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What is This?
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Anil Kumar Vaddiraju

Abstract
It is often assumed that civil society’s influence on governance can only be complementary to the state and that it must be exercised through conciliatory approaches. But contrary to that assumption, a study of civil society organizations in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh shows that the civil society may attempt to influence governance process through multiple strategies. These include conciliatory approaches, adversarial approaches and a combination of both, depending on the issue or policy on which the influence is sought to be exercised. This article illustrates this by taking the examples of two intermediary NGOs: one from Karnataka and the other from Andhra Pradesh. The question this article raises is: in the context of globalization and the supposedly prominent role of civil society, how effective are they? This article argues that they still happen to be subsidiary partners in the paradigm of ‘governance-through-networks’. By and large, public policy still happens to be influenced by, first the state, and second, multilateral donor organizations as well as multinational companies, although civil society activism itself should be welcome and need not be viewed with scepticism.

Keywords
Civil society, state, governance, policy advocacy, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, MYRADA, CWS, South India

Civil society is defined in various ways (Elliott, 2003; Carothers & Brandt, 2000; Jayaram, 2005). The term has been so overused that it is on the verge of losing its core meaning namely, the organizations and associations that are non-governmental and are in the realm of civic associations with considerable distance from the state and the party system. In political theory, there are three broad streams through which civil society can be studied. First is the L-stream, that is, the Lockean notion of state of nature as civil society. The second is the M-stream, the Montesquieu-de Tocqueville stream which focuses on the importance of civic associations and associational life particularly as it obtained in America at the time of de Tocqueville’s study (de Tocqueville, 1965; Misztal, 2001). The third is the Hegelian tradition from which also follows the Marxist theory. Hegel defines civil society as the realm between the family and the state. Marx includes the market and economic realm (Femia, 2001; Dryzek, Honig and Phillips 2006; Chambers, Simone and Jeffery Kopsten 2006).

When we speak of civil society, the one important aspect that we cannot forget is that the current theorization on civil society is significantly informed by the 1989 events of the collapse of the Berlin...
Wall and the erstwhile Soviet Union. As Kennedy and Galtz (1996, pp. 441–450) say of the then actually existing socialism, the velvet revolutions have crucially brought in the questions of spontaneous and voluntary assertion of civil society over authoritarian states.

The debate on democratization in the Third World during the 1980s also drew heavily from these historic events and made civil society as one of the mainstays for democratic governance. Therefore, the debate in the Third World not only revolved around establishing democratic polities and societies, but also focused on broadening the frontiers of democratic processes and deepening their reach to cover and include those who have been left out from its purview hitherto.

As Shinchi Shigetomi (2002, pp. 10–11) writes, developmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) trace their origin most often to the failure of either state, or market, or community or all three. The NGOs are officially non-political but their work has considerable influence and implications for political systems. They can work on development issues and attempt to have policy advocacy wings that constantly engage the state at different levels. These are the ones which fall in the category of intermediate- and state-level NGOs that have deep connections with grassroots NGOs or work with non-state donors and funders such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Ford Foundation, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Denmark International Development Agency (Danida), USAID, Oxfam, Action Aid and many such non-state, multinational donors. These organizations also maintain strong solidarity networks. The Voluntary Associations Network of India (VANI) is an example.

Here, the term civil society is used to connote developmental NGOs. These non-governmental organizations occupy the space of non-state and non-family associations and are organized and recognized under the law. The central concept of governance that we take up in this study is that of governance-through-networks. Notions of state and governance have changed, with the state becoming a ‘facilitator state’ from a ‘provider state’. The state is supposed to be governing through networks with multinational donors such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Federation (IMF) along with various donor organizations. And at the domestic level, it is supposed to include in the governance process civil society as defined above and various other networks such as advocacy groups, research groups and so on. According to this paradigm, governance is no more what the government does, but what this maze of networks do, of which the state is only one component albeit the primus inter pares (Stoker, 1998, pp. 17–28).

