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Democratic Global Civil Governance  
Report of the 1995  
Benchmark Survey of NGOs

*by Benchmark Environmental Consulting*

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A report submitted to the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
by Benchmark Environmental Consulting

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# Table of contents

Democratic global civil governance	VII
Executive summary	VII
Production	VII
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	
Definition of the problematique	1
Two models of international democratic participation	3
National democratic strategies on the international stage lobbying government	3
Global civil governance	4
Current situation at intergovernmental events and at parallel NGO events	5
Demographics of the respondents	5
Individual demographics: gender and age	5
Individual demographics: first international conference	6
Organizational demographics: base country	6
Organizational demographics: accredited and unaccredited NGOs	7
Organizational demographics: organizational size	7
Structure of the report	8
Analytic components	8
Chapter structure	9
Statistical annexes	9
Chapter endnotes	9
<b>Chapter 2: Practical issues of access and effective participation</b>	
Introduction	10
Getting in the door	10
Access to facilities	10
Technical obstacles at the intergovernmental conference	11
Technical obstacles at the NGO conference	12
Information needs at the intergovernmental conference	13
Information needs from the NGO leadership	14
Working the floor	16
Restrictions on participation	16
Communication	18
Speaking out	18
Getting heard: access to decision-makers	20
Concluding observations	21
Chapter endnotes	22
<b>Chapter 3: Representativeness</b>	
Introduction	23
Do NGOs and NGO activists take part in international events for the same reasons?	24
Actors to influence	24
Objectives in attending	26
Events to attend	27
Perceptions of representativeness	29
Whom do NGOs claim to represent?	29
Whom do others think the NGO represents?	30

Concluding observations	32
Chapter endnotes	33
<b>Chapter 4: Perception of NGO impact on conference outcomes</b>	
Introduction	34
How are we doing? Are we being heard?	34
Accomplishments from participation at intergovernmental events	36
Accomplishments from participation at NGO events	37
Post-conference activity: What do NGOs hope to do at home?	39
Concluding observations	40
Chapter endnotes	41
<b>Chapter 5: Towards new structures for democratic participation</b>	
Introduction	42
Enhanced participation	42
Alternative structure arrangements	42
Decision-making capabilities	45
Signatory authority	45
Future needs	47
Additional cash resources	47
Additional preparatory time	50
Additional NGO staff at conferences	50
Concluding observations	51
Chapter endnotes	51
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusion</b>	53
Annex I: Methodology	56
Annex II: Questionnaire	61
Annex III: Summary of the demographic data	69

## Figures

### Chapter 1

Figure 1. Respondents' gender and age	6
Figure 2. First international conference of the respondent	6
Figure 3. Base country location of NGO operations	7
Figure 4. Accreditation status of NGO organizations, as reported by survey respondents	7
Figure 5. Size of NGO organization, as reported by survey respondents	7

### Chapter 2

Figure 1. Respondents most need access to	11
Figure 2. At intergovernmental conferences, respondent generally feel limited by	11
Figure 3. At NGO international events, respondents generally feel unable to	13
Figure 4. At intergovernmental conferences, respondents most need information in	14
Figure 5. Respondent needs from 'NGO leadership'	15
Figure 6. At intergovernmental conferences, respondents generally feel restricted by	16

Figure 7.	At NGO international events, respondents generally feel the potential dominance of	17
Figure 8.	Respondents prefer to convey their views at official intergovernmental conferences through	19
Figure 9.	At NGO events, respondents prefer to convey their views to other NGOs by	19
Figure 10.	At intergovernmental conferences, respondents most need unrestricted access to	20
 <b>Chapter 3</b>		
Figure 1.	For my NGO, the two most important actors to influence at international events are	25
Figure 2.	Why do respondents attend official UN conferences?	26
Figure 3.	For my NGO, the two most important types of international events are	27
Figure 4.	Personally, the two most important types of international events are	28
 <b>Chapter 4</b>		
Figure 1.	Do Governments think the voice of the 'people', Nature', and NGOs is heard?	35
Figure 2.	Is your voice, the voice of the 'people', and 'Nature' heard at international events?	35
Figure 3.	After intergovernmental conferences, respondents generally feel pleased by success in	37
Figure 4.	After an international NGO conference, respondents generally feel their biggest impact was	38
Figure 5.	After an international NGO conference, respondents generally feel pleased by success in	38
Figure 6.	After intergovernmental conferences, respondents generally feel stimulated to	40
 <b>Chapter 5</b>		
Figure 1.	How respondents would restructure the format of official conferences	43
Figure 2.	If respondents could restructure an NGO alternate conference, their first two actions would be	44
Figure 3.	If asked to co-sign a final Governmental consensus document, respondent would	46
Figure 4.	If asked to sign a final NGO declaration, respondents would	47
Figure 5.	If your NGO was given US\$20,000 to improve NGO involvement in an intergovernmental conference, how would you recommend it be spent?	48
Figure 6.	If your NGO was given US\$20,000 to improve NGO involvement at an NGO event, how would you recommend it be spent?	49
Figure 7.	If your organization could give you 10 extra days (80 hours) to prepare for an international event, how would you use it?	50

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## Boxes

### Chapter 1

- Box 1: Respondents to the Benchmark Survey came from over 100 countries 8

### Chapter 3

- Box 1: Examples of overly vague claims to represent a human constituency by respondents 29
- Box 2: Examples of claims to represent 'Nature' by respondents 30
- Box 3: Examples of clear focused claims to constituents by the respondents 30
- Box 4: Examples of differences in perception regarding constituencies 31
- Box 5: Examples of political stereotyping in the differences in perception by respondents 32



# Democratic global civil governance

## Executive summary

The 1995 Benchmark Survey of International NGOs is the first survey ever conducted of the perceptions of NGOs of the international political process and their access to it. A world-wide poll of non-governmental organizations was conducted, with 10,000 surveys distributed through NGO newsletters and direct mailing, at international conferences and via internet, over an eight-month period, from August 1994 to April 1995, and an additional 40,000 as an insert in the Earth Times in March 1995. The survey instrument itself was fairly comprehensive. It asked 22 questions, most of which required prioritizing among several options. Not surprisingly, the questionnaire came in for praise on the grounds of its scope, and criticism on the grounds of its length. Nevertheless, it was read by many more people than responded, and both its distinctive yellow color and the issues it raised became a feature of the international NGO circuit during the months it circulated.

