

# Teaching NGOs to Act Like Businesses

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OIC International is teaching foreign aid recipients how to act more like businesses.

At a three-day workshop in November in Accra, Ghana, 40 persons from 15 African organizations took a seminar in “organizational and financial sustainability.” The key concept in the training is that smart NGOs can and should manage their finances to generate income and not be forever dependent on donors.

Participants came from Ghana, Togo, and Benin, and included representatives from CARE as well as Opportunities Industrialization Centers International.

Dr. Cheryl Lassen of Lassen Associates who led the seminar, says that putting international NGOs on a more businesslike footing is both economically necessary and helpful in achieving program goals. One key concept is persuading the beneficiaries of aid projects that they should pay- if only a small amount- for the benefits received. “In the sectors where NGOs have operated with cost recovery models, there has been an exponential growth in the numbers benefited and the quality of programs,” Lassen told *Monday Developments*.

“Certain Sectors, such as microlending and family planning, have tried to recover costs. Other sectors are used to operating on donated funds.” But, Lassen asks, in the face of growing needs, “where’s the money going to come from? It can’t just come from donors.”

A USAID matching grant to OIC International covered part of the seminar’s costs. Not surprisingly, participating NGOs also paid training fees for their representatives.

In addition to Lassen, who designed and led the seminar, OIC International staff Quy Nguyen and Caroline Hossein served as training facilitators. John E.K. Moses, chairman of OIC Ghana provided essential support, as did staff from OIC Ghana and OIC International in Accra.

Many participants said they felt the training was outstanding and recommended that the same be offered to other members of their organization.

OIC International and Lassen Associates will collaborate to offer a similar seminar in Dar es Salaam in the near future. For information, contact Quy Nguyen or Agatha Johnson at OICI at 215-842-0220, [ajohnson@oici.org](mailto:ajohnson@oici.org) or [quynguyen@oici.org](mailto:quynguyen@oici.org).

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