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Evaluation of Non-Governmental Organizations as UNESCO's Programme Delivery Mechanisms

D. Daniels and Associates
June 2006

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Executive Summary

Background

UNESCO has collaborated with NGOs since its founding in 1945 when the UNESCO constitution envisaged a role for NGOs. UNESCO even helped create some of the international professional associations in the 1950s. Over 200 NGOs maintain status with UNESCO and the Sexennial reports provided to General Conferences have described over time UNESCO's activities with NGOs.

This evaluation was commissioned to provide the first external assessment of how UNESCO works with NGOs to deliver UNESCO programmes.

The growth in the number of NGOs and the scope of their activities over the last few decades has been exceptional. There are hundreds of thousands of NGOs addressing every aspect of human activity and interest. They range in size from organizations that have a larger budget than UNESCO to many that operate mainly with volunteer effort and few resources. They range in scope from global membership associations to small community based organizations.

Major Findings

The evaluation found that there are NGOs that are relevant to achieving nearly all UNESCO programmes objectives and to advancing each of UNESCO's functions. NGO contributions are identified for each of the UNESCO functions with their contribution being greatest in capacity building and least in contributing to standard setting.

All programme sectors work with some kind of NGO but the level of involvement with NGOs appears to be greatest in the Education, Culture and Social and Human Sciences programmes.

This report identifies areas of comparative advantage for different types of UNESCO partners. Global membership associations and some NGO networks offer access to unparalleled global expertise. Sector specific NGOs can provide continuity of experience and the ability to provide pilot testing. National development NGOs, which have probably grown faster than any other type, provide a knowledge and credibility with UNESCO target groups that no other organizations can match. In general, NGOs can provide faster response times than other partners and they are often in the vanguard in promoting progressive values that UNESCO espouses. Many NGOs have also demonstrated a track record of competence and professionalism in managing projects which is why they have been attracting increasing resources over time.

The evaluation found a mixed picture in terms of the effectiveness of projects delivered by NGOs. Some provide very high benefits. They are particularly effective in some areas, such as providing benefits to key UNESCO target groups. They can be effective in providing pilot testing of new approaches but less effective in being able to scale up activities to a national level. The level of cost efficiency can be very high where NGOs provide voluntary resources or low personnel costs in UNESCO projects. Other projects are seen as having limited benefits with no sustainability or continuity of effort.

There are problems that arise from interaction between different parts of UNESCO in managing NGO projects either because there is inadequate consultation or even shifting responsibilities for project guidance between different offices. Projects developed in the field seem to have better results than those in Headquarters since field offices are better able to provide closer monitoring and to link the project to other UNESCO activities.

Key Recommendations

1. The evaluation recommends that UNESCO pursue opportunities to expand its cooperation with NGOs in light of their growing competence, cost effectiveness and their commitment to UNESCO values.

2. The evaluation found that there are certain project characteristics that enhance likelihood of effectiveness. UNESCO should build into its cooperation with NGOs these factors:

- a. selecting projects within a larger programme strategy;
- b. supporting larger projects;
- c. providing continuity through multi-phase support;
- d. drawing in more partners;
- e. pursuing cross linkages with other projects;
- f. addressing the issue of sustainability; and
- g. maximizing UNESCO's opportunity to act as an interlocutor and a catalyst.

3. UNESCO governance of NGO projects exhibits a number of weaknesses. The evaluation recommends better mapping of NGOs to improve selection of the most appropriate partners from the growing body of NGOs that UNESCO can work with.. Monitoring and evaluation of projects is limited and difficult to achieve in most cases, particularly when the project is small and UNESCO staff are distant from the NGO. The field offices appear to have advantages in selecting and monitoring NGOs relative to those commissioned by those in headquarters.

4. UNESCO should define more carefully the principles and practices it will use to build partnerships with NGOs and other actors. It should pursue such partnerships as part of a broader strategy in each area that identifies what it wants to achieve and where NGOs can be the most appropriate partner to help achieve the strategy.

5. UNESCO should implement guidelines for selection, approval and monitoring of NGO projects building on the lessons identified in this evaluation that improve the likelihood of project effectiveness. Project development and choice of partner should be done at the most local level that is feasible. Modest resources should be devoted to assessing project performance in selected NGO projects to build a better basis for improving project performance by this kind of key UNESCO partner.

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AusAID	Australian Aid Agency
BSP	Bureau of Strategic Planning
CLT	Culture
CI	Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CCNGO	Consultative Committee of Non Governmental Organizations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
Danida	Danish International Development Agency
EI	Education International
EFA	Education For All
ERC	External Relations and Cooperation
EXB	Extrabudgetary Funds
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
ICSU	International Council of Scientific Unions
ICCROM	The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage
ISSC	International Social Science Council
IFI	International Financial Institution
IESALC	International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean
INGOs	International Non Governmental Organizations
IOS	Internal Oversight Service
NATCOM	UNESCO National Commission
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCRC	Project Cooperation Review Committee
RUSHAP	Regional Unit for Social and Human Sciences in the Asia-Pacific Region
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHC	World Heritage Committee

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1. Introduction

Non Governmental Organizations have been involved with UNESCO since its foundation in 1945 when the UNESCO Constitution identified a role for NGOs.

Two main arrangements are currently in place for the monitoring and evaluation of cooperation between UNESCO and NGOs. The Director-General presents a report at each regular session of the General Conference on any changes that have taken place in the classification of international organizations maintaining official relations with UNESCO. Secondly the General Conference receives, every six years, a report by the Executive Board on the contribution made to UNESCO's activities by organizations maintaining formal relations with it. This sexennial report is also intended to include an evaluation of the results of cooperation with organizations maintaining operational relations with UNESCO.

However, UNESCO has not commissioned an external and independent assessment of UNESCO's cooperation with NGOs. Thus, the 32nd General Conference decided to authorize the present evaluation, focusing only on specific subject of the contribution of NGOs as UNESCO programme delivery mechanisms.

The evaluation will focus on operational relations with NGOs. Operational relations are defined as cooperation activities between Member States, Secretariat and NGOs "that extends beyond opinions, consultations, and meetings and backs up UNESCO's efforts to achieve a more active presence in the field"¹ "The operational relationship is essentially seen as a partnership for programme implementation"²

1.1 Evaluation Objectives

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to assess the efficiency and the effectiveness of NGOs as an increasingly important UNESCO programme delivery mechanism. It will assess the performance of NGOs as partners to implement UNESCO's programmes, achieve the objectives of the organization, and serve its strategic priorities.

More specifically, the main objectives of the evaluation are to determine the:

- Relevance of NGOs to UNESCO's programme priorities as programme delivery mechanisms;
- Results achieved by NGOs and their contribution to achieving UNESCO's goals;
- Quality of coordination and interaction between NGOs, UNESCO Headquarters, and field units, with regard to planning and implementation of programmes;
- UNESCO Governance of programme delivery by NGOs; and
- Good practices and recommendations to improve the cooperation with NGOs in accordance with their specific added value as a programme delivery mechanism.

1 31 C/27 paragraph 22.

2 31 C/27 paragraph 46.

1.2 Methodology

The evaluation will cover the period 2002- September 2005. The evaluation used two key sources of information: people and documents. Given the short time frame available of less than two months for this review, it was decided not to use questionnaires which require time to submit and to follow up to ensure a sufficient response rate. Instead individuals were interviewed either in person or by phone from all sector programmes in UNESCO as well as from a sample of different field offices. Person to person interviews as well as telephone interviews provided a more limited coverage than a survey could but allowed for more exploration of the real benefits and weaknesses in NGO performance. Interviews were conducted in UNESCO headquarters with staff from the different programme sectors, ERC and the Africa department from February 1-8.

In addition, a short visit was made to the UNESCO office in Guatemala from March 6-9 to interview UNESCO staff and to meet with six NGOs. Other interviews were conducted by phone with other country offices and some NGOs. A full list of those consulted is available in Appendix I.

Guatemala was chosen for a field visit after identifying a number of UNESCO offices that could be visited within the travel budget and time available. Contacts were made with these offices in Latin America and the Caribbean to review the kind of experience they have had in working with NGOs and the availability of staff who have some experience in working with NGOs. The Guatemala office was chosen as providing the best mix of programme activities and available staff from this short list.

Other data was collected from extant documents in UNESCO, a selective search of the SISTER (System of Information on Strategies, Tasks and the Evaluation of Results) database and external NGO evaluations carried out by other organizations. It also included a search of IOS's evaluation database and the UNESCO website. The evaluation used commonly agreed UN and international norms and standards and the results were triangulated to provide as reliable an assessment as possible.

1.3 Limitations

UNESCO's cooperation with NGOs cuts across the normal programme categorization of UNESCO activities. It is a stripe dimension so the organization does not document this in a way that one can easily analyze. There is some summary information in the C/5 Programme and Budget documents but one cannot get expenditure data specifically on NGOs from FABS (Finance and Budget System) and in most cases, one cannot use the SISTER database to identify the contracted organization as an NGO. These databases do not classify projects by type of recipient. It was also difficult to get information from UNESCO staff that covered a broad range of activities since most staff consulted tended to be familiar only with their own specific programme.

There is no centralized information system in UNESCO on all NGO managed projects contrary to the views expressed by some UNESCO staff who thought that ERC maintains such a database.

As a result, the limited evidence available in UNESCO documents and information from UNESCO staff means that this evaluation cannot fully document and assess UNESCO's experience with NGOs.

Many of the NGO projects funded from UNESCO's programme budget are very small, except for EXB projects and the documents are located in the field offices. There is limited reporting by UNESCO on project outcomes so it is difficult to identify from monitoring or end of project reports what the outcomes were, let alone the possible impact. Fortunately there is a growing body of evaluations conducted by UNESCO which provides some analysis on projects managed by NGOs. There are few, however, yet that directly address NGOs and NGO project management issues.

The range of NGOs and the types of activities that UNESCO commissions from NGOs is so diverse that it is difficult to be sure that the sample covered in this review is sufficient to generalize in the findings. Some issues appeared to be so pervasive that the findings of this review would cover a significant portion of UNESCO's collaboration with NGOs. However, it is unlikely that a review of such a broad range of activities could reach conclusions that are applicable in all cases.

1.4 Acknowledgements

The author is extremely grateful to Atsuko Shintani, the responsible programme officer in IOS who set up meetings and tracked down many kinds of information for this review. Geoffrey Geurts (IOS) assisted in searching different UNESCO databases to identify any NGO related material. In addition, Katherine Grigsby, the Director of the Guatemala office and her staff set up a full set of meetings at very short notice and readily provided all the information requested, although the office was busy with other major events at the time. Thanks are also due to UNESCO staff and NGO personnel who provided time and material for this review.

2. UNESCO's Cooperation with NGOs

NGOs have become a powerful and growing force for development of human society in the last half century. They exhibit considerable diversity ranging in size from organizations that have a larger budget than UNESCO down to small unregistered CBOs that represent small communities or interest groups at the local level.

