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1969

Organization Manual for International Non-Profit Organizations

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In: *European Commission on Agriculture: Fifteenth conference of international organizations for the joint study of programmes and activities in the field of agriculture in Europe, Paris, France, 18-21 February 1969* Rome, FAO, pp. 3-7. ECA/10/15/69. Organization of a seminar for staff members of international non-governmental organizations. Reprinted in *International Associations* 21, May 1969, pp. 263-267. [[PDF version](#)] [[voir version française](#)]

Introduction

The Thirteenth Conference of International Organizations for the Joint Study of Programmes and Activities in the Field of Agriculture in Europe requested the Union of International Associations to prepare a draft manual on the structure and functioning of international non-governmental organizations. The publication of such a manual had been recommended by the Twelfth Conference.

A summary of the objectives and contents of a draft manual was prepared and submitted to nearly twenty international organizations. This note includes the major part of the draft together with some conclusions based on the comments received.

Purpose of Manual

a) Provide information and practical advice to aid officers and staff of non-governmental organizations. (NGOs) in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of their own organization and that of their national

members; stress to be laid on problems which arise in the organizations and how to solve them.

b) Clarify the importance of an efficient operational link between international organizations and their national member organizations as a precondition for practical coordinated action by NGOs. Clarify the operational context in which national and international NGOs function.

c) Emphasise the problems of international NGOs but show the interdependence of problems of INGOs at the national and international level.

d) Demonstrate that management techniques originated by the business community can be adapted to NGOs without destroying the special NGO quality.

e) Promote an interest in the management problems of NGOs attempting to provide a systematic treatment of the major problems of non-profit organization operation.

f) Stress that in management and organization problems NGOs, of whatever point of view or activity, have a common interest justifying a common approach.

g) Collect together, by including appropriate texts or bibliographic references, a sample of the available material already produced on different aspects of the operational problems of NGOs.

Presentation

a) The Manual would consist of a compendium of articles and original material. The texts would be obtained by selecting suitable articles for each section of the Manual from material that has already appeared in printed or stencilled form. Permission to republish the material would of course be obtained.

b) Possible sources of material are :

- international or national NGO literature;
- literature on management techniques and problems;
- specialist treatments of fields such as finance, legal status, etc.

c) Original material would be requested or prepared for sections on which no satisfactory published material was available.

d) Editorial comment would be included where appropriate to link the articles in different sections.

Form

A printed volume of some 130 pages.

Readers

Staff and officers of national and international NGOs, together with other persons interested in increasing the effectiveness of this group of organizations.

Proposed Contents

Preface

PART ONE :

Non-governmental, non-profit organizations (NGOs) - a survey :

1. Origins and development of NGOs.
2. Place/role/function in national and international society.
3. Types/classification of NGOs.

PART TWO :

Creation of an NGO ;

1. How/where/why/objectives/preliminary meetings.
2. Different organizational structures.
3. Types of membership systems and scaling of membership fees.
4. Voting systems.
5. Allocation of responsibilities to Secretariat/ Committee/Assembly.
6. Role of other internal bodies such as Commissions/Working Groups.
7. Statutes and legal status.

PART THREE :

The environment in which an NGO operates :

1. Legal restrictions (for the secretariat; for organization members).
2. Tax regulations (for the secretariat; for organization members).
3. Social restrictions (for the secretariat; for organization members).
4. Economic restrictions (for the secretariat; for organization members).
5. Relations of NGO with :
 - o government of country of secretariat and of national members;
 - o United Nations Secretariat and Information Offices;
 - o United Nations Specialized Agencies;
 - o ECOSOC and UNESCO NGO consultative committees;
 - o international and national NGO committees;
 - o other international and national NGOs;
 - o business community;
 - o international and national libraries/documentation centers;
 - o press and public.
6. Location of secretariat/rotation between members.

PART FOUR :

Officers.

1. Location of suitable officers.
2. Election and appointment procedures.
3. Rotation of office.
4. Distribution of responsibilities.
5. Paid or voluntary officers.
6. Honorary officers.

PART FIVE :

Staff and human relations problems.

