

Southeast and Northeast Asian NGO Experiences: Intervening in State-led 'Economic Miracles'*

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During the past decade, people-to-people as well as people-to-state relations have been given a boost with the emergence of international as well as regional non-governmental coalitions. The People's Plan 21 (PP21), a gathering of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Asia-Pacific region which aims to come out with a pro-people development plan for the 21st century, is only one of the numerous examples of this trend. Other global NGO networks have been established to tackle specific concerns such as environment, human rights, and gender issues. Moreover, these Southeast Asian NGOs have also been collaborating with their counterparts not only in Asia but in the rest of the Third and First World as well.

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“With the current frenzy engulfing the Asian governments to take advantage of its current status as the world’s primary economic region, Asian NGOs have a crucial role in highlighting the pitfalls of development which are not only insensitive but also detrimental to the needs of the vast majority of the area’s population.”

Of significance is the role that their Northeast Asian neighbors, i.e., Japan and South Korea, has taken in actively participating in NGO regional and international networks. Its pertinence lies in the fact that, unlike their Southeast Asian counterparts, Japanese and Korean NGOs are operating in societies which are looked upon as economic ‘miracles’ with Japan being the only Asian (and even Third World) member of the Group of 7 (G7) power bloc. South Korea, on the other hand, has been accorded the enviable status of belonging to the elite club of newly industrialized countries (NICs).

With the current frenzy engulfing the Asian region’s governments to take advantage of its current status as the world’s primary economic region, Asian NGOs have a crucial role in highlighting the pitfalls of development which are not only insensitive but detrimental to the needs of the vast majority of the area’s population.

The process of capitalist industrialization in most Southeast Asian nations, for example, has not been accompanied by democratization. Its main features have been the centralization and concentration of economic power.¹ On the other hand, the Korean and Japanese development experiences reveal economic as well as political and socio-cultural problems accompanying their respective economic ‘miracles’ from which Southeast Asian NGOs can very well learn. These Northeast Asian NGOs, in turn, can also learn lessons from their Southeast Asian

¹Francis Loh Kok Wah, “Asean NGOs in the Post Cold War World.” Paper presented at the Conference on “Asia in the 1990s: Making and Meeting a New World”, 29-31 October 1993, Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, p. 3

counterparts, particularly, in the struggle of the latter to intervene actively in their respective government's drive towards NIC-dom.

Looking into the factors which gave rise to the emergence of these NGOs in their Southeast Asian and Northeast Asian contexts, the nature of alternative societies that they are proposing, and their ability to overcome the obstacles that they meet, may give a clue on their effectiveness and relevance as harbingers of a pro-people development. More importantly, the NGO movement may provide the seeds from which an alternative and democratic mode of development may ultimately emerge.

Emergence of Southeast Asian and Northeast Asian NGOs

Among the ASEAN members, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia can boast of an active NGO movement. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of Singapore, where NGO activists as well as organizations have been kicked out, because the government perceived their activities as 'subversive.' A similar situation exists in Burma where the repressive state machinery has prevented the emergence of people's organizations (POs) as articulators as well as implementors of grassroots interests and concerns.

In Vietnam, on the other hand, there are 'state-sponsored' NGOs, generally involve in conducting researches on Vietnam. In Cambodia, a lot of European and American NGOs are currently operating in the country, generally under United

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Nations protection. Local NGOs in the area, however, have remained very weak organizationally and financially.² Nevertheless, despite a politically hostile environment, Cambodia managed to produce two NGOs during the past years — one taking up women issues and another advocating human rights concerns.³

The rise of NGOs has been equated with the emergence of the middle-class in these Southeast Asian societies. This phenomenon is attributed to the rapid economic growth and capitalist industrialization of their countries. The middle-class sought to take advantage of their newly found economic clout by intervening in the political arena. A major concern raised was the manner in which the government was carrying out its developmental policies.⁴

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Among these countries, the Philippines has the most developed NGO movement which can be directly attributed to the inability of its government to address the people's concerns. NGOs began to sprout in the late 1960s when the government could not seem to extract itself from the political chaos engulfing the society so as to pay more attention to the needs of the people at the grassroots level.⁵

The problem grew worse under the martial law regime where economic repression was coupled with political

²Tarcisius Fernando, Coordinator for Education and Training, Asian Conference for People's Progress (ACPP). Interview, 6 June 1994, Hong Kong.