The number of NGOs dedicated to different development issues of concern to UNESCO has accelerated at a phenomenal rate in recent decades and has led to more demands by these organizations for input into international organizations. NGOs have also demonstrated greater expertise and capability. The number and range of NGOs has increased more than ten fold in some regions in the last few decades and civil society organizations are now a critical force for development. The numbers have grown so quickly that it is difficult to estimate the total numbers. However a recent database produced by the Department of Industry in Canada is illustrative of their size with some 175,000 social organizations and 75,000 charitable organizations being identified in a country of less than 35 million.

Their increasing presence has led to more interaction between NGOs and donor and international agencies. The level of involvement of UN agencies with NGOs varies but some are devoting as much as two thirds of their budget in the case of UNHCR to projects with NGOs. The IFIs are also allocating more resources to using NGOs for programme delivery. A recent evaluation by ADB found that NGO contract involvement in ADB loans had increased from 4 large loan projects in 1990 to 28 in 1999 representing 49% of all loans in 1999.

The UNESCO constitution adopted in November, 1945 took into account the essential role that non-governmental organizations could play along with government sponsored action in international cooperation. In line with other international organizations, UNESCO's collaboration with NGOs has grown over the years. UNESCO played an important role in creating international NGOs in its early years as it assisted in the creation of a number of international organizations, in the 1950s. In addition, UNESCO cooperates with a wide variety of NGOs that represent constituencies as diverse as:

- membership associations such as specialist or learned societies (teachers, scientists, philosophers, writers and lawyers);
- mass organizations (trade unions, cooperatives, women's associations and youth movements);
- religious organizations;
- sector specific organizations; and
- development NGOs for specific communities

UNESCO introduced a major change in its relations with NGOs with the adoption of Directives concerning UNESCO's relations with non-governmental organizations that

were approved in 1995 and amended in 2001.³ The core of the new Directives has been summarized in the desk study prepared by IOS⁴ as:

- establishment of a partnership based on the representativeness of the NGO (headquarters, membership, structures and location of activities), its dynamism (active association of members from grass-roots level to the top), the nature and regularity of its cooperation (activities, projects, etc.) with UNESCO;
- limitation of formal relations to a renewable period of six years (depending on the nature of the cooperation actually implemented);
- establishment of a new type of operational relations, a less rigid and more dynamic framework, with a view to reflecting more closely the needs for cooperation with NGOs at all levels;
- diversification of the arrangements for cooperation into: intellectual cooperation⁵, financial cooperation⁶, material cooperation⁷; and
- renewal of UNESCO's commitment to cooperate with NGOs both in the planning and in the implementation of programmes and field activities.

The adoption of the new Directives in 1995 opened the way for thoroughgoing reforms with many implications for operational cooperation among which :

- UNESCO is able to cooperate with a wider variety of NGOs: national, local or field organizations (in consultation with the National Commissions established in Member States);
- at the national level, increased priority is given to the establishment of a triangular partnership among NGOs (whether national organizations or national sections of international organizations), National Commissions for UNESCO and field units of the Secretariat.

The 1995 Directives also provided for the establishment of an NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee which acts as an official body to represent the collective voice and view of

3 Directives concerning UNESCO's relations with non-governmental organizations. Approved by the General Conference at the 28th Session. 1995

4 Evaluation of Non Governmental Organizations as UNESCO's Programme Delivery Mechanisms, Desk Study prepared by IOS, June, 2005

5 Intellectual contribution (advice, advisory services; secondments of programme specialists, experts/lecturers; documentation) and moral support (patronage, use of the Organization's name and logos, etc.).

6 contracts (programme execution, implementation of framework agreements), contributions to activities under the Participation Programme, subventions now subject to very strict rules (27 C/Resolution 13.141).

7 By making available of premises on a long-term or exceptional basis (offices; rooms for meetings or performances; exhibition areas)

NGO organizations in official relations with UNESCO. The NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee cooperates with the secretariat, notably through collective consultations involving NGOs in a particular sector: This helps UNESCO prepare its programmes and undertake joint projects to further its objectives. The Committee has created Joint Programme Commissions and working groups and participates in the collective consultations that are commissioned for major international conferences.

The Executive Board of UNESCO has also created its own ongoing link to NGOs with the decision at its 122nd session to create the Committee on NGOs as a permanent committee of the Board⁸.

Within the UNESCO Secretariat, the Sector for External Relations and Cooperation is responsible for helping to strengthen cooperation with NGOs in accordance with the Directives concerning UNESCO's relations with NGOs. . Its duties (performed in cooperation with the programme sectors, field units and national commissions, as well as NGOs) are mainly:

- a) admission of NGOs to official relations: examination of requests for admission and reclassification and preparation of relevant recommendations to be submitted to the Committee on NGOs of the Executive Board and implementation of the Directives and specific General Conference resolutions
- b) evaluation of cooperation with NGOs : support to the NGO Committee for the drafting of the sexennial report on the contribution of NGOs to UNESCO's activities and preparation of other Executive Board documents relating to the evaluation of cooperation
- c) coordination of cooperation with programme sectors (education, science, social and human sciences, culture and communication sectors
- d) communication : processing of correspondence with NGOs - requests for information, exchanges with NGOs maintaining official relations, invitations to meetings and requests for Secretariat representation, etc.
- e) coordination of and support to the collective consultation mechanisms : cooperation with the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee on preparations for, the holding and follow up to the NGO International Conference, collective consultations and joint programme commissions ; mobilization of NGOs for the preparation of major international conferences
- f) centralization and dissemination of data and information concerning cooperation with NGOs, notably maintaining and updating of the NGO database and the NGO website.

ERC maintains a database on NGOs which have official relations with UNESCO. The database provides information on: the scope of activities of each NGO; the type of statutory relation with UNESCO; sectors where it is active; the budget provided by the Participation Programme; and the existence of any framework agreements and funds

⁸ 122 EX/Decision 3.6 and 123 EX/Decision 4, 122nd Session of the Executive Committee.

provided through an agreement. However ERC does not receive information on any funds provided to NGOs from contracts issued by the programme sectors so there is no reliable way to identify how much money is provided by UNESCO to NGOs for programme delivery.

In addition to ERC, each programme sector has designated a focal point for NGO relations.

While affirming that UNESCO may maintain informal relations with NGOs, the 1995 Directive created new types of relations that UNESCO may establish with NGOs. “These relations are designed, on the one hand, to enable UNESCO to secure advice, technical cooperation and documentation from non-governmental organizations and, on the other, to enable such organizations, which represent important sections of public opinion, to express the views of their members. Since UNESCO is not a funding institution, these relations will be essentially of an intellectual nature.

Taking into account the non-governmental organization’s own objectives and the type of collaboration that is possible with UNESCO, two main types of relations will be established: the first will involve sustained cooperation both upstream and downstream from UNESCO’s programming and priorities (formal relations); the second will consist of a flexible and dynamic partnership in the implementation of UNESCO’s programmes (operational relations)⁹.”

2.1 UNESCO’s Operational Collaboration with NGOs

The category of Operational Relations was a new category established in 1995. The 1995 Directives indicated that “the Director-General may, if he deems it useful for the implementation of UNESCO’s programmes, cooperate with any non-governmental organization in a type of relations known as “operational relations”.

These relations are designed to enable UNESCO to establish and maintain flexible and dynamic partnerships with any organization of civil society that is active in UNESCO’s fields of competence at whatever level, and to benefit from that organization’s operational capacities in the field and its networks for the dissemination of information. Furthermore, these relations should make it possible to encourage the emergence of organizations representative of civil society, and their interaction at the international level, in those parts of the world in which they are weak or isolated. Finally, these relations should make it possible to gauge the competence and operational effectiveness of international non-governmental organizations with which UNESCO has previously had no relations whatsoever and which are desirous of establishing formal relations with it.

NGOs with operational relations status receive UNESCO documents and may be invited to participate observers at specified plenary meetings of the Conference and meetings of its commissions. Contracts may be concluded with organizations of a national or local nature maintaining operational relations with UNESCO, if the Director-General deems

⁹ Directives concerning UNESCO’s relations with non-governmental organizations, 1995

them to be the most competent to contribute to the execution of certain tasks scheduled in UNESCO's programme,

The Directives also indicated that contracts may be concluded with organizations of a national or local nature maintaining operational relations with UNESCO, if the Director-General deems them to be the most competent to contribute to the execution of certain tasks scheduled in UNESCO's programme.

In this context it is important to underline that the establishment of official relations with a given international NGO is not necessarily a prerequisite for the latter's cooperation with the Organization; it rather reflects the state of that NGOs sustained and constructive collaboration with UNESCO that has culminated in official relations between the two organizations. In other words, the Secretariat cooperates with a growing number of NGOs that, while being active in the Organization's fields of competence, may not have yet established official relations as defined in the above-mentioned "Directives".

UNESCO has provided funding for NGOs to undertake activities to achieve its programme delivery objectives with a wide range of NGOs that cut across these formal categories with projects being delivered by NGOs that have formal, operational and with NGOs, particularly at the national level, that have no formal status at all with UNESCO. However it does appear that the creation of the Operational status has been of assistance in helping to associate more NGOs with UNESCO who have programme delivery capability that UNESCO can draw on.

2.2 UNESCO Funding of NGO Activities

The 1995 Directives allowed UNESCO to grant various forms of financial and material contributions to non-governmental organizations likely to make a particularly effective contribution to the achievement of UNESCO's objectives as defined in its Constitution and to the implementation of its programme.

The Directives indicate that "financial and material contributions granted by UNESCO to non-governmental organizations shall be governed, as appropriate, by the following principles:

- (a) they shall be granted in accordance with the relevant rules currently in force;
- (b) they shall be granted for programmes and activities that have a bearing on UNESCO's priorities or constitute a useful addition to UNESCO's programmes and activities;
- (c) in no circumstances shall they constitute a permanent commitment on the part of the Organization;
- (d) financial contributions shall be granted solely for the purpose of supplementing the revenue that the beneficiary organization derives from other sources;
- (e) an organization receiving financial contributions shall have made appropriate arrangements for regular evaluation of the activities so financed and the submission of reports on the implementation of those activities.

