

Successful Models of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status:
Best Practices in Education

By

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DISCLAIMER

This research was been conducted by Rosetta Avolio-Toly, an American currently working towards completing her undergraduate degree in international relations at Occidental College in Los Angeles, California. The research was conducted in the context of an internship with the NGO branch of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The opinions and ideas expressed in the current research do not reflect that of the United Nations or any of its subsidiary bodies. They are the sole opinion of Rosetta Avolio-Toly. Any questions or suggestions should therefore be discussed or addressed to the author.

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Introduction:

The overall focus of the Secretary General's 2011 Annual Ministerial Review (AMR), is *"Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education"*. The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) will focus their work throughout 2011 on education; discussing the state of education throughout the world, and how the ECOSOC can help work towards achieving increased the overall quantity and quality of education throughout the world. MDG 2: achieving universal primary education. In evaluating how the NGO branch can best support this endeavor, this paper provides a review of my research on current education programs being implemented by NGOs in consultative status. I tried to provide a diverse group of NGOs from different areas of the world, who implement education programs on various themes throughout the developing world. I also worked to incorporate both local and international NGO's. There are more Western based NGOs showcased, as they were the easiest to contact and had the most information available on their website.

Keeping in mind that is a sampling of various projects, not a full review, this paper outlines and discusses current models and trends in education programming by NGOs in consultative status, while also highlighting gaps and areas for improvement. I use specific best practices from NGOs to showcase the models and trends I observed in my research. There are many NGOs doing innovative successful programming in the field of education, and I highlight just a few of these success stories. While many NGOs are making great strides in working to ensure equitable education for all, I observed some gaps and limitations when conducting my research. There are still groups of students and subjects that are receiving less attention from NGOs. Also there are limitations in continuing these projects or implementing them on a larger scale. All of these concerns are outlined later in the paper.

Overall, NGO's are essential in achieving universal education as they work in the field implementing programs, working with UN bodies and governments, as well as fellow NGO's. They are engaging in many new and unique programs tailored to their specific circumstances.

MODELS

When researching education projects, I noticed a few models which successful NGOs were using to implement successful projects. These models are strategies which NGOs are using to plan and implement their projects with a large positive impact. The models I observed were: a specific focus on incorporating the community in planning and implementing projects, forming partnerships with local civil society and government, adopting innovative approaches to providing services, and building up the capacity of the community and local institutions. Other NGOs should look to incorporate these models when planning and implementing their own programming. These models are not limited to education, but can be utilized in every type of program sector. The best projects I highlight later in the paper all exhibited at least two of these models which contributed to their success.

Community Focus and Ownership:

Successful projects are designed around the specific needs of the community they are being implemented in. This requires doing assessments and talking with the community when planning a program. Each community faces different obstacles, and designing programs around these unique needs makes programs more effective and efficient. This specialized design also attracts greater involvement and support from the community. Involving the community in the planning and decision making of programs strengthens the relationship between NGO's, the communities and projects. Community members feel more ownership and responsibility for the projects, and are more likely to be invested in a project's success and effectiveness. Community involvement can also help with funding and staffing of programs, and increases the likelihood of a successful handover from NGOs to the community.

Partnerships:

Another model of successful NGOs is their creation of partnerships with other civil society organizations, international institutions and/or the government. International NGOs are partnering with local civil society to effectively plan and implement programs. NGO's at every level are partnering with one another to share information, best practices and funding mechanisms in order to develop the best programs possible. NGOs are also working with the government to design and implement programs, often operating their programs in alignment with

the education goals and priorities outlined by the government. Partnerships, whether with civil society or the government, help spread the planning, managing, and funding burdens of programming. Overall, partnerships make programs more effective and efficient.

Innovative Approaches to Providing Services:

Successful projects go beyond the traditional models of delivering aid and services. Many effective programs are conducted outside of formal institutions or conventional formats. This allows NGOs to reach a broader range of participants, and have a larger impact. Successful programs provide services in interesting, interactive, or unique ways. Often this means moving away from preconceived ideas had prior to working with a community, and for NGOs to be flexible and willing to change or supplement their programming when necessary. One large area of recent innovation is the integration of technology for more effective and engaging programming.

