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How to Start and Build a Successful NGO: From Developing a Vision to Implementing Your Fundraising Strategy



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Act for Development NGO

Le document aborde les principales étapes à suivre de la création jusqu'à la pérennisation d'une ONG. Il propose par ailleurs des astuces pour bien gérer une ONG. Il constitue de ce fait un guide pour les ONG dans le cadre des différentes activités qu'elles voudront mener.

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1. Understanding the basics of an NGO

Over the past few decades NGOs have gained significant popularity as the third pillar of development and have played a key role in providing social, economic and environmental services to the marginalized.

Growth of NGOs as providers of essential services and key players in policy reforms has been a global phenomenon. NGOs have worked very effectively in areas where both government and private players have failed miserably, this ability of NGOs to work in the most fragile and backward places has been recognized and applauded by both national and international entities.

NGOs play an important role in pushing several social agendas both at National and International level. These organizations not only implement action oriented programs at grass root levels, but also advocate socially relevant procedures and protocols globally. Over the years, NGOs have established themselves as important institutions that tackle issues related to the poorest sections of the society. NGOs undertake a wide array of activities, including policy advocacy on international affairs, environment protection, delivering healthcare, women empowerment, economic development, and many other developmental projects.

Understanding the basics of NGO

Seeing the multiplicity of NGOs, it would not be incorrect to say that NGOs exist for nearly all possible social causes. Last few decades have witnessed the growth and upsurge of NGOs like never before, they have grown both in numbers and effectiveness. There are approximately 1.5 million NGOs in the United States, while India has around 3 million NGOs. Acknowledging the strong grass root linkages and field expertise of NGOs, several large international organizations support and work with smaller NGOs. Most often NGOs use participatory tools to engage local communities, that leads to effective project implementation.

To help you in understanding the basic concepts of NGO, this chapter has been divided into three sections. The first section briefly describes the meaning of NGOs; the second section looks into the important functions of NGOs while the third section defines important principles of an NGO.

1.1 What is a Non-Governmental Organization?

Historical records suggest that the term Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) came in to use in 1945. The term was coined during one of the conferences of The United Nations, as a measure to distinguish organizations from inter-governmental and member organizations. Though the term NGO received recognition only after 1945, studies suggest that several

organizations were actively engaged against slavery, racism and women suffrage during the late eighteenth century.

NGO is a broad term encompassing organizations, that are not affiliated by the government or a private company. Some countries use the term Non-Profit Organization, Voluntary Organization, Charitable Organization to represent organizations that are independent of government. Considering the wide diversity of NGOs both in terms of their function and structure, it is very difficult to define the term 'NGO'. However, some of the definitions that are widely used have been suggested by World Bank and United Nations.

The World Bank defines NGOs as “private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development.”

What is a Non-Governmental Organization?

While, The United Nations defines NGOs as “a non-for-profit, voluntary citizens’ group, which is organized on a local, national or international level to address issues in support of the public good.”

As per the definitions above, NGO is an organization that addresses social issues to promote public welfare. Along with the features described in the above definitions, an organization should have the following features for it to qualify as an NGO:

- **Non Profit:** An NGO is not meant for making profit for personal gain. In case an NGO conducts some revenue generating activity, the profit earned should not be distributed amongst the board members, instead it should be used for carrying out NGOs activities.
- **Social Values:** An NGO should address a social cause and should work towards public good. The activities undertaken by the NGO should improve the conditions of the disadvantaged people.
- **Voluntary:** These organizations are formed by free will of the founding member. There are no laws that restrict or promote the formation of NGOs, it is a voluntary decision of the founding members.
- **Legally registered:** Should be legally registered as per country norms.
- **Independent:** NGOs are independent of government or private interference. They are controlled by the board of management and work independently for social welfare.
- **Non- criminal:** NGOs should not indulge in anti-social and criminal activities.

Considering the above mentioned features and definitions, an NGO can be described as a legally constituted organization, created voluntarily by an individual or a group of people that operates independently of government interference towards the welfare of people.

NGOs are classified on numerous aspects, some classify them on the basis of their activity, while others classify them on the basis of their orientation. World Bank classifies NGOs in two types based on their activity:

- **Operational NGOs:** These organizations are engaged in the implementation of development related projects. There exists a wide range of activities that are undertaken by operational NGOs. Based on the scope of the work, operational NGOs are further classified into:
- **Community-based organizations (CBOs):** Operations restricted to a small geographic area.
- **National organizations:** Operate in individual developing countries.

International organizations

- **Advocacy NGOs:** These organizations promote and advocate for policy changes related to a particular cause. These organizations carry out demonstrations, rallies and events to generate awareness to influence policy change.

Another way of classifying NGOs is on the basis of their orientation, into the following types:

- **Charitable:** These NGOs follow top-down approach for its projects. There is little participation of the communities and activities are planned to help the weaker - sections of the society, without seeking suggestion from beneficiaries.
- **Service:** These NGOs provide services to the people, which can vary from health, family planning to education services as per the NGO goal.
- **Participatory:** Such NGOs follow a bottom- up approach where local people are involved in the implementation of a project. The participation can be in form of contributing cash, tools, land, materials, labor etc.
- **Empowering:** These NGOs empower the marginalized communities by sensitizing them and building their skills.

NGOs can also be classified based on the sector they work in, for example

- **Health NGOs:** Their activities revolve around providing awareness, conducting health camps, distribution of medicines and advocating health related issues.
- **Environmental NGOs:** NGOs that work only for environmental related issues, which range from awareness generation, plantation drives, climate change negotiations etc.
- **Educational NGOs:** NGOs that conduct activities related to education, skill development etc.

Most often smaller NGOs carry out several activities like advocacy, empowerment, service delivery and work across several sectors, making it difficult to classify them into one of the categories mentioned above.

1.2 Functions of an NGO

NGOs worldwide perform a wide range of services aimed towards human wellbeing and social welfare. These organizations relentlessly work towards development and bringing a positive change in the society. NGOs may have different structures, activities and policies, but all NGOs are committed towards their cause and perform their functions to achieve their respective goals.

NGOs facilitate government policies to reach remote areas and enhance the overall effectiveness of social welfare schemes. As discussed in the section above, NGOs perform a variety of services for social wellbeing either through implementing development projects or through policy advocacy.