³“A New NGO is Born,” *Impact*, June 1993, Vol. 28, No. 6, p. 5.

⁴Mikio Oishi, “Role of Malaysian NGOs in the Resolution of Domestic Development-Related Conflicts,” Paper prepared for the Conference on “Conflict Resolution in the Asia-Pacific Region, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 22-26 May 1994, Penang, Malaysia, p. 6.

⁵Garilao, 1987, p. 114.

oppression. Thus, there emerged NGOs which were not only concerned with initiating livelihood projects at the grassroots level, but also involved in advocacy work, like organizing the peasants and workers against the abuses of the authoritarian state.

In the 1980s, the Philippine NGO movement gained more ground with the entry of 'new politics' from the First World, tackling issues such as environment, peace, and gender issues. Unlike in the advanced industrialized countries, these issues could not be devoid of a class bias. For example, the issue of peace was linked with the

presence of United States military bases in the country which was propagated by the Marcos government. The NGO movement, in general, perceived the Marcos Administration as being perpetuated by an elite class in Philippine society.

Thus, a strong bias of an influential sector of the country's NGO movement is towards the realization of the necessary structural changes — essentially, the transfer of power from the rich to the poor — as conditions for the attainment of genuine development. It is not surprising, therefore, that this NGO sector is linked with, or even emanates, from the various ideological forces spearheading the Philippine popular movement. This may also help to explain why the NGO movement in the Philippines has more depth and is much more vibrant than their counterparts in Southeast Asia.

Like in the Philippines, the emergence of Indonesian NGOs was given impetus with the imposition of authoritarian rule in the country, but unlike the former, the Suharto government succeeded in repressing its popular movements as well as its opposition political parties. Indonesia's long historical experience of a nationalist movement, as well as its strong tradition for popular organizations and self-help groups, however, saw the people seeking for a new venue by which to

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continue influencing government policies; and they found NGOs as a new means for articulating their demands.⁶

The major concern of these Indonesian NGOs, similar to their Philippine counterpart, is the government's 'top-down approach' to development which disregards inputs from the target-beneficiaries of development projects. Public debates concerning the impact of development on the conditions of living of the poor ensued. Moreover, people were furious on the inefficiency and corruption of the Indonesian government. Thus, there was a call for people participation in determining not only their economic but also their political future.⁷

It was only a matter of time when Indonesian NGOs would test the ground for advocacy work, particularly, in the area of human rights. To a certain extent, considering the repression under the Suharto government, they have been relatively successful with the ascendance of influential human rights NGO groups. As with other Southeast Asian NGOs, the Indonesian NGOs not only brought with them ideas but also technical assistance, organizational know-how, and financial assistance to their target-communities.⁸

Like in Indonesia, government repression in Thailand prevented the rise of NGOs. It was only in 1978, with the relaxation of political restrictions, that Thai NGOs began to engage in community development.⁹ The rationale was the same as that of their Philippine and Indonesian counterparts, i.e., in its pursuit of rapid economic development, the Thai government has neglected the 'basic needs' of a substantial portion of society.

⁶Aswab Mahasin, "NGOs and Political Alternatives." Paper prepared for the Fifth International NGO Forum on Indonesia (INGI) Conference, 24-26 April 1989, Newport, Belgium, p. 2.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Noriko Sakamoto, "Grassroots Movements Towards Social Development Through Strengthening the Roles and Activities of NGOs Work on the Promotion of Development in Thailand." A paper presented at the International Conference on Thai Studies, the Australian National University, Canberra, 3-6 July 1987, p.4.

