Chapter 7

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Gauging civil society advocacy: charting pluralist pathways

For several years, all international donors supporting democratization, whether directly (most bilateral donors) or indirectly (mainly the World Bank), have been engaged in backing civil society initiatives. In a democracy context, this means essentially supporting civil society advocacy efforts. But how can donors tell whether such efforts have been successful or not, especially when it comes to particular organizations and constituencies? This chapter concentrates on this question, attempting to develop further a civil society advocacy scale that can help evaluate achievement in civil society advocacy in terms of what benefits accrue to targeted constituencies and the long-term effects of such advocacy in promoting system pluralism.

Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief look at donors' objectives in promoting civil society and at problems in assessing the impact of programming. The second section distinguishes the scale the author has been working on from other, more long-standing, efforts in this area and then goes on to explain the approach. The third section then applies the scale to three well-documented efforts in civil society advocacy—one in India and two in the Philippines. Each has failed in at least some significant way to achieve its ostensible objective but at the same time can be viewed as an exemplary success in building pluralist politics. A fourth section draws lessons from these illustrations, and a concluding section explores the implications for future donor initiatives in promoting civil society.

Civil society, empowerment and advocacy

Although it has long been a contentious term among both scholars and practitioners, 'civil society' can be succinctly defined in the context of this chapter using the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)'s formulation: it is 'An arena, separate from the state, the market and the individual household, in which people organize themselves and act together to promote their common interests' (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency 2004: 9). 'Empowerment' has been another much-argued term, but hopefully can be rendered into a useful concept for present purposes by accepting Deepa Narayan's definition as '[T]he expansion of assets and capabilities of poor [and I would add marginal] people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives' (Narayan 2005: 5). The term 'advocacy' has been much less disputed and it should not be controversial to define it as the process by which individuals, and especially associations (that is, civil society organizations, or CSOs), attempt to influence public policy making and implementation. Thus the advocacy analysed here is state-centred, that is to say, directed at institutions of the state, but *mutatis mutandis* it could be employed to assess advocacy in other contexts as well, for example, efforts within a religious community to promote (or oppose) female clergy, or CSO initiatives to pressure business corporations to change their policies with respect to the environment.

International donors generally put these three concepts together by incorporating civil society in democratization strategies primarily as a means to improve the lives of poor and marginal people by empowering them to advocate for their own interests and by holding state institutions accountable. A smaller group of donors (see e.g. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency 2004: 14) see building civil society and empowerment also as ends in themselves—promoting participation, enhancing accountability and advancing democratic pluralism. When civil society is used as a means, it is the organizations (and their individual members) that are thought to benefit, whereas when it becomes an end, it is the political system as a whole that supposedly benefits (although presumably individuals will also be better off when the polity has more pluralism). This chapter takes the larger perspective, looking at civil society as the actors, empowerment as their goal, advocacy as their method, and a two-tiered set of beneficiaries—groups (and their members) in the immediate sense (as being rewarded when advocacy succeeds), and the polity in the larger or ultimate sense (as becoming more pluralistic, which means responsive to more citizens, when advocacy succeeds).

When we look at the impact of civil society programmes, then, we must ask what is happening and who is benefiting at two levels—the constituencies (along with the individuals comprising them) and the larger system. Must both levels gain or lose together, or could one profit and the other suffer at the same time? Could a CSO successfully influence the state to adopt policies that benefit its constituency while

also harming (or at best having no effect on) the larger political system? Perhaps an ethnic minority could make a deal with the ruling elite to get included in the system's largesse while freezing out all other aspirants. One thinks of the Habsburg Empire after it admitted Hungarian elites to join the Austrians in the 'dual monarchy' in 1867, leaving all other groups out in the cold. Could a CSO fail to deliver much of substance to its constituency but at the same time enlarge systemic pluralism by enlarging the political space within the polity? Could it in other words lose the battle but contribute materially to winning the war? We will see several examples along these lines below. Civil society advocacy, in short, might work out in different ways.

Gauging CSO impact on the well-being of both constituencies and systems should be of signal interest to donors who are concerned about whether their democracy support programmes are actually doing anything to support democratization and poverty alleviation. It is to this topic that the analysis now turns.

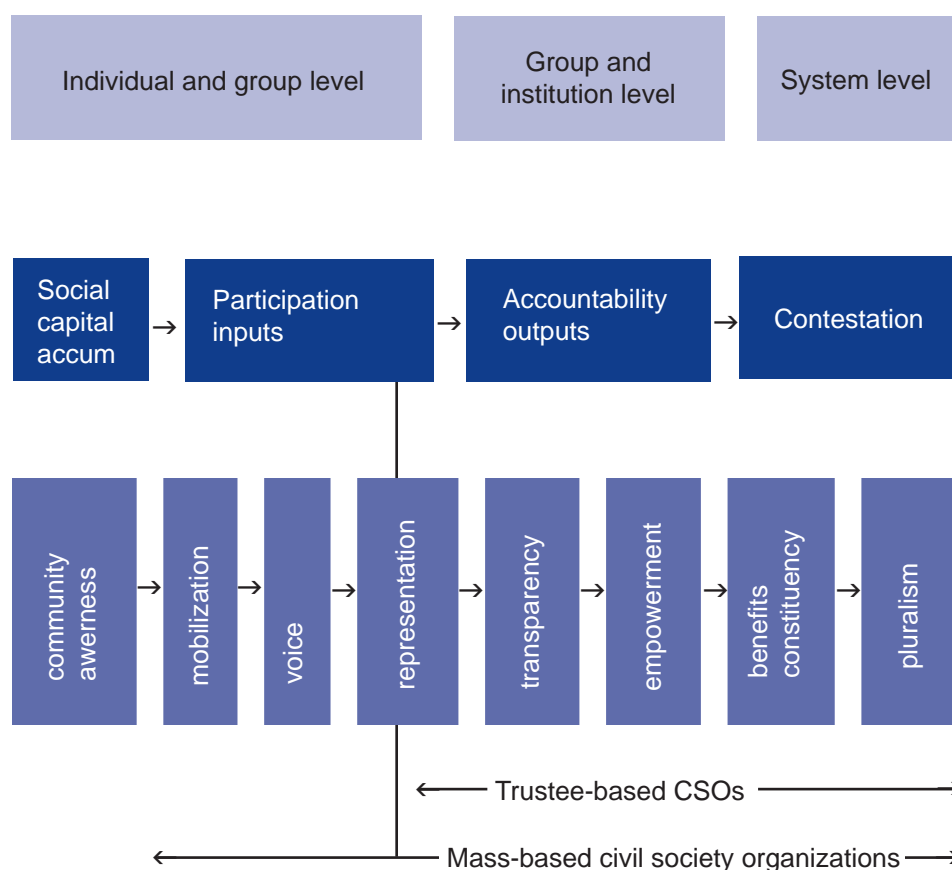## A civil society advocacy scale

In earlier work (Blair 2004), the present writer endeavoured to develop a civil society advocacy scale that could indicate how far a CSO (or coalition of CSOs) is advancing in promoting significant benefits for its constituents and for the polity within which it functions. While it is hoped that this succeeded to some extent in the first objective, the writer is less sanguine that he made much progress towards the second. This present study, then, will try to develop the scale further and test its utility against the experience of three major civil society initiatives.

Several points would be in order here regarding the principal focuses of this chapter before proceeding to explore the advocacy scale. First, the scale is intended to gauge particular advocacy initiatives, whether single CSOs or coalitions (or even—as especially in the Philippines—'coalitions of coalitions' that approach becoming social movements), as opposed to the overall progress of civil society. Accordingly, it is not put forward as an alternative to such instruments as those developed by Civicus (see 'The Civicus Civil Society Index') or the Johns Hopkins project on civil society (<http://www.jhu.edu/~cnp/>), which attempt to measure the overall status of a political system with respect to civil society. Second, the focus is on group advocacy and empowerment rather than individuals (although the latter may well be the beneficiaries of advocacy efforts, as with affirmative action programmes that give preference to members of marginal groups in hiring or education). Finally, the account will concentrate chiefly on how empowerment is (or is not) achieved rather than on how far or to what extent it has been achieved. The focus, in other words, will be mainly (although not exclusively) on the dynamics of advocacy rather than its results.

