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Charity, Philanthropy and Development in Colombo: An Overview of a Research Project[2]

Abstract
This paper is a history of a development-linked research project into philanthropy in Colombo. It presents the background to the research, considers the reasons for the project being designed in a specific way, and summarises the conclusions the researchers arrived at. Whilst being of interest in themselves, the argument of this paper is that it is doubtful whether the research conclusions have had or will have any major impact on development practice nor have they contributed much if anything to poverty alleviation which was the desired impact of the project as far as the funder was concerned. This raises the more general question what are the preconditions which would lead to academic research having a more effective role in development.

Keywords: Philanthropy, development, development research, Colombo

Introduction

One of the recurring features in Professor Hettige's work has been the way in which he has combined theoretical and intellectual interests with practical concerns. Whilst on the one hand addressing issues concerned with theoretical issues such as globalisation, social inequality, rural and urban change and local democracy, these have been used to enter into discussions with a more pragmatic and policy oriented focus: problems concerning youth unrest, alcohol abuse and its effects, and vulnerability assessment to mention

[1] Although this paper appears to be single-authored, in reality it is a joint piece of work which also involves Filippo Osella, Tom Widger and Sarah Kabir to all of whom I express my deep gratitude. However, I alone am responsible for any faults both in fact and interpretation.

[2] The research on which this paper was based was funded by three ESRC/DFID research grants: ES/I033890/1, ES/N015614/1 and ES/L007819/1. I and my colleagues thank the donors for their support.

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just a few.[3] This paper is similarly concerned with both the theoretical and the practical: with how a research project (or rather series of projects) I was involved in a few years ago attempted to address both theoretical and practical issues, and develop ways in which theoretical and ethnographic knowledge might be used to develop policies relevant to development and poverty alleviation. It is also an example of the changing architecture of research funding, at least in the UK, and how this generates particular sorts of research, or at least demands that research be legitimised in particular ways.

This paper begins with a short discussion of the context in which the research project was conceived and the nature of the research. It then moves on to present an overview of the results of the research before turning to what we considered to be the implications of the research for development and the ways in which we tried to make the findings of the research relevant to development activities in contemporary Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

The background

The original project proposal was a response to a call in 2010 from the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) for applications to a research programme funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) on poverty alleviation. The proposal itself was based on two factors. First, there was our pre-existing interests in the nature of charity and philanthropy in South Asia from a theoretical and conceptual angle. This involved a traditional anthropological approach which ultimately derived from the work of Marcel Mauss on 'The Gift' but was also informed by the wide literature on the history of charity in Europe and South Asia as well as recent anthropological work.[4] But what made our theoretical interests fundable was the growing interest in charity and philanthropy as potentially important elements in the development world and in policy discussions more generally. At that time the new UK government was trying to develop a rhetoric of the 'big society' where voluntary organisations and donations took over some of the roles of the state; in the development world major philanthropic organisations were becoming (for better or worse) increasingly important players; and the decline of aid flows, especially to the newly emerging Lower

[3] See for instance Hettige 1995; Hettige, S. and Mayer, M. 2002; Bernards,S., Graham, K., Kuendig, H., Hettige, S. and Obot, I. 2009, and Little, A. and Hettige, S. 2014.

[4] On Europe, the work we found most helpful included Owen 1965, Jones 1969, Haskell 1985 and Adam 2004. For

South Asia, Haynes 1987, White 1991, Joshi 2001, Copeman 2009 and Palsetia 2005 were most useful. Bornstein 2012 appeared after our research had commenced. As far as Sri Lanka was concerned, the major influences on our work were the volumes by Jayawardena and Seneviratne as well as the voluminous literature concerned with post tsunami relief, although most of that was concerned with the work of external agencies.

