An NGO Training Guide for Peace Corps Volunteers

NGO GUIDE

Peace Corps
2003

Acknowledgments

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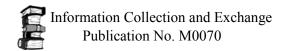
Peace Corps

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for

Peace Corps Volunteers

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NGO GUIDE

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Peace Corps Volunteers

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

The number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) is growing at a tremendous rate around the world, especially in developing and emerging nations. Working with indigenous NGOs has become increasingly popular in international development circles. In an ideal situation, these indigenous organizations:

1. Encourage grass-roots participation;

2. Build local capacity, and

3. Effectively use resources to provide their clients with needed services.

Unfortunately, numerous NGOs start up and then fail because the passion of the founder is not supported by a sustainable organization. There are countless examples of worthwhile projects that failed because steps were not taken to build an infrastructure to support service growth. Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) can make a difference by helping promising NGOs develop the organizational strength required to achieve their missions.

Volunteers in all sectors are working with NGOs. NGOs are citizens' organizations with missions to improve people's lives.

In the United States, NGOs are known as nonprofit or not-for-profit organizations. Although most Volunteers are familiar with the types of programs NGOs provide, from the Girl Scouts to the Salvation Army to the World Wildlife Fund, they have not worked on a day-to-day basis in NGO operations. By the time you complete *An NGO Training Guide for Peace Corps Volunteers* you will have the knowledge, tools, and techniques to work with an NGO's staff, board of directors, clients, and donors to build the organization's capacity.

NGOs are not cure-alls for all the problems in the field of development. But they do some things very well, and with well-aimed support an NGO could do even more to help local groups move from powerlessness and isolation to self–help and mobilization. Picture American life without the Red Cross or the Salvation Army. When you consider the impact of the wide-ranging services they provide, it is difficult to envision these organizations as one-room, start-up NGOs that someone believed in before we were born.

NGOs spring into being when there is a need in a society that is not being met through private business or government intervention, as evidenced by the founding of the Red Cross or the Salvation Army. An NGO can continue to exist after it has met a certain need, but it will not survive without the leadership to successfully manage and adapt to the changing societal, economic, and political pressures that influence its efforts.

As you approach your work with NGOs, whether you walk into a small, ill-equipped start-up or an organized growing concern, you will be surprised at how many skills you already possess that are useful in working with an NGO.

An NGO Training Guide for Peace Corps Volunteers contains five modules.

Module 1   Looks at how NGOs contribute to a civil society and the Volunteer's role in working with an NGO.

Module 2   Discusses the advantages of Appreciative Inquiry as an approach for NGO development.

Module 3   Presents the NGO Capacity Profile, a tool used to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of an NGO and review the functional components of these organizations.

Module 4   Reviews two skills that a Volunteer needs to work with NGOs: facilitation and training.

Module 5   Explores the role of governance and planning in achieving a sustainable organization.

Each module in the series is similar to a travel guide. It provides an itinerary that leads you from one NGO site to the next. These self-directed modules allow flexibility in both the time spent and the opportunities to explore areas that interest you. Experiential activities, included in each module, are structured to encourage adapting what you know and topics discussed in the modules to the local NGO situation. To maximize learning, you are encouraged to share your observations, experiences, and conclusions with your fellow travelers—other training participants and Peace Corps trainers.

Travel guides often include sections on the local culture and some useful phrases of the local language. In *An NGO Training Guide for Peace Corps Volunteers* key terms are defined and space is provided to write the local language translation. Questions highlighting cross-cultural issues are incorporated into experiential activities.

How much you learn during your visit to the world of NGOs is up to you. If you observe carefully, interact with the local people, and are open to new experiences, it will be a rewarding experience. Volunteers want to learn about their host countries and to work with the citizens to improve their lives. As you journey through these NGO training materials, it is useful to have a journal to record your observations, experiences, and thoughts; a camera; and an open mind.

HOW TO USE *AN NGO TRAINING GUIDE FOR PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS*

Learning is not a spectator sport! To learn you must be actively involved. Your host community is a place for discovery, a place for observing, experiencing,

processing, and implementing your learnings. Even "what you think you know" needs to be reevaluated in your new cultural environment.

