

STRENGTHENING LINKAGES BETWEEN UN AGENCIES & NGOs:
THE CASE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN ZIMBABWE

by

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Thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts (Political Science)

Acadia University
Spring Convocation 2001

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Abstract	vii
List of Acronyms	viii
Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 NGOs & the UN in the Post-Cold War Era	7
Chapter 2 Literature Review: Toward a Theoretical Framework	17
Chapter 3 UN-NGO Relationships in the International System	33
Chapter 4 UN-NGO Relationships in Zimbabwe: Methodology & Context	64
Chapter 5 Case Study Results	89
Chapter 6 Conclusion	112
Bibliography	122
Appendices	133

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	NGOs and Related Organizations	36
Table 4.1	Major Legislation for Women's Rights in Zimbabwe	78

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 5.1	Defining Partnership	92
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the evolving relationship between the United Nations (UN) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the contemporary international system. The paper begins by framing the issue against the backdrop of immense global change, emphasizing the growing presence of NGOs within the UN system and their considerable impact on the international stage. Next, it explores a case study of women's rights organizations and UN agencies in Harare, Zimbabwe in order to identify the nature of UN-NGO relationships within a specific cultural context. Findings show that while most use the language of partnership to describe these collaborative endeavours, few believe that they are close to fully actualizing the concept. Instead, although the discourse of partnership conveys a relationship of equality and mutual support, underlying power disparities often continue to plague collaborative relationships in practice. This study serves to acknowledge this paradox, but also explores the actual experiences and opinions of those engaged in UN-NGO relationships in order to identify opportunities for improved collaboration. Above all, the goal is to provide a window into UN-NGO relationships at the national level, as well as a greater understanding of their significance in the larger world.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
DFAIT	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada
DPI	Department of Public Information
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
IGO	International Governmental Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organization
LAMA	Legal Age of Majority Act
MCDWA	Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs
NGLS	Non-governmental Liaison Service
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
UIA	Union of International Associations
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WAG	Women's Action Group
WHO	World Health Organization
WILDAF	Women in Law and Development in Africa
WLSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa
ZWRCN	Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The genesis for this study stems from my participation in DFAIT's *Youth International Internship Programme*, which provided me with the opportunity to work with a women's human rights organization in Harare, Zimbabwe from July 1998 to January 1999. Arranged at Acadia University by Dr. Marsh Conley, this internship provided an important window into my understanding of the subject presented here, and therefore, I am forever indebted to those who made this experience possible, as well as to those who provided boundless support along the way.

Special recognition goes to my supervisor, Dr. Marsh Conley, whose patience, encouragement and wisdom has shaped the direction of my life. I thank him most for introducing me to the *real* world...and especially, to Africa.

I would also like to thank the women of WiLDAF Zimbabwe for teaching me the very meaning of activism, strength, imagination and sisterhood. *Tatenda, shas* for this gift.

To the participants in my research, who put up with countless questions and visits, my deepest gratitude for your patience and time.

And, to all of my creative companions who listened, laughed, danced, painted, hiked, gardened, and explored with me along the way – a big kiss to the head. Thank you for teaching me why "it is the journey that matters in the end." (Ursula K. LeGuin).

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have occupied an increasingly important role on the international stage. Private, nongovernmental groups such as Amnesty International, the Red Cross and Greenpeace have pervaded traditional barriers of invisibility to emerge as veritable icons of activism worldwide. And, as exemplified by their recent contributions in banning landmines, providing relief assistance in Kosovo, and creating an International Criminal Court, NGO influence now touches virtually all issues before the United Nations (UN). It seems both a timely and fruitful endeavor, then, to understand exactly *what NGOs are* and *where they fit* into the operations of the UN system.

It stands to reason that as a tide of new voices enter the global arena, the relationships between these actors will also evolve. In fact, as the UN and NGOs respond to the realities of an increasingly complex and interrelated world, an evolution in their relationship is almost certain. The question is – what form will this new relationship take if it is to respond most effectively to contemporary demands?

The purpose of this study is to examine the UN-NGO relationship from this perspective. The paper begins by framing the issue against the backdrop of contemporary global change, emphasizing the growing presence of NGOs within the UN system and their considerable impact on the international stage. Next, it explores a case study of women's rights organizations and UN agencies in

Zimbabwe in order to identify the actual goals and opinions of those involved in UN-NGO relationships within a specific cultural context.¹ The goal is to provide a window into UN-NGO relationships at the national level, as well as a greater understanding of their significance in the larger world.

In other words, this study explores both the global and local aspects of the topic at hand. It acknowledges global interdependence at the same time that it acknowledges difference. It acknowledges the importance accorded to UN-NGO relationships globally, at the same time that it investigates the significance of these linkages in one specific context. And it is by proceeding from this multi-level perspective that this study reveals one key reality – that the concept of UN-NGO partnership is far more complex than it may first appear.

At the heart of this analysis is the reality that while most use the language of partnership to describe UN-NGO relationships, few believe that they are close to fully actualizing the concept. Instead, although the discourse of partnership conveys a relationship of equality and mutual support, underlying power disparities often continue to plague collaborative relationships in practice. The case study serves to acknowledge this paradox, but also explores opportunities for improved collaboration.

¹ The term **UN Agency** will be used to refer to an array of organizations who, together with the six major organs of the United Nations, make up the UN system. These include the specialized agencies, who are linked to the UN through cooperative agreements (egs. WHO, IMF), as well as an array of UN offices, funds and programmes who report to the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council (egs. UNICEF, UNDP). Each have their own governing bodies, budgets and secretariats.

In effect, this study highlights the need for clarity in the midst of complexity. It underscores the importance of clearly defining the terms of partnership, while recognizing that divergent motivations and expectations also exist. It points to the importance of acknowledging both the problems and possibilities of partnership, while approaching each of these realities with a sense of purpose and care. And above all, this study reveals the urgency for dialogue among all participants of UN-NGO collaboration if constructive and sustainable partnerships are to be achieved.

While each of these tasks is an admittedly hazardous endeavour, it is important to acknowledge that international politics can no longer be understood without assessing the impact of NGOs on issues of global concern. As a result, the question is not *whether* to engage in partnership, but *how*. As Antonio Donini states: "The outside world has been changing much faster than the official rule book can record."² But will these changes provide the impetus for the UN and NGOs to interact, and even connect, in more imaginative ways? This study seeks to explore this idea by not only asking *how these relationships are working*, but also *how they can be improved*.

Central Objectives

Proceeding from this perspective, this study explores how a taxonomy of UN-NGO linkages fit within the context of our contemporary international system. It

² Antonio Donini, "The Bureaucracy and the Free Spirits," in NGOs, the UN, & Global Governance, eds. Thomas G. Weiss & Leon Gordenker (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 83.

is hoped that a case study of women's rights organizations and UN agencies in Zimbabwe will provide interesting insights into this question by not only offering a window into UN-NGO partnerships at the national level, but also providing a greater understanding of their significance in the larger world.

Chapter One provides an overview of global change and the emerging roles of the UN and NGOs in the post-Cold War era. In doing so, it serves to situate the growing importance of these actors within the context of global change. Findings show that since the Cold War ended, the globe has witnessed "a revolutionary restructuring of world politics" marked by declining state sovereignty, an expanding global agenda, and consequent demands for a stronger system of global governance. The result is a new vision of world politics which, by encouraging a stronger system of multilateral governance, may provide the impetus for global actors to interact, and even connect, in more creative ways.

Chapter Two builds on this evidence by delving into the literature that has accumulated addressing UN-NGO relationships in the post-Cold War era. A review of this research reveals embryonic signs of a cooperative vision based mainly on an awareness that UN-NGO linkages, by fostering a better division of labor, may contribute to the evolution of enhanced global governance. In turn, these findings serve to identify a theoretical framework from which to proceed.

Chapter Three then explores the evolution of the NGO phenomenon against the backdrop of an increasingly complex and interrelated world. After grappling with the complexities surrounding NGO definitions, it takes a closer look at the rise of

NGOs globally by: (1) exploring their rapid proliferation; (2) defining their consequent expansion within the UN system; and (3) highlighting their considerable impact on the international stage. The development of the global women's movement is then chosen as an ideal case for investigation, with special emphasis dedicated to the importance of incorporating microlevel analysis into a global understanding of UN-NGO partnerships.

Next, Chapter Four shifts from a global to a local examination of UN-NGO partnerships. It begins by unveiling the pragmatic methodology used to explore UN-NGO relationships in Zimbabwe, and goes on to introduce the cultural context upon which this case study is based. The chapter especially highlights the tide of competing crises that has swept over the country in recent years, and explores the consequent impact this situation has had both on the evolution of NGOs and the struggle for women's rights. Above all, findings reveal evidence of an increasingly diverse and multilayered NGO matrix, and as government attention is thwarted by competing pressures, a growing need and willingness to continue building their capacity through collaboration.

Chapter Five begins by exploring the concept of partnership, and then employs insights gained from this analysis to examine the results and implications of the case study. At the heart of this analysis is the reality that while most use the language of partnership to describe UN-NGO relationships, few believe that they are close to fully actualizing the concept. Instead, although the discourse of partnership conveys a relationship of equality and mutual support, underlying

power disparities often continue to plague collaborative relationships in practice. This chapter serves to acknowledge this paradox, but also identifies opportunities for improved collaboration.

And finally, Chapter Six summarizes the major findings of this paper by reviewing the insights gained about UN-NGO relationships at the global and local levels and consolidating them into three main lessons learned. Theoretical implications and prospects for future inquiry are also considered.

CHAPTER 1

NGOs & the UN in the Post-Cold War Era

The purpose of this study is to establish the nature of the relationship between United Nations (UN) agencies and women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Harare, Zimbabwe in order to gain a better understanding of such linkages in the contemporary international system. This chapter serves to frame the issue by providing an overview of global change in the post-Cold War era, and situating the growing importance of the UN and NGOs in an increasingly complex and interrelated world.

1.1 The Contemporary International System

Since the Cold War ended, the globe has witnessed immense change. Bipolar divisions between East and West no longer shape our conceptual lens of the international environment, nor does a balance of terror continue to color almost every aspect of political, economic, and social life.¹ Instead, with the destruction of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the beginning of a contemporary international system was born.

What has followed this historical breakpoint is a pace of change that seems more rapid and profound than ever before. The 1990s have not only witnessed the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet bloc, but also the emergence of

¹ Charles W. Kegley & Eugene R. Wittkopf, World Politics: Trend and Transformation, Fifth Edition (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 4.

newly released nationalisms and, at the same time, global interdependence.² The result is a “revolutionary restructuring of world politics” that now requires us to reshape our conceptual lens of the globe.³

When this lens is adjusted, three main trends in current world politics come into sharper view. These synergistic developments, unleashed primarily by the profound impact of increasing global interdependence, include: changing notions of state sovereignty, an expanding global agenda, and consequent demands for a strengthened system of global governance. A discussion of these emerging trends serves to identify the nature of our contemporary international system, and to highlight the growing importance of the UN and NGOs in contending with its new demands.

1.1.1 Changing Notions of State Sovereignty

The Westphalian tradition of state sovereignty has formed the cornerstone of world politics for more than three centuries. This well-established concept empowers states to govern matters within their territorial jurisdiction without external interference and without recognizing a higher authority.⁴ Article 2(7) of the UN Charter acknowledges this basic principle and highlights the importance of

² G. Bruce Doern & John Kirton, “Foreign policy,” in Border Crossings: The Internationalization of Canadian Public Policy, eds. G. Bruce Doern, Leslie A. Pal & Brian Tomlin (Toronto: University of Oxford Press, 1996), 240.

³ Kegley & Wittkopf, 4.

⁴ Karen A. Mingst & Margaret P. Karns, The United Nations in the Post-Cold War Era (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 2.

sovereign equality as one of the most fundamental international obligations. As a result, a state-centric and sovereignty-bound perspective has prevailed.

In the contemporary international system, however, traditional notions of state sovereignty are beginning to erode. As evidence, analysts point to a number of transnational forces which, in a world unburdened by Cold War loyalties, are heightening the permeability of state borders while diminishing state autonomy and control. Examples include: (1) the emergence of *modern communication technologies*, which are now linking individuals across territorial boundaries while reducing government control over information exchange; and, (2) the development of *economic globalization*, which has created a web of interlocking markets that undermine sovereign control over a country's economic health. States may remain dominant actors in contemporary world politics, in other words, but emerging pressures of global interdependence are posing significant challenges to their traditional autonomy.

An important corollary to this trend is the rapid proliferation of cross-state interactions. As state interdependence and mutual vulnerability have expanded, mutual interests and international alliances have also grown. The result has been the emergence of networks of state and non-state actors bound, not by territory, but by overlapping concerns.⁵ One example includes so-called *new global*

⁵ David J. Elkins, Beyond Sovereignty: Territory and Political Economy in the Twenty-First Century (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 198-206.

communities,⁶ which have inspired developments such as the global women's movement and the global environmental movement through what Paul Ghils calls a "community of response" to shared challenge.⁷ Put simply, because sovereign states can no longer address many problems through unilateral national action, multilateral diplomacy has propelled common agendas onto the international stage. In turn, as the importance of cross-state interactions has grown, long-held assumptions regarding state sovereignty have yielded to the realities of global change.

1.1.2 An Expanding Global Agenda

Global interdependence, without the austerity of Cold War bipolarity, has not only led to transnational cooperation, but simultaneously, has enlarged the responsibilities confronted by states. In particular, while orthodox definitions of national self-interest emphasize a preponderant concern for problems generated internally, governments must now acknowledge that narrow self-advantage carries high costs.⁸ Countries simply cannot afford to pursue goals that reduce the security and welfare of their competitors, nor can many internal problems be confronted without considering their sources and solutions in the international arena.

⁶ Peter J. Spiro, "New Global Communities: Nongovernmental Organizations in International Decision-Making Institutions," The Washington Quarterly 47 (winter 1995): 48.

⁷ Paul Ghils, "International Civil Society: International Non-Governmental Organizations in the International System," International Social Sciences Journal 133 (1992): 417-431.

⁸ Kegley & Wittkopf, 553.

Moreover, as our frames of reference have shifted to the international level, new issues have expanded into the locus of domestic affairs. Specifically, while the continuing threat of arms and intrastate conflict remains high, the end of the Cold War has exposed transnational challenges that go beyond traditional strategic concerns.⁹ Threats such as global warming, chronic debt, migration, and international crime and disease are salient problems which have broadened the agenda of issues faced by sovereign states. In turn, substantive global change has begun to blur the distinction between so-called *high politics* of diplomacy or security, and emerging *low politics* of economic, social and environmental concern.¹⁰

One only needs to examine contemporary definitions of security to identify this trend. As a greater number of interconnected issues have found their way onto the global agenda, the notion of what constitutes a security threat has also expanded. The result has been the replacement of conventional definitions, which focus on a state-centric view of state-safety, with a widened concept of *shared human security*.¹¹ It is now acknowledged that a state's security is dependent on the

⁹ Andrew E. Cooper & Leslie A. Pal, "Human Rights and Security Policy," in Border Crossings: The Internationalization of Canadian Public Policy, eds. G. Bruce Doern, Leslie A. Pal & Brian W. Tomlin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 214.

¹⁰ Timothy M. Shaw, "Beyond Any New World Order: The South in the 21st Century," Third World Quarterly 15, no. 1 (1994): 141.

¹¹ See for example, DFAIT, Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World (1998) [Online]. Available: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/foreignp/HumanSecurity/secur-e.htm> [2000, July 31]; and, UNDP, Human Development Report (1994) [Online]. Available: <http://www.undp.org/hdro/94.htm> [2000, July 31].

security of others.¹² In addition, there is growing recognition that strategic matters are no longer limited to military considerations, but also encompass nonmilitary dangers, such as poverty, human rights violations, environmental disasters and sustainable development.¹³ The result is a horizontal notion of security that recognizes a wider range of demands, and therefore, extends the locus of decision-making *beyond a state's sovereign control*.

1.1.3 Demands for Global Governance

It follows that as an increasingly complex and interrelated world emerges, new structures and mind-sets will be necessary to contend with its new demands. In fact, as restrictive notions of state sovereignty erode, and countries begin to face a growing list of shared challenges, solutions by individual states have become impossible.¹⁴ An evolutionary restructuring of world politics has therefore energized demands for the strengthening of *global governance*¹⁵ in order to

¹² Kegley & Wittkopf, 553.

¹³ See for example, Shaw, "Beyond Any New World Order", 144; Timothy M. Shaw, "The South in the 'New World (Dis)Order: Towards a Political Economy of Third World Foreign Policy in the 1990s," Third World Quarterly 15, no. 1 (1994): 21; and, Timothy M. Shaw, "Prospects for a New Political Economy of Development in the Twenty-First Century," Canadian Journal of Development Studies 18, no. 3 (1994b): 375-394.

¹⁴ See for example, Riva Krut, Globalization and Civil Society: NGO Influence in International Decision-Making (Geneva: UNRISD, 1997), 3; W. Andy Knight, "Straddling the Fence: An Equivocal Proposal for Future Multilateral Governance," Third World Quarterly 16 (1995): 564; Shaw, "The South in the 'New World (Dis)Order", 26; Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "Empowering the United Nations," in The Politics of Global Governance: International Organizations in an Interdependent World, ed. Paul F. Dhiel (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 371; and, Sandra J. MacLean, NGO Partnership and Sustainable Democratic Development with Lessons from a Canadian-Zimbabwean Case Study, Ph.D. diss., Dalhousie University, 1997 (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1998), 341.

¹⁵ Global Governance is defined as "efforts to bring more orderly and reliable responses to social and political issues that go beyond capacities of states to address individually" [Leon Gordenker & Thomas G. Weiss, eds., NGOs, the UN & Global Governance (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 17].

advance the rules, norms and organizations necessary to address international problems.¹⁶ The UN and NGOs are both integral to this task.

As a universal multilateral institution, the UN plays important roles that individual states or regional organizations cannot perform alone.¹⁷ Consequently, the UN has been consigned a growing list of lofty goals, from the maintenance of peace and security, to the promotion of human rights, democracy and development.¹⁸ It is no wonder that so many observers see in the UN system what W. Andy Knight so eloquently deems “the outlines of an embryonic global governance mechanism.”¹⁹ Against a backdrop of dizzying global transition, the UN is in greater demand than ever before.

Yet no single governing institution is equipped to tackle the growing list of tasks demanded of international society.²⁰ In fact, as Weiss states: “The clearest diagnosis of the [UN’s] ills after its 50th anniversary is overextension.”²¹ This assertion intimates that along with the firm commitment of states, global

¹⁶ See for example, Mingst & Karns, 4; Spiro, 49; Leon Gordenker & Thomas G. Weiss, “Pluralising Global Governance: Analytical Approaches and Dimensions,” *Third World Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1994): 358.

¹⁷ Chadwick F. Alger, ed., The Future of the United Nations System: Potential for the 21st Century (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 3; Knight, 557; and, Adam Roberts & Benedict Kingsbury, Presiding Over a Divided World: Changing UN Roles, 1945-1993 (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), 10.

¹⁸ Knight, 557.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 558.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 564.

²¹ Thomas G. Weiss, “Guest Editor’s Note – Tempering Collaboration,” *Third World Quarterly* 18 (1997): 417.

governance will require enhanced institutional capacity in order to accommodate new challenges of the post-Cold War era. Ongoing UN reform is an important step toward meeting these new demands.

In a world with limited resources and many challenges, however, the role of civil society is also essential. Fortunately, new channels of participation, which have resulted from the simultaneous decline in state authority and increased concern for issues of low politics, are propelling non-state actors into the very heart of global activities.²² The ensuing response from civil society, including the NGO community, has been to seize enough influence, and even authority, to bring new perspectives and attention to issues that would otherwise be ignored.²³ Given the occasional reluctance of states to face the international concerns of an increasingly interdependent world, such pressures from civil society will prove absolutely crucial for rallying state commitment. Some even argue that given a growing list of tasks, a growing list of actors will be imperative.

1.2 Exploring New Possibilities

It seems, in other words, that the contemporary restructuring of world politics not only requires an adjustment to our conceptual lens of the globe, but also calls for *new structures and mind-sets* to contend with its new demands. No longer constrained by the rigidity of Cold War divisions, a tide of global interdependence

²² See for example, Shaw, "The South in the 'New World (Dis)Order'", 21; Spiro, 48; and, Edwin M. Smith & Thomas G. Weiss, "UN Task-Sharing: Towards or Away From Global Governance?," Third World Quarterly 18, no. 3 (1997): 614.

²³ Shaw, "Beyond Any New World Order", 145.

has unleashed a world system characterized by the erosion of state sovereignty and a growing range of global challenges. In turn, such developments have culminated into one unavoidable reality: national welfare now depends on an effective multilateral response.

It follows that because unilateral national action is inadequate, demands for a strengthened system of global governance lie at the apex of an emerging international system. *Global governance, in other words, must somehow evolve and respond to contemporary global change.* Ongoing UN reform and the rapid proliferation of NGOs are crucial in this respect, because it is only through “new forces, voices and approaches” that a growing list of global challenges can be addressed effectively.²⁴ Yet as a tide of new voices enters the global arena, the time is also ripe to explore *new possibilities* for effective international decision-making.

It stands to reason, for instance, that as a wider range of actors responds and evolves to change in the international system, the relationships between these voices will also evolve. It follows that as the UN & NGOs each respond to a growing list of modern challenges, an evolution in their relationship is almost certain. The question is – what form will this new relationship take if it is to respond most effectively to modern demands?

For the Commission on Global Governance, the answer is clear: because no single governing institution can properly tackle a growing list of demands,

cooperative efforts between global actors are absolutely crucial to the achievement of an effective governance mechanism. As the declared objective of their 1995 report, Our Global Neighborhood, states:

The world needs a new vision that can galvanize people everywhere to achieve higher levels of cooperation in areas of common concern and shared destiny.²⁵

It is hoped, in other words, that global change will provide the impetus for global actors to interact, and even connect, in more imaginative ways.

In light of this vision, this study explores how a taxonomy of UN-NGO linkages fits within the context of our contemporary international system. It is hoped that a global view of such relationships, as well as a case study of women's rights organizations and UN agencies in Zimbabwe, will provide interesting insights into this question by not only offering a window into UN-NGO partnerships at the national level, but also providing a greater understanding of their significance in the larger world.