Most NGOs contribute to the overall development of a community through their engagement in social issues and therefore are recognized as the third pillar of development. Most NGOs have the following inherent features associated with them:

- **Grass root linkages**
- **Participatory approach**
- **Community engagement**
- **Community trust**
- **Long-term commitment**

Functions of a NGO

Most experts recognize the role of NGOs in all areas of development and have classified their role into the following categories:

- **Developing Infrastructure:** Some NGOs primarily help in development and operation of infrastructure. These organizations purchase land and then use the land for construction of schools, hospitals, wells, public toilets etc. which is used by community at large.
- **Research and Development:** These NGOs conduct research and help in enhancing knowledge on current issues. They develop innovative solutions based on the research to deal with social problems.
- **Advocacy:** Several NGOs attempt to influence policy development in favor of poor and marginalized communities. These NGOs are most likely to conduct rallies, stage demonstrations, participate in policy formulation etc.
- **Dissemination of Information:** In areas where government is unable to reach out to people, NGOs help in disseminating information about government schemes, policies and programs. They help in generating awareness about relevant government projects.

- **Training and Capacity Building:** NGOs provide training and conduct capacity building courses to empower marginalized communities.
- **Facilitate Dialogue:** NGOs can facilitate both upward communication from people to government and downward communication from the government to the people. This two-way flow of information helps in designing better projects and effective policies.

1.3 Fundamental Principles/Values of an NGO

Successful people and organizations follow certain set of rules that helps them grow and sets them apart. These rules are the fundamental principles that largely influence the working style of people and their organizations. A principle can be defined as a rule that helps people in understanding the context around us and then accordingly suggests the best way to operate in the given condition. Along with providing guidance in our day to day lives, principles also help in successfully completing the given assignments.

For an NGO to be successful, there are certain fundamental principles that should be incorporate in its day to day working.

- **Transparency and Accountability:** All NGOs should be transparent and accountable in their day to day activity. This means that NGOs should be open and honest about their activities, funding and internal operations. Most NGOs follow a protocol that enhances their credibility by making the more accountable and transparent.
- **Transparency:** Your NGO should be open about the activities it undertakes, the funding it receives and the people it helps. Information related to NGO working should be easily accessible and should be available to relevant stakeholders. Transparency empowers NGOs to approach donors, develop collaborations and improve performance.
- **Accountability:** Accountability refers to the obligation of an individual or organization to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results in a transparent manner. Accountability is a very large term and encompasses several issues of an NGO; some of these may include organizational management structure, financial procedures, human resource policies etc. Accountability is a fundamental principle for any organization, you must explain to the stakeholders how you have used the resources and what are the impacts your organization has yielded. Experts suggest the following four aspects of accountability for an NGO.
- **Upward Accountability:** This refers to the responsibility of an NGO towards being accountable to funders, donors and government institutions. As an organization you are answerable to donors and funders about how you will be utilizing their money.
- **Horizontal Accountability:** This refers to being responsible with project partners, peers and related organizations. This also includes enhancing partnerships and collaborations with other organizations and stakeholders.

- **Downward Accountability:** This means that as an organization you are responsible towards your beneficiaries and the target audience.
- **Internal Accountability:** One of the most important aspects of accountability is to be answerable to your own employees and your organizations mission. It means that you have ethical standards and governance structures and justify your organizations core value.

Values of a NGO

Advantages of being Transparent and Accountable

- **Improved rapport with donors and funders:** donors and funders are more accessible to organizations that are transparent.
- **Trust amongst communities:** Local communities tend to get involved with NGOs that provide and share information with the beneficiaries.
- **Facilitates partnerships and collaborations:** Being transparent helps you in developing partnerships with other organizations and agencies.
- **Greater employability:** Your staff will continue to work with you as they would feel secure to work for an organization that is credible.
- **Improved performance:** Tools to enhance accountability and transparency, help you to keep check on your activities thereby improving your performance.

Ways to ensure accountability and transparency in your NGO:

- **Registration:** Make sure your organization has a legal status and is registered under a relevant legal framework. Registering your NGO will not help you in enhancing your accountability but would also enable you to interact with government agencies and diverse donors.
- **Accreditations and certifications:** This refers to an external agency certifying that your organization complies with a set of norms and policies. Accreditation ensures that your organization has been evaluated by a third party and fulfills the nationally recommended standards and policies.
- **Annual Reports and financial reports:** Publishing your annual reports regularly is a great way to ensure that you are fulfilling the required activities responsibly. The annual report provides the readers with details about all the activities that your organization undertook a particular year. Another important tool to enhance accountability is to regularly update and compile your financial reports. This report clearly indicates your income and expenditure on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis.
- **Third Party Audits and Evaluation:** Many organizations rely on evaluation and external audits as an accounting tool. The external audits help you to analyze and see if you are complying with the industry standards and norms.

- **Develop your own set of self-regulation procedures:** This is considered to be one of the most effective ways to enhance accountability. Develop your own policies of keeping records, formats for reports, trip and field reports, internal minutes.
- **Conduct due diligence before partnering with a new organization:** Conduct in-depth research of a new partner firm before entering in a partnership. This will help you in selecting reliable partners who have a clean background and have not been involved in fraud or an anti-social activity.
- **Appoint a rating agency or watchdog firm:** Several organizations set up their own standards and rating systems to measure the performance of other organizations. The rating system can be applied to various activities and functions of the NGO.

