 1987, 1988 and 1989 the ICRC renewed its offer for assistance and voiced its concern over the rising tension and political violence in the South.123 CRM’s advocacy had created a better local understanding of the role of the ICRC and, with pressure from the international community, the Sri Lankan government finally allowed the ICRC to open an office and fulfil its humanitarian mandate in Sri Lanka in October 1989. ICRC activities were initially confined to the South where Tamil and JVP suspect prisoners were visited, missing person cases documented and training courses conducted on humanitarian law for armed forces. Upon the withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces, the ICRC opened an office in Jaffna in April 1990 and commenced its relief and rescue work in the North and East, organising emergency supplies, evacuating wounded combatants and refugees across the lines of fighting and visiting prisoners. During its first year (until December 1990) the ICRC registered 20,655 detainees in over 400 places around the country and received 16,000 requests for tracing disappeared persons, mainly in the South.

In July 1990 CRM launched a follow-up campaign. “Now that the ICRC is an important actor in the scene of conflict and devastation that has engulfed our society, it is necessary that we gain a clear perception of its role. (...) We can seek to gain maximum benefit from its presence, by ensuring that all concerned afford it full cooperation to effectively perform its humanitarian tasks” (CRM, 1995). Special attention was drawn to acts of violence directed against defenceless persons, especially in their extreme form: terrorism and “the treat it poses to human values as it dehumanises the societies that are exposed to it”. The ICRC continued its humanitarian work with

123 Pre 1989, the ICRC did send short missions to Sri Lanka, published annual reports and remained in contact with the SLR government to voice its concern continuously.
refugees and paid special attention to people detained under emergency regulations and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. In 1992 alone, ICRC visited nearly 10,000 persons in more than 500 places of detention. However, it was denied access to prisoners held by the LTTE. Meanwhile, a number of international NGOs opened relief and rehabilitation programmes in the North and East, resulting in a consortium of eight agencies today.

In April 1995, when the civil war entered its third phase, ICRC’s work was well known in Sri Lanka. CRM simply published a briefing paper that summarized the ICRC’s work over the past five years, emphasizing its unique role in the monitoring of prisoners and disappeared persons, and called on all parties to respect humanitarian law. The ICRC’s strict neutrality, low profile and confidential reporting to the government, open its work to criticism. The LTTE didn’t acknowledge ICRC neutrality, never allowed ICRC access to its prisoners and accused the ICRC of such acts as setting up refugee camps close to army positions and providing a human buffer. However, the ICRC’s work did result in a dramatic reduction in the number of disappearances in the 1990s and detainees who were visited by the ICRC on a regular basis sensed some protection that no other civil society organisation could provide. However, structural changes in the attitude of the warring parties were few and the Prevention of Terrorism Act was still in force in 2004, two years into the ceasefire.

National Commission to Prevent Violence against Women

The concept of a National Commission to prevent violence against women was conceived by a group of Indonesian women’s organisations in the wake of sexual assaults on ethnic Chinese women and girls during the May 1998 riots in Jakarta. Indonesia had slumped into a deep economic recession after the Asian Crisis of 1997 and while mass protests demanded a change of government, ethnic clashes broke out around the country. Civilian mobs besieged Glodok, the old Chinese quarter of Jakarta on 18 May for 24 hours attacking innocent ethnic Chinese civilians, burning properties and raping over 750 women and girls. All this happened under the watchful eye of police who did not intervene to protect civilians. Pro-democracy protests intensified and President Suharto resigned by the end of the month. As the rape reports were dismissed by the authorities and the military, Indonesian women’s organisations requested that Interim President Habibii field an independent investigation and endorse measures that would increase the physical safety of women. An independent investigation over the summer confirmed the need for new approaches to prevent sexual violence and the National Commission to prevent Violence against Women or Komnas Perempuan was formed by Presidential Decree in October 1998.

Komnas Perempuan has the mandate to publish and disseminate reports to the government, civil society and the general public and works in close collaboration with the respected National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas Ham), to reinforce their mutual interest in promoting a gender-sensitive approach to basic human rights protection. As an independent national body it has to seek its own funding. To overcome the significant gap in perception of the violence against women (VAW) problem between government and civil society, Komnas Perempuan set three main objectives: first, increase public understanding of all forms of violence against women; second, create a conducive environment for the elimination of violence through legal and policy reform; and third, strengthen capacities for prevention of and dealing with the consequences of violence.

124 An independent legal investigation team assembled sufficient evidence to bring 193 cases to court, but no lawsuits were filed. The government and military dismissed the evidence instantly, while many of the mostly young women and girls who had been raped were sent abroad to family in Malaysia and Philippines, to hide the 'shame' their rape had brought on the family.
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VAW through national, regional and international networking, consultations and exchanges. Five programmes have been implemented: national mapping of VAW cases and database development (KP coordinates the documentation done by NGOs and associations around the country); service to survivors (KP supports skill development in trauma counselling & reconciliation); witness protection in court cases; VAW response and prevention (including development of training programmes for civil servants, security forces and civil society); and institution building.

In 2000 at the UN Beijing +5 Conference Komnas Perempuan made a plea for women who had suffered individually or in groups from armed conflict related sexual violence (rape, harassment, sexual slavery), without having received any protection or legal recourse. Sexual violence has been used as a systematic tool of terror and control in military zones by the armed forces for decades. Overall rape rates have structurally increased in Jakarta since the May 1998 riots, and domestic violence has intensified dramatically since 1997. In addition, so-called ‘acts of terror’ are on the rise, in which religious laws and norms effectively exclude women from protection, recourse and representation. Many Indonesian women’s organisations have responded to the VAW crisis by taking initiative to mediate the impact of violence. They provide emergency assistance, set up trauma teams, document atrocities, campaign for peace and protection, organise women’s groups in conflict areas, and influence national policies and mechanisms to end the impunity and to build capacity to prevent VAW.

