Chapter 5.
NGO Personnel and Policies

Because NGOs are so varied in their mission and capacities, regions of operation or constituencies, NGO staff too are varied in their composition and characteristics.

When military and NGO personnel come into contact, there is often a mixture of curiosity and frustration that emerges from two very different cultures. Whereas military personnel are normally part of a stringent and well-defined hierarchy, NGO personnel are part of a largely decentralized organizational structure, often tasked with responding to the needs of NGO beneficiaries before that of the NGO. NGO staff members are from different backgrounds and have extensive experience in conflict regions, disaster areas, hostile living conditions, emergency settings and in danger. They carry long histories of involvement in these types of settings, and often develop highly valuable skills and abilities that outweigh those of government, military or international organization capabilities in many cases.

There is also a flow of personnel between government, military, and NGOs. Government officials often retire from USAID, the Department of State, or the Department of Defense and join an NGO to serve as a senior level manager or consultant. Military personnel also often find themselves cycling out of active duty and entering the service of an NGO doing jobs similar to those they had in the military. NGO personnel as well often move from the private sector into the government or UN (less to the military). Although NGO staff members are often young and inexperienced and often thought of as unprofessional, today’s NGO staff labor pool is highly professional and skilled.

NGOs started gaining ground as primary actors in emergencies during the 1980s and 1990s. With this increased field time and exposure, NGO personnel started gaining expertise and credibility. Today, thousands of NGO employees travel, live, and work worldwide and have dedicated their careers and lives to serving within NGOs. This class of relief workers now dominates the way the international community responds to emergencies.
Who Works for an NGO?

NGOs employ all types of people. No one type of personality, profession, or capability characterizes an NGO staff member; and though it is common to find people with similar desires and experiences, most often few patterns can be discerned. For military and government personnel not used to working with NGO staff, a few generalizing characteristics can be helpful. NGO personnel are often

- graduates of advanced degree programs often in public health, international relations, medicine, social work, engineering, political science and communications;
- highly professional, with memberships in professional associations, certificates, and specialized training;
- well-traveled and multilingual, having worked, lived, or studied in international destinations for extended periods;
- extremely knowledgeable about the emergency affected regions they work in after living and working there, or knowing the types of emergencies the region is affected by;
- highly motivated, often volunteering for long periods with minimal pay, or voluntarily working in harsh conditions;
- dedicated to the people they are serving and to their NGO; and
- more and more often local staff running programs in the field rather than westerners.

Looking at a few standard candidate requirements for new hires can also help. Table 5.1 presents shortened mid-level job candidate requirements from the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the International Medical Corps (IMC), Oxfam Great Britain, and ACTED.

The qualification requirements vary widely, as do the types of position each NGO is soliciting. For general management positions, qualifications for ideal candidates will normally include wide-ranging, management-oriented experiences, and more sectoral-focused positions will demand expertise and extensive experience (in both the subject and specific country) with a specific trade or project type.