Besides Transparency and Accountability, the Toronto declaration on NGO values suggests ten other core values to be adopted by NGOs. These core values are:

- 1- **Service beyond self:** The very purpose of NGOs is to serve others. Integrating this value in the overall working of the NGO not only makes them socially acceptable, it also makes them more responsive to take up societal issues. It is important for NGOs to responsibly take up societal issues and serve the community.
- 2- **Respect for human rights:** An NGO respects human rights and does not violate them in any form. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights endows all human with certain fundamental rights (which includes freedom, equality, freedom of thought, practice a certain religion, family integrity etc.) An NGO should recognize these rights and under no circumstance question or violate these rights.
- 3- **Maintain a vision:** All NGOs irrespective of their size or area of work, should maintain a vision for their existence. This simple means that NGOs should have the potential to think beyond the reality and envision an ideal society. All the work that is carried out under the NGO should be target to achieve the vision.
- 4- **Responsibility:** NGOs are entrusted with a responsibility towards the public and the society. As an NGO you have to take ownership of all activities undertaken by you.
- 5- **Cooperation beyond borders:** Most NGOs work to address existing social ills prevalent in the society. As an NGO you should collaborate and cooperate with other NGOs to foster positive change. An NGO should work beyond borders to achieve its organizational goals in particular and societal vision in general.
- 6- **Public mindedness:** Make sure that the funding you receive is strictly used for society and for the public. An NGO should be responsible and caring attitude toward the environment in all of its activities.
- 7- **Truthfulness:** An NGO should be truthful in its dealings with its donors, project beneficiaries, staff, members, partner organizations, government, and the general public. An NGO under no circumstance should be involved in money laundering, bribery, corruption, financial improprieties or illegalities.

- 8- **Nonprofit Integrity:** The organization should operate as a not-for-profit organization. In case of any surplus generated through its operations, it should be utilized solely to help the organization fulfill its mission and objectives.
- 9- **Comprehensive viewpoint:** An NGO should follow a comprehensive approach towards problem solving.
- 10- **Voluntarism:** NGOs are formed by private initiative, resulting from the voluntary actions of individuals who have chosen to pursue a shared interest of concern.

It is important for you to understand the basic concept of NGOs and their working so that you can establish an NGO. Make sure to integrate some of these values in your NGO procedures, to enhance overall effectiveness and success of the organization.

2. Starting your NGO

Starting an NGO is a time consuming process and requires a great deal of research, discussions, paper work and expert advice. So before investing your time and energy into it, make sure that this is what you really want to do. Devote time in meeting people who are engaged in NGO work and seek their help to understand all aspects of NGO management from them.

Starting an NGO requires dedication and devotion towards the cause, so unless you are prepared to give in your best, do not start an NGO.

Answer the following questions before put your efforts in starting an NGO:

- **Why do you want to start your own NGO?**
- **What activities will you undertake in your NGO?**
- **Are there other NGOs doing similar activities in your area?**
- **Are you willing to devote all your time and efforts to start the NGO?**
- **Who are the people will help you in the process?**

Starting your NGO

Good to know that you are convinced about starting an NGO, and are certain that it would solve a social problem prevalent in your locality. Your enthusiasm and passion for social wellbeing is indeed commendable!

Your passion will certainly be the driving force to help you in finding the right solutions, but the success of the venture will only come through proper planning and guidance from experts. The complications engaged in the process can be reduced considerably if you plan out the entire process with utmost care. Several NGOs get registered every year, however only a handful of them create visible impact, indicating that planning of remaining NGOs is flawed in way or the other.

To ensure that your dream NGO does not fail in achieving the desired impact, this chapter provides easy steps that can be followed while starting your NGO.

2.1 Research

Research is an essential ingredient for the success of any project, be it taking admission into college or preparing for a job interview, you cannot get away with research. The same true holds while establishing an NGO. Research may sound a little boring to you, but successful NGOs are backed by sufficient research data.

Following are a few areas that should be thoroughly researched while you plan to start your NGO.

- **The Problem:** Understand the causes and the factors that are responsible for the problem. It is necessary for you to understand various aspects of the problem, before you find a practical solution for it. You can collect information about the problem either through secondary research (published literature, government reports, book etc.) or through primary research (interviews and survey of the target area, discussions with government officials etc.)
- **Practicality of the intervention:** You might have several ideas to tackle the problem you have identified. But will these be effective? Do not just replicate an intervention in your project area, because it had worked elsewhere. You have to consider the socio-economic, ecological and cultural setup of the area before you finalize an intervention. This would require you to study about various case studies and projects that have tackled a similar situation successfully.
- **Other Organizations:** Search for organizations (NGOs, Government agencies, Research institutions etc.) those are actively working in the location that you plan to work. Get an understanding of the causes that they are working for and how your organization could complement their work. Depending on the interactions with these organizations you can modify your solutions, so that your organization does not duplicate their activities. This exercise will greatly help in identifying gaps in current projects, which could be addressed through your organization.
- **Target Beneficiaries:** It is very important to understand the communities that you plan to work for. Do not start your NGO based on assumptions, instead devote time to understand the community, their needs and their priorities.

Research

Once you are through with research and have clarity on the subject, you should proceed to the next step, which is basically to find people to help you in setting up a formal organization.

2.2 Setting up an effective Board

For the smooth functioning of the organization, it is important for you to establish an Initial Board of Directors. The Board members will constitute of individuals with a specific skill set (legal, financial, sectorial etc.) who will be helping in laying down the foundation of the NGO. The board is essential for developing good governance structure in the organization.

Before discussing about the role of board members in NGOs, let us first understand the meaning of governance?

Governance refers to the processes relating to governing an organization through a set of prescribed laws and norms. Effective governance structures are important to achieve the organizations mission and objectives.

Most NGOs exercise effective governance, through an internal system of rules and regulations that describe the roles and responsibilities of the Board members. The board members of the NGO are responsible for establishing the guidelines for the working of the organization. NGOs should develop a governance plan that reflects the mission, vision and its organization structure. The governance plan should ideally have rules relating to:

- **Process of appointing board members.**
- **Structure of governing Body.**
- **Responsibility of the Board members.**
- **Roles and duties of project managers.**
- **Policies related to communication, HR, administration.**
- **Process of conducting meetings and events.**
- **Complying with legal procedures.**

Setting up an effective board

Some of the advantages of good governance structures in an NGO include:

- **Enhancing employees trust in the organization: Employees and staff are more likely to trust the organization if the organization has proper governance structures.**
- **Supports the organizations to achieve its mission and vision: The governing body ensures that all activities are in accordance with the organizations vision.**
- **Enhances greater confidence amongst the stakeholders about the management and operations being carried out in the organization.**
- **Provides stability to the organization by making it accountable and transparent.**

Role of a Board for a new NGO

An NGO board comprises of individuals who are appointed to provide oversight to the organization. As you proceed towards establishing the NGO, you will require advice from people who are experts in their respective field of work. To start with you can establish an

initial board of comprising of 4- 5 individuals who are passionate about your cause and are willing to support your organization.