Over 500 responses were collected from respondents in some 100 countries, representing a rich turf for statistical analysis. 58% of the respondents were male and 42% female. Most are aged in their forties and have significant experience of the international forum: 25% attended their first international conference in 1990 – 1993; 24% between 1980 – 1989, and 16% before 1980. Nearly half of the respondents came from the developing world (44%). ECOSOC-accredited NGOs represent 22% of respondents; 16% come from NGOs accredited to another UN agency, and 62% are from non-accredited NGOs.

The data found that there are significant inhibitors to NGO access to the intergovernmental forum. Notable problems were the UN conference format and patriarchy. The report recommends that additional research

be conducted to further understand what is meant by these broad terms before changes are made. A second theme in the report was the diversity of 'representativeness' claimed by NGOs. This may frustrate attempts to formalize links within the NGO community or between NGOs and international organizations. A single intergovernmental policy toward NGOs will not encompass such diversity, and a flexible approach may be required.

Despite frequently heard criticisms of the UN and its conferences, most respondents feel positive about the conference experience and feel that they made a significant impact on these events, particularly through their networking activities with other NGOs. Building an international NGO community, or working towards models of global civil governance, emerged from the data as a major aim for NGOs at international conferences. The theme of building global civil governance came through clearly when NGOs were asked hypothetically how they would spend extra time and money if they had it. Their strongest wish is to bring more NGOs, from their own and from sister organizations, to international events.

As is to be expected, the survey has raised many additional questions and issues. Thus, it has provoked a serious reflection. Its data-driven recommendations will help in the process of democratizing NGO access to the international political process.

## Production

Benchmark Environmental Consulting staff who worked on aspects of this project were: Rick Bertaska, Benjamin Dudley, Eric Howard, Dan Malchiodi and Debra Weiner. Project managers were Dr. Riva Krut and Dr. Harris Gleckman, co-directors of Benchmark.



# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Definition of the Problematique

The last 50 years has seen a major transition in the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in international events. They have broadened citizen participation in international political life. Citizens groups are now sought after to underscore the maintenance of the global commons and human rights and to define new topics of global social, economic and environmental concern. In a world where the local and the global are now recognized to be inter-related, NGOs have emerged as a source of technical competence, a significant new political voice, and a potentially powerful democratic institution on the international level.

The vitality of this diverse and expanding international NGO community has entered like new blood into an existing body of intergovernmental institutions that are mandated to care for global issues. In some areas the infusion has been welcomed by its host, in others it has not. The reason international NGOs receive ambivalent treatment in the international intergovernmental process is quite simple to understand. In a traditional sense governments represent their citizens. In theory, there are no citizens without 'representation' in the international process. The very term 'non-governmental organization' assumes that government is the legitimate representative, and that the NGO is not. In many ways, NGOs are not 'representative' while democratic governments are, at least in concept. In reality, however, many national governments are undemocratic. In these cases, domestic or international NGO opposition to states that limit independent expression of domestic political voices can be seen as more democratic than that of their governments.

On the other hand, in many cases NGOs are not 'democratic' in the classical sense. NGO mandates do not come from a fixed and bounded physical entity. Their leadership need not be elected. Their political platforms need not be adopted by their membership. From a conventional democratic point of view, therefore, it is legitimate that governments ask if all NGOs truly have the right to speak on behalf of citizens and the public good.

Throughout this debate, there has always been a stream of thinking that accepts that NGO contributions to the international process are legitimate and important. As

originally conceived in the UN Charter discussions in 1945, NGOs were seen as important sources of technical expertise in the consideration of issues before the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). NGOs, however, were not seen as important players in other aspects of international governance. Starting in the 1970s, large numbers of NGOs arrived at official UN conferences and made their presence felt through counter-conferences, parallel events, and demonstrations.

A period of diverse and *ad hoc* special arrangements has prevailed. Experts and individuals from leading NGOs have been 'invited' with increasing frequency to expert group meetings, specialized conferences, and UN staff planning meetings since 1970. At the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) negotiations for a New International Economic Order, NGOs were given the ability to produce in-house newspapers during inter-governmental meetings in order to inform governments about the on-going proceedings. Under the discussions of the Human Rights Commission, NGOs were 'asked' to monitor the behaviour of governments and to report back to inter-governmental bodies on the compliance of governments on the relevant international standards. In the World Health Organization, NGO expertise was given prominence in drafting international guidelines and standards on infant formula sometimes equal to or greater than individual governments – although of course it was governments that adopted the final text at the World Health Assembly. The European Union now holds ministerial/NGO level consultations. A regional meeting in preparation for the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in Bergen, Norway, experimented with a five sided formula: governments, business, youth, labour, and environmental groups had to agree on a common statement. And the UNCED process formally defined anew the role of NGOs in the preparation for global conferences and their follow-up.

Throughout the past few decades, the acceptance, for example, by foreign offices of a high level participatory role for NGOs, is an indirect recognition that independent citizen organizations may be necessary to ensure that 'popular' views are heard in the international political process. The UN Development Program and other

technical assistance agencies are increasingly directing aid programmes through NGOs in recipient countries. That consideration continues now before the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which is, to complete the circle, reviewing its rules and procedures. As ECOSOC debates who has the 'right' to be an NGO, various reforms are being proposed by the UN system, by various high-level governmental and nongovernmental task groups, to restructure their relationship to the NGO community and its rights of access to the UN process.

