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### Acts of Faith: Civil Society and the Policy Process in Ghana and two Indian States

DRAFT

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## **Abstract**

This paper compares efforts by civil society organisations (CSOs) to influence policy communities and processes in Ghana and two contrasting Indian states. It considers their impact at the international and local levels -- and at the national level in Ghana and India, and the state level in India.

Only one Indian CSO is analysed because it undertook the full array of tasks that are required to make a policy impact. Three are analysed in Ghana since no single organisation performed those diverse tasks – policy analysis, lobbying, organising at the local level, integrating local and higher levels, coordinating the work of other CSOs, disseminating ideas at all levels, etc. Rather surprisingly, the extreme cases here are the two Indian states. The government in one sought aggressively to exert centralised control over the political and policy processes – and was thus intensely hostile to civil society and to all other independent power centres. The government in the other stressed decentralisation and adopted (within limits) more liberal postures. The Ghanaian government fell between these extremes.

These CSOs' international connections ranged from tenuous to strong. Those with strong ties could influence international policy communities. But it was far more difficult to make an impact within Ghana and the Indian states.

Even in the most liberal system, CSOs found it exceedingly difficult to make an impact on both policy formulation and implementation – because all three governments were reluctant to permit them to exert influence. But CSOs also lack 'reach' – the ability to engage with large portions of the local populations. Their organisational resources, even at their best, were unequal to the demands of the roles that they had adopted. Thus, while their values and commitment were admirable, they were largely engaged in 'acts of faith' – efforts to achieve constructive incremental changes which might one day make more promising state-society relations possible. Enlightened CSOs richly deserve support. But if we wish to see early, substantial improvements in the policy sphere, we must concentrate on persuading government actors to adopt more constructive postures.

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## **Contents**

## 1 Introduction

This is an analysis of civil society organisations' engagement with the policy process in India and Ghana. In India, one organisation is examined: PRIA (Participatory Research in Asia) which performs a multiplicity of tasks at all levels from the international to the local. In Ghana, since no single organisation performs the diverse tasks tackled by PRIA, three are discussed. They are GAPVOD (the Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organisations in Development), ISODEC (the Integrated Social Development Centre) and CDD (the Centre for Democracy and Development).

India specialists (including this writer) tend to assume that nearly all African political systems differ from India not just in degree but in kind. They assume that India belongs to a different political species (consolidated, well institutionalised democracies) towards which some African systems may be evolving, but only very slowly. This assumption is often largely valid – as this writer has found in Zambia and Mozambique. But it is invalid when we consider Ghana. The last two elections there have been distinctly free and fair, and the first of them entailed a peaceful change of government. Constitutional provisions to secure democracy, basic rights and significant space for civil society have considerable substance as well as some limitations – space is one thing, but influence on policy is another. Nonetheless, Ghana has made a successful transition into the category of democratic polities – something which is not actually happening in many so-called 'transitional' systems (Carothers, 2002). It is a democracy with imperfections, as we shall see. But so is India and every other example on earth. Thus, despite important differences between them, India and Ghana differ in degree and not in kind.<sup>1</sup> They are eminently comparable.

Partly for these reasons, this paper does not argue that one of these political systems or a particular civil society organisation (hereafter 'CSO') is better than another. Instead, it stresses similarities and differences between political



systems -- and between CSOs whose opportunities and frustrations are mightily influenced by the character of political systems and the policy processes within which they operate. In other words, this study does not make the mistake – found in many analyses of civil society – of excluding the state which has a potent impact on civil society everywhere.

This paper is divided not into separate sections dealing with each country, but into sections organised around issues or themes -- each of which compares Ghana and India, in order to maximise comparative insights. Part II provides an overview of the contexts within which these CSOs operate. Part III, compares the history, character, aims and approaches of the four CSOs. Part IV discusses CSOs' influence over policy formulation at higher levels in political systems, and Part V discusses it at lower levels. Part VI examines their influence over policy implementation and outcomes. Part VII considers CSOs' engagement with international forces. Finally, Part VIII sets out the broader implications of this study for the analysis of CSOs and policy processes in general.

Some readers may be surprised at the amount of attention given in this paper to governments and politicians, as opposed to CSOs. This is explained by one of the main findings of this study – that the thinking and actions of senior politicians are immensely important in determining what CSOs can and cannot achieve in their efforts to engage with the policy process. They almost always dwarf CSOs in influencing events. Governments, and especially politicians, have received far less attention in the literature on civil society than they deserve.

## 2 Setting the Scene

This study obviously faces a problem of scale since India's population is roughly 70 times larger than Ghana's. It is still worth comparing trends at the national level in the two countries, and that is done here. But the problem of scale can be eased by comparing Ghana mainly with individual states in India's federal system.

This analysis focuses on two Indian states which contrast sharply in ways that will enrich this discussion. One of these, Andhra Pradesh, is a difficult environment for CSOs. The other, Madhya Pradesh, is somewhat more congenial.<sup>2</sup> This shift of focus to the state level does not entirely overcome the problem of scale since these two Indian states are still far larger than Ghana.

### Populations in 2000-2001

Ghana	18.4 million
Andhra Pradesh	76.2 million
Madhya Pradesh	60.3 million

But by comparing Ghana with these states, we minimise differences of scale.

One further problem arises when we compare Indian states to Ghana – the former are not sovereign entities. However, state governments in India enjoy very considerable latitude over policy process and over their interactions with CSOs. They must operate within the national government's overarching policy framework, but they bring their own distinctive approaches to the implementation of policies and programmes that originate in New Delhi. They also formulate their own budgets, fiscal strategies, and policies on taxation and spending in almost every sector. So they have enough autonomy and room for manoeuvre to justify a comparison with a sovereign nation like Ghana.

To prepare the ground for the discussion that follows, let us briefly (with more detail later) consider some of the similarities and differences between government-CSO relations in Ghana and these two Indian states.<sup>3</sup>

## **2.1 Ghana**

The initial phase after it gained independence in 1957 was marked by a strong belief (within Ghana, but also globally) in state-led development. Little thought was given to a role for civil society. The Nkrumah government energetically promoted the hegemony of the state over society. A one-party system was introduced, and interests like farmers and teachers (which had been important in Nkrumah's rise to pre-eminence) were drawn into party front organisations which entailed controls over them rather than effective representation. The party meted out harsh treatment to other, more independent power centres – notably, other emergent CSOs and traditional leaders (chiefs). Thus the nascent civil society of the day was largely smothered.

CSOs fared little better at the hands of the military regime which followed the overthrow of Nkrumah in 1966. But over time, market traders, professionals and other groups coalesced in opposition to it, and played an important role in its ouster in 1979. Since then, a succession of democratic and military regimes has held power. CSOs made little headway under them, until 1992 when a new constitution was introduced – thanks partly to the efforts of enlightened CSOs.

As a result, since 1992 CSOs have not suffered repression and have begun to emerge as a significant force. With support from international donors, they thwarted an attempt in the 1990s to introduce a law to deal with civil society which would have facilitated heavy-handed government control.

A free and fair general election in 2000 brought Ghana's first peaceful, democratic change of government. The former opposition, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), took control of Parliament and the strong executive presidency, and it held onto both institutions at a further election in 2004 which saw the re-election of President J.R. Kufuor. Since 2000, CSOs at both local and national

levels have “ballooned” in the view of a researcher who has systematically investigated them.<sup>4</sup> Mainly for this reason, we concentrate here on that period.

CSOs at the local level mainly represent groups tied to traditional leaders (chiefs), sectional interests (producers, traders, etc.), youth associations, religious groups – and local development associations which are sometimes at odds with the chiefs. The last of these tend to be quite well funded by indigenous local capital. But in the somewhat more liberal political environment since 2000, we have also seen the growth of self-help groups and small numbers of organisations that seek to secure rights and access to information.

At the national level, there has been a marked quickening of the efforts of pre-existing CSOs which focus on issues that might qualify for international donor support – especially democratisation and democratic decentralisation -- and the emergence of numerous new organisations seeking to work in those fields. The overall amount of donor funding for CSOs has increased significantly.<sup>5</sup> A ‘budget support’ agreement between the government and donors includes a device to provide substantial funds to CSOs – because donors regard them as one element in a development policy ‘triad’ (government, donors and CSOs).

Since 2000, the political system and the policy process have to some extent become more congenial to CSOs, but they still face (as we shall see) severe limitations on what can be achieved. The government is less monolithic than in former times. An exceedingly modest dispersal of power has occurred: vertically, downward to largely elected District Assemblies (although they remain quite weak), and horizontally at the national level to a small number of semi-autonomous institutions. But since the present government holds power thanks to an electoral mandate, in contrast to its predecessor which seized power by force, the executive branch has in some respects become less liberal than the former regime – in, for example, its treatment of Parliament and (arguably) CSOs. Thus (see Parts III and IV), the changes since 2000 have

not enabled CSOs to overcome daunting impediments to their influence over the policy processes.

## **2.2 Andhra Pradesh (hereafter 'AP'):**

There are some parallels between the histories of government-CSO relations in this Indian state and in Ghana. Between independence in 1947 and 1983, the Congress Party enjoyed a dominant position within a multi-party system. The politics which this spawned were much less illiberal than those in Ghana. But a strong faith in state-led development until well into the 1980s, together with Congress dominance, caused politicians and bureaucrats to remain largely oblivious (rather than hostile) to civil society. They were also somewhat suspicious of alternative power centres, so they provided almost no opportunities for CSOs to influence policy formulation, and very few to influence policy implementation and outcomes. Governments did not repress CSOs, and many sprang up – especially caste associations and organised interests mainly among prosperous landed and middle class groups, especially in the most developed coastal sub-region of the state. Trade unions existed for a small minority of the work force in government employment and some factories, but these were largely coopted by the Congress Party and lacked autonomy.

Since 1983, when a regional party led by a film star won a state election, AP has had a two-party-plus system. At all but one of the five elections since then, the Congress and the regional Telugu Desam Party (TDP) have alternated in power. The latter has always been extremely centralised and far more suspicious of alternative power centres than Congress had been in its days of dominance. So it has been not oblivious but aggressively hostile to CSOs.

Between 1995 and 2004, the TDP and the state government were led by the film star's son-in-law, N. Chandrababu Naidu. He devoted enormous skill and energies to strengthening top-down control of every power possible centre.