NGO Staff Positions

From ex-military, government, or UN executives to young volunteers or fresh college graduates, NGOs employ a wide range of talent, labor, and abilities to manage and staff the NGO's diverse programs. And though the type of employees at NGOs worldwide is as diverse as the NGO community, it is valuable to understand how an NGO manages its staffing and programs overseas. For the purposes of this manual, NGO staff member positions can be identified within six groupings: general support staff (normally at headquarters), general international field staff (younger, less-experienced but skilled expatriots), senior international field staff (country and program directors, senior-level officials, senior management), experts, local staff, and executive management.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IRC Job Announcement: Regional Director, East Africa</th>
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<tr>
<td>• 7 years international work experience, preferably in a refugee or displaced person setting</td>
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<td>• 3 years experience at senior management level, including at least 2 years experience as country director</td>
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<td>• Proven experience as a strong manager and negotiator</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Previous budget and fiscal oversight responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Experience working with the UN, EU, US and other government agencies a plus</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Graduate degree in relevant field preferred</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Must be computer literate</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Must be self-reliant, the regional coordinator will have at most one local support staff person</td>
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<td>• Must be willing to travel 25 percent to 35 percent of time</td>
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<tr>
<th>IMC Job Announcement: Country Director Positions</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of donor practices, the program proposal process, and humanitarian or development program solicitations and applications</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ability to conduct and or supervise new program assessments and write cogent proposals and budgets</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Familiarity with international humanitarian operations, coordination structures, and the mandates of donors, UN agencies, and other NGOs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 5+ years of field experience in humanitarian relief or development programs focused on primary health care and public health in insecure settings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Graduate degree in public health, public policy, or related field</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fluency in English required; second language skills (i.e., working knowledge of French, Spanish, Portuguese, Swahili, etc.) a plus</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Strong written and oral communication skills necessary</td>
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<td>• Ability to analyze and prioritize needs</td>
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<td>• Proven organizational and supervisory skills</td>
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<tr>
<th>Oxfam Job Announcement: Humanitarian Coordinator</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Proven analytical and planning skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Leadership and management skills of multidisciplinary teams operating within complex matrix management frameworks</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Experience and knowledge of the international humanitarian sector, sufficient to advise staff on the legal and institutional framework within which humanitarian action takes place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Three years field experience of emergency and developmental work and a continuing commitment to humanitarian action</td>
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<tr>
<td>• An understanding of public health principles and preferably experience of at least one of Oxfam’s areas of distinctive competence in humanitarian response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A understanding of and active commitment to promoting gender and diversity issues in all aspects of Oxfam GB’s work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Representational, advocacy and diplomatic skills to enable the post holder to operate effectively within Oxfam and in external networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Competence in written and spoken English</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ability to travel up to 12 weeks per year</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTED Job Announcement (Afghanistan): Road Programs Manager</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge of non asphalted road networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Proven experience in a related field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Control of the data-processing tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Necessary qualities: autonomy, rigour, direction of the contact</td>
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**General Support Staff**

General support staff members are employees or volunteers most often found at the NGO’s headquarters (HQ) somewhere in western Europe or the United States. As generalists, these people focus on providing the backstopping and support services for NGO field operations. Significant time is given to providing logistical support for shipping, procurement, personnel travel and other programmatic assistance needs. General support staff members normally are also charged with human resource duties (hiring, recruiting, managing health care, insurance, often travel and other benefits), fundraising and publicity (solicitation, fundraiser event planning, gifts-in-kind organization, media relations and advertising), accounting, board relations and recruitment, information technology (IT) support (rare for smaller organizations) and the like. Larger organizations will have specialized staff members for website development and technology support, warehouse and shipping staff, specialized fundraisers, and lobbyists. Many organizations have access to a seemingly endless source of labor from universities: interns often populate NGO headquarter locations and provide research, media monitoring, general administrative duties, and clerical tasks.

General staff at headquarters are normally low to mid-level, excluding senior human resource personnel and accounting staff. Although not necessarily part of the decision-making process, general staff ensure that much of what the executive management and board members plan is put into action. General staff are normally valuable for their knowledge of an organization’s overall programmatic strategies and capabilities, and are large storehouses of information.

**General International Field Staff**

These NGO expatriate staff members (expats) make up a large portion of an NGO’s international staff base, normally filling mid-level management positions and participating in general programmatic oversight, creation, logistical services, and implementation. Normally younger men and women that are just starting in the field or that have fewer than five years of experience will find themselves assisting program managers in various duties, managing local staff, managing logistical services or shipments, participating in establishing and managing refugee or IDP camps, and will often write reports or proposals with the guidance of more senior level staff.

General international field staff members are the backbone of any international NGO operation, and normally fulfill some of the more unpopular tasks or demands placed on NGOs working in underdeveloped, conflict, or emergency affected areas. Striving to find a place in the international NGO community, these staff members are enthusiastic, ambitious, and willing to take a heavy workload in bad working conditions. In emergency settings, 20 to 24 hour workdays are common, and poor food, bad traveling conditions, personal danger, and major health risks are all just part of the job.

Many of these personnel have at least an undergraduate degree and often an advanced one in international relations, public health, communications, engineering, or social work and may speak multiple languages, but they are also often paid poorly. Furthermore, many are employed or volunteer under a specified time contract; ranging from 3 months to a more common 1- or 2-year contract.
They are often required to move from job to job, changing organizations, countries, and job functions numerous times. Although not specific to any one disaster or emergency, an informal labor pool of NGO workers who move from one emergency to another, taking up similar roles in each organization they work for does exist. It is not uncommon to meet the same people in different emergencies in different countries, regions, or continents. By traveling light and working hard, these individuals are valuable and carry with them experiences that can translate into more efficient humanitarian assistance programs. It is not uncommon for NGO personnel to cycle to HQ after long stints in the field, or to move to more permanent senior-level HQ roles that will help the organization connect field and HQ programs more efficiently.

