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**Energy Development and Environmental NGOs:
The Asian Perspective**

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Introduction

From the early 1990s, the landscape of development and the environment had changed drastically. The importance of environmental protection has come to be recognized as a principal arena in international environmental politics and policymaking. Five years have passed, since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was held in Rio in 1992. It often comes to be questioned of what has been achieved in the field of sustainable development. Despite an improved understanding of the scientific aspects of causes and impacts of environmental problems worldwide, the human dimension of environmental discourse has increasingly been recognized as an important arena for further investigation.¹ There is a need to better understand the human response emerged from different sectors of the human society, with regard to critical environmental issues and policies. We envision the human response as a steering mechanism to shape directions of development trajectories.

Energy sector development is often identified as the focus of environmental action, because of severe environmental impacts of energy exploration and utilization, driven by increasing demand for energy services. The conflict between energy production/use and the environment is seen as the main issue attracting attentions from sectors of the human society. It is commonly recognized that environmental protection has been integrated into development processes through involvement of four different types of social actors. They include governments, multilateral and bilateral aid agencies, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

First, governments play a traditional role in shaping energy development and environmental protection, through policy incentives and regulatory measures to generate environmental-oriented actions in society, or more often the vice versa. They come to dominate development process through a top-down approach with command and control methods as a steering mechanism. It is often ineffective, because this mechanism tends to diminish the potentials for citizen's participation, and discourages communities' self-involvement.

Second, development initiatives are cultivated by multilateral and bilateral aid agencies, being translated into development practice in developing countries. International aid agencies usually cooperate with governments and seldom go directly to consult NGOs, or engage them in dialogue. Many aid programs are large-scale oriented and environmentally questionable. Although the environment is relatively new in the agendas of aid practice, it has seen a shape rise in operation in recent years. The World Bank is a particular case in responding to environmental issues (The

¹ Examples include the Global Environmental Change Program in the UK, the Human Dimensions of Global Change Program in Canada, the Human Dimension of the Environmental Change Program in the European Community, and the Social Learning in the Management of Global Environmental Risks in the USA. The Battelle Institute and the US Department of Energy also supported a project "State of the Art Review of Social Science and Global Climate Change."

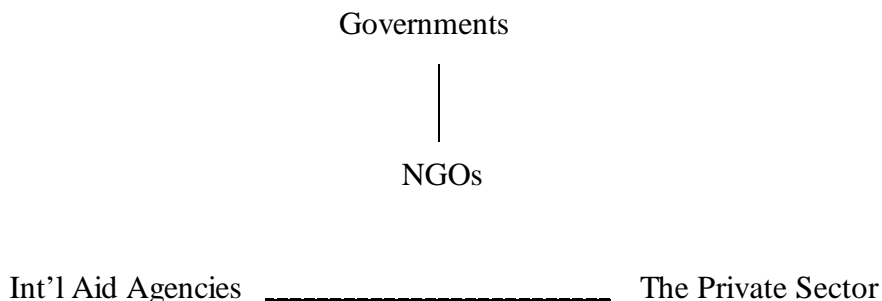
World Bank, 1997a), although this matter deserves a space for further debate.

Third, the private sector has traditionally been suspicious of the environment because of their business orientation, which often disregards environmental externalities. The private sector is increasingly pushed by governmental regulations, and, to a lesser extent, by citizens' groups to react on environmental benign directions. In general, environmental awareness is on the raise within the private sector, shaped both by internal awareness and by external pressures.

Fourth, most important, NGOs as a social actor have come to play an important role in bridging development objectives with the environment, through interactions with the other social actors. NGOs have grown into an important social entity in what is called the global civil society. NGOs have, sometimes with diverse orientations and objectives between developed and developing countries, functioned collectively as a catalytic force, or a mediator, to bringing important environmental and development objectives into the attention of practitioners, i.e., those working in governments, international aid agencies and the private sector.

NGOs have established different working relationship with other actors, as seen in **Figure 1**. Through formal and informal networks, NGOs come to shape the attitudes and operation of other social institutions. They have also developed particular modes in their practice. NGOs often act from the below with a bottom-up approach in issue-related activities. They seldom work on single issue, but often take several issues at a time and tend to integrate issues they concern. Through such activities as advocating, opposing, negotiating, consulting, NGOs have come to create an institutional framework to link the general public from local communities with high-level decision-making bodies and other social institutions. Through this process, NGOs realize their values and objectives. Their influence in different issue areas can be observed in international environmental disputes, energy project development, global climate change, and environmental impact assessment, etc (Hurrell & Kingsbury, 1992, p.10).

Figure 1. Relationship of NGOs with Other Social Actors



It is particularly in the last few years, NGOs as a community had transformed itself in scope and scale. The characteristics, purposes, interests and means of their action, or interaction, have all shifted from what we observed in the 1970s and 1980s. It is thus important to put these changes into perspective, to better understand the present

discourse of environmental politics in relation to the function of NGOs. It is assumed that a global civil society has emerged, because of the influence of NGOs. This emerging global civil society provides a new framework for societal responses toward important issues affecting human activities and survival. The overall global institutions of governance are increasingly shaped by NGOs' activities. Therefore, there is a need to better understand the social phenomenon and the process of NGOs' involvement in international political systems, particularly in the environmental field.

From the early 1990s, Asia developing countries have a particular influence in the global debate and action over development and the environment. This can be attributed to the fast expansion of the economic power in Asia, which consequently brings environment problems into the center of political and public attention. We have seen an increasing involvement of Asian NGOs in important environmental and development activities at the local, regional, national and international levels. This is a relatively new phenomenon in Asian developing countries. It is driven, on the one hand, by growing democratization of political systems in the region, and, on the other, by the increasing economic integration and liberalization, which have provided incentives for the development of the non-governmental sector.