Throughout these five modules are activities to promote community interaction. Adults learn best through experience—the most relevant experiences are in communities similar to those where you will live during your Peace Corps service. Many activities include community observation, information gathering, and/or involvement.

Your technical expertise is nearly useless until you adapt and apply what you know to fit the local culture and you can share your knowledge and skills in the local language. At the beginning of each module is a list of objectives regarding knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

These learning objectives are provided for you to test yourself to determine if you can apply the ideas, skills, and attitudes presented in the module. After completing each module you should review the learning objectives to determine if you have understood the module contents and if you have mastered the knowledge, skills, and attitudes. You are reminded several times in each module to analyze what you know and what you are learning in the context of local conditions. Technical training is not complete without the integration of language and culture.

An NGO Training Guide Peace Corps Volunteers is designed for the self-directed adult learner. Self-directed does not mean you have to learn on your own, but rather that you take responsibility for mastering the knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Activities, case studies, and hands-on exercises are based on experiential learning methodology.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

An experience that activates the experiential learning cycle may come from your past, an activity in your host community, a simulation game, or a written case study in a module.

Reflection is a special kind of thinking—it is both active and controlled. You are only reflecting as long as you stick to the problem or task at hand. Reflection is the kind of thinking that looks for the reasons for believing one thing rather than another, the kind of thinking that asks questions. It aims at making sense out of an experience. Practice reflecting on your experience, imagine the possibilities, and consider alternative meanings.

Many Volunteers find keeping a journal encourages reflective thinking. Try writing in a journal every day for two or three weeks to determine if this works for you.

Socrates believed
that it is through this kind of thinking
that people shape their lives.
He felt people need to think about
what they do and why they do it,
about what they believe
and why they believe it.
He said that a day should never pass
without such questions
and that a life
without such questions
is not worth living.

— reprinted with permission from Boostrom, Robert, *Developing Creative and Critical Thinking: An Integrated Approach.* National Textbook Company, Lincolnwood, IL, USA. p. 4

During generalization, you expand on what you learned to fit new and different situations. Generalization is an especially relevant step in the experiential learning cycle for a Volunteer operating in a new and different country and culture.

The last step of the cycle, application, requires that you use what you have learned. As you apply your learnings, you generate new experiences and the experiential learning cycle begins again.

As a self-directed learner, you are responsible for:

- Thoughtfully reading the modules.

- Actively participating in the suggested activities.

- Engaging with people in your host community to learn about NGOs in the local environment.

- Integrating culture and language to better understand technical subject matter in the local context.

- Provocatively seeking additional information to fill in personal knowledge gaps.

- Keeping an open mind to different ideas and ways of doing things.

- Ensuring that the knowledge, skills, and attitude objectives are achieved.

A mind is like a parachute—only useful if it is open.

Enjoy your journey into the
exciting world of NGOs!

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TRAINER'S NOTES

INTRODUCTION

The role of the trainer: The trainer is responsible for facilitating the learners' understanding of nongovernmental organization (NGO) development by:

- Identifying opportunities and materials to enable learners to experience, observe, and gather information related to the activities and topics;

- Helping learners contextualize their experiences and observations based on the trainer's understanding of the local environment and culture;

- Encouraging learners to take an appreciative approach, looking for resources and strengths rather than problems and needs in their journey of discovery; and

- Facilitating the processes of reflection, generalization, planning, and application, using the trainer's technical, cross-cultural, and country-specific expertise.

How to use *An NGO Training Guide for Peace Corps Volunteers:* The modules are written for Peace Corps trainees and/or Volunteers who expect to work with NGOs through their primary assignment or in community outreach activities. These materials also should be useful for Peace Corps staff in understanding the development possibilities associated with NGOs. *An NGO Training Guide for Peace Corps Volunteers* can be adapted for indigenous NGO staff and local community development workers.