**Senior International Field Staff**

This group includes expats with an expertise employed to manage entire countrywide or regional programs for an NGO. Sometimes referred to as country director, regional director, senior advisor, or coordinator, these individuals have worked in the humanitarian assistance field for career-length spans. Older and often with decades of experience, they manage other international and local staff members, and are charged with ensuring that programs are implemented appropriately. As the senior-most NGO staff person in a given region or country, this person controls budgets, grant processes, personnel, logistics, relations with the host country, donors, local and foreign military (if present), and other NGOs. Enjoying a comfortable level of autonomy, these individuals are relied on for their sound judgment, experience, and contacts within the international aid community.

Senior staff members normally have extensive knowledge of the donor and aid community, as well as close friends and peers within the UN, the U.S. government, and the U.S. military. Senior NGO staff will be found in recurring emergencies, and often travel to launch new projects in a newly affected area. Once in the senior level (varies in pay grade, title and duties for each NGO), an NGO staff member is somewhat of a permanent fixture, and fewer changes between NGO employers occur. Senior field staff often will phase out of an international location, and return to HQ for a more managerial role.

**Specialized Subject Matter Experts**

NGOs often employ medical doctors, engineers, psychologists, pilots, water sanitation and hygiene (WSH) specialists, transportation and logistical specialists, agricultural, or economic specialists on short to medium-term contracts or assignments. Because the needs in any postconflict or postemergency settings are so varied, NGOs keep rosters of deployable experts who can be dispatched in a relatively short time. These experts are deployed to the affected region to begin work in their specialized field. Normally supported by the general international field and local staff, experts focus on providing their services without much involvement in the normal daily NGO functions (fundraising, management, accounting, logistics).

Experts are normally hired on short-term contracts, though they may work for the same NGO consistently and may not be from industrialized nations. Many medical doctors enjoy time off from normal private practice or hospital duties while serving with an NGO in a humanitarian emergency, using their skills in a new venue for a short period and then returning to their usual work. Many NGOs
keep emergency rosters with updated lists of those willing to be called on short notice, and what their specialty and requirements are. In the last decade and because of funding constraints and the need to standardize programs, fewer volunteers are used and more international staff who can commit to one- to five-year contracts are filling these once short-term agreements. However, for specialized needs, (such as surgical subspecialties, NGOs maintain rosters.

**Local Staff**

Local NGO staff members are hired in country and are often victims of the emergency an NGO is responding to. Local staff fill a wide variety of job functions from drivers, security guards, cooks, storehouse managers, administrative clerks to medical doctors, program managers, translators and experts, and are essential to the success of any NGO program.

When first arriving in an emergency-affected area, NGOs normally attempt to hire *fixers* (translators and drivers combined) who can quickly orient the expats and secure housing, food, and the basic resources needed for launching an operation. The fixer serves as a link to the local population and market. He or she can help exchange money, open local bank accounts, move shipments through ports or borders, help an international NGO register with the local government, find additional staff members, and keep the NGO personnel safe.

Once programs are initiated, NGOs employ local staff at all aspects of the management, leaving larger organizational issues to senior management and international matters for the NGO. NGOs pride themselves on empowering local populations with the skills and resources to manage effective assistance programs themselves. By training the trainers and incorporating local staff into most processes during an emergency, NGOs create local capacity to respond to and manage future emergencies. Local NGO staff normally outnumber the international staff in an emergency-affected region. Smaller NGO operations will sometimes have one or perhaps three expats on staff to between 10 and 50 locals.

**Executive Management**

Executive management for NGOs also varies widely. Most management teams are comprised of professional, senior-level executives from a variety of fields. As mentioned, former government, military, private sector, and long-term NGO professionals are well suited for management positions, often bringing a unique blend of outside management experience and connections with other sectors that may prove valuable for an NGO’s programs and fundraising.