The civil society is supposed to influence the governance process by influencing public policy. Here we follow Wedel, Shore, Feldman and Lathrop in our definition of public policy (Wedel, Shore, Feldman & Lathrop, 2005) Besides this, there are also other paradigms of governance such as the World Bank notion of governance and the UNDP notion of governance. According to the World Bank, governance is basically seen as good governance comprising accountability, transparency, responsiveness, procedural simplicity and moral governance. The World Bank places extra emphasis on the accountability and responsiveness dimensions of governance. This notion also lays stress on procedural simplicity and a smaller state organizational structure, and therefore, emphasizes computerization, electronic governance, mobile governance and so on. The World Bank prefers a truncated and thinner state machinery and a rollback of the state while opposing big government and bloated bureaucracy. A bloated bureaucracy is seen as synonymous with rent-seeking. Governance through a thin state that is effective, efficient and economical would be most suitable for accountable, transparent and responsive governance.

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for the World Bank. Usually the Third World state is seen as burdened with a bloated bureaucracy that needs downsizing (Chitlangi, 2008, 44–50).

The UNDP views the process of governance, which it calls democratic governance, differently. According to the UNDP, the process of governance is to be carried out through a tri-sector model. In this model, the state, the market and the civil society are the primary players. The state is not given a short-shrift in this model but is treated on par with market. The more important addition is the civil society, which the UNDP sees as the guarantor not only of governance but of democratic governance. Democratic governance is premised upon the existence of civil society. Without an autonomous civil society, the state can become autocratic and markets unaccountable. This tri-sector model envisages the role of a watchdog for civil society and more. Civil society is the guarantor of civil rights, democratic freedoms against societal tyranny and of human rights in general against the state and markets (Van Der Zweerde, 1996). The paradigm also envisages that the three sectors should work in concert and ensure not only good governance but also a democratic one. Liberal democracy is seen as fundamentally premised on an autonomous associational and civic life that guarantees social solidarity and social capital. Thus, the UNDP paradigm of democratic governance has become an influential model for advocating democratic reforms all over the world (Bevir, 2009; Hyden, Court & Mease, 2003, 2005).

Here we try to examine the empirical relationship between civil society, public policy and governance. The model adopted here assumes that civil society, public policy and governance have a linear relationship. That is, civil society influences the governance process by influencing the public policies of the state. By working on the public policies of the state, civil society attempts to influence governance. Civil society as an autonomous actor attempts to either advocate or oppose public policies and thereby influences the process of governance. Therefore, this article examines how specific NGOs at a certain level have tried to influence the policies of the governments and thereby the governance process.

The article interrogates empirically whether a linear relationship has actually become a prominent feature in the relationship between the state and civil society. We also examine whether civil society is successful in influencing public policy or not and what are the ways and means employed through which civil society succeeds or fails in this process.

The concept of governance became prominent after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the state-socialist societies. The structural adjustment programmes in the late 1980s and early 1990s too made a rethink on the state necessary (Hyden, Court & Mease, 2005). The argument was that the state needed reform: the big government and provider state have failed, and the state’s role, especially in economy, needs to be rolled back. What was advocated was a diminished but efficient state that can operate as a facilitator for capital. This also led to theorization on the emerging circumstances and what the state and its functioning—governance—should be. Such theoretical debate was not just the making of academic political scientists but was also propagated by the Bretton Woods institutions to suit their lending policies. What emerged from these efforts was the theory of neo-liberal good governance.

The neo-liberal good governance focuses on aspects of governance such as public–private partnerships, outsourcing public sector tasks to private sector, privatizing the public sector and liberalizing the economy. The neo-liberal governance reforms encompass the neo-liberal economic reforms. Indeed, the partnerships with the civil society are also often termed as public–private partnerships though all civil society protagonists may not like to be defined as ‘private’ players to be drafted to such partnerships. While definitional battles on civil society overshadow this particular way of characterizing civil society, neo-liberal governance reforms do view civil society as one of the handmaidens of neo-liberal governance.
This is in addition to focusing on ‘development management’ and focusing on governance principles that are devoid of political content which the authors call ‘politics without politics’ (Munshi, Abraham & Chowdhuri, 2009, 20–21). This involves fundamentally applying management principles for development and administration without considering the political aspects of governance, that is, basically viewing state and developmental processes as apolitical or non-political in their essence.