Middle Income Countries (LMICs) was seen as something that could be ameliorated through the utilisation of indigenous sources of charitable funding. Sri Lanka was an obvious choice for such research, not only because two of the original team had a long-term interest in the country. First, Sri Lanka was one of these new 'lower middle income' countries and aid flows were declining, in part because of its relative wealth but also because the end of the civil conflict had led to reduced humanitarian assistance. The obvious question was how far local sources of charitable resources could or would take up this slack. But more important in some ways was that in terms of international indicators, Sri Lanka was and is a particularly generous country. In the 'World Giving Index' Sri Lanka consistently ranks amongst the top ten to fifteen countries and in the African and Asian contexts only Myanmar ranked higher when this project was conceived.[5]

Ideally of course understanding the charity/philanthropy/development nexus in Sri Lanka would favour a comprehensive approach to the country as a whole, but in terms of likely funding and our own capabilities this was out of the question. Instead we chose to concentrate on Colombo, in part because of the interesting challenges which urban field research presents but also for more immediate reasons. Comparative data indicated that religion and forms of economic activities were important determinants of charitable behaviour. Within Colombo there are sizeable concentrations of all four main religious groupings (as well as ethnic groups) in the country, and this allowed us to investigate how far religious considerations entered into charitable activities and behaviour. Second, in terms of economic positioning Colombo presented a broad spectrum of income levels and, perhaps more importantly, different styles of commercial activity ranging from old style 'traditional' businesses to self-consciously 'modern' undertakings.

The research itself had four key objectives:

- To understand the processes involved in generating charitable activity in Colombo. Our aim here was to produce a 'philanthroscape': to understand the pattern of giving. We were interested in identifying the factors involved in determining which people and organisations give and to whom, and the importance of such factors as age, gender, class, religious affiliation and ethnic identity in determining charitable behaviour.
- Identifying the role that charity and philanthropy play and could play in the development process. Here we were particularly interested in

[5] The "World Giving Index' is published annually by the Charities Aid Foundation. It focuses on numbers of participants in charitable and voluntary activities not on the value of charitable donations.

whether charity in Colombo reinforced or subverted existing forms of marginalisation and exclusion or if it supported or could support transformational developmental activities.[6]

- Elaborating transferable methods through which the sort of research we were carrying out in Colombo could be reproduced in other contexts, especially in the LMIC countries of Africa and Asia.
- Producing policy relevant briefs which utilised the findings of our research to inform policy makers and managers of charitable and philanthropic organisations.

In practice, the third goal – developing transferable methods – was effectively dropped. This was partly due to a lack of resources, partly due to time constraints, and partly due to a disinclination on the part of the team to get involved in such wide-reaching activities. But in a sense through dissemination activities involving major development agencies this objective was partially achieved.

The project involved rather a lot of people. From Sussex there were Filippo Osella, Tom Widger and myself all doing greater or lesser amounts of fieldwork in Colombo. We partnered with the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Colombo which provided enumerators for the quantitative aspects of the project. Through CEPA, Professor Tudor Silva from Peradeniya also became part of the team. Given this plethora of researchers, a major issue was one of coordination and cooperation, and here the load fell on Tom (who was based in Colombo) and Sarah Kabir who had the dubious pleasure of acting as general project facilitator as well as carrying out components of the research by herself and with Tom or myself.

The research consisted of a series of components related to the issues which we had identified in the project proposal. These elements were:

- A number of quantitative studies. These focused on charitable behaviour both at an individual level and amongst corporate and public-sector entities. An attempt was made to make these surveys more or less representative of Colombo as a whole.
- A series of case studies. As anthropologists we were much more at ease with these than with the survey elements of the research. To a certain extent these case studies built on our pre-existing knowledge, for instance Filippo focusing on Muslims; myself on Christians (especially Catholics) and Tudor on Buddhists. In addition, Tom and Sarah did a detailed case study of one *watta* (low cost housing area) in central Colombo whilst Sarah also looked at old people's homes which

[6] By 'transformation' I am referring to interventions which seek to address the causes of poverty rather than simply deal with its symptoms.

were supported by charitable contributions. We also interviewed specific individuals active in the charitable field and organisations which presented themselves as charities or philanthropic organisations.