Forms of contribution

The various forms of financial contribution shall comprise (i) the awarding of various types of contract (contracts for the implementation of framework agreements; other contracts for the implementation of UNESCO's regular programmes; contracts under the special programme of support to non-governmental entities for activities in developing countries);

- (ii) contributions under the Participation Programme; and
- (iii) subventions.”¹⁰

UNESCO categorizes its funding for NGOs in two categories. In addition to a general allocation to NGOs for programme delivery, UNESCO has another funding category for longer term agreements with a small number of INGOs that are broadly representative of certain core professional or interest constituencies. These framework agreements spell out the basic objectives that UNESCO and the INGO will try to reach over the mid-term strategy period. UNESCO commits to trying to provide a set level of funding over this period with allocation being made each biennium to reach this total. The agreements seem to focus mainly on participation in UNESCO meetings, preparation of manuals and dissemination of UNESCO material in their publications, training workshops and scholarships, research and databases. There was an assessment of 11 framework agreements in 2000 with the sectors generally providing positive comments about the benefits UNESCO has derived from its support to the INGOs through these agreements. Perhaps the most critical comment was made by the SHS sector which commented that

“Further reflection is needed concerning the basic purposes of framework agreements, in the case of ISSC as well as for similar NGOs. At present, by far the greater part of the funds made available to ISSC under the framework agreement goes towards support for activities of its member organizations.... These are certainly within the spirit of UNESCO's mission, but do not form part of UNESCO's own programme. Of the remaining funds, the greater part goes towards the costs of operating the ISSC secretariat itself. It is thus a question of policy, which should be considered at the highest level, whether the present “broad” interpretation of the purpose of the framework agreement is still viable, or whether a more “narrow” interpretation is appropriate, under which UNESCO funds would be provided only for the execution of specific projects of UNESCO's own programme”¹¹

As a good portion of the framework agreements cover non-operational activities such as conferences and other forms of consultation and there was a detailed assessment of these agreements in the last sexennial review, there will be little reference to this kind of UNESCO collaboration in this review.

UNESCO provides a breakdown of its funding of NGOs for these two categories in the C/5 Programme and Budget documents. One category covers funds provided under the framework agreements (FA). A second allocation is provided for operational activities with NGOs. The funding level for these two categories for four biennia is provided in

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ SEXENNIAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE ON THE CONTRIBUTION MADE TO UNESCO'S ACTIVITIES BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (1995-2000)61 EX/INF.8 PARIS, 21 March 2001

Table I. Unfortunately these documents do not capture all UNESCO financial transactions with NGOs since project funding may be provided by the programme sectors that is included under other programme budget categories.

Table I: UNESCO Programme Allocation to NGOs
(US\$ millions)

	INGO Framework Agreements	Other NGO	Total NGO	Programme Budget	Total NGO as Percent of Programme Budget
2000/01	8.0	11.3	19.3	103.7	18.6
2002/03	6.4	8.9	15.3	113.0	13.5
2004/05	2.3	10.4	12.7	148.2	8.6
2006/07(draft)	4.4	6.3	10.7	142.7	7.5

These figures show considerable fluctuation between the two categories of funding under framework agreements and other NGO funding over this period. However, the most notable feature is the consistent decline over time in overall funding for NGOs both in absolute amounts and as a share of the programme budgets. Its absolute share has fallen to nearly half over this period.

The declining share of resources shown in the C/5 documents over this period appears to be in contrast to other UN agencies and IFIs which have been increasing their funding directed through NGOs. The decline is not consistent with the views of many UNESCO staff members who indicated that they feel UNESCO is working more actively with NGOs. At the same time, a number of UNESCO staff commented that they feel UNESCO is not pursuing opportunities to expand their collaboration with NGOs as much as other UN agencies are.

“UNESCO is falling behind other UN agencies in building partnerships with NGOs and if it doesn’t change its approach, it will become more and more irrelevant.” (UNESCO HQ staff member)

Table II: UNESCO Sector Allocation to NGOs

(US\$)

Sector	2002/03		2004/05		2006/07	
	INGO FA	Other NGO	INGO FA	Other NGO	INGO FA	Other NGO
ED	1,324,000	3,811,250		2,990,200	2,238,200	2,253,600
SC	790,000	1,385,600	982,900	1,455,800	684,200	1,032,100
SHS	1,795,000	1,116,100	860,000	1,653,700	856,000	1,252,800
CLT	535,000	1,341,500	440,000	2,043,400	381,400	624,600
CI	1,960,000	1,219,500	20,000	2,218,200	31,300	853,550
Total	6,405,400	8,873,950	2,302,900	10,361,300	4,381,100	6,303,050

Sectoral allocations show considerable fluctuation and no discernable pattern either in the relative share between the two categories or in the amounts allocated over time. . The trend seems to be an increasing share for NGO contracts relative to framework agreements with INGOs except for the new biennium when there is a significant sift back to funding the framework agreements with INGOs.

The allocation of resources for NGO programme delivery shows increases by each sector in the last two biennia but a significant drop in planned allocation for each sector in the present biennia. Both CLT and CI show a drop of more than two thirds in their allocation.

While it is not possible to calculate the proportion spent by field offices from FABS or SISTER data because they do not categorize projects by the type of contract recipient, the evidence from sampling and from interviews with field staff indicate that UNESCO has been increasing the number of contracts provided to NGOs in the last few years.

Of six field offices searched on the SISTER database, the most complete project descriptions were found on the Jakarta cluster office. Of the 100 projects for which there is some description on the Indonesia office, 23 identified NGOs as key partners in project design. NGO input ranged from running workshops, carrying out case studies, working with particular target communities that UNESCO was trying to benefit and conducting research. NGOs appeared to be identified as partners most of all in the CLT and SHS sectors and most of these partners were national NGOs. In the case of Basic Sciences, partners ranged from regional and international professional associations to INGOs such as the WWF(World Wide Fund For Nature), IUCN (World Conservation Union) and TNC(The Nature Conservancy) working on biological diversity and resource conflict resolution.

The following table II shows the importance of NGO contracts in one cluster office.

Table III: Windhoek Office Collaboration with NGOs

Sectors	ED	CLT	SC	CI	SHS
Number of NGOs Projects	9	5	2	10	1
Percent of Total	30	25	30	100	100
Types of NGOs	National	National	National	National	CBO
Kind of Activity	90% development activity 10% research	100% research	50% development activity 50% research	90% development activity 10% research	100% development activity

The Bangkok office was unable to provide a similar overview but it did identify for some programmes that there is a wide range of NGO contracts ranging from 3 NGO projects of the 16 projects supported by the RUSHAP programme in the last biennium to contracts only with NGOs in the AIDS programme

While there is a large supply of possible NGO partners in each sector, there are differences in the numbers of NGOs that work in the different sectors of UNESCO's mandate as well as differences in the kind of NGOs that the Sector programmes work with. The sector review of NGO cooperation in the 2000 sexennial report showed that, as of 2000, 28.4% of NGOs with formal status with UNESCO were active in the Education sector and 27.9% in SHS fields of activity. The other three sectors are significantly smaller with Culture at 10.2%, Natural Sciences at 16.6% and Communications and Information at 13.9%.

All the programme sectors indicate that there is a UNESCO demand for NGO services. Education has identified a wide range of areas that it looks to NGOs as partners in technical assistance, advocacy, and testing. The Natural Science sector focuses more on collaboration with two major international INGOs to promote the development of scientific capability and to address major scientific challenges. The SHS sector notes a particular role for NGOs in its programmes on human rights, women and gender, democracy, and the struggle against racism and discrimination. This review identified a number of projects at the national level that addressed these issues. The number of NGOs working in the rapidly evolving field of the Communication and Information sector provides more opportunity for the CI sector.

The UNESCO Institutes appear to have a much lower level of collaboration with NGOs judging by the evaluations that have been carried out recently on the UNESCO Institutes for Education. IESALC has developed projects with NGOs on areas such as gender issues and access for people with disabilities in a number of Latin American

countries (Chile, Mexico, Dominican Republic and Colombia) whereas the HED and IIEP evaluations do not note any project involvement with NGOs.

3. Relevance

Finding 1: There is sufficient diversity in the types of NGOs that UNESCO can find NGO partners that are relevant to its work in achieving nearly all UNESCO programmes and functions.

While the enormous numbers and range of expertise of NGOs has already been mentioned, they also exhibit characteristics that make them appropriate partners for UNESCO in its different programmes and functions.

NGOs exhibit a number of features where they provide a comparative advantage over other possible delivery mechanisms. Governments naturally remain as the central actor in UNESCO's operations and they have the ability to set and enforce standards and establish and maintain national programmes. However, governments with limited resources find it difficult to address all the needs of particular disadvantaged groups that UNESCO targets. Universities are generally more effective in carrying out research and providing high levels of expertise in different scientific fields although they are often less effective in being able to manage projects. Some UNESCO staff commented that they tend to be slow and unresponsive at times. Consultants provide UNESCO with the opportunity to select an exact combination of expertise that they want and direct them to specific tasks although they tend to be expensive and are not appropriate resources to use in creating or managing ongoing project activities.

In comparison with these actors, NGOs exhibit a wider diversity in areas of comparative advantage that UNESCO can draw upon and UNESCO needs to choose NGO partners according to the comparative advantage each kind of NGO provides.

Global membership associations and some NGO networks offer UNESCO access to unparalleled global expertise for consultant and technical advice that no single institution could match. NGO networks can be a source of in-depth knowledge of local conditions and bring together broad regional and global knowledge on specific subjects.

Sector specific NGOs can provide continuity of experience, access and the ability to provide pilot level testing.

National development NGOs, which have probably grown in number faster than other types, often provide a knowledge and credibility with priority UNESCO target groups that no other organizations can match. UNESCO staff comments and other evaluations show that they are often faster to respond and less bureaucratic. They are often in the vanguard in promoting and creating change on progressive values that UNESCO espouses. Importantly many of these NGOs have established a track record of competence and professionalism in managing projects which is one reason why they have been attracting a higher share of international development resources.

NGOs can contribute to all the UNESCO functions although their contribution is much stronger in some functions than in others. The following table III provides an indication of the relative strength of NGOs in each function.

Table IV: NGO Contribution to UNESCO Functions

UNESCO Function	NGO Contribution
A Laboratory of Ideas	<p>There are numerous examples where NGOs undertake pilot projects to test novel approaches to achieve UNESCO programme objectives. The MOST cities project (urban poverty) and literacy (Alfa Sole) are examples of novel NGO approaches that are cited elsewhere in this review</p> <p>This would appear to be an area where UNESCO has had good results as NGO's are seen by UNESCO staff as being faster to respond and more imaginative than other partners such as universities. Many have a good record of working over time with disadvantaged groups so that NGOs have the credibility with these groups to try out new approaches.</p>
A Clearing House	<p>UNESCO has supported NGOs to help it identify the best experts, hosting meetings and publishing results. Their contribution is most notable in the ED and SHS sectors.</p> <p>NGOs are probably not contributing as much as they could as many are weak in documenting and disseminating best practices and experiences. With the growing networking experience and effectiveness of NGOs in creating regional and international networks, there is an increasing opportunity to use such networks to collect and document databases in UNESCO's programme priority areas. . Some UNESCO staff felt that this would be a cheaper alternative to UNESCO maintaining these in-house. UNESCO has supported NGO networks such as the CCNGO which has prepared over 50 case studies of national EFA experience. . EI involved in internet discussion forum on UNESCO website.</p> <p>Professional INGOs supported by UNESCO already have important functions in contributing to UNESCO's clearing house objectives. An example is the rock art database and inventory of heritage sites in the</p>

	Indian Ocean island states that ICOMOS has created.
A Standard Setter	Most limited NGO role except for contributing to monitoring and promoting adherence UNESCO support for Ombudsmen Network in Latin America allows for a stronger national monitoring of human rights. An example in helping define standards is NGO involvement in helping define transmitting standards for the Charter on Preservation of Digital Heritage.
A Capacity Builder in Member States	Most active involvement by NGOs addressing this function. UNESCO both helps build capability of NGOs and uses NGOs to build capability. Development NGOs are used to build community capacity of UNESCO target groups and professional and sector specific NGOs have been used to provide technical training. Cases are described elsewhere in this report on capacity building projects in Africa, Guatemala and the Philippines.
A Catalyst for International Cooperation	UNESCO has an Important role in supporting innovative NGO work and acting as an interlocutor with governments to incorporate or accommodate innovative work, particularly with disadvantaged groups. There are cases described elsewhere in the text where both ED and SHS have played this role.