However, even with the public acknowledgement of the problem by the State and a National Commission, it proved difficult to bridge the sexual violence ‘perception’ gap and few politicians, military and civil servants take these gross gender biased human rights violations seriously. Of the multiple issues that need to be addressed to improve the status and protection of women in Indonesia, Komnas Perempuan systematically highlights two: the victimisation of women and the absence of women at the negotiation table. KP’s national VAW database shows that the impact of security forces abuses on civilian population is far greater than the impact of communal violence. In military zones like Aceh and West Papua, rape has been used as a systematic tool of torture to intimidate the population. Furthermore, strong evidence connects the sexual violence women face in situations of armed conflict to patterns of domestic violence that women face in everyday life during peace time. “The power of religion and culture as tools of violence demonstrates how women’s victimisation during armed conflict is rooted in the norms and values developed in peace times”. (Komnas Perempuan, 2000, p.4) In terms of the second major bottleneck, the absence of women at the negotiation table. KP concludes that Indonesia is still far removed from a final reconciliation with past human rights abuses and gross injustices. “When participation happens, it is only because women’s groups push themselves upon the decision makers and insist on their voices being heard. Every single progress in women’s involvement is a product of a conscious and targeted struggle against the dominant current” (idem, p.7). It is telling that the three years of the female President Megawati had little impact on the work of Komnas Perempuan and the National Election of April 2004 saw few female candidates running and even fewer elected.

The lack of political clout of Komnas Perempuan and the highly sensitive nature of its mission and data leave the VAW database and training modules underused. Other studies have also concluded that only when political representation of women is seriously boosted, can lasting political solutions to the prevention of VAW be expected. In 2002/3 KP held an extensive self evaluation with its membership to study alternative strategies. Meanwhile, Komnas Perempuan continues to advocate with the international community to maintain pressure on the Indonesian authorities to promoted inclusive and gender equal social, political and economic transformation towards peace, democracy and justice.
8.3 People's mobilisation for peace

The peace case studies relate to the broad people's peace movements in Cambodia and Sri Lanka. Both brought together individual peace activists, religious men and women, and local NGOs and were among the few nationwide horizontal social capital building campaigns. No similar initiatives could be found in Indonesia during the interviews in 2002.

Dhammayatra peace walks in Cambodia

The concept of the Dhammayietra peace walks was launched by Venerable Maha Ghosananda in 1991. This Cambodian monk who had devoted his life to Buddhist study in India, Japan and Thailand was trained in non-violent peace building by the Nipponzan Myohoji sect in the 1960s. He moved to the Sakeo refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border in 1979 to provide spiritual guidance to the refugees who had survived the Khmer Rouge genocide. Over the next decade Maha Ghosananda set up small Buddhist temples in other refugee camps and assisted camp leaders in initiating spiritual education and cultural preservation programmes. The peace walks emerged from the Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation that was established by a group of Cambodian and foreign aid workers in Taprya, near the “Site 2” refugee camp in 1989. While Maha Ghosananda was their chief inspiration ("spiritual director"), he was never formally a member of the Coalition. (Yonekura, 1999) However, his personal prestige and leadership was central to the launch and the moral authority of the peace walks. The peace walks generally lasted a couple of weeks and depended heavily on the contribution of villagers to provide food and accommodation for the peace walkers, who marched with no luggage and little money. Maha Ghosananda participated in several of the early peace walks and motivated and inspired the participants with broad and spiritual peace messages: “sharing loving kindness to end the killing”.

Table 26 Dhammayatra Peace Walks routes and participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DMY</th>
<th>Starting date</th>
<th>Route</th>
<th>No. participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>13/04/92</td>
<td>Poipet to Phnom Penh</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>05/05/93</td>
<td>Siem Reap to Phnom Penh</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>24/04/94</td>
<td>Sisophon to Angkor Wat</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>08/05/95</td>
<td>Poipet to Vietnam</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>10/05/96</td>
<td>Southern provinces</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>20/03/97</td>
<td>Pailin to Banteay Mancheay</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The popularity of the Dhammayietra was high in the early 1990s and drew large numbers of participants, both individuals and representatives from organisations from all over the country and abroad. The walks generated wide media coverage and public interest. The first three walks occurred in the North-western provinces, where Khmer Rouge insurgents continued to combat the Cambodian armed forces. As the situation in the country began to stabilise and the UNTAC authority was handed over to the newly election government, political tension started to rise and the momentum of the Dhammiyeta became hard to maintain. (see Table 26) When two peace walkers were killed in cross fire exchanged between rebels and the army in 1994, the participation dropped further the next year. An attempt to revive interest by broadening the peace walk message and including environmental preservation concerns in 1996 failed to attract new

125 Venerable Maha Ghosananda was born in 1929 in Takeo and became a monk at the age of 8. After completing his doctoral studies in India, he studied with the Japanese monk Nichidatsu Fujii, founder of the Nipponzan Myohoji sect devoted to world peace. In 1965 he left Cambodia again, to become a disciple of a Thai meditation master Achaan Dhammadaro in an isolated forest monastery in Southern Thailand. In 1979 he initiated spiritual education and cultural preservation programmes in the Thai border refugee camps. He was elected Supreme Patriarch by a small gathering of remaining Cambodian monks and laymen in Paris in 1988 and retired in 1993. (Ghosananda, 1992, p.15-21)
crowds and the participation dwindled. Upon the military coup of July 1997 public protests were prohibited and the political situation became increasingly volatile; consequently the multi actor peace coalition fell apart.

Metathor, the ‘Forum for Peace through Love and Compassion’, emerged from the remains of the Dhammayietra coalition. It was established by a group of Cambodia peace activists who were interested in long-term structural peace building and did not perceive the annual peace walks as a sustainable way forward. They gathered a broader platform of NGOs and individuals and began to organise peaceful protests against the increasing political violence in major cities. Metathor intended to become a centre for individual peace activists, monks and NGO workers who wished to engage in long-term activities. In time the group joined in pro democracy events as well, until it took part in a demonstration for free and fair elections in Phnom Penh in 1998, which was violently dispersed by the security forces. In the face of this unexpected violent opposition Metathor fell apart too, much to the dismay of some local NGO members that had facilitated the peace work from their good offices. They concluded that individual peace activists “refuse to share responsibility” when projects go wrong and “lack the commitment to overcome differences”. (WGWR, 2001, p.16)

A third Cambodian peace initiative rose from the ashes of Metathor and was named ‘Cooperation to Reduce Violence for Peace’ (CRVP). To overcome past differences, a more formal NGO structure was formed with a single secretariat to facilitate the network, its meetings and events. However, this cross-actor peace network was even shorter lived. The political context polarised further in 1999, with the surrender of the last Khmer Rouge fraction and the further consolidation of power by the CPP after its victory in the 1998 elections. This polarisation highly politicised the peace building work. Individual peace workers were very uneasy with the idea of taking more politically outspoken positions while remaining non-partisan. Wary of the political violence directed against them, CRVP tried in vain to keep peace and politics separate. From the onset disagreements among members over the political nature of the network’s peace activities paralysed the secretariat’s work. In 1999, when the larger NGOs withdrew their financial support to the secretariat for lack of progress after a year, the CRVP closed.