- We had originally planned to carry out smaller pieces of research amongst Sri Lankans living abroad, primarily to see how far remittances (a crucial element of Sri Lanka's foreign exchange earnings) could be seen as charitable donations and their developmental role. In practice though, it turned out that it was impractical to carry out this research in the Gulf and there was insufficient time to investigate the Sri Lankan population in Italy. In the end we only managed to complete the component concerned with Sri Lankans in London.
- Finally, we looked at what historical material we could find, both published and unpublished, as well as interviewing older philanthropists.

A central component of the research plan was that it should have **practical** relevance to the Sri Lankan situation. 'Impact' and 'impact pathways' were crucial elements as far as our funders were concerned. Partly to meet such demands (and partly because it proved genuinely useful to our understanding of the situation) the project organised two 'contact groups'. The first involved Sri Lankan 'stakeholders'. This met on a regular basis and considered the progress of the project, what material was being produced, and what directions the project was taking. A second 'virtual' group was supposedly to comment on our annual reports. Whilst the 'real' group was relatively successful and useful to the research, the 'virtual' group didn't really advance beyond the virtual.

We also held various conferences, partly open and partly by invitation, which acted as means of disseminating what we were trying to do and the preliminary results of the research, as well as receiving criticisms and suggestions. They were also ways through which we generated new contacts and areas of interest for research.

Overview of general findings

So far, the project has generated a number of academic papers. The first of these gives a general overview of the project's conclusions (Osella, Stirrat & Widger, 2016) whilst others deal with particular aspects of the research. Two papers by Widger (2015; 2016) discuss philanthropy in the context of corporate social responsibility and the charitable activities of commercial companies. Two other papers (Osella 2017; Osella & Widger, 2018) examine the nature of Islamic charity in Colombo, whilst a final paper

(Kabir & Stirrat, 2017) discusses the character of charitable activities amongst Sri Lankan expatriates in the UK. In addition, the project has produced a number of as yet unpublished papers covering, for instance Tudor's work amongst Buddhists in Colombo, Sarah's research into an old peoples' home, my own work on Catholics and Tom's investigations of body donations.

Overall, our work reinforces much of what was previously known about charity/philanthropy in Colombo – at least at the macro level. Our surveys support the conclusions of the CAF's World Giving Index that Sri Lankans are extremely generous in terms of giving. Both the surveys and more ethnographic work indicate that the vast majority of people engaged in regular charitable activities. Where perhaps the conclusions of our work differ from those of the CAF overview is that we found a much lower level of volunteering, although that may well be the result of differences in definitions rather than any real variation. Even so, very many people claimed to be active not only in religiously oriented voluntary organisations but also in more secular bodies such as the Sri Lanka Red Cross, Rotary and Lankaseva.

Most donations, both of cash and kind, are small but regular, taking the form of small gifts to beggars, relations and neighbours. Much of what can be seen as charity is part of the day to day give and take between neighbours and kin, both material manifestations of social obligations and the means by which these relationships are created and maintained. Larger but more irregular donations are made to religious institutions or those which cater for the poor and needy such as orphanages and old peoples' homes, and the national cancer hospital. More rarely donations are made to environmental organisations, to animal welfare societies and to other good causes.

There is a long tradition of secular philanthropic organisations in Sri Lanka in general and Colombo in particular. In the nineteenth century, with colonial backing, 'Friend in Need' societies were founded throughout the country. Probably the oldest of these which is still in existence is the 'Rodrigo Friend in Need Society' founded in 1823 in Kalutara, the Colombo counterpart being formed a few years later in 1831. Such organisations gave assistance to the indigent and assisted during times of famine and disease. More recent foundations include the Sri Lanka Eye Donation Society and the Sri Lanka branch of 'HelpAge'. Some such as the last two have continued to be highly successful in raising local funds but others have found it increasingly difficult. What emerges clearly from our research is that religion is the main driver determining both the form and content of charitable activities. As one organiser of a secular charity put it, 'there is simply too much religion in Sri Lanka'.