4. Effectiveness

Finding 2: There is limited documented evidence of the results and impact achieved by NGOs but there is good evidence in specific cases of positive results being achieved

There is very little documented evidence on the effectiveness and possible impact of UNESCO projects with NGOs, except for the positive assessments made in some UNESCO evaluations.

The lack of evidence of effectiveness and impact is not surprising since other agencies have had little success in measuring effectiveness, often on projects much larger than those that UNESCO supports. The OECD undertook an assessment of some 240 NGO project evaluations supported by bilateral donor agencies and found that “a first overarching conclusion –confirmed by data and interviews in all (26) different study countries-is that in spite of growing interest in evaluation, there is still a lack of reliable evidence on the impact of NGO development projects and programmes”¹²

There are projects, particularly where there is ongoing support by UNESCO, where there is evidence that the projects have had considerable achievements relative to the resources provided. These tend to be qualitative but they do provide evidence that some NGOs have been very effective in achieving project objectives. UNESCO staff and publications point to numerous examples where UNESCO projects have been effective. An onsite visit to a number of NGOs in Guatemala showed very significant benefits they were providing to different disadvantaged communities in the country. Examples of other projects that have achieved good results are presented in the section on Lessons Learned. One may not be able to measure benefits but they are verifiable as in this country visit.

Open Schools in Brazil

One programme where there has been measurement of change is in the Open Schools programme supported by the Brazil country office. Initiated by UNESCO and funded by various levels of government from municipal, state and now federal, the programme has spread to some thousands of schools. The objective of this programme is to promote a culture of peace, promote quality of life and social inclusion by involving the local community to provide more activities for youth in schools on the weekends.

NGOs and CBOs are active in providing programme delivery in many of these projects. UNESCO research carried out on this programme found that the level of violence dropped in the urban areas where Open Schools were operating and 61% of students reported better learning conditions and 77% reported better relations with other students.

On the other hand, UNESCO staff felt that a significant number of projects do not achieve any beneficial change. Many projects are so small and are one off in nature that

¹² Riddell, R et al. Hidden Assets? Measuring the Performance of Non-Governmental Organizations. OECD p.1, 1997

they cannot be expected to make much difference unless they are part of a wider set of activities. Sometimes this is due to poor design. A UNESCO evaluation of an ICT workshop in West Africa pointed out that the workshop participants were unable to use any skills they developed because they don't have access to any ICT equipment either in their homes or offices. They were also told that there were no plans to address this. (See box)

Use of ICTs for Non Formal Education¹³

An example of a project with an NGO management component with many problems was the training component in a project supported by an EXB grant of \$483,000 from Italy carried out from January, 2002 to December, 2004. One of the two main objectives was to develop a prototype ICT training programme for people involved in literacy and non-formal education in four African countries. A different NGO was chosen to manage the activity in each of three countries and a National Commission was chosen in the fourth country. In each case, a number of other partners were involved from the Ministry of Education, other NGOs and universities who helped develop the training modules. Training courses on the use of ICTs were held in each country for between 13 and 20 individuals.

The UNESCO report to the government of Italy identified a number of weaknesses in this project component. There was a lack of coordination between UNESCO bureaus and between the Education and the Communication and Information sectors. There was limited technical input from the CI sector. The NGOs chosen had limited expertise in ICTs. This partly explained why they had difficulty in understanding the objectives and developing and implementing a work programme. Many of the participants had limited computer skills and only 2 of the 20 Ugandan participants had access to a computer at their place of work.

This project demonstrates weaknesses in UNESCO design and management as well as communication difficulties within UNESCO. UNESCO staff had difficulty in directing this project from a distance.

It also demonstrated weakness in NGO performance in carrying out the project. It shows that NGO performance can be poor in areas where they have little competence and that UNESCO needs to play an active supporting role in design, monitoring and backstopping support if they work with inexperienced NGOs.

Review of a number of UNESCO projects found, as have other UNESCO evaluations, that project documents are weak in identifying planned outputs and rarely identified expected changes. Many projects have a dual objective of producing outputs in UNESCO programme priority areas and a capacity building objective. However there is no clear distinction made on what resources are directed to each and separate objectives and indicators for each. This makes it difficult to judge effectiveness.

A second constraint in being able to measure effectiveness is that some UNESCO projects are a component in a larger set of sectoral or multidisciplinary problem activities so judging the project in isolation doesn't give a reliable picture.

¹³ UNESCO Developpement de l'Education non formelle par les Nouvelles Technologies de l'information et de la Communication. FMR/ED/BAS/05/234(FIT) March, 2005

Capacity Building Program for NGOs/CSOs Involved in Education in Sub-Saharan Africa¹⁴

Another project with some similar features was judged to be more successful. This project had a budget of US\$275,000 provided by Norway, the World Bank and UNESCO. It was intended to reinforce civil society participation in education for all by developing training and management tools, reinforcing NGO/CSO capacity to participate in education policy formulation and strengthening their competencies in different aspects of curriculum development in six francophone African countries.

As in the previous example, national NGO teams were selected to act as the executing agencies.

The project was judged to be successful in achieving its objectives. A number of training and management tools and a methodological guide were developed and training workshops were held in each of the six countries. The use of NGO networks was helpful in providing the broad consultative process that led to consensus on the conceptual frameworks. It proved difficult for them to provide the time necessary to finalize the frameworks so UNESCO provided contracts with selected NGOs/networks to produce the final versions. Where NGO networks did not have an established institutional base, an individual NGO had to step in to provide office space and organizational resources.

UNESCO provided close support which helped overcome some of the constraints from NGOs not being used to working together

With only a few exceptions, the NGOs had to turn to specialists from the Ministries and universities to get the best qualified expertise. There are however a number of other cases where the NGOs possessed sufficient technical expertise to carry out the activity themselves.

One issue where the NGOs did not meet UNESCO objectives was that women represented only 30 percent of the numbers participating in the consultations and training sessions. These activities took place in countries where there is a significant gender imbalance in education at all levels and hence there are fewer educated women who could participate in these activities. It should not be assumed, however, that all NGOs have progressive policies in every case. A study in Bangladesh¹⁵ looking at government and NGO programme implementation found that the personal orientation of field workers was more significant in promoting gender equity than the kind of organization they work for.

Finding 3: Some NGO projects may be costly in terms of the small scale of activities and the number of individuals reached in projects but the effects of these projects are often more sustainable than other non NGO projects of a similar size. In other cases, the value of NGO outputs far exceeds the costs provided by UNESCO.

Where the activity supported is a one off activity that the NGO will not carry on, there are cases where the benefits are so limited that even the small contribution that UNESCO makes may not provide much return. However where the NGO continues to work on the same subject, there may be a long term benefit from the support provided. The continuity of effort directed by some NGOs to communities and development issues over decades in some cases is a considerable benefit. The cost of frequently changing

¹⁴ UNESCO Capacity Building for NGOs/CSOs Involved in Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Final Report. October, 2004

¹⁵ Goetz, A. M. Who has the final say? Fieldworker discretion in implementing policy. IDS, May, 1999

project priorities has been well documented in evaluations of bilateral donor agency projects.

NGOs, at least national NGOs, often provide personnel at below market salary levels and in other cases, tap volunteer resources. Even for one off activities, the benefits may be substantial. The Youth Bureau in BSP supported the Oxfam International Youth Parliament to develop a more readable youth publication on the Convention on Cultural Diversity. The Programme Chief estimated that the number of youth involved with developing this manual was about 1000 in the different countries involved although UNESCO only provided \$1000 for this activity.

The three INGOs, IUCN, ICOMOS, and ICCROM that provide services to the World Heritage Committee calculated, in a joint paper to the WHC, the value of the services provided by their Secretariats and members to the WHC. IUCN noted that it provided staff time of up to half a day for each request as well as regional expertise without charge for technical review of International Assistance Requests (55 by October 2004) in the last biennium. In addition, IUCN independent experts voluntarily review an average of five properties per year.

Field evaluators receive an honorarium of between US\$ 500 and US\$ 1 000 for missions lasting between four and eight days (some missions can last up to two weeks) plus up to six days work researching and preparing the report. In addition, an average of ten international experts provide voluntary services for desk reviews of each nomination.. The average cost based on a more standard consultant fee of a field visit is shown in the following table

Table V: Value of IUCN Site Missions for WHC

2 days preparation prior to mission	US\$ 1,000
6 days on mission (including travel) (missions can range from 4 to 14 days)	US\$ 3,000
4 days to prepare final report and communicate with IUCN and World Heritage Panel	US\$ 2,500
5 independent external expert reviewers (average fee US\$ 300 /review/day)	US\$ 1,500
TOTAL	US\$ 8,000

Overall, IUCN estimated that the total unpaid services provided by IUCN represent US\$213,000 over and above the US\$ 353,000 provided by UNESCO. This is a fair estimate in that UNESCO staff feel that the caliber of IUCN expertise provided is typically of high quality and these individuals would normally receive at least these consulting rates.

An evaluation of UNESCO support to ICSU also mentions that there is a significant multiplier effect from UNESCO support since ICSU members provide significant voluntary resources.¹⁶

Finding 4: UNESCO partnerships with NGOs have a demonstrable effect on UNESCO's capacity to achieve its programme objectives.

UNESCO staff members consulted were unanimous in their view that NGOs play a major role in extending UNESCO's ability to carry out its programme objectives. The number of UNESCO staff in any one programme area is very limited in terms of the mandate they are trying to fulfill. UNESCO's ability to tap world wide networks of professionals in the case of professional associations for UNESCO consultancies, to monitor activities and promote UNESCO objectives through NGO networks, and the ability of NGOs to act as intermediaries to address UNESCO programme objectives for different target groups were cited as critical factors in UNESCO performance.

Even development NGOs which are seen as very strong in their holistic approach to development and participatory strengths, can also bring technical expertise to UNESCO programme activities. The MOST cities project evaluation found that the Senegalese NGO, Enda Tiers Monde brought technological innovations in the field of environmental problems to an action research project on poor urban areas.

The wide range of organizations with which UNESCO works is an asset allowing it to tap very specific kinds of expertise it couldn't otherwise access. An example is the involvement of the students from the International Federation of Medical Students and from the International Pharmaceutical Students Federation who helped prepare a kit for young people on human rights and HIV/AIDS through a small UNESCO project. They brought both technical expertise as well as knowledge of youth attitudes to this project.