Those that he could not control (including CSOs) were relentlessly and effectively marginalised. In that exceedingly illiberal period, AP became the most uncongenial state in India for CSOs<sup>6</sup> and for elected bodies at lower levels – which PRIA seeks to strengthen. In that era, CSOs faced difficulties that began to resemble the experiences of Ghanaian CSOs in the grimmer periods of the latter's history – although the considerable strength of civil society in more developed parts of the state, free media and a substantially autonomous legal system spared CSOs from the worst excesses seen in former times in Ghana. To counter the limited influence of independent CSOs, the Naidu government created numerous 'government-organised non-governmental organisations' (GONGOs) which do not qualify as CSOs because they lack autonomy from the state. Its intention was to fill the 'space' for civil society entirely with GONGOs – squeezing genuine CSOs (which it treated with contempt) out of the picture entirely.<sup>7</sup>

In 2004, an election brought the Congress back to power. The new government has imbibed some of the liberal attitudes towards civil society held by some of the party's national leaders – so that the atmosphere has improved somewhat. But many of the aloof and at times hostile habits of previous periods still pose problems. That government has been slow to find its feet, so this discussion mainly focuses on the nine Naidu years (1995-2004).

### **2.3 Madhya Pradesh (hereafter 'MP'):**

The Congress Party never achieved the dominance here that it exercised in AP and most other Indian states in the immediate post-independence period – in part because much of MP had consisted of backward princely states under the British Raj where the Congress was unable to make inroads. Since the late 1980s, MP has had a two-party system in which Congress competes with the Hindu nationalist BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party).

This state is less well developed than is much of AP. As a result, civil society here – both in rural areas and among intellectuals and urban middle class

interests – is far less formidable. During the 1990s, however, some important exceptions to that generalisation emerged. Notable among them were an impressive partner of PRIA called *Samarthan*, and two sizeable organisations which developed among poor people. The first of these was the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* which campaigned against the construction of the Narmada dam complex. It attracted the attention of the Indian and international media, and consequently, it persuaded the World Bank to withdraw funding for the dams. But it failed to persuade three state governments (including MP's) and the national government to abandon the project – which proceeds. The second was a Gandhian organisation called the *Ekta Parishad* which acts on behalf of, and with the participation of, large numbers of landless and land-poor people (see below).

In 1993, Congress won a state election under the leadership of an imaginative young leader named Digvijay Singh who headed the government for a decade. He implemented an impressive array of programmes and policies which facilitated more open, responsive governance and participation from below in demand-driven programmes. A key element of this strategy was the creation of generously empowered and funded elected councils at district and sub-district and local levels.

Despite this impressive record, however, Singh was reluctant to develop close ties with CSOs. He did little to foster GONGOs, but he remained largely aloof from most CSOs -- stopping short of actions either to cultivate or to harass them. After initial negotiations with the *Narmada Bachao Andolan*, he turned away from it because it stuck obdurately to the demand that the dams be stopped – which was not in his power to grant. And on two occasions, he treated small CSOs in an adversarial manner when he or his aides perceived them to be troublesome. In only one case, did he develop a close understanding with a CSO – in his dealings with the Gandhian *Ekta Parishad*. Its mass membership, which made it MP's only social movement, also made it

an attractive ally in electoral terms. After he addressed many of its demands over land issues, the organisation committed itself to support him at the polls.<sup>8</sup>

But this was an exception. For the most part, CSOs experienced benign (or neutral) neglect. The political environment remained broadly liberal, but in such an under-developed state, civil society was able to develop only a moderate degree of strength. It was (as we shall see) able to influence policy implementation and outcomes at lower levels, but policy formulation remained largely closed to it and to all interests except the Chief Minister's immediate circle.

In December 2003, the Congress lost a state election to the BJP. The latter party lacked a penetrative organisation, so it depended heavily during the election campaign on a Hindu extremist association called the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha* or RSS – a potent, well-disciplined CSO. Its key role in that victory (Manor, 2004b) has given it considerable influence in the state, and it is intensely hostile to CSOs that do not share its acutely chauvinistic views. It has been prevented from doing immense damage to other CSOs, as was expected, largely because of turmoil within the state government since 2004 – it is now on its third Chief Minister in as many years. Since that turmoil has prevented a clear set of policies from emerging, this discussion focuses mainly on the Digvijay Singh decade (1993-2003).

## **2.4 India's National Governments**

Finally, a few comments are necessary here on national governments' postures towards civil society in India. These are important, even though most of the actual governing in India occurs at the state level in the federal system and below. Until the late 1990s, national-level political actors behaved politely towards CSOs and informal interactions sometimes occurred. But these had little impact on national policies.



Then, however, approaches began to change -- for several reasons. Fiscal constraints affect governments everywhere, but they bit hard in India because of its dangerously large fiscal deficit.<sup>9</sup> They helped to persuade some powerful actors that civil society might assist in improving not so much the formulation but the implementation of policies at little cost to the exchequer. Some of these actors also came to realise that India possessed some of the most formidable and effective civil society organisations in the developing world. Perhaps most crucially, India's 'policy community' (including people within and outside of government) accepted much of a new development paradigm which stressed the potential of CSOs and the promise of more open, participatory and responsive approaches to governance which could deepen democracy. That message had been transmitted from Indian intellectuals and civil society activists through countless conferences and through the pages of India's numerous serious newspapers and of its premier policy journal, the *Economic and Political Weekly*.

As a result, the national government led by the BJP between 1998 and 2004 convened a high profile consultation on potential partnerships between government and civil society. (Several key documents for that exercise were prepared by PRIA.) Then after a Congress-led coalition was elected in mid-2004, things went further. The Congress President, Sonia Gandhi, established a National Advisory Council to submit ideas on policy matters. Several of its members were drawn from civil society backgrounds, and most of the others were conversant with and sympathetic to arguments for a greater role for CSOs in development. This opened up fresh opportunities for CSOs at all levels, especially in Congress-governed states where Chief Ministers are eager to cultivate their supreme leader. Additionally, a national Minister of *Panchayati Raj* (democratic decentralisation) was appointed for the first time, who is an ebullient enthusiast for elected bodies at lower levels. His efforts have lent further influence to the new development paradigm, and are beginning to create new openings for CSOs (such as PRIA) that seek to strengthen local democracy. All of this has stopped well short of transforming

government-CSO relations at the state level and below, but the trends are encouraging for civil society.

### **3 Four Civil Society Organisations: Character, Aims and Strategies**

#### **3.1 India**

Let us begin by considering the Indian CSO, PRIA. It engages with the policy process in a multiplicity of ways, seeking

- a) to influence 'policy communities and networks' at international, national, state and lower levels, in order to have an impact on policy formulation;
- b) to strengthen the capacity of other, smaller CSOs which are pursuing aims similar to its own, to develop their understanding of key issues, their commitment to key objectives, and their capacity -- and to encourage connections and cooperative efforts between them;<sup>10</sup>
- c) to interact with politicians and bureaucrats in order to influence policy implementation and outcomes, especially and lower levels where these things mainly occur, and especially in connection with state governments' quite varied experiments with democratic decentralisation; and
- d) to interact with ordinary people – especially poor and socially excluded groups – to strengthen their capacity to influence policy formulation, implementation and outcomes , especially the last two since more can be achieved by them on those fronts.

PRIA has an extremely well trained staff of full-time activists. 45 of these work at its headquarters in New Delhi, and around 200 operate in eight of India's 28 states. It also works very closely with partner organisations in seven states whose aims and approaches are almost identical to its own. One of these, *Samarthan* in Madhya Pradesh, is examined here. These partners and local animators in PRIA's own operations add around 250 more activists to the total.<sup>11</sup> Within each state, PRIA or its partners have developed elaborate networks among enlightened CSOs working below the state level in a wide array of districts. They help to extend its reach and influence beyond the two districts within each state in which PRIA and partners undertake intensive work.<sup>12</sup>

PRIA is as formidable as any CSO in the developing world. In most countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, enlightened CSOs claim to have organisations or networks that extend from the national level to the grassroots, but these claims are accurate in only four countries: Brazil, the Philippines, Bangladesh and India. PRIA is the most impressive of the Indian CSOs that can justly make this claim.

PRIA is – among other things – an advocacy organisation, but it is consistently non-confrontational and diplomatic in its dealings with national and state governments. It has adopted this posture mainly because it believes that it holds greater promise than a strident approach. But it does so in the knowledge that other CSOs challenge those same governments with more aggressive advocacy campaigns – so that they complement PRIA's efforts.

PRIA has developed a remarkably subtle set of strategies to achieve its purposes. Consider two examples. First, before elections to decentralised councils in all of the states where it is active, PRIA has undertaken strictly non-partisan campaigns to make voters aware of the ways in which the decentralised system works, and to get out the vote. In most of these exercises, it has found a willing partner in the autonomous state Election Commission. These efforts have helped PRIA to register on the radar screens of governments and of ordinary people, and to emphasise its non-partisan credentials. They have enabled it to forge ties to other, like-minded CSOs with which it could therefore collaborate in later projects. And it has established congenial ties to one official agency – the Election Commission – which has helped to legitimise it as a potential partner in the eyes of some other government actors.

Second, PRIA has always undertaken periodic exercises in very public self-assessment – which have repeatedly led to adjustments in its strategy in the light of lessons learned. It has gone further, and turned this process to constructive use in its dealings with government agencies and other CSOs. Its

representatives stress their interest in critical comments from people within these agencies. This often proves surprising and disarming to those people, and tends to trigger open, candid but relatively relaxed discussions. As dialogues unfold, they often give PRIA representatives openings to offer gentle criticisms of those other agencies – which sometimes yield positive changes, thanks to the cordiality which PRIA's openness to criticism initially inspired.

One other feature of PRIA's work has also pried open the minds of government actors – its immense wealth of experience in the sectors on which it concentrates. On one occasion, for example, a conference of senior state-level officials was convened in New Delhi to consider how to strengthen democratic decentralisation. When the meetings began, the officials – who were acutely conscious of their own importance – declined even to return to greetings of PRIA representatives. But it soon became apparent that PRIA had far more constructive, promising ideas than did the bureaucrats about ways of enhancing decentralised democracy. The officials then changed their attitude and avidly sought documents and advice from PRIA – because it would enable them to return to their states armed with impressive suggestions for policy change.<sup>13</sup>

## **3.2 Ghana**

Let us now turn to the three Ghanaian CSOs which, taken together, cover much of the ground on which PRIA is active in India.

### **3.2.1 GAPVOD (The Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Associations in Development)**

GAPVOD was founded in 1980 as an autonomous civic association, at the behest of the then government – which was democratically elected, so that no stigma now attaches to these origins. It was and remains an umbrella organisation to convene CSOs for periodic collective discussions, and to mediate and facilitate dialogue between the state and CSOs.