For Buddhists, *daane,* the giving of alms to monks, has traditionally been a central theme in what it means to be a 'good Buddhist'. This continues to be the case in the urban milieu of Colombo but the role of *daane* has been

extended, and now for many Buddhists giving to the poor, supporting orphanages, old peoples' homes and giving grants for the education of poor children are also seen as *daane*. Old peoples' homes often have rotas whereby families book days to present 'death *daanes*' or *daanes* to celebrate birthdays or other events to the residents. In some cases, this charitable activity extends to supporting major construction projects – religious buildings or charitable structures.

Similarly, charity is seen as a central element in Christian religious groupings both in terms of gifts directed towards the support of religious organisations and to the support of the poor and the needy. Church collections after services can go to various ends: maintenance of buildings; support for priests or, at various times, support for the sick and the infirm. Besides weekly collections, the offerings made to the saints at particular shrines are often directed towards charitable action. For instance, at one major shrine in Colombo all proceeds from sales of candles are directed to the support of an orphanage. At another church a rota of women organise a 'meals on wheels' service to meet the needs of the housebound. Amongst Muslims, charity is again central to religious orthopraxy. Here, the annual giving of *zakat* is an obligation for those holding wealth or assets above a certain amount whilst *sadaqah* is a form of voluntary giving open to and practiced by all Muslims.

In principle, the act of giving and the intentions of the giver are central to all religious traditions. Ideally, 'charity' is something which should be done without expectation of reward: it should be a matter of pure altruism. Thus, the scale of giving is unimportant: charitable acts by the poor are just as 'meritorious' as those performed by the rich. But of course, size does matter, and large donors use their charity to make claims to and statements about their status. This was perhaps more significant in the past: for instance, amongst the Catholics many schools, orphanages and even churches bear the names of past beneficiaries. Yet it continues especially amongst major donors who have founded charitable trusts and who are closely and visibly associated with these trusts. And this raises questions as to how far such donations are disinterested charitable acts.

This of course is linked to the issue of how far charity should be anonymous. Ideally, at least in the Christian and Islamic traditions, 'anonymity' is key for what it does is to help preserve the altruistic nature of charity. Amongst Muslims there is growing concern as to the degree that 'the right hand should not know what the left does'. And this is one reason why religious organisations and religiously minded groups are so active in trying to control charitable activities. The Catholic Church makes strenuous efforts to discourage individuals giving directly to the poor. Rather it attempts to channel the laity's charitable actions through Church-controlled organisations such as the Vincent de Paul societies found in every parish. Muslims are

equally concerned with relations between individual and collective giving. Small Muslim communities such as the Bohras and the Memons have their own structures which pool their charitable donations, but more generally *zakat* committees have begun to appear which collect *zakat* and *saddaqa* for specific purposes, for instance providing educational scholarships or supporting basic housing and sanitation requirements. Here it seems that charity is increasingly a collective activity.

Buddhist and Hindu charitable giving is somewhat less structured. Here, there are large charitable organisations such as the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress (ACBC) and the All Ceylon Hindu Congress (ACHC) which collect donations and use them to support orphanages and homes for the elders. But there is not the same attempt to control individual donations as is evident in the Muslim and Catholic cases. Many of the Buddhist charities in Colombo are partly dependent on overseas funding, often from non-Buddhist organisations. For instance, the Foundation for Goodness is largely dependent on the international cricketing fraternity and until recently Sarvodaya's main donors were Jewish synagogues in the USA and the UK. Buddhist giving tends not to be framed by any kind of institutional framework but instead is directed by the practice of *daane* – giving rise to debates concerning the relative merits of temples, orphanages or old peoples' homes – or a more impulsive and consequently ad hoc distribution of charity to the poor, needy or sick.