The scale shown in figure 7.1 has three major components, corresponding to the three core elements that the democracy literature has embraced as its essence—participation (Dahl 1998); accountability (Schmitter and Karl 1991); and contestation

(Schumpeter 1942). Citizens participate as individuals and (for our purposes more importantly) in groups (or CSOs), providing inputs or demands to the political system. CSOs seek accountability from the political system, asking that it respond by modifying its activities (outputs) to comport with their demands. And because there are many CSOs seeking accountability, the level of democratic contestation within the overall political system improves, thus making it more responsive to citizen needs and wants than periodic elections with their blunt and crude policy agendas could ever do. Prior to participation, however, people must become aware of their situation within the political system in a process that can be labelled 'social capital accumulation' (see figure 7.1). The figure, then, in effect has three-and-a-half components.

Figure 7.1: The civil society advocacy scale: a logical chain

NOTE: For a better presentation of this and subsequent figures, see the extra pages at the end of the essay.

Source: Based on a figure published in Blair, Harry, 'Assessing Civil Society Impact for Democracy Programmes: Using an Advocacy Scale in Indonesia and the Philippines', *Democratization,* 11/1 (2004), pp. 77–103.

The civil society organizations that operate along the advocacy scale may be divided into two basic types. Mass-based CSOs traverse the entire scale shown in figure 7.1, beginning by promoting (or more likely harvesting) community awareness, and then moving into the participation stage, by organizing people for political participation (mobilization), developing agendas to bring into the public policy discourse (voice) and bringing their constituencies' demands to the attention of public authorities (representation). The accountability stage opens when a CSO has enough credible representation to compel the state to justify its actions (the beginning of transparency). Empowerment comes when the state finds it must meet at least some of a constituency's demands by modifying public policy decisions, but only when those decisions are put into action do constituency benefits occur. If enough CSOs representing enough constituencies get into the game in a serious way, then finally we can say that the level of pluralism has increased.

Mass-based CSOs can be further subdivided into membership organizations such as labour unions, professional associations, and constituency-based groups such as neighbourhood slum dwellers, petty traders, ethnic minority groups and so on, where active 'membership' is much more flexible and fluid. (For more on these distinctions, see Ottaway 2000 and the essays in Eade 2002.)

The second type of CSO can be called trustee-based, in that organizations operate on behalf of constituencies that cannot act for themselves (see Ottaway 2000). Human rights CSOs provide an excellent example, generally consisting of small cadres of (often foreign) elites who investigate abuses, publicize findings and pester governments on behalf of people who are unable to act on their own behalf, such as political prisoners or lower-status women. Environmental activist CSOs try to advance the cause of a constituency that is for the most part inherently inarticulate (indigenous inhabitants can be mobilized as a mass-based constituency to defend their environment, but then the CSOs representing them would fall into our first type). This second type of CSO in effect bypasses the social capital accumulation and participation stages of advocacy to concentrate on the accountability stage. The main focus here will be on the first or mass-based type, but there will also be evidence of the trustee type of CSO in two of the cases presented below.

The scale illustrated

An imaginary (admittedly ideal) example will show how the process illustrated in figure 7.2 might work. Village mothers talk about the school their children are attending, deploring the collapsing buildings, the lack of basic supplies such as textbooks and the common absence of teachers themselves (who supplement their meagre incomes by tutoring pupils for a fee rather than attending their classes); community awareness is building. A group of mothers, perhaps inspired by a story one has seen dramatized on the community television set, get together more frequently to vent their grievances (mobilization). Some start making a list of things that ought to be done (voice).

A group of several dozen mothers organizes itself to demand an audience with the elected village council, which, after initially brushing them off, begins to think of the election coming up in six months' time and decides it really should meet them (representation). A new constituency has begun to participate in the local political arena.

Figure 7.2: The civil society advocacy scale: an imaginary case
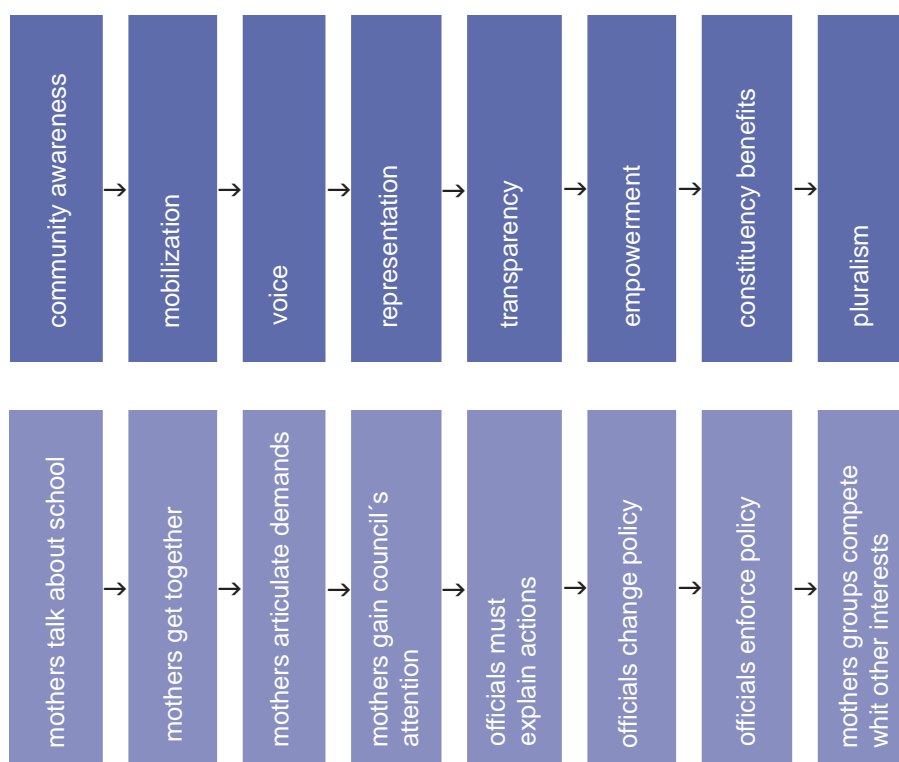
In the course of several meetings with the mothers' group, the council finds itself pressed to explain why it has done nothing to insist that the district education office repair the school roof or demand that the teachers show up for duty (the start of transparency). Exploiting kinship networks, the mothers' group links up with dissatisfied parents in neighbouring villages and the group becomes larger. Several mothers find some satisfaction in their advocacy work and make representations on behalf of their now much larger constituency to the district (that is, higher-level) council. These council members, now contemplating their own re-election chances, formulate a directive demanding that teachers attend their classes (empowerment for the mothers' organization), although nothing is done to enforce the new order. A couple of the mothers have husbands who work for the district newspaper, and who interest its manager in doing an investigative piece exposing the fecklessness of

the teachers and the indolence of the council (more transparency). With the election looming, an embarrassed district council follows up on its directive to the teachers, sacking several egregious absentees and inducing the remainder to begin taking their jobs seriously. At the same time, it decides to divert some of the Education Ministry's funding that it had devoted completely to patronage efforts back into repairing the school roof and buying textbooks. Teachers start actually teaching, the roofs are repaired, books are distributed, and pupils begin learning (constituency benefits). The political system has become accountable to a significant constituency among its citizenry.

The newly empowered mothers are not the only constituency to get involved in politics, however. The schoolteachers' union, heretofore largely somnolent as its members enjoyed the perks they enjoyed with their no-show jobs, stirs itself into action, demanding pay rises for its newly hard-working constituency. Local contractors sense that there are business opportunities in school repair and reconstruction and begin lobbying for increased funding to upgrade the educational infrastructure. The district council, now being pressed on different sides by a growing chorus of demands, finds that it must balance resources against them, seeking the best possible calculus to respond to the public. The level of pluralism, in short, has increased. This final stage will not necessarily work to the benefit of those who launched the process, it must be noted. The aroused teachers' union may roll back the district council's new demands on their services, while the contractors may contrive some way to siphon off virtually all the construction money into a combination of graft for themselves and pay-offs to the politicians letting the contracts.

What has been achieved in this imaginary example? Civil society advocacy has served as a mechanism to produce concrete benefits for children and their parents, and at the same time the advocacy experience has increased the capacity of local people to manage their own affairs. Advocacy has been both means and end. And even if the mothers don't get to the actual benefits level, or if teachers and contractors erode any improvements, they will have learned valuable lessons about political activism, which they can use to fight another day, perhaps on another political battlefront. Next year they might launch a campaign for improved drinking water or an electricity supply. All these things could be counted as achievements.