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66 The pay levels that local NGO staff members receive have been a contentious issue for some time within the NGO and donor community. Because expats receive western level salaries, per diems, travel allowances, COLAs and other benefits, local staff members’ receive minimal fractions when salaries are compared. Farshad Rastegar, executive director of Relief International, suggests that this is not necessarily bad. Local staff members should be paid appropriately, taking the job function, market and economic conditions into account of the host country. Incentive enough to attract the best candidates but without disturbing local economic and employment patterns, local NGO staff pay should be relevant to local economic and labor market conditions. Otherwise, damage to local wages and currency value could occur.
For larger NGOs, senior management plays a direct role in developing, managing, and guiding an NGO’s growth and activity. An NGO executive focuses on ensuring that programming and emergency response efforts fit into the NGO’s mission and capacities, are funded, coordinated, and part of a larger international picture. Program oversight, fundraising, lobbying, advocacy, coordination, and general organizational management fill up most parts of the day for senior managers. NGO executives also spend significant time and resources managing, growing, and engaging the NGO’s board of directors. While running the NGO, an executive also must plan for future growth, challenges, setbacks, legal issues, budgets, competition, employee loyalty, and donor relations.

Many of the same tasks fall to executives of smaller NGOs. These individuals are normally founders or an inside hire, and often are directly engaged in every aspect of the organization. Some CEOs and presidents find themselves making their own travel arrangements, running photocopies, writing proposals, and taking care of other activities normally relegated to staff members.

In all cases, an NGO’s success within its mission, its capabilities, direction and funding are heavily dependent on the NGO’s leadership. With a strong and flexible board of directors, an executive can manage effective humanitarian assistance programming, can assure that program implementation is sound and appropriate, and can make sure that the NGO's growth potential or strengths are maximized (growth may not be desired).

Hierarchy and Staff Management

NGOs are structured in different ways. Most, though, depend on a loose structure centered on locations, programs, a hierarchical relationship between HQ and field offices, emergency teams dispatched to new crises, and sometimes partnerships agencies. NGOs face many of the same problems that private companies, government agencies, and militaries have when dealing with management issues. Typical burdens include lack of financial or material resources, technical support, or personnel security. Communication between offices, staff members, and programs is always difficult. Last, although NGOs have established national chapters or umbrella organizations to manage worldwide coordinated fundraising, public relations, and public appeals, most NGOs also deal with the challenge of being everywhere at once.

At almost every NGO, the board of directors is the ultimate decision-making body and is accountable for the well-being of the NGO. The executive director, president, or CEO is the manager of the organization, and normally fulfills two types of functions, encapsulating board management and general organizational management. Below the executive director is an array of senior officer positions, normally each with a portfolio, sector, or section of the organization to manage (Assistant director of finance, vice president of operations, program manager, and so on). These managers provide the daily, hands-on management of NGO staff members worldwide, and are normally part of the executive director’s planning body, strategy makers, and proponents of the organization’s objectives and mission.
Many NGOs are flexible in their hierarchy. This translates to a heavy emphasis on making decisions at the lowest possible level. For an organization with permanent offices in various countries, this means that a country director or regional manager will normally be the ultimate authority for each country. Decisions concerning personnel, budget use and reporting, personnel safety and the like are all major areas of responsibility of a country director or regional manager.

Although closely coordinated with the executive director and senior officers at HQ, NGO staff members establish a hierarchy within each program in a specific country. A country director will normally manage multiple programs in the area of concern, and is responsible for ensuring that reporting is appropriate. Financial, programmatic, and personnel reports are filed with HQ often, and it is the duty of the program officer at HQ to liaise with senior staff and officers to ensure that the principles of the organization and the guidelines of the grant are followed.

Because large portions of NGO funding come from grants, NGO personnel are assigned tasks and responsibilities within the grant framework. This makes each program, ideally, a well-mapped project that requires minimal oversight. This is not always the case, however, and more often than not NGOs find themselves in difficult working conditions and in situations that require adjusting the original program. For flexible staff members with wide-ranging abilities, this is of little consequence. For smaller organizations with less capacity, this could cripple program implementation.

Figure 5.1 presents a sample organizational chart on how an NGO may structure itself. Although the schematic is not holistic or standard for every organization, it shows the relationships between various levels within the organization, and where entry points are for coordination or collaboration. Coordination usually starts with field-based staff members. Little to no contact with an NGO’s HQ is standard, and most communication is done on either the country director level or the programmatic level, and a program manager or officer will be the NGO point person. For example, an NGO may have various programs within a country or region, all of which fall under one director, but a program manager or director who reports to that director normally manages each program.