In a real sense, the current debate is merely the formalization of a set of countercurrents that have been emerging for some time. There has been a substantial increase in NGO participation in international conferences, negotiations, and expert groups in the last decade. As participation has increased, debate has escalated on the role of NGOs in global deliberations. The NGO community has struggled with the complexities of democratic participation and the uncertainties of how best to 'speak' for their interests and concerns. Governmental bodies too have struggled with how much of a 'seat' to give to NGOs at inter-governmental roundtables, and to whom. And NGOs, in turn, want to define their role before it is defined for them.

In the early days of accreditation to ECOSOC, the largest single category of NGOs that became accredited were professional, trade, hobby and specialized organizations with active international programs or affiliates; not exactly the types of organizations that are first thought of today when the title NGO is used in political circles. The ambiguity also causes extensive debate regarding the degree of direct or indirect governmental participation that could be allowed for the NGO still to be considered a 'Non-Governmental Organization'. These issues range from the degree of participation of government officials in policy making and selection of personnel to the source of finance (many NGOs today remain heavily financed by their national governments).

Tensions exist within the NGO community about this term. On one side some organizations resent the subservience implied in the negative and dependent title: «non-governmental». Citizen organizations, community groups, individuals, civil advocates, reformers, revolutionaries: these are positive titles and do not presume that they are less important in international affairs than the governments. On the other side, the term «non-governmental organizations» fails to distinguish meaningfully between organizations of citizens and orga-

nizations of capital, between what are currently called PINGOS (Public Interest Non-Governmental Organizations) and BINGOS (Business and Industry Non-Governmental Organizations); or organizations that promote democracy and those that oppose it. In principle, international crime rings or fundamentalist groups are NGOs.

Democratic decision-making has long been an undercurrent of concern in the international NGO movement. Who is an NGO? Who decides which NGOs can attend international meetings? How are 'NGO statements' adopted? Whom or what do they represent? Within the NGO community, what patterns have emerged for participation, representation and decision-making – and how democratic are they? Which NGO representatives can speak before inter-governmental meetings?

The common consensus is that the ability of NGOs to affect the international decision-making process depends on their ability to influence the formal governmental process and on their ability to have a process of collective NGO decision-making during inter-governmental conferences. Very little is understood, however, of how various NGOs participate at different international meetings, what their perceived understanding is of the intergovernmental process, and what their requirements are for its improvement.

Although many studies have been commissioned, none has done a statistical survey of NGOs. The Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway, commissioned this study as part of their interest in global governance and the role of civil society. Over 10,000 surveys were circulated, over an eight month period, through the mail and e-mail, by inserts in NGO newsletters and at intergovernmental meetings and international conferences. An additional 40,000 were circulated as an insert in the *Earth Times*. The intention was to get a sampling of opinion from the diverse international NGO community, the results of which are highlighted in this report.

The process of circulating the questionnaire in itself has served an educational function. Recipients were faced with the issue: how do they or their organizations participate in the international community? In the words of one respondent, the Executive Director of an international NGO based in the U.S.A., it helped to focus their strategic thinking and was used as the basis for an organizational meeting on their mission. The outcomes of the survey also may be helpful to other governments

during the current ECOSOC review on NGO status and to the international NGO community as it evolves its own independent views.

This project set out to explore what the international NGO community perceives its role to be in the international intergovernmental process, and how it could be improved. The starting assumption was that the community is rich, fluid and diverse, and that several notions of democracy and democratic participation would be elaborated. Some of the obvious questions were: Are NGOs heard in international debates? In what ways do women and men working for NGOs feel that they influence inter-governmental events? Are there differences between larger and smaller NGOs in their perceptions, or between northern and southern NGOs in their expectations? What improvements do developing country NGOs suggest for the process of inter-governmental negotiations? How do factors like age, experience, base country and size of organization affect NGO effectiveness?

### **Two models of international democratic participation**

The questionnaire was developed against a background of two co-existing models of NGO engagement with governments at the international level: one a traditional, well structured lobbying model extended to the international arena; and the other model reflecting a new approach to democratic global civil governance, that is still in the process of definition.

#### **National democratic strategies on the international stage: lobbying government**

In the traditional lobbying model, non-governmental organizations can be seen as merely continuing their domestic lobby activities at the international level. Before foreign or domestic policy goals or practices are implemented, NGOs in democracies have a variety of means available to influence, alter, or re-orient a country's policy activities. In some countries, they may lobby parliamentarians, testify before congresses, create letter-writing campaigns to foreign secretaries or prime ministers, hold public demonstrations to exhibit the extent of public support, support media coverage favorable to their views, and submit expert evidence to government officials.

International events are generally occasions when governments articulate their policy objectives and make programmatic policy announcements. NGOs in their traditional lobbying model can use international events to pursue their on-going domestic efforts to affect their own governments activities and to take advantage of the relative ease of access to senior government officials away from their capitals. This extension of domestic democratic activity can often pay dividends in framing or influencing the acceptance of compromises that arise during negotiations and in creating increased access for the NGOs to their relevant government officials after the international conference.

Under this model, what is seen as a proliferation of international NGO activity is partially explained by the rapid increase in the sheer number of countries that are now democratic or introducing democratic structures in their domestic political arenas. When combined with developments in computer technology and other means for access to and distribution of information, this has brought about a sharp increase in the number of citizens from those countries interested in effective international lobbying.

