

crisis), child labour, forced migration, and civil conflict, have pointed to the need for taking a systemic problem solving approach (addressing root causes), necessarily on a multilateral basis.

Emerging Challenges

These mostly positive trends must be balanced by new challenges NGOs face in developing their policy agenda and their approaches to policy dialogue.

Strategic Framework

In most cases, international development NGOs have come to policy work from international development programming. This has meant NGOs have had to "grow" their policy capacities, including their strategic framework. In the course of building up their policy framework, NGOs have encountered some strategic weaknesses such as:

- the lack of a clear strategy for policy and advocacy
- the failure to establish strong alliances with other sectors
- the failure to build up a broad and active policy constituency
- the uneven development of North-South NGO partnerships
- excessive focus on issues and forces that are increasingly marginal to the building of sustainable human development⁷

As CCIC and the North South Institute recently noted in a letter to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, "foreign assistance is only a modest, albeit catalytic, factor in the struggle against poverty and environmental degradation. More important is the collective and cumulative impact of all other policies: political,

⁷ See Michael Edwards, "What will we influence in a future without aid? Redefining advocacy in a market-driven world." Mimeo, 1997.