

North-South Relations: Exploring the role of Italian NGOs in post-apartheid South Africa

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Abstract: *This article makes an expose of the role of NGOs using three case studies of Italian NGOs operating in South Africa as its methodology to articulate the aspect of development assistance within the context of North-South development cooperation. It posits a model for understanding NGOs based on two intersecting continua - of ideological independence on the vertical axis and sources of funding on the horizontal axis. This model is the major contribution of this article.*

The model defines those NGOs with a combination of little or no external funding and a lot of independence as sovereign gem NGOs. Those with a high level of independence coupled with high levels of foreign funding as a rarity hence called Rarity/Independent NGOs. These NGOs have foreign funding but follow their own agenda. NGOs termed Pawns are those with a lot of external funding and but little ideological independence. NGOs without external funding but parrot the agenda of an external organisation are termed slave/dependent/puppet NGOs characterised by low levels of external funding and low level of ideological independence. The article posits that the role of NGOs should be transformational rather than be paternalistic; the motives for intervention should be both philanthropic and developmental in order to bring legitimacy to Northern NGOs operating in the South.

Key words: Foreign Policy, Non-Governmental Organisation, International Cooperation, Development Assistance, Politics

Introduction

Italy and South Africa somehow share a similar history, one that was characterised by foreign domination albeit at different historical junctures. Italy shook off foreign domination and became a unified nation state in 1870. South Africa on the other hand shook off the shackles of domination under apartheid in 1994. Hence, we have two democracies, one relatively old and one relatively new. In the same vein Italy as an old democracy entrenched itself in the world economic system and became one of the eight industrial powerhouses of the world. South Africa, as a new democracy, is regarded as an emerging economy, characterised by dualism, namely a developed and a less developed economy. However, it is important to note that Italy achieved its industrial status following the implementation of the US backed Economic Recovery Program (ERP) under the Marshall Plan. Italy's economy had been crippled by its defeat in the Second World War that ended in 1945. South Africa with its policy of separate development, apartheid, created economic disparities that presently call for assistance from different stakeholders, including foreign aid, to redress. It is against this backdrop that the Italian Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have ventured onto the South African development landscape in a quest to address problems created by apartheid.

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The term NGO has a very broad application in South Africa far and beyond its traditional usage. As argued by Abugre (1994: 121) the term, in South Africa, applies to a complex web of civil society organisations, quasi-government bodies like the Independent Development Trust (IDT), organisations affiliated to liberation movements and even multi-lateral agencies. Some sections of South African opinion classify even the European Union (EU) and the World Bank and bilaterally funded projects as NGOs once they are not executed directly by government ministries. Some Italian NGOs fall within this categorisation. It is therefore the preoccupation of this paper to explore the motive of Italian aid to South Africa in general and the Italian NGOs' role in particular.

This would be achieved by carrying out a historical scan of the South African-Italian relationship (pre and post-apartheid). Of interest would be Italian foreign policy vis-à-vis development cooperation, programme areas, types and mandate of NGOs, beneficiaries and impact of their programmes. As a point of departure it is important to highlight the general characteristics of developing countries and the historical background of South Africa in particular, as this provides setting for development assistance.

General characteristics of developing countries

Despite the obvious diversity of countries and classification schemes employed by various multi-lateral institutions most developing nations share a set of common characteristics. South Africa with its two-tiered economy, one rivalling other developed countries and the other with only basic infrastructure, shares most of the common characteristics of developing countries. According to Todaro (2000: 30) most developing countries share common problems in varying degrees. These problems are linked to their economic, social and political situations. Most of these problems relate to

“... widespread and chronic absolute poverty, high and rising levels of unemployment and underemployment, wide and growing disparities in the distribution of income, low and stagnating levels of agricultural productivity, sizable and growing imbalances between urban and rural levels of living and economic opportunities, serious and worsening environmental decay, antiquated and inappropriate educational and health systems, severe balance of payments and international debt problems and substantial and increasing dependence on foreign technologies, institutions and values systems”, (Todaro, 2000: 32).