Overall, the result is that charity tends to flow within religious groupings: Catholics give to Catholics; Muslims to Muslims etc. If anything, confessional boundaries are strengthened by charitable practice and thus both the Church and Muslims are open to criticism and attack from Buddhist extremists who see these flows as deliberate attempts to exclude other communities in the country. Interestingly the group which is perhaps most blind to religious boundaries are the Protestants (but as far as I can tell not the Evangelical churches) who have close ties to Western partners with more secular and universalistic attitudes towards charity. Caritas, the umbrella Catholic philanthropic organisation, also appears to be moving towards a more universalistic position in part because of its dependence on international funding; in part as an attempt to appear more 'Sri Lankan'.

One aspect of this tendency for charity to be contained within confessional silos is the preoccupation amongst many givers as to what is done with their charity. Here of course there are arguments as to how far the donor should have any say as to what is done with their charity: after all, if 'charity' is a free gift, what rights should the giver have in determining how it is used by the recipient? The result is that there is a search for the 'deserving poor' whose plight is not the result of their own actions but rather the result of misfortune, physical or mental ailments or the vicissitudes of the changing

world of Colombo, and who will use charity in a 'responsible' manner. The next issue is how to distinguish these unfortunates from the 'undeserving poor'. Catholics worry that by giving charity they are encouraging indolence and immoral behaviour amongst the recipients; Muslims worry that their *sadaqah* may be going to professional beggars who are not Muslim. Such worries are used to justify attempts to control giving by individuals and channel charity through institutions which can ensure the deserving nature of the recipients. They are also used to justify claims (at least in the Catholic Church) that charity should take the form of goods - dry rations; cooked meals; perhaps housing – rather than cash which the recipients might spend in dubious and irresponsible ways.

The result is a form of conditionality, donors (and the organisations through which they give) in effect demanding certain forms of behaviour and conduct amongst the recipients. In this sense charitable donations tend to become a form of social control, encouraging particular ways of behaving and particular forms of religiosity. The intended outcome of organised charity is to elicit specific moral dispositions amongst both givers and receivers thus ensuring that charitable work reinforces and supports a particular view of community and religious life. To some extent this involves an intensification of dependency, the poor and the marginal being beholden to charitable donors.

Yet whilst charity in Colombo does work in a somewhat conservative fashion reinforcing existing forms of exploitation and inequality, there is also a certain tension as to whether charity should be used simply to provide assistance to the poor, or whether it should encourage 'self-reliance' and 'empowerment'. Whilst most middle-class givers see charitable donations as hand-outs to the poor, there are also more radical elements which argue that charitable donations should be used to encourage the development of an entrepreneurial spirit amongst the urban and rural poor. For instance, a frequent comment amongst Muslims is that 'a poor Muslim cannot be a good Muslim': that *zaqat* and *sadaqah* are means through which all Sri Lankan Muslims can escape poverty. There are even elements which argue that charity should be used to encourage a radical transformation of society to undermine those structures which lead to poverty and marginality. These are few and find it extremely difficult to find donors.

More generally, although religious motives are seen as central to charitable activity, the boundary between 'charity' and 'patronage', between the anonymous and the personalised, is unclear and porous. Even today, the Catholic Church is to a certain extent a patronage organisation distributing largesse to its followers. Individuals use their charitable donations not only to ensure the loyalties of recipients but also to make claims to status and respect. More generally, there has been a steady increase over recent years in the number of charitable foundations established by politicians as means of

making moral statements about themselves but also of gaining a following, a retinue of supporters. And despite their frequent denials, it is clear that part of the deal is political support. Here altruism and self-interest become intertwined and any simple opposition between the two is impossible to sustain.

This is particularly noticeable in the context of 'corporate philanthropy': the charitable activities of private sector companies, both international and local. Here, philanthropy becomes enmeshed in the language of corporate social responsibility (CSR). This is particularly true of international companies active in Sri Lanka where local programmes are designed under the auspices of the parent companies' strategic objectives. But although the language may stress sustainability and even empowerment, in practice the corporate activities of these internationally based companies rarely moves beyond the trite 'schoolbooks and bicycles' approach. What is labelled as CSR is in practice little more than hand-outs to the companies' customers.