Initially, there was a strong need for GAPVOD because civil society was rather under-developed. At first, only seven CSOs were affiliated to it. In more recent times, however, civil society has burgeoned – there are now more than 2,000 CSOs in Ghana (of which over 420 have associated themselves with GAPVOD). In the process, civil society has become far more diverse. The growing strength, size and heterogeneity of civil society has made GAPVOD's task much more difficult. The increased strength raises questions about whether a mediating umbrella organisation is needed – since many CSOs seek to engage government on their own or in small coalitions. The greater size of civil society makes coordination by GAPVOD a far more onerous task. So does the diversity within civil society, for two reasons. First, it is hard to bring organisations with varied agendas together for common purposes, and issues seldom arise that impinge in common on most of the varied types of CSOs. Second, many CSOs have their own networks embracing like-minded organisations -- and in some cases, their own ties to government -- so that they feel less need for an all-embracing umbrella body like GAPVOD.

GAPVOD's early work once had considerable value. One experienced and perceptive observer bore witness to its enlightened professionalism in former times. During the late 1990s, she participated in one of their projects – an effort to develop a media strategy for CSOs. They held regular weekly meetings, with plenty of prior notification, at which quite free discussions occurred. These were well structured by sophisticated GAPVOD staff members who clearly knew their jobs (although as a result of a recent financial crisis, many have lost them). Care was taken to ensure gender balance at these meetings. The entire exercise demonstrated the seriousness, skills and commitment of the personnel then in GAPVOD's employ.<sup>14</sup> But as we shall see, it has fallen into serious difficulties and is now largely unable to play this or any other role (Ayee, 2002, and Gary, 1996).

Nonetheless, GAPVOD continues in its convening role, often at the request of donors or the government which must be seen by donors to 'consult' civil

society. It also represents civil society in some discussions with government agencies. The empty character of these 'consultations' has led many CSOs to look askance at GAPVOD, even though the government bears the main responsibility for that problem. GAPVOD sees itself as a pressure group which seeks (with little success, given official attitudes) to persuade government actors to engage more genuinely with CSOs. It also seeks to build the capacity of smaller CSOs. Sadly, however, severe financial problems prevent it from doing anything like as much as it would wish in that vein. It receives no remuneration for these efforts so that, as one GAPVOD official said, "Everyone uses GAPVOD's services, but no one pays for them".

GAPVOD's financial problems in recent years have led to its eviction from rented premises, so that it must now operate from a very small office. It has cut back on staff, and that in turn has meant a sharp reduction in its activities from the moderately high levels achieved as recently as the late 1990s. Many of the CSOs across Ghana that have affiliated themselves with GAPVOD have not paid the small annual subscription fee on which the organisation heavily depends. And most donors have not provided it with funds to help cover recurrent costs – although the Dutch organisation SNV has recently agreed to provide some support.

The reluctance of donors appears to be explained mainly by their scepticism about its capacity. But it also owes something to their shift in emphasis from core support for the operations of CSOs to funding the implementation of projects – nearly all of which this kind of national umbrella organisation is unable to undertake. It has not, however, received donor backing even for training exercises for CSOs to enable them to obtain resources, to engage with government, and to achieve self-sufficiency and successful outcomes on limited budgets.

Because it lacks an adequate funds, GAPVOD is unable to seek grants from the main new instrument created by donors to support large CSOs – the

Ghana Research and Advocacy Programme or G-RAP.<sup>15</sup> Since numerous other organisations can access abundant funds from that source, this reinforces the widely held view that GAPVOD is a relatively unimportant force within civil society.

Thus GAPVOD, which once had significant support from UNDP and other agencies, has been crippled. GAPVOD's financial troubles have left it with an acute shortage of human resources, of talent. As a result, the government and donors fail to take it as seriously as they take other CSOs (including the two discussed just below). Other CSOs also regard it with deep scepticism and sometimes hostility. When UNDP established a resource centre to enhance the capacity of CSOs and sought to link it to GAPVOD, influential voices from within and beyond civil society protested that it was incapable of performing effectively – so it was excluded. It was only when another CSO consortium took over work in the education sector from GAPVOD that modest headway was made in dialogues with the government. One civil society leader stated that there should be a policy forum among CSOs on health issues, but because GAPVOD is supposed to develop it – and is largely inert – little has happened. That person added that “it needs to be replaced, but no one wants to throw the first stone to knock it down”. That restraint may soon be abandoned. The government is preparing a “Trust Bill” which threatens to impose illiberal regulation and constraints on CSOs. It seeks to involve GAPVOD, but many CSO leaders regard that as a tactic to undermine resistance from civil society on this vital issue – since the government knows that GAPVOD is largely incapable. In the teeth of such a threat from government, other CSOs may conclude that GAPVOD is expendable.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.2.2 CDD (Centre for Democracy and Development)

Founded in 1998, CDD describes itself as a “think tank” that seeks to promote the rule of law, checks on state power, rights, and integrity in public administration. It has built up an impressive array of publications which offer high quality analyses of key issues such as corruption, transparency and



accountability, access to information, economic liberalization -- and its own and other election observers' reports. It disseminates these findings and seeks to encourage dialogues between government actors, CSOs and citizens in workshops, press conferences, public hearings

It also provides technical support to Parliament, the judiciary, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, the Electoral Commission and CSOs concerned with good governance. This entails training exercises for policy makers, parliamentarians, judges and leaders in the private sector and civil society. It has sought to build the capacity of organisations and citizens, and to establish networks linking CSOs to one another and to government actors.

CDD also has international links to policy research centres, to the Afrobarometer project, the International Centre for Transitional Justice, and the Institute for Democracy in South Africa. These connections and its formidable programme of action ought to earn it great credibility in the eyes of government. So should the close ties that some in CDD had with leading government actors when they were in opposition. But -- as CDD's own studies demonstrate -- the system in Ghana remains too closed to CSOs to permit it to have much influence.

One problem is the government's tendency to personalise its connections to CSOs. As we see elsewhere in this paper, this has sometimes persuaded government actors to reach out to specific civil society leaders for advice. But in the case of CDD, this has had the opposite effect. Certain senior figures in the government appear to perceive its Executive Director, Professor E. Gyimah-Boadi as a "loose cannon", a troublemaker who presses them too hard by imposing international standards on them. This suggests self-destructive hypersensitivity within the government, and it is a great pity since he has consistently taken moderate constructive actions -- and he is Ghana's most perceptive political analyst and one of its most distinguished civil society leader.

His only visit to the President's official residence since 1986 occurred in early 2007 when the visiting German President, whose government he has advised, insisted on including him in the guest list. And the tapping of CCD's telephone lines since 2003 or 2004<sup>17</sup> suggests strong suspicions in official circles.<sup>18</sup>

This has not entirely prevented certain individuals and agencies within the government from engaging with CDD, but these instances do not offer much encouragement. CDD has done important research on problems in the administration of justice and the issue of excessive use of custodial sentences. Their work in that vein was endorsed by the Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice – although as we note elsewhere, that body is a liberal outlier among government institutions and lacks influence. The government then asked CDD to organise a workshop at which its plans to tackle the problem would be considered alongside similar plans by the Chief Justice and by the government itself. CDD agreed, but found that the latter two had no plans to present, so its ideas were the main topic. Since then, the government has established a committee to develop guidelines for custodial sentences in which CDD is involved. But this episode was the main case that Gyimah-Boadi could identify in describing what he called the “slight, slight evidence” that it had had an impact on officialdom.

CDD has exercised some limited influence as a result of efforts to generate popular awareness and pressure on some issues. Its report on the abuse of incumbency at the 2004 election appears to have produced policy change. During the election, CDD complaints about ruling party politicians erecting large billboards in Kumasi (in contravention of election conventions) got the signs removed, and the government eventually ordered candidates to limit themselves to one vehicle. But these gains occurred only after government representatives called CDD insulting names on the radio. (For more on name-calling, see the section on ISODEC below). CDD also contributed to the enactment of a Disability Act. The government, as is its habit, delayed inordinately in pursuing legislation – contenting itself instead with orders to its

agencies to operate in disabled-friendly ways, but without any clear policy. Sustained campaigning by CDD and other groups eventually made this tepid response embarrassing enough to force the government to pass the Act, although given official hesitancy, implementation is expected to be slow.

So public pressure – and CDD's work to catalyse it – has on occasion had some modest impact. And the political climate in Ghana is now too liberalised to permit the government to attack CSOs openly and aggressively (as was common practice there at an earlier stage, and in AP in India between 1995 and 2004). But CDD has found it excruciatingly difficult to make much headway.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.2.3 ISODEC (Integrated Social Development Centre)

ISODEC was founded in 1987 to work on public health issues in poor sections of Accra, and then developed an effort focused on rural water and sanitation. From there, it grew into a national CSO seeking to promote justice and human rights, especially among poorer groups. This has involved it in high-level encounters with government actors,<sup>20</sup> but it also promotes health, education and micro-finance services – which the other two Ghanaian CSOs do not do.

It contains within it or is closely affiliated to a Centre for Budget Advocacy, a Media and Campaigns Department, the Centre for Public Interest Law, a twice-weekly newspaper (*The Public Agenda*), the Cedi Finance Foundation – all of which produce good quality analyses. It also works in partnership with the Muslim Relief Association of Ghana and two organisations in neighbouring Nigeria and Burkina Faso. It maintains three offices in Accra and four more in Ghana's regions. Its full-time staff numbers 44.

ISODEC is unique among the three Ghanaian CSOs in pursuing extensive efforts at the grassroots. It promotes capacity building among local civic organisations and among workers (especially those who are not unionised), and provides services such as legal aid, economic literacy and micro-finance.

It has close ties to Ghana's Trade Unions Congress (TUC), an organisation which has substantial numerical strength – although in the government's eyes, this link makes ISODEC seem a more threatening force than other CSOs, and has partly inspired destructive action against ISODEC (see below).

It also mounts more sharp-edged advocacy efforts on empowerment and socio-economic rights than do the other two Ghanaian CSOs. It has campaigned against the privatisation of free public goods (especially water), and for fee-free education, the availability of anti-retroviral treatment, extractive industries accountability, and on trade issues that threaten important small-scale producers in Ghana.

Since many of its activities are less dependent than those of the other two CSOs on action by government, it has sometimes had a greater impact. But it has been hampered by three harsh realities. First, the closed, highly centralised nature of the regime – with immense powers concentrated in the executive branch which is strongly disinclined to openness -- places severe limitations on what it can achieve. For example, its efforts to lobby Parliament and to work with the District Assemblies<sup>21</sup> can yield only minimal results as long as those institutions themselves lack influence over the policy process.