One view of the relationship of civil society to governance invokes the same arguments of velvet revolutions in the context of developing countries as well. And this approach sees the state as inadequate to meet the demands of the time. For this, civil society and markets are to fill the gap that the state has evacuated. These arguments consider the predicament of the state in the present context.

The protagonists of civil society often hold that in the context of changed constellation of circumstances, the role of civil society is prominent in governance. That civil society holds the state and, to a lesser extent, markets, accountable and intervenes in policy making, advocates new policies or holds in abeyance the policies that are not conducive to public good and finally helps the state in implementing its policies. This view sees the civil society as not just collaborating with the governments but also locked up in contest when and where necessary. For example, Mboori and Chigudu (2005, pp. 111–112) say this quite clearly:

Civil society makes a unique contribution to the democratic process through advocacy campaigns and, on occasion, outright opposition to government. In the past two decades, civil society has played an essential role in literally toppling governments from Philippines and Panama to South Africa and Czechoslovakia.

As mentioned, this article focuses on the relations between civil society and public policy. This is done by taking two empirical instances, where we attempt to see whether civil society can influence public policy. This can be through collaboration as well as through contestation. Civil society influence on government need not be that of cooperation and collaboration alone; civil society organizations can employ a repertoire of processes in which contestation and conflict too are significant.

We also try to examine state–civil society relationships at the state level. The empirical sites of research are two southern Indian states, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. NGOs with considerable capacity to carry out advocacy for public policy have been selected both in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. These are called intermediary because they work both with international and national donors and with grassroots partner and network-NGOs. These often operate at the state level and have the personnel and wherewithal to have the necessary interface with governments.

They are: MYRADA (Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency) from Karnataka and CWS (Centre for World Solidarity) from Andhra Pradesh. They are well-established and highly respected civil society organizations with long-standing experience in policy advocacy and interface with governments. In the following sections, we examine the relationships between civil society organizations in their attempts to foster policy change and influence the governance process.

**MYRADA**

This section deals with the experience of MYRADA in its efforts to influence public policy and governance. Historically, NGOs in Karnataka grew out of religion-based institutions and the freedom
movement (Fernandez, 2004; Karnataka Human Development Report, 2005). While there are many religion-based organizations, there are also a number of Gandhian NGOs that are involved in constructive work and are working on illiteracy, Dalit uplift and welfare and poverty eradication. The NGOs in Karnataka largely work on three aspects: development, social service and health. Geographically, a majority are situated in Central and South Karnataka. Below we consider the more specific case of MYRADA in Karnataka.

MYRADA was founded in 1968. MYRADA is one of the biggest and most long-standing NGOs of Karnataka. It operates in three states—Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu—concentrating on 20 backward and drought-prone districts in these states. In 2010, MYRADA had a total staff strength of 231 (MYRADA, 2010, pp. 4–5). The initial work of MYRADA focused on resettlement of Tibetan refugees in Karnataka (Fernandez, Alosius Prakash (2002 and 2003). Later work related mainly to building self-help groups for women in rural areas and watershed and natural resource management work in rural areas of Karnataka and nearby districts in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. MYRADA believes that building institutions of poor people is the most important aspect for poverty alleviation and rural development. For this, it invests all energy in building institutions of micro-finance, natural resource management and gender empowerment in rural areas. MYRADA sees itself primarily as a field-based NGO with interest in policy advocacy.

Senior officials of MYRADA say that it has been working with the government since 1979; MYRADA is engaged with NABARD and RBI since 1987. MYRADA feels that it is not possible to effect policy change by advocacy alone. Field experiences lead to policy advocacy. Two aspects are important in this regard (a) concrete ground level experience and (b) credibility of NGOs pursuing advocacy. Higher officials of MYRADA feel that policy advocacy is often a matter of power game. They say that MYRADA influences government through the grassroots work of its network of institutions. They feel that MYRADA can influence the government in specific sectors, such as primary education, and that it is possible for an NGO to exercise sector-wise advocacy rather than influence macro or national policy.