The following table prepared by the Windhoek office provides an assessment of the value of using NGOs provided by the different programme staff in Windhoek.

Table VI: Windhoek Office Assessment of NGO Value

	ED	CLT	SC	CI	SHS
Added value of engaging NGOs	positive value as implementation may be faster than government partners due to shorter administrative procedures	NGOs tends to have a better and deeper understanding of reality, at grassroots level	They bring a positive value to the implementation	NGOs tends to be more focus on specific issues at community level	They have a greater access to communities, and are close to identify community needs
Delivery of programmes in timely,	Yes, they are more timely and efficient than	It depends on the capacity of the NGO.	Yes, contributes to be more efficient	Quicker implementation than government	The human capacity of the NGOs

¹⁶ Green, W. Evaluation Report on Cooperation between UNESCO and ICSU under the Framework Agreement. February, 2000

efficient manner	government counterparts				determines efficiency and timely delivery of results
UNESCO capacity reinforced by cooperating with NGOs	yes	As above	The few NGOs in the science sector are often overwhelmed.	yes	Yes, NGOs can operate in frameworks where UNESCO has limited capacity
Sustainable long-term impact	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Administrative arrangements for accountability	Financial reports	Financial reports	Financial reports	Financial reports	Financial reports
Monitoring mechanisms	Activity report	Activity report Field/ project visits	Activity reports, monitoring communications (emails, fax)	Activity report	Activity report, field visit, monitoring communication (telephone, emails)
Cost Effectiveness of programme delivered by NGOs	yes	In some cases the capacity of NGOs needs to be built before getting efficient results.	Yes	Though it is cost effective, the relationship between NGOs and government needs to be strengthened	Investment in capacity building and management fees is recovered through their efficiency and grassroots implementation.

Finding 5: The evidence is mixed but largely negative on the sustainability of UNESCO supported projects with NGOs. It appears to be influenced by the type of project activity, the NGO’s ongoing commitment to the project objective and the degree of ongoing interest and support by UNESCO.

Many UNESCO staff members expressed pessimism about the sustainability of NGO projects supported by UNESCO’s regular programme budget. UNESCO project documents rarely address the issue of sustainability or even an exit strategy for organizations they support.

However, there are cases where UNESCO has addressed the sustainability of NGO projects and the SISTER database on NGO projects supported by the UNESCO office in Indonesia describes a number of projects where the office has addressed the issue of ongoing viability with NGO partners and it has worked to bring in other partners, including governments, to provide some assurance of ongoing funding.

The evaluation of a capacity building project for NGO/CSOs involved in education in Sub-Saharan Africa pointed out a similar case where UNESCO staff explored different

funding options with bilateral and multilateral donors, INGOs and national ministries of education.¹⁷ UNESCO also declared its willingness to provide technical and moral support for additional fund raising.

A recent evaluation¹⁸ of UNESCO projects in Brazil found that the sustainability of an activity depends on whether it is a one off activity such as production of a manual or single training course or whether it is part of an ongoing activity. If the partner organization is committed to the subject being supported, then it will continue working in that area and derive some benefit from UNESCO support. If it is not an ongoing interest of the NGO and UNESCO support is short term, then the activity will likely be dropped.

If the NGO has substantial resources of its own, then it is usually able to maintain activities that it finds useful. Sustained UNESCO support can also be a factor in the sustainability of an activity, particularly if the project draws in other partners as UNESCO did in Indonesia.

Of course there are projects such as the production of a manual where there is no need to continue the activity although even in this case, distribution and promotion of use of the manual or subsequent updating of the manual may not happen without further support.

Finding 6: NGOs exhibit some weaknesses, particularly in being able to scale up successful activities to the national level or being broadly representative.

The preceding sections on the comparative advantages of NGOs indicated a number of areas where NGOs provide considerable areas of strength where UNESCO can benefit from working with them as partners. There are, however, some areas where NGOs are typically not as strong.

One of the most significant weaknesses of NGOs is their inability to scale up successful programmes to a national level. Mass membership movements like cooperatives or even some large development organizations like Alfa Sole are exceptions.

¹⁷ UNESCO Capacity Building for NGOs/CSOs Involved in Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Final Report. October, 2004

¹⁸ D. Daniels. Review of UNESCO Project Portfolio in Brazil. January, 2006

Despite the existence of active regional and global networks, some UNESCO staff pointed out that NGOs also typically contribute little to comparative analysis. Networks which lack an institutional base can be constrained in taking on commitments that require a lot of organization.

One comment made by a UNESCO staff person actively involved with NGO networks is that they can be effective in undertaking activities but they are weak in providing feedback.

Some NGOs have become almost contracting agencies, servicing projects funded by northern donor agencies.

There can be tensions between NGOs in competing for funds or conflicts where they represent competing points of view. A good

example is the tension that can exist between environmental NGOs which promote environmental positions that don't take account of indigenous peoples needs. NGOs representing indigenous peoples feel that some environmental NGOs promote protection of the environment with little regard to the welfare of indigenous communities who live in environmentally sensitive areas or to their knowledge of how to live in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Some of the INGOs such as the professional associations are not sufficiently representative of both the north and the south. UNESCO encourages them to promote greater equity in their activities when providing grants but does not require a fixed proportion of resources be allocated to balance out under representation from the south. There can be some mitigating factors such as the point made by one of the INGOs which pointed out that it is difficult to provide balance in providing professional services. Much of their professional support is voluntary or at low fees which professionals from the south cannot afford to provide. However this issue is worth pursuing with the INGOs, particularly in view of the planned increase by UNESCO in funding for INGOs in this biennium.

Alfa Sole, Brazil: Scaling UP

UNESCO support has contributed to the success of Alfa Sole which has been recognized by UNESCO as one of the outstanding literacy organizations in the world. With EXB funding provided by the Brazilian government, Alfa Sole is expanding its literacy programming to reach an additional 2010 municipalities and to qualify 140,000 new volunteer literacy teachers in all parts of Brazil. It has set a target to in this project of reducing the literacy rate in several years from 12.4% of the population over 15 years of age to 10.3%. It is increasing its support from the public and from the national private sector so that it has multiple sources of funding. This organization has a national reach that makes it the national agency for literacy in Brazil.

It has now begun to work in a number of African countries.

Finding 7: UNESCO may fund NGOs to develop NGO capabilities, to assist UNESCO in achieving its programme goals or a combination of the two.

Some UNESCO projects are designed to improve NGO capability as the immediate project objective while others aim to increase the capability of NGOs while delivering outputs that contribute directly to UNESCO programme objectives. The World Bank

financed project to improve the capability of African NGOs already cited in a box is an example of a UNESCO project that was designed specifically to develop NGO capability. Another interesting UNESCO initiative to develop NGO capability is a project by the Youth unit in BSP which is supporting youth NGOs to develop monitoring and evaluation tools with the intention of producing a manual that can be used by other youth NGOs.

Many of the projects assessed in this review appear to represent combined objectives aimed at producing outputs that achieve UNESCO programme objectives and at allowing the NGO to expand or deepen its capabilities.

In some cases, UNESCO supports an NGO as the most cost effective delivery mechanism to achieve its programme objectives. UNESCO contracts NGOs to organize workshops and conferences for UNESCO or to undertake studies are cases where there is no intention to develop capacity. Similarly contracts with the INGOs and strong national organizations such as Alfa Sole in Brazil would not be expected to have a capacity building objective.

Project design should be different for these different kinds of project objectives. Unless the distinction is clear in the project design and planned outputs identified for each, there is a risk, particularly when the project has mixed capacity building and programme delivery objectives, that neither will be adequately achieved nor assessed.

5. Governance of NGO Programme Delivery

Finding 8: UNESCO has not implemented guidelines that govern NGO selection, project monitoring and accountability. UNESCO procedures for selecting NGOs are poorly defined and selection is often based on personal knowledge. UNESCO staff members sometimes have good personal knowledge of the capability of NGOs, particularly at the national level, but mapping of NGOs and their capability is rare.

The IOS developed guidelines¹⁹ for UNESCO projects with NGOs for one specific external donor who required this for a system of competitive NGO grants that it funded. These guidelines have however not been promulgated for wider use within UNESCO. They include some features that could be useful in improving project management including reducing the project documentation required when a project is renewed for a second phase. This feature could be especially beneficial if the later recommendation in this report to promote more continuity in project support is applied.

Many projects do not demonstrate good design although evidence from other studies shows that this can improve project performance and the management capacity of NGOs. They rarely incorporate all the elements of a logical framework or go beyond specifying expected outputs. Capacity building involves more than training and funding for project activities. NGOs need to improve their own strategic planning, project design

¹⁹ IOS. Guidelines for Selecting and Evaluating NGOs as Programme Partners.

and monitoring and UNESCO could help in this area. An AusAID evaluation of a number of NGO supported projects in Africa looked in depth at project design and concluded that the "overall quality of the NGO programme in Africa could be lifted considerably if the standard of project designs could be improved and if design frameworks could be utilized more effectively as management tools."²⁰ The large number of small short term projects that UNESCO funds from regular programme budgets however militates against its ability to plan for any strengthening of NGO managerial competence.

One area that needs more attention is greater specificity on the criteria for selecting NGO partners. In some cases there may be only one logical candidate for UNESCO to work with, but with the rapid growth in the number of NGOs over the last few decades, UNESCO is increasingly faced with a choice of possible partners. Some UNESCO staff commented that the initial choice of partner is one of the key ingredients in affecting project effectiveness. UNESCO staff in HQ indicated that they have limited ability to choose the most appropriate NGO partners on a systematic basis. They usually rely on their personal knowledge and in some cases, input from field offices or other contacts. No examples were found through interviews or document references to mapping of NGOs in headquarters but there appears to have been some mapping of NGOs in field offices to choose the most appropriate NGOs. An example cited by the Guatemala office was the review they carried out of 12 NGOs that were active in addressing children in need in response to a proposed grant from EXB resources. Five NGOs were chosen for support from a US\$ 100, 000 grant. One previous NGO recipient of UNESCO was eliminated when it was found to be less effective than the others chosen. There are considerable differences in NGOs that can be identified from a better mapping exercise. Mapping can help identify NGOs that have a lower profile, particularly in the capital city but which may have a good track record of performance and commitment. Some high profile NGOs have been created basically to service contracts provided by external donors and have few links with communities within the country.

The only reference identified for selection criteria at the sector level was a statement by CI that they were going to prioritize support for NGOs that were able to adjust to the rapid change in information and communication technologies. Field offices indicated that they choose NGOs based on their capability, credibility and proven track record. An additional factor identified by the Guatemala office was the level of commitment and dedication demonstrated by the NGO. UNESCO could develop other criteria such as choosing NGOs where it can play a significant catalytic role and provide a multiplier effect or where UNESCO can learn from new approaches.

The criteria for selecting NGOs also need to take account of the different objectives that UNESCO is trying to achieve-selecting the most competent in some cases or and

²⁰ Evaluation of Australian Government Funded NGO Projects in Africa
Quality Assurance Series No. 25. AusAID. December 2000

selecting the most promising weak NGO in another case where the general NGO sector capability is particularly weak.