Second, its efforts to engage the government in dialogue over the budget have hit a "black box". The budget process is kept tightly closed, partly to prevent people from seeing that the government lacks the capacity to develop its own economic framework. ISODEC, which understands that, sought to assist by developing its own macro-economic model which it offered free of charge to the Ministry of Finance, along with material to help it to train staff. But since this might have led to a deeply embarrassing revelation of the Ministry's incapacity and of the dominance of an IMF team within it over policy making, the government stubbornly refused to engage with ISODEC. When the UK's DFID (with government approval) brought a team from the Adam Smith

Institute to Ghana to organise public discussions of budget issues, ISODEC was excluded from the meetings.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, in pursuing advocacy campaigns, ISODEC has collided with something close to an abhorrence of confrontation that exists within the government's executive agencies and the Ghanaian establishment. One shrewd European observer with experience in other African countries describes Ghana's elite as "tightly networked". Overlapping elites based on confessional groups, boarding schools, etc., are expected to interact in a congenial manner. This imposes strong constraints upon dissenters, since energetic protests threaten that congeniality. Most actors and organisations tend strongly to seek reconciliation before conflict over an issue becomes too acrimonious. Those which fail to do this – such as ISODEC in the dispute over water privatisation – risk exclusion, as the executive branch and the elite more generally slam the door in their faces.<sup>23</sup>

That is what happened to ISODEC. The government took retribution against it for its campaign on the water issue -- even though ISODEC had adopted a more moderate posture than some other organisations within the CSO coalition on that issue,<sup>24</sup> because it was the lead association. When ISODEC organised an 11-member team of international experts to undertake a fact finding mission on the issue which broadly endorsed ISODEC's view, the government intensified a campaign of vilification in the media. Like CDD, ISODEC was subjected to name-calling, but the names used were more sinister. Its leaders were accused on the radio by government representatives of being Communists, and the Minister of Works likened it to *Al Qaeda*. It has also been prevented from obtaining government and donor contracts or consultancies – which ISODEC had permitted, perhaps unwisely, to yield 70% of its income prior to the blacklisting. This has triggered a major crisis for ISODEC, and it was fortunate to have G-RAP (a donor-funded institution that provides funds to sizeable CSOs) to sustain its operations at a much lower level. Efforts have been made to persuade donors to increase the flow of

funds to it through G-RAP, but they have so far refused – lest the iconic government be discomfited.<sup>25</sup>

It should be stressed that ISODEC's treatment was unusually harsh -- the government does not uniformly adopt such extreme postures towards CSOs that sharply criticise it. For example, the Third World Network, which has been quite critical on trade issues, was invited by the government to lead in the preparation for CSO involvement in two international conferences in 2007 and 2008. But the punishment meted out to ISODEC had done severe damage.

## **4 Influencing Policy Formulation – At High Levels in Political Systems**

In all three of the cases considered here – Ghana and the two Indian states -- policies were almost entirely formulated at higher levels. The only exception was MP where the empowerment of elected councils at lower levels enabled them to make non-trivial adjustments to policy at those levels. Before we consider events at lower levels (in Parts V and VI), let us examine policy formulation at higher levels.

### **4.1 Dynamics within the ‘Policy Community’ in Each of the Three Settings**

When we consider the ‘policy communities’ in Ghana and the two Indian states, we encounter significant variations. The membership of each of the three policy communities is similar, but the influence exercised by various members varies from place to place. The list of members (collective actors) in all three includes the following:

- a) policy-oriented CSOs,
- b) interest groups that are not CSOs (mainly individual businesses and farmers’ groups)<sup>26</sup>
- c) intellectuals (academic and non-academic)
- d) the print and broadcast media,
- e) international development agencies or ‘donors’,
- f) institutions and actors in the executive branch of government, and
- g) other government institutions and actors including the legislature and judiciary, and ‘autonomous’ institutions – and in the two Indian cases, political actors higher up, at the national level.

The last two sets of governmental actors in the list above are best treated separately from the first non-governmental five. Let us begin by discussing the varying influence exercised by those first five.

Ghana:

A little background on Ghana will help to clarify the itemised comments that follow. Because donors tend to stress democratisation and democratic

decentralisation, national CSOs focus heavily in these sectors. Indeed, there is intense competition among them for external resources which are not plentiful enough to sustain all of these CSOs. Thus many of them are struggling. These CSOs also often find that the main or even the only way that they can access funds is to agree to implement donor projects, and that core funding to cover basic operating expenses is not available.<sup>27</sup> This leaves many of them with severely inadequate staffing and logistical capacities.

One autonomous government agency which has constitutional status has made a positive difference to CSOs. The Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice has a chairperson with security of tenure for a fixed term, but it lacks adequate financial resources, access to information and the power to frame charges without the permission of the executive. The Commission has nonetheless joined forces with rights-oriented CSOs in an effort to lobby ministers for the passage of a Right to Information Act. This took several years, but in 2007, the Act was finally passed.<sup>28</sup>

But this alliance between a government institution and CSOs appears to be unique. For the most part, while CSOs are free to work as they like (although ISODEC is an exception), they find government actors very unresponsive. They were especially unresponsive when CSOs focused on governance issues. Civil society leaders have therefore been forced to smuggle proposals which sought to improve governance into discussions of other issues. Some but not all CSO leaders who enjoy public prominence (but usually not others) can sometimes get a hearing, as individuals, from senior politicians and civil servants. But efforts to obtain even routine information have (until the passage of the recent Act) often met with flat refusals. Or the officials “toss you around” – hemming and hawing, playing for time, but providing no response.<sup>29</sup> And constructive government action is harder to come by than information.

Partly for this reason, there are very few genuine opportunities for national CSOs to influence the formulation of policy. Many CSOs were invited to participate in the process through which the first Ghana Poverty Reduction



Strategy (GPRS-I) was developed. The government had to conduct this exercise in order to access funds from the World Bank and other donors<sup>30</sup> - and it was supposed to entail consultations of substance with CSOs. That process was seen to have been more genuine in Ghana than in some other countries, but that is not saying much. CSOs which participated report that government documents on which they were to offer views were delivered very late (sometimes as consultative meetings began), and that the 'dialogues' with officials often amounted to one-way procedures in which government spokespersons told CSOs of official views. This process did nothing to enable CSOs to influence the formulation of policies for specific sectors since that occurred after the broad strategy was crafted. A second such exercise in more recent times (GPRS-II) is regarded by CSOs as more genuine, but the improvement was decidedly modest.

Policy-oriented CSOs here are as formidable as those in MP, but less so than in AP. Some are formally invited to participate in various 'consultations' on major policies. But as we saw just above, these mainly entail the transmission of information from government actors to CSOs, and the latter doubt that they exercise any meaningful influence on policy formulation. When policies for specific sectors are being crafted, a small number of CSO leaders are informally consulted, but they doubt their actual influence. Several national-level CSOs are skilled at getting press attention for their workshops and their policy studies, but these have had next to no discernible impact on official policy.

Other interest groups exert some limited influence – mainly certain large businesses which are involved in patron-client (and thus rather dependent) relationships with leading politicians.<sup>31</sup>

A few intellectuals with expertise in specific policy areas are sometimes consulted – briefly, unsystematically and almost always informally – by senior bureaucrats. But they seldom receive feedback on whether their comments influenced policy-making, and they doubt that they do.

The media report constantly on politics, but focus almost entirely on personalities and almost never on policy issues. The sole exception is

one newspaper, *The Public Agenda*, which is published twice a week by a policy-oriented CSO associated with ISODEC – whose readership is very limited and whose influence on policy formulation is virtually impossible to discern and probably minimal.<sup>32</sup> Ghana's media, which as recently as 1999 were sharply critical of the former government, have become rather uncritical – partly, it is alleged by some analysts, because they have received government largesse.

Most donors have moderate influence on policy formulation, but the IMF is immensely influential. The government lacks the technocratic capacity to develop macro-economic strategies and thus macro-frameworks for policy - - and therefore largely cedes this decisively important role to the IMF (see section IV-B below). It does very little to pry the process open for CSOs.

Andhra Pradesh (AP):

Policy-oriented CSOs are more formidable in AP than in either Ghana or MP (mainly because AP is more developed), but ironically they have been more aggressively excluded from political influence over policy-making or anything else than in the other two places. This is mainly the result of the relentless drive by Chief Minister Naidu to marginalise power centres that could not be controlled.

Other interest groups: The interests of a small number of sizeable businesses (including a few foreign firms) were considered by the tiny circle at the apex of government that utterly dominated policymaking, although it appears that they did not participate in the process. This was done because the firms might invest in the state, and/or they might offer major kickbacks (a frequent occurrence). The interests of prosperous farmers were also considered – as has always occurred in AP – but they also did not participate.

Intellectuals had next to no input into policy formulation. They were occasionally encouraged by the government or supportive donors to produce 'studies' that praised the government. Some of those who wrote critiques were subjected to intimidation by government actors.<sup>33</sup>

The media reported much more often than in Ghana on policy issues. Like intellectuals, they were provided with abundant positive information by the government's lavishly funded publicity machine, but this gave them no influence on policy making. Attempts were made to intimidate those which were critical, although those efforts had far less effect on (mostly) formidable media outlets than among rather isolated intellectuals.

Donors, especially the World Bank and the British DFID, had significant influence over policy formulation (and implementation). This was true because (i) the government assiduously sought donor funds, (ii) those two agencies were immensely generous, and (iii) the AP government, like all but one of India's state governments, lacked the capacity to prepare its own detailed position papers for negotiations with the World Bank on macro-level policies. (The IMF has minimal influence in India.) The government nevertheless had substantial leverage in negotiations with donors because of the Chief Minister's image, much valued by the latter, as a development 'icon'. (The reality, when it came to policy implementation, was often different. But even a somewhat mythical icon had its uses.) It used it less to resist policy changes than to ensure that their timing conformed to the compulsions of the election timetable. The government undertook certain policy initiatives – often on its own, but sometimes on the advice of donors -- in order to be the first Indian state to do so, since this reinforced its iconic status.

Madhya Pradesh (MP):

Policy-oriented CSOs are less formidable here than in AP, mainly because MP is less developed, but some (as in Ghana, but to a lesser degree) have solid analytical capacity in certain specific policy sectors. They made their views known through their publications and seminars, through contacts they usually initiated with senior government actors including the sometimes accessible Chief Minister, and (to a lesser degree) through a somewhat more helpful free press (see below). But

policy formulation was largely closed to them, and to all but the Chief Minister's key civil servants and advisors. The main exceptions to that last statement were important figures from enlightened CSOs outside the state – whose writings the Chief Minister and his aides assiduously read. They were consulted informally or drawn into official advisory exercises. These people affirm that their views often had a significant impact on demand-driven, anti-poverty policies adopted by the government. At least two CSOs within the state, to which senior leaders took a dislike, were treated unsympathetically by the authorities. But another was contracted to prepare state *Human Development Reports* (the first in India) which candidly explained the under-development in the state. Their (largely successful) purpose was to make 'development' (rather than clientelism or partisan conflicts) the main public preoccupation – in order to prepare the way for demand-driven, anti-poverty programmes.