Three case studies

To illustrate the civil society advocacy scale with some real examples, three cases are presented below. All have been extensively documented and analysed elsewhere. Two of them have unfolded over more than a score of years, while the other, although it did not go on so long, attracted immense attention worldwide while it was in progress. All three cases include at least some elements of all parts of the advocacy ladder. The first is set in India, while the other two took place in the Philippines. Both countries can fairly be described as democracies, although they underwent a period

of authoritarian rule in the 1970s, and even today democratization has not been fully attained. In India, democracy remains under threat from the fundamentalist Hindu right and from destabilizing violence in Kashmir, the north-east and Maoist rebels in the Gangetic Plain. Several significant elements (including military factions and the Mindanao rebels) in the Philippines remain unconvinced that democracy is 'the only game in town' and periodically seek to overthrow the democracy. Both countries therefore continue in transition towards democracy and can thus provide good examples and insights for the democracy promotion community.

It should be noted that all these cases were essentially home-grown; none stemmed primarily from donor-supported efforts. This qualifier could be seen as limiting their suitability for an exercise like the present one, aimed as it is at providing guidance for future donor strategies. So why choose them? Principally because there are no instances of donor-sponsored civil society efforts that are anywhere near as rich in terms of analysis available from such a wide variety of sources and that cover so well the entire range of the advocacy scale presented in the section above. Some idea of the effectiveness of advocacy can be gleaned from donors' experience with specific CSOs (see e.g. Blair 2004), but generally the focus among donors has been on measuring outputs or indicators rather than overall impact. In addition, donor support for CSOs has tended to be for relatively short periods of a year or two—scarcely long enough in most cases to generate the effects to be examined here. If we are to attempt to gauge the impact of advocacy, we have to go to where the evidence lies. Hopefully the lessons to be found will be useful in informing donors' thinking about their own programmes.
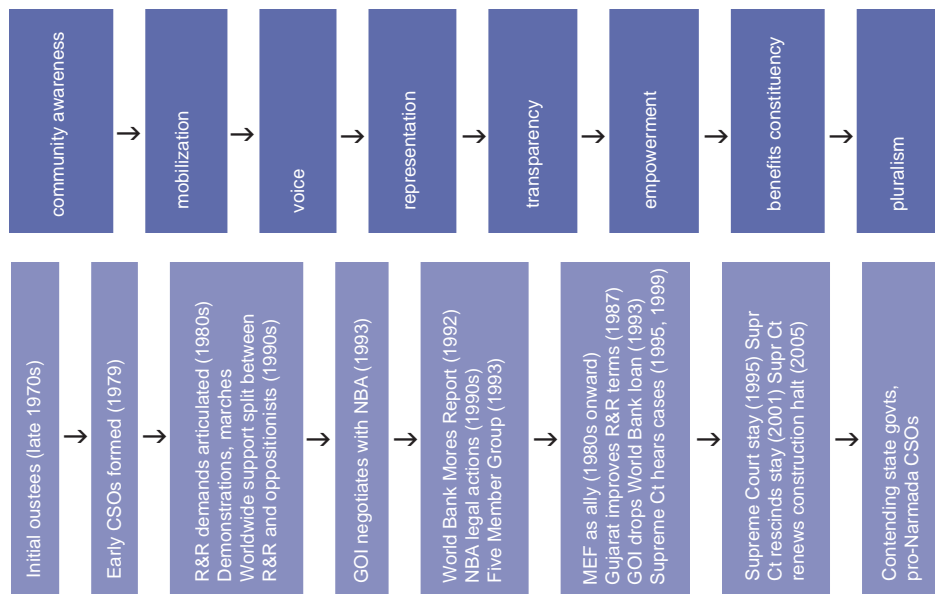
The Narmada Dam

The origins of the Narmada Dam controversy lie back in the 1940s[1], when irrigation engineers began to study the potential of the Narmada River in western India to supply water to the arid regions of what later became the state of Gujarat. The centrepiece of this multi-dam project was to be the final dam at Sardar Sarovar, rising to some 138 metres (m) when finished. It was projected to irrigate 1.8 million hectares of agricultural land, supply potable water to 30 million people, and furnish 2,700 megawatts (MW) of hydropower.

The Narmada flows through three Indian states (Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra as well as Gujarat), and prolonged arbitration was necessary before work could begin, finally, at the end of the 1970s. A unique feature of the settlement regarded persons displaced by the project, or 'oustees', most of whom were adivasis (tribal people, ethnically and culturally distinct from the majority population). For the first time in an Indian dam project, oustees were to be given land elsewhere, at least equivalent to what they would lose through submergence in the Narmada project. This was the 'resettlement and rehabilitation' (R&R) programme, a significant improvement on earlier practice of providing at most a small cash payment for land seized by dam

projects. Most of the funding was to be provided by the Indian Government, but the World Bank agreed in 1985 to step in with a 450 million US dollar (USD) 'start-up' loan (the Bank anticipated further loans later on) that would cover about one-seventh of the Sardar Sarovar's then-estimated total cost. Altogether the cost of the complete project was then estimated at some 15 billion USD.

Not surprisingly, as construction geared up, many potential oustees objected, and some formed organizations to oppose or modify the project, setting in motion the process depicted in figure 7.3. By the early 1980s, in addition to various CSOs in the immediate region of the dam project, others in New Delhi had become interested in it, and even some international CSOs such as Oxfam in the United Kingdom and the Environmental Defense Fund in the USA became engaged, lobbying the World Bank, which responded by commissioning the first of several studies on the project. By the mid-1980s, marches and large-scale demonstrations had been mounted, and court cases were filed. The first charismatic leader emerged in the person of Medha Patkar, a social worker turned activist in the cause of the adivasis, and a well-known Gandhian leader, Baba Amte, joined in as well. CSO demands at this point focused on R&R for the displacees, although some had begun to question the wisdom of the Narmada project altogether. By the end of 1987, the Gujarat state government announced better R&R terms.

Figure 7.3: The civil society advocacy scale: the Narmada Dam

At this point, what was becoming a movement began to split between one element which focused on getting the best R&R terms for the oustees and a second faction which took up a position of total opposition to the Narmada project. Those in the

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first camp worked mainly in Gujarat, cooperating with the state on a tactical basis, assisted by an ally at national level in the form of the Ministry of Environment and Forests in demanding compliance with government R&R regulations. On the other side, opposers coalesced around a new umbrella coalition formed in 1989 and calling itself the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA, meaning Save Narmada Movement).

Rather than devote attention to improving the lot of the oustees, whose numbers it estimated to range upwards of 1 million people (although others, e.g. Gandhi 2003: 484 and Gupta 2001: 75, put the numbers much lower), the NBA focused on the anticipated ecological degradation, the concentration of benefits expected to flow mainly to the rich, and the high cost overruns deemed inevitable. It intensified the anti-dam campaign both within India and on the world stage. Large rallies, demonstrations, road blockages, and a 6,000-person march covering 200 km on foot were among the tactics employed at home. Abroad, CSO pressure led to several US congressional hearings and a new review commission funded by the World Bank. Released in June 1992, the Bank-sponsored report found serious flaws with the Narmada project's R&R provisions, calling for the Bank to 'step back' from the project and take a fresh look at it. The next month the European Parliament passed a resolution calling on member countries to tell their representatives at the World Bank to cancel the project.

Stung by the severe criticism, the World Bank did indeed step back, insisting that the Indian states improve their R&R offers and laying down a six-month deadline. Embarrassed by the bad publicity, as well as annoyed by what it deemed foreign interference (but at the same time knowing that World Bank support only amounted to a small part of the total Narmada project cost), the Indian Government announced in March 1993 that it would terminate the Bank contract.

Despite the setback, the Indian Government and the state governments pressed on with Narmada, while the NBA continued its campaign at both national and international levels. Within the state of Gujarat, the Narmada canal system became a mantra fervently grasped by all political parties—'the lifeline' for this largely semi-arid state (on the 'lifeline' theme as a powerful force in Gujarat politics, see D'Souza 2002: passim), and politicians of all persuasions pushed it relentlessly at both state and national levels. For its part, the NBA intensified its efforts with a hunger strike in Bombay, followed by a dramatic 'death by drowning' campaign in 1993, featuring 'drowning squads' pledging to stay with their homes even as rising dam waters submerged them. Internationally, the NBA worked in concert with an international Narmada Action Campaign involving CSOs from 15 countries, inter alia sponsoring a full-page advertisement in *the New York Times* in September 1993. An advertisement headlined 'Why Thousands of People Will Drown Before Accepting the Sardar Sarovar Dam' appeared in The Times on 21 September 1992 (Wood 1993: n. 18). The Indian Government felt obliged to set up a Five-Member Group of prominent citizens to forge a compromise, while for its part the NBA filed a writ petition before India's Supreme Court seeking to halt construction as technically, environmentally,

economically and socially 'not in the national interest'. In January 1995, the Supreme Court halted construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam at 80 m, or just less than 60 per cent of its planned height of 138 m.