For NGOs and citizens from authoritarian or repressive countries, international events clearly operate in a different manner. For some of these NGOs and citizens, the international event is an opportunity to continue to campaign against their government and to seek new alliances from NGOs as well as from other governments in support of their domestic struggles for freedom and independence. Wangari Maathai, leader of the Kenyan Green Belt Movement, summed this up in a speech to the World Bank in 1993:

... if governments lack political will to apply laws, regulations and agreements to which they have subscribed, only an informed and involved community can stand for the environment and demand development that is sustainable ...<sup>1</sup>

At the same time that these NGOs appeal to an existing international democratic process, their experience at home is that the attempt at national democratic politics has failed and that civil governance needs to be achieved through other, democratic and non-governmental, means – working directly with other representatives of civil society, including local producers, women, and so on. In some cases, this same argument appears at the international level and is one element of the growing

call for new forms of global civil governance and a different kind of democratic participation.

### Global civil governance

A different concept of international democratic participation comes from those interested in new concepts of global civil governance. In concept, this is a far broader agenda than those interested in participating in an existing or revitalized global government (the lobbying model), although it is often expedient or essential to work through the existing institutions of global government.

In the second model, the proposition starts from the premise that the nation state has failed to adequately 'represent' its citizens on a range of global issues. The nation state has been eclipsed by the development of a global consciousness, a consciousness of nature, a women's consciousness, along with the collapse of the ideological cohesiveness fostered by the Cold War. In this view the state is seen as unable to solve key global problems: structural underemployment, poverty, demilitarization in the north, decolonization and increased violence in the south, transnational environmental concerns, and ethnic and racial equity. These major structural weaknesses of the nation state have taken place during a marked period of increased international communication, increased international markets and investments, and an increased volume of individual migration and contact between peoples of the world.

In this situation, the international NGO community sees itself – and is increasingly seen by governments – as part of embryonic institutional structures that will define a different form of global governance, a model in which citizen action occurs at a global level. It was the international scientific community that forced governments to consider climate change as a high political priority. It was the environmental movement that turned the 1992 Rio Conference and its preparation from an anniversary celebration of the 1972 Stockholm Environment Conference to a global effort on environment and development. It is civilian human rights monitors that generally define the scope and attention of the UN Commission on Human Rights. It was the pesticide activist community from a dozen countries that prompted General Assembly resolutions on the need for a FAO code on pesticides. These citizen campaigns often were initiated directly at the global level. They were not started by a successful domestic lobbying of a individu-

al government which then took the topic to an intergovernmental organization as would be the case under the lobbying model, but rather the citizens themselves went straight to the top.

This model is reflected in the work of the Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood*,<sup>2</sup> and in the title of a recent study by the UN Research Institute for Social Development for the 1995 World Social Summit: *States of Disarray*. The *States of Disarray* title is particularly intriguing, because in many ways it refers not only to global social problems, but also to the disarray of states and their decreasing centrality in the lives of their citizens.<sup>3</sup> The 28 international leaders on this independent Commission addressed similar issues of globalization and explored the relationship between the declining role of the state and the emergence of civil society:

The desire of people to be involved in the management of their affairs, the need to be active in areas where government is unable or unwilling to act, and the development of new communication technologies that convey information broadly and help people interact across national borders are encouraging what some have called a global associational revolution. This is fueled by the realization that so many of the issues requiring attention are global in scope.<sup>4</sup>

The two non-state actors discussed in *Our Global Neighbourhood* are NGOs and the global business sector.<sup>5</sup> A crucial difference that the Commission noted between the two groups is that the global business sector is 'more clearly identifiable' than the international NGO movement.<sup>6</sup> From the point of view of global governance, industry is also far more powerful. It has financial resources that rival those of nation states, institutions that publicly promote coherent industry positions, and a newly created set of international laws that protect the conduct of international trade and investment. In contrast, the international NGO movement is difficult to define, under-resourced, institutionally diverse, and politically diffuse. In addition, unlike the international business community, it has not benefited from the new global economic rules and terms of trade and the decline of government regulation.

The diversity of interest and focus, the miscellany of strategies and tactics, the multiplicity of organizational forms and mandates: these are endemic in the democrat-

ic international NGO movement and the source of its representativeness. This very source of legitimacy and strength is also a tremendous political weakness, because unlike other actors in the international intergovernmental arena, international civil society does not behave as a single actor but a whole cast of players. Moreover, whereas some of these players are willing to work within the existing script for democratic decision-making, others reject it and are working towards other forms of democratic governance. Aware of this fledgling phenomenon of democratic international decision-making, NGOs often spend considerable amounts of time trying to define the best way to govern themselves democratically at the international event, even if this process sacrifices their capacity to influence the formal process at that event.

#### **Current situation at intergovernmental events and at parallel NGO events**

The two models are of course both operating at the same time, and the current situation can best be seen as an amalgam of the two positions. The Benchmark survey questionnaire was designed to look at a series of specific elements that overlap both models and at the same time to explore the dimensions of each model. The questionnaire was also designed to explore the difference between NGO's perception of their participation in inter-governmental events and NGO's perception of their participation in NGO-organized parallel international events. As both types of NGO activities were assumed to be crucial, the questionnaire itself was divided into four sections: a demographic section, an overview section, a section on intergovernmental events and a section on international NGO events held in conjunction with intergovernmental events.

#### **Demographics of the respondents: Who comes to international conferences?**

The size of the international NGO community is unknown. A full accounting would include those that are formally connected to the process of intergovernmental debate, principally those accredited to ECOSOC or other UN Agencies. But it would also have to include a plethora of other NGOs that are unaccredited and find a way to come to these meetings; and unaccredited and accredited NGOs that do not come to these meetings but feel they have an international mandate. Accredited international NGOs that do not come to intergovernmental meetings include, for example, the Union of In-

ternational Associations, based in Brussels: 'clearly over many years our own position is basically now one of avoiding any attempt at being heard at such [international intergovernmental] events.'<sup>7</sup>

In other cases, particularly for poorer grassroots organizations, non-attendance at international events may be caused by lack of funds, not lack of interest. An Indian secretary of a grassroots organization, with 9 years experience with his NGO, got the survey from his donor organization, an ECOSOC accredited large international NGO based the UK. He commented: 'Ours is a grassroots organization. We would love to attend official inter-governmental conferences though we did not have the opportunity so far.' Later, he comments: 'Money is the major constraint for small and grass roots NGOs though they are very active.' This perspective recurs frequently in other responses from grassroots NGOs.