In the interviews with three former peace initiative participants, there was reluctance to review the past as to why the two follow-up networks failed to muster adequate levels of cooperation from the broader civil society and individual peace activists. These NGO leaders had moved on and managed new NGO portfolios, which included some grassroots peace building initiatives, like the Working Group for Weapons Reduction collaboration with the peace building projects of the American Friends Service Committee. The respondents agreed, however, with the conclusion that the key to sustaining peace movements over time lies in accepting the intrinsic link between peace work and structural change and carefully managing the risk of meeting with violent opposition. The peace building study undertaken by the Working Group for Weapons Reduction also concluded that “Peace work in inseparable from politics.Cambodians have experienced a

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126 This insight was confirmed during the 2002 interview with Yonekura, who concluded that the Dhammayietra contribution to laying the foundation for a more peaceful society had been small. Its main value was “in the present” for villagers who felt their plight supported and most of all for the walkers personally, who felt great spiritual awakening and deep gratitude to the poor people who shared the little food they had with them. Source: interview with Yonekura Yukiko. Phnom Penh, 29 November 2003.

127 The WGWR identified a second reason for the failure of the broad Cambodian peace networks, related to the different hierarchies in civil society. Individual peace activists felt uneasy with bigger NGOs who were perceived to dominate strategy discussions and to use their funders’ position to determine peace events. The peace building study concludes that the handful of examples of effective peace building experiences usually involve initiatives of a few individuals working together already in an existing project or for a single organisation.
long history of political violence. Traumatized by that experience, Cambodians do not want to have any direct involvement with anything perceived as political.” (WGWR, 2001, p.17)

Peacem campaigns in Sri Lanka

Building broad based peace constituencies to promote peaceful co-existence is also a recurring theme in NGO conflict resolution work in Sri Lanka, but multi actor nationwide movements were short-lived there as well. In the late 1980s with Indian peace keeping forces in the North and JVP resistance in the South, a broad ‘Women for Peace’ movement united individual women, small grass roots women groups and professional women NGOs. Women wearing white scarves walked every Friday to the parliament in Colombo to demand an end to the killing and a peaceful resolution of the conflict; a strategy loosely based on the model of the Mad Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. A few times a year the Women for Peace group would walk in other parts of the country, like Jaffna. To show their solidarity with female headed households in conflict affected areas, the group also collected food donations from families and businesses in Colombo and other vicinities to distribute as food packages. However, under President Premedasa’s leadership the Indian peace keeping forces were sent home and civil war resumed in 1990.

As in Cambodia, political changes politicised the peace movement and individual peace activists felt increasingly uneasy with the messages and the danger that their peace work attracted. In 1991, a Presidential inquiry commission was inaugurated to publicly investigate local human rights organisations and peace groups, which were accused of malefeasance, supporting armed rebel groups and threatening national security. The Women for Peace coalition fell apart. The involved NGOs, like the Women Media Collective, continued to include the peace agenda in their regular work, but the multi actor nature of the work could not be sustained.

Other peace campaigns came and went. The National Peace Council was founded in 1995; a couple of months after the People’s Alliance had won the national elections with a pro-peace agenda. NPC aimed at building a broad peace movement and generating public understanding and acceptance for peace settlements that would bring justice, including some form of self governance, for Tamil people. Constitutional reform requires a two third majority in parliament but the major political parties could not reach a consensus on solutions to the ethnic conflict. With international support from the World Bank and others, NPC organised multi ethnic, social sector consultations around the country with business leaders, journalists, refugees, soldiers and NGOs. Even though the war resumed only six months later, President Kumaratunga chose to pursue a dual strategy of combating armed rebel groups, while negotiating a peaceful resolution to the conflict with the Tamil population and the debate on the constitutional reforms continued.

In partnership with International Alert, NPC organised study tours to South Africa, the Philippines, Northern Ireland and Bangladesh for 70 politicians between 1996 and 1998, to ‘help generate new thinking and new relationships”. (Perera, 2001, p. 408) Unfortunately, the conflict overtook NPC’s exposure work as well. As the war intensified the Constitutional reform failed to generate the majority vote in the Singhalese dominated parliament and the People’s Alliance changed its pro peace strategy to an all out “War for Peace”. In 2003 the NPC was still working on its core message to bring about a just peace. Its international work with professional groups and politicians required sophisticated knowledge of conflict resolution and reconciliation strategies and NPC evolved into a think tank for peaceful conflict resolution over time. However, a change of leadership a few years ago strengthened NPC’s strategic links with the local NGO movement and it is now collaborating with grass roots peaceful co-existence programmes and human rights initiatives of NGOs like PAFFREL, MDDR and Sarvodaya.
Two other grassroots peace building initiatives with strong charismatic leadership also deserve mention, although they are run by a single NGO. In January 2002 the Sarvodaya Movement, under the spiritual leadership of its founder and president Dr. Ariyaratne, announced a mass peace campaign to bring a final end to the nation's bloody civil war. The peace campaign consists of two parts: expanding the Consciousness of Peace through hosting large peace meditations and the Village to Village: Heart to Heart campaign. The purpose of the peace meditation is to change the consciousness about war and peace—to make war unthinkable and peace inevitable—and to create a powerful effect on the "psychosphere", the collective consciousness of the nation. The "Village to Village Link-up Programme" links 1,000 villages in the war-torn North East to 1,000 villages in the South as sister villages to receive support with skilled and unskilled labour and materials to rehabilitate houses, tanks, schools, toilets and places of religious worship. The aim is that in the process villagers will overcome their fear, anger, animosity and prejudice, and opportunities will be created to express caring, concern and loving-kindness toward each other.