In as much as there are common characteristics, it is important to note that the size, historical and colonial background, endowments in terms of physical and human resources, ethnic and religious composition, industrial base, foreign dependence and power distribution of countries determine their structural diversity. As a case in point, South Africa, has a broad-based, industrialised economy that paradoxically exhibits most of the characteristics associated with developing economies. Todaro (2000) notes that this is reflected in the division of labour between formal and informal sectors, a highly uneven distribution of wealth and income, a dependence on commodity exports and a legacy of government intervention. This was exacerbated and entrenched with the institution of apartheid by the National Party in 1948. This skewed the economy to the extent that South African whites (14% of the population) own 88% of the country's private property and along

with foreign investors, over 90% of commerce and industry, (Todaro, 2000). This effectively “shuts out” the majority black population; over 50% who live below the poverty datum line and 40% of rural black children are stunted by malnutrition. Income distribution remains one of the most unequal in the world. Hence, UNDP (1994) was apt when it observed that “... if white South Africa were a separate country, it would rank 24th in the world (just after Spain). Black South Africa would rank 123rd in the world (just above Congo). Not just two different people’s, these are almost two different worlds”. This scenario, on one hand, has been compounded by an alarming increase in HIV/AIDS, currently at 18.8% prevalence rate for adults aged 15 – 49 years, (http://www.unaids.org/en/Regions_Countries/south_africa.asp). On the other hand unemployment in the Oct-Dec 2011 quarter was 23.9% (Stats Sa, 2012). With just over a decade following the democratic dispensation, the South African government is still optimistic of future economic growth, reduction in unemployment and correcting the existing inequities.

The enormity of problems in developing countries, South Africa included, call for comprehensive intervention strategies whether local or foreign. One strategy had been the channelling of foreign direct investment (FDI) to developing countries. According to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Council of Ministers, foreign investment holds the key to improved growth. It is stated, “... sub-Saharan Africa attracts between 1% and 2% of global foreign direct investment”. The greatest of this goes to Nigeria, South Africa and Angola, (www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid/insight/insight_africa/). It is evident that problems in developing countries set the tone for intervention, be it in foreign direct investment or otherwise. It is under such auspices that the Italian government through its sectors, public, private and voluntary, has taken a keen interest in ameliorating some problems bedevilling the South African community. Before analysing their impact on South African development it is necessary to first explore the policy that guides such intervention. In this regard, history of relations between the two countries would be explored, how Italian development cooperation is viewed, how NGOs are incorporated into law and their areas of operation.

History of Relations between South Africa and Italy

As insinuated above, for one to understand the role of foreign aid in promoting development, one must first grasp the history and objectives of Italian foreign aid as well as that of other donors. From a bilateral point of view, it is important to note that Italian-South African relations stretch from apartheid to the present day. This is mainly because the two countries share a common history, one that is punctuated by struggle for independence, freedom and unity. This is epitomised in the remarks of President Mbeki during the Italian President Ciampi’s state visit to South Africa in 2002. Mbeki remarked that:

“... as South Africans who are engaged in what we call with pride our African renaissance, we cannot but admire and draw strength from the history of your country and the revolutionary changes that came about as part of and as result of what we now call the Italian renaissance”, (<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/anctoday/2002/at11.htm>).

Owing to this convergence, it was natural for Italy as an older democracy to condemn apartheid and participate in the restoration of human dignity and equality for all the people of South Africa. This was achieved through policies that sought to minimise trade relations with the apartheid regime. Later Italy was to participate in European Union Policy on Africa. This resulted in the 1986 European Economic Community (EEC) ban on trade and investment with apartheid South Africa, (<http://www.countrystudies.us/south.africa164.htm>). President Mbeki acknowledged "... we will not forget the contribution of your country to our liberation struggle, and especially the outstanding assistance by the people of Regio Emboli to our movement", (<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/anctoday/2002/at11.htm>). It is evident that Italy was averse to the system of apartheid as shown by its involvement in the slapping of sanctions against the apartheid regime and offering of material assistance to the suffering masses of South Africa. The relationship continued to grow up to the normalisation or political transition and the democratic dispensation in South Africa.

Following the normalisation of political activity in South Africa, Italy was instrumental in having the European Union (EU) sanctions lifted. In fact, it was the first member of the Union to sign an economic agreement with South Africa, (<http://www.dfa.gov.za/foreign/bilateral/italy.html>). The EU also accorded South Africa duty-free entry on most of its exports in early 1995, and the two were negotiating terms for the purchase of South Africa's agricultural products. In 1996 the EU also granted South Africa a qualified membership in the Lome Convention that came into effect in 1997. This accorded African, Pacific and Caribbean countries preferential access to European markets, (<http://www.countrystudies.us/south.africa/64.htm>). Italy is also supportive of South African instituted New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Such a relationship ushered in Italy as one of South Africa's leading trading partners and in 2001 it was the 6th largest trading partner. In the same vein investment inflows increased as compared to the period prior to 1995. The same could be said of tourism and Italian funding for development assistance, (ibid).