High rates of economic growth have increased environmental tensions in the region. It has led to a higher environmental consciousness of the general public, on which environmental NGOs are rooted (Serrano, 1994). It can be argued that many environmental values and concepts are imported, or transferred, from the North, such as the initiatives to protect the global environment. It is clear that major actors from developed countries have shaped, to a larger extent, the values of NGOs from developing countries through international development assistance projects. However, some NGOs in the South do impose different values regarding important environment issues. Some challenge major aid agencies by opposing their activities in developing countries, such as the dispute over the Namada Dam project in India.

This study aims to compare and analyze NGOs' activities on the environment in Asia. The main focus will be on energy development with an environmental orientation, such as large hydro-power development, new and renewable energy development. The main objectives are:

- 1) to analyze the motivations, aims, characteristics, and means of operation of NGOs in their involvement in energy and environmental related projects;
- 2) to better understand the process of NGOs' involvement in decision-making, and to what extent processes are affected by the nature of operation and why;
- 3) to review the relationships, and means of interaction, of NGOs with governmental agencies, international aid organizations, and the private sector;
- 4) the influence of international NGOs to local and regional NGOs, and what are the differences in their values and modes of operation; and
- 5) the implications of NGOs' contribution to the emergence of the global civil society from the Asian perspective.

1. Energy Development and the Environment in Asia

For the last fifteen years (1980-95), economic development in Asia has been the most dynamic, compared with other regions in the world. In the 1980s, the East Asia and Pacific region had an average annual Gross Domestic Products (GDP) growth rate of 7.6 per cent, and 10.3 per cent in 1990-1995. South Asia had relatively low rates of growth at 5.7 per cent and 4.6 percent, respectively. Compared with the world average growth rates of 3.1 per cent and 2.0 per cent in the same period, Asia has performed well in catching up with economic indicators (The World Bank, 1997b, p.235).

Following the Japanese economic miracle in the 1960s and the 1970s, the four small tigers (Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong), a group of newly industrialized countries and regions,² made drastic economic restructuring and performed well in terms of GDP growth rates in the 1970s and 1980s. From the late 1970s till the early 1990s, China's emergence as a super economic power has redefined the world political and economic order in many aspects. In addition, countries in Southeast Asia, including Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam, have all come up with fast economic development in the industrial and commercial sectors. In addition, most of other nations in Asia have shown a promise in their economic performance. Clearly, this massive transition in Asia has a profound impact to world development in the 21st century.

Not surprisingly, rapid economic growth in Asia has resulted at a great expense to the environment (Clad and Siy, 1996, pp.52-58; ADB, 1990, pp.40-50). The stark contrast between Asia's successful economic development and rapidly deteriorating environment, particularly the urban-industrial environments, makes this region the foremost test for sustainable development. Energy plays a central role in this process. The conflict of energy sector development and associated environmental risks has led to concerns for ecological sustainability in the region. In many countries in Asia, the expansion of fossil fuel based power generation and development of large-scale hydroelectric power plants characterize energy development.³ Demand for industrialization and urbanization has been the main driving force to foster this development.

On the other hand, rural energy demand is often not met by supply. The continuing conflict over the lack of fuelwood and commercial energy supply, i.e., electricity, has led to ecological imbalances in rural areas. With over 80 per cent of the rural energy consumption depend on biomass energy in most Asian developing countries, such as China, Indonesia and the Philippines (UNDP, 1997, p.196), the environment is bound

² Taiwan and Hong Kong are referred to as part of China.

³ One example is China's energy sector development, which has shown a continuous growth in energy supply through construction of large coal-burning power plants and hydro-electric power stations, despite the progress on energy conservation. See: Gan, 1997.

to being affected. Burning of biomass energy for cooking and space heating in rural areas has intensified in some regions, due to increasing population pressure (Brandon & Ramankutty, 1993, pp.21-32). This creates further conflicts over natural resources and energy use.

How to balance energy development with environmental sustainability has become one of the greatest development challenges in Asia. There are many uncertainties. The reason is not only the complexity of environmental issues by themselves, but also the interrelated co-effects between economic growth, population, poverty, and urbanization. The costs of environmental externalities are often excluded from economic cost-benefit analysis when development projects are decided. The energy sector in Asia is typically owned and controlled by governments. Monopoly is a common character in energy development and service sector operation. The recent trend of decentralization in the energy sector has given rise to the legitimization of the private sector's involvement in energy development (Munasinghe, M, 1991, p.31). With governmental support, and sometimes with the help from international development assistance, public and private utilities are bound to defend their common interest in energy sector expansion. For this, great challenges are seen in terms of environmental consequences of energy development. In this process, NGOs have come to defend their own interests, and those in society at below.

We have seen major changes in public debates over environmental issues in the past two decades. With the increasing environmental imperative and evolving issue areas, public interest, as represented by NGOs, has evolved from merely local environmental problems in early period to regional and global issues in recent years. For example, in the 1970s and 1980s, most of the environmental campaigns were focused on air and water pollution, construction of large hydroelectric dam projects. From the late 1980s and till the early 1990s, there had been increasing attention on the problems of cross-boundary pollution, acid rain, global climate change, ozone depletion, protection of international water, and desertification. The rise of global environmental problems in world politics in the 1990s has given NGOs a unique opportunity to integrate themselves in world political arena. In this context, NGOs' presence in Asia is not unique, but rather reflecting a general trend in world environmental politics, and development perspectives in general.