The Sarvodaya peace programme is unique in its ability to mobilise a huge turnout at the mass mediations (170,000 in 1999, close to 300,000 in 2002 and 300,000 in 2004) and the spirituality of its peace message, compared to the peaceful co-existence and just peace messages of other NGOs. Also, it may well be the only NGO that has ever set goals that are to be achieved in 100 and 500 years. Sarvodaya emphasizes the need to address the "internal war":

"Sri Lankans are at war within themselves. Evidence of a society experiencing internal war is all other forms of non-war related violence and deliberate self-harm. Depression is the foundation for internalized violence (including alcohol, drugs, deliberate self-harm) and for externalized violence (including rape, murder and war). Sri Lanka is an island of victims. Some of the victims of the war are those killed or wounded in military action. We must also learn to see the perpetrators of violence as victims. Some are the victims of an economic system which does not address widespread poverty. Others are the victims of violent and repressive living environments that turn loving children into combatants and suicide bombers. Some victims are victimizing others, creating a terrible cycle of victim-villain-violence. Sri Lanka needs a peace that addresses both the internal and external "war"; the totality of despair in this society."128

Yet at the same time, Sarvodaya's Buddhist philosophy and mass peace meditations have immediate political implications in a society in which ethnic and religious divides prevent efforts to evolve into an active, self sustainable grass roots peace movement.

SETIK is a multi actor grassroots peacebuilding network that is concentrated in the Central Highland districts of Kandy, Nuwara Eliya and Matale. This high mountain range, dotted with lavish tea and rubber plantations, houses a mix of low cast Indian estate workers, Singhalese peasants and Muslim petty traders. Poverty is pervasive as land and off farm employment is scarce. Literacy is low and political leadership is concentrated along ethno-nationalist lines. Conflicts between ethnic communities are multiple and have historically been settled by violent means. SETIK is the Human Rights Secretariat of the Diocesan Commission for Justice, Peace and Human Development based in Kandy. It works on human rights, justice, sustainable development, protection of children and women and peace building. Founded and managed by the Catholic Diocese, it is multi religious in mission and includes religious leaders from all denominations and their constituencies in its work. SETIK is also multi lingual and all staff members master at least two of the three Sri Lankan languages. Its outspoken justice and peace approach lands SETIK in conflict with the authorities at regular intervals. For instance, its work to protect estate teenagers from sexual harassment by estate and security officials forced it to take rape cases up to the Supreme Court; its election monitors investigating election fraud and election related murders were physically intimidated by armed gangs and leading politicians. including

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128 Source Dr. Ariyaratne email letter, see also http://sarvodaya.org/PeaceInitiative SarvodayaPeoplesPeacePlan.htm
two Ministers residing in Kandy district in 2002: and in April 2003, SETIK came under attack from the National Human Rights Commission's (NHRC) coordinator in Kandy for recording complaints of human rights violations.\(^{129}\)

In this volatile environment, SETIK believes that an end to the ethnic conflict may hinge upon a willingness to listen, especially to victims of war. In this way it searches for truth about a shared, bloody past and a willingness to acknowledge the implications of a 'just settlement for all based on the rule of law'. In the words of its former director Father Nandana: "We need to look for sustainability of peace. We can only have this if all have equal rights and if there is justice through radical reforms. If this necessity is not recognised, we will have peace for some time, but it will not last." This just peace agenda is woven into its work and that of its constituencies. Multi religious Peace Steering Committees have been set up at regional, district and provincial levels; they meet on a bi-monthly basis, monitor the situation and mediate conflicts when they arise. Youth are SETIK's main target group as grooming new leadership is a key strategy. Programmes include workshops on the ideology of peace, on the progress of the peace negotiations, language classes, cultural exchanges, media campaigns and peace rallies. Learning how to build sustainable peace networks is a work in progress.\(^{130}\) The low profile grass roots nature of their peaceful co-existence and justice work, and its foundation in existing local multi religious structures has enabled SETIK to continue highly sensitive human rights work under critical circumstances and to build a strong membership base.

SETIK's low national visibility also poses a different critical bottleneck to its work: unlike PAFFREL, NPC and Sarvodaya, SETIK faces serious fund raising problems and many of the planned peace projects had to be scaled down to a core human rights and peace agenda. While strong in legitimacy and accountability, its leadership thinks they failed to invest in international donor contacts and its inter-religious image my make aid agencies wary about its development capability and hidden agendas. This is regrettable, because SETIK is the only NGO network in this four country research that genuinely works on to mobilise all local religious actors as pro-active conflict mediators who are responsible for sustainable peace with justice in their marginalised communities. It stands out as an impressive example.

\(^{129}\) The coordinator wrongfully claims that only NHRC branch officers and the Supreme Court have the right to take complaints from the victims of violations, such as victims of torture.

\(^{130}\) After peace exchange trips by Singhalese civilians to the North proved counter-productive, 28 Tamil students from Mannar and Vanni districts were invited to the Central Province for a two-week trip. "That we go and stare at people in the North like animals in the zoo proves bothersome for them", said Father Nandana in an interview with the JRS in 2002, "So instead we brought some students from Vanni to Kandy, to show them a world they had never seen before and to get the community involved. The students themselves told us they wanted to go for this trip; many of them never go out of the camps (for displaced people) at all." Source: Jesuit Refugee Service (2002) - Bridging the ethnic divide Sri Lanka, 05-06-2002, Special Report (Vatican City, JRS); and interviews with Fr Nandana Managuna, 30 November 2001 and Fr. George Sigamoney, 1 April 2004.
8.4 International advocacy for policy and practice change

INFID, NGO Forum on Cambodia and International NGO Forum on Sri Lanka

Cambodia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka all have active international NGO advocacy networks, which have played an important role in international diplomacy at some point in the nation’s history. The International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development (INFID) is the oldest such network. It was first established as the INGI (Inter-NGO Conference on IGGI Matters) in June 1985, by a group of Indonesian NGOs and their NGO donor partners in the Netherlands. Its international secretariat was based in The Hague, because the Dutch government held the permanent chair of the annual Indonesian donor consultation and pledging meeting, the so-called IGGI. Its purpose was to advocate for more equitable and environmentally sustainable development policies through dialogue and advocacy with the international agencies that fund these programmes. This was important because official in country venues to influence development priorities set by the Indonesian government were absent.

In 1992, after Dutch bilateral development aid was unilaterally terminated by President Suharto, in response to strong Dutch criticism of the East Timor human rights abuses (Dili massacre of December 1991), the World Bank took over. It renamed the IGGI the Consultative Group for Indonesia (CGI), and moved the meetings to Washington DC. At that time, the INGI was renamed INFID, but the dual secretariat structure was maintained, with an office in Jakarta and an international office in The Hague, until 1998: frequent raids by the Indonesian security forces necessitated a shadow archive outside the country. In 1998 the research coordination and documentation work moved to Jakarta and a new lobby unit was formed close to the European Union in Brussels. In 1993 a second INFID liaison unit that focuses on environmental and debt issues was formed by member NGOs in Tokyo. Given the close connection to the annual donor conference and the repressive attitude of the Indonesian New Order regime towards NGO advocacy work, INFID has been focussing on an economic development agenda with a strong environmental component (debt relief, sustainable land use, pro-poor programmes, etc). It produces research documents and annual advocacy reports, with a set of recommendations for the annual CGI meetings.