The situation amongst Sri Lankan private sector companies is rather different, in large measure because of the political context in which they are working. Historically their philanthropic activities have very much been an extension of the owners' particular interests. But increasingly strident Sinhala Buddhist nationalism has made it more difficult for some organisations to do business in Colombo, especially Muslims. The result has been that various private and public companies are responding by engaging in different forms of 'philanthrocapitalism' – perhaps better labelled 'philanthronationalism'. Of the companies we have worked with, we have identified four kinds of approaches that we define as: (1) 'collusive,' where projects are conducted in direct partnership with government agencies, including the Army, and seek to engender specific nationalist functions and goals; (2) 'placatory,' where projects display overtly nationalist commitments in the face of antinationalist/anti-patriotic suspicions and so attempt to appease nationalists' fears; (3) 'reactive,' where projects are launched with the intention of relieving specific nationalist threats; and (4) 'passive,' where projects pay lip service to nationalist sentiments but have no explicit nationalist objectives.

Implications for development

As I stressed at the beginning of this paper, the research was development orientated. The objective was to determine what could be learnt from the Colombo situation and through this have some impact on how development agencies might conceptualise the role that indigenous charity and philanthropy might play in the development process. And there were some negative conclusions:

- Clearly it would be a mistake to over-estimate the potential of indigenous charity to be a major player in financing development initiatives. The logics and motives behind charitable activities are frequently inimical to effective development interventions.
- Equally clearly, whilst one can recognise the importance and scale of faith-based organisations, there is a danger in such contexts as Sri Lanka that charitable activities associated with such organisations can reinforce existing ethnic and confessional divisions. It would be naïve to see them as neutral players in the development process.
- Whilst the fragmentation of charitable activities in Sri Lanka is clearly a drag on effectiveness, there is a major danger that successful charities (or combinations of charities) may be seen as a threat to the state. There is also the danger that individual politicians and parties may attempt to make charitable organisations subservient to their interests.

At the same time, our work in Colombo did indicate some potentially promising areas which could be further explored:

- Charity in Colombo plays a major role in providing forms of social protection in education, food, health and housing. There are problems, in particular the inherently conservative nature of such interventions, the lack of coordination and the professional weaknesses of the charities involved. But at the same time there is space for more transformative approaches to social protection through providing training and assistance to those involved.
- The 'philanthrocapitalist' sector had great potential. Despite some obvious problems there was a clear awareness in this sector that their activities could and should become more developmentally aware and effective.

These conclusions were elaborated in three 'policy notes' which we disseminated widely both in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.[7] Part of our brief was to maximise the impact that our work might have and so Tom and I visited organisations, distributed policy notes and made presentations not only in Sri Lanka but also in Europe, the USA, and Asia to a wide range of bodies including the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the EC and various UN agencies. This was perhaps the most difficult component of the work. Doing the research was relatively easy; attempting to influence policy makers was much more difficult. Perhaps our greatest success was with the ADB who already were developing interests in social protection and in the role that

[7] These covered 'The potential of charity for development', 'Corporate responsibility, philanthropy and development', and 'Charity and social protection'. They were available at http://www.sussex.ac.uk/global/research/globalinsights

private sector organisations could play. Well after the conclusion of this stage of the project, FAO began to show interest in using the research as the basis for exploring cooperative ventures with private sector organisations.[8]

Research into Practice

If the project had finished at that point then in developmental terms impact would have been minimal, or at least would have been very difficult to identify. However, there was then a call under the 'Knowledge Exchange Proposals' scheme for proposals to maximise impact from projects funded by the Poverty Alleviation programme, and a subsequent call under 'Impact and Engagement', both again funded by ESRC/DFID. Our applications under both these schemes were successful and this allowed us, particularly Tom and Sarah, to extend our efforts in realising the practical aspects of our research through two 'successor' projects.