²⁴ Shaw, "Prospects for a New Political Economy", 375.

²⁵ The Commission on Global Governance, Our Global Neighborhood (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review: Toward a Theoretical Framework

A considerable amount of research has accumulated addressing the relationship between the United Nations (UN) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the post-Cold War era. This chapter provides a review of such literature in order to identify a theoretical framework from which to proceed.

2.1 Literature Review

As the previous chapter revealed, the international system must now contend with the realities of an increasingly complex and interrelated world. No longer constrained by the rigidity of Cold War loyalties, transnational forces have transformed a firmly established international order into a world that is now regarded as both permeable and mobile. As Boutros Boutros-Ghali asserts: “The movement of people, information, capital and ideas is as important today as territory was yesterday.”¹ A new global framework is therefore required to address a much broader list of international concerns.

A recent body of literature provides an ambitious and innovative approach to this subject by examining UN-NGO cooperation in the contemporary international system. This research reveals that, given the need for a more ordered and reliable response to modern demands, cooperative efforts – most often referred to as *partnerships* – among nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations

¹ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, “Foreword,” in NGOs, the UN, & Global Governance, eds. Thomas G. Weiss & Leon Gordenker (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 7.

(IGOs) are both feasible and desirable. In turn, analysis of actual and potential UN-NGO collaboration uncovers a pivotal assertion: *cooperative efforts, by fostering a better division of labor, are essential to the evolution of enhanced global governance.*

Initial research examining the role of NGOs in international politics emerged around the 1970s, when studies first began to advance beyond a state-centric approach to transnational politics. This work subjected NGOs and their activities to rigorous theoretical and quantitative investigation.² For instance, attempts were made to categorize and classify NGOs; to collect statistical information on factors such as NGO membership, expenditure, and activities; and, to devise approaches and theoretical frameworks to the study of NGOs in the global arena.³ In turn, this early research was instrumental in both liberating the study of world politics from a state-centric focus, and nudging NGO activities farther into the spotlight of political concern.

It was not until much later, however, that the significance of UN-NGO partnerships was widely observed. Because the strictures of the Cold War restricted UN actions in many spheres, the UN did not commonly require the involvement of NGOs in areas of international concern. It was considered taboo

² See also, Robert Angell, Peace on the March: Transnational Participation (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1969); Richard Mansbach, Yale H. Ferguson, & Donald E. Lampert, The Web of World Politics: Non-State Actors in the Global System (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976); and, Robert Keohane & Joseph Nye, Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition (Boston: Little, Brown, 1997).

³ Pei-heng Chiang, Non-Governmental Organizations at the United Nations (New York: Praeger, 1981), 11.

for the UN to provide humanitarian assistance, for example, since such aid was commensurate to a violation of sovereignty.⁴ Moreover, as researcher, Antonio Donini explains, “UN assistance was being organized from the government side, and it reached mainly, if not exclusively, government-held territory.”⁵ Thus, meaningful coordination between NGOs and the UN only began to develop after the Cold War, when an expanding global agenda and a wider range of actors appeared.

Since then, a rapid proliferation of empirical research regarding the activities and exchanges among NGOs and IGOs has emerged. Paul Diehl, for example, presents five studies which establish the importance of NGOs in a number of UN issue areas of social and humanitarian concern.⁶ Findings show that frequently, NGOs not only hold additional expertise or legitimacy in this field, but also, sometimes operate with fewer political constraints than member-state organizations. As a result of such comparative strength, NGOs often play a prominent, and even primary, role in activities such as human rights, hunger, humanitarian emergencies, environmental protection, and the status of women.⁷

⁴ Antonio Donini, “The Bureaucracy and the Free Spirits,” in NGOs, the UN, & Global Governance, eds. Thomas G. Weiss & Leon Gordenker (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 93.

⁵ Donini, 93.

⁶ Paul F. Diehl, ed., The Politics of Global Governance: International Organizations in an Interdependent World (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1997).

⁷ See also David Korten, Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda (West Harford, CN: Kumarian Press, 1990); John Clark, Democratizing Development: The Role of Voluntary Organizations (Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1991); John Farrington & Anthony Bebbington, eds., Reluctant Partners? Non-Governmental Organizations, the State and Sustainable Agricultural Development (London: Routledge, 1993); Julie Fisher, The Road from Rio: Sustainable Development

Examples of NGO proficiency include their role in drawing attention to gross violations of human rights, particularly when they occur in one of the Security Council's "Permanent Five" member states; the delivery of emergency humanitarian aid in areas where one or more parties to a conflict will not permit a UN presence; and, the ability of NGOs to bring governments and insurgencies together in the same location to explore or even achieve conflict resolution.⁸ Evidence shows, in other words, that as issues of low politics rise onto the international agenda, the stage is set for the UN and NGOs to address many key problems in complementary ways.

Subsequent research takes such findings one step further, however, by showing that effective UN-NGO cooperation is not only possible, but that it is also increasingly necessary.⁹ Thomas G. Weiss & Leon Gordenker present a substantial collection of case studies demonstrating this growing need for UN-NGO

and the Non-Governmental Movement in the Third World (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993); Jon Bennett, Meeting Needs: NGO Coordination in Practice (London: Earthscan Publications, 1995); Julie Fisher, Non-Governments: NGOs and the Political Development of the Third World (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1998); and, William Korey, NGOs and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Curious Grapevine (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

⁸ CONGO (1999). Comments by the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations on the Report of the Secretary-General "Arrangements and Practices for the Interaction of Non-Governmental Organizations in All Activities of the United Nations System" (A/53/170). [Online]. Available: <http://www.conferenceofngos.org/ngopart/a5317001.htm> [2000, July 31].

⁹ See also Leon Gordenker & Thomas G. Weiss, "Devolving Responsibilities: A Framework for Analysing NGOs and Services," Third World Quarterly 18, no. 3 (1997): 421-442; Ian Smillie, "NGOs and Development Assistance: A Change in Mind-Set?," Third World Quarterly 18, no. 3 (1997): 563-578; Sheila Jasanoff, "NGOs and the Environment: From Knowledge to Action," Third World Quarterly 18, no. 3 (1997): 579-594; Edwin M. Smith & Thomas, G. Weiss, "UN Task-Sharing: Towards or Away From Global Governance?," Third World Quarterly 18, no. 3 (1997): 595-619; and, Peter Willets, ed., The Conscience of the World (London: Hurst & Co., 1996).

interaction in the contemporary international sphere.¹⁰ Evidence shows that with the rise of low politics onto the international agenda, many issues simply cannot be addressed through intergovernmental organizations alone. Now, as Weiss & Gordenker point out: “NGOs are a strong presence at every contact point for transnational governance.”¹¹ Whether as executing agencies for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), providers of material goods in humanitarian emergencies, or actors involved in furthering human and women’s rights, a growing list of demands now clearly requires the strength of collaboration.¹²

In response to this need, it seems that a whole new awareness regarding UN-NGO partnership is emerging. It is especially significant that in a recent volume examining the future of the UN system, *all* twelve studies advocate for the widened participation of NGOs.¹³ Examples of recommendations span a wide array of global issues, from the need for humanitarian NGOs in emergency aid and reconstruction, to the involvement of NGOs in economic policy-making and implementation. It is also of particular significance that the Commission on Global Governance – whose members are almost all former government officials

¹⁰ Thomas G. Weiss & Leon Gordenker, eds., NGOs, the UN, & Global Governance (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996).

¹¹ Weiss & Gordenker, 212.

¹² Peter Willets strongly reinforces this finding through a comprehensive survey showing that the UN now depends on NGOs for “agenda-setting, policy-making and implementation of policy” across the whole range of UN activities. [See Willets, 1.]

¹³ Chadwick F. Alger, ed., The Future of the UN System: Potential for the 21st Century (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

or international civil servants¹⁴ – boldly conclude that NGOs “bring expertise, commitment and grassroots perceptions that should be mobilized in the interests of better governance.”¹⁵ *Research is increasingly recognizing, in other words, that an alternative approach to better global governance is required, and that UN-NGO cooperation is integral to this task.*

Accordingly, a striking array of UN documents reveals that the UN itself is asserting the need for this new cooperative vision. The very cornerstone of Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s reform strategy, which attempts to meet new global demands through sweeping structural change, is to unite government, civil society and IGOs to work in common cause.¹⁶ As the UN responds to a changing international environment, then, it seems that NGOs are more welcome partners than ever before.

A wide array of recent reports and speeches of the Secretary-General affirm this view by applauding and encouraging the contribution of NGOs in enlarging international cooperation, and in spurring the UN system toward strengthened global governance.¹⁷ As Annan (1998) states:

¹⁴ Weiss & Gordenker, 18.

¹⁵ The Commission on Global Governance, Our Global Neighborhood (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 254.

¹⁶ United Nations, Secretary-General Sets Course for Long-Awaited UN Revitalization (1998) [Online]. Available: <http://www.un.org/reform/focus.htm> [2000, July 31].

¹⁷ See for example, United Nations, Secretary-General’s Address to the 51st Annual DPI-NGO Conference (1998) [Online]. Available: http://www.un.org/partners/civil_society/sgdpingo.htm [1999, May 5]; United Nations, Arrangements and Practices for the Interaction of Non-Governmental Organizations in All Activities of the United Nations System. Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/170), 53rd Session, (10 July, 1998): par. 2 [Online]. Available: http://www.un.org/partners/civil_society/

When I took up the position of Secretary General and embarked on a quiet revolution to reform the UN, enhanced cooperation with NGOs formed a crucial theme in my proposals. This stemmed from a recognition that our common work will be more successful if it is supported by all concerned actors of the international community.¹⁸

A multitude of additional UN documents echo this perspective, each outlining the increasing importance of NGOs in national and international affairs, and declaring the need for the UN to integrate the collaboration of the NGO community.¹⁹ As Deputy Secretary-General, Louise Frechette, affirms: “We have entered an era of ever greater partnership, and...considerable, even limitless, space for effective NGO action.”²⁰

Concordant with recent empirical research, then, the importance of cultivating partnerships with NGOs has become a crucial theme in UN reform. Because a changing international environment has forced the UN system to respond to current global challenges in new and creative ways, a cooperative vision has emerged which acknowledges the need for global actors to achieve higher levels

document/a_53_170.htm [2000, July 31]; United Nations, Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform. Report of the Secretary General (A/51/950) (1997) [Online]. Available: <http://www.un.org/Docs/SG/quotable/a51950.htm> [2000, July 31]; and, United Nations, The Millennium Report: Executive Summary (2000) [Online]. Available: <http://www.un.org/millennium/sg/report/kev.htm> [2000, July 31].

¹⁸ United Nations, Statement of the Secretary-General to Parlatino (1998) [Online]. Available: http://www.un.org/partners/civil_society/brazil.htm [1999, May 5].

¹⁹ See for example, United Nations, The Bulletin on Reform (2): NGOs Asked to Provide Input (1997) [Online]. Available: <http://www.un.org/reform/story.htm#ngo> [2000, July 31]; and, Global Policy Forum, The Role of NGOs: A Selection of Speeches (1999) [Online]. Available: www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/info/speeches.htm [2000, July 31].

²⁰ United Nations, On 50th Anniversary of Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations, Deputy Secretary-General Says NGOs Serve as Global Conscience (Press Release DSG/SM/38) (1998) [Online]. Available: <http://www.un.org/MoreInfo/ngolink/dsg38.htm> [2000, July 31].

of interaction in areas of common concern. In turn, given an expansion of global problems and a parallel growth in the number of actors involved in them, NGOs are increasingly viewed as unequivocal partners in a reformed UN system – partners who, by contributing to a better division of labor, are crucial in the creation of a more vital and relevant global force.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Growing acceptance for UN-NGO partnership underscores the need to proceed from a theoretical approach of international relations based on cooperation and partnership. The theory of functionalism, which is a variant of liberal pluralism, offers such a conceptual model by both emphasizing the prospects for peace and progress, and exploring the mechanisms by which cooperation and change might unfold.²¹ Because functionalism falls short of a comprehensive model of UN-NGO cooperation, however, the advantages of a more pragmatic approach are also explored.

2.2.1 Functionalism

The basic tenets of **functionalism** are rooted in the conviction that world governance is best achieved through the development of international economic and social cooperation. Proponents intimate that successful mastering of these non-political tasks – such as health, pollution, and poverty – will then encourage *habits of collaboration*, which will eventually spill over into other areas, dissipate

²¹ Charles W. Kegley & Eugene R. Wittkopf, World Politics: Trend and Transformation, Fifth Edition (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 31.

political and security problems, and contribute to an incremental progression toward global integration. In effect, if states can organize to perform non-political functions, they will move gradually toward structural changes that permit elevated cooperation, and even union.²²

The theory of functionalism has been formulated most elaborately and persuasively by David Mitrany. For him, “the problem of our time is not how to keep the nations peacefully apart but how to bring them actively together.”²³ Rather than building a peace strategy around points of national conflict, then, Mitrany seeks international security through collaboration in areas of economic and social concern.²⁴ The result is a horizontal approach to world governance that shifts attention away from vertical divisions of political rivalry and state sovereignty, and toward various strata of common interest.

Mitrany also believes that the mutual advantages of cooperation among technical experts would lead to successive layers of functional collaboration. As his central thesis contends, the method of functionalism would “overlay political divisions with a spreading web of international activities and agencies, in which and through which the interests and life of all the nations would be gradually integrated.”²⁵ Successful cooperation in technical areas would cultivate *habits of*

²² Cathal J. Nolan, The Longman Guide to World Affairs (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1995), 132.

²³ David Mitrany, A Working Peace System (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1946), 7.

²⁴ Inis Claude, Swords Into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization (New York: Random House, 1964), 345.

²⁵ Mitrany, 14.

cooperation, which would eventually ramify outward into other areas of universal concern. Interrelated and interacting institutions would then focus in the short-term on specific purposes and problems, but with a long-term vision to a more peaceful and orderly world.²⁶

It follows that both the UN and NGOs have had a clear functionalist bias from the very beginning; that is, both are guided by the notion that world order can be advanced if global activities are organized around economic and social needs, such as poverty, illiteracy, disease, and social injustice.²⁷ In fact, over three-fourths of the UN budget is allotted to these functional activities, with the bulk of specialized agencies engaged in such work in almost every country of the world.²⁸ As Robert W. Gregg argues:

According to virtually all indices of size and scope, if not of influence and importance, international organization is preponderantly international economic, social and technical organization. It is not inconceivable that the quantitatively larger sector of international organization may prove to be the qualitatively more significant as well.²⁹

Given that NGOs also play a prominent and growing role in such functional areas, it seems that both the UN and NGOs represent a full-fledged experiment in the employment of functional theory. As Inis Claude waggishly asserts, “the

²⁶ Nolan, 132.

²⁷ See for example Claude, 357; Kegley & Wittkopf, 540; and, Chiang, 12.

²⁸ A. Leroy Bennet, International Organizations: Principles and Issues (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 288.

²⁹ Robert W. Gregg, “UN Economic, Social and Technical Activities,” in The United Nations: Past, Present, and Future, ed. James Barros (New York: Free Press, 1972), 219.

twentieth century has seen the transfer of functionalism from the cookbooks and experimental kitchens to the serving tables of international organization.”³⁰

And, against a contemporary backdrop of global transition, the theory of functionalism is especially noteworthy. As interdependence unleashes an expanding list of challenges and a wider range of actors, functionalism is responsive to the idea that unilateral national action is inadequate in solving the challenges of the modern world. As Inis Claude explains:

More and more, the problems which are crucial to the fitness of human society for sustaining a peaceful regime are becoming bigger in scope than national states. Hence, the mission of functionalism is to make peace possible by organizing particular layers of human social life in accordance with their particular requirements, breaking down the artificialities of the zoning arrangement associated with the principle of sovereignty.³¹

In other words, functionalists contend that solutions to peace do not necessarily lie within state borders, but instead, vary with the nature of the problem itself. It is therefore in a state’s self-interest to *share sovereignty* through cooperative endeavors, and to transfer loyalties to the international community in exchange for mutual rewards.

Hence, it is of particular significance that recent literature has identified hints of an ardent yearning for, and movement toward, international cooperation. The declared objective of the Commission on Global Governance aims “to achieve

³⁰ Claude, 356.

³¹ Claude, 348.

higher levels of cooperation in areas of common concern.”³² Similarly, the UN asserts that cooperative relationships, by fostering a better division of labor, are essential to a vital and relevant global force. This current trend toward a cooperative vision reflects the need for a new concept of global governance that can properly tackle a growing list of transnational challenges and an ever burgeoning patchwork of global actors. As a functionalist would say, *a functional commonwealth appears attractive against confusion and disarray*.³³ Accordingly, global change is providing an impetus for global actors to interact, and even connect, in more creative ways.

Yet in terms of the current trend toward UN-NGO cooperation, the theory of functionalism is not without its weaknesses. For example, it has been argued that functionalists underestimate the importance of politics as a barrier to cooperative endeavor. While functionalists contend that the rewards of technical collaboration will dissolve political loyalties, the reality is that frequently, such cooperation is more strongly influenced *by* politics than the other way around.³⁴ For instance, given the control nations exert over resources, IGOs, and even NGOs, often cannot ignore the preferences of governments without jeopardizing their own relevancy.³⁵ The U.S. withdrawal from the United Nations Educational, Scientific

³² The Commission on Global Governance, 1.

³³ Chiang, 271.

³⁴ Kegley & Wittkopf, 540.

³⁵ Paul F. Diehl, ed., The Politics of Global Governance: International Organizations in an Interdependent World (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 70.

and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) because of their politicized nature exemplifies this reality. *While growing interdependence is eroding traditional notions of state sovereignty, in other words, habits of transnational cooperation are still painfully dependent upon the primacy of politics.*

Functionalism has also been criticized for attempting to separate political and non-political tasks. Analysts note that such a distinction is inappropriate, given that virtually all global problems now cut across political, environmental, economic, and social areas of concern. Contemporary views of strategic matters, which focus on a widened concept of *shared human security*, exemplify this reality. It is not a coincidence that American policy makers are now examining environmental phenomena in order to predict war.³⁶ Nor is it unusual that one of Annan's first acts as Secretary-General was to insist that human rights concerns cut across the full range of UN activities.³⁷ Put simply, one can no longer discuss peace-keeping without underscoring the importance of education, economic adjustment without disarmament, or global security without women's equal rights. Instead, substantive global change has begun to blur the distinction between the

³⁶ S. Greenhouse, "The Greening of U.S. Diplomacy: Focus on Ecology," New York Times, 9 October 1995, A6.

³⁷ United Nations, Secretary-General Sets Course for Long-Awaited UN Revitalization (1998) [Online]. Available: <http://www.un.org/reform/focus.htm> [2000, July 31].

so-called *high politics* of diplomacy and security, and emerging *low politics* of economic, social and environmental concern.³⁸

By divorcing the concepts of welfare and power, however, functionalists naively assume that nations will surrender their national interests in order to consider isolated areas of mutual concern. Yet in reality, functional tasks touch on some of the most political areas of a nation's existence. As the former leader of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, said: "Unless I can provide for the education of our young people, my people will turn out my government and me."³⁹ It follows that if economic and social cooperation becomes as crucial to state welfare as the functionalists argue, states will not step aside with ease.⁴⁰ *An artificial separation between technical and political considerations, or social connections and power relations, is simply not feasible in the modern world.*

It is the need to cope with this *interdependence of issues* which has inspired subsequent analytical approaches to global cooperation. Neofunctionalists attempt to remedy functional theory by including states, international organizations and non-state actors in their theories of global integration and complex interdependence.⁴¹ Yet many scholars suggest that this approach still does not live

³⁸ Timothy M. Shaw, "Beyond Any New World Order: The South in the 21st Century," Third World Quarterly 15, no. 1 (1994a): 141.

³⁹ Cited in Kenneth W. Thompson, Ethics, Functionalism, and Power in International Politics: The Crisis in Values (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 69.

⁴⁰ Kegley & Wittkopf, 540.

⁴¹ Sandra J. MacLean, NGO Partnerships and Sustainable Democratic Development with Lessons from a Canadian-Zimbabwean Case Study, Ph.D. diss., Dalhousie University, 1997 (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1998), 29.

up to the demands of contemporary global change. According to Ernst Haas, [neofunctionalism's] sense of orderly process and... 'disjointed incrementalism' ...is inadequate in light of the 'turbulent field' of international relations, with its numerous global issues in the late twentieth century."⁴² A consequent yearning for a more comprehensive theory which embraces the complexity, interdependence and dynamism of the contemporary world is therefore at hand.

2.2.2 Beyond Functionalism

Indeed, given these theoretical shortcomings, creative ideas that go beyond the theory of functionalism are needed to guide the future understanding of UN-NGO partnership. It is useful to balance a functionalist vision with a more pragmatic approach, then, in order to account more directly for contemporary political realities.

From this perspective, the present study marks a distinction between theory and praxis by balancing a functionalist theoretical approach with a practical and qualitative understanding of UN-NGO relations. This aim is achieved by directly assessing the nature of the relationship between UN agencies and women's NGOs in Zimbabwe in order to discern the quality of contact between, and specific roles and functions of, these global actors. Put another way, this study asks two main questions: *How are UN-NGO relationships working?* and *How could they be improved?* In doing so, this analytical approach serves as a prism which not only highlights the emerging significance of UN-NGO cooperation in a specific

⁴² Cited in MacLean, 30.

context, but also the form such partnerships might take if they are to respond best to modern demands.

This pragmatic approach is a crucial step in the study of UN-NGO interaction for one major reason: although previous research reveals that cooperative efforts are both feasible and desirable, useful statistical data and even basic descriptive information about the actual UN-NGO phenomenon are still in their infancy.⁴³ It is therefore hoped that the practical utility of a pragmatic and qualitative inquiry will provide information and insights in this direction. At the very least, such information will then contribute to a reconsideration of functionalism as a comprehensive model for understanding such linkages, and at best, will encourage further theory-building and policy recommendations suitable to contemporary demands.