In Figure 5.1 (see following page), three lines indicate possible entry points for an NGO and military interface. This identifies a common theme among NGOs operating in humanitarian emergencies and across multiple programs: depending on the size of the organization and the scale of the program, the lead coordinating staff member may be the country director, the program director or manager, or one of the expat staff members within the project. Despite clear lines indicating responsibilities for NGO operations, the liaison for the military and outside entities will be varies widely. Larger NGOs will often have a designated civil-military affairs staff member assigned to specific regions or countries.

### NGO Hiring and Contracts

NGOs take various approaches to hiring staff. Many NGOs operating in emergencies maintain short-term contracts with their employees because of the nature of the work: short, intense, and unsure conditions that require immediate response and that may end relatively quickly. When a new
Figure 5.1 NGO-Military Interface

- **Board of Directors**
  - Executive Director / President
  - Advisory Board
  - Assistant Director / Vice President of International Programs
  - Assistant Director / Vice President of Finance
  - Assistant Director / Vice President of Operations
  - HQ Program Officers / Desk Officers / Operations Managers
    - Country Director (Country X)
    - Country Director (Country Y)
    - Country Director (Country Z)
    - Program Director (Emergency Shelter Project)
    - Program Director (Water/Sanitation Project)
    - Local NGO Staff
    - Expert NGO Staff
    - NGO/Military Coordination Unit
    - Military HA/PK Operation / Joint Military Operations
emergency arises, NGOs are under intense pressure to deploy current staff to establish programs, and to hire new regional, sectoral, or general experts to join the teams immediately. When the NGO identifies that it can and should respond to an emergency, funding and donations often will dictate how many new hires can be made, and what level of experience can be afforded.⁶⁷

Larger NGOs have a professional human resources (HR) office that is a key ingredient to properly staffing NGO activities overseas, to maintaining a safe and professional work force, and in passing on the NGO’s image and professionalism to new hires or contractors.

HR offices within larger NGOs, and sometimes a single HR officer for a smaller NGO, normally keep a databases of CVs, which are kept on file for a certain period and can be searched by category, sector, or expertise when the need arises. Because emergencies are relatively unpredictable, it is in this light that hiring and employment practices of NGOs are often challenging. Some challenges include

- limited funding for the maintenance of full-time professional staff levels;
- short-term needs for experts during emergencies;
- no longer-term needs (and thus job security) for experts;
- inability to compete with private-sector or government salaries;⁶⁸ and
- harsh working conditions, lack of safety or personal comforts, stressful conditions, long hours, and often challenging work environments.

Many NGO lifers have grown accustomed to this lifestyle. NGO contractors will often bounce between different NGOs in different emergencies around the world, holding 3-, 6- or 12- month contracts before moving on to their next assignment. Larger organizations, such as World Vision International, are focusing on hiring and keeping personnel by increasing benefits, personal comforts, and other incentives for staying on board between emergencies or even during prolonged programs.

An anonymous World Vision Australia staff member is a good example of how many NGO staffers are becoming more permanent members of international emergency response teams and the NGO community in general. This individual is currently stationed in Afghanistan, having started in southern Sudan in Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) as a logistics officer, moved to East Timor for a similar position, been sent to Kosovo, and then detailed to his current assignment.⁶⁹ Enjoying his work, he has also benefited from World Vision personnel policies and practices that make his ability to work, live, and have a life within emergency settings tolerable. With ample vacation time, travel allowances, vacation stipends, excellent health, and procedures that ensure his satisfaction and job utility, he and many other World Vision staff members are breaking the traditional mold of contractor lifestyles that would see upwards of three or four employers per year in various emergency settings.

In hiring practices, HR offices and representatives are faced with making quick decisions and often do not meet the contractor in person, although video conferencing has made face-to-face interaction

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⁶⁷ Despite popular opinion, most NGO staff members are not volunteers.
⁶⁸ This disparity between wages in different sectors is changing for the better, however.
⁶⁹ Interview with World Vision staff member, June 17, 2002.
less anonymous. NGOs often employ people already in the area of concern, or those on assignment in some other region. By reviewing a candidate’s credentials, referring to references and background data (including criminal checks), and by attempting to learn the person’s reputation, an HR office often makes a hiring decision that other sectors would cringe at making.

