



**Institute for Nonprofit Studies**

**Presents:**

**Ken Wiwa Lecture:**

**Globalization, the Pervasive Business Agenda and  
Civil Society**

**Wednesday, October 20, 2004**

**Ramada Hotel**

**Grand Ballroom**

**8:00 a.m. – 12:00 Noon**

***Part of the Burnet, Duckworth & Palmer LLP Lecture Series***

## Group Discussion Notes

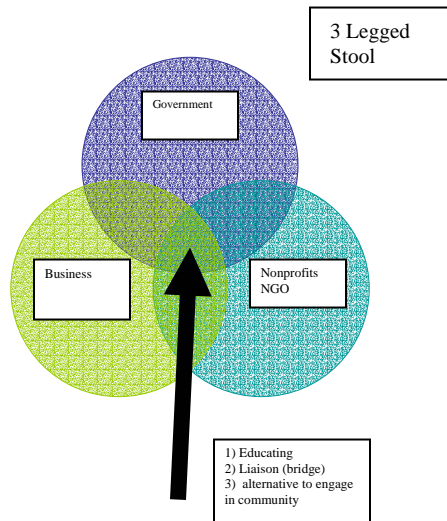
# Ken Wiwa Lecture: Globalization, the Pervasive Business Agenda and Civil Society

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### Question 1: *What is the role of an NGO in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?*

- The role of NGO's in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to connect people and bring to the surface basic human needs and similarities. It is also to integrate topics or issues into the public consciousness, and then develop ideas on how to find solutions to these issues. In essence, NGO's are the social safety net of our society.
- There are also challenges facing the role NGO's play in our society. One challenge is securing funding for programs and services. The government is becoming increasingly hard to gain funding through, and corporations are very selective in their allocation of funds.
- There was also a feeling that NGO's had to jump through a number of hoops to obtain funding. You have to abide by policies from the Federal government (ex. 10% rule), policies by the Provincial government, corporations, and other funding agencies in Calgary.
- Another challenge area we thought was the belief that the Klein government lacked the imagination of some provinces (ex. British Columbia) when it came to helping NGO's. It seems as though the Provincial government is sticking to a corporate agenda, and throwing a lot back to the NGO's in the province.
- The key to improving these issues is to keep an open dialogue with the government (on all levels), and all stakeholders, to promote the crucial role NGO's play in society.
- Consistency evolves, 2 steps ahead, social expectations must keep things moving (i.e.) progress made protecting environment
- Business development – they choose to operate differently in different communities
- Monitor where government is, show profit to share holders (business)
- Different parameters depending on each community
- What is government role? Value of corporate citizens (example) Kyoto, regulation of government.
- Moderator (be a link between government and business)
- NGO's can be good but also can not be
- Assess in community – building links

- Government cannot be only vehicle for expression and advocacy
- NGO's need to be more representative of community
- More people are engaged in NGO's because of unhappiness with government
- People are interested and engaged
- Can put more issues on table
- Civic participation cannot happen without government
- NGO's need to engage civic participation (engaged in community)
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- Draw legitimacy from illegitimacy of government
- NGO's are appointed not elected – Not as democratic
- Best and brightest want to work for NGO's
- Talent is turning away from governmental positions
- Government needs to be strongly checked and balanced

**Question 2: *Should the NGO be outside the tent, a watchdog for public opinion, a guardian of civil liberties against the growing power of the state or...? If "yes", then what would this look like?***

- There was a belief in this group that if NGO's could remain neutral, or let their biases be known, then indeed they could be a watchdog for public interest. NGO's have a role to document and record information to be used for the public good.
- It was also believed that NGO's had a responsibility to work with the media (ex. papers, reporters) to alert them about public opinions, and issues that are facing NGO's (ex. 10% rule). The result of an effective relationship with the media would be keeping the citizens and governments of Canada educated about what NGO's and their stakeholders require to be effective.
- Another point brought up was how do NGO's get on the inside of the tent and have a voice in helping to bring light on issues facing NGO's (ex. funding, downloading

services)? The 10% rule was brought up as a deterrent for NGO's to take part in advocacy. NGO's are afraid of spending more than 10% of their resources on advocacy, because the consequence in losing their charitable status.