Against a contemporary backdrop of rapid and profound global change, each of these tasks is an admittedly hazardous endeavor. Yet given that the UN Secretary-General himself has deemed such partnerships to be “the new diplomacy” of the modern world,⁴⁴ it is clear that a greater theoretical and practical understanding of UN-NGO cooperation is now of fundamental importance. This study is a modest response to that challenge.

⁴³ Thomas G. Weiss & Leon Gordenker, “NGO Participation in the International Policy Process,” in NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance, eds. Thomas G. Weiss & Leon Gordenker (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995), 221.

⁴⁴ United Nations, The United Nations: Partners in Civil Society (1999) [Online]. Available: http://www.un.org/partners/civil_society/csngo.htm [2000, July 31].

CHAPTER 3

UN-NGO Relationships in the International System

This chapter takes a closer look at the evolution of the NGO phenomenon against the backdrop of an increasingly complex and interrelated world. It begins by proposing a definition of NGOs that best captures their shared features, as well as their diversity. The chapter then traces the rise of NGOs onto the international landscape by: (1) exploring their rapid proliferation; (2) defining their consequent expansion within the UN system; and, (3) highlighting their considerable impact at international conferences. Finally, the development of the global women's movement is chosen as an ideal case upon which to proceed, with special emphasis dedicated to the importance of incorporating microlevel analysis into a global understanding of UN-NGO partnership.

3.1 Defining NGOs

Over the last two decades, NGOs have forged an increasingly important position on the international stage. Private, nongovernmental groups such as Amnesty International, the Red Cross and Greenpeace have pervaded traditional barriers of invisibility to emerge as icons of activism worldwide.¹ And, as exemplified by their recent contributions in banning landmines, providing relief assistance in Kosovo, and creating an International Criminal Court, NGO influence now touches virtually all issues before the UN. It therefore seems both a

¹ Peter Willets, ed., The Conscience of the World (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1996), 1.

timely and fruitful endeavor to understand exactly *what NGOs are* and *where they fit* into the operations of the UN system.

As P. J. Simmons warns, however, “defining NGOs is not an exercise for the intellectually squeamish.”² This is because NGOs are a diverse group of organizations which do not readily conform to a simple taxonomy. As a general definition, an NGO is described as:

any social organization or socio-economic formation of a non-profit nature, which is not legally or organizationally part of the official structure of the state.³

Yet the term has also been applied loosely to a complex array of actors, from tiny, specialized grassroots coalitions to giant multinational organizations; from fiercely independent NGOs to creatures of corrupt governments; and, from organizations dealing with issues like human rights and the environment to those who represent chemical industries, religious sects and even terrorist groups! It follows that the NGO phenomenon, in all its richness and diversity, is open to much analytical confusion and debate.

The difficulty begins with the very term *nongovernmental organization*, which is plagued by a multitude of alternative usages. These include: independent sector, volunteer sector, civic society, grassroots organizations, community

² P. J. Simmons, “Learning to Live with NGOs,” *Foreign Policy* (fall 1998): 1 [Online]. Available: www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/issues/simmons.htm [2000, July 31].

³ Partnership Africa Canada, *Partnership: Matching rhetoric to reality. An NGO Discussion Paper*. (Ottawa: PAC, 1989), 4, cited in Sandra J. MacLean, *NGO Partnership and Sustainable Democratic Development with Lessons from a Canadian-Zimbabwean Case Study*, Ph.D. diss., Dalhousie University, 1997 (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1998), 6-7.

organizations, third sector organizations, humanitarian organizations, nonprofit bodies, and nonstate actors.⁴ Some of these labels are used interchangeably, while others refer to highly specialized varieties. Either way, the result is what one analyst calls “an alphabet soup” of terms.⁵ **Table 3.1**, which outlines a sea of acronyms used for NGOs and related organizations, further exemplifies this heterogeneity, making it clear that *any attempt to delimit the NGO phenomenon is constrained by its complexity*. As Sandra J. MacLean explains, the recent and rapidly expanding prominence of NGOs evades “convenient and appropriate typologies by which NGOs...can be catalogued and compared.”⁶ Multifarious terminology is a reflection of the diverse NGO universe, then, and a source of confusion among even the most ardent scholars.⁷

Further difficulties arise from attempts to classify NGOs based on their strict independence from the state. One important example is the *International Red Cross*, which is recognized by the UN as a leading NGO, yet operates as both an

⁴ Leon Gordenker & Thomas G Weiss, “Pluralising Global Governance: Analytical Approaches and Dimensions,” *Third World Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1995): 358.

⁵ Riva Krut, *Globalization and Civil Society: NGO Influence in International Decision-Making* (Geneva: UNRISD, 1997), 8.

⁶ MacLean, 6.

⁷ It should be noted that the term NGO can also have culture-specific meanings. For example, in Western Europe, it generally refers to nonprofit organizations who operate internationally, while in the Third World, NGO usually means “organizations involved in development, broadly defined”. [Julie Fisher, *Non-Governments: NGOs and the Political Development of the Third World* (West Hartford: Kumarian Press, 1998), 5.]

Table 3.1 - NGOs and Related Organizations

ANGOs	Advocacy NGOs
BINGOs	Business and Industry NGOs
CBOs	Community-based organizations
CONGO	Congress of NGOs – a group of NGOs with consultative status with ECOSOC
CSOs	Civil Society NGOs
DINGOs	Australian NGOs
DONGOs	Donor-organized NGOs
ECOs	Ecological citizens organizations or Environmental community organizations
ENGOs	Environmental NGOs
GONGOs	Government-organized NGOs
GRINGOs	Government-run NGOs
GROs	Grassroots organizations
GRSOs	Grassroots support organizations that incite and support GROs
GSCO	Global social change organizations
INGOs	Individual-based or International NGOs
NNGOs	Northern NGOs or National NGOs
ONGOs	Operational NGOs
PINGOs	Public Interest NGOs
POs	Private organizations or Peoples' organizations
PVOs	Private voluntary organizations
QUINGOs	Quasi-government NGOs
SHOs	Self-help organizations
SHPOs	Self-help support organizations
SMOs	Social movement organizations
SNGOs	Southern NGOs

Source: Riva Krut, *Globalization and Civil Society: NGO Influence in International Decision-Making* (Geneva: UNRISD, 1997), 9.

NGO and government auxiliary.⁸ Similarly, the *World Conservation Union* holds international NGO status, but allows the participation of government officials alongside NGO members.⁹ Most scholars resolve this contradiction in three main ways: (1) by classifying such NGOs as *hybrids* that coexist with so-called pure NGOs along a continuum; (2) by emphasizing their extreme infrequency compared to those without government membership; and (3) by recognizing the importance of hybrids within their own field of activity.¹⁰ Still, such NGOs illustrate the difficulty in separating government relations from the relations of NGOs, and thus, further reveal the complexity of the NGO phenomenon.¹¹

A final source of confusion in defining NGOs involves their **size**. At the highest level of complexity stand the **umbrella organizations**, which are composed of international NGOs connected around specific global concerns. *WomensNet*, which mobilizes a vast global network of organizations around gender issues, is one example.¹² The term NGO also refers to **trans- or international organizations**, which range from giant Northern-based groups such

⁸ Cyril Ritchie, "Coordinate? Cooperate? Harmonise? NGO Policy and Operational Coalitions," *Third World Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1995): 514.

⁹ Peter Willets, ed., *The Conscience of the World* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1996), 7.

¹⁰ Willets, 7.

¹¹ The question of independence also arises when NGOs accept resources from governments, whether cash or supplies, in order to support their operational activities. While this issue is beyond the scope of the present study, it should be noted that the UN accepts such arrangements provided that government contributions are openly declared. [See Willets, 6.] As a result, some suggest that, rather than NGO, the term *Extra-Governmental Organization* (EGO) may be more appropriate.

¹² Further information about *WomensNet* can be found on their website at: www.igc.org/igc/wn

as *OXFAM* and *Amnesty International*, to smaller, specialized organizations based in a single country.¹³ Next, are the **nationally-based NGOs** that support activities within their own countries, but for the benefit of those outside their membership.¹⁴ And finally, the term includes **tiny indigenous groups** established to meet their own needs.¹⁵ Given such diversity, generalizations about the NGO universe is extremely difficult – not only because of their varied structures, but also, because size conditions their outreach, effectiveness, professionalism and image,¹⁶ that is, *size determines how NGOs both operate and relate with others*, and thus, further adds to the eclecticism – and consequent confusion – of the NGO landscape.

Of course, while attention to this diversity can be confusing, an alternative danger is desperate oversimplification. Since a coherent typology of NGOs cannot be formulated, many analysts tend to behave somewhat like *butterfly catchers* who impose vague definitions in an attempt to capture a broad array of participants.¹⁷ The danger is that, while a reductionist approach avoids much confusion, the immense richness of the NGO universe is also lost. As Cyril Ritchie states:

Since nongovernmental organizations deal with the entire spectrum of human values, human aspirations, human needs and human antagonisms, it is natural that NGO coalitions similarly reflect the

¹³ MacLean, NGO Partnership, 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Ritchie, 514.

¹⁷ Anthony Judge, "NGOs and Civil Society: Some Realities and Distortions," Transnational Associations 47 (may/june 1995): 175.

human condition through their complexities and defy simple definitions.¹⁸

It is the very complexity and dynamism of our contemporary international system, in other words, that has led to the evolution of such an unruly lot. Consequently, it seems prudent to temper general definitions of NGOs with a deeper understanding of the particular organizations under examination.

A number of studies further elucidate the importance of this task. Peter Willets reveals the significance of NGO diversity by showing that while most are involved in agenda-setting, policy-making and implementation, the balance between these functions varies widely; on women's rights, NGOs generally focus efforts on agenda-setting, while NGOs like *Save the Children* tend to emphasize policy implementation.¹⁹ Similarly, a number of factors influence how NGOs relate with others. As Sandra J. MacLean reveals, collaborative and adversarial interconnections between NGOs and state or global power structures vary "depending on their ideological assumptions, strategic considerations and the political space available for their actions."²⁰ Thus, a clear understanding of NGOs depends not only on identification of their common features, but also, their particular goals, structure and context.

¹⁸ Ritchie, 513.

¹⁹ Willets, 11.

²⁰ MacLean, 87.

The present study proceeds from this perspective. First, the following general definition is used in order to list concisely an NGO's most commonly accepted features.

They are **formal** organizations that are intended to continue in existence; they are thus not *ad hoc* entities. They are or aspire to be **self-governing** on the basis of their own constitutional arrangements. They are **private** in that they are separate from governments and have no ability to direct societies or to require support from them. (And), they are **not in the business of making or distributing profits** (emphasis added).²¹

While it is recognized that not every organization claiming NGO status fits this definition of a *formal, self-governing, private, and non-profit organization* exactly, it does serve as a satisfactory guide for the purposes of this study.²² Efforts are then made to address the specific goals, structure and context of the NGOs under examination by focusing on one specific group: small, nationally-based women's human rights organizations in Zimbabwe.

In addition, careful attention is dedicated to terminology. The term *NGO* will be used over other labels simply because of its common currency, and because it is the term employed in article 71 of the UN Charter.²³ To avoid confusion, the term *nonstate actor* will cast the net more broadly to include NGOs, as well as other actors, such as profit-making corporations and banks, criminal elements,

²¹ Leon Gordenker & Thomas G Weiss, "Pluralising Global Governance: Analytical Approaches and Dimensions," *Third World Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1995): 360.

²² This definition also approximates the standard definitions used by most IGOs [Willets, 3].

²³ Thomas G. Weiss & Leon Gordenker, eds., *NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 18.

insurgents, churches, transnational political parties and mass communication media.²⁴ In addition, the term *NGO* will refer to the general phenomenon of nongovernmental entities, national and international, unless otherwise specified, with *national NGOs* operating in a single country, and *international NGOs* (INGOs) operating in multiple countries.

3.2 Proliferation of NGOs

While NGO definitions escape universal consensus, there is no question that their numbers, influence and reach have risen to unprecedented levels.²⁵ This explosion is the product of immense global change – namely, the simultaneous decline in state authority, increased concern for issues of low politics, and the emergence of new communication technologies – which has galvanized people’s capacity to organize themselves and to exert their influence worldwide.

The rapid proliferation of NGOs can be discerned from a myriad of sources. Estimates by the *Union of International Associations (UIA)* show that conventional INGOs have risen from approximately 2,000 in the 1970s, to 5,400 in 1996.²⁶ In addition, from the 41 NGOs granted consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1948, and 377 in 1968, membership

²⁴ Gordenker & Weiss, 359.

²⁵ Simmons, 2.

²⁶ Union of International Associations (UIA), *Yearbook of International Organizations. 1996/1997* [Online]. Available: <http://www.uia.org/uiastats/stybv296.htm> [2000, July 31]. The UIA defines *conventional* NGOs as autonomous, non-profit organizations who have members in at least 3 countries and do not have their activities or decision-making structured in favor of any particular country.

has now jumped to over 1,500.²⁷ Also striking is the fact that between 1987 and 1996, 54,000 new associations were established in France alone, and in Italy, more than 40 percent of all associations were set up in the last 15 years.²⁸ Add to this list, the vast proliferation of nongovernmental entities which have emerged in Eastern Europe since the end of communism,²⁹ as well as the growing number of organizations now established in the developing world,³⁰ and a dramatic picture begins to unfold.

Further illustration of NGO growth can be discerned from their expanding and quantifiable presence in areas of global concern. In terms of development strategies, for example, developed-country NGO programmes doubled in real size from 1975 to 1985, compared to a 39 percent increase in Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) over the same period;³¹ NGOs in Africa now manage nearly 3.5 billion in external aid, compared to \$1 billion in 1990;³² and, with an average of 10

²⁷ United Nations, Arrangements and Practices for the Interaction of Non-Governmental Organizations in All Activities of the United Nations System. Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/170), 53rd Session, (10 July 1998): par. 2 [Online]. Available: http://www.un.org/partners/civil_society/document/a_53_170.htm [2000, July 31].

²⁸ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "Foreward," in NGOs, the UN, & Global Governance, eds. Thomas G. Weiss & Leon Gordenker (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 7.

²⁹ Andrew E. Rice & Cyril Ritchie, "Relationships Between International Non-Governmental Organisations and the UN," Transnational Associations 47, no. 5 (1995): 255.

³⁰ Willets, 10.

³¹ United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), NGOs: Partners in Social Development (DPI/1523/SOC/CON) (New York: DPI, January 1995), 1.

³² Sam Chege, "Donors Shift More Aid to NGOs," in Africa Recovery, UN Department of Public Information (June 1999): 1 [Online]. Available: www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/issues/chege.htm [2000, July 31].

percent of total ODA allocated to NGO-run programmes, bilateral donors are now channeling more resources through NGOs than through the entire UN system!³³

Portrayed by numbers alone, then, is a universal movement toward greater citizen action. The recent proliferation of NGOs has even led some to label the last decade a *global associational revolution*, and to deem NGOs a hallmark of our contemporary international environment.³⁴ At the very least, it can be said that increasing numbers of NGOs have injected unexpected voices into a global discourse once reserved for representatives of states.³⁵ It seems increasingly obvious, however, that through new channels of participation, NGOs have also developed into a distinct, essential and unavoidable sector of public life worldwide.

3.3 Defining the UN-NGO Relationship

NGOs have been involved in the activities of the UN since its inception in 1945. In fact, the final design of the UN Charter is due in large part to the efforts of NGOs. Perhaps the greatest accomplishment in this respect is the inclusion of Article 71 of the Charter, which was the first of its kind to provide a formal consultative relationship between NGOs and the intergovernmental process. As Article 71 reads:

³³ United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), NGOs: Partners in Social Development (DPI/1523/SOC/CON) (New York: DPI, January 1995), 2.

³⁴ United Nations, Arrangements and Practices, par. 2-3.

³⁵ Thomas G. Weiss & Leon Gordenker, eds., NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 17.

The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and, where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned.

This provision now serves as the core legal mandate for all formal relations between the UN and NGOs.

Arrangements for consultation are governed by ECOSOC resolution 1996/31.³⁶

This mechanism establishes three categories of status for NGOs, including: (1) General **consultative status**, comprising large international NGOs whose area of work covers most of the issues on the Council's agenda; (2) Special **consultative status**, including NGOs with special competence in a few fields of the Council's activity; and, (3) Inclusion **on the Roster** for NGOs whose competence allows them to make solicited contributions to the work of the UN, or who are already in consultative status with other UN bodies.³⁷

The ensuing rights and privileges accorded to these NGOs enable them to make contributions to the work of the UN by serving as technical experts, advisors and consultants. In concrete terms, this means that NGOs may attend public meetings of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, submit written statements relevant to the Council's agenda, and consult with the UN Secretariat on matters of mutual

³⁶ ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 is an amendment to resolution 1296, which governed consultation rules and procedures from 1968 to 1996. The changes are meant to address the evolution of the UN-NGO relationship.

³⁷ As of 31 July 1997, 88 organisations were in general consultative status, 602 were in special consultative status, and 666 were on the Roster. [United Nations, Arrangements and Practices, par. 5.]

concern.³⁸ Additionally, NGOs with general status may contribute items to provisional agendas, and those with general and special status may submit oral interventions at certain meetings.³⁹

While consultative status with ECOSOC remains at the core of formal UN-NGO relations, the vast proliferation of NGOs has since led most UN funds, agencies and programmes to provide additional avenues of participation. Most of these new mechanisms mirror that of ECOSOC by granting formal status for consultation, and aiming to uphold collaborative connections around technical and operational matters.⁴⁰ The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for instance, currently grants consultative status to approximately 190 international development organizations who serve as observers at meetings of the Executive Board, and often submit written statements and oral interventions. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provides similar openings, and has even established an *NGO Advisory Committee* to guide the active involvement of NGOs in the agency's work, as well as an *NGO/Civil Society Theme Group* to promote further collaboration.⁴¹

In order to support these mechanisms, in turn, various institutions of the UN have established innovative structures and personnel to facilitate communication

³⁸ Ibid., par. 6.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., par. 15.

⁴¹ For a more comprehensive list of arrangements for the participation of NGOs in the activities of UN agencies, see United Nations, Arrangements and Practices, par. 15-30.

and cooperation. For example, the NGO Section of the Department of Public Information (DPI) disseminates UN information and education materials to the NGO community; the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) educates NGOs about, and encourages their involvement in, UN social and economic activities; and, upon request by the Secretary-General in 1997, most substantive departments of the UN now designate at least one NGO liaison officer to facilitate access and improve communications.⁴²

Also worthy of mention are the *informal* relations that have recently developed within what Antonio Donini calls “the corridors of the UN.”⁴³ For instance, while the UNDP does not have formal accreditation procedures, it does engage in collaborative agreements with individual NGOs in specific areas of concern.⁴⁴ Similarly, although formal arrangements have not been established by the General Assembly, NGOs are beginning to participate actively in the work of the Assembly’s main committees, subsidiary bodies and special sessions.⁴⁵ And, given the contemporary shift toward *shared human security*, the Security Council has begun to depend more heavily on NGOs as vital sources of information,

⁴² *Ibid.*, par. 14.

⁴³ Antonio Donini, “The Bureaucracy and the Free Spirits,” in NGOs, the UN, & Global Governance, eds. Thomas G. Weiss & Leon Gordenker (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 85.

⁴⁴ United Nations, Arrangements and Practices, par. 18.

⁴⁵ For example, panels and consultations of the *Working Group of the General Assembly on Financing for Development* were organized in 1999 to provide NGOs with a framework to interact informally in its overall process. [Global Policy Forum, NGOs and the UN: Comments for the Report of the Secretary General (June 1999): 4 [Online]. Available: www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/docs99/gpfrep.htm#2 [2000, July 31].] The Millennium NGO Forum also plans to make a formal call for the extension of consultative status for NGOs to the General Assembly in September 2000.

informal participants in preventative diplomacy, and service providers in crisis areas.⁴⁶

As a corollary to these advances, new communication technologies have also had an important impact on UN-NGO relations. The Secretariat and other agencies have constructed an astounding constellation of websites that now link NGOs instantly to tantamount UN information and documents.⁴⁷ Additionally, UN listservs and on-line conferences have proven extremely useful in expanding communications across a wider population, and driving NGOs and UN officials further into informal, but valuable, discussions and debates.⁴⁸

It seems clear, in other words, that the nature and degree of NGO access to the UN has evolved markedly in recent years. Beginning with Article 71 of the UN Charter, new openings have gradually enabled NGOs to secure formal and informal roles in the UN system. And, it is through these openings that increasing numbers of NGOs are contributing more actively to the UN's technical and operational affairs, as well as to the functions of governance and decision-making.

⁴⁶ The NGO Working Group on the Security Council, comprised of about 30 NGOs who work actively on Security Council matters, has been meeting with members of the Council since 1997, and expects to hold over 30 sessions with them in 1999. [Global Policy Forum, NGOs and the UN, 3.]

⁴⁷ Global Policy Forum, NGOs and the UN, 4. Examples include: WomenWatch, which is an Internet gateway on the advancement and empowerment of women (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch>), and an ambitious website promoting the 'global compact' between the UN, business and civil society (<http://www.unglobalcompact.org>).

⁴⁸ For example, the **CONGO listserv** offers an important forum for on-line dialogue among UN officials and NGOs regarding UN-NGO collaboration. In addition, from September to December 1999, WomenWatch held the **BEIJING+5 GLOBAL FORUM**, a series of Internet Working Groups allowing government representatives, NGOs, academics, and others to provide input into the Beijing +5 review process.

Affirming the growing importance of NGOs in the operations of the UN system, the Secretary-General himself remarks:

NGOs have introduced additional knowledge and information into the decision-making process; they have raised new issues and concerns which were subsequently addressed by the UN; they have provided expert advice in areas where they were the main actors; and, they have contributed greatly to a broad consensus-building process in many areas which ensured commitment by all actors to a global agenda.⁴⁹

Some analysts even argue that UN politics can no longer be understood without evaluating the role of NGOs in most areas of global concern.

3.4 Global Conferences

Nowhere is this contribution more evident than in the major UN conferences of the 1990s. From Rio to Vienna, Cairo and Beijing, NGOs have served as crucial actors in the global effort to tackle a growing list of modern demands. In turn, whether as advocates, policymakers or lobbyists, it is this participation that has allowed NGOs to secure the necessary prominence, voice and potency that now galvanizes the very evolution of the UN-NGO relationship.