An NGO Training Guide for Peace Corps Volunteers will be used most often during Pre-Service Training (PST) and In-Service Training (IST). Because the modules are designed for the self-directed learner, they can be adapted to a center-based, a community-based, or a hybrid training model. Also, Volunteers can use them for self-study anytime during their Peace Corps service. Some sections can be used in NGO Counterpart trainings.

Although a training participant benefits from individual study, working with a small group is often more interesting and sharing ideas deepens understanding. Interaction with a knowledgeable skilled technical trainer is not essential, but highly desirable.

Trainer's Notes, continued

Writing training materials to fit every Peace Corps post and training situation is not possible. These modules are furnished electronically to facilitate making changes to better fit the local conditions, culture, and training model. We urge you to invest the time and effort to adapt *An NGO Training Guide for Peace Corps Volunteers*. Work with the post's programming and training staff to:

- Rewrite sections not applicable to local conditions;

- Add country-specific examples and graphics; and

- Adjust activities to your training situation.

Trainer's Notes are found at the end of each module. They include the following:

- **Overview** of the topics covered in the module/activities to explain the reason for including the topics.

- **Time** to complete the module/activities. You may need to adjust times to fit the training schedule.

- **Materials** that should be on hand before starting the module/activities.

- **Preparation** that should take place before beginning the module/activities.

- **Hints for debriefing the experience and processing the learnings** of the module/activities to assist trainers in guiding training participants through the reflection, generalization, and application steps of the experiential learning cycle. Through debriefing and processing the experience(s), a skilled trainer adds value to self-directed learning.

At the beginning of each module are knowledge, skills, and attitude objectives. The learning objectives are stated in behavioral terms and stress the application of learnings developed during the module. Application is the final step in the experiential learning cycle. Key terms, listed at the end of each module, include significant words and phrases defined as they are used in the module. Space is provided for the local language translation of each key term. Encourage training participants to seek help from the language staff in translating and learning the key terms.

At the end of each module are resources from the Peace Corps Information Collection and Exchange (ICE) catalog and from selected Internet sites. These readily available materials allow trainees and trainers to acquire additional information on topics covered in the module.

Continued

The following three books, available from ICE, are recommended for *An NGO Training Guide for Peace Corps Volunteers* trainers.

Methods for Development Work and Research: A Guide for Practitioners. Britha Mikkelson. (Sage Publications.) 1995. 269 pp. (ICE No. TR074)

Describes and analyzes different development research models, devoting special attention to the participatory approach, but also considering conventional and quantitative research methods that can complement this approach. Discusses the development issues that are being researched, with a separate chapter on poverty and gender analysis. Offers detailed information that can be useful in training field workers to do research.

The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry. Sue Annis Hammond. (Kodiak Consulting.) 1996. 61 pp. (ICE No. TR110)

Simple, practical explanation of Appreciative Inquiry and how to use it. Also includes useful information on project planning and nongovernmental organization development.

Training Trainers for Development—Conducting A Workshop on Participatory Training Techniques. CEDPA Training Manual Series Volume I, 1999. (ICE No.TR111)

[Distribution to Peace Corps In-Country Resource Centers Only]

Compilation of training activities that CEDPA has used in many programs to strengthen the training capacity of reproductive health and other types of development organizations. Manual prepares managers and trainers to conduct interactive, learner-centered training of trainers.

TRAINER'S NOTES

GUIDELINES FOR PLACING VOLUNTEERS WITH NGOS

Because the NGO environment differs from country to country and the Peace Corps' reasons for working with NGOs may also differ, posts need to write guidelines for working with NGOs that reflect the reality of the local situation. Post-specific NGO guidelines are useful in developing project strategies, selecting NGOs to work with, training Volunteers, and helping Volunteers understand their roles in working with NGOs. The information below is provided to assist programming and training staff in the development of post-specific guidelines for placing Volunteers with NGOs.

