

TIPS FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

A ROUGH GUIDE TO STARTING YOUR OWN PROJECT, NGO, NON-PROFIT



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By Maggie Doyne

Within Another Country

When considering starting a project and registering as an NGO within another country, that is either under-developed or war-torn, there are important factors to consider. Depending on the country you are in, the language spoken, how remote of an area it is, social, cultural, and religious customs may all come into play. For example, in many cultures your experience could be very different depending on whether you are male or female. In other areas certain religious traditions and values must be respected and upheld. So be really sure you have been in the area long enough to know the culture and traditions.

If English is not the main language spoken in the area, you also may want to enroll yourself in a language school, find a tutor or immerse yourself in the area for a while so that you learn the basics. Sometimes the people with the best advice may not speak English. In the case of a serious language barrier the best scenario would be to find a trust worthy English speaking local person to be your translator and right hand guide throughout your registration process and other start-up procedures. If you live in an area long enough and have become motivated to start a project, chances are you probably have good connections with the right people already!

Find Other Organizations in the Area

The first step in starting your own organization or NGO will be to search for other organizations working in the area, and then ask away. As a foreigner it can be especially helpful to find other foreigners! How did they get started? What did they do? Who is their target group? What problems did the organization face in their start-up period? What does it take to register as a non-resident within the country? How did they obtain a substantial visa? Be sure to go to the biggest and smallest organizations in the area working for all different causes. If there aren't any, things may be a bit more difficult for you.

What do the people have to say?

Along the way be sure to record testimonials from local people. Many times you may be surprised to know that people themselves have their own ideas as to what the real problems in their communities are and have different ideas and solutions as to how to solve them. Talk to locals and really get to know them: rich and poor, young and old, educated and non-educated, farmers and business men, find out what is it the people themselves see as the needs within their own community. And how will your future plans address those needs? Citing these testimonials and using them as examples may give your project more legitimacy.



Documentation is important!!!

Record everything. Be sure to carry a notebook, handheld recorder, or video camera, especially in the start-up phase. When you're talking to so many people, different organizations and government officials a day, it can be easy to get overwhelmed and forget important bits of information. It will also be fun to look back on one day.

Take pictures of the issue your organization hopes to address. For example if your working for clean water, take pictures of the insufficient water treatment plant, the waste-infested or open sewage system, or a child drinking a glass of contaminated water. These pictures can later be used on your website, when speaking to government officials, in protests, or back in your own country.

Do a field study; get to know your region!

Let's take the example of water again. Find statistics as to how many people suffer from illnesses as a result of drinking contaminated water in the area. Talk with doctors, local hospitals and medical clinics to find out exactly what kind of statistics you are dealing with. Have there been any other studies in the past? Where does waste go? In a given area, count how many proper latrines there are. Take a water sample. Pay a visit to the water treatment plant and other agencies who handle distribution of the water.

* Once you have clearly identified the need for your project, your particular interest, you're ready to start moving forward.

Establishing a Board

Prior to the registration process your organization should establish a Board of Directors, or Advisory Board. The members of the board collectively have trustee and legal responsibility for the actions of the organization and serve as a bridge between yourself and the government.

Advice for creating a board

You want your members to bring as many different talents, abilities and backgrounds to the table.

If you are working in an area with a caste system you want to be sure that your board incorporates people of all different castes. For example, you do not want to have an organization working for social justice and equality, with a group of people all of the same caste. If an individual has an issue with working alongside members of another caste, it may be wise not to include them on your board

You will want both men and women on your board. If you are an organization working for women, you obviously want more women. If you're working for widowed women, you will want a representation of widows on your board. If you are working for gender equality make a statement, by having equal members of both men and women on your board.

Positions of the Board

- Executive Director
- Chair-person (President)
- Vice-chairperson (Vice-president)
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Advisory Members

Responsibilities of the Board

- Financial Management
- Planning
- Fund Raising
- Public Relations
- Governance
- Holding Regular Board Meetings



Find a Name, and Logo

This will be important information in regards to the registration process and for the rest of the lifetime of your NGO. Create a name that clearly identifies your organization, which local people will understand, and that does not already exist. You will probably not want to have an all English name if no one in your area speaks English. *An acronym is a good way to have a name that also clearly states what the organization is working for.

The logo for your organization will be used on sign boards, business cards, letterhead, your official stamp, etc. It should obviously be representative of your work and something that can be recognized by the community.

Establish an Address

In order to register, you must have a certified address. It may be helpful during the start-up period to rent an office space. If necessary use the address of one of your board members homes. Once you obtain a piece of land or purchase an office space more permanently, you can file your new address with the government.

Clear Objectives of the Organization

Make sure your objectives are feasible, clear, concise, and meet the needs of the target community. You do not want too many objectives at the very beginning that may be difficult to meet. Keep it simple. Set goals that are feasible and most important to you.

Mission Statement

The mission statement is a one line statement clearly stating the mission of the organization.