Officials of MYRADA say that they are ‘actionists’ on ground even as they conduct advocacy. They think that ‘actionists’ develop institutions do activism as well as lobbying1 and feel that political parties and ideologies at the state level do not matter in this regard. For MYRADA, it is the local politicians and contractors—broadly the local political elite—at the Mandal, Zilla level and further below that matter. This is particularly true for this NGO because it believes in building institutions at that level where the ground level politicians and street bureaucrats are the ones that are relevant. The officials of MYRADA have good relations with higher level politicians and bureaucrats. For instance, the Executive Director of MYRADA is a retired officer from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), and some IAS officers have worked with MYRADA at one point or the other.2 IAS officers are happy with MYRADA because the organization delivers on the commitments given to the government.3

MYRADA’s publication ‘The MYRADA Experience: Working with the Government in Multilateral and Bilateral Projects’ (Fernandez, 1996, pp. 120–121) sums up MYRADA’s working relationship with government quite clearly as somewhat lengthy quotation below will show. It says:

- ‘MYRADA’s Board is composed largely of senior retired government officers who are widely respected for their integrity, capabilities, and experience and dedicated to duty, and of a politician with a reputation for integrity and service.’
- ‘MYRADA adopts systems and procedures in finance and project management with which government is familiar and comfortable.’

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3 IAS officers are happy with MYRADA because the organization delivers on the commitments given to the government.
• ‘MYRADA keeps distance from party politics and maintains secular image; both features make it easier for government officials to involve MYRADA.’
• ‘Though it [MYRADA] did not agree with government on many occasions, MYRADA did not accept a position that made dialogue difficult or government defensive, but sought to work out solutions in the field to prove its point.’
• ‘MYRADA’s staff were able to relate with government officials at all three [State, District and local] levels; they were members of the Committees at State and Central levels; this enabled MYRADA to cultivate a broad spectrum of relationships with government and to relate with government even outside the context of a particular project where operational pressures influenced the relationship and even distorted it; this network of contacts created an enabling environment for MYRADA’s involvement in a particular project.’

The publication further says:

There is a degree of commonality of interests between the following: Local politicians and MYRADA: they often lobby for the project area to cover their constituency. Senior government officers and MYRADA who believed that MYRADA can implement anti-poverty programmes effectively than government departments; Government field level staff often find support and encouragement from MYRADA project staff. (Fernandez, 1996, pp. 120–121).

Given the above situation which clearly shows how closely MYRADA works with the government, there is a need to consider some aspects of MYRADA’s relationship with the state. An example of MYRADA’s successful cooperation with government is the Management of Environment and Development of Women (MEADOW) project with Tamil Nadu government in Dharmapuri district of Tamil Nadu clearly shows the collaborative nature of MYRADA work. Likewise the Integrated Rural Water Supply, Environmental Sanitation and Habitat Development project in collaboration with the World Bank and Government of Karnataka in Mysore and Gulbarga districts of Karnataka shows the nature of collaboration and extent of participation of MYRADA with government and multilateral donor projects. There are several other projects (Fernandez, 1996) in which MYRADA collaborated with government and other donors in multi-party agreements and these all show that despite the hurdles it faced, MYRADA was always willing to cooperate and collaborate with government and believed that both NGO and Government sectors have their comparative advantages and disadvantages which could be used for common purposes instead of contesting and confronting each other.

Senior officials at MYRADA4 say that so far as policy advocacy is concerned, they are successful because there were officials from the government who also had an interest in NGO work in general and MYRADA work in particular. These officials were also associated with MYRADA and other NGOs in different capacities. This clearly demonstrates that MYRADA follows a more conciliatory approach towards the state than a confrontationist approach.

Andhra Pradesh
The Centre for World Solidarity (CWS) has been fostering policy change and influencing the governance process in Andhra Pradesh. As part of the experience of civil society in influencing public policy in the state, we consider the efforts of CWS, an NGO which was founded in 1992 as a public trust and has its headquarters in Hyderabad. CWS is modelled after the Berlin-based Action for World Solidarity. It is an
intermediate-level civil society organization that serves Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Jharkhand and Bihar. The organization works on a range of issues from child and women’s rights to rights of Dalits and forest-based communities and minorities. The organization also works on decentralization, panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) and broader governance issues. CWS works mostly through its network of grassroots NGOs and provides thematic, financial and advocacy support for the network of NGOs.

