Igniting the Power of Community
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The Role of CBOs and NGOs in Global Public Health
To each of you who are reaching beyond yourself to the benefit of others, contributing to the public good through improving health and public health throughout the world.
I am grateful to all the outstanding authors who contributed chapters to this book. I have learned a tremendous amount from them, both through our discussions as this book was taking shape and through the chapters themselves. I feel privileged to have had this opportunity to work with each of them as part of this project and I look forward to our continued discussions and collaborations, both now and in the future.

I would also like to acknowledge my publisher and editors at Springer Science+Business Media, LLC. The trust Mr. Bill Tucker and others placed in my vision for this project from the outset, as well as their professionalism, guidance, and support from the start will always be truly appreciated.

I am indebted to Ms. Anisha Dharshi for her tireless editorial assistance and support throughout this project. Her high level of editorial skills, her insightful perspectives, and her unwavering commitment to the standards I had set out for this book were invaluable to this process. I have come to respect her as a fellow public health professional and trusted colleague.
When it comes to modern, global health, we may think of community-based and nongovernmental organizations as a kind of fourth estate, following government, intergovernmental agencies, and philanthropic foundations. Nongovernmental and community-based organizations number in the tens of thousands and range from simple associations of neighbors to large and complex global enterprises. However varied these organizations may be in size and structure, two key—seemingly contradictory—features unite them: self-reliance and collaboration.

This book, Igniting the Power of Community: The Role of CBOs and NGOs in Improving Global Public Health, demonstrates how self-reliance and collaboration are not only mutually compatible, but jointly essential for success in advancing health. Virtually every case described within, whether a local program or one with international reach, conveys a story of individual leadership, group initiative, and inter-organizational cooperation to meet health needs. Case after case shows community-based and nongovernmental organizations that succeed by cooperating with one another, with governmental agencies, with inter-governmental organizations, and with foundations. Community-based and nongovernmental organizations offer variety and versatility to meet specific needs. They serve as channels to focus the concerted energy of individuals who join together – in self-reliance and collaboration – to achieve their health goals.

At its core, this work reveals the power of communities to solve health problems and to promote health. More than a recitation of success stories, this book demonstrates what it takes to build, motivate, and manage organizations at all levels of complexity and scope. Beginning with the first section, Preparing for Action, and through the next sections on Areas of Action, Citizens in Action, and Call to Action, this book illuminates timely, important health problems and creative solutions. Paul Gaist, the editor, has assembled a remarkable array of knowledgeable scholars and community advocates to share their insights and experience.

This book is a valuable resource for anyone who wishes to become involved in global health, as a student, a professional, a researcher, a community activist, or a policy maker. Igniting the Power of Community is, indeed, a formidable and inspiring force for good.

Harvey V. Fineberg, M.D., Ph.D.
President, Institute of Medicine of the National Academies
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The views expressed in this book are those of the authors. No official endorsement by the US Department of Health and Human Services or the National Institutes of Health is intended or should be inferred.
About the Editor

Dr. Paul A. Gaist is an Adjunct Professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH), with joint appointments in the Departments of Epidemiology; Health Policy and Management; and Health, Behavior and Society. He is also a health scientist administrator in the Office of AIDS Research in the Office of the Director at the National Institutes of Health. He received both his PhD in behavioral sciences research and health education and his MPH in health policy and management from JHSPH. He also has degrees in psychology and physiology from the University of California, Berkeley.

Among the courses he teaches at JHSPH is a course he designed and began teaching in 2003 titled, “The Roles of CBOs and NGOs in Improving Global Public Health,” which serves as the basis for this book.

Previously in his career, he was an intramural researcher at the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH); a program director for the Psychobiology Branch of the NIMH; the Deputy Director for HIV/AIDS for the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, Mental Health Administration at the US Department of Health and Human Services; and a senior health advisor/agency representative at the White House National AIDS Program Office.

Good health is at the core of a good life. And public health around the world, that is, global public health, is the key to good health and good life for everyone and anyone. But today we are in the fight of our lives.

