

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE ROLE FOR INGOs IN DEMOCRATIC GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Judith Grummon Nelson

Consultant to Not-for-Profit Organizations, Washington, DC, USA

Keywords: International Nongovernmental Organizations, Nongovernmental Organizations, Governance, Resource Development, Communications and Advocacy, Planning, Evaluation

Contents

1. Introduction
 2. The Historical Roots of the INGO Movement
 - 2.1 The Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries
 - 2.2 From Post-war Assistance to Aid to the Developing World
 3. Twenty-first Century INGOs: New Issues, New Rationales, New Strategies
 4. Structures and Strategies for Improving Governance and Management of INGOs and NGOs
 - 4.1 Optimal Structural Frameworks
 - 4.1.1 Government Legislation and Regulations
 - 4.1.2 Sound Structures
 - 4.2 Strategies: Flexibility Matched with Strength
 5. Conclusions
- Appendix
Glossary
Bibliography
Biographical Sketch

Summary

The movement to strengthen the role of national and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs, INGOs) in the formation of national and international public policy had its roots in the development of international humanitarian, peace-seeking, and other organizations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The number and diversity of INGOs increased significantly in the aftermath of the Second World War, as they gradually expanded humanitarian relief to include social and economic reform in the developing world. By the start of the third millennium, an increasing number of INGOs had adopted ambitious goals and sought greater resources to affect national and international public and private sector decision making. Dependent on national government policies for consummation of their goals, INGOs encouraged and sometimes coordinated the activities of NGOs in western countries and in the developing world. To resolve the major global issues, which are the focus of the UN and other IGOs, the components of a nascent global civil society represented by these INGOs and NGOs need institutional strength, financial integrity, and sustainability, as well as the ability to use resources such as the latest communications technology. Their quest for success in affecting increasingly complex issue areas inevitably led to the

development of professional help programs. The basic requirements for strengthening organizations are suggested and examples provided.

1. Introduction

From earliest recorded times, the need for stable societies that would respond effectively to basic human needs has become increasingly evident. While early governing bodies were able to provide some protection against famine and other disasters, their efforts frequently fell short. With the development of the industrial revolution came displaced populations and the ill-effects of colonialism. While the means for ameliorating disasters improved, resources were not sufficient to care for victims of war, epidemics, and an assortment of other crises.

The voluntary organizations, which responded to these and other needs, began as service providers and developed over time into advocacy groups and components of a developing global civil society. As their interests extended around the globe in response to wars and the dangers of epidemics of cholera and other communicable diseases, a new international sector developed to address unsolved global social, cultural, and economic problems.

By the beginning of the new millennium, most countries in the world had some form of nongovernmental movement; and many NGOs were coordinating or affiliating in some way with a burgeoning INGO sector. Technological advances in communication have brought fresh attention to the impact of international economic and social problems on individual countries. The Internet has played a large role in providing information and encouragement to national groups worldwide, even in the least developed countries. The impact of civil societies within countries, particularly democracies or those in transition to free economies and democratic governance, grew noticeably.

This article is concerned with NGOs which support the peaceful resolution of international, religious, and ethnic conflicts; universal access to improved education, health, and economic development; greater economic and social justice; and the strengthening of democratic political institutions. These organizations may have differing and even competitive viewpoints and their activities may overlap. In any case, in the new millennium they have taken on an increasingly larger role at the local, national, and international level to influence the goals of public policy.

Increasingly complex crises strengthened organizations that could expand resources and programs to meet needs and intensify efforts to complement national and international government responses. A significantly large number of NGOs and INGOs are seeking help as they try to upgrade the institutional and financial capacities of their organizations. Most choose to abide by national legal constraints, yet many confront unfriendly, if not hostile, cultural and social mores. Within such constraints, their needs are nevertheless similar. Methods that have been tested in all parts of the world to increase their influence in their respective issue areas are described below. Ways are suggested to improve organizational structure and practices to maximize resources and to use new methods and theory.