It is important to understand the motive behind such cooperation. This would be achieved by glancing at driving forces behind Italian foreign policy vis-à-vis development assistance to third countries in general and South Africa in particular. It would also be of interest to assess the expectations of South Africa in receiving development aid. Hyatt (2000 cited in Grodeland, 2010) notes that about 95% of Bosnia's NGOs received foreign funding in 1999, although this proportion has been somewhat reduced in recent times. NGOs in Serbia played a key role in removing Milos̄ević from office, in Bosnia distributing humanitarian assistance during the war to internally displaced persons, while those in Macedonia were active during elections (Grodeland, 2010). Deacon and Stubbs cited in Grodeland (2010: 177) suggest that instead of strengthening civil society, Western donors have been castigated of engaging in a new form of "colonialism" or "new feudalism", by foisting their agendas on local communities and keeping local NGOs in 'a state of dependency'.

Italian Foreign Policy

Having looked at the history of relations between Italy and South Africa, it is important to draw out what motivates Italian foreign policy. This is an attempt to assess whether foreign policy has an impact on the work of Italian NGOs or development aid in general. Italy's involvement in Africa, just like other western countries, is driven by challenges and opportunities that Africa poses in terms of global security and other interests of the international community. The proximity of Africa to Europe and therefore Italy means Italy is also affected by problems emanating from Africa. This means Italy finds itself involved in Africa's problems that range from health and humanitarian emergencies, environmental degradation, and conflicts to poverty among others. Away from the gloomy side of things, Africa wields great economic potential characterised by untapped natural resources and potential markets. Though implicitly stated it is clear that Italy would want to cooperate with Africa as it relies on some of the resources from Africa such as gold, diamonds and steel products. As acknowledged by the Italian Foreign Affairs, development cooperation is premised on two priorities. These are stated as:

“... the need for solidarity to safeguard the life and human dignity of all the planet's inhabitants. The second is to employ cooperation to establish, improve and consolidate global economic interdependence, which will distribute economic growth to all people through market expansion and improved circulation of production. Italy's development cooperation policy intends to pursue these objectives with its economic, cultural and security diplomacy, consolidating our country's role and image worldwide”, (http://www.esteri.it/eng/4_28_66_75_247.asp).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs further observes that such cooperation stemmed out of a series of technical and economic assistance initiatives offered to former Italian colonies from the 1950s and 1960s onwards, (ibid). Law 38 of 1979 first regulated such assistance. This was revised in 1987 with the approval of Law 49. This followed the global reorganisation of systems linked to AID. There may be good intentions in promulgating such a law, however, the aid may come with strings attached. Italian cooperation normally entails recipient countries to “build and reinforce their institutions through good governance, respect for human rights and democratic participation in economic development of all members of society, without discrimination”, (http://www.esteri.it/eng/4_28_66_75_247.asp).

With such a foreign policy in place, it is natural for the Italian government to expect stakeholders from its land, in pursuit of development programmes in other areas, to further the aims of foreign policy. In this regard policy has been put in place to enable Italian NGOs to take up challenges in developing countries. Hence, any NGO that harbours thoughts of receiving assistance from government for its operational budget has to fulfil certain obligations. Such qualification is highlighted below.

NGO acknowledgement of qualification

For Italian organisations to function as NGOs as stipulated by article 28 of Italian Law no. 49 of 1987 paragraph 4, they must:

- be non-profit and obliged by law to utilise all revenue, even that deriving from accessory commercial activities,
 - not be dependent on profit-generating entities nor associate in any way with the interests of Italian or foreign public or private profit-generating entities,
 - be willing to undergo periodic controls as deemed necessary by the Directorate General for Development Cooperation for the purposes of maintaining qualification;
 - fulfil the obligation to present an annual report of the status of the programmes underway.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs oversees the law governing operations of NGOs with developing countries. Of importance in this regard is the associated executive regulations (article 30, 40 and 41). If NGOs fulfil these obligations, they are then deemed as qualified by the Decree of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Qualified NGOs can apply to receive contributions for the cooperation activities they promote for amounts of up to 70% of the total budget of the programmed initiative. They can also be tasked with carrying out specific cooperation programmes whose costs are covered by DGCS funding. The following types of activities are usually considered for qualification:
- carrying out of short and medium term programmes in developing countries,
 - selection, training and deployment of civil service volunteers,
 - on-site training of developing country citizens.