People seeking employment with NGOs have a few resources at their disposal. Sometimes fresh out of undergraduate or graduate school, current employment with another NGO or other profession, people can use the Internet, e-mail, and publications to learn which positions are open, what each position requires, the terms, and how to apply. Most applications today are submitted electronically by e-mail or website form.

### NGO Personnel Policies

Many of the religiously based NGOs require employees to sign a faith-compliance or acknowledgment of religious beliefs, policies, or orientation, which the NGO maintains. For some potential employment candidates, these types or requirements are deterrents. In efforts to remain neutral or nonbiased, many humanitarian workers strive to remain independent and free from any association with a larger cause. Although the days of handing out Bibles and food together to beneficiaries are largely over, major overtones of proselytizing from some organizations remain.

NGO personnel policies are normally basic and straightforward. Policies normally include safety procedures, neutrality, NGO code of conduct acknowledgments, descriptions of duties, appropriate behavior in specific areas, sexual harassment awareness training, and sometimes a confidentiality agreement. Many NGOs have new hires sign a form that suggests they have read the Red Cross code of conduct, and that they agree, understand, and will abide by its elements.

Many organizations attach specific policies to specific positions. For World Vision positions open in Afghanistan, candidates are told that strict behavior restrictions exist, and that religious sensitivity must be maintained at all times. A warning about the use of alcohol is given as well.70

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NGO Training Sources

As NGOs and the NGO community become more professional and established, so too are resources that assist NGOs to manage, operate and implement programs more effectively. Most of the training programs that exist are focused on providing humanitarian personnel with training in specific sectors, topics, or themes.

RedR, founded initially as Registered Engineers for Disaster Relief, is now a leading organization that provides not only an extensive roster of professionals that can be called on by partner agencies, but also a significant level of training to NGO personnel globally. Founded in England in 1979, it has offices in more than five countries.

InterWorks, of Madison, Wisconsin, also provides NGO personnel and organizational training to a variety of clients. Specific seminars, distances learning options, and direct consulting services are ways that InterWorks helps NGO personnel develop professional, technical, and general skills that are of use in the field. The InterWorks website explains it this way:

InterWorks provides customized training, distance learning and consulting services that enhance our client’s efforts to reduce disaster risks, prepare and respond to humanitarian emergencies and build peaceful and sustainable societies.... InterWorks provides... solutions to [the] United Nations, NGOs, governmental, academic and military organizations involved in international development, disaster management and humanitarian emergency response. We are dedicated to addressing your particular priorities, opportunities and constraints, and delivering our services when and where you need them. To date, our staff have worked in more than 60 countries.71

Training and consulting services that InterWorks provides are primary indicators that disasters are becoming increasingly complex and professional. Still, gaps exist between NGOs and other agencies, potentially because of management structure and the lines of work associated with NGO operations. Although the number of NGOs is rising, there is not necessarily a significant parallel shift in the level of professionalism and expertise. Paul Thompson, executive director and cofounder of InterWorks, suggests that though some sectors are increasing in capability, many still have not progressed from 1980s levels of capacity and know-how.72 This is troubling.

NGO Training Organizations

The following websites list courses for NGOs for specialized training for improving technical capacity and professionalism:

- Alnap: [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)
- CHART: [http://coe-dmha.org/course_chart.htm](http://coe-dmha.org/course_chart.htm)
- H.E.L.P.: [www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/helpcourse](http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/helpcourse)
- IDHA: [www.cihc.org/idha](http://www.cihc.org/idha)
- INTRAC: [http://bricksandmortar.wordpress.com/2009/02/05/intrac-ngo-training-courses](http://bricksandmortar.wordpress.com/2009/02/05/intrac-ngo-training-courses)
- InterWorks: [www.interworksmadison.com](http://www.interworksmadison.com)
- Karl Kübel Institute for Development Education: [www.kkid.org/ngo_training_programmes.asp](http://www.kkid.org/ngo_training_programmes.asp)
- RedR: [www.redr.org](http://www.redr.org)

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72 Interviews, Paul Thompson (InterWorks, Summer, 2002) and Donald Krumm (USAID, Winter and Spring, 2002).
Thompson believes. “Many NGOs are staffing their projects with generalists,” he says, “and that means that an NGO doing a shelter project after a conflict or earthquake can manage materials and the logistics of the program, but may not know the appropriate materials, structures, geometry or plumbing to use for that region. Kosovo was a good example. Of the more than 10 NGOs that were executing emergency shelter programs, only three or four were competent and had shelter or construction experts.”