For this reason, the survey collected responses from participants at international conferences but also by distributing surveys through the mail, via announcements in newsletters and on internet. The responses therefore represent a range of NGOs that perceive themselves as international in scope.

The demographics of the respondents were sorted against six indicators, three for the individual and three for the individual's organization. These six independent variables were based on (1) gender, (2) age, (3) years of personal experience in the international arena (year of first international conference), (4) location of the organization (developed, developing, and countries in transition), (5) organizational accreditation status (ECOSOC accredited, accredited to another UN system agency but not ECOSOC, not accredited), and (6) organizational size. Detailed distributions between demographic groups is provided in Annex III.

#### **Individual demographics: gender and age**

Interestingly, respondents were less willing to be specific about their gender than they were about their age. Of the 474 respondents to the question on gender, 58% are male and 42% female. While the male/female representation among staff working in the international NGO community is unknown, it is probable that there are more men than women. This survey data provides a sufficient sample from both populations to analyze possible differences between male and female political behavior and perceptions.

# GENDER AND AGE

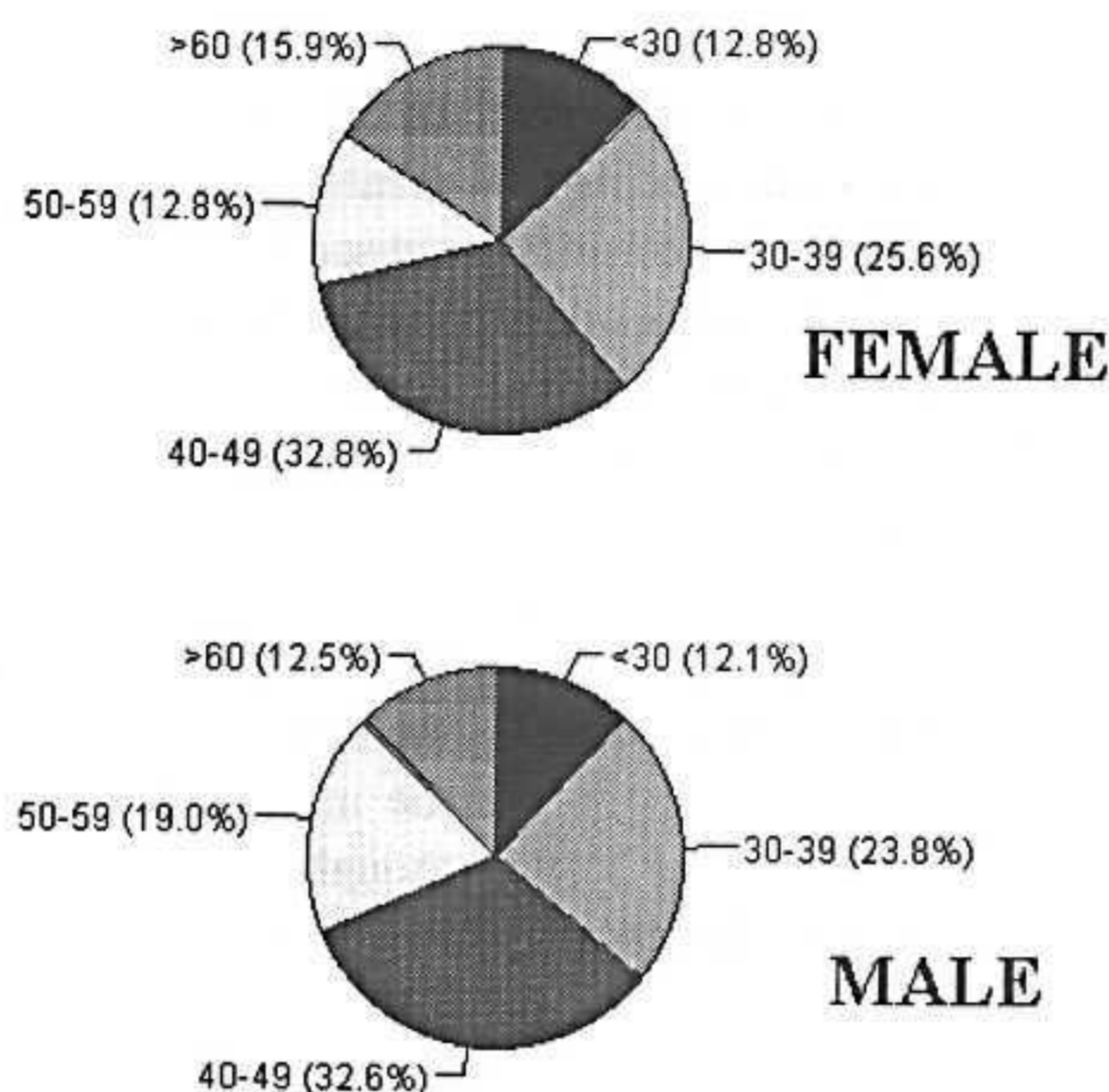


Figure 1. Comparison of gender and age of survey respondents.

Within the male and female respondent population, the age range was similar. Of the 487 who provided age data, 40% are over 50, 33% are in their 40s, 25% are in their 30s, 12–13% are under 30. The only age difference in the ratio of men to women respondents is highlighted in figure 1, which shows a slightly greater proportion of women to men respondents in the over the age 60 category and smaller share in the 50–59 category. The survey data provides a sufficient sample from the five population categories to analyze possible differences in opinion.