The NGO Forum on Cambodia was established in 1987 by a group of International NGOs running operational relief and reconstruction programmes in Cambodia. The Forum started as an international initiative because no local NGOs were in existence at the time. During its first five years the Forum met in European and Asian donor countries, because travel to Cambodia was restricted and the Forum’s main purpose was to end the economic boycott and seek diplomatic and financial support for an UN transition government. Reports on the socio-economic situation inside the country were widely disseminated and bilateral aid agencies, the UN and EU were systematically lobbied. As Cambodia had been internationally isolated for over ten years, grass roots development data were virtually non existent; the Forum managed to fill this void and gained the attention and appreciation of the international community. It was invited to provide policy recommendations based on its long experience years’ of relief work with the local authorities.

After the signing of the Paris Peace accords and the start of the UNTAC, a huge influx of international NGOs emerged in 1991. In response, the Coordinating Committee of Cambodia (CCC) was established to assist new coming NGOs and promote mutual cooperation. This new network rapidly became the national NGO focal point for the UN, embassies and other international agencies and gradually ‘took over’ the international advocacy role from the Forum.
In 1993 the CCC obtained official accreditation to the annual donor pledging conference (ICROC) that was held in France and Japan alternately. Meanwhile, the nature of the Forum’s work changed dramatically during the UNTAC period. Its new local NGO members were in urgent need of programme development skills and the Forum set up a series of trainings and working groups on key topics (like environment, micro-credit, gender, land disputes), in which international and local NGOs worked together to enhance the quality of their work. Given the volatile political process and the Khmer Rouge legacy, the CCC/Forum’s advocacy agenda focussed primarily on economic development, environmental degradation and participatory and inclusive, sustainable development approaches. Furthermore, the CCC/Forum has consistently promoted gender equity and asked for attention to the feminisation of poverty.

The International NGO Forum on Sri Lanka had an entirely different history. Not only is it the youngest of the three, established in December 1989, but it ceased to exist in its original form in 1995. It was founded by a group of International donor NGOs from Great Britain, Norway, Germany, France and Netherlands, that was deeply concerned over the intensifying war in the North East and the serious human rights violations in the South during the JVP uprising. Many local NGO leaders had gone into hiding after repeated threats on their lives from the LTTE, JVP or the Sri Lankan army or all three. While the situation deteriorated and international action was deemed necessary, serious donor and media fatigue kept Sri Lanka out of the headlines in Europe. The International Steering Committee launched a year long campaign in 1990 to get Sri Lanka back in the European newspapers and on diplomatic agendas. It worked with journalists, universities, churches and ministries to convey a simple message: an end to the killing. A Sri Lanka news service was set up at the British Refugee Council for journalists in Western Europe and the Ambassador’s meeting in Colombo took an active interest in the Forum’s documentation work. While the International Steering Committee worked in close consultation with local human rights and women’s NGOs from the onset, the Sri Lankan Steering Committee could only be established three years later, after the political violence in the South declined. Even then, however, the Forum continued to face strong opposition of the Sri Lankan authorities and ethnopolitical groupings, like nationalist Buddhist organisations.

In 1993 the agenda was diversified to address economic development issues and membership increased both locally and internationally with NGOs from Australia and US joining the lobby. However, conflict dominated the Forum till the very end when the war resumed and the political opposition to the Forum’s peace with justice agenda mounted in 1995 to the point where local NGOs decided there was no added value to them from international peace advocacy and the Local Steering Committee was dissolved.

Aims, audiences and advocacy strategies

INFID intends to “to give voice to the perspective and common concerns of the people represented by NGOs involved in Indonesia vis-à-vis governments, multilateral development agencies and the private sector. INFID aims to facilitate communication between NGOs inside and outside Indonesia in order to promote policies to alleviate structural poverty and to increase the capacity to improve conditions of the poor and disadvantaged in Indonesia.” The Cambodian

131 The Cooperation Committee for Cambodia is a membership organization of over 100 NGOs committed to facilitating the exchange of information among the development community in Cambodia. In part their mandate overlaps with the Forum, as they focus on local capacity building and policy research in key sectoral areas. However, they share an office building and collaborate closely when it comes to convening seminars, publishing, etc.
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Forum has a single goal: “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.” The SRL Forum no longer exists, but had a three-pronged agenda: to stop the human rights violations and to promote peace with justice and sustainable development policies.

INFID has two main objectives: 1) to ensure that the formulation and implementation of national and international policies on development in Indonesia, including those related to lending that creates debt dependency, investment and trade, are in the interests of the poor and disadvantaged, and based on principles of peace and justice; and 2) to create conditions allowing for the strengthening of democratic life through broadening people's participation in, access to, and control of development in Indonesia. The objectives of the Cambodia Forum are to highlight the impact of development processes and economic, social and political changes on Cambodians and to contribute to an informed and empowered population that participates in a strong and vibrant civil society. Furthermore the Forum identified seven core values that the members need to have as underwrite: 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.

INFID’s target audiences are donor governments, multilateral development agencies, local governments, community leaders, the media, parliament and the private sector. Current advocacy campaigns include: debt relief, CGI and trade monitoring (especially IMF, World Bank, ADB and WTO initiatives), democratisation and a strong NGO network, inside as well as outside Indonesia to advocate for the rights of the disadvantaged in development and oppose lending that creates debt dependency, investment and trade. The Cambodia Forum’s audiences are all local: NGOs and associations, ministries, local authorities and locally based international aid agencies. Four permanent sectoral networks are currently active: environment (awareness, pesticides and river protection), development (policy, gender, trade and economic development) and land tenure and livelihoods (land reform, resettlement and forest livelihoods). Detailed research or follow-up work (like organising events) is carried out in smaller working groups.