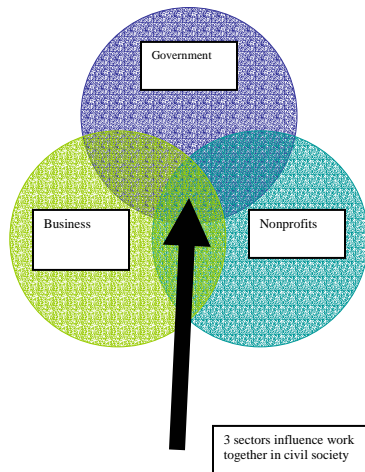
- The opinions were split on the issue of NGO's advocating the government. Some people believed that a charitable organization should spend all of its resources on service delivery and not partake in advocacy. Other people believed that it was the obligation of charities to stand up and effect change in the government by advocating on behalf of their stakeholders. In the end, the group agreed to disagree.
- Level of input, NGO's supporting, must service the culture. Collaborative thinking – all opinions are important whether they are in or out of the tent. People represent their own interest (sphere of influence). Good that there is disattachment between NGO's and government (Government/NGO/Private).
- Like a sandbox (to go to play within all sectors).
- Need perspective – Greenpeace had made up research for a case with Shell, they must be socially responsible.
- Must have a balance and check.
- Each sector has impact.
- Non registered NGO's lobby on behalf of the sector – 10% rule
- Free load
- Grey area – they can – people can express
- Need to be separate from the government
- Government can stifle organizations if not separated
- Special interest
- Funding is tied to business and government – comes with stipulation
- Intrinsically linked today between sectors
- Need more freedom but with business and government having their own reason for donating, it might not align with organizations mission
- Warring faction
- Need NGO's to have a democratic society
- Depends on NGO and their mandate
- Cannot be a watchdog when aligned with government
- We are all as a society linked to the government
- NGO – agitator outside government
- Need to be careful who you accept money from and who you allow into membership
- Need to bark – be critical of government and business
- Need to chose your partners and choose wisely
- Free floating to other organizations

**Question 3: *Should an NGO be a link in civil society or a “node” in a networked society? If “yes” then what would this look like?***

- The group thought volunteerism and NGO's played a vital role in civil society, and the government should perpetuate the value of NGO's throughout our society.
- In terms of networking, there was the belief that NGO's needed to retain a clear mandate for themselves, but it would be beneficial to be linked to other NGO's to

share resources (ex. research materials) and ideas on how to be an effective industry. In essence, the group believed that NGO's should network because we are a global society, and if we can help one another, then why not?

- NGO's also have a duty to be educated and mindful of what is going on in civil society to ensure its' stakeholders are getting the best possible service.
- Yes, the overlap of the 3 sectors influence work together in civil society – civil society is the network to society.



**Question 4: *Is it helpful to differentiate between GONGOs, QUANGOs and DONGOs? If so, what are the implications for international, regional and local public policy?***

- Sorry, but we ran out of time before being able to start this question.
- Differentiation of who is doing what
- Can make you suspicious (example: CBC would be a BONGO because it is funded by government – or would it?)
- Cutesy acronym
- Non-governmental
- Once you partner with a government you are owned with them
- Aligning with government = protected state
- Need to be clear when aligning with other organizations to your mission, vision, goals, etc.
- Helps to have a clear understanding of terms and know where they are coming from
- You know what you are working with
- International groups can connect to others
- Groupings are arbitrary
- Lingo is important internally but might not apply to another sector
- Terminology may not be valuable in another sector
- Helpful – quick – educational

- It can look different from what it is
- Helpful to make distinctions so people and public know and understand what we are working on
- Clear in understanding when speaking with some groups
- Can be a hindrance if you are speaking about an acronym and if your speaking to someone who doesn't understand what the term means

**GENERAL DISCUSSION (Some Groups had a general discussion on all questions rather than going through each question one by one)**

- Looking at NGO's first at a community level, then at an international level
- In Calgary, we are naïve with charities, not politically active, charities and nonprofits here have different agendas from elsewhere in the world
- People in the 3<sup>rd</sup> world come with a political sophistication that shows in their advocacy, work in NGO's, which we don't have
- Example: Habitat for Humanity has a local agenda – to help build a house, meet basic needs
- Our Not-For-Profits generally provide relief of a problem, people from other countries look more to political action
- In this country, we have had it good for a long time so we look at basic needs, not fighting for rights, so we can be more altruistic
- NGO's, Not-For-Profits, should spend more time focusing on what caused a problem, issues, instead of just focusing on one issue resulting from the causes
- In Calgary, not many charities have a political agenda, mainly a mission to help just in our area
- This city is business focused, people are too busy to be involved, they have a corporate vision/agenda
- With this many non profits, they are scared to be political – they are more concerned with who to have on their committees and boards so they have leverage with business connections

**(Example):** A business asked another business to partner with them to build a house for Habitat for Humanity and the business would not because of the organizations religious background.

