

BACKGROUND NOTE

DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION: EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND EUROPEAN
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS HELP THE THIRD WORLD

European Non-Governmental Organizations active in development co-operation recently held their Tenth Annual General Assembly in Brussels. Meeting with European Communities officials, the representatives examined progress in development co-operation, particularly co-financing projects with the European Community. Discussions during the meetings centered on improvement of EC-NGOs co-financing operations and on how to increase European public awareness of and sympathy to real Third World needs.

The Community's relations with NGOs

The Community works with NGOs on large numbers of «micro-projects». The Commission's view is that the many small-scale operations have a considerable multiplier effect and compare favourably with more traditional types of project. The success of co-financed operations is above all due to the strong personal motivation and commitment of NGO staff and the organizations' independence from outside pressures, their small scale and consequent operational autonomy and flexibility. These are assets which enable them to react quickly to changing economic, political or technical conditions and set up the necessary operations promptly and efficiently.

The Commission is committed to respect the independent character of the NGOs, (which have sole responsibility for the initiation and presentation of projects) and their widely differing doctrines and approach.

However, the co-financing of projects in the developing countries is only one of the ways in which the NGOs and the Community work together. Equally important are support for the NGOs' educational work in Europe and their role in the distribution of food aid and emergency relief. The Commission also plays an active part in fostering inter-NGO co-operation at the European level through its constant contacts with them both individually and as a group.

Co-financing of NGO projects in developing countries

From 1976 to 1983 the Community provided a total of approximately 104.5 million CAD towards 1,327 co-financed projects in 107 developing countries; 205 NGOs were involved, and the overall Community-NGO investment totalled nearly 267 million CAD.

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Of that money, 47% went to Africa, 25% to Latin America, 20% to Asia, 7% to the Mediterranean Basin and 1% to the Pacific. The ACP countries received 47% of the total Community contribution, and 57% went to countries with a per capita GNP of under US\$ 500.

In 1983, 214 projects were co-financed, in 80 developing countries. As usual, they varied widely, but the three main areas of concern were rural development, training and health. Most of the projects were relevant to more than one of these issues, exemplifying the integrated approach characteristic of NGO operations.

Educational activities

In 1983, 43 educational projects were co-financed with 39 NGOs for a total of 2.2 million CAD. Their aim: to make the European public more aware of North-South interdependence, particularly in industry and agriculture. Much of this work was aimed at schools. An opinion poll on development issues was also carried out in the ten Member States.

Community food aid and emergency relief distributed by NGOs

Some 13 million CAD of emergency aid, 41% of the Community total, went through NGOs in 1983, making them the most important channel for this form of assistance.

The NGOs were involved in relief operations for disaster victims not only in ACP countries (following famine in Ethiopia and the drought in Mauritania) but elsewhere, coping with the consequences of flooding in Andean countries, drought in Brazil and Mozambique and an earthquake in Colombia. They also provided assistance for foreigners expelled from Nigeria and for displaced persons in Central America.

Approximately 10.5 million CAD of the emergency aid channelled through NGOs went to Poland.

For further information, please contact Darlene Nowlan at our Press and Information office.