The role of the initial board members will be to:

- **Establish the organizations value, mission and vision statement.**
- **Constitute the bye-laws, article of incorporation and other procedures.**
- **Register the organization**
- **Develop projects, proposals and concept notes for initial donor engagement.**
- **Conduct initial meetings with donors and government agencies.**
- **Creating management and administration structure by developing necessary rules and regulations.**
- **Hiring office staff**

Initial Board of directors governs the organization along with carrying out managerial and project related functions. Once the NGO receives its first funding, the role of these board members will be restricted to governance of the organization.

With the growing need to enhance good governance structures, transparency and accountancy in NGOs, the role of Board members has significantly grown in the last few years. There are several functions that the Board performs for the successful management and governance of the NGO. Typically, in a well-established organization, the board is responsible for the following:

- **Compliance of the organization to its Mission and Vision:** A board of directors not only establishes the values, vision and mission of the organization, but also ensures that it lives up to these. The Board evaluates the various activities to see if they are in line with organizations vision and mission.
- **Establishing Fundraising Goals:** Board members along with the executive director of the NGO establish the fundraising goals for the NGO. They may also help the NGO in establishing contacts with donor agencies and corporate houses.
- **Assessment of NGO activities:** Board members regularly evaluate and assess the working of the NGO, through reports and discussions. Based on the assessment, the board members suggest revision, modification and restructuring of current projects and programs.
- **Establishing policies:** Board members draft policies and protocols for smooth functioning of the organization. These policies may be related to human resource management, communication, fundraising, administration and procurement etc.
- **Hiring the executive director:** The responsibility of hiring the executive officer lies completely in the hands of the board members. The board members should develop the ToRs for the position of the executive director and then accordingly identify the right candidate for the job.

- **Financial health of the organization:** The board is responsible for ensuring that the NGO utilizes the funds judiciously and remains financially secure. Board members develop a comprehensive financial policy to achieve accountability and transparency.
- **Annual budget and annual work-plan:** Board members develop and approve budget on an annual basis. Based on the approved budget, a work-plan is drafted to carry out various activities as per the budget.
- **NGO representation:** Board members are the face of the NGO. They represent and promote the organization in various events and functions.

Identifying and appointing board members

Board members play a crucial role in the functioning of an NGO, and therefore, one should be careful while appointing them. It is a good practice to develop a systematic process for their appointment and selection.

The board recruitment plan should clearly indicate the following:

- **Number of board members**
- **Criteria for selection of Board members**
- **Key Qualities**
- **Tenure of a board member**
- **Terms of Reference for the job.**

You can develop the recruitment plan to suit your organizations objectives. For instance, if your NGO works for Health care services, you will surely need a health practitioner as a board member.

You should look for the following qualities in a candidate while identifying a member for your board:

- **Passionate about the causes that your organization works for.**
- **Past experience in NGOs and social work**
- **Effective communication and interpersonal skills**
- **Ability to lead a team**
- **Expertise in a particular field (finance, legal, sector expert)**
- **Strategic thinker**

Once your board is in place you should organize a meeting to discuss about the key objectives of your organization. During the first meeting you can share the research data with the board and discuss about the issues that your organization would take up. These people will help you in establishing your NGO, so make sure that all of you are at the same page and agree on important aspects of NGO management and governance.

2.3 Establishing the vision and mission for your NGO

Once your initial board members are finalized and you have discussed with them your preliminary ideas about the organizations, it is time to establish the NGO's values, vision and mission statements. These statements are crucial for the success of your organization, as they explain to your stakeholders the organizations purpose in a concise manner.

Vision statement: Vision statement describes the goal that an organization aspires to accomplish in the long run. In other words, the vision statement is the summary of changes/impact you would bring into the lives of the community you work for. The vision statement should be expressive and well drafted so that it appeals to people and at the same time also gives direction to the NGO. While drafting the vision statement keep the following points in mind:

- **Use simple language that can be understood by people of all backgrounds.**
- **Should be appealing and inspiring to engage people.**
- **Should have a broad context.**
- **Should be written in present tense.**
- **Should be easy to remember.**

The best way to draft a vision statement is to get the perspective of the community about their problems and the changes they would like to see. Once you know how the community feels about a particular problem, it will be easier for you to articulate the vision statement. Some examples of vision statements of International organizations may also help you in drafting the Vision statement.

- **IUCN: Our vision is a just world that values and conserves nature**
- **WWF: WWF's vision is to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature.**
- **CRY: A happy, healthy and creative child whose rights are protected and honored in a society that is built on respect for dignity, justice and equity for all.**
- **CARE: We seek a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security.**
- **Green Peace: An earth that is ecologically healthy and able to nurture life in all its diversity.**

Remember that establishing an articulate vision requires time and consultation. You will have to write and re-write the statement several times, before it clearly describes the purpose of your organizations.

NGOs vision

- **Mission statement:** Now that you have a vision for your organization, you will need a plan to achieve it. This is where Mission statements come into play; mission

statement describes the process of how the organization will lead to its vision. The mission statement describes the purpose of your organization (i.e why the organization exists) and also how the organization addresses the issues. Make sure that the mission statement has the following:

- **Simple and concise:** Just like the vision statement, use simple language and keep it concise.
- **Defines the problem:** The mission statement should state the problem it would solve.
- **Solution:** Describes how you intend to solve a problem
- **Suggests the outcome:** the long term changes that the organization would bring
- **Comprehensive:** inclusive of all stakeholders.

Some examples of the mission statement of some international NGOs to help you in writing mission statement for your NGO.

- **IUCN: “Influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.”**
- **WWF: WWF’s mission is to stop the degradation of the planet’s natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by: conserving the world’s biological diversity. ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable.**
- **Green peace: “Greenpeace is the leading independent campaigning organization that uses peaceful protest and creative communication to expose global environmental problems and to promote solutions that are essential to a green and peaceful future.”**
- **Care: CARE’s mission is to serve individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world. Drawing strength from our global diversity, resources and experience, we promote innovative solutions and are advocates for global responsibility. We promote lasting change by:**
 - **Strengthening capacity for self-help**
 - **Providing economic opportunity**
 - **Delivering relief in emergencies**
 - **Influencing policy decisions at all levels**
 - **Addressing discrimination in all its forms.**

Developing an effective mission statement also requires lot of consultation and discussion. Once you have both the vision and mission statement ready, make sure you discuss it with the board members before finalizing it. Communicate about your vision and mission statements, so that people understand your organization in a better way.