3.4.1 The Rio Conference

The 1992 *Rio Conference on Environment and Development* is considered a watershed for the active and democratic involvement of NGOs in the UN system. Never before had NGOs descended upon an international forum with such astounding breadth, nor had any major international conference been marked by such extensive connections between states, IGOs and civil society.

A major impetus for this shift was the UN's decision to include NGOs without consultative status in conference proceedings. This action enabled a burgeoning list of NGOs that had never before interacted with the UN – whether from North or South, national or international, large or small – to wield an impressively large voice on the world stage.⁵⁰ In turn, this step allowed a diverse array of nongovernmental actors to mobilize themselves into a greater collective force than ever before.⁵¹

This large and vocal NGO presence is denoted by a number of unprecedented successes. In terms of numbers alone, the Global Forum for NGOs, held in parallel with the official Rio Conference, mobilized representatives from around 7,000 organizations – outnumbering governments by about 100 to 1.⁵² These vast numbers then forged NGO alliances, networks and caucuses who played a crucial role in shaping the agenda of the conference, mobilizing participants around the concept of sustainable development, and building the political consensus that made adoption of the Rio declaration possible.⁵³ Even more importantly, the final document of the conference, known as Agenda 21, *fully recognizes these*

⁴⁹ United Nations, Arrangements and Practices, par. 31.

⁵⁰ James A. Paul, NGOs, Civil Society and Global Policy Making (June 1996): 4 [Online]. Available: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/analysis/analysis.htm> [2000, July 31].

⁵¹ Gordenker & Weiss, "Pluralising Global Governance", 363.

⁵² Sheila Jasanoff, "NGOs and the Environment: From Knowledge to Action," Third World Quarterly 18, no. 3 (1997): 579.

⁵³ Donini, 84.

achievements and highlights explicitly the significance of “major groups” in addressing UN concerns.⁵⁴

The Rio Conference therefore stands as a definitive turning point in the evolution of the UN-NGO relationship. Here, not only did NGOs become greater in number, visibility and coordination, but also, they gained credibility as rightful and integral defenders of UN concerns. As one UN report states, NGOs “are no longer seen only as disseminators of information, but as advocates, shapers of policy and indispensable bridges between the general public and the intergovernmental process.”⁵⁵ Consequently, it is now almost inconceivable for the UN to plan any global event without welcoming the active involvement of NGOs.

3.4.2 The Beijing Conference

Three years after Rio, the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing attracted women’s NGOs in record numbers. In fact, with 189 countries represented at the official proceedings and an astounding 35,000 NGO representatives attending the concurrent NGO Forum, the Beijing Conference was the largest in the history of the UN.⁵⁶ The result has enabled NGOs to secure an

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ United Nations, Arrangements and Practices, par. 57.

⁵⁶ United Nations, The Women’s Conference [Online]. Available: <http://www.un.org/geninfo/bp/women.html> [2000, July 31].

unprecedented role in UN forums and the opportunity to achieve strategic gains for women's human rights across the globe.⁵⁷

Momentum for the Beijing Conference grew from a tremendous current of activism that originated in the 1970s, when the global women's movement first began *en force*. From the 1975 First World Conference on Women in Mexico, and proceeding through what was deemed the UN Decade for Women (1975-85), NGOs not only secured a stronger position on the formal intergovernmental agenda, but also, began to tackle their shared concerns as a collective force.⁵⁸ In turn, the explosion of activity that marked subsequent conferences helped to galvanize these linkages into the most intricate transnational networks ever recorded,⁵⁹ serving to heighten the strength and visibility of women's NGOs like never before.

Once the foundation for transnational networks was laid, NGOs concerned with women's issues were able to secure new spaces for political participation on the international stage. In particular, increasing bonds of solidarity granted NGOs the

⁵⁷ It should be noted, however, that NGOs devoted to women's issues have been active in UN affairs since the foundation of the organization. It was at its founding in 1945 that a number of women's activists and organizations working under the Inter-American Commission on the Status of Women had gender equality and non-distinction on the basis of sex included in five articles of the UN Charter. And, once ECOSOC's consultative system for NGOs was established in 1947, ten women's organizations out of 32 NGOs were the first to gain consultative status with the UN. See for example, Jane Connors, "NGOs and the Human Rights of Women at the UN," in *The Conscience of the World*, ed. Peter Willets (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1996), 150-151.

⁵⁸ Martha Alter Chen, "Engendering World Conferences," *Third World Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1995): 479.

⁵⁹ Since the Rio Conference, women's NGOs have convened at a public forum known as the *Women's Caucus*, which has been held by NGOs in conjunction with *all* UN preparatory meetings and major conferences in order to provide a forum to specifically discuss women's issues, and to monitor all amendments and rewrites of draft documents.

collective capacity to move from the initial consciousness-raising efforts of the 1970s, to a second stage in which they actively challenged the very laws governing women's lives.⁶⁰ Such strategic organizing then allowed NGOs a greater role in evoking international legal norms, and even more importantly, in appropriating the leverage necessary "to demand accountability under the law, nationally legitimated and internationally sanctioned."⁶¹ Essentially, as their strength and visibility grew in UN forums, NGOs moved from being *victims of inequality* to *agents of change*.

Nowhere is this shift more visible than at the Beijing Conference of 1995. Here, as a movement for rights under law expanded, women's NGOs began to supplement their more conventional roles in campaigning, activism and consciousness-raising, with exceptional proficiency in information exchange, policymaking and implementation. It was at Beijing that, for the first time, NGOs secured the legitimacy and political base necessary to begin working *alongside* government delegates to craft a plan for the protection of women's rights.⁶² And, it was as a result of such active participation at the UN that NGOs were not only able to weave the notion of accountability into the very heart of Beijing documents

⁶⁰ Ellen Dorsey, "The Global Women's Movement: Articulating a New Vision of Global Governance," in *The Politics of Global Governance*, ed. Paul F. Diehl (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 339-340.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 341.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 346-347.

and proceedings, but also, to begin using their ensuing leverage to rally global commitments to these international norms. As Ellen Dorsey states:

If we think in terms of the process forged for articulating a new vision, organizing communities of disparate people to fight for that vision, and the advancement of new norms around which the practices of international institutions, social and economic forces, and government policies are increasingly held accountable – the successes have already been overwhelming.⁶³

3.5 The Global Women's Movement

Given such remarkable success at the global level, it seems that the development of the global women's movement provides an excellent foundation from which to proceed. It can be argued, in fact, that given the nature of our contemporary international system, the movement is an *ideal* case for analysis. Just as current trends in world politics are characterized by changing notions of state sovereignty, an expanding global agenda, and consequent demands for an effective multilateral response,⁶⁴ the global women's movement is similarly transnational in character, spans a myriad of interdependent issues, and has been markedly successful in securing a strong position on the formal intergovernmental agenda. The global women's movement has even been described as one of the "strongest, inclusive, dynamic and viable" examples of universal citizen action.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid., 356.

⁶⁴ See Chapter One

⁶⁵ Ellen Dorsey, 336.

The next important step of analysis, however, is to examine UN-NGO relationships from a *microlevel* perspective. In terms of women's rights, this means evaluating the global women's movement by the strength of its activities in the local sphere.⁶⁶ Put another way, this study moves from an exploration of the women's movement at the international level, to an examination of how NGOs and UN agencies collaborate in strengthening the women's movement on the ground.

A case study of women's human rights organizations and UN agencies in Harare, Zimbabwe will serve as the main tool for investigating UN-NGO relationships at the national level. In undertaking this microlevel approach, two main questions will be asked: *How are UN-NGO relationships helping to advance women's rights in Zimbabwe?* and *How could such linkages be improved?* In doing so, it is hoped that this approach will reveal the actual goals and aspirations of those involved in women's rights activism within a specific cultural context, and help to construct strategies for improving UN-NGO collaboration on the basis of these concrete experiences and aspirations.⁶⁷

As a segue into a microlevel analysis, however, this chapter ends by reviewing the very importance of connecting global and microlevel activism. In terms of the women's movement, such an analysis reveals that *only by engaging sufficient*

⁶⁶ Here, the term *local* will be used to refer more generally to local and national levels.

⁶⁷ Jane L. Parpart, "Who is the 'Other'?: A Postmodern Feminist Critique of Women and Development Theory and Practice," *Development and Change* 24, no. 3 (1993): 454.

attention to local implementation can the global women's movement adequately impact those it purports to serve on the ground. Yet what is also revealed is an already discernable and dangerous gap between the movement's international and local levels of pursuit, as well as an increasing need for greater leverage at the national level. The study therefore proceeds by examining how local UN-NGO partnerships may help to close this formidable gap in the next phase of the movement's development.

3.5.1 Local Activism

One of the most important connections between international and local levels of activism is the reality that by enabling women's NGOs to harness leverage in the international arena, UN conferences have also helped to deepen the power base of activities on the ground.⁶⁸ This is especially true in terms of normative frameworks which, although created at the global level, help to legitimize the enforcement of women's rights locally. In this sense, local efforts are very much an integral component of the global women's movement: while one part secures strategic gains for women globally, another part uses the legitimacy of international norms to achieve practical gains at the country level.⁶⁹ As most analysts say, *the movement is now working above and below the state.*

⁶⁸ Dorsey, 356. See also, Riva Krut, Globalization and Civil Society: NGO Influence in International Decision-Making (Geneva: UNRISD, 1997), 24.

⁶⁹ Chen, 491.

At the same time, it is increasingly acknowledged that the importance accorded to local implementation has not received enough explicit attention in the global sphere. This oversight threatens to generate a dangerous chasm between the two levels of pursuit. As Ellen Dorsey explains:

Reflecting sophistication in utilizing the UN system, great attention has been paid to ensuring that the language of government implementation has been incorporated into the Beijing documents and that the gains of each separate issue conference are not set back. But in organizing the movement's presence and leverage at these meetings, coupled with the energy consumed in the preparatory process for Beijing, *little attention has been devoted to building the political leverage and policy-specific focus for post-Beijing implementation at the national level* (emphasis added).⁷⁰

A similar perspective is found in a study on transnational advocacy networks by Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, who note that:

The downside of the network's intensive preparations for the Vienna and Beijing conferences is that many organizations were so focused on these that they neglected their own communities...(leaving) a considerable distance between the new resolutions and changing actual practices.⁷¹

Given that the main purpose of activism at the global level is to effect change locally, the dangers of this gap cannot be overemphasized. In order to transform normative standards and global commitments into action, the international women's movement *must* be firmly linked to efforts for implementation in the local sphere.

⁷⁰ Dorsey, 351.

⁷¹ Margaret E. Keck & Kathryn Sikkink, Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 188.

Of course, the idea that local solutions are a vital component of the global women's movement is not a contemporary notion. The problem is that until now, the importance of local perspectives has been too easily ignored. A 1981 report of the UN even dismisses the idea altogether, saying that in rural communities, "it is difficult to arouse the poor from their apathy and indifference."⁷² Yet experience increasingly shows that women's local mobilization is absolutely crucial in addressing global concerns.

i) CEDAW

The need to integrate local perspectives into the promotion of women's rights was first identified explicitly in the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 1979, this document serves as an international bill of women's rights that attempts to place women's issues squarely on the human rights agenda. It is especially significant because it goes one step beyond earlier human rights conventions first, by exposing the specific inequalities that plague women's lives, and second, by providing a plan of action to overcome this inequality.⁷³ In addition, unlike any other human rights treaty, CEDAW recognizes that global

⁷² United Nations, Popular Participation as a Strategy for Promoting Community Level Action and National Development (New York: United Nations, 1981), cited in James Midgley, "Community Participation: History, Concepts, and Controversies," in Community Participation, Social Development and the State, eds. James Midgley et al. (London: Methuen, 1986), 28.

⁷³ Charlotte Bunch, "Transforming Human Rights from a Feminist Perspective," in Women's Rights, Human Rights, eds. Julia Peters & Andrea Wolper (New York: Routledge, 1995), 13-14.

actors must transform not only law, but also *the very societies within which violations occur*.

For the effective enforcement of women's rights, then, CEDAW calls on governments to abolish local stereotypes, customs and norms that discriminate against women. As article 5 states:

Governments must eliminate "prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women."

This means that where cultural constructs of gender obstruct women's equality, it is culture that must give way, not women's rights.⁷⁴ CEDAW therefore demands that governments outlaw any harmful or life-threatening practices, such as female circumcision, forced marriage and dowry murders, which are so often marginalized under the guise of tradition.

Even more significant, CEDAW acknowledges that *legislation against culturally justified practices is not enough*. Because they are often embraced with "nostalgic affection",⁷⁵ eradication of harmful customs also requires local education. As Abdullahi An-Na'im stresses, "unless international human rights have sufficient legitimacy within particular cultures and traditions, their

⁷⁴ Ann E. Mayer, "Cultural Particularism as a Bar to Women's Rights," in Women's Rights, Human Rights, eds. Julia Peters & Andrea Wolper (New York: Routledge, 1995), 179.

⁷⁵ Carmel Shalev, "Women in Israel," in Women's Rights, Human Rights, eds. Julia Peters & Andrea Wolper (New York: Routledge, 1995), 92.

implementation will be thwarted.”⁷⁶ Accordingly, article 10 mandates the revision of textbooks, school programmes and teaching methods in order to eliminate dangerous stereotypes. In doing so, CEDAW demands the transformation not only of law, but also of culture – *admitting that unless the achievement of women’s rights is rooted directly in the affected community, international standards and global commitments are often meaningless.*

ii) Female Genital Mutilation

The issue of female genital mutilation (FGM) exemplifies this view. At the international level, CEDAW has successfully placed FGM on the human rights agenda as a health hazard and a form of violence against women. And, at the national level, CEDAW has provided the legitimacy necessary for NGOs to both evoke and maintain many government denouncements against the practice.⁷⁷ Yet even those states who have translated their concerns into laws have not adequately eradicated the problem.⁷⁸

The primary reason that FGM persists rests in the sociocultural nature of the act. In some parts of Africa, FGM is not only defended as a ritual that serves

⁷⁶ Rebecca J. Cook, “Women’s International Human Rights Law: The Way Forward,” 9, citing Abdullahi An-Na’im, “State Responsibility Under International Human Rights Law to Change Religious and Customary Laws,” in Human Rights of Women: National and International Perspectives, ed. Rebecca J. Cook (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 167.

⁷⁷ According to the *1999 Human Rights Watch World Report* (<http://www.hrw.org/hrw/worldreport99/women/index.html>), governments tend to abandon their commitments to women’s human rights when other pressures, such as economic downturns, arise. Local NGOs are therefore essential in ensuring that state commitments are both procured and upheld.

⁷⁸ Nahid Toubia, “Female Genital Mutilation,” in Women’s Rights, Human Rights, eds. Julia Peters & Andrea Wolper (New York: Routledge, 1995), 234.

important values, but is also honored as one of the few traditional practices left since colonialism.⁷⁹ It follows that while international efforts and government commitments have proven essential in empowering the struggle against FGM, these efforts are not sufficient against the auspices of culture. As Nahid Toubia explains, “criminalization and regulation are effective only once a substantial body of public opinion has been raised against the practice.”⁸⁰

Local initiatives are therefore an essential component of international efforts against FGM, for unless activities are guided by the knowledge and wisdom of individuals from the communities involved, cultural change is almost impossible.⁸¹ It has even been shown that unguided and patronizing interference from those perceived as outsiders can actually create a backlash in support of FGM.⁸² As a result, the community-based articulation and promotion of rights through midwives, educational organizations, media groups and others is essential in transforming mere standards and legislation into meaningful practice.⁸³ And, it is only when the task of transforming culture is placed firmly in the hands of local NGOs and other community members that efforts at all levels become global solutions. As Rhadika Coomaraswamy states:

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 234.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 235.

⁸³ Along with an educational function, local NGOs can also assist victims of human rights abuses to gain redress either through the legal system or public calls to action.

Unless these human rights values take root in civil society and unless civil institutions and non-governmental organizations take up the cause, then women's rights as human rights will have no resonance in the social institutions concerned.⁸⁴

3.5.2 Moving Forward

Thus, given that the main purpose of activism at the global level is to effect change nationally, the international women's movement – and their prominent role in UN forums – must be firmly linked to efforts for implementation in the local sphere. As Ellen Dorsey explains:

The failure to engage the diversity of issues and patterns of organizing locally into global goals and political campaigns will have the slow effect of eroding the mass constituency of the movement.⁸⁵

The challenge for the global women's movement as it enters the next phase of organizing and strategy development, then, is *to sustain the process toward greater equality by building the movement's presence and leverage at the national level.*

Of course, as the UN also enters a new era, interesting insights regarding the achievement of this objective have emerged. Specifically, because the UN has been consigned a growing list of modern demands, the UN itself is increasingly seeking to address global concerns in new and effective ways. One response has been to meet new global demands by seeking to unite government, civil society

⁸⁴ Rhadika Coomaraswamy, "To Bellow Like a Cow," in Human Rights of Women: National and International Perspectives, ed. Rebecca J. Cook (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 44.

⁸⁵ Dorsey, 375.

and IGOs in common cause – in effect, making NGOs more welcome partners than ever before.⁸⁶

In addition to this new cooperative vision at the international level, however, are indications that the UN is also opening to deeper collaborative efforts in the local sphere. Speaking on development priorities in Africa, for instance, the Deputy Secretary-General, Louise Fréchette, asserted that “the most important coordination is that which takes place at the country level.”⁸⁷ It is also significant that a recent report of the Secretary-General specifically emphasizes the potential for enhancing local and national UN-NGO collaboration as the UN continues to decentralize its activities and more firmly define the efforts of UN programmes, funds, and agencies at the national level.⁸⁸

What is most striking about this focus on country-level collaboration is not only that it could serve to enhance the participation of local and national NGOs in UN affairs,⁸⁹ but when combined with a cooperative vision, might even provide additional impetus for: (1) stronger UN-NGO cooperation at the country level, and (2) improved linkages between local and global levels of activism. These new

⁸⁶ See Chapter Two

⁸⁷ United Nations, Deputy Secretary-General Seeks Sharper Focus, Identification of Priorities in Development Proposals for Africa (DSG/SM/65/ECOSOC/5855) (July 19, 1999) [Online]. Available: www.un.org/News/Press/docs/1999/19990709.dsgsm65.html [15 June, 2000].

⁸⁸ United Nations, Arrangements and Practices, par. 60.

⁸⁹ Efforts to strengthen UN activities at the country level will especially enhance the contribution of southern NGOs, whose access to international UN forums is most often impeded by financial and geographic constraints.

arrangements, in turn, would serve to support and strengthen efforts for effective implementation on the ground.

The present study considers this possibility by examining the evolving relationship between UN agencies and women's rights organizations in Zimbabwe. Specifically, it explores: (1) the **present confluence of UN-NGO efforts at the national level** and, (2) how **this interaction can be strengthened in order to help build the presence and political leverage necessary to improve Beijing implementation at the national level**. As the Commission on Global Governance states:

The world needs a new vision that can galvanize people everywhere to achieve higher levels of cooperation in areas of common concern and shared destiny.⁹⁰

A case study of UN-NGO relationships in Zimbabwe serves to explore how this vision may be achieved.

⁹⁰ The Commission on Global Governance, Our Global Neighborhood (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1.

CHAPTER 4

UN-NGO Relationships in Zimbabwe: Methodology & Context

This chapter unveils the pragmatic methodology used to explore the relationship between the United Nations (UN) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Zimbabwe, as well as the cultural context within which this study will proceed.

4.1 Methodology

A case study of women's rights organizations and UN agencies in Harare, Zimbabwe will serve as the main tool for investigating UN-NGO relationships at the national level. In undertaking this qualitative, microlevel approach, two main questions will be asked: *How are UN-NGO relationships helping to advance women's rights in Zimbabwe?* and *How could such linkages be improved?* In doing so, it is hoped that this study will reveal the actual goals and aspirations of those involved in women's rights activism within a specific cultural context, and help to construct strategies for improving UN-NGO collaboration on the basis of these concrete experiences and aspirations.¹

4.1.1 Participants

Participants were 12 individuals working toward the advancement of Zimbabwean women's rights in one of three settings: (1) a UN agency based in Zimbabwe (31%); (2) a national NGO dedicated strictly to gender issues (54%);

¹ Jane L. Parpart, "Who is the 'Other'? A Postmodern Feminist Critique of Women and Development Theory and Practice," Development and Change 24, no. 3 (1993): 454.

or, (3) a national human rights NGO, with at least one staff member assigned to gender concerns (15%). All were volunteers who received no remuneration.²

4.1.2 Procedure

A list of over 20 possible participants was formulated at the beginning of the study using various NGO directories and personal NGO contacts. The list included representatives from all major UN agencies in close contact with women's NGOs, and the most prominent human rights and women's NGOs operating in Zimbabwe. Each of these potential participants are contacted directly and informed about the study. Of this group, 12 agreed to participate.³

The resulting cohort was then divided into two sets. The first of these included a group of eight national NGOs working in the field of women's rights. The second set included 4 UN agencies out of a possible 6 from the original list.⁴ Among the NGOs, discussions were held almost exclusively with the executive director, whereas among the agencies, they were held with the head of the relevant gender unit.

² Consult **Appendix A** for a comprehensive list of participating organizations.

³ It should be noted that while efforts were made to secure the participation of NGOs operating outside Harare, no responses were received from outside the capital.

⁴ Participants included the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The two remaining offices who maintain significant contact with women's NGOs, but did not agree to participate in the study, include the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Two different open-ended, semi-structured questionnaires were then developed addressing the nature of UN-NGO relationships in Zimbabwe.⁵ After pretesting the questionnaires for clarity,⁶ one version was distributed to participants from UN agencies and the other to NGOs. One-to-one interviews were also conducted in several cases, including: (1) two participants who requested a direct interview in lieu of written responses; and, (2) three participants who were willing to meet for a follow-up interview to clarify their written responses. In each case, the questionnaire served as a guide, and questions were asked in an open-ended and probing way.

Information collected from questionnaires and interviews was then grouped into various categories and used to make a summary of relevant information.⁷ All respondents were assured complete confidentiality, and therefore, only aggregated or group data are reported.

