

CHAPTER 12

ESTABLISHING A SOCIETY

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1 INTRODUCTION

Establishing an animal protection society is a serious commitment that will take enormous energy and dedication and seriously impact all aspects of your life. All too often, animal protection work simply takes over our lives. This can be rewarding, but it can also be physically and emotionally exhausting.

Anybody considering establishing an animal protection society should, at a minimum, read the HSUS guidance booklet (please see 'Further Resources' section for the reference). As the HSUS guidance advises:

"THE MORE CAREFUL THE PREPARATION, THE MORE LIKELY IT IS THAT THE ORGANISATION WILL SUCCEED IN ITS GOALS."

It is important that in-depth analyses are carried out before a new society is started and that very careful consideration is given to all issues. Some animal protection organisations that start up without the right analysis and understanding can actually hamper existing animal protection activity or damage the welfare of the animals (for example, by sheltering in awful conditions). Others simply duplicate or confuse messages. This is why it is vital to research and plan carefully.

This chapter offers practical advice to assist you in the process of deciding which issue to tackle, what approach to take and what you need to bear in mind when it comes to establishing a board of trustees/committee and drafting a governing document.

2 DECIDING WHICH ISSUE TO TACKLE



The aim is to identify the issue that would make best use of an organisation's resources towards ensuring the maximum improvement for the plight of animals.

An examination of the following will help in this process:

- Other existing animal protection societies in your area, if any
- The range of potential animal protection problems that could be tackled and the likelihood of success
- The resources of your prospective organisation – both human and financial.

These three topics are considered individually in the sections that follow.

a) Analysis of Other Animal Protection Societies

The first step in the process is to find out whether there are already **animal protection societies in your country** (see the World Animal Net link, where you can search for all societies in your country). If there are existing societies, then try to learn more about these groups: the areas of work they cover, their approaches, methods and levels of success. If possible, meet with them to find out even more.

Key questions include:

- Are these organisations potential competitors or collaborators?
- How will you avoid wasting scarce animal protection society funding through duplication or competition?

- How will your organisation differentiate itself in the animal protection society 'marketplace'?
- What is your unique role?

Bear in mind that it may be more productive to join and strengthen their efforts, rather than duplicate their work.

b) Analysis of the Status of Animal Protection

The next step is to examine the **range of animal protection problems that could be tackled**. If you intend to work nationally, then a good research tool is to prepare a report on the status of animal protection in your country, covering the main animal protection issues.

A full analysis of the 'status of animal protection' should be carried out for each of the issues the organisation is considering from the following main headings:

- Companion Animals
- Farm Animals
- Wildlife
- Working Animals
- Animals in Entertainment
- Animal Experimentation
- Disaster Relief.

The status report should analyse:

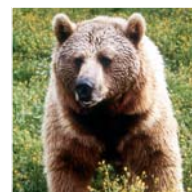
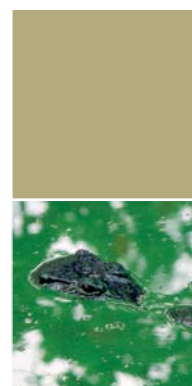
- Major welfare problems
- Numbers of animals affected
- Severity and duration of the welfare problem
- Legislation – existing and proposed national legislation, conventions and regional or international agreements, enforcement issues
- Legislative system or processes – level of democracy, openness, consultation, success of consumer pressure etc.
- Existence of an Animal Welfare Committee (or subject-specific Animal Welfare Committees such as a Farm Animal Welfare Committee etc.)
- Government contacts
- Likely success with the issue
- Major threats and opportunities
- Educational opportunities
- Campaigns and media potential
- Industry initiatives and training etc.
- Financial opportunities (tenders for stray control for example)

It is most important to compare the numbers of animals involved and the level and duration of their suffering, because all too often organisations think that the issue they are aware of, or the issue that is most visible (such as stray animals) is the most serious, and they feel compelled to act on these, without due consideration. An organisation may decide to be a single-issue group or tackle multiple issues, in which case it will have to decide a level or priority for each issue.

Some organisations also carry out investigations into the most promising issues – visiting and recording actual situations. The combination of analysis and investigation can form a powerful backdrop to any future work on the issue, it can provide useful information about the issue and approach to be adopted, and can be useful in attracting supporters.

c) Organisational Analysis

Finally, an honest assessment of your **own resources and capabilities**, both human and financial, should be made. Assess your strengths, weaknesses and the assets at your disposal.





Then consider these against the animal protection issues that you have analysed, in order to make an assessment of how the organisation can best help.