Capacity Building:

In order to run effective projects, NGO's must help build the infrastructure and capacity of governments, institutions and communities to support these projects. Capacity building can be done in many forms; including institutional, physical or intellectual—depending on the needs of the community. Sometimes this means increasing physical infrastructure—building roads, buildings, telecommunication, etc that will ease the implementation of projects. Other projects focus on building intellectual capacity; passing on new knowledge, technology and skills to community members. Still others focus on building the institutional capacity of governments, institutions and other civil society groups to take on and administer the services NGOs are providing. Countries must develop their infrastructure in order to provide the services NGOs are currently providing to their citizens in the future. Successful NGOs focus on building capacity in order to implement programs efficiently, and enhance communities' ability to provide services by themselves in the future.

Projects

To showcase these models I picked a variety of NGOs implementing best practices in education. There are many NGOs doing great work, and the following projects are just a sample

of these. The largest focus areas I found were programs focusing on: building education infrastructure, female education, education of at-risk or underrepresented children, community involvement, non-formal education and technology. Many of the programs cross cutter through these categories as well.

Building Education Infrastructure

Many programs current programs focus on building up the education infrastructure of communities. Many communities require building basic physical infrastructure---classrooms, toilets, playgrounds---to create a safe learning environment for students, as well as increasing skills of teachers and parents to provide education lessons.

For example, **Mission International Rescue (MIR)** works to increase the Dominican Republic's education infrastructure in regards to middle and high school students. Targeting areas of poor enrolment, **MIR** has created 2 schools to serve the ages of 5th-12th grades. Both schools, one is boys and the other girls, provide a comprehensive secondary education culminating in vocational training in the last two years of school. The mix of general education with vocation skills prepares students to become effective members of society.

NGOs are also focusing on increasing the effectiveness of teachers and parents in providing education. Strengthening all aspects of a community to institute better education in is seen as necessary for long run success. In Turkey, **ACEV** is implementing programs that focus on building the capacity of parents and teachers to provide education to preschool children. The **Preschool Parent Child Education Program (PPCEP)** works to strengthen the existing



PPCEP Participants. ACEV.

curriculum in government run preschools, and to support cooperation between parents and schools. The program develops literacy and mathematics curriculum for teachers and parents to implement simultaneously at school and at home. ACEV's programs directly strengthen the education skills of parents and teachers—building the capacity of the local Turkish community to conduct successful education programs.

In Guinea, **World Education (WE)** is also working on building the education capacity. Working rural communities, WE work to strengthen the local civil society's ability to provide

literacy programming with their **Community Action for Education and Literacy Project (ACEB)**. The ACEB works in underserved areas implementing literacy and basic education programs to children who would otherwise go without education. At the same time, ACEB works with local community groups, teaching them new education techniques and programs, as well as managerial skills. This will increase the local community's ability to provide basic education services to their population without the help of ACEB.

Female Education

While many programs encompass creating better mechanisms for education, some focus more specifically on targeting this capacity building to underrepresented groups. One of the largest underrepresented groups are females, often left out of education for cultural or socioeconomic reasons.

To combat this, NGOs are running culturally sensitive female only programs. **World Education** is working in Mali to run a girl's and woman's program. In response, WE's program is a female only basic education class taught by women. WE's past experiences showcase that female only classes led to better women participation. Women and girls are in class together, and able to share local knowledge and teach one another. This type of female focused programming is essential to overcome the hurdles women face in gaining education.

Afghan girls attending one of MADRE's schools



Similar to Mali, cultural barriers have long kept girls out of school in Afghanistan. Under the Taliban girls were not allowed to openly go to school, and they still face cultural barriers to attending school today. Therefore **MADRE** is partnering with local Afghan organizations to renovate and construct new schools for girls. In Afghanistan, there is very little infrastructure for educating girls. MADRE works to build schools, and then provides basic education to both girls and women throughout the country. The hope is to enable more of Afghanistan's females to become active participants in all sectors of society.

The Half the Sky Foundation is implementing programs focused on providing education to girls as well, but with a specific focus on orphans. Half the Sky provides secondary

education to orphan girls in China with their **Big Sisters Program**. After the age of 14, girls can no longer be adopted in China. Many of these girls would do not have the ability or resources to go on to higher education if they are not adopted. Half the Sky provides support tailored to the interest of the child—be it art, science, music, etc. They foster the skills of the child and provide financial support for their education.

At-risk and Underrepresented Children

While some NGOs focus target their programming to females, others focus on various other at risk and underrepresented groups. **Rural Reconstruction Network (RRN)** works in poor rural areas of Nepal to increase the access of marginalized and vulnerable children to education. The program works with local educators to provide better school management and strengthen the curriculum and skills of teachers. RRN is also working with local civil society and local government to increase access to education for the underserved—by paying school fees,



and implementing non formal education schooling. These efforts have increased the enrolment and retention rates of students.