While the Supreme Court was deliberating the case, the NBA kept on with its campaign regionally, nationally and internationally. A major coup for the NBA came with the recruitment of Arundhati Roy, the prize-winning author of *The God of Small Things,* who, beginning with her essay 'The Greater Common Good' in the spring of 1999 (Roy 1999)[2], became a major activist and publicist for the cause, marching with the demonstrators and proclaiming that the anti-dam movement had replaced writing fiction as her life's main focus.

Despite her presence and support for the NBA (or, as some would later argue, in part because of it), the Supreme Court found against the opponents of the dam in October 2000, deciding that the Sardar Sarovar dam should be completed according to the design laid out in 1979 (Routledge 2003: 253). The Court's decision provoked a firestorm of outrage from the NBA and its allies, fuelled by intense media coverage. But construction resumed and, despite periodic flare-ups—in December 2002, for instance, a protest demonstration resulted in Arundhati's arrest and eventual sentencing by the Supreme Court to one day in jail for contempt (see Yates 2002; and Harding 2002)—the movement gradually lost steam, as is clear from the data shown in figure 7.4, which indicate press clippings about the Narmada declining from a high of over 200 the month after the court's October 2000 decision to near zero a couple of years later. This remarkable collection of clippings, mainly from Indian newspapers but also from the international media, was maintained by the Friends of River Narmada, and most of the items are still available online on their website (<http://www.narmada.org>).

*Figure 7.4: The Narmada Dam: monthly clippings, 1999–2004*
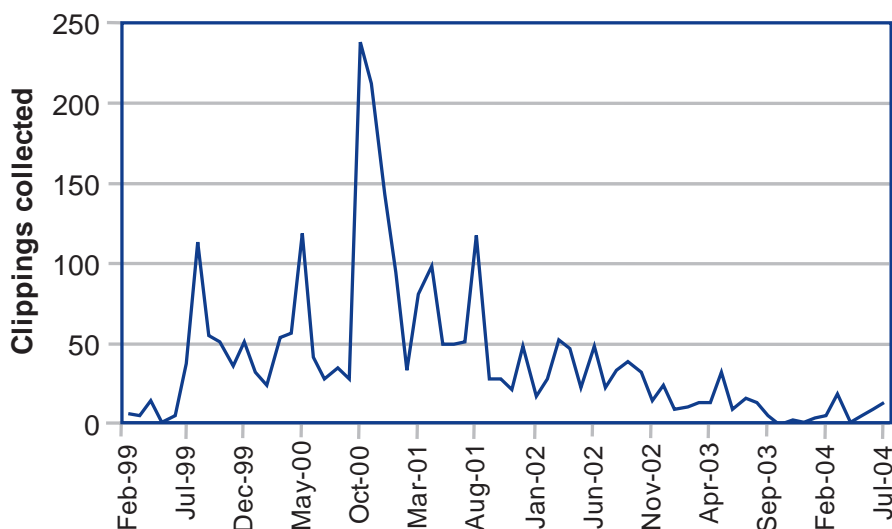
The struggle is not yet over, however. In March 2005, the Supreme Court again intervened, stating that the R&R orders included in its October 2000 decision to resume construction had been seriously violated. The Sardar Sarovar dam was halted at 100.6 m, still far short of the intended height. Presumably, however, the dam authorities will meet the R&R requirements and construction will in time resume. In early 2006, Wood's prediction of more than ten years still looks good—that 'the [state and national] governments and developers will eventually have their way… the unfolding story of the Narmada controversy indicates that too much is at stake—economically, legally and politically—for current development plans to be reversed' (Wood 1993: 969). The Narmada controversy has been (and still is) a convoluted one, with a good deal of movement back and forth along the advocacy scale shown in figure 7.3. The same path was seemingly traversed more than once, but there does seem to have been a logical progression from awareness up through community benefits (and their apparent withdrawal) and finally an increased degree of pluralism in the political system.

Ousting a president in the Philippines

When the Supreme Court of the Philippines approved the removal of President Joseph Estrada from office in January 2001, a long saga capped by mammoth public demonstrations finally ended. The immediate reason behind his departure from the

Malacañan (presidential) Palace lay in the armed forces' abrupt withdrawal of support (a move quickly approved by the Supreme Court), but that was only the last act. The campaign against him had been building for months, built largely on investigative reporting carried out by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ), which had first launched its research effort more than a year previously.[3] Taken as a whole, the case provides an excellent illustration of how public policy, if it is to represent the popular will, requires accountability, transparency and the involvement of long-term constituencies. It also shows the messiness, inconclusiveness and mixed consequences of what might seem at first glance to be a clean and clear-cut denouement of a lengthy drama, as illustrated in figure 7.5.

Figure 7.5: The civil society advocacy scale: the ousting of President Estrada
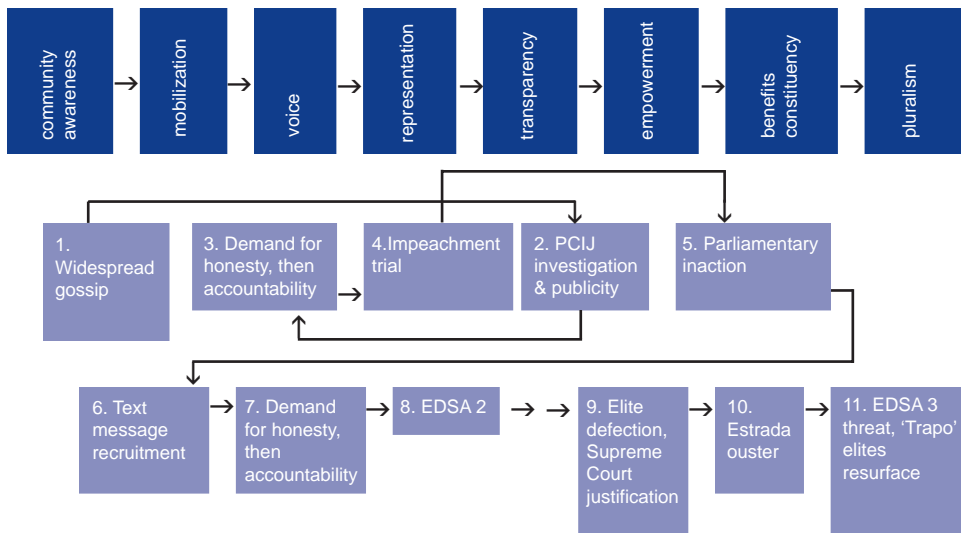
Our case began with wide community awareness, as rumours of presidential corruption swirled around President Estrada, beginning almost immediately after his election in 1998. A former film star, Estrada had long been known for his lavish spending on his wives and mistresses, as well as keeping shady company in his business dealings, and there was much apparently well-founded talk of his continuing to do so after becoming president. Gossip and political jokes did not lead directly to any mobilization of outraged citizens, however, to say nothing of voice and representation on the advocacy scale. Instead, it was the PCIJ that decided to investigate the rumours, beginning in January 2000 by researching corporate registration and financial records at the national Securities and Exchange Commission, which allowed individual citizens to retrieve three records each business day. In terms of the advocacy scale shown in figure

7.5, then, the movement was from community awareness directly to transparency. The PCIJ amounted to a 'trustee-based CSO' operating on a public-interest basis on behalf of a constituency (in this case a potential one) that as yet had not coalesced into an active group.

In July the PCIJ was ready to release its first set of stories linking Estrada's wealth to a set of some 66 corporations that he had failed to list in the annual declaration of assets required of all public office-holders in the Philippines. The mainstream press, largely cowed by presidential bluster, intimidation and reportedly some bribery, showed little interest in the stories, but they were picked up by several small papers and created a modest stir. The following month, the PCIJ released a second set of stories, also compiled through painstaking research this time into public real-estate records, detailing a string of luxurious mansions built for Estrada's wives and mistresses since he took office which had been carefully hidden from public view. This time larger papers picked up the story, and the PCIJ succeeded in getting it aired on a television network (despite strong objections from the network's owners).