2. The Historical Roots of the INGO Movement

2.1 The Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Social and humanitarian concerns have been a special focus of religions since very early times. That charity would be rewarded after death, in an afterlife, was an Egyptian concept several centuries before Christ. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the roots of the contemporary INGO nonprofit community were planted and nurtured, for the most part in developed, democratic countries. In response to pressing needs for national programs and services in other parts of the world, many national NGOs became international in scope. The INGO movement responded to urgent economic, social, and humanitarian issues exacerbated by armed conflict, natural disasters, communicable diseases, and an industrial revolution, which brought with it wealth to the few and poverty and slums to the many. Humanitarian concerns for displaced populations and victims of war stimulated the formation of voluntary organizations. Examples include the movement to improve public health in response to epidemics (see *A Global Approach to Disease: Coordinating through the World Health Organization*), to end the slave trade and slavery in the early 1800s, to help meet refugee needs in time of war, and poverty and homelessness in times of peace. In addition, many organizations formed to achieve such goals as improving the status of professional groups and encouraging international cooperation in technical areas such as navigation and communications.

The International Red Cross was founded in 1863, as a reaction to the bloody battle at Solferino, 4 years before. The conflict between the French and Sardinians on the one hand, and the Austrians on the other, had left a large number of wounded and sick without care. Its founders supported the Geneva Convention, which set standards for more humane treatment of prisoners of war and other victims. The International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent now has affiliates in almost every country. They are funded by membership fees and government grants. The Religious Society of Friends sought to end slavery and improve conditions in prisons, among other areas of interest. The American Friends Service Committee was formed in 1917 to provide relief to refugees and reconstruction of war-damaged areas. The Salvation Army got its start in England in 1865. A religious denomination as well as an international nonsectarian Christian organization, its Corps is organized along military lines and provides social services throughout the world.

By the end of the nineteenth century, several groups increased attempts to raise funds. The Young Men's Christian Association began the practice of intensive, short-term fund-raising drives, emphasizing collections from commercial enterprises. Coordination among charitable groups for both fund-raising and service activities began during, and intensified after the First World War. Community Chests and joint appeals such as the United Way were developed to maximize financial resources for a large number of nonprofits and to reduce competition among them. Accompanying this development has been a trend toward projecting future needs and using long-term planning to prepare to anticipate social and humanitarian needs and perhaps prevent their occurrence.

2.2 From Post-war Assistance to Aid to the Developing World

In its 1999 Yearbook, the Union of International Associations listed over 30 000 international organizations. Most of these are nongovernmental and show a substantial increase in numbers as well as issues of concern, since the Union began tracking international organizations from its headquarters in Brussels in 1910. The major categories of issues for NGOs and INGOs underscore the social, political, and economic changes, which occurred in the second half of the twentieth century:

- social and humanitarian problems, particularly those that followed wars and economic development: hunger, disease, poverty, and over-population;
- economic issues including regulation of trade, currency and financial transactions, and natural resource protection through sustainable development;
- international justice and the recognition of universal human rights for women, and ethnic, religious, and other minorities, and
- regional and global peace and security through peaceful settlement of disputes, peacekeeping, and control of weaponry.

The voluntary groups, which developed over a century and a half, gradually adapted to new issues and new strategies. The impact of the Second World War had brought horrendous refugee problems to Europe and elsewhere. Immigrants to new countries were often threatened with being deported, forbidden to work, or imprisoned. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) coped with aid to refugees after the Second World War and, when problems continued into the later decades of the century, was subsequently replaced by the International Refugee Organization. Dislocations of large numbers of people continued throughout the post-Second World War period in all parts of the world. The post-colonial region of Africa provides examples of savage battles to eradicate ethnic groups and widespread disease and famine in their wake. The artificial boundaries of new nations cut across tribal areas, causing fierce fighting among indigenous people. It is estimated that in the final year of the millennium there were over 16 million international refugees.

The private relief agencies which first helped in the aftermath of the Second World War include Oxfam, CARE, and Catholic Relief Services, among others. Oxfam, the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, is a privately funded British-based agency offering relief and development services to communities throughout the world. Its roots are in the Second World War, when its founders went to the rescue of starving children in Greece. Following a trend to help countries help themselves to improve food availability and distribution, Oxfam provided training in new methods of soil conservation and land management in developing regions. It circulated information as well on good nutrition in an effort to make, eventually, famine and other disaster relief less necessary.

CARE, the acronym for Cooperative American Relief, became famous for the food packages it made available to people in danger of starvation in the war devastated areas of Europe. It currently provides aid to 35 countries. Formed at the end of the Second World War, by US and Canadian relief groups to care for war victims, it later set up programs in the developing countries. It works through host governments, emphasizing the need for sharing costs and for self-help programs. It has a number of projects including soil conservation, improved nutrition and land management. A branch, the

Medical International Cooperation Organization (MEDICO) which was founded in 1958, provides training for health care workers in remote rural areas.