The Hariri Foundation is also its working to increase retention rates of students. In Lebanon, Hariri works to build up the academic skills of likely dropouts in their **Our Right to Succeed** program. Our Right to

Our Right to Succeed Students. Hariri

Succeed works with teachers to run remedial and extracurricular classes for at risk 3rd-5th graders. It builds the academic skills of at-risk children by providing them with additional school sessions in summer and winter. The additional sessions allow at risk students get more individual attention, increasing their engagement with education. As their academic achievement increase, so to does their likelihood of graduation.

Another example of targeted programming for at risk children is **World Education's** Atfaluna **Amaluna** project in Gaza. Atfaluna Amaluna works to provide education for children living in dangerous environments. The program works to improve psychosocial well being and community resilience's through targeted life skills education for children, youth and parents. It also works to strengthen and form partnerships with community organizations, and dialogue with

communities about how they can support their children's education. Arfaluna Amaluna promotes kids' quality safe play and learning through developing critical thinking, emotional management, good communication, building mutual relationships and creating responsibilities. The goal is to provide children a safe space to learn new thinking skills and receive a quality education regardless of the dangerous environment in which they live.

Community Lead Education.

Getting the entire community involved in education, instead of just the students, is vital to the success of many programs. Support of the entire community for a project helps increase its effectiveness. Communities should be empowered and take ownership over the education of their youths. Also, incorporating the community provides insights into how to tailor the programming for the unique educational needs of every area.

Providing education resources for the entire community to access greatly enhances community ownership and participation in education. In rural areas of the Punjab region of Pakistan, **Bunyard** is implementing community based projects with their **Community Learning Centers**. The CLC's allow all members of a given community to increase their literacy through access to reading and writing materials. The CLCs are available for the entire community to use, and particularly target drop outs, street children and child labourers; individuals out of the formal education system who still wish to pursue their education. Often they also have computers and other technology that community members can use. The CLCs increase the education capacity of the entire community.

Likewise, **The International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR)** is also tailoring its programs to the specific needs of the community with its **Pastoralist Education Program (PEP)**. In Ethiopia and Kenya, the IIRR works within rural pastoral communities to increase the educational opportunities and literacy for out of school children, and illiterate adults. PEP works with community based organizations, parents and the government to set up non formal education programs that work within the pastoralist mobile lifestyle. Children can go to school, and still be involved in the economic household duties. IIRR has established 54 learning centers, 28 functional adult literacy classes and 17 early child development centers.

Non Formal Education

Engaging communities in new ways, many NGOs are implementing projects that either incorporate non tradition teaching methods or operate outside of normal school settings. These types of non-formal child friendly education programs are increasingly being utilized to reach underrepresented communities. NGO's have realized that you must go to the people if they are not coming to school, simply providing more of the traditional education programs still leave many individuals out of education.

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) focuses on creating child friendly learning environments. DAM's **UNIQUE** project in Bangladesh targets disadvantaged children from poor and rural areas. UNIQUE is a flexible and interactive multi-grade teaching and learning approach for students aged 6-12, which incorporates flexibility of class timing and assessments, and integrate ethnic, cultural and geographical sensitivities into its curriculum. Teachers teach more than one grade at a time, allowing individuals to be placed in different level groups according to their competency for different subjects. UNIQUE's ability to adapt to each learner, contributes to greater success for the student.



Students practicing the UNIQUE approach. DAM.

World Vision is also working to promote child friendly programming. In Indonesia, their **Creating Learning Communities for Children** project aims to improve the quality of learning and teaching in primary schools. WV has partnered with local communities and the Ministry of Education to conduct teacher trainings and construct new lessons. The centers also incorporate community involvement by developing partnerships with various groups to help manage the running and budget of the schools. Their program focuses on active, joyful and effective learning incorporating new child friendly methods. Teachers are trained in the use of games, group discussions, problem solving, creating reading corners, promoting creative writing, conducting experiments, classroom management, and diversified assessment mechanisms.

Another program focusing on non tradition techniques is **Plan's Child Friendly Approach to Education** in Cambodia. Here, Plan has implemented a new educational approach that has drastically increased school exam pass rates from 5% to 97% over the last 2 years. First, Plan worked with families and teachers to identify their needs and access a plan of action to combat high dropout rates. They helped construct new primary schools, toilets and libraries---

creating healthy learning environments. Then, partnering with KAPE, a local NGO, and Plan provided training to 40 primary school teachers. These teachers learned new child friendly approaches-- such as allowing students to sit in groups, and “student centered” teaching allowing students to study and learn on their own and in groups. This helped to engage students and increase their achievement.