Some of the factors to consider include:

- Number of staff
- Skills and abilities of staff (for example, there is no point in analysing or choosing companion animals as an issue, if your organisation involves highly skilled marine biologists!)
- Location and size of office
- Financial resources
- Whether you are an animal rights or animal welfare organisation
- Whether you want to campaign for social change, educate, or undertake service provision work
- Whether you are part of a regional or international network.

Weighing up the outcomes of the three analyses outlined above will facilitate your decision as to which issue your organisation should tackle. The next step is to determine HOW to go about it. The following section considers the various approaches available.

3

DETERMINING THE BEST APPROACH

Dealing with the sad end results, without tackling the root of the problem, is soul-destroying and counter-productive. This tendency to deal with end results, rather than tackling the roots, is symptomatic of the animal protection movement (probably because the compassion felt for the end results leads to such approaches). However, the aim should be total resolution of a problem, and this can only be reached by tackling, and stemming, the problem at source.

WHATEVER YOU DECIDE TO DO, BEAR IN MIND THAT IT IS MORE EFFECTIVE TO TACKLE A PROBLEM AT ITS ROOT.

a) Categories of Animal Protection Activity

There are three main approaches to tackling an animal welfare problem:

- Service delivery
- Campaigning and lobbying
- Education.

Service delivery: The largest and most prominent animal protection societies, including the SPCAs, are those that provide animal protection services, such as stray control, euthanasia, sheltering, fostering, re-homing, veterinary care for animals of the disadvantaged, disaster relief and rescue, inspection and enforcement, training, instruction and advice on animal protection issues (in particular to the authorities).

Campaigning and lobbying to improve the status and welfare of animals. Campaigning is considered the 'engine for social change' and has already resulted in some groundbreaking changes for animals. Lobbying can be highly effective at securing improvements to the laws protecting animals.

Education: The purpose of humane education is to sensitise individuals to the plight of animals, thereby generating empathy and improving the treatment of animals. It is a long-term investment that changes both the practical treatment of animals and the social climate in favour of change.



b) Factors Influencing Your Approach

THE AIM IS TO IDENTIFY THE APPROACH THAT WILL MAKE BEST USE OF AN ORGANISATION'S RESOURCES TOWARDS ENSURING THE MAXIMUM IMPACT FOR THE CHOSEN ISSUE.

Much of the analysis carried out to decide which issue to tackle will also assist in deciding on which approach to take.

The following need to be considered:

Resources available: The organisation's resources, both staff and financial, as well as its particular strengths and skills. This is an important part of the decision. There is no point in deciding that you want to start an animal shelter, if you do not have the finances or the skills needed to do this.

Nature of the problems to be tackled and the issue: The analysis of the status of animal protection should highlight vulnerable areas to target. An analysis of feasibility can be added, examining different approaches. This could include important factors such as:

- The numbers of animals likely to be saved or helped by the chosen approach
- The likelihood of long-term beneficial change (contribution towards social change).

Issues already covered by other animal protection societies: Look at the issues other animal protection societies work on (if relevant) and the methods and approaches they use. Avoid creating unnecessary duplication or competitive tension in the movement. The aim should be to fill an unmet need.

Situations specific to your country and culture: For example, in some countries campaigning is not yet fruitful (because of low levels of democracy for example), in others it may not be permitted to run an animal shelter (as was the case in some former Communist countries in Eastern Europe). You need to examine your own situation, against the possible approaches you could take on your chosen issue.

Cost: The full cost of likely approaches should be evaluated and weighed against the likely end results (short and long-term). This may appear mercenary, but it is the only way to ensure that you are using your resources to save as many animals as humanly possible.

Amongst all this logical analysis, there also needs to be some creative vision and inspiration. Some organisations feel driven to work in a certain way. In this case, the organisation has to be built with this objective in mind and any shortcomings rectified to ensure that it is able to cope with its chosen mission.

Deciding which approach to take is a balance of all the above factors. The analysis is relatively simple, compared to the choice!

The next section deals with harnessing the research and resources you need to tackle your chosen issue in the way you have decided.



4

HARNESSING RESOURCES

Detailed plans are needed before you can harness resources. But before you can put together an authoritative plan, you need to research your chosen issue and approach thoroughly and pull together all the relevant information. The following information is intended to assist you in this process.

Research is of utmost importance. It is the foundation for all professional activity. In campaigns work, it ensures a thorough understanding of the political and consumer environment, which is vital to the preparation of a targeted campaign with potential to succeed. In service delivery work, it is essential to ensuring the provision of the most appropriate and effective programmes, at the most competitive cost. In educational work, it can help to ensure that educational messages are appropriate, usable and reach target audiences effectively. Well-targeted research can help animal protection activity to succeed without wastage of time or money.