Besides working on its own, CWS has also founded very active and influential solidarity organizations that work on watershed (WASSAN: Watershed Support Services and Activities Network), sustainable agriculture (CSA: Centre for Sustainable Agriculture), forestry (CPF: Centre for People’s Forestry), Dalit welfare (NDF: National Dalit Forum and BODHI: Centre for Dalit Bahujan Initiatives) and Adivasi uplift (Centre for Adivasis). These solidarity organizations work on their own and are separate institutional entities in their own right, though they are founded by, and operate in solidarity with, CWS.

Before moving onto specific cases, we may take an overview of the interaction of CWS with government and policy-making. When asked whether he thinks policy-making in AP is open to interventions by NGOs, the founder and Honorary Secretary of CWS said the answer is a ‘qualified yes’. He felt that the GO–NGO committee of the Government of Andhra Pradesh headed by a senior administrator is meant precisely for this. He said the Programme Monitoring Committees of different development departments, social audit of programmes such as Comprehensive Land Development Programme and NGO involvement in programmes such as NREGA are examples of the openness of AP government to NGO interventions.5

The higher functionaries of CWS say their involvement is mostly through the particular bureaucrats in the government, who involve NGOs in development programmes and invite them to participate. Sometimes, however, the initiative is also taken by the NGOs themselves. CWS continuously seeks to interface with the government and attempts to avail the opportunities for such interface (ibid.).

On whether there is common agreement among the network of CWS partner grassroots NGOs on working with the government, the officials say the grassroots NGOs, even if they are small, cannot be taken for granted, and that while they participate in networking and solidarity building, the process is not easy. This is particularly true for intermediary level organizations such as CWS. The officials feel that working with a network of NGOs is both fascinating and frustrating (ibid.). Broadly, they feel that the state for various reasons at times articulates policies which they cannot take exception to, and CWS has to work around or adjust to these policies and persons in the state. For WASSAN and CSA (ibid.), there was a specific favourable constellation of circumstances that favoured their coming into existence.

CWS functionaries feel that both ‘person and policy’ should be favourable to civil society in order to advocate any policy or change in policy. For example, WASSAN’s coming into existence in 1994 was facilitated because of a watershed policy that was already enunciated and for which ground work was ready and done. They believe that there are spaces within the state and spaces within the policy, and that generally, government and civil society view each other with suspicion. But the presence of powerful individuals with connections to state and in support of civil society allays such suspicion.

Case Studies of Policy Interventions

In this section, we consider three aspects of the work of these ensemble of institutions: First, the decentralization work of CWS, particularly the work on PRIs and Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA); second, the work by solidarity organization CSA. We attempt to see how policy advocacy was done in all three cases in the context of Andhra Pradesh, and also in the context of the union government.
CSA had both positive and critical interactions with the government whereas the PRI programme of CWS had been quite critical of the successive governments that have marginalized PRIs.

**CWS Work Related to Panchayati Raj Institutions**

The CWS programme on PRIs began in 2000 and since then, the organization has been working in 13 of the 23 districts of Andhra Pradesh with the help of 15 grassroots NGOs. CWS feels that the PRI policy advocacy is most frustrating because Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and political leaders are opposed to the promotion of PRIs. This is despite the same party being in power at the state and the union level. Out of 29 items in the 11th Schedule of the Constitution, the devolved items are only nine by the first-term government of the late Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy (i.e., 2004–2009). This is also because elections were round the corner in 2009. PRIs are an electoral issue. From 2004 to 2009 nothing was done. The Andhra Pradesh Academy of Rural Development (APARD) had done activity mapping for different tiers of PRIs long ago but the GOs related to devolution of powers are not in tune with the activity mapping.

One of the major demands of the CWS was that within six months of the PRI elections, all the women representatives should be provided capacity building training. And CWS was successful in this, and separate trainings were imparted to women representatives from all over Andhra Pradesh. The Andhra Pradesh Academy of Rural Development has conducted one session of training for all the elected representatives coming from all parts of the state and has conducted separate training for women representatives from all over the state. CWS considers this to be one of its success stories vis-à-vis the government. The scale of training required inevitably necessitated the government to take up the work.