NGOs also depend largely on training conferences and courses held at various times of the year by different hosts. For an extensive list of training conferences, classes, and programs, Reliefweb (www.reliefweb.int) is the most likely to have comprehensive databases available online. It lists numerous training programs for humanitarian assistance management, logistics, telecommunications, sectors, and many other topics. The H.E.L.P., IDHA, and CHART courses are examples of civil-military relations programs, specific humanitarian assistance courses, and medical response training courses that involve both civilian and military participants:

- **H.E.L.P.** Managed and taught by the ICRC, the H.E.L.P. course was created in 1986 to upgrade professionalism in humanitarian assistance programs conducted in emergency situations. These courses are given all over the world and since 1986 have helped train approximately 1,600 health professionals and humanitarian aid workers from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, United Nations agencies, NGOs, ministries of health, armed forces medical services, and various academic institutions.

- **International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance (IDHA).** The Center for International Humanitarian Cooperation developed a practical, academic program offering an international diploma in humanitarian assistance with the goal of creating universally accepted basics that should be taught to humanitarian aid workers. This course enables aid workers to function more effectively and efficiently in times of war or in the event of natural disasters. More than 990 UN, NGO, military, diplomats, academics, political, and religious groups from more than 120 nations have graduated from the program.

- **Combined Humanitarian Assistance Response Training (CHART).** This 5-day course is designed to introduce military and civilian personnel to the spectrum of humanitarian action within complex emergencies and natural disasters. Course participants discuss the unique issues in coordination, public health, security, and logistics necessary to support or execute a humanitarian program or operation. Graduates are better prepared to respond in their respective capacities to emergencies through their increased awareness and enhanced understanding of different humanitarian response environments including the difficult civil-military relationship.

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### NGOs and Inter- and Intra-NGO Relations

NGOs are just like other organizations. There are good managers, bad managers, rivalries, weaknesses, deficiencies, staff shortages, and various other problems. Of specific value to this manual are two

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types of conflict: field-headquarter conflicts within an NGO, and NGO-to-NGO conflicts between organizations.

Many NGOs experience ongoing conflict between field and HQ offices. Although the root of the conflict can be explained various ways, evidence is clear that HQ personnel continually feel left out of field-based decision-making, and that field personnel feel continually pressured and burdened by HQ demands and processes. Field staff members are often experts in their trade and are able to make decisions quickly. HQ staffers often attempt to put more management into the decision-making process because of specific donor regulations or senior-level director management style. In any case, this straddling for position often creates tension between staff members who feel the urgency of the moment (field level) and those who have to archive and account for field operations from a safe and comfortable HQ location.

The NGO community is also known for rivalries between NGOs. Many NGOs develop institutional relationships with others, creating bonds in some cases and tension in others. Furthermore, many NGOs depend on external funding from the same few donor agencies. When vying for the same grant award, NGOs must compete with each other to obtain the grant. Although the lowest bidder does not always get the grant, it is true that NGOs must jostle and position for funding in tense environments. NGO operations often depend on it. Without that grant, NGOs may have to pack up and go home, which would mean laying off personnel and capacity. This is institutional competition.

In any case, tensions within and between NGOs are not major factors in gauging an NGO’s capacity, but often can be a sign of institutional credibility and performance. An NGO with low personnel morale and negative attitudes toward their work and employer could signal a specific weakness in management or organization culture. An NGO with a bad reputation throughout the NGO community may be a signal of poor programming or practices. However, it is important to keep in mind that NGOs, for reasons including safety, personality of field staff, funding, and the like may have a poor reputation in one country but be considered effective and successful in others. Still, as in other organizations and communities or sectors, there are always problems at NGOs, and most navigate through them successfully.

### Conclusion: NGO Staff Are Good to Go

NGOs depend on a solid class of professional, experienced, and senior-level disaster and emergency managers that have worked in some of the most severe, harsh, and challenging environments in the world. The days of witnessing untrained and young “humanitarians” attempting to get involved are not over, but now more than ever value is placed on professional operations, experience, protocol, training, and capacity to handle extremely technical tasks in difficult working environments. Advanced degrees and program specialties are major rank indicators, and most mainstream NGOs found operating in humanitarian emergencies can be trusted to meet their objectives.