2.4 Writing the article of Incorporation

Article of Incorporation provide legal description to your NGO by establishing the existence of the organization as per government rules. The articles of incorporation define the purpose of your organization, along with describing the operational processes and membership details. The number of articles required will largely depend on the country laws. While drafting the article of incorporation, check with the government authorities about the various forms that you require to fill. Depending on the complexity of the content you can either fill in the form or take legal advice from a legal expert.

What to include in the Articles of Incorporation? Most often, NGOs are required to provide the following information, while filling in the form:

- Article I: Name of the organization. Be sure that you have discussed about the name and finalized on a few names for your organization.
- Article II: Organization Purpose: Describe the purpose of your organization and reasons for establishing an NGO
- Article III: Address of the Organization: Give complete contact details of the organization correspondence address. Include the name of the person the communication should be addressed to.
- Article IV: Board Details: Mention the name and contact detail of the board members.
- Article VI: Membership Information: If you plan to have some sort of membership in your NGO then give details of the membership process, the fees, member qualification etc.
- Article VII: Stock Information: Some forms require you to give details of the stocks that your organization has.
- Article VIII: Duration of existence: You need to mention the duration of existence of the NGO. Most often NGOs are everlasting or perpetual.

Writing the article of Incorporation

Writing and filing the articles of incorporation is crucial in determining the success of your organization. Take time to consult with experts to understand the incorporation process, before writing the article of incorporation. The articles of Incorporation are subjected to Country specific norms, therefore read the guidelines specific to your country.

Once you the have form filled, discuss it with the board members to seek their approval.

2.5 Developing the By-laws

By-law is a rule established by an organization to regulate its activities and manage internal affairs. Well defined and clear set of by-laws provide a clear structure to the NGOs and facilitates in smooth functioning. Along with providing consistency in working, by-laws also

help in developing networks with local organizations and government entities. It is important for your organization to have a set of by-laws as they will guide you in operating and managing all your activities. Just like Article of Incorporation, different countries will have their own provisions for bye-laws, and an NGO should refer to them before drafting the by-laws. Most often NGOs should have the following information in the by-laws:

- **Introduction:** This section provides a summary of the by-laws.
- **Name, Logo, Address:** Mention the organizations name, acronym and a logo (if available). Give details of the location and address office.
- **NGO Purpose/ Mission/Vision:** Give information related to the NGO mission and vision. You should mention about the activities that the organization will undertake to achieve its objectives.
- **Membership Information:** If you plan to have some sort of membership in your NGO then give details of the membership process, the fees, member qualification etc. Also mention the roles and responsibilities of the members.
- **Governance Structure:** Describe the roles and responsibilities of the board, composition, qualification of board members the frequency of meetings, process of election of board members.
- **Staff management:** Layout details of the staff members, their roles and duties, procedure of hiring.
- **Auditing:** state about the process of conducting audits of finances, projects and other resources.
- **Legal Issues:** give details about the legal procedure in place, law under which the NGO is formed, resolution of legal matters.
- **Amendment in By-laws:** process related to the bringing modifications and amendments in the by-laws.

By law

While writing the by-laws for your organization, it is a good practice to refer to by-laws of similar organizations, consult with board members and review the articles regularly. Once the by-laws are written, get them approved by the board members. Be sure that a copy of the bylaws is handy any is put into use. Using the by-laws in everyday activities will lead to smooth functioning of the organization by reducing confusion and chaos.

2.6 Registering your organization

Once you have written the by-laws and the articles of incorporation, you can register the organization as per the country norms.

Refer to the country specific guidelines to legally register your organization as per the rules of the country you wish to operate. Registering the organization requires you to submit

several documents to the registering authority. You will be required to fill a form and submit the following documents:

- **By-laws**
- **Article of incorporation**
- **List of Board members**
- **Mission and vision statement**

Registering-an-NGO

Registering the organization is often a time consuming process, but there are several advantages once you get registered.

- **Enhances organizations credibility**
- **Hiring of staff becomes easier**
- **You can seek financial assistance from government agencies and international donors**
- **You can claim tax benefits**

3. Successful management of your NGO

Congratulations! You just got your dream NGO registered.

You might be really stressed out and tired during the entire process of getting the organization registered, but now is not the time to rest. Getting the organization registered is one thing and successfully managing it, is a different ball game altogether.

Management of NGO

Registering an NGO is quite similar to purchasing a piece of agricultural land. Unless and until you plough the field, sow the seeds, timely water the crops, add the right amount of fertilizers, pesticide etc., your field will remain barren. In the same way, you need to do a whole lot of things before your NGO can create a positive impact.

This chapter explores some of the most important issues that should be considered to successfully managing your NGO.

3.1 Initial board meeting

Once the NGO comes into existence, you should hold the first meeting with the board members. It is during this meeting that the board members formally adopt the bylaws and also discuss about important issues related to the NGO functioning.

Initial board meeting

Some of the issues that you can discuss during this meeting are:

- **Setting up Office**
- **Office Supplies**
- **Hiring of staff**
- **Project Development**
- **Communication Strategy**
- **Policy Development**

3.2 Policy Matters

Policies are one of the most important documents that will guide the NGO staff in carrying out routine office work. Creation of policies is definitely a time consuming process, but well written and comprehensive policy documents yields several benefits.

Let us first understand the meaning and the purpose of a Policy:

A policy is a deliberate system of principles to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. A policy is a statement of intent, and is implemented as a procedure or protocol. Policies are generally adopted by the Board of or senior governance body within an organization whereas procedures or protocols would be developed and adopted by senior executive officers. Policies can assist in both subjective and objective decision making.