Thai development NGOs have ardently called for a 'bottom-up development' strategy since the early 1970s.¹⁰ Despite the high economic growth, there persists income inequality, rural poverty and backwardness, and the predominance of child labor and prostitution. As with the experience of its Southeast Asian counterparts, Thai NGOs also saw the need for advocacy work to make their development efforts effective. Thus, these organizations carry on a conscientization program geared towards making the Thai people aware that genuine development can only occur when it takes into consideration the issues of social justice, equality, and democratization.¹¹

In contrast to the Philippine experience, Malaysian NGOs hardly initiate development projects because of their government's effectiveness in pursuing the same at the grassroots level. Thus, most of their work involve advocacy which attempts to address the adverse effects of government projects. Emphasis is placed on "universal human values, like spiritual and socialist values" emphasizing the "dignity of humanity."¹² What use is "development" to them, they ask, if it is at the expense of people's human rights or the environment? Compared with other Southeast Asian NGOs, Malaysian NGOs lack a broad popular base, i.e., there is almost no regular contact between these organizations and people at the grassroots level.¹³

Development Dilemmas of 'First World' Asian NGOs

Unlike in the Southeast Asian states, NGOs arose in Japan not because of its government's inability to confront development issues, but due to the concern of a substantial portion of the Japanese populace concerning the threat of war. As early as the 1950s, Japanese peace movement raised the argument that the country's economic prosperity is of no use when it could very well be eliminated by an atomic bomb. This movement continued to rapidly grow as a result of the Cold War.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹²Oishi, *op cit.*

¹³*Ibid.*

With the Japanese people's paranoia about another Hiroshima or Nagasaki, an active anti-nuclear campaign was launched. This movement further swelled in the 1960s with the anti-Vietnam war. The message was the need for the Japanese people and the rest of Asia and the Pacific to live together in peace.

With the diminishing of the Cold War era, however, the theme of "No War, No Nukes" as well as "No more Hiroshimas" began to lose ground, particularly, when powerful nations, including Japan, began to justify military intervention in the name of international peacekeeping. The peace movement was to take on a new dimension.¹⁴

The lessening of war hysteria in the 1970s resulted into linking the issue of peace with concerns of Japanese exploitation of the Third World as well as poverty, human rights violations, and environmental degradation in the developing regions. It was pointed out that the Japanese was still committing atrocities against other Asians and the "evils of racism, sexism, militarism, and nationalism which drove the Japanese to massacre hundreds of Asians" continued to exist.¹⁵ The view was that for as long as this situation is perpetuated, peace will remain elusive. Thus, Japanese NGOs took on an outward-looking approach to the solution of their problems.

Like the Japanese NGO movement, South Korean NGOs were also very much engrossed with the issue of peace as embodied by the people's movements concern with the reunification efforts with North Korea. For as long as Korea remains divided, the Korean people will perennially live in a state of war. Thus, like in Japan, Korea carries with it a strong peace movement.

Similar to the former concerns of Philippine NGOs, the Korean NGOs up to the present are very much concerned with the presence of American troops in its demilitarized zone. Like in the Philippine case, when the American bases were still in the country, a major concern was

¹⁴National Council of Churches-Hiroshima Peace and Human Rights Center (NCC-HPHRC), "Peace with Justice," *Japan Militarism Monitor*, No. 58, January-February 1993, p. 13.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 11.

the undermining of the nation's sovereignty because of the presence of foreign troops. Moreover, resources which could otherwise be channeled towards the economic restructuring of the country as well as vital social services are diverted to unproductive military use.

Apart from this comparison, the peace movement, although present in the other Southeast Asian nations, is not as strong and vibrant as those in Japan and Korea. Southeast Asian NGOs are very much concerned with development issues *per se*, i.e., not having to link this with the immediate threat of war.

Development via a Dictatorship

Despite being a newly-industrializing country, South Korea continues to suffer from political as well as economic problems which are similar to Southeast Asian societies. These include the upliftment of human rights (e.g., release of political detainees); sectoral rights (e.g., labor, farmers and women rights); and, economic liberalization to free the economy from the stronghold of Korean big business.

Much is to blame to the authoritarian state which paved Korea's way to its NIC status. It is only now, under the new government of President Kim Young Sam, that the Koreans are experiencing a civilian government after thirty (30) years of military rule. It is not surprising, though, that, unlike in Japan, where the NGO movement is generally outward-looking, (i.e., the fate of Japanese society is strongly interlinked with those in the Third World), the Korean NGO movement has focused its activities in strengthening its civil society. There is a strong determination on the part of the Koreans to rely on themselves to get organized and exercise control over their own national affairs. It is in relation to this that it shares a strong similarity with the NGO movement in Southeast Asia.