2. The Evolution of Environmental NGOs

What has characterized Asia's development is the growing presence of the NGO community in political and social activities (Princen & Finger, 1994, pp.1-3). NGOs have evolved into a social critique in shaping political development processes. NGOs also become a widely accessible provider of social service to millions of people in rural communities. In South Asia, for example, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) has more than 17,000 full-time staff, and works with over three million people in rural communities. It reaches nearly 60 per cent of the country's 86,000 villages. With an annual budget of \$88 million, 55 per cent comes from overseas, and the rest from local donors and from its own commercial ventures. India has more than 12,000 development NGOs. The Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India has over one million clients in its credit programs. In Sri Lanka, the NGO named Sarvodaya works in 7,000 villages. Muslim Youth Movement of

Malaysia (ABIM) has more than 50,000 members (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p.3). In Indonesia, WAHLI (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup), the Indonesian Environmental Forum, had 79 NGOs in 1980. By 1992, it had over 500 members,⁴ working on all of the 27 provinces in the country. The Philippines has some 18,000 NGOs and most of them are rural and small (Princen & Finger, 1994, p.2). Even in China, the traditionally centrally controlled society, NGOs have mushroomed over the past one and a half decades, although environmental NGOs are small in proportion (Wang, 1993). It is generally agreed that NGOs have fostered great social changes through their activities, although their accountability and cost-effectiveness still deserve a space for further debate (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, pp.6-14).

The development of environmental NGOs and their involvement in environmental activities must be interpreted from a historical perspective. It is part of the massive social movements that challenge the dominant structures and processes of the authoritarian regime, through which political elite maximize their power and interest. The free associations of citizens in Asia have a long tradition, which can be traced back into the pre-colonial communal societies (Serrano, 1994, p.29). Asian societies are traditionally community based and integrative in common values. Asians have high values in family ties and tend to involve in collective community activities. This tradition is the basis for NGOs' growth, as many NGOs are community based and deeply rooted in societal networks at the local level. This is a cultural dimension, which may help understand the important function of networking in NGOs development in Asia.

Much of the NGOs' growth can be traced back into the post-World War II period in the late 1940s and 1950s. The independence movement has given rise to anti-colonization movements, through which civil society come to exercise their power and influence. During this process, local residents and communities have developed their networks of contacts and become independent from established fabrics of society, as traditionally dominated by super powers of western nations and national governments.

During the 1960s and 1970s, increased income in some Asian countries has enabled the middle class to expand. This relatively well-educated and better informed social group tends to exercise their influence through participatory social involvement. They strive for more independent rights and freedom, and tend to challenge dominant social structures and practices. Many voluntary organizations were developed during this period with community-oriented social service as their primary objective.

Environmental NGOs emerged from the 1970s, as part of the global environmental movements. They developed further in the 1980s, and expanded rapidly in the early 1990s (Thomas, 1992, pp.27-29). This phenomenon owes in part to the alarming environmental situation in Asia, and the world in general, following rapid economic development and the so-called modernization movements promoted by governments.

⁴ There are differences in the numbers of NGOs presented by WALHI. According to Mayer (1996, p.187), there were only about 300 members in WALHI by the early 1990s.

Increasing industrialization has given rise to pollution problems that create environmental risks affecting human health. Many local residents were victims of development, instead of benefiting from development.⁵ Conflicts over the use of natural resources have intensified because of the conflicting interest of the private sector, individuals and local communities.⁶ NGOs sometimes challenge dominant development activities when they see the risks of their eroding interest that may be undermined by large-scale project development. The general trend is that many environmental NGOs are becoming more complex with a global orientation in their areas of involvement. Although local environmental issues still occupy much of their attention, increasingly, they turn to global environmental issues, such as global climate change, conservation of biological diversity, and protection of international water, etc. This can be understood as part of the globalization process: moving from local to global, as in contrast to the other trend of development: moving from global to local in response to sustainable development.

From Rio Declaration to Local Action

The biggest challenge the UNCED has put forward is the implementation of the environmental conventions, and national Agenda 21, as the steering mechanisms for sustainable development. Five years after Rio, what we have seen is a massive transition from governmental responses toward local actions. Although implementation of Agenda 21 has been within the control of governments, many local initiatives are developed and shaped by NGOs. In some Asian developing countries, implementation of local environmental agenda is largely conducted through local NGOs. Their participation includes monitoring, assessment, advocacy and evaluation of projects and development plans. Even in countries such as China where NGOs are traditionally a weak player in society, local citizen's have come to play a critical role in shaping governmental development strategies and decision-making process (*News Letter of China Network*, April 15, 1996, p.7). In China's situation, most NGOs work on less sensitive areas of environmental activities, such as on education, research and consultation. Few of them put their emphasis on radical campaigns. This situation is different from most Asian countries where NGOs have a tradition to overlook governmental activities.

NGOs as a Social Actor

Function of Social Institutions

⁵ Resettlement of local people for hydroelectric dam construction is a well-known example. Large dam projects may result in millions of people to be moved out of their homeland. In many instances, these people do not benefit from dam development.

⁶ One example is seen in the recent forest fires in Indonesia. According to a report published by the International Center for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), based in Bogor near Jakarta, many forest fires in Indonesia have been "deliberately started as in disputes over land rights" between big companies and local farmers. Forest fires are used as a weapon to solving social conflict. Large companies had been known to burn land to drive out small holders. Small holders have been known to burn trees planted by large companies to retaliate for perceived injustice. In these conflicts, fire is a powerful weapon for both planters and farmers.

The concept of "shaping of institutions" in social development can be understood from three interrelated aspects: the role of experts and expertise, actors and their networks, and policy instruments. Experts and expertise refer to those professionals with specific knowledge/training or experience. Actors, broadly defined, include human and non-human actors. Networks play a critical role in facilitating communication and cooperation between organizations. Actors usually interact through a web of networks. Networking can be understood as an important means to promoting cooperation between institutions, and to keeping balance in power relations. Through networking activities, institutions come to share specific knowledge or information, and establish consensus to reach specific objectives. To what extent a network can function effectively depends on a number of variables: relationship between key actors involved, political interest of individual actors, design of communication focal points, a common knowledge base, etc.

