

The Development of Local Philanthropy and Management of Foundation Resources

Sujeewan Perera, Fellow, International Fellows Program ~ 2003

Abstract

Sujeewan Perera examines the question of how a secular culture of giving might be developed in Sri Lanka, a country where civil society is weak, poverty extensive, and social unrest an ongoing problem. As in many countries, Sri Lanka's third sector is heavily reliant on foreign donors, the level of professional development is often low, local resources are limited, and public confidence in NGOs is often lacking. Although there is a strong tradition of religious philanthropy, little of this giving currently finds its way into social development programs.

Within this framework, Mr. Perera suggests several initiatives to foster a secular philanthropic culture in Sri Lanka. His suggestions include efforts to increase corporate social responsibility, promote diaspora philanthropy, introduce tax reforms, and develop more institutions to channel giving to philanthropic ends, including community foundations. He also notes that it may be possible to divert a portion of Sri Lankan remittances from the Middle East into social causes. First steps would be to collect and publicize stories of successful projects, and to identify and nurture potential donors. Necessary steps for creating a community foundation are also detailed, from managerial training to building a board and setting up different kinds of funds. Transparency should be stringently maintained to build trust, and Sri Lankan NGOs should create a self-regulatory authority to promote enhanced accountability within the sector.

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