Another success story of CWS in influencing government has been vis-à-vis PESA7 (Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas) draft rules. The advocacy for this began when CWS held a meeting of 1,000 tribals on PESA, which was attended by senior state level officials. Advocacy for pro-tribal PESA rules began with this meeting, and eventually the rules were accepted by the government of AP. This work brings out the point that in the case of PRIs, the advocacy is difficult, arduous, painstaking and slow. While the results are not dramatically visible, the role of civil society does not come out clearly in the final instance. The third successful work of CWS was the restoration of power to issues cheques by Panchayat Sarpanches (village council heads). In this case the Sarpanches Association along with CWS staged protests, sit-ins (dharnas) and demonstrations and as a result of this the cheque issuance powers were restored to elected representatives.

Though these three successes appear small, given the context of Andhra Pradesh policy environment, they are indeed major. Overall, CWS perceives PRI advocacy as ‘the toughest nut’ as it deals with political power.

**Advocacy Efforts of the CSA**

Work on WASSAN and CSA began as part of CWS, but was later hived off into separate organizations. Non-pesticidal Management (NPM) work began in 1989 but branched out as CSA in 2002. The CSA’s work evolved in the following stages: Promotion and advocacy for NPM of farming (Down to Earth, 2006; Marten & Williams, 2007; Grain, 2008); promotion of organic farming and marketing of organic farming produce and advocacy of changes in seed policy of the union government. One crucial fact about the work of CSA is that it has been aimed at not only changing government policy but also educating the public, besides raising public consciousness about the positive outcomes of organic agriculture and the negative impact of GM foods. Indeed, its advocacy on Bt. Brinjal had become very popular. The effort

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of CSA to raise the level of public reason on specific issues related to the above aspects was considerable. It must be noted that the CSA made its advocacy after having conducted field trials of non-pesticidal management of agriculture, after experimenting with organic agriculture and after sowing and examining the growth patterns of GM seeds.9

Another important point is that the engagement of CSA with the governments at the state and union levels has not just been one of collaboration. CSA has been playing the role of a critic of government policies as well. The NGO is opposed to GM crops and chemical and pesticidal agriculture; and in this context it is continuously engaged in battles with the agricultural and environment ministries of the state and union governments. This shows clearly that civil society does not always play second fiddle to the government. Besides being critical about government policies, CSA has also been opposed to the multinational corporations that produce and sell GM seeds such as Monsanto, Cargill, Mahyco and others. These seed companies have been at the forefront of promoting GM seeds in sectors on non-food crops such as Bt.Cotton and food crops such as Bt. Brinjal.

The Advocacy Against GM Crops Including Food Crops

With regard to GM crops, the efforts of CSA centred around putting brakes on the policy process of uncritical adaptation of GM crops in general and food crops in particular. CSA also made considerable effort with regard to Bt. Cotton (Ramanjaneyulu & Kuruganti, 2010). The attempt was to contest official claims and enrich dialogue on GM food and non-food crops. During 2009–2010, CSA had done field trials of Bt. Brinjal and came up with consistent criticism of the adoption of Bt. Brinjal. In this case, the GM seeds were sown by CSA, their growth was examined and then a position on the crops was taken which was to advocate a policy against the adoption of GM crops. The third aspect on which policy advocacy was done related to the Seed Bill of the union government. CSA engaged fully with the state and union governments both on the First Draft Seed Bill and the Second and final Draft Seed Bill. The bill was halted from being adopted by the government due to CSA’s efforts.