Like in the Philippines, the Korean NGO movement played an important role in confronting an authoritarian state. With the collapse such state, NGOs play an important role in attaining a smooth transition from authoritarianism to democracy. As for Thailand,

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Malaysia, and Indonesia, whose NGOs are operating within relatively repressive strong states, which are paving its way to NIC-hood, the task of dismantling their repressive state machineries still lies ahead.

The Korean experience also shows that development *per se* does not bring about democracy, particularly, if it is a state-led development with little participation from the vast majority of the people. Southeast Asian NGOs have taken their cue from the experience of the Korean ‘economic miracle.’ The ‘miracle’ brought about a higher per capita income at the expense of socio-

inequality and political repression.

Thus, a pervading philosophy towards development among these NGOs is that in order to attain genuine economic progress, there is a need for popular participation in the decision-making process as well as in the implementation of economic projects. Moreover, these development endeavors should be self-reliant and sustainable. Effective development is, therefore, equated with people empowerment, i.e., the ability of people to determine and carry out their own economic destinations.

In this process, NGOs cannot separate economic from political tasks. The latter involves the raising of the level of people’s consciousness and the creation of political spaces for action or mobilization. Being a product of the middle-class, the NGOs’ success is also seen in its ability to tap and develop organic intellectuals from the mass base they are working with. Lastly, it is important for NGOs to make use of all venues, legal and extra-legal, to bring about the societal transformation they are fighting for.¹⁶

¹⁶Suthy Prasartset, “Notes on NGOs Problematique.” Unpublished.

Implementing the NGO Alternative Concept of Development

In meeting their objectives, NGOs have taken on various forms in their respective societies. Philippine NGOs have been described in the following categories which may also apply to its counterpart NGOs in Southeast Asia.

Among them are grassroots NGOs, or people's organizations (POs), which are established at the grassroots level where their beneficiaries are at the same time members and constituents.¹⁷ This NGO form is not so prominent in the rest of the region, particularly, in Malaysia where the NGOs lack a popular base because of the absence of permanent contact between the NGOs and communities at the grassroots level.¹⁸

Another form taken by these organizations are those of professional NGOs or intermediaries, which have a specific area of interest or experience. They work with and for beneficiary communities which often constitute the poorest 40 percent of the country's population. One of the goals of these NGOs is to make organizations and institutions viable. But one can also find grant-making NGOs.

Lastly, there are support NGOs "which have specific expertise which is extended to other NGOs upgrading or providing a specific expertise to the latter." Among its specializations include "research, training, communication and education..."¹⁹

In Philippines and Korea, the Catholic Church plays an active role in the NGO movement. In the former, these are found in the Basic Christian Communities (BCC) which one may refer to as the precursors of the NGOs in the country. As for Korea, the Church hierarchy has actively intervened in pressing political and socio-economic issues affecting the Korean peoples. In Malaysia, on the other hand, there are

¹⁷Garilao, *op cit.*, p.115.

¹⁸Loh Kok Wah, *op cit.*, p.7.

¹⁹*Op cit.*

Muslim-led NGOs spearheading the NGO movement in the country carrying with it society's 'moral values.'

Some may also refer to 'traditional' interest groups like trade unions, professional, religious and ethnic organizations etc. as non-governmental organizations.²⁰ This seems to be the case in South Korea where these traditional interest groups form the core of the NGO movement.

In Japan, a major thrust of its NGO movement is peace research encompassing a broad field. A number of Japanese NGOs, for example, have sponsored field research in Southeast Asian societies concerning the effects of Japanese official development aid, the findings of which are publicized in its various journals.

Political Dimension of NGO Work

NGOs have also taken up political tasks. Malaysian NGOs, for example, have been described as "experts in exploiting social resources" for the benefit of their cause in the following manner: 1.) they provide for democratic space for people to express their opinions; 2) they fight for national laws and government policies which will protect public interests; and, 3.) they provide relevant expertise of professionals and researchers in the country.²¹ Such a description also fits other Southeast Asian NGOs.

Thus, one would find NGOs purely engaged in advocacy work, mainly, because these organizations are functioning in political environments which, they perceive, are not conducive to the kind of development work they want to do. Numerous NGOs, both in Northeast and Southeast Asia, are engaged in the struggle for political and civil rights. They may carry on political and social educational programs, which seek to "conscientize, mobilize and empower the affected groups." Included here are the maintenance of documentation and resource centers, organizing of seminars, and the conduct of network coalitions.²²

²⁰*Op cit.*

²¹Oishi, *op cit.*, p. 18.