## Individual demographics: First international conference

In order to get a measure of the experience level of NGO participants at international and intergovernmental conferences, the survey asked respondents to provide the year in which they first participated in such a meeting. This data was grouped into six categories: pre-1970; 1970–1979; 1980–1989; 1990–1993; 1994; and 1995 (fig. 2).

NGOs from developed and developing countries both have a large degree of recent experience in participation at international conferences, though respondents with more prolonged experience (active since at least 1980) come predominantly from developed countries.

## Organizational demographics: base country of operations

Respondents to the Benchmark survey came from over 100 countries and all major regions (see box 1). Using the UN geographic definitions, of the 440 respondents to this question, 54% are from developed countries, 43% are from the developing countries, and 2% from countries in transition (see figure 3). While the actual proportion of these groups in the international NGO community is unknown, it is probable that there are

## YEAR OF 1ST CONFERENCE

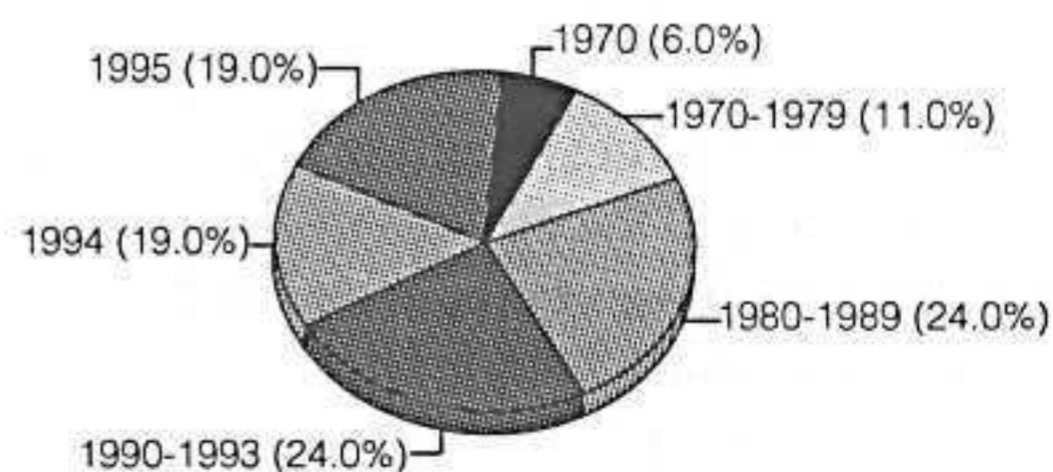


Figure 2. Respondents reporting their first year attending an international conference.



### BASE COUNTRY LOCATION OF NGO OPERATIONS

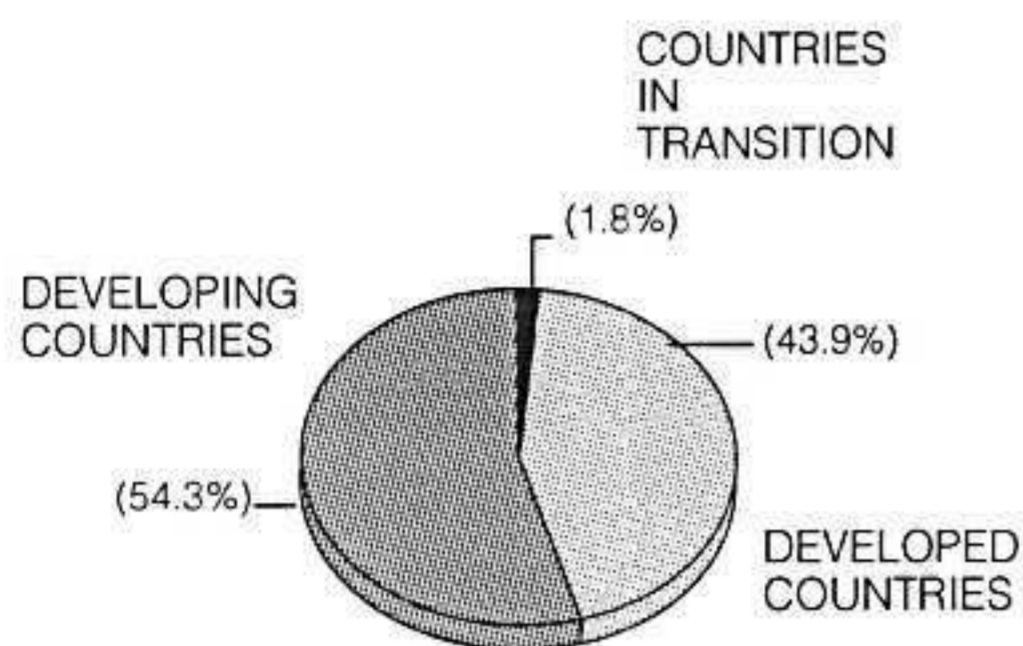


Figure 3. The distribution of base country of operations of NGOs reported by survey respondents.

more NGOs based in developed than developing countries. In any case experience has shown that developed country NGOs appear to have a stronger voice because they have greater access to funds and so are more frequent participants in intergovernmental meetings. Survey data provides a sufficiently large sample and geographic distribution from developed and developing country NGOs to analyze possible differences between their political behavior and perceptions. The responses from NGOs based in countries in transition are too few