In some countries, there is a strong divide between NGOs that are seen as very dependent on the government and others that are seen as hostile to the government. In such an environment, UNESCO support may be able to forge a better working relationship with the government for some good NGOs that have been viewed with suspicion by governments.

Finding 9: There are weaknesses in providing accountability for NGO contracts.

Many NGO contracts, particularly from regular programme funds, are very small and most appear to be less than US\$ 10,000. Contracts do not provide much detail about requirements in terms of outcomes to be achieved or say how equipment is to be used and maintained. UNESCO's ability to assess implementation is limited often by being distant from the NGOs activities. UNESCO rarely has a competitive process for selecting grant recipients although this is done to some extent in the Participation Programme where some NATCOMs use a competitive process. This would not be feasible in most cases for UNESCO since the grants are so small. The administrative and staffing costs would make this excessively expensive for UNESCO and unappealing for NGOs.

Finding 10: UNESCO monitoring of NGO projects is generally very limited with the best monitoring taking place at the national level by country offices.

Most UNESCO staff consulted indicated that formal reporting on project achievements was weak to non-existent. This is consistent with the findings of other UNESCO evaluations. An exception is the reporting that UNESCO provides for projects funded from EXB resources. These reports can be thorough in assessing achievements, weaknesses and drawing of lessons. An example is the UNESCO report to the government of Italy on the project entitled Development of Non-Formal Education through ICTs, which it funded in four African countries in the last biennium.

There is considerable variation in the quality of reporting by NGOs. Some of the larger more professional NGOs are accustomed to providing quality reporting to different donors and use such reports for their own tracking and assessment of performance. However most UNESCO programme grants are very small and to organizations that sometimes have very limited capability or experience in reporting on project activities.

The findings of the ICSU evaluation²¹ in 2000 indicate that this may be a problem also in UNESCO funding through the framework agreement mechanism. It noted that ICSU

²¹ Green, W et al. Evaluation Report on Cooperation between UNESCO and ICSU Under the Framework Agreement. UNESCO September, 2000

reports on the 30 projects funded through the UNESCO grant during 1998 were short and varied in quality and detail. Eleven were just one page long. UNESCO provided little feedback on these reports and had not raised any concerns about the level of reporting. While this information is now dated, the lack of monitoring and reporting on project activities continues to be a problem.

As a result, there is little learning by UNESCO of lessons and best practices.

6. Quality of Interaction

Finding 11: There is insufficient top down consultation and collaboration between HQ and the field offices on planned project activities with NGOs at the regional or country level.

This view was shared by many HQ staff although one staff member expressed concern that field offices, particularly at the national level, may be too influenced by the views of governments on NGOs they favour and others they don't want UNESCO to deal with. The field offices consulted and other UNESCO evaluations indicated that HQ staff takes little account of field office needs. There was considerable frustration expressed at the country level where UNESCO staff pointed out that they are not consulted on programming strategies that affect them or on selection of NGOs for wider regional initiatives. In one case, the country office found out only from government officials that a regional office was holding an NGO consultation in the country. The Regional office confirmed that a meeting was taking place but that the country office Director was only allowed to attend the closing ceremony. The country offices are given funds for specific areas to support with little input on how these funds can be allocated most strategically across sectors in the country.

UNESCO staff and some NGO project reports have also noted the difficulties caused when there is a lack of communication and coordination between headquarters, regional and country staff. Some of the assessments of the EFA programme as well as the evaluation cited earlier of the Development of Non-Formal Education through ICTs project identified lack of clarity over responsibilities and lack of coordination as weaknesses in UNESCO support for these activities. This project also noted the difficulties caused by distance supervision and technical support for the inexperienced NGOs involved in the project.

There was little evidence available to allow for a judgment on the degree to which decentralization has given greater flexibility to the field offices but it seems that decentralization still has limited effects in giving field offices more flexibility to decide and act on programming priorities.

“Decentralization is not being taken seriously by headquarters staff”
(UNESCO field office staff comment.)

The sector programmes also seem to play a limited role in backstopping or providing technical advice and assistance to the field offices on NGO activities supported by the field offices.

The role of the National Commissions seems to be limited in a number of countries with the NATCOMs playing a passive role. In some cases, they are focused primarily on how UNESCO can assist the government and they do not consider their role as assisting or incorporating all national stakeholders. In the case of Kenya, where the NATCOM has been more active in creating different stakeholder programme committees, the

UNESCO office sometimes works with a different set of NGOs²². In some countries, particularly where there has been civil strife, the NATCOMs created by governments appear to favour NGOs that are most favourable to the government, even if UNESCO does not believe they are the most effective. This creates a sensitive situation for the UNESCO offices.

²² Oketch, Moses. O. Evaluation of UNESCO Support to National EFA Planning. Country Case Study: Kenya. September, 2005

7. Lessons Learned/Best Practices

A number of positive lessons can be identified from UNESCO's experience in working with NGOs. As many of them are interrelated, it may be useful to give an illustration of lessons that can be drawn from one project.

7.1 An Illustration of Good Practices

One project from Guatemala, the country office visited, will be described in some depth because it illustrates a number of points about how extensive UNESCO involvement can be in a project, the scale of resources that may be required in some cases, the potential benefits from involving multiple partners, and the need to build on one activity to link with others in order to create the conditions for lasting change. It also demonstrates that, in some cases, it is not sufficient to judge one project in isolation. UNESCO assessment must take account of the broader set of projects and other supportive activities that it may support in one area. Clearly many UNESCO projects are not so complex or do not involve such a strategic process by UNESCO. However it is not the only case assessed in Guatemala where there are mutually re-enforcing links between projects.

The Flor del Campo Project

At the request of the Ministry of Culture, UNESCO carried out a small study of cultural activities in four municipalities. An isolated woman's handicraft association, Flor del Campo set up by women who lost their husbands during the civil strife in Guatemala was identified as being the most deserving case for further support. The women had worked together for 25 years with limited resources that kept them in deep poverty. Yet they were committed to pushing for education of their children while using traditional Mayan handicraft techniques to maintain their culture.

The Guatemala office was able to access US\$ 42,000 from EXB resources for a project with this group. A UNESCO project carried out in 2005 provided funding for training of the women in production of different kinds of products, financial management and other skills, the purchase of some modern looms that allowed them to increase production; commercialization of their business and the spread of production into new areas such as home made soaps, candles and natural shampoos. It also provided a vehicle that allowed them to market bread and other products in other towns as well as taking their children to a distant school.

Other organizations were drawn into support for this group as a result. This included the Ministry of Culture and Sports which provided an expert for training on the use of natural dyes as well as help in registering this group as a legally constituted cooperative. The National Institute for Tourism, the Indigenous Development Fund and the Italian Institute of Culture all helped provide support to expand the marketing reach of this group.

Impressed with the initial success of this project, the Japanese embassy offered US\$56,777 for a follow up project to construct a training centre. Other individuals became involved in supporting this group and one architect offered to design and supervise construction at no cost. He has visited this distant project a number of times.

UNESCO staff has continued to maintain an involvement with this group despite the fact that the original UNESCO project finished in December, 2005. They have helped the women develop better marketing such as developing a brochure handout and a quality low cost carrying bag describing the women's group. The responsible project officer is thoroughly familiar with the group and other UNESCO staff in Guatemala City was also well informed.

Membership in the cooperative has grown from 20 last year to 33 women and they expect to train and add more members each year. The income effect of this support has been dramatic with an increase in one year in each member woman's income from about US\$ 1000 to US\$ 4000.

In addition to the effect on the women's income and the cooperatives viability, there have been very positive effects on the self respect and confidence of these women with little or no formal education. They are now in discussions with the village mayor to build a middle school in their area so that children can go beyond elementary schooling in the village.

While the women have definitely benefited from this UNESCO and partners support, it might also have been seen as an expensive activity to benefit a small number of women if it had gone no further. However this original project has lead to spin off benefits. The Japanese embassy grant allows them to provide training to seven other communities nearby with the potential to benefit 3000 families and the Japanese embassy has expressed interest in building more such centres.

UNESCO support has allowed this group to become a source of innovation in craft design and marketing that is unique in Guatemala and it could become a model on which other craft cooperatives could build to create a strong national capacity in craft design. .

In a parallel project with six Guatemalan museums, UNESCO has helped document the rich cultural heritage of the Mayan peoples in jewellery, jade and other products including textile design. Many of these products are no longer produced. UNESCO programme staff are now exploring the potential to establish a quality shop at the airport that would market craft products from groups like the Fier del Campo and books and other products dealing with the rich heritage that is found in the various museums of Guatemala.

Additional activities will be needed to build a strong national craft industry with various government departments and other organizations such as Agexpront, the Association of Guatemalan exporters. The cooperative may need some modest additional support,

given its limited experience in the larger leadership role it is beginning to play. The UNESCO office will have to ensure that this group and other handicraft cooperatives do not develop a dependency on UNESCO for technical advice and that it develops an exit strategy to run down its involvement as local capacity develops.

However the involvement of UNESCO in partnership with other actors is helping to create what could be a significant contribution to a renaissance in Mayan culture and heritage that could bring pride to Mayan peoples and to address the needs of the most marginalized population in the country.

The UNESCO office recognizes the significance of this development and is considering writing a book that will document this experience for a wider audience.

Lessons

A small UNESCO project may provide sufficient benefit and contribute to a self sustaining activity but in many cases, UNESCO support needs to be sustained over a period of time and involve more UNESCO resources than is typically provided. . This is particularly the case if the NGO being supported is small, poorly funded and with limited capability.

In this case, UNESCO's support is still short term but the potential to access additional funding from the Japanese embassy to build on this project with Flor del Campo as a base and to link it with other projects provides greater possibilities for sustainability and broader scaling up.

Other lessons that can be drawn from this project are referred to in the following general findings from this evaluation.

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Finding 12: Projects which are strategically chosen to fit into a broader plan for development are more effective than one off, isolated projects.

As already pointed out, many UNESCO projects with NGOs have very modest budgets with the majority having a budget of less than US\$10,000. The 34 projects²³ reviewed were all consistent with general UNESCO programme priorities but some did not appear to be part of any broader strategy by the UNESCO programme staff. Some UNESCO country staff confirmed that they do not have a country strategy that they can use to guide them in selecting projects to support.

Many of these one off activities don't seem to be related to other ongoing projects. There may be more continuity than is evident from reading project documents since these documents don't provide a broader picture of UNESCO's involvement with the organization or describe previous support to the organization.

The SISTER reports provided by the Jakarta office provides some examples of how effective UNESCO support can be if there is a strategic plan, continuity of support and multiple partners. One example of this is cited in the box on GENPEACE.

GENPEACE: Long Term Multi-Partner Support

An example of the benefits of a strategic approach with multiple partners is the GENPEACE programme in the Philippines. UNESCO joined a UN multi-donor programme in 1999 to promote a culture of peace and gender development amongst the Tri-people (Indigenous, Muslims and Christians) affected by the Mindanao conflict. UNESCO has provided ongoing support to this programme which has increased from 3 to 10 sites with plans for another three in the last biennium. Other organizations are supporting parallel activities that together with UNESCO provide a more comprehensive development programme.