Institutions operate through means of acting and reacting. Each institution has its identity which defines rules and principles. Institutional identity is established, due to the social and cultural settings on which institutions are rooted. Transfer of knowledge in decision-making processes, patterns of policy change, strategy setting, technological innovation, and so on, are largely determined by institutional identities.

Characteristics of NGOs

It is assumed that there are basically three types of NGOs involved in environmental disputes and related activities. First, research-oriented NGOs are those with informative and advisory characteristics. Their main interest is on academic research in order to generate debate both within the scientific community and the civil society. They intend to increase environmental knowledge and inform the society with critical environmental risks. For example, the Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI) in India is an influential research institute in areas of energy and the environment. It has played a critical role in informing the human society of the important environmental issues related to energy production and consumption.

Second, lobbying NGOs are those with critical, sometimes radical, attitudes toward environmentally related development issues. They come to criticize important development activities that have high environmental risks and impact to local communities and people. They lobby governments and international aid agencies for their policies on development projects. One example is the citizens' campaign against the construction of the Naerinchon Dam project in South Korea, which has been supported by the government. This campaign is led by the Citizen's Coalition for Economic Justice. Local residents have shaved their heads as means of public protest (Han, 1997, pp.19-21). These NGOs often use mass media to inform the public. They also present themselves in international meetings to publicize their opinion.

Third, mediating NGOs are those providing network services. They have a competence in establishing networks, domestically and internationally. Their main interest lays in making connections and informing important messages to concerned interest groups and individuals. One example is the Third World Network based in Malaysia. This NGO has functioned as a network organization by providing information to concerned NGOs. Their means of operation is through seminars and

publications. They have been influential through the monthly journal *Third World Resurgence*. The staff members of this organization have been actively involved in the consultation to the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and in post-Rio campaigns for sustainable development in UN system organizations (Gan, 1993b). These NGOs function differently in their activities than the other two types of NGOs. Therefore, they impose different impacts on social institutions and actors involved in environmental activities.

It must be mentioned that there is an overlapping relationship among these three types of NGOs. Although TERI is basically a research NGO, it also gets involved in networking activities. It acts as the secretariat for the Asian Energy Institute (AEI), a network organization with 13 member institutes across Asia. Its objectives are to promote information exchange, facilitate sharing and dissemination of knowledge, to undertake research and training activities that are of common interest to its members, and to analyze global energy developments and their implications. Third World Network is also active in lobbying international aid agencies, such as the World Bank, for their environmentally questionable projects.

In some circumstances, NGOs aim at circumventing the function of state through direct interactions with other social actors. This is often the case when the state cannot effectively fulfill their mandates, so is the case of inability of states in satisfying public interests, which differ from that of states. In addition, some tasks that may be attributed to the state in one country do not form part of the governmental sphere of competence in another country, due to different political, social, cultural and institutional conditions. However, these conditions may change over time, partly because of NGOs influence in the process of policymaking and implementation.

While NGOs vary greatly in size, interest, and objectives, most share the common goals of helping people and benefiting society. International and national NGOs support activities ranging from social welfare to environmental and political advocacy. NGOs at the local level provide services that include community organizations, healthcare, education, welfare support, small-scale financial assistance, and environmental protection, and just name a few.

NGOs also help improve people's lives through training activities and other livelihood support programs. NGOs prepare and implement development projects and work to strengthen local institutional capabilities and promote community self-reliance. Funding of NGOs comes from different sources: private donations, membership fees, government subsidies, international aid, and a variety of other sources.

Governments are often criticized for their accountability in dealing with programs for local community development. Their means of governance are questioned by most NGOs as having a top-down approach with inadequate consultation with people concerned. Meanwhile, NGOs have approached an alternative strategy with a bottom-up orientation. They provide services to local communities with flexible organizational structure and more democratic processes. They have objectives of opposing dominant players and institutions, and the intention to empower the poor.

NGOs have contributed to social and economic development in developing countries.

Often they enjoy comparative advantages over government and private sector institutions because of NGOs' closer contacts with local people. NGOs can deliver services to hard-to-reach communities in a more cost-effective manner than those provided by governments.⁷ Much of the success of NGOs come from dynamic leadership and committed staff members. NGOs usually tend to be more flexible and innovative. They are less affected by bureaucratic constraints, because of their build-in structures of governance, which are often decentralized.

NGOs also have limitations. Many NGOs are small both in size and scope of operation. Their impact is sometimes limited. NGOs can suffer from financial and technical constraints. Some of them depend on foreign donations and lack long-term financial security. Often focussed on a specific concern or a specific location, NGOs may lack broader economic and social perspectives. Many smaller NGOs are loosely structured and have limited accountability. Management and planning in these NGOs may be weak, or too flexible (Edwards and Hulme, 1995).

Communication and means of operation

In the 1990s, what is evident is that the emerging information society has empowered people at different levels in society. The increasing accessibility of information through internet services has provided a powerful means of communication for common people. This technological development has broken down the information monopoly, traditionally maintained by governmental institutions. It is clear that NGOs in the 1990s are much better informed than that in the 1980s and before. Use of electronic mails has enabled more networking and collaborating activities. One example is the operation of the Professional Association for China's Environment (PACE). This NGO was established in 1996 with all the members working on energy and environmental related areas. PACE has expanded rapidly over the last year, and has now more than three hundred members in China and all over the world. One of the main means of its operation is through e-mail, for sharing information and networking activities. The same is with many other NGOs. Formal and informal networks have taken shape, due to the diffusion of communications technologies and services, or what it is referred to as the impact of "global information super-highway". As a result, many NGOs increasingly operate in a global scale, rather than in regional and local presence.