Policies are required to bring operational structure in an organization to ensure effective delivery and working within the organization. Some of the ways in which policies help organizations are as follows:

- **Internal control:** policies help you to keep internal checks within the organization. Thorough the enforcement of the policy you can maintain a standard protocol for almost all aspects of operations in the organization.
- **Effective office management:** policies help in managing the office effectively. Be it maintenance of the organization's books or issuance invoice, payments, banking transactions all of it can be done through proper policy enforcement.
- **Receptive staff:** Policies allows the NGO staff to clearly understand individual & team responsibilities. This facilitates smooth functioning thereby saving time and resources.
- Improves transparency and accountability.
- Enhances trust amongst stakeholders.

Policies are drafted by board members and once approved by the senior executives they come into force. Most policy documents have a standard format and contain the following components:

- **Statement of purpose:** A brief statement outlining the purpose of the policy.
- **Scope statement:** This section describes the scope of the policy, i.e the people and resources that lie within the ambit of the policy.

- **Date of commencement:** Clearly mention the date indicating when the policy comes into force.
- **Responsibilities:** this section clearly rolls out roles and responsibilities of staff to carry out policy statements. Each policy brings with a structure that ensures that the policy is implemented effectively.

Policy statements: this forms the most important section of the policy indicating the specific regulations, requirements, or modifications to organizational behavior that the policy is creating.

There are a whole lot of policies that can be developed by an NGO, however, the following three policies should be developed in the beginning itself.

Policy Matters

- **Finance and Accounting Policy:** This document is not just necessary for you to manage your finances and accounts, but this would also help you in complying with legal protocols.
- **Purpose:** The NGO Financial and Accounting policy describes the procedures and systems that the NGOs adopts for managing its finances. The policy will cover the flow of financial data within the organization that would ensure that the health of your NGO in terms of finances remains good. Having a sound financial policy in place will certainly enable you in keeping track of the NGOs expenditure, basis which you can plan your fundraising strategy

Make sure that the financial policy is a comprehensive document and covers the following topics:

- **Accounting systems**
- **Cash Handling**
- **Banking Transactions**
- **Salaries and Advances**
- **Payments**

Financial Reporting procedure and format

- **Human Resource Policy:** The Human Resource policy is an important document that will provide the framework by which you manage the employees in the organization. Once your NGO successfully raises funds, you will be hiring staff, this HR policy will then come into play. This policy will clearly spell out the process of hiring, the expectations from employee, leaves, salaries etc.

- **Purpose:** The HR Policy describes the processes, standards and obligations of NGO employees subject to their performing of the duties and responsibilities in their respective job descriptions. The policy will guide you right from the time of hiring to termination of employees. Make sure that the HR Policy is shared with all employees, so that they are aware of the various clauses and adhere to it.

While developing the HR policy for your NGO, you should cover the following point:

- **Recruitment process**
- **Starting on the job**
- **Payment policies and procedures**
- **Staff development policies**
- **Leave policy**
- **Disciplinary procedures**
- **Temporary appointments**
- **Employee welfare**

General policy guidelines

- **Communication policy:** Communications play an important role towards successfully conveying about your organizations mission and goals. The communication policy helps in laying down a framework for all communications (external and internal) within all fields of operation.
- **Purpose:** A communication policy describes the tools and processes to be used for effective communication to enhance transparency, relevance and coordination. The policy lays down the guidelines and gives details about the communication protocol, roles of staff members in the communication process, target groups and channels.

While developing the communication policy you can include the following:

- **Communication tools (Telephone, Fax, Emails)**
- **Visual Identity protocol (Use of Logo, Letter head)**
- **Communication protocol (Font, Format, language)**
- **Website design and maintenance**
- **Social Media**
- **Target Audience (Communities, Donors, Government)**
- **Media related communication**
- **Access of staff to the use of phone, mobile, internet etc.**

The number of policies that you may want, will largely depend on the decision of the board members, location of work, type of activities, scope and coverage etc. Many organizations also develop policies related to:

- **Procurement of products**
- **Travel and reimbursement**
- **Computer use**
- **Safety and security**
- **Grievance Redressal**
- **Fixed assets**

Remember, there is no rush for developing so many policies right at the beginning; you can always draft a policy as your organization grows.

SWOT: Another tool that can help you in managing the organization is through a SWOT Analysis. Conducting a SWOT analysis is a very effective tool to assess, analyze the current health of your organization and manage the organization successfully. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. SWOT helps an organization to analyze both internal (strengths and weaknesses) as well as external factors (opportunities and threats) which are likely to impact the working of the organization. By conducting a SWOT you can manage the projects as well the organization in a much better way.

Through the SWOT you will be able to conduct a self-analysis of the processes, policies and governance structure of the organization, operations and project issues. Many organizations conduct such analysis only during crisis, however carrying it out on a regular basis (annually) can help the organization in better managing their internal systems and externalities.

During the SWOT the following are analyzed:

- **Strengths:** characteristics that give you an advantage over others.
- **Weaknesses:** Characteristics that place you at a disadvantage relative to others.
- **Opportunities:** External elements that the project be an advantage to expand your work.
- **Threats:** External elements in the environment that could act as a risk for you.

3.3 Project management

Successful NGOs provide high quality service to the beneficiaries and ensure that their projects make a difference in the lives of the target community. With the growing competition amongst NGOs it is essential that you develop effective project management strategies that could enhance your visibility both amongst the beneficiaries and also the donors. This will require you to manage and operate all project activities professionally.

For most NGOs, project management relates to implementing the project activities as per the agreed terms with the donors.

Project management refers to an array of activities related to project implementation, managing the external risks, communication, resources and budget. Project managers often

face complex situations during project implementation that may arise due to a number of reasons (political, climatic, cultural etc.). It is therefore necessary to use a set of pre-defined management strategies that could be used during project management.

