Introduction

This book is about nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), often referred to as private voluntary organizations (PVOs), nonprofits, charities, and (humanitarian) aid organizations. Its aim is to orient the military with NGOs: their operations, strengths, limitations, budgets, practices, and other characteristics that make them unique actors in a large and dynamic humanitarian community.

Every NGO is unique: no two have exactly the same objectives, missions, operating procedures, or capacities. To provide a cohesive body of information, generalizations are often made and detail may be sacrificed. This book has been produced specifically for uniformed services personnel, but it may prove useful to others in understanding some of the military-specific issues in foreign aid.

The annexes in this book play an important part in constructing an understanding of NGOs and the NGO community. Designed as a quick reference, annex 2 is a compilation of the most informative websites highlighted in different sections of the book. Annex 1 covers the basics for NGOs commonly found in humanitarian emergencies around the world and ones the military are likely to encounter. In addition, a more comprehensive and searchable database of NGOs can be found at www.global-health.org.

This publication was initially written in the spring and summer of 2002 by Grey Frandsen, at the time a project officer for CDHAM and a graduate student at the Johns Hopkins University School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Mr. Frandsen served as special assistant to Ambassador Carlos Pascual, who headed the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) at the State Department, and S/CRS advisor on NGO-military relations.

Using the original text as a guide, the book was rewritten and updated in 2009. Many people contributed to this effort and are designated as authors in the chapter they wrote or edited. Additional editorial help came from Jennifer Espititu MD, MPH (UNC-Chapel Hill), Warner Anderson (IHD), Charles Beadling, and Kevin Riley (CDHAM). The extensive NGO list in annex 1 was researched and written by Kristen Saenger and Helen Barnhardt, both first-year medical students at Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, with the help of Gregg Nakano (CDHAM). We are grateful to everyone who helped in this revision.

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For feedback, suggestions, or additions, contact ngobook@cdham.org.