The Sri Lanka Forum was founded to address the apprehension over the civilian victims and local NGO leaders under fire. It therefore prioritised the right to life and a political and civil rights lobby agenda and focussed its lobby on the annual sessions of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva. It lobbied delegations, facilitating local witnesses to provide testimonies etc. UN surveillance of human rights violations added to the reduction of extra judiciary killings in the North and South in the early 1990s. The Forum also successfully probed the unlawful procedures applied by President Premadasa’s Inquiry Commission into the NGOs set up, which publicly accused a group of charismatic NGO peace advocates of malfeasance, corruption and support to armed insurgents without providing any hard evidence. The Commission used a reverse legal procedure: presuming the accused guilty until they proved the contrary. The Forum asked the International Commission of Jurists to observe the trials and the Ambassadors’ meeting sent representatives as well. Soon the procedures were adjusted and the hearings were closed to the public. After President Premadasa’s assassination, the pressure on NGOs waned and the commission finished its work in silence. In 1993, the Forum expanded its membership both in Sri Lanka and in the US and Australia, hired its first permanent lobbyist and diversified its agenda to include the social consequences of the privatisation of the tea estates and the termination of poor farmer subsidies as part of the Structural Adjustment Programme. However, the dialogue attempts with the World Bank ended in failure, as limited local economic expertise was available to assist the mostly human rights and community development NGO members of the Forum and hence their reports did not meet the Bank’s quality standards.
The first public SRL Forum conference held in Sri Lanka was closed down by pro Singhalese, anti peace protests and a group of armed thugs in 1994. The LTTE had keen interest in the Forum too, though its military orientation prevented them from becoming member. They did attempt to reap political gain and legitimacy from its peace with justice mission and critical dialogues with the Sri Lankan authorities. Representation of members of armed groups at the Forum’s events was a tricky from the Forum’s inception and became a breaking point in 1995 when the war resumed, the PA military “war for peace” campaign began and the Local Steering Committee withdrew from the Forum for diplomatic and security reasons. With the withdrawal of local NGOs, the Forum’s legitimacy ended, though a small European NGO group continued its lobby work from London till the end of the decade.

Membership and resource mobilisation

All forums have a number of similar features that reflect their civil society nature and allow them to operate despite hostile environment. First, they combined local and foreign NGO membership. Over 100 NGOs participate in INFID, approximately 50 from Indonesia and 60 from 14 other countries. The Cambodia Forum has 70 member NGOs that run operational programmes inside the country: 31 international and 39 local NGOs. The Sri Lanka Forum was smaller in size and had on average 60 participating NGOs, divided equally between international and local NGOs: its lose membership structure reflected the high human security risks that come with human rights lobbying. Only the Steering Committee members are usually highly visible ‘members’ of the network and would speak in public on behalf of the Forum. Second, the Forums had a dual steering committee system (local and foreign) that met twice a year to set the advocacy agenda and prepare for lobby events taking place simultaneously around the world. Steering committees are also responsible for management, fund raising, financial reporting and other administrative responsibilities. Ad hoc working groups are formed around priority themes to mobilise research data and brainstorm appropriate recommendations for alternative sustainable development approaches. Some of these working groups became more permanent knowledge centres, like the debt group in INFID and the environment group in Cambodia. A secretary maintained contact between meetings; but as the research and advocacy agenda grew, secretariats turned into lobby units with full time staff. Annually, large international conferences are organised for the full NGO membership and the general public. In the early years these forum conferences could not be held locally, either because the government would not give permission (IDO and CAM) or for security reasons (SRL), and were hosted in Europe, Australia, Japan and the US. The first Cambodia Forum conference was held in Phnom Penh 1992, but INFID had to wait 14 years before an international conference could be convened in Bali in 1999. The SRL Forum’s first locally held international conference in Batticaloa in 1994 was also its last.

Both INFID and CCC/Forum have ‘localised’ their advisory and management structures over the past decade. The CCC/Forum is based in Phnom Penh and increasingly focuses on domestic advocacy issues; it was run by expatriates till 1996 when the International Steering Committee resigned and the local Management Committee became the chief decision making body. From 1997 to 2001, the CCC/Forum changed its predominant language to Khmer and Cambodian staff began leading the CCC/Forum’s activities. Its local staff was expanded to improve technical backstopping of grassroots NGOs in the provinces and to help them build advocacy links to the national level to address issues like landmines, illegal logging, fisheries rights, micro credit, women’s rights and democratisation. The localisation of INFID’s office structure occurred around the same time. While international NGOs have played an important counterpart role throughout INFID’s history, the network has always been carried by a core group of approximately 15 local
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NGOs with strategic connections to the academic and business world (unlike the other two Forums). In 1997 a ‘Committee of Six’ was elected from among the two steering committees and worked out a process to transfer the international INFID archives and tasks from The Hague to Jakarta and Brussels. Moreover, it reviewed the local policy planning and management structures to assure maximum security and accountability for the extended Jakarta office. The transition process was completed in late 1998 and coincided accidentally with the Transformasi. In May 2000 INFID was registered as a foundation in Indonesia.

All three forums were initially funded by a group of international NGOs, whose policy included funding international advocacy work to promote policy changes, because the domestic political systems did not allow for democratic consultation in policy planning. Core NGO donors of the forums included mostly British, German, Dutch and Norwegian agencies, like Brot fur die Welt, CAFOD, Christian Aid, CCFD, Diakonia, Ford Foundation, Hivos, Novib, Oxfam Belgium and Red Barna. As the forums gained legitimacy and were invited to observe or speak at consultative group meetings and UN human rights hearings, bilateral governments became increasingly interested in funding their policy research and advocacy projects. In 2003 INFID and the CCC/Forum received additional support from Oxfam Cambodia, Asia Foundation, JVC, DFID, SIDA, USAID and CIDA. The Cambodia Forum’s budget for in 2003 was US$ 558,000. The INFID budget for 2003 was expected to be close to US$ 700,000.