4. Relationship between Asian NGOs and international NGOs

There is a changing perspective with regard to relationship between NGOs in Asia and those from other regions of the world. On the one hand, Asian NGOs are rapidly expanding their areas of activities across national boundaries, and responding to issues with international orientation. They present themselves in international gatherings and conferences (Princen and Finger, 1994, pp.4-5). They often act as advocacy of international protest against dominant institutions. In this process, key persons play a central role. Prominent environmental activist, such as Vandana Shiva from India, is

⁷ The issue of cost-effectiveness in NGOs' operation is very much debated among researchers. See: Edwards and Hulme, 1994.

recognized internationally as a leading spoke-woman on behavior of the type of radical environmental NGOs from Asia. Her speeches and writings are influential in shaping international environmental politics. Her arguments often come to attack the policies of dominant international institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Shiva, 1991, pp.58-60). Khor Kok Peng from Malaysia is another example. He has written many articles on international relations on the environment. He acts as an advocate for Third World countries, opposing unsustainable aid activities and policies.

NGOs in Asia are paving their ways into the arenas traditionally occupied by NGOs from industrialized countries. Protest against international aid agencies is one of the areas that attract high attention. There are differences in performance among NGOs from industrialized countries, particularly Japan, and those from developing countries in Asia. Many NGOs from Southeast Asia are more actively involved in international environmental disputes than that from Japan. For example, global climate change has been viewed by many local residents as a relatively remote issue than that immediately affecting their health and livelihood, such as air and water pollution. However, many NGOs in Asia have involved in one way or another in climate change related activities, such as the GEF. Global climate change has come to shape the interest from both the North and the South. It has helped improve the relationship between NGOs from different backgrounds and motivations. Similar development is also seen in the issues of deforestation, conservation of biological diversity, and ozone layer protection. This has become a common phenomenon in international relations. To a larger extent, NGOs in developing countries have taken over some of the power space from international NGOs. NGOs from the South have redefined their strategies to share a common interest with their counterparts from the North. By doing so, they could establish themselves in world political forums.

On the other hand, international NGOs have become more engaged in Asia than ever before. This is mostly because of Asian's growing importance in world economy, politics and the environment. Many NGOs in the North are increasingly seeking partners from the South for collaborative activities, i.e., research, campaign and network. This trend can be understood as an interdependent relationship, driven by demand for closer collaboration to link the local with the global, and the vice versa. Large International NGOs, such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Nature Conservancy, Greenpeace International, have all established closer contacts and collaborating relationship with local NGOs in Asia. For example, WWF is rapidly expanding its activities in China since the early 1980s. It has been mostly dealing with the government, but with increasing involvement of local NGOs, such as the research community and conservation groups. This increasing collaboration is encouraged by interest from both sides. Chinese are interested in exchange of information, expertise, most important, financial resources. WWF is interested in having access to local people, resources, and the prospects to expand its activities in China. The same is also happening in Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines.

From the early 1990s, we have seen an increasing development of relationship between Asian NGOs and those from industrialized countries, particularly those NGOs with international orientations. In 1991, about 50 NGOs from Asia and North America and Europe worked together in a campaign to protest the establishment of

the GEF and the operation of the multilateral aid agencies for their environmental destructive activities in developing countries. This campaign was led by Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth Malaysia), and, not surprisingly, it adopted a similar strategy like those used by the Friends of the Earth International. In many aspects, the operation of the GEF has provided an opportunity for many NGOs, including Asian NGOs, to be engaged in activities that shape global environmental agenda. This is evident from the NGO consultation meeting prior to the GEF meetings. These consultations have affected the making of the GEF policy and strategies (Gan, 1993a, p.208). Another example is seen from the UNCED process, during which NGOs from the South and the North strengthened their relationship.

One could argue that there might be a diminishing support or collaboration from Northern NGOs to governments in developing countries. The main cause of this shift may be attributed to closer contacts between Southern and Northern NGOs. Although WWF has committed to work with governments for its country programs, increasing emphasis is being put on support to non-governmental conservation institutions. WWF Nepal assists a number of agencies in a variety of ways. Support includes funding staff training, purchase of field equipment, upgrading office facilities, and participation in national and international seminars and events.

Following the democracy movement in 1990, hundreds of local NGOs are now registered in Nepal. Many of them function as pressure groups, catalysts, and educational forums, while others execute conservation and development projects. Many of these NGOs are committed to environmental conservation. WWF is helping through its project "Support for Local NGOs". Recipients of WWF grants include the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC), Environmental Camps for Conservation Awareness (ECCA), Kathmandu Environment Education Project (KEEP), Nepal Forum for Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ), Himal Associates, Nepal Botanical Society, and Women in Environment. Supporting grassroots NGOs with practical and original ideas promotes conservation as part of the daily life and actions of Nepal's people. WWF is also developing a network of NGOs to ensure that all conservation initiatives are well coordinated.

In addition, there is an increasing cooperation among NGOs within Asia developing countries. NGOs see the advantage of building up coalitions to strengthen their positions in international environmental movements. This is particularly seen in Southeast Asia where networks of NGOs are blooming. NGOs come to define common interest areas for collective actions. They build up their collective alliance by holding large regional meetings and conferences. Such cases can be seen at the "Southeast Asia Regional Consultation on a People's Agenda for Environmentally Sustainable Development: Toward UNCED and Beyond", held in Los Banos, Laguna, the Philippines in December 1991, and at the "People's Participation in Environmentally Sustainable Development", held in Puncak Pass, Indonesia in March 1990 (WWF, 1993, p.49).