²²Loh Kok Wah, *op cit.*

Economic Activities

Livelihood projects initiated by NGOs involve various spheres of rural and urban life. These, generally, include the following: public health service (e.g., primary health care services), slum improvement, child care programs and education, rice production, rural electrification, infrastructure (e.g., building of roads), organic farming, and development of appropriate technology. These are basic community development and health service projects which governments are supposed to undertake.

Asides from livelihood projects, NGOs are also involved in information campaign relevant to rural as well as urban communities. Some of these include information on consumer issues, markets and prices of agricultural production, family planning, and environment.

In the NGO experience, the economic cannot be separated from the political concern and vice-versa. Thus, NGO political and economic activities are very much intertwined. These include information drive and conscientization programs on issues like human rights and other rights specifically affecting the various sectors of society such as farmers, women, children, workers, and tribal minorities. Moreover, NGOs are also involved in organizing these sectoral groups in its attempt to make them stronger in dealing with the government for their rights and, more importantly, as a first step towards self-reliance as a solid unit. It is not rare, therefore, to find NGOs organizing farmers into cooperatives or mobilizing communities against polluting companies in their areas.

Japanese and Korean Experiences

The Korean experience reveals that despite being far more economically advanced than its Southeast Asian counterparts, its society continues to experience problems which also confront the latter. The environment, for example, is a very important concern carried on by the country's NGO movement. During the 1960s and the 1970s, Korea was the recipient of chemically hazardous industries from Japan and the United States in its eagerness to industrialize. Korea is now experiencing the adverse effects of industrialization. A survey revealed that only two percent of the air in Seoul is not dangerous to human health.²³ Just as

²³*Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ) Report (b)*, 1992.

in Southeast Asia, consumer cooperatives have also been set up to introduce the farmers to the organic way of farming. Even if the products come out more expensive, people are made aware that in the long run, society will benefit from this. And like in Southeast Asia, women and children's rights are also given special attention.

The Korean NGOs, however, seem to be more obsessed in intervening in their government's export-oriented policies. Korean farmers, for example, have focused their recent efforts in criticizing as well as demonstrating against their state's decision to swamp the rice market with cheap foreign rice imports.²⁴ Korean workers, on the other hand, have also mobilized to denounce the government's export-liberalization policies, which has resulted into stiff competition Korean products are suffering from due to cheaper products from China and Southeast Asia.

Demonstrations against government economic policies also ensue in Southeast Asia most specially in the Philippines but it is not the major preoccupation of NGOs as these have to attend to what it perceives are more basic issues, like livelihood projects for survival.

Economic Restructuring of Society

Korean NGOs have also been absorbed with the urgency to restructure their society economically. This, they believe, is the only way by which genuine development could occur. For Korean NGOs, a major economic problem of its society is the domination of the economy by a few big businesses (*chaebols*) who have close ties with government officials. This allows the latter to gain preferential treatment to the detriment of the country's medium and small-scale industries. The movement proposes the need to adopt a freer market economy with less government regulation.²⁵

Southeast Asian NGOs are also not blind to this reality and have articulated the need for economic restructuring of society as a prerequisite for genuine economic development. But being underdeveloped nations,

²⁴CCEJ Report (a), 1992.

²⁵CCEJ Report (1), 1992.

there is the realization that the process will be much slower as well as difficult because there is still a need for a very strong middle-class which already exists in South Korea.

NGOs and the Transition from Authoritarianism to Democracy

A political issue which draws Korean and Southeast Asian NGOs together is that of human rights. Despite being an advanced industrialized state, South Korea is not devoid of the human rights problem which, generally, pervades in poorer developing countries. Korean NGOs have been very much involved in calling for the release of prisoners of conscience. They have also taken up the cause of the illegal arrest and dismissal of workers.

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A significant issue which Philippine NGOs share with its Korean counterparts is the crucial role NGOs can play in guiding their respective society’s transition from authoritarianism to democracy. Korean NGOs, for example, perceive human rights as part and parcel of the lingering problem of their government’s need to establish its political legitimacy. Other political concerns include the elimination of graft and corruption as well as safeguarding of the electoral process.