Other interest groups received careful attention from the state government, although they did not contribute to policy formulation. Here as in all Indian states, the interests of prosperous farmers (who are important at election time) were constantly considered. To attract external investment in the mining sector, the government developed imaginative leasing arrangements to get round national restrictions on ownership. This government took numerous effective steps to serve the interests of ordinary villagers in this overwhelmingly rural state by generously empowering and funding elected councils at district, sub-district and local levels, and by launching several high-impact demand-driven programmes linked to those bodies – surpassing all but three other states on this front. It also developed several anti-poverty initiatives – surpassing all other states on this front. And it took more aggressive action than any state or national government in India's history to address the needs of the Scheduled Castes (ex-untouchables or *dalits*). But in none of these cases did actors external to the Chief

Minister's circle at the apex of the system exercise more than minimal influence over policy design.

This state (like Ghana) has fewer intellectuals whose work might inform policy formulation than does AP. The government gave hearings to some of these people and very occasionally incorporated their ideas into policies. But it mainly took (and often heeded) informal advice from enlightened analysts from outside the state (as it did with external CSOs).

The media in MP are less formidable than in AP or most other Indian states. They pay more attention to policy issues than do their Ghanaian counterparts, but not enough to have much impact on policy formulation. Analyses in some Indian publications external to MP (often by the intellectuals discussed just above) have a significant impact in several policy sectors.

Donors played a relatively modest role here. The state government took the initiative in negotiating, early on, a prudent fiscal stabilization initiative with the Asian Development Bank – in part because that agency was more open to genuine consultation than were other donors.<sup>34</sup> That agreement persuaded the World Bank to limit its involvement in MP, as part of a division of labour among donors across states. The state government sought support from Britain's DFID for a health programme, but was rebuffed – and the government later testily rejected an offer of substantial budget support from DFID because it contained unjust criticisms and excessive conditionalities.<sup>35</sup> The MP Chief Minister would have made a more genuine and constructive developmental 'icon' than his counterpart in AP, but he was not treated that way by DFID or most other donors.

Let us now turn to governmental actors operating at high levels in each place.

Ghana:

Institutions and actors in the executive branch of government – in this system with a strong executive presidency – dominate policy formulation. The only other actors which have significant leverage are international development agencies – mainly the IMF (see section III-B below). No other actor or institution, governmental or non-governmental, has more than minimal influence.

Other government institutions and actors are among that latter group. This may appear surprising since Ghana has a Parliament with an electoral mandate separate from that of the President, and a small number of ‘autonomous’ institutions with constitutional status. (Let us leave aside the District Assemblies which are discussed in Part V). But at all times since the creation of this political system in 1992, Parliament has been controlled by the President’s party, and Members of Parliament (MPs) have depended on the President for their nomination by the party, and for their continuance in office. MPs who have indulged in criticism or dissent have been expelled from the ruling party – which means that they have lost their seats. This and MPs’ hopes of promotion to ministerial rank have made Parliament a pliable body which exercises next to no leverage over policy formulation (or much else). Its influence is, in the words of Ghana’s leading political analyst, “at best stagnant and possibly declining”. The current government has made fewer concessions to it than the former Rawlings government – because unlike Rawlings (who seized power in a coup) – President Kufour has a credible electoral mandate, and that has persuaded the executive agencies to impose greater hegemony over the legislature, even though it is also elected.<sup>36</sup> This became vividly apparent in 2004 when the scrupulously neutral Speaker of Parliament was ousted – even though he was a former president of the ruling party – in favour of an abject successor who cannot protect the integrity of Parliament in the teeth of attempts by the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs to muzzle it.<sup>37</sup> Some CSOs have found MPs responsive to their constructive initiatives – for example, to the findings of the Growth and Poverty Forum. But as long

as Parliament remains so weak and the executive remains closed to such initiatives, such initiatives hold little promise.

Autonomous institutions like the Electoral Commission and the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice exercise some power – significant power in the case of the former – within their limited spheres. But their remits do not extend to policy formulation. The judiciary has issued some rulings in high profile cases that were unwelcome to the executive, but it has also at times bent to the will of the executive – and has scarcely any influence over policy formulation.

#### Andhra Pradesh (AP):

Institutions and actors in the executive branch – mainly the Chief Minister himself -- utterly dominated policy formulation. Donors were the only force outside his tiny circle which had much influence here, and even they were unable to prevail very often over this assertive leader. Other government institutions and actors had next to no impact. The ruling party was rigorously controlled, as was the state legislature where that party enjoyed solid majorities. The bureaucracy was also tightly controlled and at times felt itself brow-beaten. The courts occasionally rendered judgements that were inconvenient to the government, but this was a rarity. The Election Commission exercised significant power in the periods immediately preceding elections, but only then. National-level government actors had little influence until 2004, (that is, in the period analysed here) because they depended on Naidu's government for survival. Since then, an enlightened National Advisory Council has had somewhat more influence.

#### Madhya Pradesh (MP):

Institutions and actors in the executive branch – mainly the Chief Minister and his immediate advisors – again dominated policy formulation. Senior bureaucrats in line ministries – who were (sometimes with justice) regarded as less than dynamic – were often excluded from major decisions. Ministers were allowed to engage in

patronage politics and self-enrichment – as distractions from policy issues.

Other government institutions and actors thus had only very limited voice in policy making. The ruling party's majority in state legislature, for the most part, tamely supported the Chief Minister. The opposition was maladroit and thus impotent. National leaders of the Chief Minister's Congress Party (which was out of power in New Delhi during most of his time in power) interfered little in state-level affairs, mainly because he was their most effective state-level leader and they needed him to show how imaginative Congress could be.<sup>38</sup>

We shall see in Part IV that in MP (but not in Ghana or AP), elected councils at lower levels had the power to adjust policies formulated at higher levels. But with that exception, policy formulation in these three places was utterly (in AP) or substantially (in Ghana and MP) dominated by the executive branch of government.

#### **4.2 The Flow – or Control – of Information**

If CSOs are to interact effectively with governments and to influence policy communities and networks, they need information on conditions in the country, and on government resources, capabilities and thinking. They almost always find this difficult to obtain at high levels within political systems – although the degree of difficulty varies from case to case and, within cases from sector to sector.<sup>39</sup>

In all three places considered here and in most other countries, those at the highest levels within the executive refuse to share more than minimal information on security policy. Most are also very reluctant to share information about the formulation of macro-economic policy -- which powerfully facilitates or constrains major policy decisions in every sector. And some are reluctant to disclose information on major sectoral decisions until policies emerge fully formed from the executive. Within certain sectors, however, the



formulation process may be somewhat more open. All of these points can be illustrated by evidence from our cases.

In recent times, senior figures in all three governments have shared very little information of any sort at the formulation stage. Why were they were so tight-fisted? There are four possible reasons (which are not mutually exclusive):

- a) *arrogance* – because they regard the possession of information as their prerogative;
- b) *a desire for political dominance* – which the control of information facilitates;
- c) *to husband limited resources* – because retrieving information would consume too much scarce time of over-burdened government employees; and
- d) *ignorance/embarrassment* – because the government does not actually possess much information and is too embarrassed to reveal this.

*Arrogance* is often stressed by observers as the main cause – Ghanaians use phrases like “lingering authoritarian” thinking, while Indians speak of persistent “imperious” attitudes. In all three of our cases, there is some substance in these accusations, but their importance is exaggerated. *A desire for political dominance* is clearly more important in the two Indian states, and it appears to be more important in Ghana. The last two of the four reasons do not count for much in India, but the fourth one does in Ghana.

This last comment needs some explaining. Careful studies of macro-economic policy making in Ghana, and of the government’s command over information on major expenditures have revealed serious weaknesses – which the government has not acknowledged. When the time comes for macro-economic policy to be made, the Ghanaian government cedes the task to the IMF – in Washington and to IMF officials in Accra, some of whom work with great autonomy within the finance ministry. The government provides

whatever data it possesses to these people and – since it lacks the analytical capacity to translate them into policies – it permits them to design its macro-framework. The government's inadequate control over its own data is further evident from the fact that, while it can provide statistics on its spending in various developmental sectors,<sup>40</sup> it does not possess similar statistics showing how much has been spent in different the country's different regions.<sup>41</sup> It thus appears that much of the Ghanaian government's reluctance to share information is rooted in its own *ignorance* – its lack of such information – and in the *embarrassment* that would attend an admission of this. The new Right to Information Act, passed in Ghana in mid-2007, may begin to change that. But the official incapacity (and perhaps a residual unwillingness) to provide information may cause problems to persist.

One further, hugely important comment is necessary about actions inspired by *a desire for political dominance*. Governments seek to monopolise information and to close down the process of policy formulation with different aims in mind. Note a striking contrast between the two Indian state governments. The AP Chief Minister kept policy formulation at the state level closed in order to construct political and policy processes that were tightly controlled by him from apex down to the grassroots. The MP Chief Minister kept it closed for the opposite reason. He sought to open up the political and policy processes at intermediate (district) and local (village and town) levels to popular participation and preferences, via democratic decentralisation and demand-driven programmes. To achieve this, he had to withhold information from and keep policy formulation largely closed to his ministerial colleagues, because he knew that they opposed opening up.

Thus, perhaps surprisingly, AP and MP represent extremes among these three cases. The AP Chief Minister sought relentlessly to practice illiberal politics, while his MP counterpart strove to liberalise politics at lower levels. Ghana stands in the middle here. Its leading politicians -- who achieved power because politics had been gradually liberalised -- took a few minimal,

exceedingly hesitant steps to liberalise further. As we shall see below, politicians' attitudes to such liberalisation do much to determine CSOs' prospects – although this has usually been overlooked in the literature.

### **4.3 Clientelism and Post-Clientelist Approaches**

To learn more about politicians' proclivities, let us briefly consider their varying attitudes towards clientelism – a process in which the making and implementation of policy are manipulated by leading politicians to cultivate patronage networks populated by individual clients who are personally loyal to them.

Ghana's leaders are intensely preoccupied with the pursuit of clientelist approaches. A recent authoritative study demonstrates that policy processes are largely a “façade” in Ghana, and that politicians believe that clientelism will suffice to keep them in power.

The two Indian Chief Ministers did not share this view. They saw that state governments which had emphasised clientelism had been rejected by voters at almost every state election in India since 1980. They understood that if governments were to cope with demand overload, something more than clientelism was required. Each therefore devised a post-clientelist approach to governing (and to the policy process).

In that they were similar, but they differed radically in the post-clientelist strategies that they adopted. In AP, we saw an illiberal drive to achieve top-down control, to exclude and/or harass groups and organisations (including CSOs) which could not be controlled. This was accompanied by a ceaseless effort to use information technology to amass detailed data from government employees on every aspect of government in every arena in the state – to enable the Chief Minister to micro-manage and thus to control the system. In MP, we saw a drive to liberalise government at district and lower levels, through the generous empowerment and funding of elected councils there.