By now, the investigation had developed into a public scandal. Interest and indignation built up. No formally structured CSOs of any size emerged to engage and develop a constituency of indignant citizens, but public demands for some response to the PCIJ's revelations began to build, and then another front against the president opened with claims by a provincial governor that that he had been paying off Estrada in connection with a massive illegal gambling scheme. By November the national House of Representatives had filed formal impeachment articles against the president, with three of the four principal charges based on the PCIJ newspaper stories. Further incriminating articles from the PCIJ strengthened the case as it unfolded. Huge anti-Estrada crowds demonstrated against the president, mobilized into action through what was probably the world's first people's movement activated through mobile phones and text messaging.[4]

The impeachment proceedings stalled in the Senate on an ostensible technicality in mid-January, as Estrada loyalists engineered a resolution by a one-vote majority not to accept evidence linking the president to bogus bank accounts. By this time, however, the affair had gained such momentum that millions of citizens were watching the Senate proceedings, and after the vote popular indignation erupted in mass protests. Mammoth rallies—quickly dubbed 'EDSA 2' after the EDSA demonstrations that were instrumental in ousting President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986—resumed, again facilitated through mobile phone text messaging. (EDSA refers to Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, Manila's ring road where the demonstrations were held, that led to the ousting of presidents Marcos and Estrada.) In short order, the vice-president, major Cabinet members and important members of the president's party resigned, and prominent leaders along with the Roman Catholic prelate Cardinal Jaime Sin demanded Estrada's resignation. The final step came when military leaders withdrew their support, on 19 January 2001. The Supreme Court then ruled that the president should be stripped of office and that Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (the newly resigned vice-president) should be sworn in.

The coco levy case in the Philippines

Our last case has been in play even longer than the Narmada controversy and is illustrated in figure 7.6. Coconuts form the basis of a major sector of the Philippine economy, accounting for some 30 per cent of the country's export earnings in the early 1990s and providing income for as much as one-third of the country's population. The coconut levy saga[5] goes back more than 30 years, beginning in the early years of the Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorship, when he established successive 'levies' on the sale of coconuts to the millers who produce coconut oil. Ostensibly intended to support funds for price stabilization, the levies collected soon went into the hands of Marcos cronies charged with managing them. Despite the dictatorship, the levies were onerous enough for a great deal of farmer opposition to develop, and finally they were ended in 1982.

Figure 7.6: The civil society advocacy scale: the coco levy
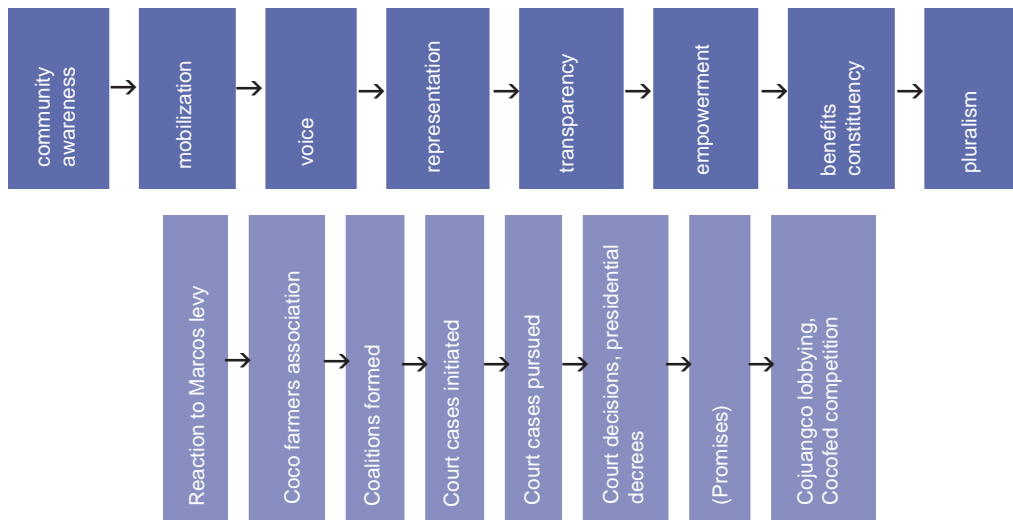
By this time, however, the larger of the two levies had collected almost 10 billion Philippine pesos (PHP), and much of the money had been invested through various mechanisms controlled by cronies into a number of industries, including the San Miguel Corporation, by far the largest brewery in the country. The lead Marcos crony involved in the coco fund at the time was Eduardo 'Danding' Cojuangco, who along with the Marcos family fled the country after the EDSA revolution in 1986. The following year, the Presidential Commission on Good Governance, tasked with recovering the illegal gains siphoned off during the Marcos regime, filed suit with the newly established Sandiganbayan (anti-corruption court). But Cojuangco eventually resurfaced, returning in 1991, and resumed his role in San Miguel,

claiming control over some 47 per cent of the corporation's stock. At the end of the decade, the prize had become a huge one indeed, worth about 1 billion USD; San Miguel was ranked third among all Philippine corporate enterprises in the year 2000 by *Asiaweek,* and one of only seven operations in the country that ranked among the top 1,000 in Asia overall (see <http://www.cnn.com/ASIANOW/asiaweek/features/asiaweek1000.2000/c_philippines.html>).

Many of the farmers who had been subjected to the levy continued to seek its recovery, and a number of CSOs were pursuing this objective. By the mid-1990s, two coalitions representing small coconut farmers' associations were active on this front, the Coconut Industry Reform Movement (COIR) and the Pambansang Koalisyon ng Magsasaka at Manggagawa sa Niyugan (PKSMMN, a coalition of NGOs representing small coconut farmers).[6] Over the course of the 1990s, the two umbrella groups received funding from various donors, including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which sponsored an initiative it called Building Unity for Continuing Coconut Industry Reform (BUCO), intended to assist the two coalitions.

BUCO's main efforts were devoted to advocacy through the government, the political arena and the media to obtain a release of the San Miguel shares to a trust fund that would benefit the small farmers who had involuntarily created the stockholding through the levies. BUCO's argument was that a majority of Cojuangco's 47 per cent holding rightfully belonged to these farmers. The alliance pulled together a Multisectoral Task Force (MTF) including businessmen, religious leaders, academics, legislators and even former Cabinet secretaries. Their main objective was to induce then President Joseph Estrada to issue an executive order setting up a trust fund for these shares that would benefit the coconut farmers.

In its campaign, the task force generated immense publicity, with video documentaries and heavy press coverage, aided greatly by the convenient target presented by Cojuangco with his past as a leading Marcos crony and widespread current allegations that he had a similar role in Estrada's inner circle. Press stories appeared frequently in Manila's leading daily newspapers, often on the front page. (BUCO assembled a collection of 64 clippings appearing in the national press between January and July 1998. See Building Unity for Continuing Coconut Industry Reform 1998. Between May and August 2000, more than a dozen stories appeared in just two Manila dailies, the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and *Philippine Star.*) BUCO also pushed a legal case in the Sandiganbayan.

The BUCO coalition was not the only group attempting to pressure the president. Cojuangco himself insisted that all the shares were rightfully his personal property, and not purchased with coco levy money. And BUCO faced a rival claim from another coconut group, the Coconut Producers Federation of the Philippines (COCOFED), which claimed that they, representing larger farmers and mill owners (who actually paid the levy collections to the government), were entitled to the contested shares (BUCO responded that the mill owners simply deducted the levies from what they

paid the growers and thus acted merely as conduits in the process, not as the actual payers). The fact that COCOFED elected a representative to Congress under the 'party list' electoral system in 1998 gave it added clout in pressing its claims.

President Estrada repeatedly promised to issue an executive order resolving the issue, but, pressed on different sides by BUCO, COCOFED and Cojuangco, he kept postponing a decision. Then in November 2000, as the impeachment movement against him appeared to be gathering steam (see the above section), he issued a Solomonic decision, awarding part of the prize to Cojuangco and part to be auctioned, with benefits going to BUCO's two component coalitions and also to COCOFED. The move created great confusion and anxiety, but the events surrounding Estrada's removal from office the following January overtook everything else, and the situation remained unresolved.