Example: Kopila Valley Children's Home-
To Sustain and Improve the Quality of Life and the Future of Children of Nepal.

Strategies Towards Achieving Objectives

What are your plans? What execution is already in place? How will they impact the local community and contribute to the good of the people? SUSTAINABILITY is a big consideration. How will your organization sustain itself?

Fundraising Strategy

When registering, you will be required to state some ideas, initiatives, and plans concerning how to bring funds into your project.

What is generally involved in the registration process?

In almost any country, registration will involve the writing and filing of your organization's bylaws. Bylaws are basically your organization's constitution, including rules and regulations by which your organization will operate. These are set forth by your executive board, i.e. length of term of the board members, nomination process, accounting, board's responsibility, amendments, legal status, etc. Your local government will give you an outline of what must be included. In many cases your bylaws will have to be written in the local language. If you're not yet fluent in the language, this will be a difficult obstacle. Be prepared for this. You will also want a legal translated version in English for your own records. For this, you will need a law representative that is fluent in both English and the language that pertains.

If your organization pertains to women you will probably have to register and submit your bylaws under the umbrella of a local women's welfare council. The different agencies you may have to register under will depend on the target group of your organization. Be prepared and be willing to go to at least 10 different offices and government agencies. Kopila Valley Children's Home of Nepal's bylaws are registered within 6 different government agencies, all of which needed to sign and approve of our organization. As you can imagine this was a lengthy process.

The Office of the District Development Committee (Surkhet)
The Chief District Office (Surkhet)
Government Municipal Office (Surkhet)
The Women's Development Office (Surkhet)

Local Police Department (Surkhet)
Social Welfare Council (Katmandu)

Ready to begin registration?

If you've talked to enough people, you'll probably know where to go first to obtain the necessary paper work. Registration may not be as easy as you think and again will differ from country to country. Be proactive. You do not want your papers to end up sitting at the bottom of a pile on someone's office desk. Meet with government officials face to face. Get to know them. Address them respectfully, and remember to stress how much you appreciate their help, especially in getting your registration in a timely manner. Just remember Bureaucracy is everywhere and there are certain steps and processes you may have to go through that seem unnecessary at the time. Try your best not to get frustrated, bogged down, or emotionally strained. This can be especially difficult when you are entrenched in an area of poverty and devastation. You may find yourself so depressed by the conditions surrounding you, that it will be too hard to maintain a sense of self and emotional well-being. In that case you will not be of any help to anyone. Ride the wave, stay with-in yourself, and move forward knowing that it will probably take longer than you expect, so leave yourself extra time. It's all about the journey, not the destination.

U.S. Registration Process



Have a clear vision

So let's just say that you're registered as an NGO in another country. You've returned home and now you're ready to begin your next steps. Chances are you're pretty overwhelmed. People flood you with questions about where you've been and what you've been doing. You're probably in desperate search for money for your cause, and you need to set yourself up and register as a non-profit in the U.S. You have timelines and deadlines and restraints preconceived in your mind. You're in GO GO GO gear. Ok let's stop for a moment here and take a deep breath. Breathe.

I think a lot of times, we become so passionate and wrapped up in our causes that we set our selves up for living in survival mod. We can even turn ourselves into martyrs. You turning yourself into a victim isn't going to help anything. Don't lose who you are in fighting for your cause. You'll either burn out, or you'll lose that passion that drove you there in the first place.

So breathe. Take some time for you. My friend Megan Shull was the first person who really woke me up to this. One late night when I was really overwhelmed overextended, and on the verge of a mental break down, she gave me some wonderful words of wisdom. She told me to take a few days just for me. Massages, acupuncture, long walks, journaling, art, dance, shopping for a new pair of sneakers for myself, or a great new shirt at Patagonia, quality time with friends and family, lots of water, healthy food and sleep. She said to think of nothing else but me, me, me and to see what would happen. After my few days of ME time, the vision for what I wanted not only for my project, but for my own life, my own livelihood became crystal clear. Ideas and inspiration seemed to come out of the clear blue and I had a renewed enthusiasm and energy to keep me on my path. Work turned into fun. I wanted to read every book there was to read, talk to everyone possible, make endless phone calls, send countless e-mails. I became a girl on a mission, and I was having FUN with it! The pressure was gone. The blank word documents, the business plans turned into a landscapes where I could paint my wildest dreams and desires, where I could pour my heart and soul out. My fingers were flying on the keyboard.

My point is that sometimes in the angst of it all, in being consumed by poverty, by suffering, by social injustices and whatever our cause may be we lose what brought us to them in the first place. This can be our fatal mistake.

What is it about the word non-profit?

When you really think about it, the word non-profit is a very funny word. We do need profit. We work hard for it. It's a little thing in the non-profit world we call "fundraising." We need profit, not only for our projects and our organizations, we need profit for ourselves. We need to eat, we need clothes, and we need to pay our rent, just like everybody else, and every now and then it's nice to treat ourselves to dinner and a movie, a new shirt, or a pair of sneakers. We need money just like everybody else. We are a business just like any other business, we have budgets, we have expenses, and we have a career just like everyone else in the western world. We need income so that our projects, our businesses, our "non-profits" can grow and flourish, we take our



income and put it back into our project so that we can take the next steps in becoming what we want to be. So the word non-profit is really pretty ridiculous when you think about now isn't it?