(http://www.esteri.it/eng/4_28:66_75_247.asp).

It is important to note that Italian cooperation initiatives are also carried out in harmony with other sectors of its foreign policy such as peacekeeping initiatives and management of migration. Bilateral and multilateral (UN, World Bank, OECD) and EU regulations also drive Italian development cooperation. The current buzz is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) brought forth by the Millennium Declaration of the UN General Assembly in September 2000. The Italian NGOs operating in Africa are expected to play a role in these commitments. For a list of these commitments see, (www.un.org/millenniumgoals/). This raises questions as to how autonomous or independent of government are Italian NGOs. The very fact that NGOs owe their legitimacy to the state in terms of registration or recognition and financing somehow effectively means they are an extension of government. The fact that they are “controlled” by the state also raises questions on accountability. To whom are they are accountable? Is it to the people they serve or the organ that finances them? Does this assistance really contribute to sustainable development, and does it produce the intended results? Who defines the development problem, that is, who sets the agenda for policies and programmes? How are plans developed, who determines the objectives, the strategies, the timetable, the resources? How are plans implemented? Who manages, monitors, who is accountable? Does implementation build capacity? Who benefits from international assistance? How is the benefit measured? What is the impact on sustainable development? It could be a matter of opinion but one that is important in the quest to understand the landscape of cooperation between Italy and South Africa. It would be

necessary as well to glance at the flipside of relations vis-à-vis the expectations of South Africa in cooperating with Italy.

What South Africa expects from development assistance

It is crucial to unlock the expectations of South Africa as it joins the queue of aid-receiving nations. As observed by Fehnel in Fitzgerald et al (1997: 369) the South African government counts heavily on international assistance to support a wide range of initiatives in the public, parastatal and private sectors in a quest to shore up the economy from a decade of recession and give tangible meaning to hopes for a new dispensation. Thus, it is envisaged that cooperation and solidarity are necessary ingredients for solving some socio-economic dilemmas facing South Africa. This was epitomised by President Mbeki in 2002 when he received President Ciampi of Italy. He highlighted that:

“... it is in this context of common success in South Africa and the aspirations of all of Africa’s people that we feel so inspired that you come here as a brother and friend to us all. Like you, Mr President, our own actions are informed by our consciousness of the importance of solidarity, of the necessity of constructive engagement between North and South. In this context we are deeply appreciative of the critical role that Italy has played and will continue to play for the betterment of Africa and the world”, (<http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/anctoday/2002/at11.htm>).

In the same vein, South Africa expects buy-in to some of the continental programmes, such as the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) that are in place on the continent. Such a partnership is seen as an ingredient for success as Italy is one of the economic powerhouses in the world and one of the top trade and investment partners of South Africa. South Africa also expects cooperation in the development of small and medium sized enterprises (SMMEs), science and technology, arts, culture, education and sport.

It is clear that South Africa expects to gain materially or otherwise from cooperation with Italy and vice versa. It is evident from the South African point of view that without foreign assistance, development activities could be difficult to initiate. The question is whether such cooperation leads to sustainable development as would be later established in this paper. Before getting to that it is necessary to shift focus to particular Italian NGOs operating in South Africa. In this regard 3 Italian NGOs would be highlighted as case studies. This is to gain some insight into their operations rather than generalising, as it is not a representative sample. Hence, Italian NGOs namely CESVI, CISP and Xena would be described and their work analysed with a view of bringing to the fore their impact on the target population.

Description of Italian NGOs Operating in South Africa

1. CESVI – Coperazione e Sviluppo

CESVI is an Italian independent association, established in 1985 in Bergamo. It works in more than 30 countries all over the world, Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East. CESVI stands for Coperazione e Sviluppo, that is, Cooperation and Development. It claims as its

philosophy the idea of giving the recipients of aid a leading role, working together to own natural benefit. It is therefore committed to ensuring that international aid does not become mere charity nor is it influenced by the donors' self-interest.