After Estrada's departure, all sides took up their separate causes again, with Cojuangco and the various CSOs lobbying the new president, pursuing the case in the Sandinganbayan, and trying to marshal public opinion in their favour. The case continued to excite much public interest. The Internet archive of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* for instance, indicated almost 200 articles on the coco levy during 2001 (see <http://www.inq7.net>). In July 2003, the Sandinganbayan ruled that the disputed San Miguel shares belonged to the government, which was helpful to the farmers, but scarcely disposed in their favour (Pazzibugan et al. 2003). In early 2006, the dispute was still in full play. The PKSMMN coalition, which had earlier denounced its partners for trying to sell out the small coconut farmers, asserted that its members approved a negotiated settlement with Eduardo Cojuangco, while the MTF, formerly an umbrella alliance that included the PKSMMN, now said it would gather at least half a million signatures to prove that its members disapproved of the settlement. The MTF charged that President Arroyo and Cojuangco had made a sleazy deal to deprive the farmers of their rightful due (Calumpita 2006). In short, more than 30 years after the coco levy had begun and more than 20 years after it had ended, the principals involved were still wrangling over its ownership, with no end to the dispute in sight.

Lessons to be drawn

At first glance, our three case studies might appear to have few lessons to offer donors. As noted above, neither the Narmada campaign nor the anti-Estrada movement was initiated—or even supported in any serious way—by official international donor agencies. Nor was the coco levy movement, except for some modest USAID assistance when BUCO was formed in the late 1990s. And yet such cases do provide excellent examples for donor learning.

After 'management for results' became the mantra for evaluating programme assistance in the 1990s, donors became fixated on quick measures and indicators of success, rather than in-depth analyses of what worked and how. Moreover, donor assistance to civil society has largely been delivered in short-term grants, which has

obviated any real interest in looking at longer-term impact. Not surprisingly, there has consequently been little donor interest in analysing in depth cases like those presented here. But it is precisely by studying such cases that we can build a picture of how advocacy efforts function to influence public policy over both the shorter and the longer term. By building an understanding independent of donor programming of how civil society groups succeed or fail in attaining empowerment, and of the impact of their experiences on systemic pluralism, we can find many useful lessons to inform future donor strategies.

Success

What is 'success'? The concepts of 'success' and 'failure' are especially elusive in the Narmada case, in part because the identity of the principal constituency itself has been in dispute since early on in the controversy: was it the oustees, whose homes and livelihoods were to be wiped out by the project? Or was it the environment of the Namada River Basin, which would be forever changed by the dams? Yet again, perhaps it was the wider cause of environmentalism in India. If it was the oustees, then perhaps the campaign has succeeded in that they will eventually get a better R&R settlement than could ever have been dreamed possible a couple of decades ago. Even illegal squatters were to receive some compensation for being moved by the dam project.

But if the river system's ecology was to be the principal beneficiary, then perhaps the NBA has failed, because the dam has been in good part built and, once the current turbulence occasioned by the Supreme Court's 2005 decision has been smoothed out, construction will doubtless continue. And, finally, if it is the Indian environment in an overall sense that was to be the main beneficiary, the Narmada controversy may well turn out to have been a tide-turning event which, even if the immediate battle was lost, energized the cause of environmentalism in such a way that the long-term effort to preserve the environment has been greatly enhanced. Among environmentalists and long-time champions of the poor there has been much argument and dissent. Many supported Arundhati Roy and the NBA, while others accused them of romanticism at the expense of the adivasi oustees who could have achieved an even better deal than they were in line to receive if the NBA had concerned itself more with real people and less with opposing the idea of development at all costs—see, for instance, the intense irritation at Arunadhati Roy expressed by prominent environmentalist Ramachandra Guha (2000a, 2000b) and the pro-poor activist and intellectual Gail Omvedt (1999a, 1999b).

In the Estrada case the constituency ostensibly succeeded in its goal of ousting a corrupt president, but was this truly a victory for Philippine democracy? Some would argue this, including a great many Filipinos at the time, and the country's leading opinion polling organization found a majority in support of the president's departure (Mangahas 2001; Reid 2001). However, many of the same cronies soon resurfaced

around the new president, and the same old crowd of 'trapos' (traditional politicians) quickly resumed their leading roles in the system. The country's dominant oligarchy (of which the new president's family were virtually charter members) had little trouble in coming back to where the power was.

Perhaps worse, the EDSA approach to politics showed fair promise of becoming a habit, as Estrada supporters mounted an attempted—although unsuccessful—'EDSA 3' to restore their man after his removal, mustering their own gigantic demonstrations. Five years later, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo faced a new impeachment trial on grounds of corruption, along with Cabinet resignations and an attempted (albeit failed) coup within the military. A repetition of the same destabilizing movement scenario—including an 'EDSA 4'—cannot be dismissed out of hand. After an impeachment drive failed in late 2005, an attempted 'people power' effort combined with a military coup was launched in February 2006. The movement fizzled out fairly quickly but the extra-constitutional impulse seems nevertheless to be running strong in the Philippines (see Mydans 2006a, 2006b; and Gomez 2006). As for EDSA 2 and the ousting of Estrada, it is arguable whether the PCIJ and the movement it initiated really benefited its constituency or the political system.

With the coco levy saga, it would be hard to argue that the past three decades of advocacy—first against the levy itself and then to recover the funds that were levied—have brought any concrete success at all to the farmers involved. Indeed, the prospect of obtaining any benefit from the coco fund must seem more like an ever-elusive chimera to the hundreds of thousands of coconut growers than a cause with some hope of succeeding. Presidential promises and decrees, as well as court rulings, have come and gone, but in 2006 Eduardo 'Danding' Cojuangco continued to control the same 47 per cent of San Miguel shares that he had at the end of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986.

Achievement

Perhaps it makes more sense to think about democratization 'achievement' rather than immediate campaign 'success' as the gauge of civil society advocacy impact. In the end, perhaps it is experience at 'doing democracy' that is really important. Thus NBA marchers and 'suicide squad' members became more effective participants in the practice of democracy, as did PCIJ journalists (and their readers) and EDSA demonstrators, and small coconut farmer-members of the COIR or the PKSMMN. The skills these participants developed, whether as advocacy leaders or as foot soldiers, will prepare them to take on other causes and eventually become more successful players in the democracy arena.

Are some levels of achievement (that is, steps on the advocacy scale) more valuable than others? Certainly, people will become discouraged if they get no further than, say, the Voice stage after repeated efforts. And the longer they stay at that level, the more dedicated and charismatic the advocacy leadership will have to become if they

are to induce group members to carry on the struggle. One can think of the US civil rights movement and its organizations, which took roughly a century after the American Civil War of the 1860s to achieve much in the way of concrete benefits for their constituency. Women's suffrage in the Western countries represents another long-term saga, where it took decades to achieve any real progress. And, within a shorter time frame, the gay rights movement traced a similar path. (At least in the USA and the United Kingdom, women's suffrage organizations collectively took from the 1880s to the 1920s to achieve the vote for their constituency, while formal CSOs campaigning for gay rights took perhaps a couple of decades, from the 1970s to the 1990s, to begin attaining legal rights in the form of anti-discrimination laws.) But without those lesser stages having been achieved it is surely fair to say that the later and more concrete attainments never could have been realized. So, even if the accountability stages are what count in the end, the participatory stages are critical building blocks. This perhaps will not be pleasing to donors who want to think in terms of three- and five-year democratization programmes, but it accords well with experience in the developed countries.

The impermanence of success

Whatever successes CSOs attain can always be reversed. The NBA obtained a stay from the Supreme Court in 1995, only to have it rescinded in 2000. The anti-Estrada movement gathered enough support to get the Congress to take up an impeachment case in the autumn of 2000, only to have it rejected early in 2001. The coconut farmers have several times appeared to be on the verge of winning a settlement, but each time they have been denied it in the end. The movement against Estrada did win the battle to remove him from office, of course, but if its ambition was to eliminate cronyism and corruption, it lost the overall campaign, as both elements resurfaced almost immediately in the succeeding Arroyo government. Even seemingly permanent victories can come undone, as the administration of President George W. Bush in Washington showed on the environmental front by rolling back such landmarks as the Kyoto Protocol and much of the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act that previous administrations had welcomed. Few things in politics are ever immutable (although some things, like a 120-m-high dam, would be difficult to undo). But, just as achievements can be overturned, so can losses: the environmentalists, anti-corruption campaigners or coconut farmers may well win in future rounds.