Research is also required to ascertain what, if any, are the legal requirements for setting up and operating a NGO in your country. Every organisation should make a point of researching, and following, the legal requirements its country (or its Charity regulatory body) imposes. This should include aspects of company law, charity law, financial law, health and safety requirements and employment law. If in doubt, legal advice should be sought.

Meetings and consultations: Once the available information has been collated, it is helpful to arrange background meetings and fact-finding consultations. These could include potential partners, competitors or anybody involved in the issue or the fight against it such as government, industry, academics, scientists, cultural and religious bodies, vets, lawyers, biologists and other NGOs.

This may lead to a greater understanding of areas to target or avoid, driving factors of the problem, relevant political and legislative factors and potential collaborators and competitors. It may also create a more realistic picture of the obstacles you will have to overcome!

Staff resources: You need to make a full and honest assessment of your staff and volunteer resources, including skills, expertise, strengths and weaknesses. This will help identify areas that need recruitment and/or training and development.

Financial resources: All the information you gather will help you put together a proper business plan, including a well-prepared budget and project proposal(s). A business plan is an extension of your mission statement (which is explored in the chapter on 'Strategy'); without a business plan, it will be extremely difficult to fundraise and apply for grants. The various methods of fundraising are examined in the separate chapter on 'Fundraising'.

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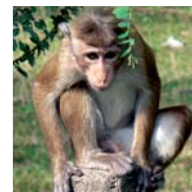
ESTABLISHING A BOARD OF TRUSTEES OR COMMITTEE

It is essential that you check if there are any legal requirements for NGOs in your country. In many countries, NGOs are legally required to have a board of trustees or a committee. Some countries stipulate further requirements; for example in Brazil NGO board members must be residents in Brazil.

Whatever the legal requirement, NGOs do traditionally have boards for moral reasons. As NGOs raise money from the community, it is appropriate that elected individuals from that community oversee the use of that money and ensure that it is used in line with the NGO's objectives and the community's needs. Simply put, NGOs should have boards to ensure that the NGO is acting responsibly. This is not to say that workers in an NGO can't be trusted, just that it is very difficult

for the same person to 'do' and to check what's being done, this should really be carried out by two different sets of people.

The board takes responsibility for the governance of an NGO and usually includes a chair/president, a treasurer, a secretary and general board members. Its main role is to publicly represent the NGO in a positive manner. Board members should help mobilise resources and open doors; they should be influential and share the same vision outlined in the mission statement. Obvious examples include: a local government officer, someone within the local or national education system, a prominent and respected businessperson, someone from a larger animal welfare organisation, someone from another type of NGO in the community (like the chief exec of a children's charity) or someone from the veterinary profession.



The NGO must stipulate exactly how much responsibility the board members have, how they are elected and removed, and how and when they should meet etc. These provisions should be included in the society's governing document.

6

PREPARING A GOVERNING DOCUMENT

A society's governing document sets out the society's reason for being and clarifies its intent. It is the 'instruction manual' for the NGO, which sets out the rules under which the society will operate. Again, it is important to become familiar with the legal requirements for setting up an NGO and the relevant legislation, prior to preparing a governing document.

A governing document can be referred to in a number of ways, depending upon the law of a particular country. Common names include constitution, by-laws, memorandum and articles of association and statute.

The governing document should contain all the provisions necessary for the effective and efficient running of an NGO, including:

The NGO name: The name is important. It is the most remembered and recognisable feature of an organisation, and it forms the basis of the public's first impression of the NGO. It is therefore important that the name accurately reflects the organisation's purpose and is sufficiently different from other NGO names to avoid confusion. In addition, the name must not include a word or expression that might cause offense.

Objectives should be clear and understandable and reflect what the organisation intends to do.

If the organisation is to benefit a particular species or group of animals this should be made clear.

If the benefits of the organisation are to be confined to a particular geographical area, this should also be clarified.

Powers: Committee members will need some powers, which they can use to help them meet the objectives of the NGO; this can include, for example, the power to raise funds and receive contributions, the power to buy or lease any property, and to maintain and equip it for use.

Membership is normally open to any individuals or organisations interested in furthering the NGO's objectives. The governing document should explain:

- Whether any membership subscription is payable
- How people apply for membership and the criteria for acceptance



- Whether members have any voting rights
- How membership may be terminated by the committee. (Termination should only happen for good and sufficient reason, and the individual should have the right to be heard before a final decision is made).

Committee members: The governing document should stipulate how many committee members there will be, how they will be appointed and how long they are appointed for. It is usual for committee members to be appointed by the members of the NGO at its annual general meeting. The first committee members may be the people who formally adopt the governing document.