CESVI's assistance to people in need around the world can be divided into three main categories:

- Immediate help to ensure survival and to overcome emergencies.
- Rehabilitation and reconstruction of systems destroyed by war or natural calamities.
- Cooperation programmes and projects for the development of underprivileged social groups and poor communities.

(www.cesvi.org).

CESVI has been present in South Africa since 2002. It is engaged in a project to fight HIV/AIDS in a shantytown on the periphery of Cape Town. It points to South Africa, where distribution of resources is dramatically unjust and social inequality feeds into most serious tensions. It further points to the fact that millions of people live in absolute poverty pushing most of them to the periphery of cities thereby creating shanty towns where social degradation is evident. Unemployment is between 60 and 80%, people lack access to water, health and sanitary services, domestic and street violence is rampant and the spread of HIV/AIDS is in catastrophic proportions. CESVI has a programme that attempts to address social and sanitary concerns of poor people and is working in the prevention of HIV/AIDS in the periphery of Cape Town. In 2005 CESVI also undertook the construction of a house or shelter for women who are victims of domestic and street violence. It also came up with an occupational plan for domestic refuse collection in zones not covered by public service. It collaborates with local partners and has recorded 1 000 people as direct beneficiaries and 120 000 people as indirect beneficiaries. It employs 10 people, 1 expatriate and 9 locals. It is financed by Fondazione Cariplo, Media Friends, Media World, Saturn and other private donors, (www.cesvi.org).

2. CISP – Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli

Translated in English, International Committee for the Development of People is a European NGO that was formally established in 1983. It is based in Italy and operates in international cooperation field and in the fight against social exclusion. One of CISP's main missions is to participate in the planning of development policies through a constructive dialogue with principal actors involved in their preparation and implementation. It carries out development, rehabilitation and humanitarian programmes as well as projects of applied research in about 30 countries in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Asia and Eastern Europe. Its priority sectors in development cooperation include rural development, food security (agriculture, fishing, aquaculture and small-scale breeding) and poverty alleviation, rural and urban health, education and training, natural resources and environmental management, and support to the peace processes). In emergency and humanitarian aid, CISP has been operating in the following contexts: global attention to refugee communities, returnees and displaced people, health services, disaster preparedness,

reconstruction and reactivation of productive activities after natural catastrophes or conflicts, (<http://www.cisp-ngo.org/ENG/ENGcontent.htm>).

When it comes to lessons, CISP notes that it learns from experience, drawing practical lessons from it as a way of improving the quality of the implemented activities. Therefore, on this basis, it edits publications in which it studies and deepens the theory behind the programmes run in the field.

As far funding is concerned, CISP's activities rely on contributions and funds from individuals and institutions. Among these are: the Commission of the European Union, the General Directorate for Development Cooperation of the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (DGCS-MAE) and the Department of Civil Protection. Other donors include UN agencies and institutions from other industrialised countries, governments of the countries where CISP works, foundations, universities, companies and charities, (<http://www.cisp-ngo.org/ENG/ENGcontent.htm>)

In South Africa CISP has supported the following projects:

Support for the implementation of the local business service centres strategy in the Northern Cape Province.

The aim is to support South Africa's poverty alleviation and reconstruction strategy through the improvement of the sub-sectors of SMME development training and employment creation.

Support to small enterprises in Northern Cape Province

The project aims at development of training materials, organisation of training courses for Department officials and small entrepreneurs and creation of a credit scheme for small enterprises.

Support to the programme of the "Local Business Service Centres" (LBSC) in Northern Cape Province

The project aims to support the development of micro and small-scale enterprises through the training and technical assistance.

Support to Civil Society's Organisations in the Northern Cape

The project aims at promotion of democracy and pluralism of civil society through strengthening of the role of NGOs in the analysis, participation and dialogue with other institutions in the province.

3. XENA

This is a cultural association based in Padova, Northeast of Italy. It was founded in 1995 and runs youth projects that are open to the participation of the countries that are not members of the European Union. This organisation runs the Euro-African Network, a training course in Cape Town in intercultural learning and youth working. The participants of this training course are drawn from youth workers from 7 countries, with as many cultures and languages, belonging to

Africa and Europe. Why was South Africa viewed as the ideal place for such a course? South Africa is viewed as a country with a particular background against which to develop and deepen intercultural issues. It's a country with 11 official languages, many ethnic groups and a historical/political situation that needs a lot of work to further breakdown the old prejudices and fences, (<http://www.xena.it/eurafnnet.html>). The project is run in collaboration with other youth trainers from Cape Town. It is viewed as creating the possibility of a rich network between Africa and Europe in the field of youth work. The project was funded by the European Union of which Italy is a member.