Philippine NGOs, on the other hand, are attempting to create a viable movement of general people’s organizations that will have the capacity to intervene in national affairs.²⁶ It is, therefore, not surprising that NGOs have also engaged in the electoral process which it conceives

²⁶Karina Constantino-David, “The Need for Greater Unity and the CODE-NGO,” in *Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO)*, 1989, p. 12.

as integrally linked to its empowerment projects.²⁷ The potency of this NGO work was seen recently with the country's new Local Government Code giving NGOs and POs a role in the formal governance at the sectoral and local levels.

Thai NGOs, to a certain extent, have also asserted themselves in preventing a reemergence military dictatorship rule their country. This was seen in 1992 when NGOs played an important role in leading and coordinating the people's movement to restore democracy in Thailand.²⁸

Unfortunately, much cannot be said concerning Indonesia and Malaysian NGOs whose political objectives as means to attain economic ends have been looked upon with suspicion and even outrightly banned by their respective governments. This has created various reactions from Indonesian NGO activists. Some have sought to take an autonomous position and even on occasion come out openly to oppose government policy. There are, however, those who have chosen for rapprochement with government sectors which perceive NGOs as having an important role to play in national development.²⁹

Malaysian NGOs, on the other hand, are subjected to the government Securities Act which grants the state the power to dissolve any organization it deems threatening the national security.³⁰ Despite operating in a politically hostile environment, a number of Indonesian and Malaysian NGOs continue to pursue advocacy work for political reforms which they believe is needed for genuine development to occur.

Reunification Efforts

An NGO activity which distinguishes the Korean NGO movement from the rest is their involvement with their country's reunification

²⁷Council for People's Development, The Resource Databank and Publication Department. "Coalition Strategies," *Council for People's Development*, 1991, pp. 1-14.

²⁸Loh Kok Wah, *op cit* p. 10.

²⁹Benjamin Witjes, "The Indonesia Law of Social Organizations: A Study of the Socio-Political Context and Consequences for Indonesian and Foreign NGOs." Paper presented at the International NGO Forum on Indonesia (INGI) Conference, Nijmegen, the Netherlands, April 1987, p. 36.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 3.

effort. In August 1993, 60,000 Koreans launched a demonstration on "Human Chains for Peaceful Reunification" which was aimed to make government aware that people want to take an active part in the reunification process. A South-North campaign for "peace and reunification" was launched earlier on in April of the same year. It sought to attain this through "spiritual and material sharing" between North and South Korean Churches.³¹

Propagating a Japanese Alternative Lifestyle

As with Southeast Asian and Korean NGOs, Japanese NGOs have also been concerned and have launched active campaigns on issues involving environment, gender, human rights, and children's and consumers' rights. To better understand Japanese society, various researches under the umbrella of the peace theme have also been carried out on issues such as Japanese morals and Asian youths expectations towards Japanese.³²

These activities are all part and parcel of the Japanese NGOs' effort to establish an 'alternative lifestyle' which is more attuned to a 'non-commercial' way of living. One expression of this is 'alter-trade,' whereby cooperatives having direct links between consumers and producers have been established. This enables the former to buy goods cheaply by eliminating the middle person. Hundreds of women, generally housewives, have been involved in this scheme.³³ The export of such an alternative lifestyle is seen with Japanese NGOs linking up with Philippine NGOs concerning the direct trading of commodities such as bananas and mascobado sugar.³⁴

Japanese NGOs and Third World Development Dilemmas

Because of their economic status, however, Japanese NGOs have generally taken an outward-looking approach in their activities concerning

³¹Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, *Korean Situation in 1993*, (Seoul, Korea: CISJD, 1993), p. 82.

³²Santasilan Kadirgamar, "Peace Movement in Japan," *Asian Exchange: ARENA Bulletin*, Vol. IV, Nos. 2 & 3, January 1986, p. 122

³³Muto Ichiyo, "The Alternative Livelihood Movement," *AMPO: Japan-Asia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 24 No. 2, p. 4.