5. Interrelationship of NGOs with Other Social Actors

The following sections review the interrelationship of NGOs with other societal institutions, i.e., governments, international aid agencies, and the private sector. It

points out the interdependent relationship of these actors in society, particularly in Asia's contexts.

Governments

In the analysis of external forces that are important in shaping the environmental discourse, we distinguish two interrelated social institutions: governments and NGOs.

Table 1. indicates the main characteristics of these two institutions interacting on energy and environmental discourse. It is the interaction, or tensions, between these actors that function as means to retaining inter-agency relationship and promoting cooperation. Formulated policies are thus the results of conflict resolution as means to harmonizing development process and achieving perceived objectives. In this regard, adjusting sectoral policies can be viewed as an instrument for accomplishing commitments, and for resolving conflicts among involved groups of actors.

Table 1. Characteristics of NGOs and Governmental Institutions

	NGOs	Governmental Organizations
Characteristics	Social Critique	Bureaucratism
Main Interests	Defending Local Interests Engaging in Int'l Politics	Control of Resources Retention of Power
Priorities	Poverty Reduction Natural Resource & Environmental Protection	National Economic Development National Security
Instruments	Lobbying Public Debate Media Reporting	Negotiation Financial Control Political Pressure

The relationship between government and NGOs has gone through major changes in recent years. Concerns for environmental sustainability of development have brought governments and NGOs together. Social and environmental accountability of development is often claimed by NGOs as central to their agenda. Their attitudes to governments differ from country to country. In some countries in Asia, there has been traditional dependency of NGOs on governmental subsidies for their activities. For example, many NGOs in China are usually semi-public in order to assure their legitimate rights. The Chinese NGOs attended at the UNCED were selected and sent by the government as part of the official delegation. This perspective is currently changing, due to economic liberalization and decentralization of the political system, and the diminishing governmental support. New types of NGOs are emerging in response to environmental challenges. They tend to distant themselves from governmental control, and try to work on issues less sensitive to challenge governmental legitimacy.

For example, the Friends of Nature in China has devoted itself to environmental education for children and schoolteachers. It receives financial aid from international

sources, and tends to keep itself away from governmental subsidies.

⁸ The intention is to keep its independent status. By contrast, some NGOs grow out of governmental bodies. Many of them are research oriented, instead of acting radically. The Beijing Energy Efficiency Center is developed from the Energy Research Institute of the State Planning Commission. It maintains close ties with governmental agencies, and operates within the framework of official contacts. Its objective is to facilitate the transfer and dissemination of environmentally friendly energy technologies. This NGO couldn't have become existence without the support from the Department of Energy in the US. In recent years, many governments in Asia have come to rely more on NGOs' collaboration for project implemented at the local level. Governments increasingly see NGOs' connection with local communities as an important factor to ensure cost-effective operation of projects.

International Aid Agencies

From a global perspective, the influence of environmentally concerned NGOs is crucial, as they are the primary promoters of environmental protection and sustainable development management in multilateral and bilateral development banks, and the United Nation system organizations. From the early 1990s, international aid agencies have all changed their policies in dealing with NGOs' affairs. The World Bank developed particular policy guidelines in dealing with NGOs and also institutionalized its NGO division in the Bank (Malena, 1995). This can be considered as part of the response to recognize the role NGOs plays in international and national environmental matters. Efforts have been made to improve the relationship between aid agencies and NGOs.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) has claimed to establish closer ties with NGOs. Areas of cooperation include information sharing, practical assistance in developing and implementing programs and projects, and, where possible, co-financing. Other development agencies also benefit from such cooperation with NGOs. It is claimed by the ADB that participation in Bank activities helps NGOs expand their operations, in areas such as project preparation and implementation, community organization and social mobilization. Governments gain from cooperating with NGOs through better project planning and implementation. Above all, cooperation with NGOs benefits the poor and disadvantaged and helps support broad social concerns and environmental and natural resource protection and management. Some specific advantages of working with NGOs are, as stated by the ADB:

1) NGOs, with direct knowledge of local communities, can share expertise with the Bank and Governments in identifying, preparing, monitoring and evaluating development policies, programs and projects. NGOs can enhance public awareness of development. The ability of NGOs to gather and share information is particularly useful in identifying and avoiding potential problems.

2) NGOs help the Bank and Governments prepare and implement specific programs and projects. This input is increasingly important as development efforts specifically

⁸ According to an informal discussion with the president of the organization.

include emphasis on poverty reduction and enhancing the role of women in development, and focus on concerns such as human resources development, population planning and environmental protection. For the Bank, NGO input is important in addressing specific concerns such as involuntary resettlement, protection of indigenous peoples, participation in development planning by beneficiaries and affected persons, and benefit monitoring and evaluation.

3) NGOs can provide co-financing in the Bank's loan and technical assistance activities, whether by financing selected activities, or by providing resources, such as consulting services, staff assistance or facilities and equipment.⁹

Providing assistance for NGOs has become part of the policy priority in ADB. This is a shift, even still small, from its previous policies that put heavy emphasis on governments. In 1994, ADB approved regional technical assistance to strengthen the capacities of women's NGOs across the region. Some 180 NGOs in seven countries received support in developing systems for planning, monitoring and evaluating projects, so that more effective and efficient programs could be established. Staff training was conducted for capacity building, so NGOs were able to manage their organizations and programs more efficiently. NGOs covered under the project were linked in national and regional networks. The project provided NGOs with access to resources, and helped them achieve more influence in decision making and gain greater acceptance as equal partners in development.