Project Management

Following are a few advantages of using management strategies in project implementation:

- **Timely completion and delivery of project outputs**
- **Effective implementation of project activities**
- **Enhanced visibility**
- **Reduces confusion**
- **Timely modification of activities in case of negative externalities**

There are several tools and techniques that can be used for effective project management. Some of the commonly used tricks for project management include:

- **Staff and human resources:** Hiring staff for project implementation will be the first step towards project management. The Human Resource policy that you had developed will now come into use. Decide on the roles and responsibilities of the staff that will be recruited for the project. Once the staff is on board, explain them about the project and their deliverables. Remember to regularly meet them and guide them in project implementation.
- **Resource management:** Make sure that the funds you have received are used as per the agreement with the donors. You can hire a finance manager to manage the funds effectively. If there are any changes in the budget, inform the donor and seek their permission before making any changes in the budget. Make sure that the finance manager creates a file to update all financial transactions. Along with financial resources you will have to oversee the efficient utilization of other resources (tools, equipment, machines, books, computers etc.).
- **Communication and Reporting:** Communicate the project objectives with the target beneficiaries and involve them in the process of project implementation. Make sure that the project team meets the beneficiaries to take their feedback and suggestions. Also keep the donors informed the project progress on a regular basis. Send the reports as per the schedule and adhere to reporting deadlines.
- **Monitoring:** As the project head and the founder, you will have to monitor all project activities and ensure that the project is being implemented as per the agreement and your expectations.

Success of the organization will largely depend on the effectiveness of the projects, so make sure that all your projects are managed and implemented properly.

4. Fundraising Essentials

Many experts consider fundraising to be the backbone of the nonprofit sector, as continuous flow of funds ensures NGOs to implement projects effectively. Raising money is indeed a challenge, but with some help and practice you can boost up your fundraising efforts. Fundraising forms the most important activity of any NGO to sustain and continue their efforts for social wellbeing and development.

Fundraising Essentials

This chapter discusses about the types of donors, types of funding, processes involved in developing a fundraising strategy and engaging donors in your NGO.

4.1 Types of Donors

It is necessary for you to understand the types of donors and the types of funding opportunities, before you start fundraising. There are several sources for you to avail funding for your organization, and to make the most of this opportunity, you will have to understand the various types of donors, their priorities and their core values. Most donors can be classified in to the following categories:

- **Foundations:** Foundations are non-governmental entities that are established to provide grants to smaller organization, research institutions and NGOs. Most NGOs rely heavily on foundations mainly because they provide grants for a long duration. Different foundations have their own specific areas of funding and NGOs should conduct proper research before approaching a foundation for funds.
- **Corporations:** Corporations are business houses and private firms that provide funding to NGOs. Corporate Social responsibility has opened up new gateways for NGOs in developing solutions to various societal issues. Private sector, local businesses and International Corporations have huge potential to financially support the Not for Profit sector. Corporations generally support NGOs through donations, in-kind support and employee matching donation programs.
- **Individuals:** Individuals tend to support NGOs by giving donations or volunteering. Individual donors believe in your organization and your mission and therefore support the organization. Even though they may not donate a huge amount of money to the cause, they tend to contribute money on a regular basis. Also they help you in spreading the word about your cause.
- **International donors:** These include bilateral and multilateral donor agencies which majorly fund large international organizations. NGOs can also receive funding from development assistance agencies of countries, UN agencies, and multilateral development banks; worldwide sources also include international foundations, multinational corporations, international religious organizations, and larger international NGOs.

4.2 Types of Donors of funding

Just like there are several source of funding, the type of funding received from these sources also varies significantly.

- **Restricted fund:** Restricted funds can be used only for a specific purpose, as per the agreement with the donor. These funds are often received as grants from foundations against the proposal submitted by the NGO. Most restricted funds clearly state of how the grant money is to be utilized and are accompanied by a formal agreement between the NGO and donor.

Example: Grants received from a foundation or a donor agency. To receive such funding, NGOs write a detailed proposal which specifies the activities and a detailed budget showing the costs to undertake the activities. The proposals are reviewed by the funding agency and certain proposals get approved for funding. The approved fund can be utilized only for the activities that are mentioned in the project proposal. In case any changes are to be made in the budget, written approval is required from the donor.

- **Unrestricted funds:** Unrestricted funds give the NGO complete flexibility to use the funds as per their requirement. There is no restriction in terms of how the funds should be used, most often these types of funds are provided by individual donors and during fundraising events. Unrestricted funds are generally used for expansion of NGO activities and other miscellaneous purposes.

Example: Donations received by an NGO from individuals, families or corporations. Unlike grants, donations are not received through a competitive grant proposal. Donations can either be in the form of cash or in-kind gifts. Donations are typically solicited through fundraising events, crowd funding etc.

- **Temporary Funding:** This type of funding is available for a short period which may arise due to the occurrence of an unexpected event. Temporary funding is generally received by organizing a fundraising event, individual charity or member's contribution.

Example: Funding received during a disaster can be used while carrying out relief work for the victims. Such funding is temporary and does not help in sustaining the NGO in the long run.

4.3 Writing a fundraising strategy

A fundraising strategy helps you to identify financial needs of your organization and accordingly outline the activities required to meet those needs. It typically helps you to plan the fundraising process for a period of 3-5 years by setting necessary deadlines and responsibilities.

The primary purpose of a fundraising strategy is to prioritize activities to ensure fund flows through varied sources to help the organization in sustaining its activities. The best way to start writing the fundraising strategy is to analyze the following:

- **Current status of funding:** You need to analyze the current financial health of the organization, before seeking additional funding. You will have to closely monitor the flow of funds to assess if they are being used effectively.
- **Proposed and planned activities for coming years:** Gather information from project staff about the status of projects and get an understanding of activities that are to be taken up in the coming years.
- **What is the target of fund raising for a particular year?** You need to fix upon a target as the entire strategy will depend on the target you set. Work with your project managers to work on the budget and financial resources that you require.
- **What are the areas/causes for which your organization needs fund in a particular year?** You have to identify the area which needs immediate funding. May be a particular year you are focusing on health projects, and may be the next year you need funds for setting up a school for dropouts. Your selection of donors will depend on the cause you select, because not all donors will donate for all causes.
- **Staff responsibilities:** You have to identify people who are good in relationship building and networking. Even if you have a small team, identify the person who has exceptionally good communication skills. Giving responsibility always yields better results.
- **How many donors to contact?** Depending upon the size of funding and the cause for fundraising, you will have to focus on a certain number of donors. If you think you can contact all donors at one time and engage them, let's be honest it won't be possible. Based on the financial requirement and the cause, identify prospects from your donor pool. Gather all relevant information about them so that you get an idea of the number of donors you will need.
- **What activities will you undertake to raise funds?** There are several activities that can be undertaken for raising funds. You should look into all aspects of fundraising and identify the ones that are most suitable for your organization.