4.1.3 Special Concerns

This cross-sectional case study intends to shed light on the nature of the UN-NGO relationship in Zimbabwe. Obviously, a small sampling of specific cases does not constitute a representative sample of any specific population, nor does it provide theoretic generalizations or steadfast solutions. This approach does offer

⁵ Consult **Annex B & C** to view these questionnaires.

⁶ Special thanks goes to Karen Dzumbira of WiLDAF Zimbabwe and Scholastica Nhekairo of the WiLDAF Regional Secretariat for their input.

⁷ It should be noted that informal discussions with those in the field were also an important component of data collection and analysis.

insights of general applicability, however, and serves to provoke discussion and explore new possibilities.

In pursuing these goals, this research employs three main themes of feminist praxis.⁸ First, emphasis is placed on qualitative methods of data collection that highlight **context-specificity** and **difference**. Efforts were made, in other words, to give voice to those working in the field of women's rights in Zimbabwe by enabling them to articulate their own experiences, goals and aspirations regarding UN-NGO collaboration.

Second, this research emphasizes an **action-oriented** approach. It is hoped that by providing these participants a platform to relay their experiences, the degree of understanding between actors may be enhanced. In addition, it is hoped that the analysis and recommendations generated by this research will actually help to map out strategies for improving women's rights activism in Zimbabwe.

And finally, emphasis is placed on **positionality** and **subjectivity** whereby the researcher experiences rather than simply describes the research process. Use of this approach acknowledges the threat to reliability caused by factors such as a researcher's position, interview skills, and background knowledge.⁹ Yet it also recognizes its potential in moving beyond broad generalizations toward a deeper

⁸ See Alice Hovorka, Women Heads-of-Households' Access to Adequate Housing in Areas of Harare, Zimbabwe (CIDA: 1995) [Online]. Available: www.cbie.ca/oldcida/cp7323.html [2000, July 31]; and, Marjorie Mbilinyi, "Research Methodologies in Gender Issues," in Gender in Southern Africa: Conceptual and Theoretical Issues, ed. Ruth Meena (Harare: Sapes Trust, 1992), 31-70.

⁹ Mbilinyi, 61.

and more complete understanding of the phenomena under investigation.¹⁰ As Jane L. Parpart states, it is only by “discovering the voices of specific women, of learning about the concrete, lived experiences of specific women” that “we begin to see through the smokescreen of figures and statistics that too often obscure more than they reveal.”¹¹

4.2 The Zimbabwean Case

Since the founding of the Republic of Zimbabwe in 1980, the country and its citizens have endured many growing pains. One of the most contentious of these has been the government’s pendulum swing from socialist developmentalism to economic austerity, which as some of its strongest proponents now concede, has severely disturbed an already precarious balance between growth and equity. Rapid social deterioration has consequently ensued, placing an onerous burden on ordinary citizens and slowly galvanizing an atmosphere of civil discontent. In response, a movement of collective resistance is gaining vast salience across Zimbabwe’s political landscape, with women’s organizations no exception to those groups now fighting for reform.

4.2.1 Background¹²

In 1980, following a protracted liberation struggle, the former British colony of southern Rhodesia was declared the independent republic of Zimbabwe.

¹⁰ M. Lal Goel, Political Science Research (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1988), 63.

¹¹ Jane L. Parpart, “Gender, Patriarchy, and Development in Africa: The Zimbabwean Case,” in Patriarchy and Development, ed. Valentine M. Moghadam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 163.

Widespread optimism immediately ensued, based on expectations of renewed economic growth, as well as state assurances for reduced social disparity and distress.¹³ As the decade unfolded, however, optimism began to wane against the frustrations of recession, debt, recurring drought, and by 1990, the adoption of a neoliberal development strategy and programme of structural adjustment.

The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was implemented in 1991 as a response to economic crisis. Its strategy aimed to restore macroeconomic balance through the neoliberal formula of devaluation, deregulation, desubsidisation and privatisation, which in turn, set the conditionalities for International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank loans. Given that by 1983, the cost of Zimbabwe's debt servicing had grown from 3 to 30 percent of export earnings, and was increasing steadily throughout the decade, such a market-oriented approach seemed desirable.¹⁴ The goal, according to the government of Zimbabwe, was to "encourag(e) economic growth and development and thereby improv(e) the quality of life of all the people."¹⁵ But, as even some of the programme's strongest supporters now concede, the overall effects of austerity have not been very positive.

¹² See **Appendix D** for an overview of Zimbabwe's basic indicators.

¹³ Sandra J. Maclean, NGO Partnerships and Sustainable Democratic Development with Lessons from a Canadian-Zimbabwean Case Study, Ph.D. diss., Dalhousie University, 1997 (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1998), 189.

¹⁴ James G. Copestake, "Zimbabwe: Country Overview," in Non-Governmental Organizations and the State in Africa, eds. Kate Wellard and James G. Copestake (London: Routledge, 1993), 16.

¹⁵ United Nations, Zimbabwe Country Report to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/1990/5/Add.28), 25 September 1995, para. 9.

While implementation of ESAP has encouraged new investment, especially domestically, it has not led to sweeping improvements in the lives of ordinary citizens. Instead, the first decade of structural adjustment has been marked by a steady deterioration in social development, including decreased wages, employment and social spending, as well as an increased cost of living.¹⁶

A number of examples illustrate this decline. A country which once boasted one of the best and most equitable health systems in the sub-region, now counts in real per capita terms on half the budget it had in 1990.¹⁷ Spending on education has also dropped sharply, and school fees, like most requisites, are rising beyond the reach of the poor. Even those working in the private sector have been forced to supplement their incomes with informal sector activities in order to survive.¹⁸ And, according to a study undertaken by the Textile Workers Union in 1993, an alarming *fifty percent* of workers interviewed had already reduced consumption to

¹⁶ See for example, P. Balleis, A Critical Guide to ESAP (Harare: Silveira House, 1991); A. Chikasha, With Focus on Economic Distress, Structural Adjustment and Women (Harare: Ministry of Community and Co-operative Development, 1992); S. Gear, Structural Adjustment and Gender Inequity: A Case of Zimbabwe's Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (Manchester: Faculty of Economic and Social Studies, University of Manchester, 1994); D. Hellinger, The Ongoing War (Harare: Forum of African Voluntary Development Organizations, 1992); R. Loewenson, The Social Dimensions of Structural Adjustment (Harare: Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions Health Department, 1991); Guy C. Z. Mhone, Social Dimensions of Structural Adjustment and Stabilization in Zimbabwe: A Critical Review and Assessment (Harare: SAPES Trust, 1994); UNICEF, Economic Structural Adjustment Programme: A Situational Analysis (Harare: UNICEF, 1994).

¹⁷ UNFPA, ICPD+5: Progress, Constraints and Remaining Challenges in Southern Africa (Harare: UNFPA, 1998), 3.

¹⁸ Sandra J. MacLean, "The Effects of Structural Adjustment on Civil Society in Zimbabwe: Implications for Canadian Aid Policy," Canadian Journal of Development Studies 38, no.3 (1997): 467.

one meal per day.¹⁹ Thus, as translations of ESAP graffitied around the city of Harare state: “Even Sadza is a Problem.”²⁰

Along with the market-oriented policy options of ESAP, a number of additional factors have complicated Zimbabwe’s development path. It is particularly unfortunate that the severe drought of 1992 coincided with the initial stages of the adjustment process. The ensuing recession has since been aggravated by a second drought in 1994, along with a host of other economic pressures, including: global recession, civil war in neighboring countries, an exodus of skilled labor, the stagnation of land redistribution, and one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS infection in the world. Entangled with the direct effects of ESAP, in other words, is what the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) deems an “endless series of competing crises”, whose solutions now require an even greater investment of resources in an environment of growing scarcity and constraint.²¹

Further adding to this complexity is a growing atmosphere of civil discontent. Anti-government attitudes and social unrest have increased significantly in the past few years, with the most recent explosions of violence erupting over rising prices, falling wages, and widespread perceptions of government authoritarianism and deceit. Various NGOs, church groups and the independent media have joined traditional labour, professional and students’ movements in this struggle, with civil

¹⁹ Ibid., 467.

²⁰ Sadza is the national food staple: a porridge made from white maize flour. Cited in MacLean, “The Effects of Structural Adjustment”, 468.

and human rights organizations especially vocal in criticizing the undemocratic rescinding of rights to social well-being, and in raising awareness about legal, constitutional and human rights issues.²² Extensive networks of resistance are also slowly developing among these activists and organizations, which in turn, are giving civil society at least some of the collective leverage necessary to begin seizing new spaces for political action.²³

4.2.2 Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs)

The origin of Zimbabwe's civil sector dates back to the period of British rule, when colonial hardships began to generate the need for various forms of non-state intervention. By 1920, a number of NGOs dedicated specifically to ameliorating the suffering of marginalised African communities had emerged,²⁴ with at least half of the 260 indigenous organizations currently operating in Zimbabwe originating during the colonial period.²⁵

²¹ UNFPA, 3.

²² Sandra J. MacLean, Fahimul Quadir & Timothy M. Shaw, "Structural Adjustment and the Response of Civil Society in Bangladesh and Zimbabwe: A Comparative Analysis," *New Political Economy* 2, no. 1 (1997): 160; and, MacLean, *NGO Partnerships*, 218-219. See for example, *ZimRights News* (Zimbabwe Human Rights Organization), *WomanPlus* (ZWRCN), *Musasa News* (Musasa Project), *Speak Out* (WAG), *News from the Streets* (Streets Ahead), and *The Journal of Social Change and Development* (Independent).

²³ MacLean, Quadir & Shaw, 161.

²⁴ Ernest Maigurira, *Zimbabwe Country Profile* (CIVICUS: Feb. 1999) [Online]. Available: <http://www.civicus.org/pages/atlas/zimbwpro.html> [2000, July 31].

²⁵ MacLean, *NGO Partnerships*, 219.

A modern typology of Zimbabwean NGOs divides roughly into six major forms.²⁶ Of these, as in the period before independence, nearly half are designed to provide welfare and relief. The remaining groups comprise those dedicated to skills/job training or adult education, community development, women's issues, illness-support groups, and associations of professionals/workers.

Although these categories are similar to those which existed prior to independence, a number of important differences have also evolved. Among welfare organizations, HIV/AIDS has become a major concern, along with the new sub-categories of street children, homeless, and ex-combatants. In addition, organizations designed to support church activities have declined, while the number of environmental NGOs, and those concerned with human rights and research have increased. Linkage organizations aimed at connecting NGOs with each other and with the government have also recently developed. And finally, while NGOs were once established mainly from outside the country or by members of the white settler community, the membership of indigenous Africans now predominates.

Along with the expansion of a well-developed NGO matrix, however, has come increased government monitoring and control. The clearest manifestation of this trend is the adoption of the 1995 Private Voluntary Organizations Act, which

²⁶ I am indebted to Sandra J. MacLean for all information regarding NGO typologies in Zimbabwe. [MacLean, *NGO Partnerships*, 219-222.] See also Copestake, 19-20.

restricts the operation of NGOs within very tight limits.²⁷ The Act even entitles the Minister of Social Welfare, Labour and Public Service to suspend the executive of an NGO on a number of obscure grounds, with no right of appeal nor right to make representations. Moreover, upon suspension of executive members, the Minister himself is entitled “to appoint persons to manage the affairs of the organization for a specified time.” The ensuing danger of such controls, as one University of Zimbabwe political science professor describes, is that “worthwhile community development and assistance work will be open to censure...on rather arbitrary and politically-inspired grounds.”²⁸ In response, NGOs are currently negotiating for revision of the Act, as well as any other harsh controls, in an attempt to maintain their constitutional rights to free speech and assembly.²⁹

Yet it seems probable that against an atmosphere of civil discontent, increasingly autocratic government behavior will persist.³⁰ As the 1999 Human Rights Watch Report confirms:

In the grip of a crisis of confidence regarding its ability to manage the economy...(the government of Zimbabwe) appeared to have opted for a mixture of carrot and stick: conceding limited economic

²⁷ The Private Voluntary Organizations Act (1995) is an amendment to the Welfare Organization Act (1968), which provided for the compulsory registration of all voluntary civic organizations before they could operate.

²⁸ Hugo Stokke, Astri Suhrke & Arne Tostensen, Human Rights in Developing Countries Yearbook 1997 (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1998), 391.

²⁹ The Supreme Court has since deemed the VPO unconstitutional, but no changes have yet been made to the Act. [Stokke, Suhrke & Tostensen, 391.]

³⁰ Recent examples of autocratic government behavior include: (1) the closing of the University of Zimbabwe between June and October 1998 under the pretext that violent demonstrations by students had occurred, and (2) after a year marred by strikes, the Presidential Powers Act was adopted in order to ban all strikes for a period of 6 months.

and political points while lashing out against some of their most virulent critics.³¹

The unfortunate consequence is that with signs of increased government repression against those who oppose its measures, NGOs face the challenge of not only combating deteriorating conditions in Zimbabwe, but also protecting their right to do so.³²

Of course, while this situation does not appear to bode well for NGOs, most analysts agree that the government's growing hostility toward civil society does provide at least some scope for optimism. It seems clear, for example, that if NGOs were generating *no* influence, the government would not require increased controls over them. Such a response to the growing pressures of civil discontent therefore predicates that *NGOs have actually exerted a political voice*. Further, given that an NGO matrix is already well-developed in Zimbabwe,³³ and that even in the face of new controls, extensive networks of collective resistance continue to develop, it seems likely that NGOs will wield enough leverage to figure prominently in the ongoing state-societal struggle. As Sandra J. MacLean contends:

The variety and interconnectedness of these various organizations, together with what Christine Sylvester has described as 'fugitive'

³¹ Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999: Africa* (1999): 6 [Online]. Available: www.hrw.org/hrw/worldreport99/africa/index.html [2000, July 31].

³² Stokke, Suhrke & Tostensen, 391.

³³ *Well-developed* in the sense that they show great diversity, coordination and maturity. See also UNDP, *Partners in Development Programme II: Mid Term Evaluation*, 4 [Online]. Available: <http://www.undp.org:80/csopp/pdpengaf.htm> [2000, July 31]; and, MacLean, *NGO Partnerships*, 216.

(meaning largely informal, diffuse or covert) forms of resistance to authoritarianism, may yet contribute to the deepening and extension of democracy in Zimbabwe.³⁴

An examination of Zimbabwean women's rights organizations serves to exemplify this possibility.

4.2.3 Women's Rights in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, women have come out very strongly demanding that their voices be heard. Several women's rights groups and related scholars have been especially active in promoting campaigns of political mobilization, conscientization and sensitization around gender-based interests, and have made great strides in addressing issues of both practical and strategic concern. A broad approach to women's subordination, in turn, has served to foster a myriad of loose partnerships among these activists and scholars, which has helped in building a critical mass of resistance. The challenge now is to cultivate and support such commitments to partnership so that, against a seemingly endless series of competing crises, they can mobilize the collective leverage necessary for future visibility and success.

³⁴ MacLean, Quadir & Shaw, 161. One example of *fugitive resistance* includes the covert strategy used by several newly established Zimbabwean NGOs to register as 'associations' connected with established NGOs in order to protect their executive bodies from government interference. See for example, Stokke, Suhrke & Tostensen, 391. See also, Jane Parpart, Gender, Patriarchy and Development in Africa: The Zimbabwean Case (Working Paper #254, November 1995), which shows how some Zimbabwean women have managed to use the benefits of economic development and changing value systems to challenge patriarchal authority and control.

i) The Status of Women in Zimbabwe

For those seeking to extend the rights of women in Zimbabwe, the first decade after independence held out great promise. It was at this time that amidst expectations of renewed economic growth and redistribution, the government of Zimbabwe formally recognized women's crucial role in the liberation struggle by introducing a series of laws, programmes and structures aimed at advancing women's status.

The most far-reaching of these measures was the 1982 Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA), which granted all Zimbabweans full legal capacity and majority status at the age of eighteen. For women, the Act meant gaining full jural rights for the first time in history,³⁵ including the right to own, transfer and dispose of property without male mediation.³⁶ LAMA thereby abrogated customary law, established the first principle of gender equality, and most importantly, opened the door for subsequent reforms. Several major laws for the extension of women's rights have since followed (see **Table 4.1** for examples), resulting in what is now considered one of the most progressive legal records in the region.³⁷

³⁵ Parpart, "Gender, Patriarchy, and Development in Africa", 149.

³⁶ United States Department of State, 1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Zimbabwe (February 2000):21 [Online]. Available: www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1999_hrp_report/zimbabwe.html [2000, July 31].

³⁷ Susan Jacobs, "Zimbabwe: State, Class, and Gendered Models of Land Resettlement," in Women and the State in Africa, eds. Jane L. Parpart & Kathleen Staudt (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1989), 167.

Table 4.1 – Major Legislation for Women’s Rights in Zimbabwe

Legal Age of Majority Act (1985)	Grants all Zimbabweans full legal capacity and majority status at the age of 18.
Matrimonial Causes Act (1985)	Renders no-fault divorce more accessible and property distribution more equitable.
Sex Disqualification Removal Act (1985)	Declares that women with requisite qualifications cannot be prevented from holding the same offices and positions as men.
Labour Relations Act (1985)	Prohibits discrimination in hiring on the basis of sex and provides female workers with partially paid maternity-leave for a minimum of three months.
Maintenance Act (1987)	Allows women to claim maintenance for her children whether or not she is married to the father.
Deeds Registries Amendment (1991)	Entitles women to execute deeds and documents without the assistance of husbands.
Deceased Estates Succession Act (1997)	Allows a widow to maintain guardianship of her children and to inherit part of her deceased husbands property.

Various government programmes and structures were also initiated shortly after independence in order to protect women’s interests. A female-headed Ministry of Community Development and Women’s Affairs (MCDWA) was set up in 1981 with the mandate to eliminate discriminatory laws and labor practices, undertake women-centered development projects and educational campaigns, and put an end to discriminatory cultural practices such as *lobola* (bride price).³⁸ In addition, influenced perhaps by the egalitarianism and Marxist rhetoric of the liberation struggle, the new government of Zimbabwe officially supported an array of government welfare reforms that have since benefited women. Examples include: programmes addressing national nutrition, methods of contraception, and access to

³⁸ Parpart, “Gender, Patriarchy, and Development in Africa”, 150.

rural healthcare;³⁹ low-cost primary education for all children;⁴⁰ and, incentives for drawing women into waged employment.⁴¹

It was when the effects of structural adjustment began to hit Zimbabweans in the 1990s, however, that the momentum for women's rights slowed. The government has since been forced to replace the MCDWA with a Minister of Gender, with fewer staff and resources.⁴² The delivery of welfare programmes have also been inhibited by financial constraints. And, despite legislative measures undertaken during the post-independence era, initiatives aimed at translating these enactments into substantive gains for women remain inadequate.

As Christine Sylvester explains:

the state has been unwilling to stick its neck out too far for women, pulling back whenever a backlash emerges – whenever, that is, the agenda of other ongoing struggles need to be co-opted.⁴³

It follows that as economic pressures shift government attention away from women's issues, the task of sustaining progress made during the first decade now depends more heavily on the capacity of Zimbabwean NGOs.⁴⁴ **Annex E**, which

³⁹ Jacobs, 166.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 167.

⁴¹ Parpart, "Gender, Patriarchy, and Development in Africa", 150.

⁴² Officially known as the *Minister in the President's Office Responsible for Gender* (Ms. O. Muchinguri).

⁴³ Christine Sylvester, "Simultaneous Revolutions and Exits: A Semi-Skeptical Comment," in Women and Revolution in Africa, Asia, and the New World, ed. Mary Ann Tetreault (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 422.

⁴⁴ Stokke, Suhrke & Tostensen, 425-426.

outlines an extensive list of their priority concerns, reveals the immensity of this task.

ii) Women's Human Rights Organizations

For this reason, it is particularly remarkable that organizations dedicated to women's issues have flourished within such a strongly masculinized and increasingly autocratic environment. Those who enjoy an especially high profile within the NGO community range from large regional organizations, such as the prominent Women in Law and Development in Africa (**WiLDAF**) and Women and Law in Southern Africa (**WLSA**), to smaller national collectives like the Musasa Project, the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Center and Network (**ZWRCN**), and the Women's Action Group (**WAG**). Zimbabwe also plays host to a variety of NGOs who, while focussing on broader issues such as human rights or AIDS, have established gender units or experts to specifically address women's issues.⁴⁵ The result is a *diverse and multilayered NGO matrix* which, as the next section shows, not only emphasizes the myriad interconnections that contribute to women's subordination, but also fosters an important commitment to building flexible partnerships.

The Empowerment Approach

While women's groups of the pre-independence period identified a general need to improve women's condition, NGOs have since begun to focus more

⁴⁵ Examples include the prominent human rights NGOs, ZimRights and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, as well as the welfare organization, SafAIDS.

explicitly on overcoming oppressive gender relations. To this end, as researcher Changu Mannathoko points out, most women's organizations in the country have embraced a conceptual framework based on the notion of *empowerment*.⁴⁶

In concrete terms, this means that NGOs aim to address both the practical and strategic needs of women by helping them to meet basic needs, such as food, health, education and shelter, as well as empowering them to participate in the very management of their society. A political movement has developed, in other words, which goes beyond basic provisions to challenge the very structures and ideas maintaining gender inequalities – aiming not only to improve women's immediate condition, but also to build strategies for women's long term empowerment through radical societal transformation.⁴⁷

Some of the most effective of these organizations and strategies began by addressing practical needs such as health or law, but gradually extended efforts toward strategic gender concerns.⁴⁸ One example is the regional organization, **Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA)**, which was established in 1987 to examine women's legal rights in southern Africa, but has since taken up the challenges arising from their findings. Now, **WLSA's** collaborative research

⁴⁶ Changu Mannathoko, "Feminist Theories and the Study of Gender Issues in Southern Africa," in Gender in Southern Africa: Conceptual and Theoretical Issues, ed. Ruth Meena (Harare: Sapes Trust, 1992), 71-91.