Institutional Strengthening of NGOs in Bangladesh is an example. In 1992, technical assistance was undertaken to deepen the understanding of NGOs' operation. Enhancing Government-NGO cooperation was an important aspect of this project. In 1994, follow-up technical assistance was undertaken to develop a framework that would help involve NGOs directly in ADB, and other donor agencies, supported projects. The objective is to strengthen development NGOs for higher effectiveness in their operation. This project includes support for the Government's NGO Affairs Bureau and creation of a consultative Government-NGO body.

The critical roles the NGO community plays in pushing the World Bank towards a "greener" path have not been investigated in depth. It is the combined force within the Bank and from outside of the Bank, including governments and NGOs, that has made the Bank more responding to environmental matters (Gan, 1995). The Bank has realized the importance of the NGO community, internationally and locally, in affecting environmental politics and policy performance. A Development Committee report in 1989 credited NGOs for contributing to the major shifts in Bank's policy towards the environment (The World Bank, 1989, p.1). In the past several years, the World Bank has made substantial adjustments in its NGO policy, and reacts more responsively to requests from NGOs. In order to guide task managers at the Bank to better understand the principles in dealing with NGOs, a guide has been developed, highlighting practical issues in involving NGOs in project design and operation (Malena, 1995).

⁹ For more information about ADB's policy on NGOs, please search the homepage of the ADB from the Internet.

NGOs' desire to put pressure on the World Bank about its environmental accountability has sometimes been rather impressive. For instance, during 1987-89, a series of recommendations was made by NGOs, from both the North and the South, to press the Bank to reform its organizational structures and policies. Some involved considerable numbers of NGOs such as the International Citizens' Conference on the World Bank, Environment and Indigenous People held in Berlin in September, 1988, which gathered more than 500 participants from about 150 non-governmental organizations around the world (The Bank Information Center, 1990.p.33). Some of the environmental NGOs are internationally well-known, e.g., the World Resources Institute, Natural Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace and Sierra Club. However, the majority of NGOs are local-based from developing countries. In most instances, NGOs function as a "watchdog" to keep the agency' project operation environmentally "correct". They do this through three channels: first, by putting pressure on governments, which has an direct impact to the Bank's policy through formal government-Bank negotiations. Second, NGOs put pressures on the Bank by making open criticism through mass media and scientific journals, and, to a lesser extent, in Congressional testimony, which is mostly conducted in individual basis (McNeely, 1991). Third, NGOs sometime hold direct dialogues with the Bank on critical matters such as the GEF policies. These dialogues are conducted through direct consultation meetings and organized seminars.¹⁰

The Private Sector

The private sector's relationship with NGOs has so far been little studied. This is a complicated issue, because it deals with diversified sectoral interest and, sometimes, conflicting organizational objectives. Due to the business interest of the private sector's involvement in development projects, many industrial enterprises find it difficult to be in agreement with NGOs, especially on environmental aspects of development projects. Meanwhile, the private sector has been criticized by NGOs for being responsible for major environmental damages in development. Compared with international aid agencies, the industrial sector has made limited efforts to improve its relationship with NGOs. For doing so, drastic changes need to be undertaken to improve the environmental performance of industrial projects. Because of the rapid industrialization in Asia, many NGOs have found it difficult to take effective campaigns against major development projects funded by large international corporations, which are considered to having environmental damages. The ineffectiveness of NGOs in dealing with the private sector reflects the issue of legitimacy. NGOs feel being incapable of pushing the business community toward reacting drastically on the environment. To promote better environmental accountability of the private sector, governmental regulations and pressure may prove more cost-effective, if combined with NGOs' campaigns and support. NGO-private

¹⁰ See a memorandum sent to Mr. E. Patrick Coady, U.S. Executive Director to the Bank by Glenn Prickett of the NRDC, 1991. The Bank has organized regular seminars to consult with NGOs. This has become institutionalized in the last few years.

sector

6. Hydroelectric Dams and the Role of NGOs

Rapid industrialization and urbanization drastically increase demands for commercial energy supply and services, especially on electricity. In response to the need from industrial and commercial sectors, governments in Asia have targeted the development of coal- and oil-based power plants, hydroelectric power stations, and, to a lesser extent, nuclear power plants, as main objectives in national development. In the case of large hydroelectric dam projects, increasing environmental awareness and potential social-cultural impacts of the construction of large dams have made NGOs respond strongly to the implementation of this type of energy development. Sometimes, resistance from affected local communities has made it difficult for governments to proceed with the operation of these projects. So is with international donors that support these projects. The most well-known cases of hydroelectric dam projects are the Narmada Dam project in India, and the Three Gorges Dam project in China, which have inspired strong public protest that result in policy changes in governments and international aid agencies.

The Sardar Sarovar Dam and Power Project in western India, or what is known as the Narmada Dam project, is one of the energy projects that have sparked most public debates and protest. The project was proposed by the Indian government and strongly backed up by governmental energy development institutions. The World Bank was originally involved as providing credits for the project. Largely concerned about the replacement of local tribal groups because of the construction of the dam, NGO lobbying activities separate across nation-states and draw large attention internationally. NGO groups, such as Narmada Bachao Andolan, came to criticize the environmental impacts of the project, particularly to local ecosystems, on which local people depend for their livelihood. In this process of public protest, different NGO groups participated, including research institutions, national and international NGOs, indigenous groups, and the mass media. Demonstrations, publicity campaigns, and pressure on the Bank were held, aiming to stop financing for the project. These protests have generated concerns from politicians, executive directors of the Bank's member countries. Eventually, the Bank loan for this project was withdrawn at the request of the Indian government in 1993. The project is still under the support of the government, but it has widespread implication in terms of impact. NGOs' protest on this project has helped shape the World Bank's policy on the environment and human settlement. The Bank has now set up a policy to encourage NGOs' participation in resettlement plans. It also requires consultation with potentially affected social groups and local NGOs in environmental assessments for large development projects (Malena, 1995, p.23)