Discussion

The study of two civil society organizations, one in Karnataka and one in Andhra Pradesh, shows that while MYRADA adopted a more conciliatory approach to the state, CWS in Andhra Pradesh adopted both conciliatory and adversarial approaches. These NGOs engage the state at various levels. The CWS approach vis-à-vis PRI empowerment brought the organization directly into a combination of conciliatory and conflicting roles. While the state governments in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh were trying to forge partnerships with NGOs on the lines of neo-liberal ‘good governance’ as advocated by IMF and World Bank, they were and still are resistant to democratic governance as advocated by UNDP. The example of resistance to PRI advocacy in AP illuminates the point that whenever questions of deepening and broadening democracy come to the fore, the Indian state does not accede to such demands easily and resists policy advocacy in that direction. The situation in Karnataka is not very different. Historically, in Karnataka, bureaucracy is influential and powerful and hence MYRADA’s reliance on bureaucracy is a successful strategy. What the experiences of CWS and MYRADA partially reflect are the differences in the political cultures themselves in these two states: in Andhra Pradesh ragione di stato (‘reason of state’) is not taken as uncritically as it is in Karnataka.
Civil society organizations’ major contribution to governance in India lies in advocating and practicing policies that deepen and broaden the frontiers of liberal democracy, though politicians and bureaucrats even at the state level are both insensitive and unwilling for that to happen. Therefore, policy advocacy by NGOs towards strengthening PRIs or making the state more accountable faces insurmountable hurdles at different levels. In view of this, a conflictual relationship with the state becomes necessary. The state is more interested in following neo-liberal notions of governance than in a UNDP-type of definition of democracy. Conflict therefore seems inherent in the relationship which becomes more acute when corporate interests are also at stake. CWS and CSA’s stand on genetically modified food and non-food crops had put the NGOs on a collision course with both the centre and the state. Their stand did not also please the multinational seed companies such as Monsanto, Mahyco and Cargill. The obvious question therefore is how effective are they? Here, we need to remember that these NGOs still happen to be subsidiary partners in the paradigm of ‘governance-through-networks’, with major influence on public policy being wielded by multinational donor organizations and multinational companies. In spite of this, NGOs involved in the debate on genetically modified foods have made much valuable contribution towards raising public consciousness on these technologies, thereby contributing to public sphere. That is valuable in itself. In the current environment of globalization and India’s liberal democracy, there is hope for policy advocacy by local NGOs through networking with larger international NGOs. The campaign against BRAI (Bio-safety Regulatory Authority of India) Bill by Indian NGOs in association with the international advocacy NGO Greenpeace and the limited successes obtained therein so far point not to total scepticism towards NGO policy advocacy in governance but to calculated and cautious optimism.

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Notes

1. Interview with Mr Aloysius Prakash Fernandez, Member Secretary, Governing Body of MYRADA on 12–10–09. He said you cannot change policy through bhashan (i.e., through a lecture to the government).
2. Interview with Mr Aloysius Fernandez at MYRADA on 13–1–2010.
3. Interestingly Neema Kudva quotes from one of the publications of MYRADA in which Aloysius Fernandez categorizes government officials into three categories: Levels A, B and C. Level A officials are the IAS and IFS level officials who are often in synergistic relationship with the NGO sector; Level B officials who operate at the district and taluk levels at the supervisory level, and are often uncomfortable with NGOs; and Level C officials who directly interact with the citizens and are the ones who normally relate well with the NGO staff (Kudva, 2008, pp. 131–132).
4. Interview with Dr S. S. Meenakshisundaram at MYRADA on 29–11–2010.
5. Interview with Shri M. V. Sastri dtd. 26–10–2009, Hyderabad; Shri M. V. Sastri besides being the founder of CWS and all the solidarity organizations is also the doyen of the NGO sector in Andhra Pradesh and as such these views are fairly representative of the views of the broader NGO sector in AP.
6. This section is based on interviews with officials of CWS, Dr. C. Vijaya Shyamala; Mr. N. Sambashiva Rao and Shri M. V. Sastri of CWS during 20th to 26th July, 2010.

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7. There are a total of nine scheduled districts in Andhra Pradesh namely Adilabad, Khammam, Warangal, Mahabubnagar, East Godavari, West Godavari, Srikakulam, Vishakhapatnam and Vijayanagaram. CWS work covers all the nine districts through grassroots partners and these have also formed into a state level PESA network by CWS.

8. The information on this is based on interviews with Dr. G. V. Ramanjaneyulu, Executive Director of CSA and with Shri M. V. Sastri, Honorary Convener CWS, and the other staff members of CSA and the documents provided by them.

9. The work of CSA has been documented in Down to Earth, The Ecologist, Economic and Political Weekly and the journal Seedling and widely in the newspapers and national TV channels such as NDTV.

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