The aim was enable ordinary people, and their representatives and preferences, to influence government action through bottom-up participation. The Chief Minister thus abandoned 'control' of much of the system – radically broadening the policy community to include the citizenry – on the (largely correct) assumption that this would produce better developmental outcomes, and greater popularity and legitimacy for the ruling party. Clientelism continued to be practiced to some degree in both states, but it was substantially subordinated to these sharply contrasting post-clientelist approaches.

If we understand the views of any government on (i) clientelism, (ii) the possible need for post-clientelist approaches, and (iii) the content of any such approaches, we will have gone a long way towards comprehending CSOs' access to the policy process – and how it might (or might not) be broadened.

## **5 Influencing Policy Formulation – At Lower Levels**

How much influence to CSOs have over policy formulation at lower levels? In order for them to have any, formulation must actually occur at lower levels -- and many systems are too centralised for this to happen. We saw above, however, that the MP Chief Minister closed down policy formulation at the apex of the system in order to open the policy process up at lower levels. This gave CSOs and citizens some opportunities to influence policy formulation there. The approach of PRIA's partner *Samarthan* at those levels was not so much to lobby government actors for specific policy decisions, but rather to press them to ensure that institutions at lower levels were genuinely open to influence from ordinary people and their elected representatives – especially to poor, low status groups. *Samarthan* also worked with those groups to develop their awareness, skills, organisational strength, confidence and capacity to operate effectively within the more open system – and it had considerable success.<sup>42</sup> It was helped by strong system of democratic decentralisation which gave elected councils the power to frame some of their own policies.

Things were very different in AP and Ghana. In both places, governments claimed to be pursuing democratic decentralisation. But in AP, the Chief Minister systematically deprived elected bodies of powers, funds and information. He was the only Chief Minister in India to divert (illegally) funds intended for these bodies to a major initiative which, unlike those elected bodies, he could control. It entailed visits by officials and ruling party leaders several times each year to localities -- to engage with residents prior to a largely pre-determined distribution of benefits to (on each occasion) a pre-determined section of society (women, artisans, etc.). There was some room for local preferences to matter, but not much – far less than in a robust system of democratic local government which was starved to fund this alternative. Policy was almost entirely pre-formulated at the apex of the system.

The Ghanaian authorities also speak warmly of democratic decentralisation and of their District Assemblies (DAs). Most members of the DAs are elected, but there is a significant number of presidential appointees – at all levels from the district down to the village. The chief executive of each DA is also appointed by the President (with the sometimes grudging consent of the DA), and he – together with appointed members – ensure that the DAs have only very minimal influence over policy formulation. Only six percent of government revenues are channelled to them – a much smaller sum than in more genuine systems of democratic decentralisation. They have limited discretion over how to use those funds. But this mainly entails decisions about which localities should receive them rather than what to spend them on – and it is the latter type of decision which would give them influence over policy formulation. Many elected members are so preoccupied with gaining promotions to higher levels in the system that they accede readily to the wishes of actors higher up in the ruling party. The DAs are thus largely unable to affect the formulation of policy, and they offer CSOs next to no openings to influence that process.

This evidence indicates that the predilections of politicians at higher levels largely determine CSOs' prospects of influencing policy formulation at lower levels.

## **6 Influencing Policy Implementation and Outcomes**

It is at lower levels in political systems that CSOs mainly influence policy implementation and thus outcomes – since that is for the most part where implementation happens. On very rare occasions, CSOs may have an impact on implementation by reporting to high-level authorities, but in these three cases, the upper reaches of government were substantially closed to them. We must therefore focus on lower levels.

We have seen that in the substantially closed systems in AP and Ghana, CSOs had next to no opportunity to influence government action at lower levels. That is as true of policy implementation and outcomes as of policy formulation. The Naidu government in AP was relentless in its hostile determination to exclude CSOs from any influence. The situation in Ghana has been more complex, so that it deserves a little detailed comment.

It is difficult for most national CSOs in Ghana to have much influence on policy implementation and outcomes, since most of them lack organisations and allied CSOs that can penetrate down to district and lower levels where these things largely occur. The main CSOs that might make an impact in these spheres are those that operate at and just above the local level. But most of them lack either the inclination or (more often) the capacity to engage with the implementation of policies. And they face further problems in their dealings with the main government institutions that might help them to influence implementation -- the District Assemblies (DAs).

The DAs no longer suffer the looting of their paltry funds by the ruling party that occurred in the Rawlings era (Crook and Manor, 1998, chapter five). But they still have far too few powers and funds to achieve much. And as we saw just above, actors linked to the President nearly always prevent the exercise of these powers. Attached to the DAs is a skeletal bureaucracy which operates in a very hierarchical manner. The result is a system (and a policy process)

that is substantially centralised, which offers very limited opportunities for lower-level CSOs or elected members of the DAs to have much influence over policy implementation and outcomes. The overall picture that emerges is decidedly sobering.

This leaves MP where the lower reaches of the system were far more open – thanks mainly to (i) the empowerment of elected councils there, and (ii) the creation of several genuinely demand-driven programmes. Those things enabled enlightened CSOs like PRIA's partner *Samarthan* to influence implementation in several ways. They maintained direct contacts with bureaucrats at lower levels, but their principal emphasis was on indirect efforts – in two ways. First, they focused on poorer groups, helping them to access development programmes by transmitting information to them about the programmes and building their capacity in a non-partisan manner. They worked to enhance their political awareness, organisational strength, links to similar groups in other localities, collective self-confidence, and political skills -- at obtaining and acting upon information, lobbying, protesting, etc. Second, they worked with elected members of lower-level councils to strengthen their awareness of the promise of those newly empowered bodies and their political skills. They also supported associations of council leaders, to enhance their leverage within the system.

By these various means, they helped to ensure that policies made at higher levels were adapted to suit distinctive local conditions – so that implementation was more successful and outcomes were more valuable to local residents, and thus more sustainable -- since people maintain what they value.



## **7 CSOs' Engagement with International Forces**

Let us begin by considering the financial support which CSOs receive from international sources, which provides some background to the discussion later in this section of their impact at the international level. In India, such financial support is limited and declining since the previous national government invited donor agencies from all but a few countries to leave. But in Ghana, like aid to the government, it looms large.

In very recent times, most donors there have moved away from direct funding to CSOs to pooled efforts to support them through intermediate organisations. Two of these, G-RAP and RAVI (see above) offer funds to, respectively, large and smaller associations. They also work together to ensure complementarity. Since 2004, a third organisation, BUSAC (the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge Fund), backed by the Danish, British and U.S. governments and private sector funds) stands somewhat apart, and supports business associations. It conducts some discussions with the first two bodies, but does not coordinate action with them.

The work of G-RAP was discussed earlier, in connection with the government's blacklisting of ISODEC. It has provided very constructive support to larger CSOs, as that sensitive case suggests (although not to GAPVOD whose budget turnover has been too small for it to qualify). So has RAVI with respect to smaller associations. So through their efforts, the international development community is delivering solid backing to civil society in Ghana. But a less inspiring word is in order on BUSAC.

BUSAC has provided grants to 183 business organisations (about 40% of which focus at the national level) to enable them to lobby government for changes in regulations and procedures to remove bottlenecks and constraints on business. This writer interviewed two senior actors at BUSAC and heard diametrically opposite views on its progress. The first said that the government

had taken “no action” in response to business associations, even though in 2002 it had announced the start of a “golden decade for the private sector” in Ghana. Some changes had been made by District Assemblies, but the executive agencies of the national government had been wholly unresponsive. The second interviewee argued (without detailed evidence) that great progress had been made. Enquiries by this writer with other knowledgeable informants indicted that the first witness had provided the more accurate view. They stated that the current government is more business friendly than its predecessors, but that it tends strongly to favour large businesses with which it has close clientelist ties. Small businessmen regard talk of the “golden decade” as a cruel deception.

In two of our three cases, iconic status in the eyes of international agencies enabled regimes to operate in ways that disadvantaged civil society. In AP, it was Chief Minister Naidu himself who enjoyed such status. This was surprising, since he was far less enlightened than his counterpart in MP. But Naidu went to great (one might even say ‘extravagant’) lengths to cultivate senior actors in donor agencies personally, and he was supported by a vastly expensive and quite effective publicity machine. He thus acquired the status of the leading development ‘icon’ in South Asia, which enabled him to obtain massive external funds despite a highly questionable (and in some cases, downright outrageous) record on many fronts.<sup>43</sup>

In Ghana, it is more the government than the more low-key President who enjoys iconic status. Official actions there scarcely warrant this status. Inaction – the product of hesitancy, complacency and a shortage of competent people within government -- has been more noticeable. As one perceptive analyst put it, when it comes to efforts to improve governance, Ghana’s government is “coasting”.<sup>44</sup> The main explanation for its image as an icon lies in the dismal condition of other regimes in its region. Donors – many of whose officials work with multiple countries in the region, so that they are acutely aware of the contrast between Ghana and its neighbours -- have repeatedly

given the Ghanaian government the benefit of the doubt on ‘governance’ and other reforms. They have for example, often spoken of a *de facto* framework for improved governance when none actually exists. They have reduced the number of targets which the government must reach to satisfy donors, and there is a clear presumption among knowledgeable observers (and, they suggest, within the government) that abundant aid will continue to flow even if targets are not reached – to sustain the icon.<sup>45</sup>

What of the impact of CSO’s in these three places at the international level? One shrewd European observer in Ghana argued that “virtual networks” linking various enlightened civil society groups have slowly developed, so that those organisations have acquired a certain minimal influence within the international ‘policy community’ on Ghana. The change should not be overstated. These networks are, as this informant put it, “fluid, ethereal and not well institutionalised”... like “groupings of gases that partly mix”.<sup>46</sup> In time, they may assist CSOs within Ghana to make a greater impact, but evidence from India – where such entities have much more substance – suggests that the gains may be disappointing.

Three of the four CSOs being examined here – GAPVOD is the exception – have used more conventional methods to make impacts at the international level which have in turn had some effect within their countries.

ISODEC took its concerns over water privatization in Ghana to legislators in London and Washington. It persuaded several American Congressmen and Senators to write to the World Bank and the IMF headquarters, supporting ISODEC’s views. The result was a significant dilution of the privatization programme.<sup>47</sup> This represented a clear success, but it probably also helped to inspire the government’s retribution against ISODEC thereafter.

CDD and PRIA tend to use research outputs and learned argument, more than lobbying, to influence thinking within international policy communities -- which

include both CSOs and practitioners within donor agencies and governments. We have already noted CDD's work with the Afrobarometer project, the International Centre for Transitional Justice, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, and the Overseas Development Institute in London. It also reaches out to other international fora, and the quality of its studies has earned it influence there. CDD and some other Ghanaian organisations not assessed here (for example, Action Aid) have provided studies to international development agencies that have induced policy change, which in turn has at least a modest 'trickle down' effect within Ghana. But as with ISODEC's lobbying, CDD's impact at the international level appears to have provoked more suspicion and resentment than acceptance in the eyes of the Ghanaian authorities.