⁴⁷ Jane L. Parpart & Marianne H. Marchand, "Exploding the Cannon: An Introduction/Conclusion," in Feminism/Postmodernism/Development, eds. Marianne H. Marchand & Jane L. Parpart (London: Routledge, 1995), 14. See also Naume M. Ziyambi, Women's Groups in Zimbabwe [Online]. Available: <http://landow.stg.brown.edu/post/zimbabwe/gender/ziyambi3.html> [2000, July 31].

⁴⁸ Mannathoko, 79.

efforts actually serve as a springboard to empowerment, providing a practical foundation from which to challenge the existing legal and policy environment, and to bring much needed legal information, training and assistance to grassroots women.⁴⁹

Another NGO that has shifted toward an empowerment approach is the **Women's Action Group (WAG)**. This organization was established in 1983 in response to a national *clean-up* campaign marked by the widespread and indiscriminate arrests of women deemed urban prostitutes. **WAG** has since continued to challenge specific discriminatory policies, but has also broadened its mandate to more strategically promote the economic, socio-political, legal, educational and cultural advancement of women.⁵⁰ To this end, the organization now advocates for gender sensitive laws and policies; aims to promote, protect and defend the rights of Zimbabwean women; creates public awareness about the economic, health and legal rights of women; provides counseling in legal and health issues; and, attempts to facilitate women's direct involvement in decision-making on issues that affect their lives.

Finally, the **Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN)**, which was established in 1990 as a documentation centre for gender and development issues, has also expanded its mandate to more actively pursue the

⁴⁹ MacLean, *NGO Partnerships*, 237.

⁵⁰ Mannathoko, 81.

empowerment of women.⁵¹ Now, the organization not only provides an extensive library of information regarding women's rights, but also aims for structural change by undertaking research, advocacy, and sensitization seminars on gender issues, and providing a forum for discussion among those active in the field of women's rights. Acknowledging that *knowledge is power*, the ZWRCN further distributes their own publications, bibliographies, and a quarterly newsletter, and has even implemented a rural libraries programme in order to more readily disseminate information on women's issues to the grassroots.

A unique corollary to this empowerment approach is the growing linkage between researcher and activist. WLSA, which began as an academic research project on discriminatory laws, has since taken up some of the challenges emanating from their research; WAG has similarly moved from activism against a discriminatory *clean-up* campaign to incorporate research and publications on women's issues; and, even the ZWRCN has not confined its activities to traditional documentation and library services, but has begun to embrace new forms of activism through training, research, and advocacy. A notable feature of the Zimbabwean women's movement, in other words, is a tendency to combine "research, documentation and action", which in turn, serves to enhance efforts against oppressive gender relations by linking analyst and activist in common cause.⁵²

⁵¹ Ibid., 82.

⁵² Ibid., 82-83.

Building Partnerships

Women's organizations also enjoy an especially high profile within the NGO community as a result of their loosely coordinated presence. It is particularly significant that many of their officers and board members hold prominent offices in networking organizations, and often serve as representatives of Zimbabwe's NGO community at various international meetings and conferences.⁵³ Additionally, most of these organizations are committed not only to eradicating gender inequities – mainly by improving women's knowledge of their legal rights, increasing women's economic power, and combating domestic violence⁵⁴ – but also addressing the interdependence of these issues and their broader relationship to democratization and development.⁵⁵ As a result, a strong emphasis on the myriad interconnections which contribute to women's subordination has evolved, which in turn, has further heightened a widespread commitment to establishing *partnerships* for devising adequate solutions.⁵⁶

One example is the regional organization, **WLSA**, which has developed extensive connections with civil society both through its research efforts and provisions for legal information and counseling.⁵⁷ Not only does it interact with

⁵³ MacLean, NGO Partnerships, 238.

⁵⁴ United States Department of State, 22.

⁵⁵ MacLean, NGO Partnership, 238. See also, Joe Oloka-Onyango, "Zimbabwe," in The Status of Human Rights Organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa, ed. The Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights (September 1994), 3.

⁵⁶ MacLean, NGO Partnership, 238.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 237.

individuals directly, but also with various NGOs, and especially women's, human rights and other legal institutions. In addition, because its mandate extends across the southern Africa region, and is also connected with international NGOs and researchers from abroad, **WLSA** not only provides a valuable comparative element to its research, but also brings a broader geographical perspective to those it interacts with at the national level.⁵⁸

Another example of such linkages is the **WiLDAF Network**, which operates through WiLDAF's Zimbabwe office in order to connect approximately 15 Zimbabwean women's, human rights, legal and development NGOs in common cause.⁵⁹ This network not only provides a crucial forum to share a broad array of functional perspectives, but also allows these organizations to mobilize as a collective force against mutual concerns. Recent initiatives have included: collective efforts to advance gender perspectives into government land redistribution schemes, assisting production of the CEDAW Shadow Report on women's human rights, and preparation for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign held annually across Zimbabwe.

Given the need to address the multifaceted nature of women's inequality, such networks have been especially important. They not only provide additional space to explore strategies for women's empowerment, but also permit a wide array of NGOs – whose focus may differ both geographically and functionally – to share

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ See **Appendix F** for a list of WiLDAF Network members.

relevant skills, information, and contacts. In turn, such networks allow NGOs to erect what Zimbabwean activist, Dr. Patricia McFadden, calls “solidarity platforms” upon which a critical mass may wield collective strength, influence and enhanced viability;⁶⁰ or, as the Regional Coordinator of WILDAF, Joana Foster, so boldly asserts, a network allows NGOs “to create a critical mass to which people in power have to listen.”⁶¹

iii) Moving Forward

To witness the effectiveness of this collective voice in Zimbabwe, one only needs to examine the 1998 UN Human Rights Committee Report, which was *heavily* influenced by those working in the field of women’s rights.⁶² In their final report, the Committee especially emphasized concern “about the subordinate status of women in Zimbabwean society”, noting particular problems in the area of marriage and inheritance laws, as well as the extent and persistence of domestic violence.

Also interesting is the fact that activism for the advancement of women’s rights has been potent enough to provoke mounting government criticism. In its report to the UN Human Rights Committee, for example, the government complains that

⁶⁰ FEMNET, Protect and Safeguard Women’s Rights (September–December 1998) [Online]. Available: <http://www.africaonline.co.ke/femnet/pressrelease.html> [1999, September 21].

⁶¹ Joana Foster, Networking for Effective Feminist Organising into the Next Millennium (Harare: WILDAF, 1998), 1.

⁶² United Nations, Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 40 of the Covenant: Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee – Zimbabwe (CCPR/C/79/Add.89), Human Rights Committee, 62nd Session.

given the vast proliferation of educational campaigns for women in Zimbabwe, “there has been cultivated a general feeling that human rights have **degenerated** into gender issues (emphasis added).”⁶³ What such *degeneration* may reflect, however, is not only the vigor and salience of those currently challenging persistent gender inequalities, but also how much work is left to be done in the face of mounting government complacency and discontent.⁶⁴

It follows that as economic pressures shift government attention away from women’s issues – especially in an environment of competing crises – the task of sustaining progress made during the first decade now depends more heavily on the capacity of Zimbabwean NGOs.⁶⁵ Evidence of *a diverse and multilayered NGO matrix* holds out great promise in this respect because it not only fosters a critical mass of resistance, but also lays the groundwork for further forms of collaboration. In an age of competing crises, the challenge now is to further cultivate and support this coordinated presence in order to build the capacity necessary to maintain a strong political voice.

The next chapter takes a closer look at this issue by examining the role of UN-NGO cooperation against the backdrop of growing scarcity and constraint. Resembling questions being posed at the global level, then, it asks: *Can UN-NGO*

⁶³ Government of Zimbabwe, 1998 Zimbabwe Country Report to the UN Human Rights Committee (UN doc.ccpr/c/74/Add.3), par. 10.

⁶⁴ Nowhere is the enormity of this task more visible than in the 1998 Zimbabwe NGOs Shadow Report on CEDAW, which presents an excellent profile of the major issues these NGOs currently face. See **Appendix E** for a summary.

⁶⁵ Stokke, Suhrke & Tostensen, 425.

relationships contribute to this coordinated presence? And, Can UN-NGO partnerships help to maximize the political leverage and policy-specific focus that is now so necessary for advancing women's rights?

CHAPTER 5

Case Study Results

While efforts were made to use an array of terms when referring to the linkages between United Nations (UN) agencies and women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Zimbabwe, participants of this study typically used the language of *partnership* to describe their collaborative endeavors.¹ As a consequence, this chapter also emphasizes the concept of partnership to explore both the results and implications of this study.

What emerges from this analysis, however, is the reality that while most use the language of partnership to describe UN-NGO relationships, few believe that they are close to fully actualizing the concept. Instead, although the discourse of partnership conveys a relationship of equality and mutual support, underlying power disparities often continue to plague collaborative relationships in practice. This study serves to acknowledge this paradox, but also explores the actual experiences and opinions of those working in the field of women's rights in order to identify opportunities for improved collaboration.

The chapter begins by exploring the concept of partnership, and then employs insights gained from this analysis to examine the findings and implications of the case study. Finally, strategies for strengthening UN-NGO relationships are proposed.

¹ Examples of terms used in questionnaires and interviews include *relationship*, *linkage* and *collaboration*. See **Appendix B & C**.

5.1 The Concept of Partnership

Against the backdrop of an increasingly complex and interrelated world, the concept of partnership is gaining immense salience. Governments now commonly seek partnerships with private industry and NGOs in order to support or implement new initiatives. NGOs likewise forge immense and tangled webs of worldwide alliances, networks and caucuses around shared concerns. And, as an expanding global agenda is met by a growing tide of concerned actors, a cooperative vision has also become a crucial theme in UN reform.

In Zimbabwe, too, the concept of partnership is gaining currency. Various NGOs, church groups and the independent media are now linking with traditional labour, professional and students' movements in order to address an emerging series of competing crises.² Similarly, as economic pressures begin to shift attention away from gender issues, women's organizations have shown a special openness toward partnership by connecting an array of activists and analysts in common cause. Extensive networks of resistance are slowly developing as a result, giving these actors at least some of the collective leverage necessary to begin seizing new spaces for political action.³

While it is clear that the *idea of partnership* is gaining new heights of relevance, however, the actual meaning of the term requires far more attention.

² Sandra J. MacLean, Fahimul Quadir & Timothy M. Shaw, "Structural Adjustment and the Response of Civil Society in Bangladesh and Zimbabwe: A Comparative Analysis," New Political Economy 2, no. 1 (1997): 160.

³ MacLean, Quadir & Shaw, 161.

On the one hand, partnership as an ideal seems to convey a relationship of equality and mutual support. Participants at a recent UN issues conference confirm this view, agreeing that effective partnerships must include qualities such as: mutual recognition, transparency, inclusion, mutual respect, flexibility and accountability.⁴ Similarly, as Charles Abugre emphasizes in his research on the aid industry, “reciprocity, symmetry, equality and fairness are the bedrock upon which partnership is founded.”⁵ A formal understanding of the term therefore negates traditional power hierarchies and promotes a more egalitarian and democratic mode of operation.⁶ Yet few partnerships actually meet this theoretical ideal in practice.

As a mode of operation, the meaning of partnership is beset by tremendous ambiguity. The main problem is that *although the discourse of partnership advances the ideals and strategies associated with equality, underlying power disparities often continue to plague collaborative relationships in practice.* The parameters of partnership are therefore blurred by an obvious contradiction

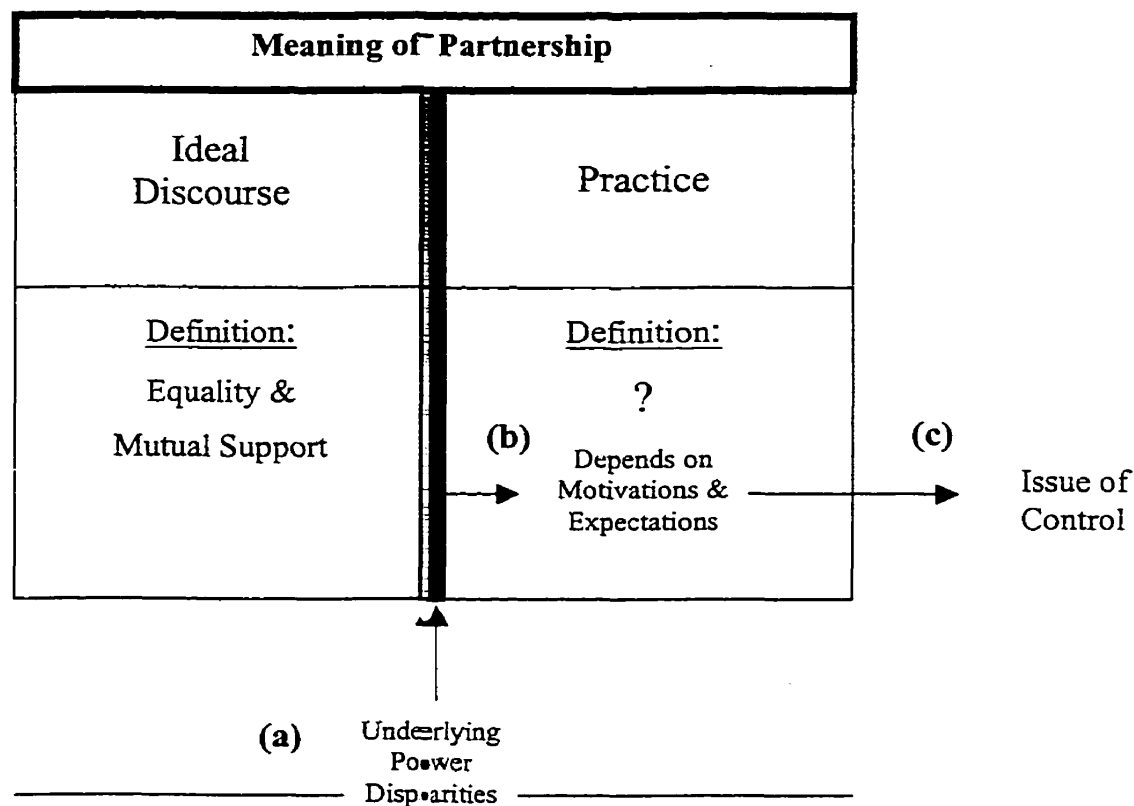
⁴ Richard H. Stanley, The United Nations and Civil Society: The Role of NGOs. The Report of the Thirtieth United Nations Issues Conference (Feb. 1998): 11 [Online]. Available: <http://www.stanleyfdn.org/confrpts/unissues/issues99/report.html> [2000, July 31].

⁵ Charles Abugre, Partners, Collaborators or Patron-Clients: Defining Relationships in the Aid Industry. Background document prepared for CIDA/Canadian Partnership Branch (Aug. 16, 1999): 7 [Online]. Available: [http://fly.web.net/ccic/devpol/CA10 Partners Collaborators or Patron-Clients 1999.htm](http://fly.web.net/ccic/devpol/CA10%20Partners%20Collaborators%20or%20Patron-Clients%201999.htm) [2000, July 31].

⁶ Sandra J. Maclean, NGO Partnership and Sustainable Democratic Development with Lessons from a Canadian-Zimbabwean Case Study, Ph.D. diss., Dalhousie University, 1997 (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1998), 246.

between discourse and praxis, thereby evoking much confusion about how such operational connections should actually be defined (see **Figure 5.1a**).

Figure 5.1 – Defining Partnership



For Africa, one of the most resonating illustrations of this imbalance derives from the 1987 London Symposium, where discussions on northern and southern NGO partnerships exploded into a cathartic airing of complaints over continued Northern dominance of NGO activity.⁷ As Charles Elliott, one of the participants at the conference, noted: “No amount of well-intentioned dialogue” can remove

⁷ William Postma, “NGO Partnership and Institutional Development: Making It Real, Making It Intentional,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 28, no. 3 (1994): 449-450.

the “asymmetry of power” in a north-south partnership.⁸ Instead, concerns remain that links between diverse and unequally endowed actors – such as the so-called rich north and impoverished south – set the stage for ongoing dependence, mistrust and paternalism.

An unfortunate corollary to this problem is the reality that uneven power relations also tend to foster uneven motivations and expectations (see **Figure 5.1b**). Research shows, for instance, that the discourse of partnership tends to be used differently by various agents in order to maintain or improve their respective power positions.⁹ It follows that when disparate and unequally endowed actors are frequently led by the primacy of self-interest – even if not always willingly or knowingly – the content and approach of collaboration is left extremely vulnerable to divergent views and inherent contradictions. As William Postma explains, “everyday discourse reveals beliefs that not only belie the power differential, but prevent...truly equitable and transparent partnerships from being forged.”¹⁰

What often emerges, in other words, is a paradoxical operative discourse that heralds the ideal of equality and mutual support on the one hand, but allows underlying power imbalances to influence how partnerships are framed in practice. Because motivations and expectations tend to be differentially maintained as a result of these disparities, however, it is not uncommon to hear those engaged in

⁸ Anne Gordon Drabek, “Development Alternatives: The Challenge of NGOs – An Overview of the Issues,” *World Development: Development Alternatives: The Challenge for NGOs* 15 (Supplement) (1987): ix-xv, cited in Postma, 450.

⁹ Maclean, 298.

partnership describe something more akin to a patron-client relationship, complaining that “we give information to our partners, but we do not know how it is used” or “we are underestimated, while the approach of our partner dominates.”¹¹ Such statements make clear that while the idea of partnership conveys a relationship of equality and mutual support, underlying power disparities continue to distort the actual practice of collaboration with immense unevenness and contradiction.

Put simply, *meaning is not found in the ideal language of partnership, but in the contrasts between, and the varying degrees of interconnection among those who apply the concept in practice.* Their levels of power and resources, their motivations and expectations, and the content and approach of their collaboration are all important considerations.¹² And when these factors vary widely, the resulting contrasts and complexities not only distort the parameters of partnership, but as a result of underlying power disparities, often evoke much tension and miscommunication around the issue of control (see **Figure 5.1c**).

In terms of UN-NGO collaboration, then, the development and implementation of partnership necessarily embodies paradox. This is especially true of a relationship between a major intergovernmental organization (IGO) and a small southern NGO, which unavoidably manifests enormous power differentials and

¹⁰ Postma, 451.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 452.

¹² *Ibid.*, 451.

divergent interests. Unequal control of information and access to decision-making processes, as well as differing levels of political strength, organizational capabilities and financial power are just a few of the factors that can place such partners at odds from the very start. These underlying power disparities then threaten to distort the content and approach of partnership, often leading to relationships that are neither evenhanded nor characterized by mutual support.

While acknowledging the significance of this paradox, however, the case of UN-NGO relationships in Zimbabwe also reveals scope for optimism. Evidence shows, for instance, that despite an obvious dissatisfaction concerning partnership in practice, primarily among NGOs, most not only continue to engage in partnership but also see the concept as a worthwhile objective. As Sandra J. MacLean finds, “most (Zimbabwean NGOs) profess a genuine commitment to the ideal...even if they (are) cynically aware... about the limitations.”¹³

The result is a situation of both paradox and potential. On the one hand, partnership may generate frustration around the issues of power and control, but on the other hand, most actors show a willingness to continue engaging in partnership and working towards the ideal. It follows that while it may be difficult to forge positive and equitable relationships between diverse and unequally endowed actors, the concept of partnership is at least potentially useful.

Proceeding from this perspective, this case study not only seeks to acknowledge the paradox of partnership, but also to explore its possibilities. This

aim is achieved by directly assessing UN-NGO relationships in Zimbabwe, and enabling those involved to actually articulate their own experiences, goals and aspirations. This study not only asks *how UN-NGO relationships are working*, then, but also *how they can be improved*.¹⁴

It should also be emphasized that this case study does not seek to resolve the paradox of partnership, but rather to explore how best to manage it and learn from the experiences described.¹⁵ It provides a platform upon which to begin unraveling and decoding the constraints that impinge on partnership, as well as the prospects for improvement. The goal, quite simply, was to encourage conversation and imagination – which, as the results show, is exactly what emerged.

5.2 Results

A closer look at UN-NGO relationships in Zimbabwe reveals that, concordant with recent empirical research, the practice of partnership is often beset by issues of power and control. The result is a situation in which most participants employ the language of partnership, but few believe that they are close to fully actualizing the concept.¹⁶

¹³ Maclean, 267.

¹⁴ See Chapter 4, Section 4.1 Methodology.

¹⁵ This idea was inspired by David F. Murphy, Business and NGOs in the Global Partnership Process (Sept. 1998): 5 [Online]. Available: www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/un/unctad16.htm [2000, July 31].

¹⁶ See also, MacLean, NGO Partnerships, 263.

The main constraint to UN-NGO partnerships can therefore be summarized as a frustration with underlying power disparities. Specifically, Zimbabwean NGOs complained that:

- collaboration is often plagued by paternalism and hierarchy;
- NGOs must adhere to an overly doctrinaire and regimented protocol; and,
- the level of information-exchange and consultation with NGOs is often inadequate.

Complaints about paternalism and hierarchy were the most frequently and consistently raised. NGO representatives especially resented the fact that UN agencies tended to assume a leadership role in collaborative endeavours while downplaying the role of NGOs. As one NGO stated: “The UN bureaucracy needs to learn how to let go, rather than always attempting to maintain leadership and control.” Several NGOs also complained of feeling extremely undervalued, and were especially frustrated that their local expertise was often downplayed or overlooked. Moreover, although almost all NGOs identified a general need to foster what one participant called “a greater understanding and appreciation of each other,” many respondents also voiced an immense skepticism regarding the UN’s willingness to do so.

UN agencies did not acknowledge a tendency toward paternalism and hierarchy, but instead, were far more positive in their responses about the UN-NGO nexus overall. As one UN agency asserted, ongoing partnerships have been characterized by “mutual support and the strengthening of each other’s efforts.”

Yet hints of a paternalistic attitude emerged from UN responses nonetheless. One participant even remarked that it was through partnership that issues were “better *explained* to women’s groups,” without further noting the opportunity for a reciprocal exchange of knowledge. Also interesting was that both NGO and UN representatives commonly used the term *donor* interchangeably with *partner* when referring to UN agencies, thereby revealing aspects of a patron-client or benefactor-beneficiary relationship.