Many of the organizations responsible for the on-going development and evolution of the GENPEACE activities are members of the Mindanao NGO Literacy Network. In addition to their involvement with GENPEACE, the Literacy Network is involved in EFA advocacy. UNESCO is promoting life long education for social transformation through additional networking and information exchange through this Mindanao Literacy Network. UNESCO will assist in upgrading the status of the Mindanao NGOs Literacy Network to a registered Federation to ensure its survival and sustainability.

Finding 13: Projects which have received continuity of support appear to have better project performance and have better prospects for sustainability.

One of the criticisms made by many staff is that the two year budget cycle is not conducive to good project design and management. It forces programme staff to rush project design and approval while funding delays cut the project cycle even shorter. This can be mitigated somewhat by providing support for a project through more than one cycle. There are cases where UNESCO has provided ongoing support to an activity and with the same project partners over time. This allows the partners to consistently build

²³ . A total of 34 UNESCO supported NGO projects were assessed. This included 9 projects from an on site visit in Guatemala, 18 from Indonesia and Jordan drawn from the SISTER database, two from the Brazil evaluation and five from previous UNESCO evaluations already quoted elsewhere in this review.

on the achievements of a previous phase, to extend the scope and depth of activities and to bring in more partners and improve the viability of a project. The GENPEACE and the Palihan projects already cited demonstrate how the benefits have grown and become consolidated through multi-phase support.

Finding 14: Projects that are linked to other complimentary projects benefit from the synergy created.

One step that would address part of the problem of too narrowly focused support would be to encourage more cross-sectoral projects or complimentary sector projects by the different UNESCO sector programmes. An evaluation of Brazilian projects identified a number of cases where there were complimentary sectoral projects. One example in the Guatemala office of synergy between two UNESCO projects is the support that a street school NGO and a gymnastics NGO have provided to each other in attracting and motivating street children to achieve a better education.

The Flor del Campo case cited earlier also illustrates how cooperation between two different NGOs may be able to achieve greater market development that they might not be able to do alone

Finding 15: UNESCO projects can be more effective if they involve multiple partners who can bring additional expertise and resources and who can contribute to ensuring sustainability of the activity.

UNESCO project documents often do not identify other partners involved in the project or related UNESCO projects which can affect the significance and potential contribution of the project. An exception that was noted were a number of projects in the Jakarta office SISTER database that identified partners in a number of NGO projects. The Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity also identified a number of partners involved in its projects and the projects described in their literature indicate the benefits from combining the expertise and functions of different partners

UNESCO is seldom able to provide all the technical and financial resources required to address all the key change elements required to address a problem or to create a significant impact. Bringing other partners into the project can provide the kind of balanced support necessary.

There were other cases identified where UNESCO promoted the involvement of other partners in advisory committees or other means, partly to assist in fundraising efforts. UNESCO arranged a meeting with possible donors for the NGO capacity building project²⁴ reviewed earlier to present the new coalition and the outline the programme.

²⁴ UNESCO Capacity Building for NGOs/CSOs Involved in Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Final Report. October, 2004

There are of course costs in creating and maintaining this collaboration between multiple partners which is well documented in various studies of partner collaboration in the literature.

Expanding Palihan with Partnerships.

The long standing UNESCO designed project “Technical and Vocational Skills Training Programmes for Street Children and Out-of-School Youth in Metro Manila (Palihan)” has had success in giving disadvantaged 15-24 years old street children and out-of-school youth a variety of technical/vocational skills, values, peace education, job readiness, basic management skills, and remedial literacy training modules. In 2002, it established partnerships with two training institutions. An increasing number of companies are offering in-plant placement, showing that trainees’ skills can meet companies’ needs. Other organizations and educational institutions (for example from Mindanao) have shown interest in the Palihan model and requested to attend training sessions. The support to Palihan will be continued in Manila and long term sustainability plans will be developed together with the implementing NGO, government and other program supporters and the Palihan model will be disseminated to new areas in the Philippines (Mindanao) and possibly within other countries covered by the Jakarta cluster office. .

Finding 16: UNESCO’s role as an interlocutor between NGOs and other partners, particularly governments is widely recognized as a significant UNESCO contribution. Where UNESCO can act as an interlocutor and even as a catalytic agent, it can be especially effective in contributing to project success.

Both UNESCO and NGO staff interviewed pointed to this as an area where UNESCO can bring real value added to its project activities with NGOs. One UNESCO staff person said that senior officials in Nigeria felt UNESCO’s role should be pro-active as a catalyst bringing together

all the different stakeholders in EFA and being able to intervene quickly with support at critical times to keep a positive momentum.

NGOs often lack credibility with governments and UNESCO endorsement can open doors for the NGOs and encourage governments to consider positive achievements by

AIDS Programming In Brazil²⁵

The government of Brazil provided a large grant to UNESCO to establish a competitive grants scheme for Brazilian NGOs for preventative AIDS education. Hundreds of NGOs in Brazil were quick to respond to the AIDS situation when it developed in Brazil. Government officials were not familiar with how to work with the often marginalized groups who were most vulnerable and who were sometimes stigmatized. The NGOs and governments were not used to working together and the NGOs had limited capability in many cases. UNESCO’s involvement in this AIDS project allowed it to bring government and NGOs together to work on a programme of preventive education that has spread to all parts of the country and all segments of the population. Government officials interviewed indicated that they preferred to work with UNESCO rather than other international agencies who could be seen to have greater technological expertise because UNESCO had an ability to address the social dimensions of AIDS prevention such as through this NGO grants project.

²⁵ Daniels. D. op cit

NGOs. One UNESCO staff person cited her experience in Burkina Faso where UNESCO was able to facilitate exchanges between the Ministry of Education and NGOs working with street children. As a result, there is now some ongoing collaboration between the Ministry of Education and these NGOs without UNESCO involvement. Similarly the Senegalese government is now including an NGO coalition developed for a UNESCO project in more of its activities, including monitoring missions at district level.²⁶

Many NGOs comment that they benefit from the credibility that UNESCO can provide. When a number of small and poor NGOs in Guatemala were asked what they would like from UNESCO in future, they mentioned access as a top priority

“UNESCO support gives us credibility with other agencies which is critical for our development.” (NGO staff person)

UNESCO can also use its knowledge and credibility to bring other partners together. An example in Guatemala was UNESCO support for a small rural NGO where young people got together to study and document the traditional Mayan music. In addition to a small grant to allow them to expand their work, UNESCO was able to bring them together with one of the Guatemalan museums where an expert helped them recreate musical instruments that were no longer produced.

Finding 17: UNESCO staff members are able to provide more technical input and facilitate the project if projects are larger, there is sustained support, they are more strategic in meeting UNESCO programme objectives and they are interlinked with other projects. This can allow UNESCO staff to provide better monitoring, reporting and drawing of lessons.

There is not as much documented evidence to support this finding as for the others but interviews with UNESCO staff did demonstrate that staff members were much more knowledgeable about and involved in projects where UNESCO was providing ongoing support and which fit the specific short term strategic interests of their programme. This was also evident from the site visit to Guatemala where the office has supported a number of similar projects that have links to each other. The Programme officer was able to arrange joint meetings with NGOs working on providing educational support for street children. The NGOs knew each other and the programme officer has been able to devote time to understanding the environment and operating conditions for each of the NGOs

²⁶ UNESCO. Capacity Building for NGOs/CSOs Involved in Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Final Report. October, 2004 p. 25

8. Recommendations

8.1 Importance of NGOs

Recommendation 1: While recognizing that UNESCO is an intergovernmental organization and that governments remain the essential actor in UNESCO's work, UNESCO should pursue opportunities to expand its cooperation with NGOs in light of their growing competence, cost effectiveness in performance and their commitment to UNESCO values.

There is general agreement in UNESCO that NGOs have become a more important partner for UNESCO as both the number and capability of NGOs has increased over time. This review has identified a number of areas where NGOs have a comparative advantage over other possible partners in programme implementation.. The level of professionalism in many NGOs is good and improving; they can provide a good benefit to cost return; they provide continuity of effort on key development problems particularly with target groups important to UNESCO; and many of them subscribe to the same basic values as UNESCO.

While UNESCO has limited resources in relation to the large number of programme activities it undertakes, the reduction in funding for NGOs by nearly half over the period 1999 to 2007 does not appear to be consistent with the benefits that UNESCO staff have seen from NGO supported activities. This approach would be in line with other UN agencies and IFIs that have substantially increased the level of project activities undertaken by NGOs. UNESCO programme sectors should reconsider whether the declining level of resources for NGO collaboration is appropriate.

8.2 Managing the Relationship

Recommendation 2: UNESCO should define its partnership principles and guidelines for staff to use in developing partnerships with NGOs and other actors.

Comments by UNESCO staff and the limited material on partnership approaches in the UNESCO literature indicate that there is not a clear or consistent view on the meaning of partnership and practice within the organization. There appears to be some confusion between contracting NGOs to deliver services for UNESCO such as organization of a workshop or training course where the objective is to get value for money and other projects where it wants to work with a partner in pursuing a common objective

The only sector specific partnership document that was identified was published by the SHS sector. However it deals more with specific areas where UNESCO would like to collaborate and doesn't spell out UNESCO's partnership strategy.

Yet UNESCO is dependent on developing strong partnerships. UNESCO has a broad mandate relative to its resources and it depends on accessing the expertise and resources of other partners to achieve its programme objectives. Partnerships can not only enhance UNESCO effectiveness but in some cases, are essential for UNESCO to even achieve its goals.

The principles for good partnership based on the concept of mutual interests and mutual obligations have been tested in many conditions and are now increasingly defined in other multilateral agencies.

Given ERC's mandate to promote cooperation with NGOs, it would appear to be the most appropriate UNESCO office to take the lead in developing these guidelines in consultation with the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and the programme sectors.

Recommendation 3: UNESCO's cooperation with NGOs should be based on defining broader strategies that identify what it wants to achieve in each area and where NGOs are the most appropriate partner to achieve part of the strategy.

While cooperation with NGOs is most extensive in intellectual cooperation and UNESCO has established many mechanisms to promote this at the Board level, at the level of a formal NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and within the Secretariat with the existence of the ERC and programme sector focal points. What is not as well developed is a strategy and process for cooperation with NGOs in programme delivery through projects undertaken by NGOs.

While UNESCO may apply universal standards for developing partnerships, it cannot apply a common strategy that covers all sectors and levels since there are significant differences in the kinds of partnerships needed by different parts of the organization.

These strategies should identify where NGOs can be the best partners and what UNESCO hopes to achieve by working with them. In particular, the different programme units in UNESCO should be clear when choosing partners and in subsequent project design what objectives it is trying to achieve. What is the balance between capacity building and achievement of specific results? In some cases, UNESCO will want to work with strong NGOs who meet high standards of performance in producing outputs and in other cases, it will measure its effectiveness by the degree to which it has built capacity in a weaker NGO in a neglected area.

