

NETWORKING WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

When it comes to what makes an NGO truly successful, we might think first about the various numbers involved and the presentation of the website. How many children in rural areas get an education thanks to this organisation? How many mosquito nets are being handed out to curb malaria? And how impressive is that all-important website?

All this is important, at least to a degree. But we often neglect to consider what is behind the scenes. We forget about the fundamental structure that makes NGOs effective or not. In order to be successful, NGOs must create a close community of stakeholders, partners and other NGOs and work together. Collaboration is key. No organisation can be entirely efficient on its own. While working together sometimes proves difficult because so many individuals voice so many different opinions, cooperation allows for greater expansion of ideas and more creative solutions.

How to identify suitable partners for achieving your goal?

Staff with diverse expertise

Gather a team of staff with different social, academic and professional backgrounds. This will allow you to take advantage of their experience and social networks, as well as facilitate the identification of suitable partners.

Volunteers

Volunteers are also a great source from which to identify potential partners. Organise periodic meetings with your volunteers to discuss and develop a map of possible partners who can contribute to better achieving your goals.

Networking opportunities

National and international events like conferences, workshops, study trips etc. are also an excellent way to meet and connect with potential partners from the same or other fields that are beneficial to your work.

Cause and values

Find a company, institution or other potential partner whose cause aligns with yours. In the wake of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability concerns finding their way into corporate strategies, companies are looking to create partnerships with NGOs whose cause aligns with their business values.

Long-term thinking

Think of the partnership as a long-term strategic investment. Companies often include CSR and sustainability initiatives in their strategies for the future that are linked with long-term goals. Identify your long-term goals and search for companies that would be interested in long-term cooperation.

How to approach potential partners and various stakeholders?

Make use of your “core competency”: each organisation has its own strengths and core competencies. Once you have identified a company or an organisation you wish to partner with, it is time to identify their needs. A company might have expertise in marketing, while an NGO may have expertise in climate and environment. Knowing what you can offer a potential partner provides the best way to approach them.

Invite representatives of local government and its bodies to take part in your initiatives and all your activities.

In education, open youth activities where representatives of the education sector in local level are an integrative part and bring your activities into the context of schools and universities to make the reality of civil society more tangible for the young.

Have your older volunteers share their youth experiences with the younger (potential) volunteers in high school settings and thus make volunteering an interesting experience from the youth perspective.

How to establish long-lasting partnership with various stakeholders?

Implement projects that reflect the needs of the community and at the same time address local and national policies. This and the quality implementation of your projects will help you gain a good reputation with the local authorities and other stakeholders, thus making them more willing to be involved in future projects. Organise opportunities for volunteers, partners and stakeholders to bond and deepen their relationships (youth retreats, team building activities, etc.). Give them the opportunity to share their ideas for the upcoming events and projects.

Express the desire and readiness to be a part of their initiatives as an active actor.

Sign a Memorandum of Understanding. This will make clear exactly what each partner will do, outline basic agreements between them and help avoid confusion and conflict.

Never forget to make the role and the engagement of your partners and local stakeholder visible to the public. Use their logos, mention them in your press releases and in social media posts.