Increasingly, Volunteers are working with NGOs in their primary assignments or in community outreach activities. This is not surprising given the impact of NGOs in global development. In an article published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1998, Jessica T. Mathews reported "NGOs deliver more development assistance than the United Nations." Today, NGOs are working and making a difference in developing and redeveloping countries worldwide. They help formulate policy, change societal mores, and collaborate with counterpart agencies to form effective international coalitions, alliances, and partnerships. They have become local enablers, doing what governments and private industry cannot do.

No less impressive than the globalization of NGOs and the sheer number of voluntary associations is the bewildering variety of missions they serve—environmental awareness, community improvement, economic development, health education, recreation, social services, women's issues, and youth empowerment. Such organizations have taken the lead in organizing public concerns about environmental and ecological issues, whether at the local, national, or international level. Education, long seen as the exclusive domain of the state in most countries, has also grown increasingly open to independent initiatives. Many areas where NGO activity is increasing are the same areas served by Peace Corps' economic development, education, environment, health, and youth projects.

At Peace Corps' NGO workshops held in 1998, field staff requested guidelines for addressing a number of issues related to placing Volunteers with NGOs.

Guidelines for Placing Volunteers With NGOs, continued

NGO Volunteer placements are complicated by the diversity of NGOs; their role as social advocates; the lack of organizational structure and financial stability of NGOs most in need of Volunteer assistance; and the changing relationship of NGOs and government, together with the Volunteer's willingness to take on multiple tasks in assisting these community organizations.

The following guidelines respond to post staff requests and reflect discussions with program and training specialists, regional management, as well as field staff experienced in NGO Volunteer placements.

There is general agreement that where relationships with NGOs result in a mutual benefit—helping the NGO achieve its mission and enabling the Peace Corps to achieve its mission of "world peace and understanding" and its three goals—the following programming efforts should be encouraged and supported. The remainder of the guidelines discuss various factors to consider in deciding if a particular Peace Corps/NGO working relationship will benefit both organizations.

Definition of an NGO: The broad definition holds that every organization in society that is not part of government is an NGO. The narrow definition, generally used in the Peace Corps, refers to an NGO as a specific type of organization that is not part of government and that possesses the following four characteristics:

• Works with people to help them improve their social and economic situation and prospects;

• Was formed voluntarily;

• Is independent, controlled by those who have formed it or by management boards representing the organization's stakeholders; and

• Is not-for-profit; although NGOs engage in revenue-generating activities, the proceeds are used in pursuit of the organization's aims.

Not all organizations that call themselves NGOs meet these four criteria. Often, an NGO is in reality controlled by a parent body that is not an NGO. First, they may not have been organized voluntarily, and second, they may not be independent, because there is a controlling link between the organization and the parent body, which is not an NGO. These organizations include GONGOS *(*government-organized NGOs), QUANGOS (quasi-autonomous NGOs), BONGOS (business-organized NGOs), and FONGOS (funder-organized NGOs). Before collaborating with these types of organizations, it is necessary to assess not only the NGO but also the parent body.   Continued

Guidelines for Placing Volunteers With NGOs, continued

Host country government relations: Most country agreements are silent on the issue of the Peace Corps working with NGOs. Because collaborations between the Peace Corps and NGOs are neither approved nor disapproved in the country agreement, caution is warranted in establishing working relationships with NGOs. Peace Corps staff and Volunteers should be aware and considerate of the host country's policies regarding NGOs. Collaboration with NGOs opposing the government's policies could hinder the implementation of the Peace Corps' program. For example, political parties, often organized as NGOs, are not appropriate partner organizations.

NGO legislation and official procedures for the registration and public accountability of NGOs continue to evolve in most developing and redeveloping countries. Legislation and official procedures established by governments should, but do not always, enable the formation and operation of organizations that possess the four defining characteristics of NGOs. No matter how restrictive or impractical the laws of a country may seem, a Volunteer should never advise NGO colleagues or those forming a NGO to evade the law. During Pre-Service Training (PST), Volunteers need to become aware of the general status of NGO laws in their host country.

Cultural sensitivity: Many NGOs have been active in raising awareness of social issues. As guests in the host country, Peace Corps staff and Volunteers should be sensitive to the cultural and religious values of their hosts. There are times when Volunteers may be sympathetic to a cause that conflicts with the country's traditional social or religious values. In these cases, it is the role of the post staff to ensure that Volunteers collaborate with culturally appropriate NGOs.