Technology

Technology may be the biggest trend in non-formal education. Technology is being incorporated into education in a variety of ways: from increasing effectiveness of lessons in the typical classroom to reaching rural underserved populations. NGOs will increasingly develop new techniques involving IT that make their programs more efficient and effective.

One way technology can be used is in increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching tools. **Viva Rio** is incorporating technology with their **Fast Track Schooling Program** in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This program offers young adults and adults that were unable to complete school and still lack basic education and literacy. The program is implemented in low income, under serviced areas of Rio. Viva Rio partners with other associations or businesses in the local area to arrange classroom space and resources. Fast-Track schooling is an intensive approach allows students to complete 4 grade levels in less than years if necessary. This approach incorporates a variety of teaching methods, and relies heavily videos and computers to speed up the learning process.

Technology can also be used to harness new means of communication. **AED** works to incorporate technology into education with its **Para o Futuro** program in Brazil. Part of the program is teaching youth computer skills—such as technical design and repair, and software installation. More uniquely, Para of Futuro links poor youth with middle class professionals. Communicating through email and instant messaging, the adults eMentor the youth. This removed method reduces the prejudice, due to their low socioeconomic standing, the youth may face if interacting person to person. The program provides tutoring, mentoring and positive engagement with adults to youth who would otherwise not have these opportunities. It gives youth insight into future careers post secondary school, and how they can work towards these careers.

Technology also has a role in providing NGOs new ways to accessed underserved populations. The **Mobile Literacy Program** run by **Bunyard** in Pakistan incorporates technology to teach literacy to people in rural areas. Bunyard partners with local and international



organizations, such as UNESCO, to implement their Mobile Based Post-Literacy Programme.” This program engages teens and adults, ages 15 to 25, which are semi literate, but need more education to acquire full literacy. The students are given mobile handsets to receive SMS messages---which they then copy into their workbooks. They would then create and send messages back. Reading and writing messages continued to improve student’s literacy. Intermittently, learners go to mobile resource centres to test their literacy advancements. This program harnesses the power of technology to reach adults who would otherwise go unnerved.

Gaps:

While NGOs are implementing unique, innovative and successful programs, there are still gaps in programming. These gaps exist for many reasons---funding, difficulty of providing such programs and the lack of attention to these areas. It is important to identify these gaps, so that in the future, more attention can be placed in these areas in order to truly achieve universal education.

Secondary Education:

Providing access to quality secondary education is essential to promoting overall education. Today, primary education is not enough to increase the economic development of a country. Countries often give focus to the start of education in primary schools, and post-secondary or university education. Focus must be placed on transition kids from primary to secondary school, and on increasing the quality and diversity of secondary education. Secondary schools can be used as a mechanism for job training, so graduates can enter the economy with skills¹.

Science and Math Curriculum:

Much attention is paid to basic literacy reading and writing literacy, but math and science curriculum often gets forgotten. Basic math and science skills should also be considered basic

¹ International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis. *Economic Growth in Developing Countries: Education Proves Key*. Issue brief no. 3. Laxenburg: IIASA, 2006.

literacy, and curriculum developed and implemented to strengthen the education students receive in these subjects. Just learning to read and write is not a full education. More focus should be placed particularly in elementary school—for the students will need this knowledge to succeed in secondary and post secondary education. In order for developing nations to progress economically, they need to produce citizens that have a comprehensive education so that they are capable of working in a variety of sectors.²

Minority Groups: Disabilities

Currently, there is a focus in the international community on increasing overall enrollment numbers. Policies that focus broadly on enrollment tend to overlook necessity of targeted programs to some minority groups. I found little to no programming that focused on education students with learning or physical disabilities. With the proper targeted specialized programs, these individuals will become productive members of society. Universal education includes all citizens of a nation, and programs must be developed to better incorporate disabled students into the education system.³

Urban Programs

There were also fewer programs targeted focused in urban areas. Urban centers in developing nations also need attention, as they often have large amounts of out of school children, high rates of drop outs and overcrowded schools. They too need help in building the physical and intellectual capacity of their schools; to create environments that keep kids in school and give them a quality education. Also with an increase of rural to urban migration in many areas, cities must build up their capacity to provide education services for these students.¹

Difficulties for the Future

The analysis of models, trends and gaps provides a good overview of the current capacity of the NGO field in education. There are major successes, and models to follow in order to replicate these successes. There are also gaps and areas in which to improve. We must now look to where the difficulties lie in the future: scale, longevity and government incorporation.