The world is struggling with severe, far-reaching, and emerging health and public health issues, economic and environmental stressors, political instabilities, and social inequities. At all levels, whether individual, community, national, or world-wide, there is a call for effective action to promote and sustain a strong and healthy planet, a strong and healthy world population. This requires action from and interaction across all sectors of society. But the alert and the action needed often begin and are carried forward by individuals and their communities. Formalized, this is the activity of community-based organizations (CBOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), or what can be referred to as the citizen sector or civil society.

The overall concept of this book is to inform the reader on the power, roles, and opportunities of the citizen sector, of CBOs and NGOs, in improving global public health. It provides the major reasons why anyone concerned with health and public health needs to know about these citizen sector organizations. It also highlights aspects and discusses skills that are intended to assist professionals across sectors and nations to be successful in their health and public health efforts throughout the world.

CBOs/NGOs have an important and constructive history of contribution to global public health. With the health threats of today, the manner in which these organizations are formed, organized, and run is evolving as new challenges and opportunities arise. So, no matter whether you are working in research, programs, or policy development and implementation – and no matter whether you are doing so from a position in the citizen, private, or public sector – these increasingly influential entities known as CBOs and NGOs are important to realizing your own goals. They represent vital and important players in reaching health and public health goals successfully, which in turn drives the “quality of life” engine on which all else depends. In fact, not understanding the power of the community expressed through these organizations may often explain (at least in part) lackluster health, business, and governing results instead of the robust impact and outcomes often planned and hoped for.

It is crucial as we move forward, as we take on this fight, that we recognize health and public health as inextricably linked to all forms of development – physical, behavioral, economic, social, structural, and political – as well as to the sustainability and survival of our planet. All of us, in our various roles and responsibilities, must find and embrace ways to work together in order to effectively include health and public health as the bottom line of everything we do. This book focuses on one of the
major players, a major sector involved in making progress in this fight, calling on each of us to recognize and utilize the value of the citizen sector in creating a healthier and more sustainable world for us all.

Understanding the emerging and evolving roles of CBOs and NGOs is vital to anyone concerned with improving health and public health, whether locally or globally. The goal of this book is to be a guide to that understanding. It will provide not only valuable foundational information, but it will also offer real-world examples and issues that range from the local to the multi-national, highlighting the opportunities as well as the challenges and the skills needed to address them. And along the way, it is hoped that you, the reader, will find not only key insights and skills, but also stories of inspiration to draw upon as you engage in your own efforts to contribute to bettering the public’s health.

**CBOs and NGOs: A Brief Review**

This book is a forward-thinking journey into the important role of the citizen sector in improving local and global public health. Although it is not meant to serve as a “how to” on setting up or running a CBO or NGO, practical considerations regarding organizational structure, financing, and operations are presented in many of the chapters.

This introduction serves as a brief primer for the rest of the book, providing you with fundamental concepts, definitions, and general aspects of CBOs and NGOs and the citizen sector—a basic orientation for readers who may be coming to this subject for the first time and a brief review for the veteran community advocate or public health professional.

**Key Concepts and Terminology**

From the outset, it should be said that the terms “community-based organization (CBO)” and “nongovernmental organization (NGO),” while helpful, are also somewhat self-limiting and defy simple definition. Paraphrasing the World Bank, CBOs and NGOs are characterized as being largely independent of government. They are considerably diverse; they can be private agencies from industrialized countries engaged in international development, indigenous groups organizing regionally, or even youth clubs in an inner city neighborhood. They include charitable, religious, volunteer associations, and other community-oriented organizations that mobilize resources for and act to address health promotion and disease prevention, food security and nutrition, protection of social structures, improvement of the environment, and advocating for positive social change and policies (World Bank 1990). CBOs and NGOs have also been described as:

…self-governing, not-for-profit organization[s] dedicated to alleviating human suffering; and/or promoting education, health care, economic development, environmental protection, human rights, and conflict resolution; and/or encouraging the establishment of democratic institutions and a civil society (Aall et al. 2003, p. 89).
These organizations have many names besides CBOs and NGOs. For example, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), among others, refers to them as Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs) (USAID 2003). And depending on their orientation and affiliation, specific CBOs and NGOs can be identified in various ways such as Faith-based Organizations (FBOs), Community-based Health Organizations (CBHOs), AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs), and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Collectively, these groups and their community focus are also often referred to by different names such as the civil society, the citizen sector, the social sector, the nonprofit sector, and/or the community sector.