Another organization formed during the Second World War, Catholic Relief Services, followed the trend of extending its initial programs to humanitarian relief in the developing world, combining direct aid with indirect assistance to economic development. The group Medecins sans Frontieres (Doctors without Borders) asked aid organizations to add justice and human rights protection to humanitarian aid in the face of the Rwanda massacres by extremist groups which dislocated millions of people and caused a very large number of deaths. In 1995, an International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was established in Tanzania to identify those responsible for the genocide. The Catholic Relief Services and other groups began to try to bridge gaps among diverse groups and to become more involved in advocacy on economic, political, and structural issues.

-
-
-

TO ACCESS ALL THE 12 PAGES OF THIS CHAPTER,
Visit: <http://www.eolss.net/Eolss-sampleAllChapter.aspx>

Bibliography

Aall P., Miltenberger D., and Weiss T. G. (2000). *Guide To IGOs, NGOs, and the Military in Peace and Relief Operations*, 300 pp. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace. [A concise, well structured guide to the key actors in peace-building and relief to distressed populations written by three top experts in their respective fields.]

Edwards M. and Hulme D., eds. (1996). *Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World*, 285 pp. Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press. [Provides a comprehensive review of the latest developments in the global voluntary sector; includes case studies.]

Fisher J. (1998). *Nongovernmental Organizations and the Political Development of the Third World*, 234 pp. Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press. [Analyzes the reciprocal impacts of government and nongovernmental organizations; includes a discussion of the NGO role in the civil society.]

Lakey B., Lakey G., Napier R., and Robinson J. (1995). *Grassroots and Nonprofit Leadership: A Guide for Organizations in Changing Times*, 215 pp. Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers. [Explores in detail the special needs of grassroots organizations, including the need to adjust to developing situations in critical issue areas.]

Lindenberg M. and Bryant C. (2001). *Going Global: International Relief and Development NGOs in Transition*, West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.

National Center for Nonprofit Boards. 1828 L Street, NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20036-5104 website: www.ncnb.org/lists [Publications and videos to increase the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations by strengthening their boards of directors, plus annual international leadership conference in Washington. The Center has a global program, which has provided workshops for NGOs in their home countries and two-week training courses for 20 international fellows twice a year in Washington.]

Nelson J. G. (1995). *Six Keys to Recruiting, Orienting, and Involving Nonprofit Board Members*, 62 pp. Washington, DC: National Center for Nonprofit Boards.

Nelson J. G. (2001). *Moving Forward and Staying Afloat: Institutional Advancement and Financial Sustainability for Not-for-profit Organizations*, 90 pp. Washington, DC: Redding Press. [Both of these publications identify practical tools and strategies to help NGOs achieve their missions.]

Simmons P. J. (1998). Learning to live with NGOs. *Foreign Policy Fall*, Vol. 77; 82–96. [A concise review of the need for policy-makers in the public and private sector to respond to NGOs—includes bibliography.]

Weiss T. G. and Gordenker L., eds. (1996). *NGOs, the UN, Global Governance*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner. [A theoretical framework on NGO relations with the UN system is followed by contributions from a UN official, scholars and NGO participants that focus on an array of global issues and several controversial dimensions of escalating NGO involvement in the UN system.]

Yearbook of International Organizations (1999/2000 edn.). Brussels: Union of International Associations. [A vast storehouse of information on international organizations. Vol. 1, of four volumes, provides detailed profiles of 9844 organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, and a keyword index. Included are names of principal executive officers, addresses of all offices, telephone numbers, history, goals, structure, inter-organizational links, activities, publications, and membership by country.]

Biographical Sketch

Judith Grummon Nelson is a consultant to NGOs and INGOs, and a Certified Fund Raising Executive by the National Society of Fund Raising Executives (US). She has presented and facilitated seminars and training sessions for not-for-profit organizations in the US and in Brazil, Egypt, Estonia, Guam, Lithuania, Romania, Saipan, and Thailand. She has presented and facilitated seminars and training sessions in the US for NGO leaders from Croatia and India and many other countries. She studied at Radcliffe College, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and received a B.A *magna cum laude* from the School of International Service at American University in Washington, DC.