This assessment of the role of NGOs in UNESCO's programming should be done by each sector and field office when preparing their biennium plans.

Recommendation 4: UNESCO should implement guidelines for selection, approval and monitoring of NGO projects

The draft IOS document entitled Guidelines for Selecting and Evaluating NGOs as Programme Partners has not been promulgated for wider use within UNESCO. These

guidelines should be implemented now with modifications as necessary to take account of changes in UNESCO policies and practices, especially at the field level.

UNESCO needs to apply more explicit guidelines for NGO selection and project design to improve project performance. There is no consistency in the criteria that are used at present. These guidelines will have to allow for differences in selection criteria that are appropriate to the different objectives of the planned project.

Particular attention should be given to specifying the criteria for selecting NGO partners. With the rapid growth in the number of NGOs over the last few decades, UNESCO is increasingly faced with a choice of possible partners. There is some evidence that the choice of partner is one of the key ingredients in affecting project effectiveness. The cases illustrated in this report show that large organizations such as Alfa Sole with a proven track record can provide greatest likelihood of effective performance than other NGOs which do not have expertise or a long track record of performance. In cases where UNESCO is supporting activities in NGOs with limited expertise or proven track record such as in the case of the ICT project in Africa, UNESCO needs to pursue a more phased approach and provide close monitoring and technical assistance to ensure that the planned results are achieved.

Many projects do not demonstrate good design and evidence from other studies shows that this can improve project performance and the management capacity of NGOs. Guidelines to address this will have to be applied with some sensitivity, recognizing the concern of NGOs that the use of more elaborate project design and accountability can lead to a blueprint approach to development which does not take account of the realities of different needs and environment at the local level.

The ERC is not actively involved in the selection and monitoring of UNESCO projects with NGOs but it could work with IOS and the programme sector focal points to facilitate the development of UNESCO wide guidelines.

8.3 Improving Effectiveness

Recommendation 5: UNESCO should build into its project cooperation with NGOs those features that increase the likelihood for greater effectiveness. The key elements identified in this review as best practices include:

- a. **selecting projects within a larger programme strategy**
- b. **supporting larger projects;**
- c. **developing more continuity through multi-phase support;**
- d. **drawing in more partners;**
- e. **promoting cross linkage with other projects;**
- f. **addressing the issue of sustainability; and**
- g. **maximizing UNESCO's opportunity to act as an interlocutor and a catalyst.**

These best practices can be useful in improving programme effectiveness. Each one of these factors has been addressed in the section on best practices with examples and evidence that they can contribute to greater project effectiveness and sustainability of activity.

There are UNESCO projects which incorporate all or most of these features and the results generally indicate a higher level of achievement and sustainability. The Flor del Campo project reviewed in some detail in this report is such an example. These lessons on what constitutes successful project characteristics are not inconsistent with the findings of other evaluations. These lessons could be spelled out in the UNESCO guidelines for cooperation with NGO partners.

8.4 Devolution of Responsibility

Recommendation 6: UNESCO should devolve responsibility for NGO project selection and management as close to the national level as possible to take advantage of potential benefits such as more informed selection of NGOs, linkages with other projects and the opportunity for UNESCO to act as an interlocutor with governments and other partners.

UNESCO has important global and regional objectives that require it to develop broad partnerships with global and regional NGO networks. Thus it has promoted the development and provides sustaining support for globally representative INGOs.

However there are benefits from maximizing the involvement of field offices in identifying the most effective NGOs and benefits such as those from cross linking projects, and drawing in other partners. Thus it is recommended that UNESCO promote greater local involvement applying the principle of subsidiarity, or making decisions at the most local level that is feasible.

Decisions on decentralizing project selection and monitoring should be addressed by the different programme sectors.

8.5 Improving Evaluability

Recommendation 7: UNESCO should adopt specific measures to improve organizational assessment of NGO programme delivery.

UNESCO uses NGOs as an important delivery mechanism and, in many cases; UNESO also aims to build the capacity of these organizations. It is important to be able to assess and improve performance in achieving these objectives and improving overall organizational effectiveness.

However there are some particular difficulties in being able to monitor and assess NGO performance. Most programme officers are interested in project outputs rather in assessing the delivery mechanism. Assessing NGO performance is a stripe issue that cuts across the standard programming structure of UNESCO. A second difficulty is that so many NGO projects are so small that it is not feasible to devote many resources to monitoring or assessing performance.

The recommendations made in this review to support larger projects over a longer period of time and to link them with other projects should provide somewhat greater opportunities for better monitoring and increase the justification for evaluation.

However UNESCO should also consider additional means to ensure that such partnerships are adequately assessed. The programme sectors should providing some additional funding for selected NGO projects to allow for an assessment of small NGO projects that can be used to draw lessons an improve UNESCO programming for this important delivery mechanism. This would have to be decided and funded by the programme sectors after assessing what projects could be assessed and allocating some additional funding for evaluations of these small projects.

The ERC maintains a comprehensive database on selected aspects of UNESCO's cooperation with NGOs. It should explore with the programme sectors whether it could also become the repository for information on UNESCO funded projects with NGOs. An alternative that it could pursue is to explore whether the SISTER database could be modified so that it identified all NGO project recipients.

IOS should consider expanding the IOS evaluation database to incorporate all UNESCO evaluations. IOS maintains a database of all evaluations submitted to UNESCO governing bodies.

These changes to track all UNESCO funding of NGO projects and to increase the number of evaluations and to track them will allow UNESCO to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of NGO activities undertaken in collaboration with UNESCO.

Appendix I List of Findings

- Finding 1: There is sufficient diversity in the types of NGOs that UNESCO can find NGO partners that are relevant to its work in achieving nearly all UNESCO programmes and functions.
- Finding 2: There is limited documented evidence of the results and impact achieved by NGOs but there is good evidence in specific cases of positive results being achieved
- Finding 3: Some NGO projects may be costly in terms of the small scale of activities and the number of individuals reached in projects but the effects of these projects are often more sustainable than other non NGO projects of a similar size. In other cases, the value of NGO outputs far exceeds the costs provided by UNESCO.
- Finding 4: UNESCO partnerships with NGOs have a demonstrable effect on UNESCO's capacity to achieve its programme objectives.
- Finding 5: The evidence is mixed but largely negative on the sustainability of UNESCO supported projects with NGOs. It appears to be influenced by the type of project activity, the NGO's ongoing commitment to the project objective and the degree of ongoing interest and support by UNESCO.
- Finding 6: NGOs exhibit some weaknesses, particularly in being able to scale up successful activities to the national level or being broadly representative.
- Finding 7: UNESCO may fund NGOs to develop NGO capabilities, to assist UNESCO in achieving its programme goals or a combination of the two.
- Finding 8: UNESCO has not implemented guidelines that govern NGO selection, project monitoring and accountability. UNESCO procedures for selecting NGOs are poorly defined and selection is often based on personal knowledge. UNESCO staff members sometimes have good personal knowledge of the capability of NGOs, particularly at the national level, but mapping of NGOs and their capability is rare.
- Finding 9: There are weaknesses in providing accountability for NGO contracts.
- Finding 10: UNESCO monitoring of NGO projects is generally very limited with the best monitoring taking place at the national level by country offices.
- Finding 11: There is insufficient top down consultation and collaboration between HQ and the field offices on planned project activities with NGOs at the regional or country level.
- Finding 12: Projects which are strategically chosen to fit into a broader plan for development are more effective than one off, isolated projects.
- Finding 13: Projects which have received continuity of support appear to have better project performance and have better prospects for sustainability.

Finding 14: Projects that are linked to other complimentary projects benefit from the synergy created.

Finding 15: UNESCO projects can be more effective if they involve multiple partners who can bring additional expertise and resources and who can contribute to ensuring sustainability of the activity.

Finding 16: UNESCO's role as an interlocutor between NGOs and other partners, particularly governments is widely recognized as a significant UNESCO contribution. Where UNESCO can act as an interlocutor and even as a catalytic agent, it can be especially effective in contributing to project success.

Finding 17: UNESCO staff members are able to provide more technical input and facilitate the project if projects are larger, there is sustained support, they are more strategic in meeting UNESCO programme objectives and they are interlinked with other projects. This can allow UNESCO staff to provide better monitoring, reporting and drawing of lessons.

Appendix II Persons Consulted

UNESCO Headquarters	
Aliaga, Bernardo	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, Programme Specialist
Alarcon, Minella	Programme Specialist, Basic and Engineering Sciences
Chianese, Fabriana	Education Sector
Detzel, Sabine	Education Sector/ Division of International Coordination and Monitoring for EFA
Geurts, Geoffrey	Evaluation Specialist, IOS
Henriques Mueller, Maria Helena	Section for Youth, BSP
Ishizaka, Sachiko	Programme Specialist, Division of Relations with Organizations and New Partnerships, ERC
Kusuma, Regina	Programme Officer, IOS
Majoram, Tony	Natural Science, Division of Basic and Engineering Sciences. NGO Focal Point
Migeon, Florence	Education Sector, Basic Education, Section for Primary Education
Motae, Aurora	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, NGO Focal Point
Nalecz, M	Director, Basic and Engineering Science
Plathe, Axel	CI, Information Society Division, NGO Focal Point
Poussin, Georges	CLT, Division of Arts and Cultural Enterprise, NGO Focal Point
Sankare, Cheikhna	Africa Department
Santana Afonso, Ana Elisa	Africa Department, Section for Intersectoral Coordination, NGO Focal Point
Smith, Eunice	SHS, Programme Specialist
Solinis, Germain	SHS, Division of Social Sciences Research and Policy/Urban Development Division, NGO Focal Point
UNESCO Field Offices	
Arnaiz, Elena	Programme Officer, Guatemala

Bado, Shem	WGES/NESIS Secretariat, Zimbabwe
Coyote, Marco Antonio	Programme Officer, Guatemala
Essotto,,M	Programme Officer, Costa Rica
Grigsby, Katrine	UNESCO Director, Guatemala
Haque, Anjum	UNESCO Director, Jordan
Linaje, Cristina	Programme Officer, Costa Rica
Lopez, Maria	Programme Officer, Namibia
Padillo, Danny	Bangkok Regional Office
Other Individuals	
Auchincloss,E	Conservation Learning Officer, IUCN
Various Individual Members	Codisra
Cordero, Alma Gladis	UNCONIME-MINEDUC, Guatemala
Various Individual Members	Cuarto Mundo
“ “ “	EPRODEP
“ “ “	Flor del Campo
“ “ “	Grupo Mojoca
“ “ “	Grupo Sotz'il
“ “ “	Institue Quetzl Ciudad
Peraita, Sara	Commision Nacional Guatemaitica ante le UNESCO-MINEDUC, Guatemala
Pearl, Georgina	Programme Officer, IUCN
Sheppard, David	Head, IUCN Programme on Protected Areas
Tchetmi, Thomas	Director, Presse Jeune

Appendix III Documents Consulted

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