A second complaint was that UN agencies adhere to an overly doctrinaire and regimented protocol. Of particular concern were the processes by which UN agendas are designed and implemented, with NGOs feeling that because many plans are established at UN Headquarters abroad, little room is left for consideration of NGO priorities at the regional or country-levels. A number of respondents pointed to UNIFEM’s global campaign to eliminate violence against women as one example of this problem, noting that while the initiative has dominated Zimbabwe’s gender-based activism since 1998, many national NGOs simply do not identify the issue as their top priority.¹⁷ A number of NGOs further admitted that they acquiesce to these agendas in order to benefit from UN connections and initiatives, but said that in doing so, they feared becoming less

¹⁷ For more information on UNIFEM’s global inter-agency campaign to eliminate violence against women, go to: <http://www.unifem.undp.org/campaign/violence/unkit/uncampad.htm> [2000, July 31].

responsive to the changing needs of their domestic constituencies.¹⁸ Accordingly, NGOs expressed a need for greater flexibility on the part of UN agencies in order to better incorporate local views and priorities. As one NGO bluntly stated, if UN-NGO relationships are to be effective, “UN agencies should advocate for policies which are applicable to local NGOs.”

It is interesting to note that one UN agency also acknowledged the problem of an overly regimented UN protocol. Again, the major frustration related to the fact that because global campaigns are often created at a level far removed from the local context, field offices are sometimes forced to collaborate with NGOs within the confines of less-than-appropriate agendas. As one UN respondent explained, while a country-specific need may be identified by an agency or NGO, projects are far more difficult to implement when they do not fall within the current UN focus area – such as the issue of violence against women – imported from the top down. Given the enormity of the UN system, a frustration with regimented protocol should not come as a surprise. However, it is important to recognize that, like NGOs, UN field representatives may sometimes feel a similar need for greater flexibility and control.

Inadequate levels of consultation and information-sharing were also a major source of concern. NGOs especially expressed a desire to learn more about the operations of the UN system and how to access the most relevant agency or gender

¹⁸ For example, in response to question # 3 (*Please list up to two major activities or programmes that you have worked on in collaboration with a UN agency recently*) 78% of reported initiatives were related to the issue of violence against women.

focal point available. A number of respondents further emphasized that UN agencies should work with NGOs in a more open and transparent manner. Specifically, they reported that because the UN is sometimes protective of information and often undervalues local expertise, NGOs did not feel fully incorporated into the collaborative process. Emphasis was therefore placed on the desire for a mutual exchange of ideas – an exchange that would not only endorse a greater flow of information from UN agencies to NGOs, but again, would value a reciprocal exchange of local expertise in the opposite direction, as well.

All participating UN representatives also recognized the need for greater information exchange and consultation. In fact, the most common suggestion from UN respondents overall was that “regular meetings should be held to share information and discuss collaboration.” Like NGOs, several indicated that UN-NGO partnerships could be strengthened if NGOs were to learn more about the UN system. A few also specified that collaboration was often hindered when NGOs failed to approach the most appropriate UN agency or staff person for their needs. Moreover, UN agencies reported a desire for greater access to first-hand information about Zimbabwean NGOs and their programmes, and noted that ongoing efforts to prepare an NGO directory for this purpose was underway.

Concordant with recent research, then, this study underscores the fact that the practice of partnership is often affected by some form of power disparity. This is especially true in the case of IGOs and NGOs, where power disparities are rather obvious in terms of unequal access to resources and decision-making processes.

The problem is that when those engaged in partnership differ in power, this usually means that they also differ in their motivations and expectations of collaboration.

The main concern for NGOs related to issues of power and control. Frustrations were especially high regarding the tendency for UN agencies to assume a leadership role in UN-NGO relationships, while downplaying the value of local expertise. NGOs also resented an overly doctrinaire and regimented protocol, as well as inadequate levels of consultation and information-sharing, which they felt especially hindered the inclusion of local views and priorities into the collaborative process.

The result is a situation in which most NGOs employ the language of partnership, but few believe that they are close to fully actualizing the ideal. According to a standard list presented in recent research by Sandra J. MacLean, the characteristics and requirements of partnership include:

1. Common Goals and objectives;
2. Commitments to the enterprise;
3. Involvement in the enterprise;
4. Mutual benefit;
5. Mutual trust, respect and confidence in your partner;
6. Sharing power and responsibility over the enterprise;
7. Interdependency and mutual exchange of good and services.

Yet the majority of Zimbabwean NGOs interviewed for this study indicated that the relationship between UN agencies and Zimbabwean NGOs fell short on the last three points.¹⁹

UN agencies, on the other hand, were far more positive about UN-NGO collaboration overall. While some concern was raised over the issue of regimented protocol, most responses focussed on the need for greater information-sharing and consultation. Particular emphasis was placed on the need for NGOs to learn more about the operations of the UN system, and for UN agencies to enhance their understanding of national women's organizations and their programmes. However, no mention was made of power disparities, nor of tensions around the issue of control.

The result is a rather disjointed form of partnership that seems to be viewed somewhat differently from each side. While NGOs revealed hints of ongoing dependence, mistrust and paternalism within UN-NGO relationships, UN agencies did not acknowledge such issues. Instead, while NGOs complained that UN agencies need to "value their partners", "recognize NGO expertise", "consult more", and "let go...(of) leadership and control", UN agencies were more likely to assert, quite simply, that they "served each other well."

Such divergent statements confirm that while the idea of partnership may convey a relationship of equality and mutual support, underlying power disparities continue to distort the actual practice of collaboration with unevenness and

¹⁹ These findings are similar to those found in previous research by Maclean (1998) and Postma (1994).

contradiction. Again, as William Postma observed: “Everyday discourse reveals beliefs that not only belie the power differential, but prevent...truly equitable and transparent partnerships from being forged.”²⁰ The content and approach of the UN-NGO relationship is left extremely vulnerable to underlying power disparities, thereby evoking much tension and miscommunication around the issue of control.

5.3 The Way Forward

While acknowledging the significance of this problem, the case of UN-NGO relationships in Zimbabwe also reveals scope for optimism. Evidence shows, for instance, that despite an obvious dissatisfaction concerning partnership in practice, most NGOs not only continue to engage in partnership, but also see the concept as a worthwhile objective. In fact, *all* participants interviewed for this study agreed that steps should be taken to strengthen UN-NGO relationships.²¹ The problem is not *whether* to engage in partnership, but *how*.

It follows that although it may be difficult to forge positive and equitable relationships between diverse and unequally endowed actors, the concept of partnership is at least potentially useful. This study therefore proceeds by moving beyond the problems of partnership to explore its benefits and possibilities.

The main advantage of UN-NGO relationships can be summarized as an opportunity for solidarity and support. Specifically, UN agencies and Zimbabwean NGOs said that partnership offered the potential for:

²⁰ Postma, 451. See also **Section 5.1**.

²¹ See Question #4, **Appendix B & C**.

- assistance in project planning and implementation;
- dialogue, idea-sharing and access to information; and,
- networking.

Assistance in the planning and implementation of projects was the most frequently and consistently raised advantage. NGOs especially emphasized the importance of UN-NGO partnerships in providing additional technical support, funding and skills. As one respondent stated, “We knew where our weaknesses were and UNIFEM backed us up.”

UN agencies also tended to define the benefits of collaboration in terms of successfully completed projects, and commonly referred to themselves as “technical partners” and “partners for project implementation.” Moreover, although UN agencies placed special emphasis on their role in assisting NGOs, and especially their funding role, they also spoke of the potential for “joining as one organizing committee” and “strengthening each others efforts.”²²

Participants also spoke of partnership as a promising forum for dialogue, idea-sharing and access to information. As noted above, NGOs and UN agencies both complained that levels of information-sharing and consultation remain inadequate. Yet the majority of respondents also lauded the potential benefits of such exchanges, and expressed a genuine interest in fostering further dialogue. Several NGOs specified that UN agencies hold information of great relevancy to their

²² In Question #6, all UN agencies rated “offer access to funding” and “collaboration in implementing programmes/projects” as two of their top three roles in UN-NGO collaboration.

work, and one respondent even asserted that the only purpose for their collaboration was access to this information.

UN agencies, on the other hand, were more likely to emphasize the importance of dialogue in strengthening the collaborative endeavour itself. Respondents specifically highlighted the value of consultations in providing opportunities to obtain information on NGO programmes; “to share information and discuss collaboration”; and, “to exchange views, learn and evaluate needs.”

Finally, considerable attention was dedicated to the practice of networking as an important benefit of collaboration. NGOs frequently noted the array of connections that UN-NGO relationships fostered nationally, including access to government officials, other NGOs and the media. As one respondent stated: “When we get the UN involved in a campaign launch, the government attends.” NGOs also appreciated that collaboration with the UN provides links beyond the local level, widening their reach both regionally and internationally; that is, access to the UN not only increases their exposure within Zimbabwe, but also facilitates the strengthening of regional and international networks abroad.

The UN likewise applauded UN-NGO partnerships for their role in helping to build networks of common concern. One participant referred to his agency as a “networking partner”, while another explicitly confirmed that their central role was “to bridge gaps between community based organizations, local NGOs, international NGOs, UN agencies, government and academia.” Again, however, UN agencies placed special emphasis on their role in assisting NGOs.

To summarize, partnerships provide many opportunities to foster solidarity and support. UN agencies and NGOs especially highlighted the role of partnership in facilitating project planning and implementation, with special emphasis on transfers of funding, technical support and skills. Participants also noted the potential advantages of partnership in providing a forum for dialogue and information-exchange, as well as a mechanism for networking across a wider field.

The problem is that although NGOs and UN agencies both acknowledged the benefits of partnership, UN respondents listed the potential advantages for NGOs without emphasizing the reciprocal benefits for the agencies themselves. UN participants did not mention the potential value of transferring local knowledge from NGOs to UN agencies, for instance. Nor did they suggest that relationships with NGOs might ease UN connections with rural communities or help to legitimize country-level initiatives. Instead, UN respondents tended to frame partnership within the confines of a benefactor-beneficiary relationship, again exposing the paradox of UN-NGO partnership, and underscoring the tremendous need for meaningful dialogue to begin.

5.4 Future Possibilities

This study therefore highlights the need for clarity in the midst of complexity. It underscores the importance of clearly defining the terms of partnership, while recognizing that divergent motivations and expectations also exist. It points to the importance of acknowledging both the paradox and possibilities of partnership,

while approaching each of these realities with a sense of purpose and care. And above all, this study reveals the urgency for dialogue among all participants of UN-NGO collaboration if constructive and sustainable partnerships are to be achieved.

One promising initiative in this respect is known as the *Zimbabwe Gender Forum*.²³ Launched by the UN Gender Working Group in 1998, with the support of UNIFEM, the *Gender Forum* is meant to provide a major platform for dialogue among a number of activists and organizations, including: representatives of NGOs, the UN, government, bilateral donors, the private sector, and individuals working towards gender equality and women's empowerment. The hope is that members will meet approximately once every six weeks to share information, debate, network, discuss current gender issues, and collaborate on upcoming events.

What is especially significant about the *Zimbabwe Gender Forum* in terms of UN-NGO relationships is that it was deemed a useful tool for collaboration by NGO and UN respondents alike. As one UN agency stated, "it is the perfect platform to exchange views, learn, and review current needs and possibilities." An NGO responded likewise, saying that the forum is "an important place for information-sharing, understanding, and developing contacts."

²³ For more information on the *Zimbabwe Gender Forum*, contact: The Coordinating Chairperson, Zimbabwe Gender Forum, c/o UNIFEM, P.O. Box 4775, Harare, Zimbabwe.

While the role of the *Gender Forum* in fostering these advantages should not be underplayed, it is important to note that several NGOs also specified areas for improvement. The first concern related to issues of coordination, with a few participants frustrated that agendas were planned on a rather ad hoc basis, and that the frequency of meetings had so far been scattered. Not surprisingly, the second concern related to issues of power and control. Some NGOs were especially annoyed that UN representatives took leadership of meetings, and usually came up with key topics for discussion.

At the same time, the *Zimbabwe Gender Forum* holds significant potential for strengthening collaboration. First, it provides a space where various UN agencies and NGOs can gather simultaneously and on a consistent basis. Second, it serves as a forum where concerns about UN-NGO collaboration can be raised, thereby providing an opportunity to diffuse tensions and miscommunications much sooner than might otherwise occur. And finally, the *Gender Forum* offers the only formal space where all UN agencies and women's NGOs can negotiate the conditions of partnership, and thus, where meaningful dialogue can begin.

Given the complexities of partnership, however, some analysts suggest that the potential for strengthening UN-NGO linkages also lies in fostering a more suitable conception of the term. It must be acknowledged, for instance that UN agencies, like NGOs, are a diverse lot who may differ widely in their goals and agendas. As a result, it may be more useful to broaden the concept of partnership so that it applies to a multitude of circumstances and needs. For some, relations based

purely on funding are valid expressions of partnership, while for others, it is the very antithesis of the term.²⁴ The point is that by broadening the definition of partnership away from a restrictive ideal, while continuing to emphasize goals of equality and mutual support, the concept becomes flexible enough to encompass an array of perspectives, and thus, becomes a better reflection (acknowledgement?) of current realities. As Alan Fowler explains:

A broader conception of partnership “reduces the anxiety of ‘speaking a lie’ in knowing that the partnership label does not cover the possible content of a relationship” and “allows for more appropriate standards and realistic expectations about interactions that foster trust rather than cynicism.”²⁵

It should also be noted that Zimbabwe’s current political landscape may offer additional entry points where UN-NGO relationships can begin and grow. For example, in Zimbabwe’s environment of competing crises, a mounting sense of mutual insecurity may provide greater incentives for UN agencies and women’s NGOs to engage in constructive collaboration. One analyst even suggests that with both sides left vulnerable to current conditions, linkages that lean towards a patron-client relationship may be nudged closer toward one involving “mutually affected stakeholders.”²⁶ Moreover, it is possible that with the language of partnership gaining currency within Zimbabwe’s current environment, the term

²⁴ Dennis A. K. Muchunguzi & Scott D. Milne, Perspectives from the South: A Study on Partnership (Ottawa: AFREDA, 1995), 4.

²⁵ Alan Fowler, Civil Society, NG-DOs and Social Development: Changing the Rules of the Game (Geneva: UNRISD, 2000), 49.

²⁶ MacLean, 77.

itself may serve as a strategic tool that helps to further justify and strengthen NGO demands for empowerment, input and control.²⁷ As David F. Murphy states:

In a world where so many complex social, economic and environmental issues remain unresolved, there remains a need for more inclusive and participatory problem-solving models founded upon partnership.²⁸

It follows that perhaps Zimbabwe's current crisis could provide the impetus for UN agencies and Zimbabwean NGOs to interact, and even connect, in more imaginative ways.

One final note relates to the rather obvious fact that partnerships cannot be strengthened without an awareness of mutual benefits and goals. As David F. Murphy explains, it is necessary to find the points where UN agencies and NGOs, like the biological concept of *mutual symbiosis*, are "intimately coexisting and both benefiting from the relationship."²⁹ Put simply, UN agencies and NGOs need a reason to work together. And this reason must be explicitly identified and discussed among those committed to the collaborative pursuit.

The goal of this case study was therefore to sift through the sea of complexities and contradictions in search of such opportunity. It highlighted the importance of acknowledging each other's differences, and approaching this diversity with a sense of purpose and care. Moreover, it explored the actual experiences and

²⁷ Ibid., 299.

²⁸ Murphy, 7.

²⁹ Ibid., 6.

opinions of those working in the field of women's rights in order to identify the collaborative opportunities at hand.

What emerged from this analysis is the optimistic fact that despite immense skepticism regarding the UN's sincerity on the issue, NGOs show a willingness to continue engaging in partnership and working towards the ideal. It will therefore be prudent to continue exploring how best to negotiate the problems of partnership, to gain a better understanding of its potential benefits, and to learn how to maximize these advantages from the experiences described. The process of strengthening UN-NGO relationships may be "slower, more complicated and less unilinear" than desired, but this is no reason to free ourselves from the pursuit.³⁰ As Bryce Courtenay so eloquently states: "Changes can come from the power of many, but only when the many come together to form that which is invincible...the power of one."³¹

³⁰ MacLean, 245.

³¹ Bryce Courtenay, The Power of One (New York: Random House, 1989).

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the evolution of UN-NGO relationships within an increasingly complex and interrelated world. The paper began by framing the issue against the backdrop of immense global change, emphasizing the growing presence of NGOs within the UN system and their considerable impact on the international stage. Next, it explored a case study of women's rights organizations and UN agencies in Zimbabwe in order to identify the nature of UN-NGO relationships within a specific cultural context.

In other words, this study served to acknowledge both the global and local aspects of the topic at hand. It recognized global interdependence at the same time that it acknowledged difference. It recognized the importance accorded to UN-NGO relationships generally, at the same time that it investigated the significance of collaboration in a specific context. And in doing so, this study not only offered important insights regarding partnerships at the national level, but also a greater understanding of their significance in the larger world.

Global Insights

By exploring the nature of UN-NGO relationships from an international perspective, three main insights emerged. First, *this study indicated that UN-NGO relationships are evolving within an increasingly complex and interrelated world.* In particular, since the Cold War ended, a tide of global interdependence has unleashed a world system characterized by the erosion of state sovereignty and a

growing list of modern demands. It follows that national welfare now depends on an effective multilateral response. Ongoing UN reform and the growing presence of NGOs are crucial in this respect, because it is only through new structures and mind-sets that a growing list of global challenges can be addressed effectively. It is also clear that as the UN and NGOs each respond to these challenges, an evolution in their relationship is inevitable. An examination of UN-NGO relationships within the context of global change therefore provides an important window into their significance and evolution in the larger world.

Second, *this study revealed signs of a cooperative vision based mainly on the tenet that by fostering a better division of labor, UN-NGO linkages may contribute to the evolution of enhanced global governance.* A recent body of research reveals growing acceptance for this assertion, emphasizing that given the need for a more ordered and reliable response to modern demands, cooperative efforts are both feasible and desirable. Evidence also shows that given an expansion of global problems and a parallel growth in the number of actors involved in them, NGOs are increasingly viewed as unequivocal partners in a reformed UN system – partners who, by contributing to a better division of labor, are considered crucial in the creation of a more vital and relevant global force.

And finally, *this study unveiled the remarkable evolution of the NGO phenomenon, including their rapid proliferation, consequent expansion within the UN system, and considerable impact on the international stage.* One major finding was that through new channels of participation, NGOs seem to have

developed into a distinct, essential and unavoidable sector of public life worldwide. It was even noted that the recent proliferation of NGOs has led some to label the last decade a *global associational revolution*, and others to deem NGOs a hallmark of our contemporary international system. As a corollary, this study also showed that NGO access to the UN has evolved considerably in recent years, with new openings gradually enabling NGOs to secure formal and informal roles in the UN system. And, it is through these openings that increasing numbers of NGOs are now linking with the UN in order to contribute more actively to its technical and operational affairs, as well as to the functions of governance and decision-making.

Local Insights

An exploration of UN-NGO relationships from a local perspective also elucidated three important trends. These insights not only reveal the nature of UN-NGO relationships in Zimbabwe, however, but also provide comparable lessons for collaboration in the global sphere.

First, *this case study situated UN-NGO relationships against the backdrop of Zimbabwe's complex political landscape*. Combined with the direct effects of structural adjustment, the country is beset by what the UNFPA deems “an endless series of competing crises”, whose solutions now require an even greater investment of resources in an environment of growing scarcity and constraint. It follows that economic pressures are shifting government attention away from

women's issues, and leaving the task of advancing women's rights more heavily in the hands of Zimbabwean NGOs.

Second, *this study identifies evidence of an increasingly diverse and multilayered NGO matrix, as well as hints of a growing need and willingness to continue building capacity through collaboration.* Various NGOs, church groups and the independent media are now linking with traditional labour, professional and students' movements in order to address an emerging series of competing crises. Similarly, as economic pressures begin to shift attention away from gender issues, women's organizations have shown a special openness toward partnership by connecting an array of activists and analysts in common cause. It follows that UN-NGO relationships could further strengthen this coordinated presence, and help to maximize efforts for advancing women's rights at the national level.

And finally, *at the heart of this case study is the reality that while there is a willingness to engage in UN-NGO partnership, few believe that they are close to fully actualizing the concept.* Instead, although the discourse of partnership conveys a relationship of equality and mutual support, underlying power disparities often continue to plague collaborative relationships in practice. It follows that while UN-NGO relationships may be evolving markedly at both the local and global levels, these linkages are far more complex than they may first appear.

Lessons Learned

What is most intriguing about an examination of UN-NGO relationships from a multi-level perspective is that the local insights gained from the case study in Zimbabwe also offer lessons that can be related back to those insights raised in the global sphere. Put simply, an understanding of UN-NGO partnerships at the national level offers a greater awareness of their significance in the larger world.

The first lesson gained from this multi-level approach is that *against a backdrop of complexity, UN-NGO relationships seem increasingly necessary*. That is to say, just as UN-NGO relationships at the global level hold potential in responding to a growing list of complex challenges, similar linkages in Zimbabwe's environment of competing crises could serve to maximize efforts for advancing women's rights. It was even suggested that a mounting sense of mutual insecurity in Zimbabwe may provide greater incentives for UN agencies and women's NGOs to further engage in constructive collaboration. As James A. Paul states: "necessity and creativity combine to produce innovation."¹ If this is true, then it appears that change may *indeed* provide the impetus for the UN and NGOs to interact, and even connect, in more imaginative ways.

The second lesson raised from this study is that *as a cooperative vision has evolved, a willingness to actually engage in partnership has also emerged*. At the global level, increasing numbers of NGOs are playing a crucial and energetic role

¹ James A. Paul, NGOs, Civil Society and Global Policy Making (June 1996) [Online]. Available: <http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/analysis/analysis.htm> [2000, July 31].

in the UN's technical and operational affairs, as well as the functions of governance and decision-making. Some even suggest that UN politics can no longer be understood without evaluating the role of NGOs in most areas of global concern. The UN has likewise shown a willingness to build capacity through partnership, not only asserting the need to meet global demands by connecting government, civil society and IGOs in common cause, but also showing embryonic signs of opening to deeper collaborative endeavours in the local sphere. The result has been a considerable evolution of NGO presence in the UN system overall.