1. Personnel/salaries/pensions.
2. Legal and fiscal status of foreign nationals in secretariat country.
3. Differences of national/political/social background/language.

PART SIX :

Finance :

1. Ordinary sources of income (member fees; publications; etc.)
2. Other sources of income (donations; fund raising; grants; loans; etc.)
3. Contract work for other bodies.

PART SEVEN :

Financial control and reporting :

1. Accounting in non-profit organizations.
2. Invoicing/subscriptions/bank accounts, etc.
3. Control of income and expenditure.
4. Financial reports/budgeting/audits; shortterm planning.

PART EIGHT :

Offices and equipment :

1. Offices and secretarial services/shared office services.
2. Office equipment/mechanization/computer service bureau.

PART NINE :

Day to day operations of secretariat :

1. External contacts to further organizations aims.
2. Internal contacts with members/officers.
3. Contacts with press and public.
4. Translation.

PART TEN :

Publications and dissemination of information.

1. Preparation and use of stencils.
2. Preparation and use of periodicals/newsletters.
3. Preparation and use of activity reports.
4. Preparation and use of meeting reports.
5. Preparation and use of survey reports.
6. Brochures/illustrated material/wall charts, etc.
7. Maintaining and using address lists/direct mail.

PART ELEVEN :

Organization and use of meetings and their results.

1. Committee meetings.
2. Seminars/symposia/working groups, etc.
3. General assemblies/congresses.
4. Exhibitions.

PART TWELVE :

Collaboration with other NGOs.

1. NGOs based in the same country.
2. NGOs with similar interests and programmes.
3. International NGO committees.

PART THIRTEEN :

Special activities :

1. Campaigns/special celebration days.
2. Contracts.
3. Organization of lobbies/pressure groups.

PART FOURTEEN :

Evaluation of organization and its programme.

1. Surveys of result of organization activity.
2. Member satisfaction.
3. Administrative and operational efficiency.
4. Effectiveness of organization/long-term planning.

PART FIFTEEN :

Major policy decisions:

1. Geographical diversification of membership/membership campaigns.
2. Adaptation of organization aims to new trends in society.
3. Use of advertising.
4. Changes in membership qualifications/new types of membership.
5. Modification of statutes.

PART SIXTEEN :

Dissolution of organization.

PART SEVENTEEN :

Statistics, graphs tables of NGO activity and characteristics.

PART EIGHTEEN :

References. Index.

Conclusions arising from comments received on the enclosed proposed Manual contents

The major conclusions were :

- general support for the idea of producing such a Manual;
- some concrete suggestions or proposals for suitable articles or other material;
- some organizations were able to send copies of manuals prepared as a guide to their national member organizations which in fact covered a selection of the topics suggested in the proposal;
- some hesitation about whether the contents could be adequately covered in the proposed number of pages.

In order to prepare the manual, therefore, a certain amount of time will have to be spent scanning published journal material. (A library specializing in this area is prepared to co-operate on this phase).

The articles will then have to be grouped under the contents headings and reviewed by a panel. (A number of organizations agreed to co-operate at the review stage).

With regard to the reservations on the length of the manual, these appear to have arisen because the draft did not make clear that the manual was merely supposed to be a practical guide in note form and not a detailed original study. Some headings can possibly be covered in a few lines with references to more comprehensive studies. Basically the volume is intended as an introduction with practical suggestions to be used by persons faced with the problem of having to operate an international organization secretariat.

It is difficult to determine to what extent such a manual would be self-supporting if it was produced for sale. Clearly it would be advisable to include material applicable to national organizations and showing them the problems of international organization operation to facilitate the co-ordination of national and international programmes. This would considerably increase the potential number of organizations interested in the manual. A possible solution would be to produce the first version of the manual in stencilled form and only produce a printed version as a second edition if the demand was sufficient.

INVITATION

Following the recommendation of the 15th Conference that the Union of International Associations should prepare and publish this Manual as soon as possible, the UAI would like to thank any international organizations which sends :

1. their remarks concerning the draft contents;
2. any texts or documents which they themselves have prepared on one or more of the subjects mentioned in the report published above;
3. any texts or documents which they have found to be a useful guide to problems under any of the headings in the report.



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