- There are social action groups here but no one listens to them because typically they are younger, students, with no money or power
- Another reason people might not support or stay with a cause is because many volunteers need to accomplish something tangible, accomplishing what your advocating for can take a long time before you see results – you can't necessarily move the outcomes, which then you cannot get money to help you further your advocacy without being able to move the benefit / outcomes
- How do we get support for organizations that need to be a political voice? How do you get media on side, advertisers support, the market does not pay attention to a

cause unless there are many people involved, but how do you get them on board if you do not have the resources to get the word out to them?

- You need to buy in from people, the problem is to prove ones impact nowadays it is measured in money, and you can not do that with NGO's. You have to look at the cultural database
- We as a society start to default into seeing certain areas of service as a purchase, entertainment (**example**) – Arts in Calgary measures their success with wording like “value for service, economic measurements”. It is in how we frame it.
- We do not see bigger picture, only narrow neo-con world view.
- World issues effect these views and will effect how perceptions will need to change. We are seeing the decline of our western civilization
- Many businesses are international and depending on resources, economics, the provinces and states could be grouped together in a different way from what we see now. They would come together under their common economics / nation states based on economics.
- Rise of China, more powerful over time, will change economics / fear then will put us into like groups driving us economically
- A NGO should be like the canary in the mine shaft, they should serve as an early warning system
- Media needs to give the right perceptions of what organizations are doing. They are different locally and different between local and international groups
- The media can make people believe things contrary to the realities
- NGO's are places of engagement for citizens to share ideas and build from them
- They fill a perceived void, what 's wrong or a community that has no civil engagement
- They are the result of a seed planted between a few people to start a movement
- It is hardship that brings people together - when things are good we are complacent
- As a society, we've moved away from living in small groups to large communities where families now can not take care of issues the way they use to, growing bigger has made us impersonal
- “It takes a village to raise a child” means little now in a community where there is complacency
- It takes outside intervention to make us look at ourselves, organize, know our resources
- In a civil society, we should elevate NGO's to make genuine progress
- It takes small groups to drive the agendas, the survival of our communities, NGO's can be the voice of the people, right now thee is the political agendas and NGO's have to stand up to them
- NGO's come together because of a cause to have a voice. There needs to be resolutions to the cause
- NGO's can be based around basic needs, social justice, political
- We live in unnatural communities – built by man and forced to be grouped together (**Example**) Communities in city - communities need to have a common interest, special interest, otherwise we seclude ourselves
- Perceived freedom that NGO's bring – but there is competition within NGO's

- Freedom today to give freely to an organization today and feeling euphoria
- Freedom of choice – NPO run with magic dust – people can give freely and donate their time
- You get bright young people who make a huge economic sacrifice to work in NGO's
- Government should fund schools and hospitals because other NPO's lose out on sustainability
- We take things for granted when they have government support until it is pushed toward the nonprofit sector
- Have international NGO's work together (ideally)
  - Here, need to build powerful NGO's to stand against government – to create solutions
  - Work for the people, pull out if demands are imposed on the people
  - NGO's to go public, tell them what's going on
    - Leads to this question though: Should NGO's be involved politically?
    - Need to educate the public, get involved and engaged
  - Whole together as a whole, don't separate areas in relation to health, education, training
  - Have to be neutral in order not to be involved with the corruptiveness of the government

We had disadvantages to this:

1. NGO won't have a chance against a corrupt government
  - Need funds and so much competition for funding between NGO's. Hopefully NGO's working together will solve this problem
  - Security an issue
2. Accountability an issue
  - NGO's accountable to donors or community?
  - Should be accountable to people regardless of funding but how do we do this?

## **Role of NGO's**

- 2 kinds of NGO's – disaster relief and developmental side
- Share resources and build networks to build the capacity of the community
- Provide basic human needs
- Give foreign aid to provide education, training, health = build a community