³⁴Masahiko, 1993, p. 12.

development issues. Their main concern is what Japanese NGOs can do for their counterparts in the developing regions. The problems of underdevelopment, pollution, poverty, discrimination and oppression are all viewed as 'structural violence' in society which hinder the full development of an individual. Such concerns have to be confronted specially when the Japanese government is involved in perpetuating such oppressive structures in the Third World.³⁵

As compared to their Southeast Asian and Korean counterparts, Japanese NGOs carry out their advocacy work generally through the conduct and dissemination of research work. These organizations also link up with research centers of countries receiving Japanese assistance. These NGOs look into issues such as the impact of Japanese official development aid and multinational corporations in developing regions. Other researches include food problems in developing areas and relief and rehabilitation of refugees and displaced persons in Pakistan, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Japanese NGOs have also sent technical help to Third World countries, like providing for professional trainers on agricultural education in Asia.

Japanese NGOs have also organized demonstrations to denounce the abuses of not only their governments but also of their own peoples in the Third World. There were the demonstrations held against "sex tours" taken by Japanese men to Asian countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, Korea, and Taiwan.

Being a xenophobic country, Japanese NGOs have also established programs to minimize discrimination of foreigners in the country. Women's programs, for example, have been established to help Filipino women married to Japanese men. Its aims to empower these women against personal and institutional racism and sexism by informing them of their rights under the Japanese constitution, immigration and residency proceedings, laws pertaining to marriage, and laws on labor standards.³⁶

³⁵Kadigamar, *op cit.*, p. 44.

³⁶NCC-HPHRC, *op cit.*

These organizations have also instituted programs to help migrant workers in Japan, particularly the Koreans and the Filipinos who are subjects of violation of workers' rights such as non-payment of wages as well as the prostitution of women. The fight is for better living conditions for them.³⁷

Strengthening the NGO Movement

A significant manner in which NGOs have sought to attain their objectives is through the formation of local, regional, and international coalitions and networks on one or several issues. Malaysian NGOs, for example, have come together to draft the Malaysian Charter of Human Rights in 1993. There has also been substantial cooperation among NGOs engaged in environmental issues and a number of them have cooperated to establish organic farms. In the Philippines, numerous coalitions have emerged. A prominent one was the formation of the Caucus of Development NGOs (CODE-NGO) network in May 1990. Composed of ten (10) networks, CODE-NGO came about with the belief that NGOs could make a stronger impact on national development if they were united as one group.³⁸ The formation of coalitions and networks are also not new for Thai NGOs. There are NGO coalitions carrying out social development projects for example.

NGOs have also come together on a regional and international level to engage government concerning socio-economic and political issues. Parallel NGO summits have occurred vis-a-vis World Bank/IMF meetings. Another was an NGO international conference on human rights in Austria.

Regional and international forums have also been used to propagate the aims of NGOs. A Korean NGO, for example, recently fought for the rights of foreign migrant workers in Japan by bringing their case to

³⁷RAIK News, Vol. 3, Iss. 2, July 1991.

³⁸Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO), First National Congress on "Forging Unity Towards Development," 4 December 1991, University of the Philippines Film Center, Diliman, Quezon City, 1991.

the United Nations Human Rights Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.³⁹

Conclusion

The experiences of Japanese and Korean NGOs are both humbling and inspiring. For the Japanese, the people's movement has brought about the realization that there is something more than being among the world's economic power. There are vital costs to pay such as the absence of freedom from war and the exploitation of Third World peoples. For the Koreans, there is a recognition of the importance of the freedom to live in a democratic environment aside from that of achieving NIC-hood. Despite these problems, however, the fact that peoples' movements in these countries have not only raised concern over development issues, but are also doing something about these political, economic and socio-cultural dilemmas, serves much inspiration not only to their own societies but also to the world community as well.

Among the beneficiaries of the Japanese and Korean NGOs' struggles are the Southeast Asian NGO movements who at the moment are fighting to meaningfully intervene in their respective governments' drive towards rapid industrialization. The non-negotiable conditions for development are people participation, socioeconomic equality, and the upliftment of civil and political rights. An arduous task lies ahead for NGOs, but definitely, not formidable enough to hurdle, as seen in the headway they have made during the past years. If they could do it again, Japanese and Korean NGOs would probably have gone the Southeast Asian way, i.e., fought for a more people-oriented development in the road towards rapid economic growth and expansion. It is never too late, however. As what has been noted, Southeast Asian and Northeast Asian NGOs still have much to learn from each other.

³⁹"A New NGO is Born," *op cit.*, p. 9.