A logical/ordinal scale, not a chronological one

It should be clear from our case studies that progress along the advocacy scale was not at all necessarily chronological. While the coco levy example did proceed along the scale, the other two definitely did not, backing and filling, at times moving a step or more back before going forward again. The Narmada example tracked back and forth

several times over its course, while the Estrada case began essentially in the middle of the scale as a 'trustee-based' effort. For the PCIJ took up its investigation originally on its own internal initiative; there was no real constituency insisting on action or even mobilized. Only when the PCIJ had made a case against the president was it possible to develop a constituency, and it was other groups that mobilized interested citizens to demand accountability, not the PCIJ. Still, it seems evident that a campaign does not begin to move seriously into the empowerment or constituency benefits stage unless all the logically prior steps have been taken. The Gujarat state government would not have improved the R&R package, nor would the final steps of Estrada's removal from office have taken place, nor would presidents and courts have decided (at least temporarily) in favour of the coconut farmers, if all those logically prior elements had not been in place.

Assessing advocacy

How can achievement along the advocacy scale be assessed? It would be wonderful to develop a set of metrics for gauging such progress. In our imaginary case, for example, mobilization might be measured by what proportion of pupils' mothers got involved in the group's initial days. Transparency could be assessed by asking how far school officials found themselves having to go to explain themselves (a letter from the principal? a meeting with the school board? a court case requiring disclosure of official records?). But, even if such metrics could be crafted, they would be useful only for school cases, and probably only for certain schools in a particular country. Donors spent much time and effort in developing measurement systems during what might be called the 'evaluation decade' of the 1990s, including the democracy sector, but with somewhat dubious results (see Blair 2000, 2002). It is most doubtful that they could construct better schemes for dealing with the advocacy scale.

A far better approach would be to undertake a thorough analysis of specific advocacy efforts, using intensive interviews with participants and officials involved, perhaps along with some surveys—or, given the expense of good surveys, 'good enough' focus groups could suffice—with 'thick description' being the principal technique. The three case studies presented here provide a good deal of useful material. But they come from a variety of sources who were concerned with asking questions different from those posed here, so that the writer's own analysis has had to be done very much at third hand. The kinds of query a solid assessment of civil society advocacy would ask would run along the following lines, paralleling the advocacy scale:

- When did any appreciable number of people become concerned?
- What exactly did the initial mobilizers do?
- How did they formulate and articulate their agendas?
- Why did the state find itself having to pay attention in some fashion?
- What did it do to explain itself?

- How, why and in what ways did the state actually respond?
- How if at all did constituency members actually benefit?
- What effect did all this advocacy activity have on the political arena?

These would be the basic questions to ask, with the main academic approach being political anthropology. Evaluation budgets would not need to be large (two- or three-person teams working with local experts would be quite adequate). Three or four countries could be selected, and in each one four or five carefully chosen donor-sponsored civil society advocacy initiatives could be assessed. Would such an effort yield a complete understanding of how best to support civil society advocacy and promote democratic pluralism over time? Of course not, but the results of a well-conducted assessment would go far in giving the international donor community a clear picture of what works and how in furthering both these objectives.

Notes

[1] The literature on this topic is immense. Book-length treatments can be found in Fisher 1995 and D'Souza 2002 among others. This chapter relies primarily on the relatively short but comprehensive and insightful accounts given by Dwivedi 1998 and Wood 1993, up to 1998. Except where otherwise stated, substantive data in this chapter come from these two sources.

[2] The essay, which first appeared in the Indian journals Frontline and Outlook in May 1999, has been reprinted by Friends of River Narmada, an international CSO supporting the NBA. It is available on the Friends' website, along with much other material (including some critical of the NBA and Arundhati Roy), at <http://www.narmada.org>.

[3] For a thorough account of the PCIJ's role in the removal of Estrada, see Møller and Jackson 2002. As with the Narmada case, except as noted, facts are taken from the well-researched account cited here, while I have taken considerable (although I hope reasonable) liberty in interpretation.

[4] Mobile phone use facilitated the gathering of an almost instant assembly of thousands at first, and in Estrada's final days crowds estimated at over 1 million. By the end of 2000, mobile phones had become plentiful; the two major companies had perhaps 4 million subscribers between them, a very large proportion of whom lived in metropolitan Manila. See Alcantara 2000 and Chandrasekaran 2001. Text messages could be sent to multiple recipients ('phone trees') for nominal cost—0.02 USD or less, in contrast to voice calls, which were much more expensive. Internet use became critical as well; the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* later reported over 1 million hits a day on its website at the height of the crisis (Magno 2001).

[5] There is a great deal written on the coconut levy, but it tends to be scattered pieces, mainly newspaper stories. A comprehensive analysis of this fascinating story remains to be written. The present account is based largely on what the author learned during an assessment for USAID in the Philippines in 2000 (Blair 2001). Other available reports are Gregorio-Mendel 1998, Parreño and Gaborni 1999, and Matute 2001.
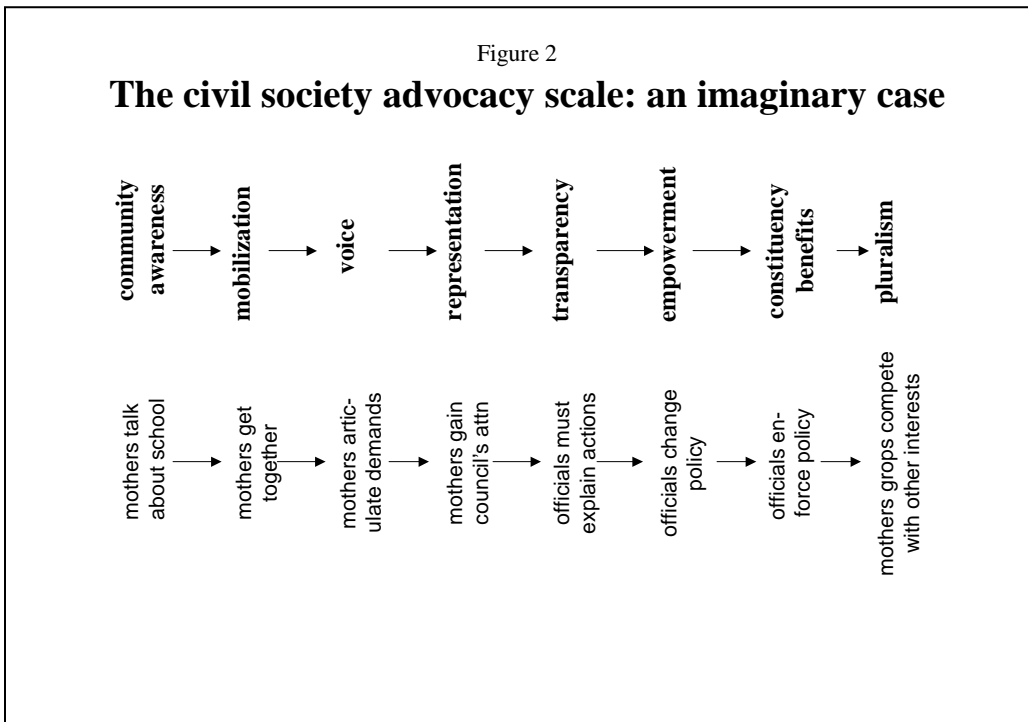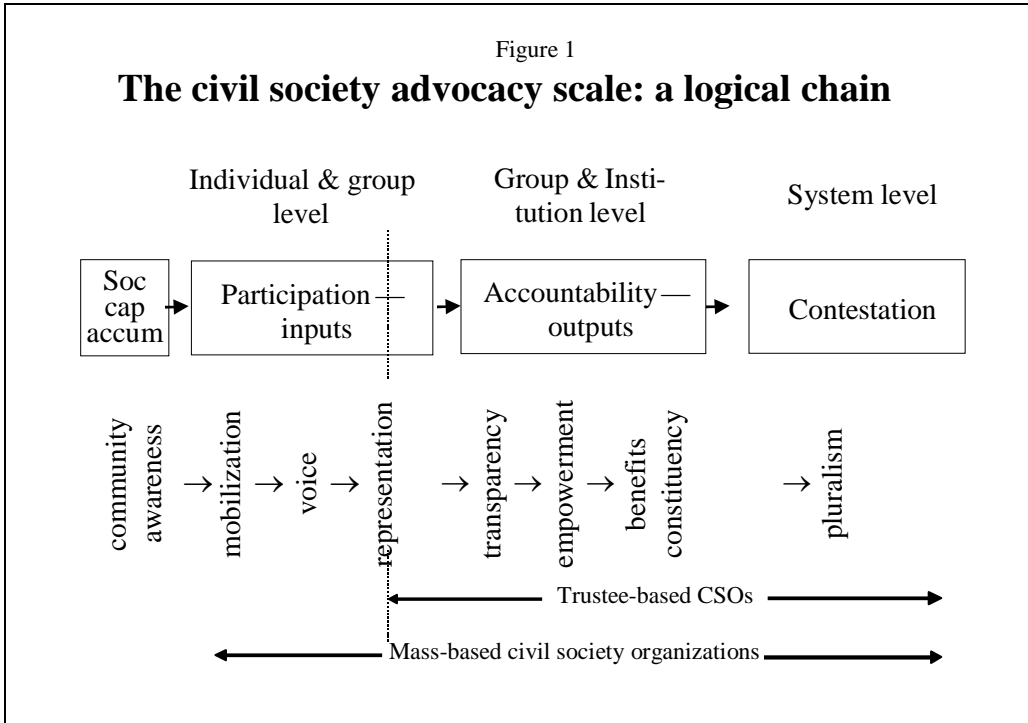
[6] There were two parts to the 47 per cent holding: 27 per cent was claimed by BUCO as coco levy money, while Cojuangco had evidently acquired the remaining 20 per cent by other means.