Similarly, as economic pressures have begun to shift government attention away from gender issues, Zimbabwean NGOs have shown a special openness toward partnership by connecting an array of activists and analysts in common cause. The case study further reveals that despite a number of concerns regarding partnership in practice, Zimbabwean NGOs and UN agencies not only continue to engage in partnership, but also see the concept as a worthwhile objective. The problem is not *whether* to engage in partnership, but *how*.

And thirdly, this study emphasizes the idea that *while most use the language of partnership to describe UN-NGO relationships, those involved in collaboration do not necessarily believe that they are close to fully actualizing the concept*. Instead, although the discourse of partnership conveys a relationship of equality and mutual support, underlying power disparities may continue to plague collaborative relationships in practice. These underlying power disparities then threaten to

distort the content and approach of partnership, often leading to relationships that are neither evenhanded nor characterized by mutual support.

What is especially interesting about this last finding is its implications for the theory of functionalism. It was argued in Chapter Two that functionalists underestimate the importance of politics as a barrier to cooperative endeavour; that is, while functionalists contend that the rewards of technical collaboration will dissolve political loyalties, the reality is that frequently, such cooperation is more strongly influenced *by* politics than the other way around.² The case study of UN agencies and women's NGOs in Zimbabwe seems to confirm this assertion, revealing that despite efforts to collaborate in common cause, the practice of partnership remains plagued by issues of power and control. In other words, habits of cooperation remain painfully dependent on the primacy of power.

By choosing to balance a functionalist vision with a more practical and qualitative approach to UN-NGO relationships, this study aimed to contend with the complexity, interdependence and dynamism of the contemporary world. It directly assessed the nature of the relationship between women's NGOs and UN agencies in Zimbabwe in order to better discern the quality of contact between, and specific roles and functions of, these actors. And finally, it served as a prism which not only highlighted the emerging significance of UN-NGO cooperation in a specific context, but also the form such partnerships might take if they are to respond best to global demands.

This pragmatic approach was a crucial step in the study of UN-NGO interaction for one major reason: although previous research reveals that cooperative efforts are both feasible and desirable, useful statistical data and even basic descriptive information about the UN-NGO phenomenon are still in their infancy. This study therefore aimed to contribute information and insights in this direction.

Above all, findings underscored the need for clarity in the midst of complexity. They highlighted the importance of clearly defining the terms of partnership, while recognizing that divergent motivations and expectations also exist. They pointed to the importance of acknowledging both the problems and possibilities of partnership, while approaching each of these realities with a sense of purpose and care. And above all, this study revealed the urgency for dialogue among all participants of UN-NGO collaboration if constructive and sustainable partnerships are to be achieved.

Given that research about the UN-NGO phenomenon is still in its infancy, however, further studies will be necessary if the complexities and possibilities of collaboration are to be fully understood. Additional statistical data and basic descriptive information will be essential in building a more comprehensive understanding of such linkages, as will studies which examine the practice of partnership across various contexts. It will also be important to examine the role of other global actors, such as the state and broader civil society, in influencing the

² See Chapter Two, Section 2.2 Theoretical Framework.

evolution and practice of UN-NGO partnerships. And finally, it would be prudent to investigate the potential dangers of such relationships. For instance, is it possible that UN-NGO partnerships will serve to dampen the activist role of NGOs? As Charles Abugre fears: “The partnership concept could have the effect of eroding the social consciousness of NGOs and co-opting them into the liberalisation agenda as ‘beneficiaries’, ‘contractors’, clients and ‘capacity builders’.”³ Or, could UN-NGO linkages serve to erode connections between NGOs themselves? These and many other questions will be crucial considerations for future inquiry.

It must again be emphasized that this study did not seek to resolve the paradox of partnership, but rather to explore how best to manage it and learn from the experiences described. It provided a platform upon which to begin unraveling and decoding the constraints that impinge on UN-NGO relationships, as well as the prospects for improvement. And in doing so, this study showed that what lies within the “‘turbulent field’ of international relations”, as Ernst Haas calls it, is hope.⁴

As Ashoka, an organization dedicated to supporting social entrepreneurship, explains: “Each idea is, like a great tree, by itself handsome and useful. However,

³ Charles Abugre, Partners, Collaborators or Patron-Clients: Defining Relationships in the Aid Industry. Background document prepared for CIDA/Canadian Partnership Branch (Aug. 16, 1999): 16 [Online]. Available: [http://fly.web.net/ccic/devpol/CA10 Partners Collaborators or Patron-Clients 1999.htm](http://fly.web.net/ccic/devpol/CA10%20Partners%20Collaborators%20or%20Patron-Clients%201999.htm) [2000, July 31].

⁴ Cited in Sandra J. Maclean, NGO Partnership and Sustainable Democratic Development with Lessons from a Canadian-Zimbabwean Case Study, Ph.D. diss., Dalhousie University, 1997 (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1998), 30.

only when one suddenly sees them all together can one see the forest.”⁵ The solution to any social problem, in other words, is to promote collaboration among an array of actors who share the power of a common vision or idea. While often a hazardous endeavour, NGOs and UN agencies across the globe are presently engaged in collaborative relationships that seek to contribute meaningfully to the well-being of our world. This seems reason enough to continue exploring how best to negotiate the problems of partnership, to gain a better understanding of its potential benefits, and above all, to encourage conversation and imagination among those already engaged in the collaborative pursuit.

⁵ Ashoka Innovators for the Public, www.ashoka.org.

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APPENDIX A

Participating Organizations

The Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights)

Box 2192, 288 H. Chitepo Ave/ Cnr 7th St., Harare, Zimbabwe TEL: (263-4) 737435 FAX: 720331
EMAIL: zwrcn@zwrcn.org.zw

ZimRights is an indigenous non-profit making NGO that was founded in 1992 with the goal to develop a culture of human rights among individuals and all sectors of society in Zimbabwe. Primary activities include human rights education, research & documentation, legal assistance, and advocacy work. The Secretariat is based in Harare, but active members and branches of the organization operate throughout Zimbabwe. A bimonthly newsletter is also distributed in order to raise human rights concerns and to link the membership.

WiLDAF-Zimbabwe

Box 4622, Zambia House, 2nd Floor, Union Ave / J. Nyere Way, Harare, Zimbabwe TEL: (263-4) 752105
FAX: 781886 EMAIL: wildaf@mango.zw

WiLDAF is a pan-African network dedicated to promoting and strengthening strategies which link law and development in order to promote a culture for the exercise of and respect for women's rights in Africa. The network brings together over 350 organisations and 1200 individuals who share this objective and who are operating at the local and national level in 24 African countries to make it a reality. WiLDAF-Zimbabwe is the focal point of the WiLDAF Regional Secretariat, which aims to specifically address Zimbabwean concerns.

Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC)

Box CR 486, Cranborne, Harare; 22 Jesmond Road, Hatfield, Harare, Zimbabwe TEL: (263-4) 572063/81
FAX: 572056

A prominent actor in the human rights arena since well before independence, the ZCC is a vocal critic of flagrant state-sponsored human rights violations. Especially significant has been their critical focus on the ESAP, as well as their efforts in human rights education.

Women's Action Group

Box 135, 11 Lincoln Road, Avondale, Harare, Zimbabwe TEL: (263-4) 339161 FAX: 339161

Established in 1983, WAG aims to promote the economic socio-political, legal, educational and cultural advancement of women in Zimbabwe. To this end, the organization advocates for gender sensitive laws and policies in Zimbabwe; promotes, protects and defends the rights of Zimbabwean women; creates public awareness about economic, health and legal rights of women; and, enables women to be directly involved in making informed decisions on issues that affect their lives. Counselling in legal and health issues is also available, and publications and newsletters are distributed on a regular basis.

The Musasa Project

Box A712, 64 Selous Ave, Avondale, Harare, Zimbabwe TEL: (263-4) 794983 FAX: 734381
EMAIL: musasa@mango.zw

Founded in January 1988, the Musasa Project aspires to be a leading activist organisation that serves Zimbabwean society in general through public education, counselling, target research and networking around issues of gender violence. Their work is meant to influence necessary changes in attitudes, policies

and laws in order to reduce gender violence, with the overall aim to end marginalisation of women and children, and to free them to participate in the development of society. Counselling and shelter services are also available.

Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN)

Box 2192, 288 Herbert Chitepo Ave, Harare, Zimbabwe, TEL: (263-4) 737435/702198 FAX: 720331
EMAIL: zwrcn@zwrcn.org.zw

Established in 1990, the ZWRCN offers a vast documentation centre, which is open to all members of the public and provides an enormous selection of resources surrounding the issue of women's rights. The ZWRCN also distributes a quarterly newsletter, and prepares numerous publications, discussion papers, workshop reports, fact sheets and bibliographies on gender issues. In addition, the organization is involved in research & advocacy, gender training, and a rural libraries programme.

Jekesa Pfungwa/Vulinqondo

Box C4 2811 Causeway, 44 Logan Road, Hatfield, Harare, Zimbabwe TEL/FAX: (263-4) 570846

An organization with field workers in 34 rural districts of Zimbabwe who provide training for women in the following 5 focus areas: food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, income generation, organizational development and gender issues.

Men's Forum on Gender

Box 1524, 285 Samora Machel Ave, Eastlea, Harare, Zimbabwe TEL/FAX: (263-4) 776627
EMAIL: ess@mango.zw

The Men's Forum on Gender aims to raise awareness on gender issues specifically among men. A recent initiative included organizing awareness outreach programmes on gender violence targeting men.

UNIFEM – Regional Programme for Southern Africa

UNIFEM was created in 1976 to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. It works to ensure the participation of women at all levels of development planning and practice, and serves as a catalyst within the UN system, supporting efforts that link the needs and concerns of women to all critical issues on the national, regional and global agendas.

UNIFEM is represented at the regional and country level by its Regional Programme Advisors. They are the front-line of contact between UNIFEM and its partners and clients, developing and overseeing UNIFEM's projects in their regions. The Regional Programme Director for southern Africa is Martha Mahonde, and may be contacted at: martha.mahonde@undp.org

Further information about UNIFEM is available at www.unifem.undp.org/about.htm

UNDP – Zimbabwe Country Office

Established in 1965, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the United Nation's largest source of assistance for development and the main body for coordinating its development work. Its mission is to help countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable human development by assisting them to build their capacity to design and carry out development programmes. UNDP's overriding goal is poverty eradication through sustainable human development, but is also involved in issues of employment creation and sustainable livelihoods, the empowerment of women, and the protection and regeneration of the environment.

UNDP resident representatives normally serve as resident coordinators of the operational activities of the United Nations system, supporting at the request of governments the coordination of development and humanitarian assistance. The Zimbabwe Country Office may be contacted at: registry.zw@undp.org

Further information about UNDP is available at: <http://www.undp.org/toppages/discover/index.html>

UNFPA – Zimbabwe Country Office

Founded in 1969, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is the world's largest internationally funded source of population assistance to developing countries. The main objectives of the fund are (1) to assist developing countries in providing quality reproductive health and family planning services; (2) to advance the strategy endorsed by the 1994 International conference on Population and Development (ICPD); and, (3) to promote cooperation and coordination among United Nations organizations, bilateral agencies, governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector in addressing issues of population and development, reproductive health, gender equality and women's empowerment.

In Africa, UNFPA is working to reduce some of the region's poor reproductive health indicators, such as high levels of maternal and infant mortality and low use of modern contraceptives. It also helps to develop information and service programmes that will reach out to young people and help them to maintain their reproductive and sexual health, and reduce the number of adolescent pregnancies. For information about the Africa Programme and Activities, contact: africa.info@unfpa.org

Further information about UNFPA is available at: <http://www.unfpa.org/about/brochure/main.htm>

UNESCO – Zimbabwe Field Office

The main objective of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is to contribute to peace and security in the world by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science, culture and communication in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations. To fulfill its mandate, UNESCO performs five principal functions, including: prospective studies; the advancement, transfer and sharing of knowledge; standard-setting action; expertise; and, exchange of specialized information.

The Zimbabwe Field Office serves as a focal point and resource centre for inter-country activities, especially involving higher education, distance education, culture, human rights, peace and democracy, HIV/AIDS, science and technology, environment and population education, girls and women education. The office also acts as a relay for UNESCO's inputs into the world Solar Summit Process and activities in other areas developed by other offices and Headquarters, including capacity building initiatives intended to strengthen the management of development co-operation programmes in the Member States of the sub-region. The Director of the Zimbabwe Field Office is Mr. A. Mauno Mbamba, and may be contacted at: harare@unesco.org

Further information about UNESCO's Zimbabwe Office is available at: <http://www.unesco.org/general/eng/about/office/external/harare/index.htm>

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire for Local NGOs

International Organizations and Local NGOs: Strengthening Linkages

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain a better understanding of the working relationship between local women's human rights NGOs and UN agencies in Zimbabwe, and to determine how to strengthen this linkage in order to best serve the needs of both levels.

Please respond to as many of the questions below as possible, on a separate sheet if you prefer. Your answers will remain entirely confidential.

Any information (pamphlets, etc.) that you can provide about your organisation would be greatly appreciated.

Name of Organisation:

Name of Contact:

Position:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

Email:

Website:

1. Please list any UN agencies that your NGO has contact with.

2. How would you describe the main role(s) of these UN agencies in your organisation, if any?

3. Please list up to **two** major activities or programmes that you have worked on with a UN agency recently.

Activity/Programme 1

UN Agency _____

Programme or Activity _____

What was your organisation's role? _____

What was the UN agency's role? _____

Describe any positive outcomes that came out of this collaboration. Explain.

Describe any specific challenges that emerged as a result of this collaboration. Explain.

How could the UN agency have served you better?

Activity/Programme 2

UN Agency _____

Programme or Activity _____

What was your organisation's role? _____

What was the UN agency's role? _____

Describe any positive outcomes that came out of this collaboration. Explain.

Describe any specific challenges that emerged as a result of this collaboration.

Explain.

How could the UN agency have served you better?

4. Do you think that steps should be taken to strengthen the partnership between your organisation and UN agencies? YES / NO (circle one)

5. If YES:

What could UN agencies do to strengthen their relationship with local NGOs?

What could NGOs do to strengthen their relationship with UN agencies?

6. Rate the following UN roles in their order of importance, according to **what you think these agencies currently offer your organisation** (1=most important):

___ Offer access to funding

___ Collaboration in implementing programmes/projects

___ Act as intermediaries between NGOs and government

___ Offer new ideas for programmes/projects

___ Facilitate networking with other organisations

___ Provide Research Data

___ Other: _____

___ _____

___ _____

7. Rate the following UN roles in their order of importance, according to **what you think these agencies should offer your organisation** (1=most important):

___ Offer access to funding

___ Collaboration in implementing programmes/projects

___ Act as intermediaries between NGOs and government

___ Offer new ideas for programmes/projects

___ Facilitate networking with other organisations

___ Provide Research Data

___ Other: _____

___ _____

___ _____

8. Please feel free to attach additional comments or information.

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire for UN Agencies

International Organizations and Local NGOs: Strengthening Linkages

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gain a better understanding of the working relationship between local women's human rights NGOs and UN agencies in Zimbabwe, and to determine how to strengthen this linkage in order to best serve the needs of both levels.

Please respond to as many of the questions below as possible, on a separate sheet if you prefer. Your answers will remain entirely confidential.

Any general information (pamphlets, etc.) that you can provide about your agency would be greatly appreciated.

Name of Organisation:

Name of Contact:

Position:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

Email:

Website:

1. Please list any local women's human rights NGOs your agency has contact with in Zimbabwe.

2. How would you describe the main role(s) of these NGOs in your agency, if any?

-
-
-
3. Please list up to **two** major activities or programmes that you have worked on in collaboration with a local women's human rights NGO recently in Zimbabwe.

Activity/Programme 1

NGO _____

Programme or Activity _____

What was your agency's role? _____

What was the NGO's role? _____

Describe any positive outcomes that came out of this collaboration. Explain.

Describe any specific challenges that emerged as a result of this collaboration.
Explain.

How could the NGO have served you better?

Activity/Programme 2

NGO _____

Programme or Activity _____

What was your agency's role? _____

What was the NGO's role? _____

Describe any positive outcomes that came out of this collaboration. Explain.

Describe any specific challenges that came out of this collaboration. Explain.

How could the NGO have served you better?

4. Do you think that steps should be taken to strengthen the partnership between your agency and local women's human rights NGOs in Zimbabwe? YES / NO (circle one).

5. If YES:

What could NGOs do to strengthen their relationship with UN agencies?

What could UN agencies do to strengthen their relationship with local NGOs?

6. Rate the following UN roles in their order of importance, according to **what you think your agency currently offers local NGOs** (1=most important):

- ___ Offer access to funding
- ___ Collaboration in implementing programmes/projects
- ___ Act as intermediaries between NGOs and government
- ___ Offer new ideas for programmes/projects
- ___ Facilitate networking with other organisations
- ___ Provide Research Data
- ___ Other: _____
- ___ _____
- ___ _____

7. Please feel free to attach additional comments or information.

APPENDIX D

Basic Indicators of Zimbabwe

Capital	Harare (Population 1.2 million)*
Languages	English (official), Shona, Ndebele
Population	11.5 million (roughly 5.7 million women)
Birth Rate	31.32 births/1,000 population
Death Rate	20.09 deaths/1,000 population
Life Expectancy	Male 39.12; Female 39.19
Total Fertility Rate	3.86 children/woman
Infant Mortality Rate	61.75 deaths/1,000 live births
Religion	Syncretic 50%; Christian 25%; Indigenous 24%; Muslim 1%
Literacy	Male 90%; Female 80% (1995 est.)
Labor Force	Agriculture 70%; Transport & Services 22%; Industry 8%
External Debt	US\$ 4.8 billion (1996 est.)

Source: CIA, The World Fact Book 1998: Zimbabwe [Online]. Available: www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/zi.html [1999, September 3]. (*Source: World Almanac 1998, 1067)

APPENDIX E

Summary of Zimbabwe NGOs Shadow Report on CEDAW

-
- Issue 1: Discrimination against women in law still exists in Zimbabwe.**
- (i) in the substance of the law – for example, while section 23 of the Constitution protects women from discrimination, it specifically exempts from its coverage *any laws which give effect to customary law*.
 - (ii) in the administration of the law – laws are often inaccessible to women as a result of bureaucratic procedures and requirements; also, because enacted laws have not been adequately disseminated, many women lack the legal literacy necessary to use existing laws.
 - (iii) in the environment within which law operates – social norms often sanction discrimination, which means that even gender-neutral laws may work against them.
-

Issue 2: There are inadequate administrative procedures to underpin laws intended to end discrimination against women

The national machinery charged with effective gender justice is woefully inadequate. For example, the women's affairs unit in the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Cooperatives is extremely understaffed and underfunded; and, neither the Ombudsperson's Office nor the government's legal aid office are gender specific in their operations.

Issue 3: Women are not fairly and effectively represented in decision-making positions at all levels of society.

Democratization processes have thus far done little to give equitable representation to the female half of the population. The culture of decision-making within the existing political structures is not conducive to women's participation. The voting process does not revolve around women's concerns, nor do most political parties have an agenda on women.

Issue 4: Health services remain inaccessible, costly, understaffed and are characterized by shortages of medical supplies.

Many people in rural areas must travel long distances in order to reach a clinic, often walking 3 hours or more. Clinics in some rural areas are being run by Red Cross Nurses or Nurse Aides who are neither qualified to run clinics nor covered by the Ministry of Health. Inadequate numbers of ambulances between district and central hospitals, and the unavailability of telephone service in district hospitals and clinics have caused delays in referrals to Central Maternity Hospitals during the critical period of delivery. Due to rising costs, it is now common for pregnant women to make initial medical visits in the third trimester, thus increasing the risk of complications. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has negatively affected women both socially and economically, as they are left to provide most of the caring work which sufferers require.

Issue 5: Women do not have the same access to economic resources and opportunities as men.

Women with substantial business knowledge may still lack access to information that puts them on par with men in competition for resources such as credit facilities, equipment, and time. Also, customary laws often bar women from owning land.

Issue 6: Women continue to have less access to education than men.

Because education is not free, parents tend to prefer sending boys to school at the expense of girls, especially at the tertiary level. Pregnancy and early marriages also continue to interrupt female attendance.

Issue 7: Women continue to be discriminated in employment.

Current laws relating to employment remain inadequate. For example, despite maternity leave provisions, women still lose 25-40 percent of their salary while away from work. Moreover, if women fail to return to work at the end of the maternity leave, they are obliged to repay the employer the amount received while away. Also, laws that specifically target sexual harassment do not exist, and export processing zones are exempt from the operation of the Labour Relations Act.

Issue 8: Women lack autonomy within the family.

For example, social norms often impede family planning measures because it remains largely acceptable for major life decision to be made for women by men as fathers, brothers, husbands] and sons. It follows that while in theory, women have the right to decide on family size, in reality, pressures to comply with their husbands often forces women to have more children than they may desire.

Issue 9: Violence against women in Zimbabwe continues unabated.

Social attitudes remain too accepting of violence against women; no laws or administrative structures specifically address the issue; and, very little statistical data has been collected.

*This report is a product of wide consultation among human rights organizations, development agencies and individual activists coordinated through Women's Action Group (WAG), an organization which deals with women's legal and health issues.

APPENDIX F**Members of the WiLDAF Network, Zimbabwe**

Bulawayo Legal Projects Centre
PO Box 1131, Harare

Bulawayo Women Lawyers Association
PO Box 1131, Bulawayo

Harare Legal Projects Centre
5th Floor Blue Bridge, Harare

Jekesa Pfungwa/ Vulinquondo
PO Box CY 2811, Causeway
Harare

Musasa Project
PO Box A 712
Avondale, Harare

Women's Action Group
PO Box 135, Harare

Women and AIDS Support Network
PO Box 1554, Harare

Women and Law in Southern Africa
PO Box UA 171
Union Ave, Harare

Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
Women's Desk
PO Box 3549, Harare

Zimbabwe Council of Churches
PO Box 3566, Harare

Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Assoc
6052/53 Gazaland
Western Triangle, Harare

Zimbabwe Women's Bureau
43 Hillside Road, Hillside, Harare

Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre & Network
PO Box 2192, Harare