A wish list and a magic wand (Amazing words from Megan Shull)

After your personal retreat, or any point when you're feeling really clear and level headed, take some time to envision what you want for your project and most importantly, your life. Envision your life and your project at its best, fully running and operating. Then sit down, meditate, do some deep breathing, or take a walk and write out your wish list. This could take hours, days, or even months, but start that list and put it out there. Maybe post it on your prayer wall or your altar with a candle lit next to it. If you had a magic wand, what is it exactly that you would want the universe to grant you? This list may turn into two lists or three lists, and even include a timeline. You may make a list of what you want for yourself in your own life, as well as a list for your project.

“First envision your life as you want it to be, then build your business.”
The wise words of Sam Bull (Director and founder of LeapNow)

In setting up our businesses we often let them rule our life. Instead of doing things that we truly love, we end up being consumed with all of the things WE HAVE TO DO to get by and keep ourselves going. Thus our business tends to take over and we're left without a life of our own, and without happiness. I've seen this a lot in our culture especially. Life starts to become a race to the finish line, a race to get ahead and accomplish our goals, we tend to forget about the journey along the way.

The Hedge-Hog business plan www.jimcollins.com

An amazing idea and helpful tip. Create one of these for your own project.

Writing your “business plan”

This is a very important part of your start-up period, not only for the people who you will be presenting it to but also for yourself and to get your vision down.

Determine who your audience will be

General Outline for your Business Plan

Title Page with Logo

Table of Contents

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Overview

1.2 Vision

1.3 Mission

1.4 Values/Focus (These can be just a few words that sum up your focus) See ours

1.5 Objectives (Bulleted format)

2.0 Organization's Summary

2.1 Executive Board of Directors (USA)

2.2 Executive Board of Directors (Nepal) or whatever applies

2.3 Management Team/Staff

*** It is helpful to include personal bios and qualifications

- 3.0 Highlights of the organization
 - 3.1 Organizations responsibility
 - 3.2 Location
 - 3.3 Why the location is suitable/ in need
 - 3.4 Activities (break down into stages/phases)
 - 3.5 Aspects of sustainability (environmental, organizational, etc.)

Market Analysis

(Bio of the country, stats, extra info, why is there a market for your project)

- 5.0 Similar Projects (highlight the successes and impact of these projects)
 - 5.1 Similar Project 1
 - 5.2 Similar Project 2

6.0 Financial Information

- 6.1 Revenue generation initiatives
- 6.2 Budget (construction/rental fees/start up)
- 6.3 Operational Cost

State Approval

First and foremost you need state approval. Many states have an online registration process and return approval within a matter of days or weeks. This depends on the state you live in. Initial state registration is relatively simple, and includes a couple of forms with a few basic questions. There is a small fee associated with this approval.

Once you've acquired state approval, you will receive an EIN. Employer Identification Number, almost like a social security number, except for your company.

Federal Approval

Your Employer Identification Number is all you need to move on to your federal registration and obtain your 501c3 tax exemption and official status as a non-profit within the U.S. There are different ways of submitting applications online. The easiest way is through private companies and lawyers who work directly with the IRS and will do most of the work for you. These companies will guarantee 100% approval. Expect a fee ranging from anywhere between \$500 to \$1000.

www.501c3.org
www.legalzoom.com

Other Helpful Sites

www.charityvillage.com
<http://www.gdrc.org> (The NGO cafe)
www.idealists.org
www.wikipedia.org/non-profit

Before starting NGOs and non-profits that work at the poverty level, we believe it is important to have an in-depth understanding and clear definition of poverty, its causes and effects, and the different solutions and theories as to how to combat it. Provided below is a recommended reading list which offers a variety of philosophies and solutions that both inspired and directed our own journey. We hope you will continue to read and direct yourself through this process. Email us, and share your own favorites.

[Creating a World that Works for All](#)

by Sharif Abdullah

[Banker to the Poor](#)

by Muhammad Yunus



[The White Man's Burden](#)

by William Easterly

[Free the Children](#)

by Craig Kielberger

[Managing the Nonprofit Organization](#)

by Peter F. Drucker

[Dark Star Safari](#)

by Paul Theroux

[The Colonizer and the Colonized](#)

by Albert Memmi

[Three Cups of Tee](#)

by Greg Mortensen and David Oliver Relin

[Peace by Peaceful Means Peace Education](#)

by John Galtung

“People can change their own lives, provided they have the right kind of support. They're not asking for charity, charity is no solution to poverty. Poverty is the creation of opportunities like everybody else has, not the poor people, so bring them to the poor people, so that they can change their lives.” — [Muhammad Yunus](#), Nobel Peace Award Winner 2006