From our earlier work, there seemed to be two areas of potential interest: social protection and corporate philanthropy. In the end we concentrated on the latter because the evidence indicated that here there were both available resources and an interest on the part of the corporate sector to improve the effectiveness of their activities, whilst involvement in social protection raised a series of practical issues which would make work complex. It also reflected a shift in the focus of our practical work away from a general interest in charity and philanthropy towards corporate social responsibility which could be seen as one manifestation of philanthropy in action.

The first of these successor projects had two objectives:

- To establish learning, training, and development sessions for individuals, groups, and organisations involved in corporate philanthropy, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and toolkits necessary to embed more effective, transparent, and representative processes and stakeholder relationships into strategic plans and day to day operations.
- To run a pilot community development project in Colombo involving collaboration between corporate philanthropists, civil society organisations, and international organisations, during which the potential and scope of such partnerships for knowledge transfer and developmental impact could be evaluated.

[8] Rather bizarrely, the agency which showed least interest in the results of the research was DFID – who had funded it! This may have been related to the decline in interest in the 'big society'.

Whilst the previous project had been primarily a matter of research, this stage of our activities was directed towards practical impact and so we worked with different partners:

- CSR Lanka, which is the umbrella body for private sector organisations involved in work relating to corporate social responsibility in Sri Lanka.
- Clarity consultants, a UK-based organisation with experience in setting up and running training sessions.
- Third Wave consulting, a company providing facilitating services.

All together over 130 people attended the seven training workshops put on by the project (our target was 105). These came from a wide range of organisations: private and state sector companies; charities involved in practical activities; INGOs; various aid agencies. Although most participants were Colombo based, we also attracted participants from as far away as Jaffna. In addition, in response to a request from the Asian Development Bank's Colombo office, we put on a planning, monitoring and evaluation workshop for 35 participants.

A central element in these workshops was a training manual, "The Colombo Workshops Handbook". This was distributed to all participants as a hard copy whilst it was also made available online in English, Sinhala and Tamil. It provides a basic 'toolkit' for charities, foundations, and companies, as well as a template for creating collaborations between these different actors. Demand for this handbook unfortunately exceeded our available resources. As well as providing training the workshops also provided an arena for networking and this seems to have been remarkably successful, at least insofar as informal reports can be trusted.

The key exercise in these workshops was to design proposals for potential cooperative ventures between funders and organisations working in development. These produced a wide range of proposals, some atrocious; some very good. The most promising of these involved bringing together charitable organisations in the war-affected north of the country with various philanthropic institutions based in Colombo and elsewhere to develop a project focusing on the provision of cheap latrines designed to meet the needs of limbless victims of the civil war.

The second successor project was in some ways more ambitious – although it did not achieve all its objectives. One element involved building on the interest shown by participants from northern Sri Lanka in our earlier workshops. This led, first, to a series of workshops on CSR and the potential of philanthropic activities in encouraging development in the north, and secondly, work with the Jaffna Business Managers' Forum who took over responsibility for the initiative. A second element was a series of bespoke

workshops held in Colombo and directed towards particular economic sectors with the aim of showing how CSR interventions could be transformative for the lives of beneficiaries as well as being in line with corporate policies and objectives. Thirdly, the project worked with CSR Lanka to support a National Forum in which issues concerning the relationship between philanthropy and development could be addressed within the complex and inter-related worlds of the private and public sectors as well as civil society.

Where the project was less successful was in two other areas. One element had envisaged the creation of an on-line forum within which relevant issues could be discussed and links between potential benefactors and beneficiaries created. But we then found that such a forum already existed! The second was to scale up the work done in Sri Lanka to a wider Asian context. Despite a series of meetings this initiative failed basically due to a lack of momentum amongst potential partners.