Meetings: The governing document should explain:

- The minimum number of committee meetings that will be held each year (the committee members of even small organisations usually meet at least twice a year)
- The procedure for calling emergency/special meetings
- The procedure for electing the person who will be in control of the meetings, – the meeting 'chair'
- The minimum number of committee members who need to be present if a meeting is to be valid. (Usually when there are 3-5 committee members, the minimum is 2, but if there are 6-9 committee members, the minimum is 3).

Finance and accounts: All organisations need to keep complete and accurate accounts showing their income and expenditure. Annual statements of accounts for the NGO and an annual report should be produced.

The governing document should give details of the bank account and should state that the assets are to be held in the name of the NGO (not in the name of a committee member).

The number of signatories for cheques should also be stated in the governing document; usually at least two people sign cheques, one of whom should be a committee member.

Amendments: It is important that the governing document sets out a procedure for making amendments to it, as there are likely to be occasions when changes need to be made to meet the changing needs of the NGO.

Dissolution: There may come a time when an NGO cannot continue operating, so the governing document should explain:

- How the NGO may be dissolved
- What happens to any remaining assets (wherever possible they should be passed onto another NGO).

The governing document is normally put into operation by being adopted at a formal meeting of the new committee and general members. The final typed version should be signed by all the committee members and dated the day of the meeting at which it was agreed. The minutes of the meeting should formally record that the governing document was adopted.



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

7

Q What are the main barriers stopping animal protection societies from becoming professional, modern NGOs?

A There are a variety of factors including:

- Lack of professional animal protection society managers (the field is small, with a limited career structure)
- The movement appears slow to adopt modern NGO management practises
- Lack of proper strategic management
- Being reactive and passive, rather than proactive and goal-focused.

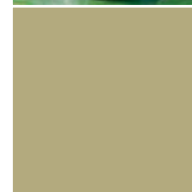
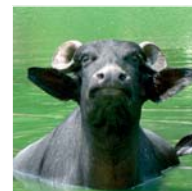
However, some organisations are becoming very professional in their approach and these can be useful models. There are also effective models in other areas of NGO activity.

Q Why are there so many animal protection organisations in some countries?

A This is probably a case of the market supplying what the market needs at any particular time. However, many animal protection organisations do run out of funding. Also, as this is an activity driven by ethics and emotions, there are many different ideas and approaches.

Q What can WSPA do to help member societies become more professional?

A In addition to providing information resources, WSPA has practical experience with a wide variety of animal protection organisations, so can recommend appropriate models or contacts. Also, WSPA and some of its member societies sometimes hold training sessions, workshops and conferences for animal protection societies. These can be very useful, both in learning new skills and concepts and in exchanging ideas and experiences.



FURTHER RESOURCES

8

Web Sites

Charity Commission:

www.charity-commission.gov.uk/supportingcharities/default.asp

Guidance for UK charities

The Chronicle of Philanthropy

<http://philanthropy.com/>

Humane Society of the United States

www.hsus.org/ace/18478

Organisation and operation documents, including 'How to Form an Animal Protection Society in Your Community'

http://files.hsus.org/web-files/HSI/E_Library_PDFs/eng_ht_form_org.pdf

HSUS advice on forming an animal protection society and developing a mission statement



The Nonprofit Resource Centre

<http://not-for-profit.org/>



PETA

www.collegeactivist.com/guide-1.asp

Starting a college group

www.animalactivist.com/actguide6.asp

Guide to becoming an activist

White Hat Communications

www.whitehatcommunications.com/nphome.htm

Online Non-Profit Information Centre – includes ‘Non-profit Handbook’ and ‘Improving Quality and Performance in Your Non-profit Organisation’

World Animal Net

<http://worldanimal.net/>

Includes the World Animal Net Directory of animal protection societies worldwide

Books

The Earthscan Reader on NGO Management

Michael Edwards (Editor), Alan Fowler (Editor)

Publisher: Earthscan

ISBN: 1853838489

Good Governance: Developing Effective Board-Management Relations in Public and Voluntary Organisations

C. Cornforth, C. Edwards

Publisher: CIMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants)

ISBN: 1874784906

How to Run a Voluntary Group: A Guide to Successful Organisation and Management

Chris Carling

Publisher: How To Books

ISBN: 1857031350

Managing a Voluntary Organisation

Sheila Evers

Publisher: The Institute of Management

ISBN: 0859462218

Striking a Balance

Alan Fowler

Publisher: Earthscan

ISBN: 1853833258

Effective Management and Organisation for NGOs

Issues in Voluntary and Non-profit Management

Julian Batsleer, Chris Cornforth, Rob Paton

Publisher: Addison-Wesley

ISBN: 0201565471