Writing a fundraising strategy

Once you are clear with the funding goals and priorities you should start writing the strategy, under the following heads:

- **Case of Support:** In simplest terms a case for support is a narrative of your organization that tells the prospective donors about your funding requirements and the problems you would address on receiving the funds. In other terms it is a document that provides donors with information about your organization, future goals and aspirations, accomplishments, and why should a donor invest in your program. Key features of a case for support:
 - **Should be attractive**
 - **Should be donor centric**

- **Should clearly illustrate your funding requirements**
- **Should showcase your accomplishments**
- **Should convince the donors to engage with your organization**

Mention clearly about the funds that you require sustaining your activities. Along with the financial requirements you should also make note of other resources that may be required by your organization.

- **Who are the prospects?** According to the funding requirement and the case of support, you will have to start looking for prospects from your donor database. Start going through donor webpages, history of past donations, donor priorities etc. to prepare a list of prospects.
- **Plan for approaching prospective donors:** Once you have the list of prospective donors, prepare a plan of approaching them. Each donor in your prospective list will require special attention as they may have different requirements and terms of providing funds. Make sure you read through their guidelines and understand the process of funding before approaching them.

Also as there are various methods to approach a donor viz. Online, fundraising event, telephonic, door-to door, sponsorship, applying for a grant etc. clearly mention in the plan of how you will approach a particular donor. You can discuss with your board members for help in introducing your organization to a few prospective donors.

Along with conventional sources of funding you can also explore the following options:

- **Crowd funding:** Crowd funding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising monetary contributions from a large number of people, today often performed via internet-mediated registries, but the concept can also be executed through mail-order subscriptions, benefit events, and other methods.' (Wikipedia).
- **Membership:** You can start a membership process in your organization, wherein you charge a certain fee from members. These fees can be used as an unrestricted fund for various operational purposes.
- **Events:** Organize special fundraising events like cycle rallies, marathon etc., to raise funds.
- **Donation boxes:** You can place donation boxes in malls, community halls etc. along with a banner of your organization. People interested in your cause can donate money through donation boxes.
- **Responsibility of staff:** In the fundraising strategy clearly mention the roles and responsibilities of your staff members who will support you in the process. For example, people with really good inter-personal skills and communication skills should be involved in directly contacting the donor, while a person with really good research skills should be used for identifying the prospects and conducting research.

Calendar of activities: Develop a calendar of events that clearly indicate the schedule of major activities which may include; Timelines to contacting a particular donor, organizing a fundraising event, initiating an online fundraising appeal etc.

Incorporating the above mentioned tips in your fundraising effort will surely boost up your performance and will help you engage with many donors. Just remember that these tips can help you in improving your performance and if you don't get immediate results do not lose hope but instead keep trying and integrate the above mentioned tips in your routine. Organizations need to understand that raising funds is a time-taking and skillful job. Proper planning and strategy can generate precious funds to implement and upscale their projects.

5. Sustaining the NGO

The one ingredient that is essential for your organization to create long lasting impact is Sustainability. The term sustainability has gained significant popularity in policy-oriented research, business development and social sector over the last few decades. Sustainability, a word frequently used across several disciplines, has become part of our everyday lexis. Origin of the word Sustain dates back several centuries, from two latin words sus which means- up and tenere meaning to hold. The current use of the word implies something that continues for a long time.

Some ways to ensure Institutional and Organizational Sustainability are:

- **Be flexible:** Keep a flexible approach while looking for new opportunities you may have to modify your priorities to adopt to changes. If your NGO has been successfully implementing projects for several years, there are chances that the purpose for which you started the NGO does not exist. In such cases you will have to explore and look for options that could be integrated in your NGO activities.
- **Invest in partnerships and collaborations:** To develop a sustainable organization you should develop new partnerships. These partnerships will make you stable and will also help you in taking your mission ahead. You need to understand the social change is possible only when you scale up and replicate your projects. For scaling up you projects, you will have to partner with other NGOs, research organizations and government institutions.
- **Boost existing relations:** Maintain a congenial relation with your existing donors: You need to maintain a good rapport with your existing donors as well. Submit all the reports, financial documents and updates with them in a timely manner. It is important that you involve them in your organization and acknowledge them for their support. Developing long term relation with the donors will certainly increase the likelihood of repeat funding. While searching for new donors, do not forget the people who have previously funded your organization. You need to maintain a good rapport with your existing donors as well. Submit all the reports, financial documents and updates with them in a timely manner. It is important that you involve them in

your organization and acknowledge them for their support. Developing long term relation with the donors will certainly increase the likelihood of repeat funding.

- **Enhance your visibility:** The chance of your organization to sustain itself largely depends on your visibility. In today's time when everything is just a click away, it is essential that your organization is on the internet. It is equally important to make your presence felt in public domain.
- **Improving online presence:** In today's time when everything is just a click away, it is essential that your organization is on the internet. There are several benefits that an organization can have through presence on the web; along with enhancing your organizations visibility it also makes you look more professional to donor agencies and potential partners. Internet has enabled producers reach out to millions of consumers and vice-versa. It has helped connect writers to millions of its readers. In recent years the world of internet has come up with another new communication and social channel. Social media is a catch-all term for sites that may provide radically different social actions. Through the use of technology, you can connect to a large audience spreading across the globe, within fraction of a second and spread your message.
- **Diversify funding sources:** The most important aspect of sustainability is to diversify your donor base and to develop long term partnerships with donors to support you in your endeavor. Do not just look at the traditional donor agencies but explore new opportunities as well. There are several new donor mechanisms in place viz. virtual funding platforms, crowd funding, CSR, individuals etc. Keep an eye on such funding windows as there is a huge potential to get funds from them. This will surely help you in engaging with multiple donors thereby enhancing your chances of funding.

Sustaining the NGO

The success of your NGO completely depends on how well you have planned the entire process of NGO establishment. By devoting time on initial planning, you are more likely to lay a strong foundation of your NGO. The primary purpose of the guide was to introduce you to the various steps involved in establishing an NGO and help you in laying down the foundation of your dream NGO. Hope the guide assisted you in the process.