The Yangtze River in China symbolizes the life and death for Chinese people. Its waters nourish most of China's 1.2 billion people, and 70% of China's rice is grown in the Yangtze River Basin. After more than half a century of debate, the Chinese government decided to build the world's largest hydroelectric dam at the Three Gorges in 1992. The project is designed to generate about 18 billion kilowatts a year, which is enough to supply the power needs of 150 million people. The dam is expected to cost about US\$ 11 billion over 18-years period. The main concern from opposition groups

is that the dam will force the relocation of more than one million local people. Most of these people are farmers, living in poor conditions. Opponents say it would be cheaper and less risky to build smaller dams upstream of the Three Gorges. They say China should rely on solar, wind and other alternative energy sources and improve the energy efficiency of its outdated factories. The Chinese government has decided to build up the dam under the ambition to solve the power shortage problem, and intend to modernize the region with large plans for industrialization after the Dam is completed.

The project had sparked protest and suspicion among NGOs, nationally and internationally. The International Rivers Network, Friends of the Earth, the Center for Marine Conservation, International Three Gorges Coalition, Probe International of Canada, WWF in Hong Kong and the Asian Pacific People's Network in Malaysia coordinated with several Chinese environmental groups to lobby the construction of the dam. Some criticisms and protest of the dam are from prominent scientists in China and abroad. Dai Qing, a leading Chinese journalist, was jailed for nearly a year after she published a book of essays criticizing the dam.

NGOs have lobbied the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which has been hired by China to help design the dam, to stay out of the project. They've pressured the World Bank, which has funded other large dams, not to fund this project. They lobbied at the International Tribunal in Amsterdam and won a symbolic victory, the court ruled the dam shouldn't be built until an environmental assessment is done and the people being moved are heard from.

Against the pressure from NGOs, the Chinese government decided to approve the project with full governmental backup. The Chinese government muffled criticisms and unleashed pro-dam propaganda. According to Haipei Xue of the Three Gorges Coalition, "This issue enjoys less freedom than any political issue in China". In 1992, two-thirds of the 2,633-member Chinese People's Congress voted to build the dam, only 12 votes more than the minimum necessary. This project is one of the lowest support ever given to a government-backed project. The dam is now under construction with a full governmental finance. However, international aid agencies, such as the World Bank and ADB, have stayed away from financing the project, mostly for fear of criticisms from NGOs (*China News Digest-Global*, October 11, 1992).

By contrast, the Xiaolangdi Dam at the Yellow River, China's second largest dam project, is well under construction. When completed in four years, the \$4 billion dam is expected to contain the type of "catastrophic" floods that have killed hundreds of thousands of locals over the past 2,500 years. The Xiaolangdi Dam project has "proceeded without the controversies" (*Greenwire*, July 8, 1996). Many NGOs were preoccupied by the Three Gorges Dam and paid inadequate attention to the Xiaolangdi Dam project. The World Bank is offering financial support to the project, which is by far the largest loan provided to the Chinese government (*People's Daily*, October 29, 1997, p.1). These two cases illustrate difference in terms of the effects of NGOs in domestic and international politics.

Conclusions

To sum up, the role of NGOs in international and national environmental politics is crucial. Their increasing presence in world political forum has helped, in one way or another, reshape development agendas of governments and international aid agencies. NGOs' movements on the environment cannot be considered in isolation. They are conducted in a dynamic, instead of a static process. They keep changing their perspectives, according to international and local circumstances. Their engagement in environmental activities has helped establish new and critical linkages among societal institutions. They base their strategy of survival on linking local with global perspectives. NGOs' have managed to create a niche within societal contexts to establish themselves as a social critique and service provider, in order to cope with governments and international aid agencies. Over the past one and a half decades, NGOs in Asia, and other regions of the world, have learned how to cope with changes in international environmental arenas. Their establishment in world politics reflects a trend in international relations, which will have a profound impact to the human society in the 21st century.

NGOs' movements as a particular social phenomenon can be characterized as having been developed from the below. NGOs have managed to establish themselves as a social agent with critical linkages to those at below in society. They have developed a public space that is not, and cannot be, filled up by other societal institutions: governments, international aid agencies, and the private sector. The origins of NGOs' movements are deeply rooted in societal contexts. NGOs' activities reflect the needs of those from the lowest level of the human society. It is in contrast to many institutions generated by governments from the above. The development and growth of NGOs as a social entity have proved to be crucial to the wellbeing of the human society. The influence of NGOs across national boundaries is what we say as part of the globalization process. It will have a far-reaching effect to public policy in general, and environmental policy in particular.

NGOs represent the future engine of development in the world. The conflict of development with the environment is far from over. Therefore, the internal logic of NGOs' development is self-evident. From the Asian's perspective, several characteristics can be generalized from the current development: first, NGOs will continue to create new social linkages, or web of contacts, throughout the human society. They will help establish and improve the relationship between the general public and rest of the social institutions: governments, international agencies, and the business community. Second, the diversification and out-grown of NGOs will continue to increase in a greater speed and scope. This will be especially seen in the environmental field, because of the imperative of environmental deterioration and its impact to human survival.

The increasing involvement of NGOs in environmental activities provides a good opportunity for the UN and the international development assistance community. Through increasing engagement of NGOs in design, consultation, operation and evaluation of projects, these institutions will be able to act as agents to empower the people in lower ranges of the human society. The future of the UN in the 21st century will be shaped, to a larger extent, by NGOs' participation in development activities. It

can be assumed that NGOs might replace many conventional mandates, usually performed by specialized UN agencies and governments. What represents the so-called global civil society is the inclusion of people's voice and needs, through which NGOs come into being in social process.

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