Conclusion

As I indicated in the introduction, this project in many ways represents an increasingly common form of funding in the UK, and probably elsewhere. The object of the funder is 'impact', in this case on poverty, and the project as a whole has to be oriented towards this objective. Intellectual justification and outputs are, at least in the eyes of the funder, secondary to these pragmatic objectives and thus a considerable amount of the overall budget has to be devoted to exploring 'impact pathways' and ensuring 'impact' in terms of inducing or encouraging change. 'Dissemination', which used to be key, is now a minor component of the more general attempt at producing "impact". These impacts may be changes in policies, but more importantly in this case the impact was ultimately conceived of in terms of the lives of the poor: that somehow project activities would generate knowledge and understandings which would alleviate poverty. This of course was very wishful thinking.

As an academic exercise, the project has had some impact, at least in terms of publications. And of course, in the longer run there may well be more publications, for instance those arising from Tom and Sarah's work in urban Colombo. But how precisely the impact could be measured is to me unclear – presumably the best that could be done is by counting the number of citations although even here the ways in which citations are collected, aggregated and analysed works against a project as distinct from an individual being the unit of analysis. If this project had been simply an academic exercise, without the developmental overtones, then overall it has been fairly successful at least in terms of outputs and dissemination. At the same time, if the funding had been different without the 'developmental impact' rationale, I wonder if our field research would have taken a different form and addressed more academic and intellectual issues in greater detail.

Turning to 'developmental impact', the picture is equally unclear. One element, the workshops run by Tom and Sarah, were extremely popular and very well received. Presumably they had some impact on ways of thinking and perhaps led to changes in charity-related activities which had some long-term impact on poverty. More specifically, the project provided assistance to CSR Lanka at a point when their original grant from USAID had been withdrawn owing to government intervention and gave CSR a new lease of life. This was perhaps the greatest success of the project in terms of 'impact'.

In sum, the workshops went well beyond simple dissemination and contributed to 'capacity building' amongst Sri Lankan organisations. But what is perhaps debatable is how far the workshops built directly on the earlier research supported by the project and how far they were based on much wider general thinking about CSR which owed little to the experience of the research itself. Certainly, the research did provide some basic information which was used in the workshops, supplied a context and ensured that the workshops were relevant to local interests and needs. This was probably more marked in the second set of workshops than in the original ones.

More generally, what our experience shows are the role shifts in anthropological research that the impact agenda implies and requires. If impact is to be anything more than increasingly elaborate dissemination, unless the anthropologists involved happen already to have consultancy experience, they will have to accept big changes in the way they work. We could probably have been more successful in terms of impact if we had changed our starting aims and research questions – that is, set ourselves up as anthropologists for hire – and aspired to publish in different kinds of journals. The fact that one of us already had extensive experience in working for development agencies and another in training for the private sector made things easier, but even so there was still a tension between the academic and the practical aspects of the project.

The limitations we faced indicate that 'anthropologists' and 'policy makers' have very different sets of interests, starting points and end points. Whether some meeting point or accommodation can be arrived at is an open question. At the global level, to be honest there is very little sign of any 'impact' of our project in terms of changes in the approach adopted by development agencies, and this is despite considerable efforts being made to disseminate our findings and follow them up with visits and presentations to the major agencies. Certainly, there is some anecdotal evidence that the lessons learnt from our research has had some limited effect, but there is no systematic evidence that agencies have been willing to take local-level philanthropy more seriously.

The general lack of interest on the part of the EU, World Bank and others is instructive. The impact agenda assumes a population of 'research

users' just waiting for an anthropologist to call but there seems to have been little thought given to whether they actually want what anthropologists have to offer. This I suggest is the case in most development-driven research: neither party is really sure what the other wants. From the agencies' point of view, there is a recognition that 'social analysis' is important – but how to integrate it sensibly into their activities remains unclear.

From the anthropologists' point of view the tendency is to pay lip service to 'developmental impact ', but to carry on as normal doing academic research. In this case it is clear that our funders were satisfied with what we were doing – if not the two secondary grants would not have been forthcoming (although there is a nagging doubt that perhaps our competitors were simply incompetent). And this perhaps is perhaps where the next research initiative should be focused: how to integrate the academic and the practical.

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