Discussion

At face value, the picture painted in the above sections shows the invaluable role played by Northern aid and NGOs towards the development of the South. Lipschutz (1992) and Mathews (1997) as cited in Reimann (2006), argue that the decline in the influence of the state and the spread of international activism resulting from the revolution in the information and technology field, spurred the growth of international NGOs. It is undoubted that Northern NGOs have filled in where national governments have failed. There are many instances where pockets of poverty have been alleviated. CESVI and CISP work in Cape Town is testimony to this. To add to this, the issue of capacity building among communities and their southern partners is evident. This is shown by the fact that most Italian NGOs are collaborating with local partners in order to reach their target areas. They have even chosen programme areas where government has not made its presence felt. The HIV/AIDS policy is a case in point for South Africa. The country has been blamed at highest level, such as UN forums, for not having progressive HIV/AIDS policies. No matter what intention, Italian NGOs such as CESVI and CISP have chosen to work in the area of health, where HIV/AIDS is a major component. The work of CESVI in HIV/AIDS prevention in the periphery of Cape Town has resulted in 1,000 direct beneficiaries and 120,000 indirect beneficiaries. One is bound to argue that this is a drop in the ocean given that over 5 million South Africans are infected and many more at great risk. What is obvious though is that they reached a segment of the population that would otherwise be "wiped off" due to government "inactivity" on the issue. There is a tendency in development literature to compare NGOs to governments in terms of scale. There is an argument to the effect that NGOs cover a small geographic area. This is clearly demonstrated by the case studies presented earlier. All organisations operate in different pockets of Cape Town. While this is valid an argument we beg to differ with the proponents. Our argument is that NGOs in general are not meant to replace or take over the functions of government. They are there to complement the efforts of governments, since they even owe their legitimacy to national governments. Politicians have, however, distorted this by telling people that NGOs would look after them when called to account for their inactivity. Therefore, comparing the capacity of NGOs to state capacity is not only unfair but borders on ignorance of what role each party is supposed to play. The emergence of a new pro-NGO norm internationally in the 1980s put "top-down" pressure on countries to involve NGOs in domestic and international politics giving the NGOs some legitimacy and political space in countries that previously did not sympathise with them (Reimann, 2006). He, thus, argues that

intergovernmental NGOs and NGOs have emerged in large part due to 'top-down processes of political globalization, i.e., the globalization of political structures, institutions, and Western liberal democratic values'.

NGOs constitute a major part of the Italian foreign policy. This is shown by the legislation governing their operations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs takes an active role in overseeing the legislation governing operations of NGOs. It even pays up to 70% of the operating budget of these NGOs. This shows growing confidence in NGOs by the Italian government to advance values of its foreign policy. This was unlike the period just after the democratic dispensation when foreign governments and donors channelled their funds to South African government's reconstruction and development programme (RDP), (Habib and Taylor, 1999). Donors now prefer to channel funds straight to NGOs for development work. Bilateral and multilateral funds are channelled to government though. The growing confidence may also be a manifestation of the belief that NGOs are in direct contact with the grassroots or local organisations and are more effective and efficient way of disbursing resources. In a way they are perceived as being in a better position to carry out the developmental approach to sustainable development or facilitate change.

The issue of funding is very contentious in development aid debate. The fact that most Italian NGOs derive their funding from their government raises eyebrows as to their sovereignty and accountability. Is it the question of "he who pays the piper calls the tune". In such a scenario it is difficult to ascertain the independence of Italian NGOs operating in South Africa. The question is whether they are carrying out surrogate activities or they are trying to alleviate the condition of the poor. Their accountability is also brought under the spotlight. Are they responsible to the people they serve or their funders in the North? The fact that their operations fit into activities, principles and legislation laid out by the Italian government, forces one to conclude that they are an extension of that country's foreign policy.