Efforts to define the citizen sector’s typology and refine its taxonomy include the network analysis of Green and Matthias (1997) and the generational model of David Korten (Korten 1990; Korten and Brown 1991). However, there is no one accepted taxonomy defining and ordering the dynamics of the field. Paula Hoy, in *Players and Issues in International Aid*, writes, “There is no such thing as a typical NGO. Their diversity encompasses every feature imaginable: size, operating style, geographic focus, religious background, programmatic orientation, and so forth” (Hoy 1998). As a reflection of this diversity of players and groups, you will see a variety of names and their acronyms used throughout the book.

Regardless of name, these organizations are all related in that they are each variations on the theme and core values of being community-focused and community-involved, carrying out their missions and operations as separate entities from government. Whether for-profit or nonprofit, whether referred to as a CBO, NGO, or FBO, and collectively as the civil society or the citizen sector or by any other domain name, they are of the community (Box 1) and are community-based (Box 2), whether locally or globally.

For the purposes of this introduction, CBOs and NGOs will be the umbrella terms for these groups and organizations and collectively they will be referred to as the citizen sector.

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Community

**Community** can be defined as:

1. A group of people who have common characteristics; communities can be defined by location, race, ethnicity, religion, age, occupation, interests in particular problems or outcomes, or other common bonds. Ideally, there should be available assets and resources, as well as collective discussion, decision making, and action (Turnock 2004).
2. A group of people who share a geographical space; [and/or] have common social bonds of status, concerns, or perspectives about specific issues; and assume, depending on the depth and strength of social capital available in that community, the obligations and responsibilities involved in collectively helping one another (Rubin and Rubin 2001).
Community-based

*Community-based* suggests a cadre of residents or community members who, with the involvement of fellow residents/members, institutions, and other stakeholders (who may be from in and outside the community), take on a central role in building and empowering their community and its organizations in the pursuit of addressing a pressing issue that is impinging on the community. The synergy that results from community-based involvement helps garner community-wide involvement and sustain collective efforts in public health actions around concerns of the community members (Smith et al. 2005).

### The Structure and Management of CBOs and NGOs

CBOs and NGOs vary in size, scope, mission, structure, history, budget, affiliations, activities, and governance. In the USA (and increasingly elsewhere), a CBO/NGO is usually a formalized organization with a defined mission statement, a Board of Directors, an administrative structure, a set of by-laws, a physical (and/or now increasingly a virtual) location from which to operate, and a source or means of funding. These organizations often also set out their values, the purpose of their activities, and their goals and objectives in writing in the form of a charter that is recognized by the CBO’s or NGO’s country of origin.

CBOs and NGOs are still most often, but not always, nonprofit organizations. There are many resources available which explain in detail the legal, administrative, and other requirements necessary for establishing and managing nonprofit organizations (as referenced in several chapters in this book). The following are some of the basic points on organization, function, and roles that are important in understanding CBOs and NGOs.

### Core Commonalities

CBOs and NGOs are formally or informally organized around a shared purpose and focus primarily on human needs. As noted, they are nongovernmental, and as such, are not part of the state apparatus. They are self-governing, rather than externally-controlled. And CBOs and NGOs are voluntary in the sense of being non-compulsory in their governance or operations (Global Development Research Center 2008).

Philosophically, the citizen sector generally sees each person as part of the larger society and the world as a whole. Each person is both a potential participant and beneficiary of societal gains and improvements that may be realized through CBO/NGO actions, including better health and the resulting improvement in quality of life. There is a core belief in social justice and equity, whether viewed in a given community or across the globe. In this regard, CBOs and NGOs most often approach health and public health as a universal right of every person. As delineated in the World Health Organization’s Constitution, “...the enjoyment of the highest attainable
standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being” (WHO 2008). In this pursuit, CBOs and NGOs work to promote citizen awareness of health factors, mobilize citizen demand for institutional response, and provide citizen support for collective health action and practices (Naidoo 2001). And in doing so, the view of the citizen sector is that ultimately everyone gains.