That has been a far less serious problem for PRIA since national-level officials in India have tended in recent years to be more open to innovative thinking within the international development policy community – especially since 2004 when a Congress Party-led coalition has held power in New Delhi, but also before that. PRIA's influence at the global level has surpassed that of its counterparts in Ghana, in most other developing countries, and indeed in India. It has had a major impact on the work of CIVICUS, the Commonwealth Foundation and a large-scale Ford Foundation enquiry into civil society-government interactions – and that is only a partial list of its achievements. So the overall picture that arises from this study is mixed, but not utterly depressing.

## 8 Implications

To sum up much of the detail presented in this paper, an inevitably over-simplified table is set out below covering four key topics. It is worth noting that the two Indian states, which we might expect to resemble one another more than Ghana, are the extreme cases in all respects. Ghana stands between them.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>AP</u>	<u>Ghana</u>	<u>MP</u>
<i>Government hostility to CSOs</i>	high	medium	low
<i>Strength of civil society</i>	high	medium	low
<i>Partisan character of public discourse</i>	very high	high	low
<i>Official approach to improving governance</i>	largely pretence	“coasting”	on most fronts, energetic

What answers does all of this suggest to the core questions posed in the larger project of which this study is one part? When we consider the three sites covered by this paper, the answers vary somewhat.

*Do we see any signs of movement from normative advocacy by CSOs to sustainable policy engagement and to policy outcomes based on more democratically accountable ‘political contracts’?*

In Ghana, we see a little of this – mainly in the “consultations” to create the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), but also in other government-CSO dialogues on policies for single sectors like water, health and education. However, these exercises are virtually all regarded by CSOs as empty rituals in which their views have no impact, and in which government actors mainly transmit information, one way, to CSOs. At lower levels, the DAs have no influence over policy

formulation and virtually none over implementation. So in Ghana, we see virtually no genuine movement.

In AP, we see no movement at all because the state government there was the most hostile in India both to CSOs and to elected councils at lower levels

In MP, we see little movement at high levels, except in the case of one CSO (*Ekta Parishad*) which had some influence on land policy. Note, however, that the Chief Minister there kept the policy process closed at high levels in order to open it up at lower levels by empowering elected councils there. (Had it been more open at high levels, opponents of such openings would have thwarted change.) So we see impressive movement at lower levels which enables CSOs and the ordinary (especially poor) people with whom PRIA's partner works to influence the implementation of policies largely crafted at high levels. The result has been the gradual emergence of democratically accountable governance and thus political contracts at lower levels.

*How has such movement occurred -- and thus, how might it be promoted in other places?*

In Ghana, the movement (such as it is) is almost entirely explained by donors' insistence on "consultations" in the GPRS and in certain single-sector programmes – but the movement implies very little genuine change because the government ensured that these were empty exercises.

In AP, the government systematically resisted genuine movement.

In MP, genuine movement occurred at lower levels – because the government energetically sought to make it happen there.

Note that in every case, the proclivities of senior figures (mainly politicians) in governments determined whether movement occurred.

This strongly suggests that the way to promote movement elsewhere is to persuade politicians that it will serve their political interests – as it has done in some places (including MP).<sup>48</sup>

All of this suggests that, absent an inclination towards change by politicians, CSOs – even PRIA in India which is as formidable as any civic organisation in Asia, Africa or Latin America -- are as yet too weak to effect much movement.

*What are the factors which explain varying degrees of CSOs' policy effectiveness?*

This analysis indicates that those factors are mainly to be found at and very near the apex of government. It should be noted, however, that when the MP government opened up the system at lower levels, PRIA's partner CSO (*Samarthan*) was able to operate effectively in direct engagements with government actors, and to enable ordinary people with whom it worked to do likewise, because it had developed the organisation and strategy that made these things possible. In other words, while CSOs must largely wait upon governments to generate movement, their capacity to respond will do much to determine their effectiveness once such movement occurs. PRIA's well-crafted approach to capacity building offers useful lessons for other CSOs.

*How important is the degree of social 'rootedness' of CSOs in determining their political influence?*

This study suggests that 'rootedness' almost always acquires significance only when senior politicians are prepared to open processes up.

In AP, many CSOs (including PRIA) are very well rooted. But the Chief Minister's fierce determination to keep processes closed rendered that meaningless.

In Ghana, CSOs are somewhat less well rooted, but their roots have again counted for little because the government was disinclined to move towards genuine engagement with CSOs. As Tony Killick has argued, even CSOs with roots in powerful interest groups like associations of traders and producers have had very little influence because Ghana's senior politicians prefer to emphasise the clientelist distribution of patronage (Killick, 2005, pp. 1-2).

In MP, we saw the ‘rootedness’ of CSOs begin to make an impact only when the government opened the political and policy processes up to democratic influence at lower levels – with one important exception. *Ekta Parishad* was permitted to influence land policy at high levels because it was a social movement that had struck roots among hundreds of thousands of landless and land-poor people – so that its inclusion was likely to win the ruling party votes.

This suggests that CSOs which mass bases and with limited and very coherent policy agendas (both of which *Ekta Parishad* had) can make a difference in democratic polities. But there are few such CSOs in Asia and almost none in Africa.

*Do CSO interactions with governments help to produce policy outcomes that are more responsive to the needs of the poor and excluded?*

We only see this in one place – MP again. It is apparent from the *Ekta Parishad*’s interactions with government, and from those of PRIA’s partner *Samarthan*. The opening of the political and policy processes at lower levels gave the latter opportunities to achieve tangible results from its work to strengthen both elected councils at those levels, and the capacity of the poor and excluded to engage effectively with the councils. *Samarthan* was also able to facilitate the workings of certain anti-poverty programmes like MP’s formidable Education Guarantee Scheme. However, in AP and Ghana, CSOs’ interactions with governments produced very little effect – because (to reiterate) the governments there would not permit such interactions to yield results. In AP, PRIA’s interactions not with government but with poor, excluded groups achieved some successes – and the same was true of efforts by certain Ghanaian CSOs to work with vulnerable groups. But these gains had little or no connection with official policy processes.

*Does CSO influence on policy communities and networks help to persuade governments to make policy processes more open and effective?*

In Ghana and AP the answer is, almost entirely, ‘no’. A few Ghanaian CSOs who had special expertise in a few policy sectors (for example,



trade) were -- very occasionally and almost always informally -- approached by government actors for ideas to enrich the latter's limited understanding of issues and policy options. But it was seldom apparent that they had exercised any influence. It would be encouraging to think that they had some impact in persuading the government to pass the Right to Information Act after a delay of several years. But this does not appear to be true -- it was donor pressure which counted, if anything did. In AP, PRIA was never consulted, even informally. But its work to strengthen certain networks -- for example, associations of elected heads of (largely powerless) elected councils at lower levels -- may have produced some advances at the margins.

In MP, PRIA's partner did similar work -- something that has been almost entirely overlooked in Ghana. It had greater effect because the councils had significant powers. But since the policy community within that state was largely ignored by the state government, efforts to strengthen that community had little impact. On the other hand, the government drew often upon ideas from enlightened sections of India's national policy community (and, to a degree, from similar forces within the international policy community) -- and there, PRIA's influence was potent. But in none of these three cases did CSOs' efforts within the immediate arena (the country in Ghana, and the state in AP and MP) have enough impact upon the policy community to trigger much change in government policy.

It is worth noting that the AP government also drew many ideas from one section of the international policy community. But it looked to people who celebrated the illiberal approaches of politicians (like Malaysia's Mahathir) in pursuit of political control -- marginalising and often harassing independent power centres. This reminds us (i) that we must ask which policy communities (or sections of such communities) governments look to for ideas, and (ii) that not all policy communities are enlightened.

*The Outlook for CSOs in Monitoring, Feedback and the Remaking of Policy*

Ideally, CSOs should be able to assist (and enhance the effectiveness of) governments by continuously monitoring policy implementation and outcomes, and by feeding back that information to officials. If that happened, CSOs could then play a role in the remaking of policy -- as governments adjusted their approaches on the basis of such feedback. This has actually occurred in several fragile states where donor influence was strong enough to get it started, and where governments began to see that it served their interests (Manor, 2006).

The evidence from this study suggests, however, that many governments are reluctant to permit this. CSOs in all three of our settings engaged in monitoring, and attempted to feed information back to governments. But this had next to no effect in Ghana and AP. Those governments were unwilling to listen – much in the former, and at all in the latter. They were disinclined to allow an open ‘politics’ of policy making to emerge.

In MP, efforts to provide feedback to high levels of government had only limited effect -- although CSOs were sometimes given a polite hearing by high-level officials, and the Chief Minister’s interest in adjusting policies in the light of lessons from practical experience sometimes enabled them to have an impact. At district and lower levels, they had more success. This occurred partly because PRIA’s partner CSO used the subtle, congenial approaches which has PRIA perfected, and crucially because elected councils at those levels were usually inclined to listen and powerful enough to act on the information.

Note, however, that in AP, where councils had little power, even those same subtle approaches had little effect. Thus, the overall outlook here is, once again, not encouraging for CSOs.

These findings are sobering, and two further grim points must be added. First, both Ghana and India are genuine democratic polities, but many other less developed countries are not. That suggests that even the limited the headway made by Ghanaian and Indian CSOs may not be replicable in many other

countries. Second – and to reiterate -- if headway is to occur, it is crucial to focus on persuading leading politicians in those countries that more open policy processes will serve their political interests. Governments and their leaders have much to gain from contributions by CSOs, but most of them do not recognise that. This is, excruciatingly, a missed opportunity.

Where does all of this leave enlightened CSOs? They are, to a great extent, natural allies of democratic governments. They can help to make the political and policy processes more open, accountable and responsive. By doing that, they can build firm bridges between state and society, erode dangerous popular cynicism -- and not incidentally, they can enhance the legitimacy and popularity of governments and ruling parties. That should be music to the ears of politicians, since it speaks to their fondest desires.

But they are disinclined to hear it. The evidence from these three solidly democratic polities suggests that three key politicians – two of whom were (however undeservedly) donors' icons,<sup>49</sup> while the third, who was strangely overlooked by the donors, has been hailed (with some justice) as a world class progressive<sup>50</sup> -- failed to tune in, entirely (or in the first two cases, at all) to the music. The first icon, Naidu in AP, regarded CSOs (since they were alternative power centres) as anathema – as objects of contempt to be marginalised and, if possible, eliminated. The second, Kufour in Ghana, sees CSOs as an almighty, unelected nuisance -- with which he must appear to 'consult' because of donor pressure, but which offer him so little benefit and so much potential embarrassment that they must (again) be marginalised. The third leader, Digvijay Singh in MP, took a less adversarial view of most (though not all) CSOs. He treated most of them with his customary unfailing courtesy, and made an alliance with one because it commanded a mass following. But even he failed to see that many of the others – including PRIA's partner – could assist mightily in promoting his key goals of enhanced service delivery, greater responsiveness, and social justice to disadvantaged groups.