² Nagao, Masafumi, John M. Rogan, and Marcelita C. Magno. *Mathematics and Science Education in Developing Countries: Issues, Experiences, and Cooperation Prospects*. Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 2007.

³ UNESCO. 2010. EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010. Reaching the Marginalized. Paris.

Scale/ Government Takeover

All of the programs highlighted are small in scale. The success of these programs is due to their unique approaches, that have been tailored to the communities they are operating within. The NGO's have accessed the needs of the population, and come up with programs, often non formal education, that can increase education and literacy. It is unrealistic to believe that there are enough resources to enact these small scale programs in every needy area. In the future, it would be beneficial to scale up these projects to regional or national level if possible—though this presents some difficulties. Scaling up would have to be done by larger organizations or taken over by the government, as it would cost would greatly increase. Also, when the projects grow in scale, they loose some of their tailoring, and are not as specific—which could decrease their effectiveness.

Funding

Many of these NGO's are operating under tight budgets, with funding they may or may not be consistent over the years. While most of the programs are working with communities to build their capacity to provide services, at the moment these communities do not have the capacity to enact them on their own. If the NGO's ran out of funding, or moved on to another program, the local community would be unable to sustain these programs. There needs to be effective planning as to how to make these programs sustainable in the long term—whether through government or institutional hand over, etc.

Quality Assessment:

While it is of vital importance to increase enrollment rates, it is essential to evaluate the type of education these students are receiving. Many programs evaluate their effectiveness by national test scores or grade graduation rates---but these are standards are set by the government, and may not be the best assessment of true quality. Education is seen as a pathway out of poverty and to economic growth, but this can only happen if citizens are receiving quality comprehensive educations. NGOs should make sure that they incorporate assessments into their programming.

Conclusion

This research uncovered many important models, trends and gaps that should be discussed when implementing education projects in developing nations. In the future, NGOs should look to the models of success to discover new strategies they can incorporate when planning and implementing their projects. These models were discovered when conducting research relating to education, but many can be applied to other sectors as well. Programs of any type that are implemented with a strong focus on the community, with help from community or government partners, that build up the capacity of communities and increase their ownership over projects, are likely to be successful.

While the programs and projects NGOs are implementing are unique and successful, there are still apparent gaps and problems. The largest gaps I found were a lack of programming regarding secondary education, urban areas, disabled students and science and math curriculum. These gaps in programming leave large groups of society out of education.

There are also problems in looking towards the future. The overall goal should be to have nations to support the universal public education of all their citizens. NGO's should not have to provide programs because the local government does not have the capacity to provide for its citizens. The largest obstacles for future success that I identified were: the lack of quality assessment of programming and funding in the short term, and the scaling up or government takeover of programs in the long run. To meet the goal of universal primary education, and to increase secondary and university education, more money and focus must be put towards education. The goal of universal comprehensive education, that leads nations out of poverty and to economic progresses, is to be achieved.

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Organization	Program	Email
MADRE	Girls Schoosl in Afghanistan	ldavis@madre.org
World Education	ACEB Guinea	hq@bunyad.org.pk
	Atfaluna Amaluna	
	Brighter Futures	
	Female Literacy in Mali	
Mission International Rescue	Secondary Schools in DR	lazqueta@mircharities.org
Half the Sky Foundation	Big Sisters Program	contact@halfthesky.org
The Hariri Foundation	Our Right to Succeed	rubina.c@hariri-foundation.org
Rural Reconstruction Nepal	Education for Vulnerables	Bhanu@rrn.org.np
Bunyad Foundation	Community Learning Centers	hq@bunyad.org.pk
	Mobile Literacy	
Int'l Inst. Of Rural Reconstruction	Pastoralist Edu. Program	us.office@iirr.org
World Vision	Creative Learning Communities	APhillip@worldvision.org
	Child Friendly Education Indonesia	
Plan International	Child Friendly Approach	Anne-Sophie.Lois@plan-international.org
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Viva Rio	Fast Track School	eduarda@vivario.org.br
AED	Para o Futuro	smoseley@aed.org

ⁱ UNESCO. *Education for All by 2015 - Will We Make It?* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007.