**Types of CBOs and NGOs, Their Establishment, and Their Funding**

There are both for-profit and nonprofit (sometimes referred to as not-for-profit) CBOs and NGOs. A primary difference between them is the disposition of net profit (income exceeding expenditures). Nonprofits invest earnings back into achieving their organizational objectives, whereas for-profits may engage in the same types of work and have similar missions, but with earnings going to shareholders or investors. Another difference is the level of transparency. That is, nonprofit filings are always public, whereas privately-held, for-profit organizations are not.

In the USA, there are two key steps to becoming a nonprofit CBO or NGO. First, you must incorporate as a legal entity at the state level, which involves the establishment of a group with a recognized core purpose and a set of by-laws. Second, once a legal entity at the state level, you must register with the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as what is referred to as a 501(c)(3) organization. Every 501(c)(3) organization must file a 990 form with the IRS annually, disclosing the organization’s core objectives, revenues, expenses, the remuneration of the five highest-paid employees, a reporting of program versus management expenditures, and more. This information is made available to the public.

Donations made to a nonprofit organization are tax deductible. This has served as a key facilitator in the growth of the citizen sector in the USA and in many other countries that follow a similar model. This provision of the tax code gives nonprofit organizations the ability to continue to attract funding from small and big donors alike, from across the wide range of individual to large corporate donors.

**The Board of Directors**

The management of a nonprofit organization is conducted primarily through its Board of Directors (a legal requirement for nonprofits) working with its Executive Director. This is not unlike for-profits, except that nonprofit Board members do not earn a fee for serving on the Board; they are only entitled to reimbursement of expenses. The role of Board members includes being the fiduciary agents of the organization. That is, they are legally and ethically bound to act in the interest and benefit of the organization and as such act in confidence, good faith, reliance, and trust in representing and in guiding the operations and direction of the organization.

Organizational articles of incorporation and by-laws are required in order to incorporate in any State. How the organization is to be run (who will be on the Board, length of term, parameters of staff positions, etc.) and how the Board will function are contained within the organization’s by-laws. There is no set standard or one way the
Board must be structured other than the requirement that there be at least three Board members (most organizations have more than three) and there are usually standard positions like President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

**Geographical Focus and Area of Focus**

CBOs and NGOs can also be looked at in terms of their geographic focus and reach as well as their particular area of focus or concern. Categories of geographic focus and reach include:

- Local
- Regional
- National
- International

In general, CBOs and NGOs carry out their mission within their geographic focus and reach. Areas of focus or concern include: (a) advocacy; (b) provision of services; (c) empowerment and capacity building; (d) research; or (e) a combination of any of these.

While many CBOs and NGOs in the USA and around the world remain committed to a service delivery model – with an emphasis on welfare and services that address short-term and intermediate problem resolution – increasingly they are also emphasizing a new focus on longer term solutions and with that, such important factors as: sustainability, structural interventions, capacity building, and resource management. In addition, there is a newer focus on promoting (and sometimes conducting) research and spearheading advocacy, training, and efforts toward policy change (utilizing research results when applicable). And with this type of emphasis, CBOs and NGOs are not only focused on the individual and the family, but also on community, local, and government partners.

**Strengths of CBOs and NGOs in Addressing Public Health Issues**

CBOs and NGOs and the citizen sector are uniquely positioned to be able to form close linkages with local communities and engender community ownership through participatory processes. They are able to serve as successful intermediaries between actors in the decision making and health arenas, including governments and other relevant institutions and agencies, as well as donors. What also imparts advantage and strength to CBOs/NGOs is that they are guided by values and a mission. In addition, they are generally unencumbered and able to advocate for and represent issues and views important in the dynamics of health and development processes even when they may be controversial or otherwise opposed by government or other gatekeepers and decision-makers.

CBOs and NGOs, community groups of all shapes and sizes, also share a core value of the sector, namely self-care and responsibility. Whether researching and identifying an issue or problem impacting people in a community; delivering services or training; building infrastructure in the community; or advocating and pushing
government and business to better, healthier policies and actions, at the core is a motivation to take responsibility for their own and their neighbor’s health, to recognize the inter-linkages of health among citizens and to focus on the relationship between the citizen and the community in health and public health (Kaplan 2008).