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Original figures for Chapter 7. "Gauging civil society advocacy"

Figure 1
The civil society advocacy scale: a logical chain

Individual & group level	Group & Insti-tution level	System level

Soc cap accum → Participation inputs → Accountability outputs → Contestation

community awareness → mobilization → voice → representation → transparency → empowerment → benefits constituency → pluralism

←—— Trustee-based CSOs ——→

←—— Mass-based civil society organizations ——→

Figure 2
The civil society advocacy scale: an imaginary case

community awareness → **mobilization** → **voice** → **representation** → **transparency** → **empowerment** → **constituency benefits** → **pluralism**

mothers talk about school → mothers get together → mothers artic-ulate demands → mothers gain council's attn → officials must explain actions → officials change policy → officials en-force policy → mothers grops compete with other interests

Figure 3
The civil society advocacy scale: Narmada dam

community awareness → mobilization → voice → representation → transparency → empowerment → constituency benefits → pluralism

- Initial oustees (late 1970s)
- Early CSOs formed (1979)
- R&R demands articulated (1980s); Demonstrations, marches; Worldwide support; Split between R&R and oppositionists (1990s)
- GOI negotiates w NBA (1993)
- WBank Morse Report (1992); NBA legal actions (1990s); Five Member Group (1993)
- MEF as ally (1980s onward); Gujarat improves R&R terms (1987); GOI drops Wbank loan (1993); Supreme Ct hears cases (1995, 1999)
- Supreme Court stay (1995); Supr Ct rescinds stay (2000); Supr Ct renews constructoin halt (2005)
- Contending state govts, pro-Narmada CSOs

Figure 5
The civil society advocacy scale: Estrada ouster

community awareness → mobilization → voice → representation → transparency → empowerment → constituency benefits → pluralism

- 1. Widespread gossip
- 3. Demand for honesty, then accountability
- 4. Impeach-ment trial
- 2. PCIJ investiga-tion & publicity
- 5. Parliamentary inaction
- 6. Text message recruitment
- 7. Demand for honesty, then accountability
- 8. EDSA 2
- 9. Elite defection, Supreme Court justification
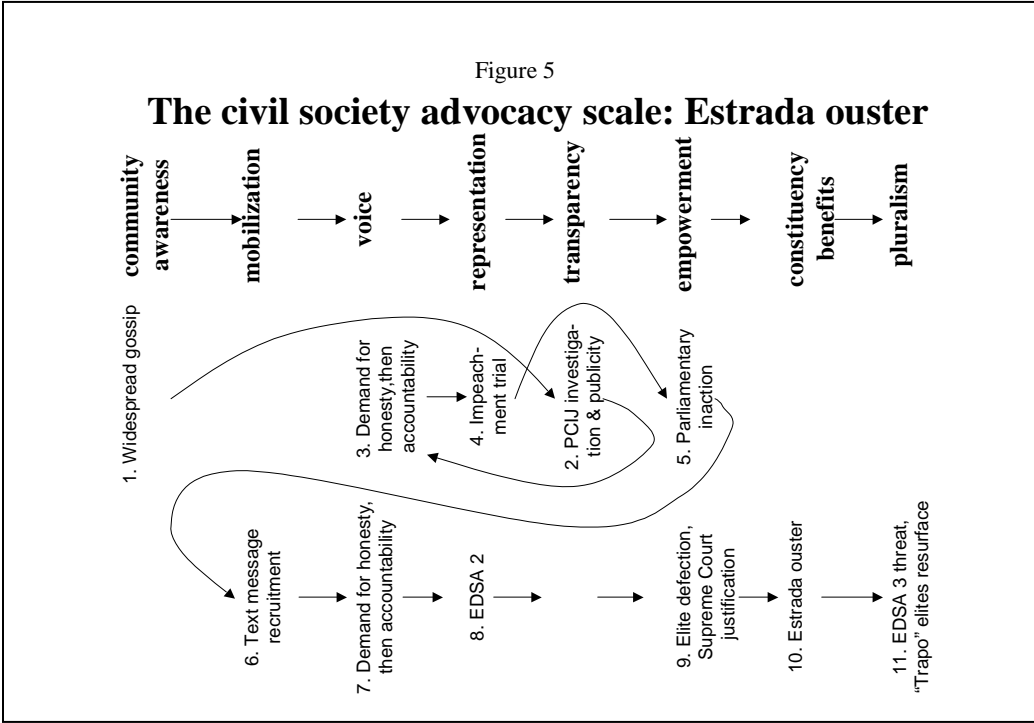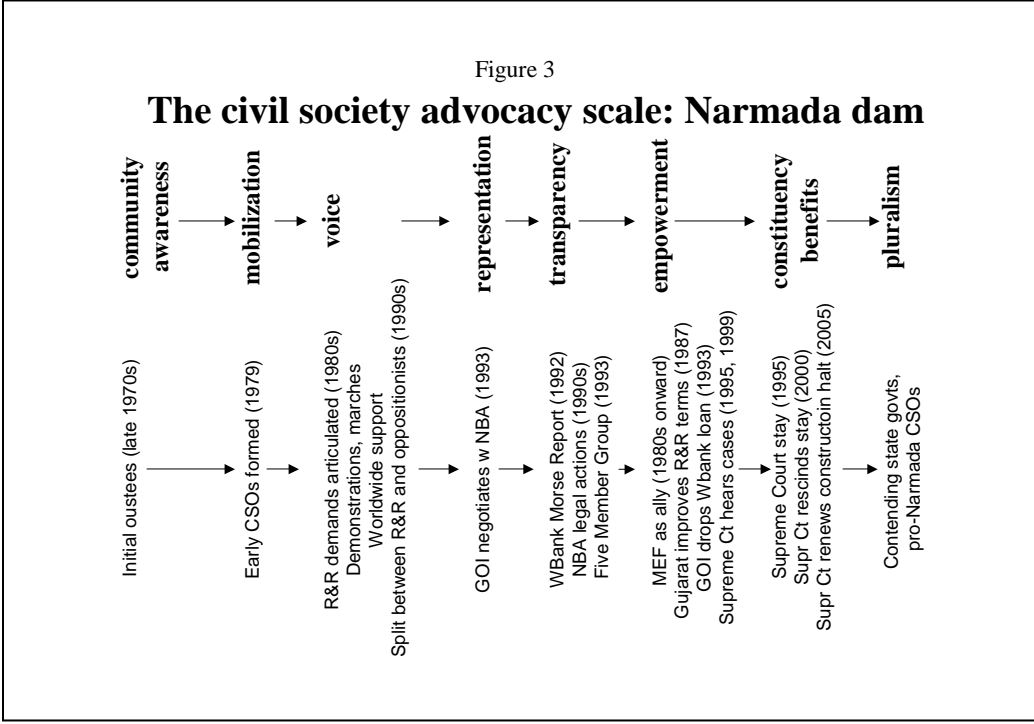- 10. Estrada ouster
- 11. EDSA 3 threat, "Trapo" elites resurface

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Figure 6

The civil society advocacy scale: coco levy

community awareness	→	mobilization	→	voice	→	representation	→	transparency	→	empowerment	→	constituency benefits	→	pluralism
Reaction to Marcos levy	→	Coco farmers associations	→	Coalitions formed	→	Court cases initiated, widespread publicity	→	Court cases pursued	→	Court decisions, presidential decrees	→	[Promises]	→	Cojuancgo lobbying, Cocofed competition

3