### ACCREDITATION OF NGOS

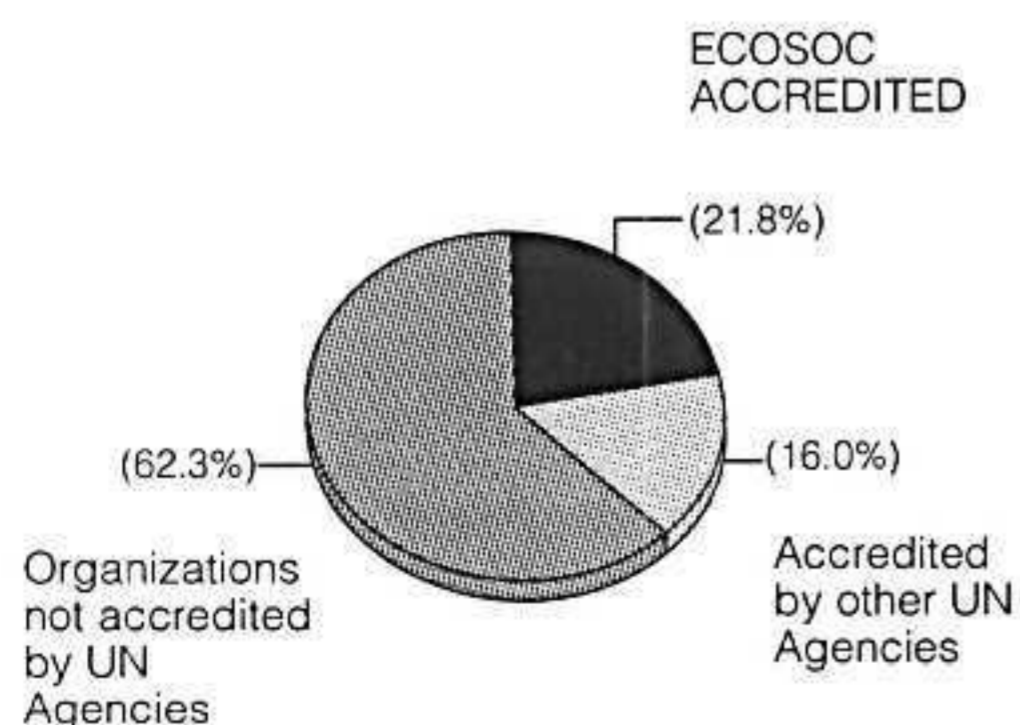


Figure 4. Accreditation status of NGO organizations reported by survey respondents.

for conducting a valid comparison against the other two groups.

### Organizational demographics: accredited and unaccredited NGOs

Of 437 respondents who replied to this demographic element, 38% are accredited to ECOSOC or another UN agency, and 62% are non-accredited NGOs (see figure 4). Of those surveyed who work for accredited organizations, just under two-thirds are accredited to ECOSOC, and just over one-third to other UN agencies. The actual proportions of accredited to non-accredited NGOs operating in the international arena is unknown. Survey data provides a sufficiently large sample and geographic distribution from both populations to analyze the differences between accredited and non-accredited NGO political behavior and perceptions.

### Organizational demographics: organizational size

The data on the size of the NGOs is fairly mixed, representing organizations of all sizes, from those smaller than 99 members to those over 10,000 members (see figure 5).

While the data includes surveys from accredited NGOs of all sizes, a high portion (43%) of the non-accredited NGOs had large memberships (over 10,000 members).

### SIZE OF MEMBERSHIP

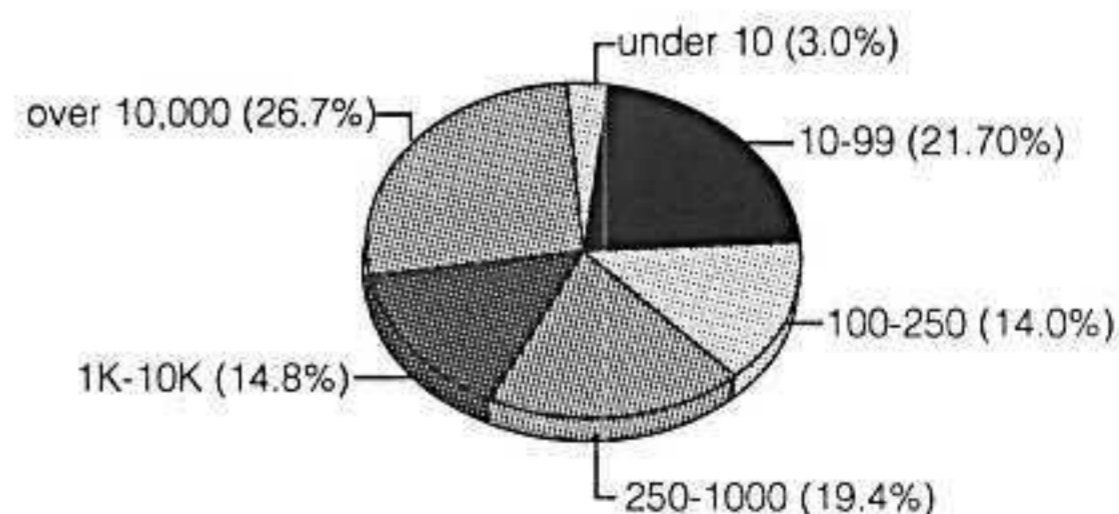


Figure 5. Size of the NGO as reported by the survey respondent.

**Box 1.** Survey respondents came from over 100 countries.

Afghanistan	Greece	Nigeria
Algeria	Guatemala	Norway
Argentina	Haiti	Pakistan
Australia	Honduras	Panama
Austria	Hong Kong	Peru
Bahamas	Hungary	Philippines
Bangladesh	India	Poland
Belgium	Indonesia	Portugal
Benin	Iran	Russia
Brazil	Ireland	Senegal
Burkina Faso	Israel	Somalia
Cambodia	Italy	South Korea
Cameroon	Japan	Spain
Canada	Kenya	Sri Lanka
Colombia	Latvia	Sudan
Costa Rica	Lebanon	Sweden
Cuba	Lesotho	Switzerland
Czech Republic	Liberia	Tanzania
Denmark	Lithuania	Thailand
Dominican Republic	Malaysia	Tunisia
Ecuador	Mali	UK
Egypt	Mauritius	USA
El Salvador	Mexico	Uganda
Ethiopia	Monaco	Uruguay
Fiji	Montevideo	Venezuela
Finland	Morocco	Yemen
France	Mozambique	Zaire
Gabon	Nepal	Zambia
Gambia	Netherlands	Zimbabwe
Germany	Nicaragua	
Ghana	Niger	

### **Structure of the report**

This report is divided into five analytic sections, followed by Annexes with statistical tables.