A scan of principles governing Italian NGOs' operations in Africa point to the need for development approach as opposed to the welfare approach. In fact, the work of CESVI and CISP is a move away from a welfare approach, one that is characterised by immediate relief from poverty through the provision of material and human resources to the poor – developmental approach. We see an approach that is characterised by support for projects aiming at increasing local capacity to meet the social and economic needs of the community. The support for the health and sanitation project and the capacitating of small to medium enterprises are cases in point to this effect. The fact that partners or collaborators are involved in the whole project cycle means they benefit in information and knowledge exchange. The project has also resulted in employment creation for locals. Although this is on a small scale, it can go a long way in changing the lives of those involved. In as much as Italian NGOs have been credited with facilitating change in South Africa's impoverished areas, yet they have also been criticised for not

addressing the economic and political relations within the country. It is common knowledge that structural factors are the major impediment to poverty alleviation. Any sustainable effort should work towards structural transformation, a terrain where many NGOs have been found wanting.

Partnership and collaboration are words that feature prominently in the rhetoric of Italian NGOs operating in South Africa. These words are much used and frequently abused. They have found credence in a world trying to move away from the master-serf relationship to that characterised by equality. In other words, partnership has become a politically correct phrase meant to legitimate the operations of Northern NGOs in the South. It may also be that donors in the North insist on this. Hence, it can be used as a gimmick to hoodwink the potential funders. Case examples in this paper show that Italian NGOs in South Africa rely on their “local partners” to implement the programmes. This relationship is aptly summarised by Rossiter and Palmer (1990: 44) who note that “... Northern NGOs need Southern partners much more avidly than vice versa. After all, they provide the justification for and means through which development work in the South can be conducted. But the relationship is fraught with possibilities for abuse, especially on the Northern side”. This has brought to the fore arguments about Northern paternalism characterised by transfer of resources to the South. In this regard, Northern NGOs provide significant sums of money to Southern counterparts in order to mobilise and educate public opinion within donor countries. Any bypassing of the Southern counterparts would run the risk of diminishing the interest and understanding of people in those countries of the needs and realities of communities in less developed countries, (Rossiter and Palmer, 1990). Some operational and pragmatic imperatives have necessitated the sprouting of NGOs as Reimann (2006) observes:

Wary of giving too much to governments in the developing world, unwilling to greatly expand the UN's operational capacity, and not always willing to expand their own bureaucratic and operational infrastructure, donor states have turned to service NGOs as a solution for implementing aid and providing relief in humanitarian crises (Reimann, 2006).

However, a case in point that illustrates the double standard of the relationship between Italian NGOs and their South African counterparts is the issue of funding. In as much as Northern NGOs use their Southern “partners” in fundraising drives and implementation, nowhere is it mentioned that they release funds to Southern NGOs to allocate as they see fit. Instead they (Southern partners) have to fit into a neatly packaged project. Salamon (1995 as cited in Reimann, 2006) claims that NGOs cannot survive without donations from private individuals as well as grants and subsidies from governments, elite institutions and foundations. It is the funders who have tended to define the agenda. NGOs are seen as societal actors who can ‘persuade, pressure and teach states new ideas, values, and practices’ (Reimann, 2006:59).

As alluded to earlier, it is fashionable to work with Southern “partners”. This qualifies for another scramble for Africa. In Southern Africa the trend has been to scramble for new partners in the newly independent states. When Zimbabwe attained its independence in 1980 there was an influx of Northern NGOs positioning themselves for post-independence development. With the

independence of Namibia in 1990 a scramble of partners by Northern NGOs was evident. This reached its peak with the independence of South Africa in 1994. As the new democracy in Southern Africa the scramble was unprecedented. Even those who supported apartheid wanted to be seen as contributing to the development of South Africa after the “evil” apartheid era. This meant having partners if they were to implement any programmes. The process even entailed claiming partners belonging to certain Northern NGOs. It is therefore not surprising that Xena chose South Africa as its ultimate destination for the implementation of its Euro-African Network project.

Towards a Framework/ Model for Understanding NGOs Based on their Independence and Funding

We posit the following model for NGOs based on two dimensions – the level of independence and the level of external funding (See Fig 1: Perceptual Map of NGOs). NGOs that belong in quadrant A are NGOs with little or no external funding, therefore, they are self-financing and enjoy a lot of independence. These NGOs have been called the *sovereign gem* NGOs. Those in quadrant B have a high level of independence coupled with high levels of foreign funding – these are a rarity hence called *Rarity/Independent* NGOs. These have foreign funding but follow their own agendas. NGOs in quadrant C are termed *Pawns* because they enjoy a lot of external funding and have little independence. In this case it is analogous to the case in which it is the piper who calls the tune. In quadrant D are NGOs without external funding but parrot the agenda of an external organisation. These are termed *slave/dependent/puppet* NGOs characterised by low levels of external and low level of ideological independence.