**Future Challenges and Opportunities**

While this book presents many challenges and opportunities for CBOs, NGOs, and the citizen sector, several that are highlighted here provide a forecast of overarching themes and discussions addressed throughout the book.

First is that now and into the foreseeable future, the citizen sector remains primarily dependent upon funding and support provided by others. This can at times result in focusing on the needs and preferences of the donors over those of the community/beneficiaries. The more the sector can shift to utilizing new models and self-supporting business approaches – without sacrificing mission, innovation, and community-orientation – the more independent and sustainable these organizations and their efforts will be.

Second, a community-focused organization may find itself operating with potentially contradictory goals of developing sustainable approaches for their communities of focus and interest, while also working toward the success and growth of the CBO/NGO itself. An approach to minimizing this type of contradiction is to recognize it upfront, and to determine priorities as well as decision steps through the organization’s policies and strategic planning processes. A clear mission statement, by-laws, and operating procedures, along with a strong Board and good governance (including vigilant accounting practices), are essential tools to manage the growing complexity of and demands placed on the CBOs and NGOs.

Third, public health challenges often result in the need for a shift in policies. While CBOs and NGOs can consult and advocate, confront, and even shame, they do not set government policy nor make decisions on private sector practices. The challenge and opportunity is to forge and realize new forms and types of constructive collaborations and partnerships across sectors.

And finally, health and public health efforts may at times be placed within the framework of national security and/or foreign policy. This can challenge the ability of CBOs and NGOs to maintain their status of neutrality and, as such, their ability to gain access to and function in otherwise inaccessible and problematic areas and with the populations they work to help. CBOs and NGOs being aware of this challenge ahead of time can allow them to better navigate this increasingly complex world stage.

**Moving Forward…**

Today, health and public health oriented CBOs/NGOs are identifying health issues and concerns, delivering services to address them, and providing training and infrastructure to maintain and sustain prevention and care approaches that will be needed into the foreseeable future. At the same time, they are engaging, partnering, prodding, exposing, or otherwise interacting with government and industry, working to
move them to conduct their business and adopt policies and practices that better serve the health and public health interests of communities in particular, while often also serving the long term viability and health of society as a whole.

The purpose of this introduction and brief overview of CBOs and NGOs has been to discuss some important fundamentals and key characteristics of CBOs and NGOs, as well as their unique position and ability to forge and realize health and public health benefits to those most in need. With this, the stage is set for a rich and interconnected discussion of the power and the role of CBOs and NGOs in improving local and global health.

The book is organized to facilitate smooth and logical movement through the citizen sector – its principles and parts, its people, and certainly its potential. The first section, Preparing for Action, includes historical and foundational elements for creating and maintaining CBOs and NGOs. Areas of Action, the second section, offers a broad array of the topics and issues rich in community involvement that CBOs and NGOs are addressing today. The next section, Citizens in Action, is a diverse selection of individual and organizational experiences of note in the citizen sector. The final section, Call to Action, concludes with challenges and opportunities CBOs and NGOs face and must embrace in the new millennium.

It is important to say at the outset that there are so many exciting, dynamic, active organizations working in the pursuit of better health and public health today that it would be an impossible task to cite them all or even a significant fraction of them in a way that would do them justice. This book has the good fortune of being able to present to you an important swath of a select group of key topics discussed by some of the best experts and citizen activists today. These chapter authors have used their organizations as a vehicle to convey their messages and/or have drawn upon their experiences with the many organizations they have been a part of or have worked with during their lives and their careers.

The chapter authors were tasked to bring – through their organizations and their experience – the knowledge, perspectives, insights, tools, and lessons they considered most important for the reader to know. It is the hope of this editor and these chapter authors that each chapter on its own, and the book taken as a whole, will serve as a vehicle to inform, energize, and motivate you forward in your pursuits to improve health and public health. We further hope it will serve you as an ongoing aid and reference in increasing the effectiveness and success of your contributions to the public good from whatever sector you are in and focus you may have. It is the power of one (you) and the action of many that will resolve today’s problems and create a healthier and happier world for each of us and for all of us.

So, let us continue forward on this journey into the power of community and the roles of CBOs and NGOs in improving global public health – for it is, for each of us and for all of us, the fight of our lives.

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