Advocacy contribution to preventing deadly conflict

While proving overall impact of NGO advocacy work is a tricky business, the three advocacy networks related here have had a major influence at crucial times in their nation’s histories. The short lived, but well planned concerted advocacy efforts of Sri Lanka Forum members was quite effective during its first two years. It got the human rights abuses and the suffering of ordinary citizens back in the European media headlines and on agenda of major bilateral agencies. For three consecutive years, special measures to increase the local human security situation in Sri Lanka were on the agenda of the UN Commission on Human Rights. While this renewed attention did not directly end fighting at the battlefield, the two key players—the Sri Lankan Army and the LTTE—became more cautious in committing human rights violations, for example when the Sri Lankan PM made the voluntary statement to the chair by the Sri Lankan PM in 1993 to prevent UN human rights’ rapporteur visits. Similarly, the Forum mobilised the European Ambassadors and reputed law institutes to complain about the unlawful procedures of the 1991 Presidential Inquiry committee; this prevented incarceration and the closing down of NGOs with a peace activist agenda and was successful in fund raising for the first national election monitoring campaign in 1994. The Forum’s upfront lobby to end human rights atrocities, extrajudiciary killings and promote peace was both a sign of strong in-country civil society, as well as the cause of its premature collapse after only five years. Walking the tight rope of impartiality between warring fractions at times of war and in the presence of a large and active Diaspora may not be sustainable over a prolonged period. The SRL Forum fell apart when the war over Tamil Eelam entered its third phase in 1995 and disagreement over issues like local ownership of (or control over) the message, networking with rebel representatives and public representation in international conferences made membership too sensitive for Sri Lankan NGOs. Concluding the international steering committee lacked the empathy and hands-on conflict information to represent them adequately. the Sri Lankan Steering Committee withdrew from the Forum and the public limelight and continued their human rights and peace advocacy work with caution as part of their ongoing NGO mandate.
Not surprisingly, the CCC/Forum and INFID also had to be very cautious in addressing the local human rights situations in their lobby agendas. Because civil society was weaker and the role of the military in daily governance more prominent, the forums at best raised human rights issues indirectly until the mid 1990s, when the wave of political transformation swept through the region. The CCC/Forum had its hey day in the late 1980s, when it was virtually the sole authority on sustainable development work inside Cambodia. It played a very important role in the moral lobby to end the international diplomatic isolation and economic boycott under the “Trading with the Enemy Act,” which prevented a country ravaged by genocide and natural disasters from receiving proper development assistance and moving to a more democratic governance system. The publication of the book “Punishing the Poor” (1988) for instance, made a deep impression on the conscience of Northern governments. With the Paris Peace Accords in negotiation, the Forum briefed bilateral and multilateral donors and directly influenced their development policy formulation. With humanitarian needs and democratisation objectives always high on the agenda, issues pertaining to political and civil rights, abuse of State power and other controversial topics could not be raised. At the time the international NGOs worked in close partnership with the Cambodian government and were conscious of human rights abuses. They felt an end to the international blockade would force the government to open up to more democratic participation and accountability, which would reduce human rights violations. A dramatic transformation of the CCC/Forum’s organisational focus occurred in the 1990s, when in response to the request of local members it became a development capacity building network. This reflects the strong local ownership of the organisation and the accountability of the expatriate leadership to its membership. In the course of this study it was impossible to assess the quality of their current capacity building work in the provinces, but some strategic national campaigns can be mentioned: the ban the landmines campaign, the small arms and light weapons reduction working group, the involvement in land disputes research (see 8.2), the advice on NGO regulation and promotion of ethical standards for NGO governance and work to foster direct vertical links between grass roots and government.

The INFID, to conclude, was most influential in its mid career phase. In the context of the New Order regime and a highly militarized society, INFID opted for a more technocratic advocacy approach and focussed on economic development issues with second generation human rights components. The high quality of its debt research and the impact of unsustainable State development choices on poverty eradication and environmental degradation for example made INFID an annual debating partner with bilateral donors and IFIs like the World Bank. Its tradition of less direct involvement in political and civil rights issues and grass roots civil society building work is visible today: INFID is publicly more oriented to research and international advocacy and has not been challenged to rethink its mandate. Beside its debt relief work, INFID promoted environmental research work in support of local member NGO networks like WALHI and ELSAM, to lobby for socio-economic indigenous minority rights and an end to eco-violence. Its advocacy power in the 1990s was manifested in its strategic advocacy partnership building with Japanese NGOs to confront Japanese corporations and authorities involved in unlawful logging and mining practices in West Papua and Kalimantan (Freeport and Rio Tinto). The 1992 international INFID conference was held in Odawara and was the first of its kind in a country with strong reservations against public NGO advocacy. The conference was well received and resulted in various local awareness-raising and lobby initiatives and the opening of the INFID liaison office in Tokyo. Furthermore, the liaison office had local spin off effects and raised awareness on eco-violence elsewhere, resulting among others in the formation of the Japanese Mekong Watch Committee in 1994 that undertook joint lobby campaigns with Oxfam International for the Mekong and China region in 1998.
In sum the policy advocacy networks have played an important role in giving a voice to alternative views of development and peace that would otherwise not have been heard. Of the seven success indicators, strategic vertical networks of key actors, alternative development and peace messages, mobilisation of soft power through international connections and joint NGO campaigning have proved valuable. Support of charismatic leadership and elite members of society have also been important in boosting the legitimacy of Forums, but with the exception of a few years in INFID, the day-to-day lobby was largely led by expert teams. The organisational integrity of the Forums reflected the situation they tried to address at the time, and thereby the historic State - NGO relationship. Only the CCC/Forum network transformed its role—to that of capacity builder. This is uncommon as most advocacy networks have a limited life span and either wind down or merge with other advocacy groups to adopt an alternative lobby agenda.

8.5 Lessons learned

The twelve NGO initiatives discussed in this chapter were selected, because they reflect the seven success indicators in a variety of combinations, they show advanced organisational integrity and they focus on strengthening governance and enhancing stakeholder collaboration. Examples of strong national cross-cutting or bridging social capital building are the Dhammayatra peace walks; the Sarvodaya mass peace meditations and the Mada Depan scenario building dialogues. These broad based people’s initiatives managed to engage NGOs, peace activist, academics, government officials and businessmen alike and raise public support for a pro-peace message at tense times. Unfortunately, it proved hard to sustain these horizontal broad based peace networks over time. With the polarisation of the positions of political opponents in the conflict, the broad based peace and reconciliation work in all three countries got politicised and family activists, officials and business representatives withdrew.

Four other initiatives managed to sustain their bridging community networks by building vertical actor networks simultaneously. SETIK in Central Sri Lanka managed to sustain its bridging, multi-religious grassroots peace activities by engaging the top level leadership in their province and beyond. This provided some protection to human rights defenders where others had failed. Strategic linking with a wide set of stakeholders enabled the two election monitoring networks, COMFREL and PAFFREL, to protect a nationwide network of respectively 38,000 and 42,000 local volunteers during sensitive and at times violent election processes. This moreover enabled them to diversify their programmes to include complementary governance initiatives, like the strengthening of the commune decentralisation process in Cambodia and the community dialogue programmes on peaceful co-existence in Sri Lanka. The diverse and long-term approach of the Cambodia NGO working group on land issues combined grassroots research, economic projects and legal aid with law reform and international lobbying, and has resulted in the establishment of conflict mediation mechanisms within the State structure to address problems in the Ministries.