In these three places, and especially in the more dismal of these environments, AP and Ghana, CSOs with precious little access to the policy process continued to press ahead with their efforts regardless -- preparing themselves, other CSOs, and ordinary people for the day when processes might become more open. In Andhra Pradesh and other Indian states, that hope is not entirely unfounded. Governments have changed at a large majority of state elections in India since 1980, and this has sometimes brought more liberal regimes to power, as in AP in 2004 (although things can go the other way, as they did in MP in 2003). In Ghana, the situation is less promising. The electoral system has been become far more liberal than before, but this has not been matched by a similar liberalisation of the policy process.

When they are asked about this dilemma, activists in enlightened CSOs argue that their efforts are producing important changes within society. They are helping to make elites (who are, thus far, the main targets of most Ghanaian CSOs) more assertive in their support of open politics and policy processes, and better able to seek constructive change. Ordinary people (who, despite ISODEC's efforts in Ghana, are more effectively reached by PRIA and similar organisations in India) are becoming more politically aware, self-confident and capable. These achievements have not yet produced more open systems, but they have great moral worth in themselves. They also make it harder for governments to become even more illiberal, and they may some day help to persuade political leaders that behaving like genuine democrats will serve their own interests.

CSO leaders' arguments are not entirely misplaced. In Ghana, we have seen some modest steps forward – and the Right to Information Act may eventually prove more than merely modest – but the determinedly unresponsive habits of the executive core of government live on. In India, AP has witnessed some openings since the election of a new government in 2004 – which is no surprise since nothing could be worse than the proactively destructive regime

over the preceding decade. But that is counterbalanced by an intolerant Hindu nationalist government in MP since 2003 whose excesses have mainly been checked by the chauvinists' own disarray and squabbling. So the overall picture is mixed at best, and far from uplifting for enlightened CSOs.

CSO activists make their hopeful arguments rather grimly, in the teeth of stubborn refusals to change by politicians and governments that are vastly more powerful than civil society. So their efforts are plainly acts of faith, which may never produce the intended outcomes. But the very grimness of their determination is admirable, and deserves continued support.

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<sup>1</sup> This statement oversimplifies since – as we see early in Part II of this paper -- there are important variations among states in the Indian federation. In recent times, policy processes in a few Indian states – including one that is assessed here (Andhra Pradesh) – have been less open than those in Ghana.

<sup>2</sup> Andhra Pradesh was examined in 2006 and 2007 as a case study for this project. The author did extensive research in Madhya Pradesh between 1998 and 2004 -- some of which focused on issues other than (but adjacent to) the concerns of the present project -- but it included an in-depth study of *Samarthan*, PRIA's partner CSO in Madhya Pradesh (which operates in ways that are very similar to PRIA).

<sup>3</sup> The discussions of the latter focus mainly on the governments that held power in those two states for roughly a decade between the mid-1990s and 2003/04. Less is said about events since they lost elections and left office – mainly because the new governments have established clear patterns in their dealings with CSOs, and partly because habits from the previous governments persist to some degree. In Madhya Pradesh the Congress Party government led by Digvijay Singh held power from 1993 to 2003. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime that succeeded it experienced an utterly chaotic first year and further turmoil since. In Andhra Pradesh, Chandrababu Naidu led the regional Telugu Desam Party's government from 1995 to 2004. It Congress successor has until recently suffered from considerable inertia, and thus has not departed as markedly from the practices of Naidu's regime as people expected.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Marton Markovits of the University of Pennsylvania, Accra, 7 March 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Markovits argues that three key growth areas in Ghana's recent history have been the banking sector and religious institutions/groups (both funded by indigenous capital), and CSOs (funded by external donor capital – that is, by 'softer' money than that which supports the first two sectors).

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Rajesh Tandon, head of PRIA, New Delhi, 4 September 2002.

<sup>7</sup> I am grateful to Anil Kumar Vaddiraju, a former PRIA activist in AP who now teaches at the Institute for Social and Economic Change in Bangalore, for the points in this last sentence. He illustrates the contemptuous attitudes of state government officials by stating that over a period of several years, the senior administrators in the districts in which PRIA worked never granted it even five minutes to discuss its work. Other district-level officials would take the calling cards of PRIA representatives and immediately throw them into the waste bins before their eyes.

<sup>8</sup> This section is based on a large number of interviews with a diversity of actors, including Digvijay Singh himself, in Bhopal and New Delhi, 2003-2005. These issues are set out in greater details in chapter three of Melo, Ng'ethe and Manor, forthcoming.

<sup>9</sup> Both fiscal constraints and the fiscal deficit have eased significantly since about 2003, as a result of high growth rates which have enhanced government revenues.

<sup>10</sup> PRIA is, however, not an all-embracing umbrella organisation in the manner of the Ghanaian organisation GAPVOD. PRIA limits its partnerships to like-minded organisations.

<sup>11</sup> PRIA is thus a smaller organisation than some other Indian CSOs, but it prefers to limit itself to these sorts of numbers since it makes the organisation manageable and effective.

<sup>12</sup> This writer had extensive exposure in 2002 to *Samarthan's* network in MP, and has evidence of similar efforts by PRIA itself in AP.

<sup>13</sup> This section is based on interviews with PRIA representatives, New Delhi and Hyderabad, January 2006, and on a study of PRIA's partner *Samarthan* in Madhya

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Pradesh and discussions with PRIA activists in New Delhi, March 2002. It is also based on assessments of PRIA documents (PRIA, 2003) and (PRIA, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Nana Oye Lithur of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Accra, 9 March 2006.

<sup>15</sup> To qualify, an organisation must have had a turnover of \$400,000 in the previous year. A second complementary instrument, funded by Britain's DFID – the Rights and Advocacy Voice Initiative or RAVI – provides funds to much smaller CSOs.

<sup>16</sup> Most of this discussion is based on interviews with the head and deputy head of GAPVOD, Accra, 4 and 8 March 2006, with activists in other CSOs in March 2006 and February 2007, and on GAPVOD documents.

<sup>17</sup> As far as can be determined, even the AP government in India which was more hostile to civil society than that of Ghana, did not tap CSOs' telephones. In Ghana, ISODEC – which adopted a more adversarial posture towards government than did CDD – suspects but cannot affirm that it lines may have been tapped.

<sup>18</sup> These comments are based in an interview with Professor E. Gyimah-Boadi, Accra, 27 February 2007, and on further discussions thereafter with two people who are close to the government. There is no evidence that governments in the two Indian states assessed here have had their telephones tapped – although the AP government was fully capable of that.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> See in this connection an ISODEC study of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy process: (Abugre, 2001); as well as (Killick and Abugre, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> See for example, ISODEC, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Bishop Akogo of ISODEC, Accra, 26 February 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Hans Determeyer, Accra, 22 February 2007.

<sup>24</sup> For example, ISODEC restrained activists from Ghana's Trade Unions Congress from agitating on the issue, since they wanted to ease pressure on what still was a young government.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Hans Determeyer who works with G-RAP, 22 February 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Associations of businesses and farmers qualify as CSOs.

<sup>27</sup> The G-RAP and RAVI initiatives, discussed elsewhere in this paper, have eased this problem -- but only somewhat.

<sup>28</sup> Some CSO leaders long feared that the draft would never be placed before the cabinet. An earlier draft had been considered by the cabinet prior to the 2004 election, but ministers asked for more consultation with CSOs before finalising it – which some CSO leaders saw as a delaying tactic rather than a genuine effort at wider consultation.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Nana Oye Lithur, Accra, 6 March 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Note that India has not prepared a Poverty Reduction Strategy document, so this process has not occurred there – although reasonably genuine dialogues with CSOs on policies occasionally occur at national and state levels.

<sup>31</sup> See the discussion in Part VII below of BUSAC.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Audrey Gadzekpo, University of Ghana, Accra, 8 March 2006.

<sup>33</sup> This writer has had direct contact with and detailed information from intellectuals who experienced both types of treatment.

<sup>34</sup> This is based on an interview with the key civil servant who negotiated the package, Bhopal, 9 June 1999.

<sup>35</sup> The state government showed this writer the correspondence on the latter issue with DFID. He later discussed it with officials at DFID New Delhi.

<sup>36</sup> CDD and other CSOs have nonetheless worked with Parliament to enhance its analytical capacity, and to strengthen links between it and the public through public



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hearings. But they are acutely aware that they are dealing with an institution that – at present – has very limited influence. Interview with E. Gyimah-Boadi, Accra, 27 February 2007. For further discussion on the tendency of some governments with electoral mandates to behave less liberally than regimes that seized power, see Manor, (2004a).

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Professor E. Gyimah-Boadi, Accra, 27 February 2007.

<sup>38</sup> This did not, however, prevent them from actions which contributed much to his election defeat in December 2003, lest he threaten the pre-eminence of Sonia Gandhi and her children. This is an old, self-destructive tendency in the Congress Party towards outstanding state-level leaders.

<sup>39</sup> India has recently passed a Right to Information Act with teeth, but it existed for too short a time to be considered here. Ghana's new Act which has fewer teeth has, at this writing, just been passed.

<sup>40</sup> Note, however, that serious doubts exist about the reliability of even these statistics (Killick, 2005).

<sup>41</sup> These comments are based on a discussion with an economist at the University of Ghana, who had undertaken these studies, 13 March 2006.

<sup>42</sup> This writer witnessed the work of *Samarthan* activists in two MP districts for an extended period in 2002.

<sup>43</sup> These comments are based on a very detailed and highly negative political risk analysis of his regime conducted by this writer in 2001 for DFID, from a smaller study for the World Bank, and from extensive interactions with officials at those agencies – especially the latter.

<sup>44</sup> I owe this word to Professor E. Gyimah-Boadi.

<sup>45</sup> These comments are based on discussions in Accra in February 2007 with key civil society leaders and international observers, some of whom work with or within donor agencies.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Hans Determeyer who works with G-RAP, Accra, 22 February 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Bishop Akogo, an ISODEC leader, Accra, 26 February 2007.

<sup>48</sup> This is the main argument in Melo, Ng'ethe and Manor (forthcoming).

<sup>49</sup> The reference here is to Naidu in AP and Kufour in Ghana.

<sup>50</sup> This is a reference to Digvijay Singh in MP. See Melo, Ng'ethe and Manor, forthcoming.