The NGO's ethics: Some countries have no legal mechanisms for registering NGOs, whereas in other countries registration consists of paying a fee with no evaluation of the organization's moral practices. Thus, legal registration of an NGO is an inadequate indicator of the NGO's ethics. The objectives of an NGO should be based on the desire to advance and improve the human condition. They should be evident in:

- Respect for the rights, culture, and dignity of men and women served or affected by the organization's work;

- Allocation of all available resources to the task at hand;

- The organization's commitment to its mission and objectives;

- The involvement, whenever possible, of beneficiaries as partners;

Continued

Guidelines for Placing Volunteers With NGOs, continued

- Willingness to collaborate and network with other agencies on issues of mutual concern and interest rather than compete with them; and

- High ethical standards at both an organizational and personal level.

Assigning Volunteers to international NGOs: Several questions need to be answered in determining if a Volunteer should be assigned to an international organization:

1. Will the Volunteer take the job of a host country national this large organization could afford to hire?

2. Will the Volunteer be working directly with host country nationals and not expatriates?

3. Will the Volunteer be working outside the capital city to extend the international NGO's services to those who would not otherwise have access to these services?

4. Is this the most appropriate NGO assignment for the Volunteer?

It is tempting to assign Volunteers to international organizations that do good development work, provide a stable site, have Counterparts who speak English, and can afford to pay the Volunteer's housing. However, is this the most effective use of the Peace Corps' most valuable resource, Volunteers, in building local capacity?

Housing: If the local NGO is unable to provide housing for the Volunteer, the Volunteer can share assignments between two NGOs, or between an NGO and a school or government organization. Volunteers should be prepared for the fact that home stays may be required if the NGO is unable to provide housing.

The role of a Volunteer: Whether the Volunteer assists the NGO with organizational development or delivery of technical (environmental, health, educational, etc.) services or both, the role of a Volunteer working with an NGO is that of facilitator or catalyst, not NGO manager, expert consultant, or "doer." Volunteers should never sign documents on behalf of the NGO, speak for the NGO, or have discretionary use of NGO funds.

In their desire to get the job done, Volunteers sometimes act inappropriately and assume a decision-making role such as that of executive director or a voting member of the board of directors. Counterparts often cite Volunteers' "can-do

Guidelines for Placing Volunteers With NGOs, continued

attitude" and model volunteerism as the greatest attributes of a successful NGO Volunteer.

Volunteers as an access to funding: Often, Volunteers are requested by NGOs because of their perceived access to funding instead of their capacity-building potential. The expectation that a Volunteer will provide access to funding must be addressed during site development and clearly stated in any documents signed between the Peace Corps and the NGO. The expectations of the host agency should be that the Volunteer will provide training opportunities for Counterparts and other NGO staff, and assist the staff in learning how to research and prepare funding proposals. Volunteers, too, should have a clear understanding of Peace Corps philosophy of providing human rather than monetary resources. A joint work plan developed by the Volunteer and the organization will clarify the Volunteer's fundraising role.

Sustainability of the NGO: A Peace Corps project manager should place multiple generations of Volunteers with an NGO to achieve sustainability. Most NGOs are not built in two years. Capacity building takes time, and interventions should be linked to an NGO's phase of development. In general, NGOs need to develop capacity in the following areas before they are sustainable: leadership, institutional development, financial management, fundraising capacity, networking, and access to information.

NGO networking: Posts should look for opportunities to encourage NGO networks and organizations that provide services to support and strengthen the management and organizational capacities of NGOs. Volunteer/Counterpart training which includes the introduction of technology skills can prepare them to promote collaboration between local NGOs and access to information.

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Please discuss these guidelines with all of your Volunteers, since most will be involved to some extent with NGOs during their service. Any questions related to NGO placements can be discussed with your regional program and training advisor or with the program specialist for NGO development in the Center for Field Assistance and Applied Research.