Lastly, six initiatives showed the variety of strategies that depend on vertical social capital building to strengthen governance and link State and grassroots actors. The National Peace Council and Konmas Perempuan serve as think tanks, data banks, training centres and public campaigners to find alternative ways to end the civil war peacefully and prevent sexual violence against women, respectively. The Civil Rights Movement launched a public campaign and mobilised the international community to convince the State to accept the Geneva Conventions and acknowledge the rights and increase the protection of internally displaced and political prisoners during civil war. All three managed to frame ethic values of dignity, rights and protection in ways that made the issues acceptable again for all parties involved. Soft power, the
Four thematic case studies of joint national NGO campaigns

ability to achieve goals through attraction rather than coercion, was also successfully applied by the three national advocacy networks.

What lessons can be learned from these experiences? First, it is clear that NGOs with strong cross-cutting or bridging and vertical social capital building skills have a higher chance of being successful than those that focus more on technical approaches or professional service delivery expertise. This likelihood is further enhanced when social capital is reflected in their own organisations ("walking the talk"). The multi lingual and multi religious SETIK staff and the decentralised and volunteer-based monitoring structures of the national election networks are examples that show the effectiveness of this approach.

Second, the fostering of strong joint national NGO campaigns to further good governance and conflict resolution and prevention work is an essential strategy. This help NGOs overcome human resource and financial restrictions (for example in case of maintaining national monitoring networks) and overcome deficiencies in stakeholder networks (for example lawyers working with community development NGOs to research land grabbing problems with peasants). Furthermore, these joint NGO campaigns add to the legitimacy of the message and can go a long way toward balancing the asymmetric power relation with the State. A united, well informed and well connected civil society is hard for States in this day and age to discard or violently repress and is hence of prime importance to sensitive and risky conflict prevention and human rights work.

Third, the cases show that the capacity of NGOs to build effective stakeholder relations is strongly affected by their historic relationship with the State. In the most extreme cases, NGO sectors were prohibited and their leaders killed, imprisoned or deported (Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, Indonesia in the early New Order days, and currently in North East Sri Lanka and in Myanmar). As result of international pressure, the NGO sector reappeared in Cambodia, but its relation with the State remains tense. That makes it harder to work with key stakeholders in government service, the business sector, religious institutions and academia. Cambodian NGOs compensate for this void by working more closely together and with the international community. In Sri Lanka and Indonesia the State repression of NGOs was more ‘strategic’ in the past two decades, focusing on restricting freedoms of assembly and expression. Here NGOs have been more successful in linking with academics, the middle class business sector and religious leaders (for example the NU and academic support to INFID, the business and officials support to Masa Depan and religious support to NGO work in Sri Lanka). However, their capacity to mobilise grassroots constituencies was dented and remains problematic today. The (re)building of mutual trust in State-NGO relations requires a deliberate and sensitive local process of reconciliation at different levels.

Fourth, international advocacy to exert pressure on the national government to end harmful practices and change policies has proven useful in the absence of democratic venues in country. Forums tried to fill the void in local participatory democracy by researching, debating and documenting their alternative policy recommendations, systematically lobbying governments, bilateral aid agencies and the UN and holding them accountable for their own development policies and rights principles. The State-NGO relations strongly influenced the messaging of international advocacy forums. The power of the military in Indonesia made the INFID adopt a more technocratic economic development agenda, while the Sri Lanka Forum was able to lobby with a strong peace and human rights agenda, because the mature NGO sector was more respected and the security forces were in favour of a peaceful settlement at the time. However, this main peace message proved unsustainable in the long run.
Fifth, a focus on a narrow “end the killing” peace message or on conflict resolution capacity building alone is unlikely to reap success even in the medium term regardless of how well the NGO initiative is framed, professional and connected to multiple actors. In the case countries, and likely in world at large, peace is politics and it cannot materialise without social justice. A just peace requires structural economic, social and political change to end inequality and indignity. While the three peace capacity building NGO cases show pioneering work in highly sensitive areas, they are providing motivational resources at best, as their aim is to build capacity and goodwill among government officials and local NGOs, which need to provide the required changes.

Sixth, the only successful deadly conflict prevention approach is sustainable development and inclusive good governance. Cambodian community development NGOs are rebuilding community trust through restoring livelihoods and setting up village credit associations; in the land title project they associated with lawyers and advocates at the national level to find alternative ways to protect their beneficiaries from land grabbing where the State apparatus failed. COMFREL utilises its election monitoring network to train commune council officials and villagers alike to make decentralised governance a bottom up force for the common good.

Seventh, even the best NGO development and conflict prevention work will only have marginal effect, if the State, parliament and the armed forces do not fulfil their prime duty holder’s role of providing human security to all citizens. The degree to which the State allows political space for NGOs to act in democratic ways shapes their success. The influence of the international actors on the State is limited when States are less concerned about their international credibility. The cases showed that official exclusion, impunity, corruption and indignity are prevalent in all countries. Strategic NGO efforts promoted new conflict mediation and reconciliation mechanisms within the government’s jurisdiction to overcome bottlenecks due to poor governance (like the Land Dispute Settlement Commissions, Forest Crimes Monitoring Unit, ICRC, Komnas Perempuan and Masa Depan). However, none of these hard fought initiatives have thus far provided actual protection to the poor nor have they resulted in a major change in the governance practices.

Eighth, women are most prone to inequality, exclusion and indignity and deadly conflict has aggravated their plight. They face physical, economic and social insecurity, but have no political power to redress it. The land case described how land loss makes peasant families destitute and forces primarily women and young girls to migrate to the cities or abroad to compensate for the lost income. Sexual harassment and domestic violence have been on the rise in all case countries since the 1990s as result of economic crises, communal conflict, militarization and civil war. Komnas Perempuan’s Presidential acknowledgement of the problem did not change the political will to act to increase women’s protection. Attempts to redress the under-representation of women in politics for example by COMFREL and PAFFREL, have met with unfavourable cultural and social climates and Ministries for Women Affairs in all countries are the weak and most under-resourced institutions.