High level of independence	
Sovereign gem NGOs High level of independence and low level of external funding HL Quadrant A	<i>Independent</i> NGO (Rarity) High level of independence and high level of external funding HH Quadrant B
And Low level Of External funding Low level of external funding and low level of independence LL <i>Slave/Dependent/Puppet</i> NGOs Quadrant D	High level of External funding High level of external funding and low level of independence HL <i>Pawns</i> Quadrant C
Low level of independence	

Figure 1: Perceptual Map of NGOs

When we look at independence we are looking at ideological independence. The tendency has been that NGOs from the North because of ideological differences with Governments in the South work against these governments rather than with them especially those involved in advocacy and human rights issues especially where cultures and understanding of democracy is at crossroads and conflicting. This article adopts the definition of ideology from the American Heritage Dictionary (n.d), which defines ideology as a body of ideas reflecting the social aspirations of an individual, group, class, or culture or a 'set of doctrines or beliefs that form the basis of a political, economic, or other system'. Reimann (2006) observes that Non-western states, are skeptical of NGOs and thus view them as an imposition from "above" by wealthy, western countries.

In a study of Macedonian NGOs, Grodeland (2010) observes that all NGOs were largely negative about international NGO's despite their sources of funding. However, foreign-funded NGOs spoke well of the international community than those with mixed sources of funding (that is, comprising of local and foreign funding) who cherished "new thinking", but were not satisfied with NGO dependency syndrome. Those locally-funded NGOs harboured negative sentiments of the international community especially regarding the strings attached to the funding with some even accusing international organizations of criminality associated with money laundering. (Grodeland, 2010).

The role of a good NGO from the North is that of one that respects the Southern agenda, people-centred, people-focused, willing to learn and adapt, supports the ideals of self-reliance, empowerment, sustainability; advocates the cause and agenda of the South, one that is non-paternalistic, creates job opportunities for local people, facilitates rather dictate development initiatives, allows target beneficiaries to steer their own development and additionally one that shuns political patronage and immersion in local politics. Edwards (2004) as cited in Frödin, (2009) observes that NGOs are viewed as a source of common and shared meanings and a symbol of community solidarity as well as a 'counterbalance against both government and corporate power'. Given such non-hierarchical co-ordination and steeped in trust, loyalty as well as informal relationships, this presents a problem as some NGOs may become closed to outsiders, unaccountable for their actions and unrepresentative to outsiders and can conflict with other structures of governance (Rhodes, 2000 cited in Frodin, 2009).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has shown that Italian development cooperation has traditionally been undertaken for the main reasons of: humanitarian reasons; commercial interests; security objectives; historical and cultural links including international prestige. These motivations have been advanced by Italian NGOs operating in various capacities in South Africa. Reimann (2006) argues that participation in local and international fora has given NGOs an avenue to survive as organizations by virtue of access to decision-makers which in itself provides them with the legitimacy and influence they need to justify their existence. In as much as evidence points to the

overriding paternalistic orientation of NGOs in South Africa, it is also evident that they have made a positive contribution and difference in pockets where they operate. This is admissible given that NGOs are smaller than nation states in terms of capacity and resources. However, if Italian NGOs want to make a lasting impression on South African development scene they must:

- Continue to speak out about the causes of and possible solutions to poverty and underdevelopment. Highlighting macro changes in political and economic relationships between North and South could be one way to achieving this.
- Learn from experience and have flexible responses to different changing situations.
- Not rely on rhetoric.
- Assist South African NGOs establish and strengthen themselves, and to achieve a reasonable degree of financial autonomy.
- Be prepared to facilitate NGOs attempts to generate their own resources, for example, creation of financial reserves.

When beneficiaries are able to define their own agenda as a pillar of aid effectiveness, this allows donors to concentrate on building local capacity as well as institutions that can sustain growth (Rosenkranz, 2012). The role of NGOs is thus enormous given the enormity of the problems. We conclude that the role of NGOs should be transformational rather than be paternalistic; the motives for intervention should be philanthropic rather than charity in order to bring legitimacy to the operations of Northern NGOs operating in the South in mutually beneficial partnerships capable of sustaining growth.

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