#### **Analytic components**

*Chapter 2: Access:* Chapter 2 explores a series of practical issues. How do NGOs go about getting access to international events? How they get in the door, work the floor of the meeting, and address physical and social obstacles for effective participation in the international event.

*Chapter 3: Representativeness:* This chapter introduces the issue of representativeness in international events.

Whom do NGOs 'represent' when they enter an international conference? Governments are 'representative' in ways that are well known and understood. NGOs are not 'representative' in the same way. The chapter contributes to a discussion on the different concepts of 'representativeness' that underlie the presence of NGOs and citizens at international events.

*Chapter 4: Impact on the Conference Outcome:* This chapter explores the impact of NGOs on the outcome of the international event. Depending on the orientation of the NGO, an important outcome may be the final intergovernmental text or declaration; it may be the agreement on the next steps to take on this issue on the international agenda; or it may be the public perception

of the events in the international or home country media.

Generally the international event itself has a formal set of goals and objectives set by the intergovernmental decision or sometimes by the sponsoring international organization. The NGOs, however, work in both the formal and the informal political process, and their political participation ranges across a spectrum of activities. In addition to paying attention to the governmental process, what attention do NGOs pay to the development of linkages between different parts of the global community? In this section the questionnaire sought to determine what were the crucial measures of success of the impact of the NGO on the international event and how this impact may affect the post-conference activities of the NGO.

#### **Chapter 5: Towards a new form of civil governance:**

The fifth chapter contributes to an examination of the impact of the current international NGO process on the creation of an alternate system for civil global governance. How would NGOs choose to participate in international events if financial resources were increased or time constraints were reduced? The questionnaire posed a number of options, seeking to understand the degree to which NGOs were trying to impose themselves onto the existing international intergovernmental process, and the degree to which they were trying to create a new mode of governance.

**Chapter 6: Concluding observations on the 1995 NGO benchmark survey:** This is a summary of the findings and implications for democratizing the participation of NGOs in future intergovernmental conferences.

#### **Chapter structure**

Within the four data based chapters the report has adopted a rather uniform three part format to analyze each question:

(1) a summary of the question as it appeared to the respondent along with a minimum amount of contextual background;

(2) the major messages of the statistics accompanied with appropriate graphic presentations;

(3) a breakdown in bullet format of the outstanding trends or variances in responses to the major messages by the key independent variables.

This approach was adopted to present the data on NGO perceptions in a rather neutral fashion, allowing the reader maximum flexibility to interpret the data.

#### **Statistical annexes**

There are three annexes: the first contains the original questionnaire; the second a methodological note; and the third contains details on the demographics of the sample.

#### **Chapter endnotes**

1. Wangari Maathai, 'Implementing Sustainable Development – the Green Belt Movement,' in *Valuing the Environment: Proceedings of the First Annual Conference on Environmentally Sustainable Development*, 30 September – 1 October 1993. World Bank, Washington, D.C.1994
2. Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood*, Oxford University Press, 1995.
3. UNRISD, *States of Disarray: The social effects of globalization*. An UNRISD Report for the World Summit for Social Development. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1995.
4. *Our Global Neighbourhood*, p 253.
5. Business and industry associations are eligible to apply for ECOSOC accreditation as NGOs. They are also included as a 'major group' in UNCED's Agenda 21. The Benchmark Survey was open to business groups. However, in acknowledgement of the vast discrepancies in power between the business and other NGO communities, a distinction is usually made on the lines made here by the Commission on Global Governance.
6. *Our Global Neighbourhood*, p 255.
7. Anthony Judge, Assistant Secretary General, Union of International Associations, letter to Riva Krut/Benchmark Consulting, 25 October 1994.

## Chapter 2: Practical issues of access and effective participation

### Introduction

In order to function properly, the democratic process requires that participants have a 'level playing field' or at least tolerate little bumps in the proverbial field of action. This is seldom the case in reality, and the NGO capacity to participate in these processes fully, effectively or at all depends on factors like resources to travel to the conference, their ability to gain access to the conference and, once there, the skills needed in order to influence the process. In the international arena, these skills might also include knowledge of the host country and its language, the format of intergovernmental conferences, and their skills to work the floor both in the intergovernmental and NGO fora.

This chapter divides these practical issues into three parts. The first, 'Getting in the Door,' addresses needs ranging from the basic – food and shelter – to higher order needs like negotiating skills and pre-conference information needs. The second part, 'Working the Floor,' looks at the political/ cultural context of the intergovernmental and nongovernmental fora, and asks which features of these arenas are experienced as obstacles to effective participation. If the floor is uneven, which elements do respondents single out as obstacles? The third part, 'Communication,' asks NGOs to identify which media and methods they find most effective, and which people are most significant audience.

### Getting in the door

#### Access to facilities

#### *Summary of the issue*

Getting to an international event is a major effort. UN preparations for official conferences pay great attention to ensuring that government delegations find accommodation, have the institutional support structure to maintain contact with their national offices (telephones, faxes, etc.) and have appropriate translation and interpretation services to express their views. Once they get to the conference city, what experience do NGOs have in obtaining adequate access to equivalent facilities and services, and how important is this to them?

Food and shelter, communications technologies, the ca-

capacity to understand the language of the proceedings: uncertain access to these practical items can be effective barriers to NGO participation or at least be sufficiently distracting that a significant amount of conference time is occupied resolving practical issues of physical access.

Respondents were asked to choose their two prime needs from the following options:<sup>1</sup>

- inexpensive, clean hotels
- inexpensive, healthy food
- telephones, computers and faxes
- office space
- translation facilities
- and interpretation facilities

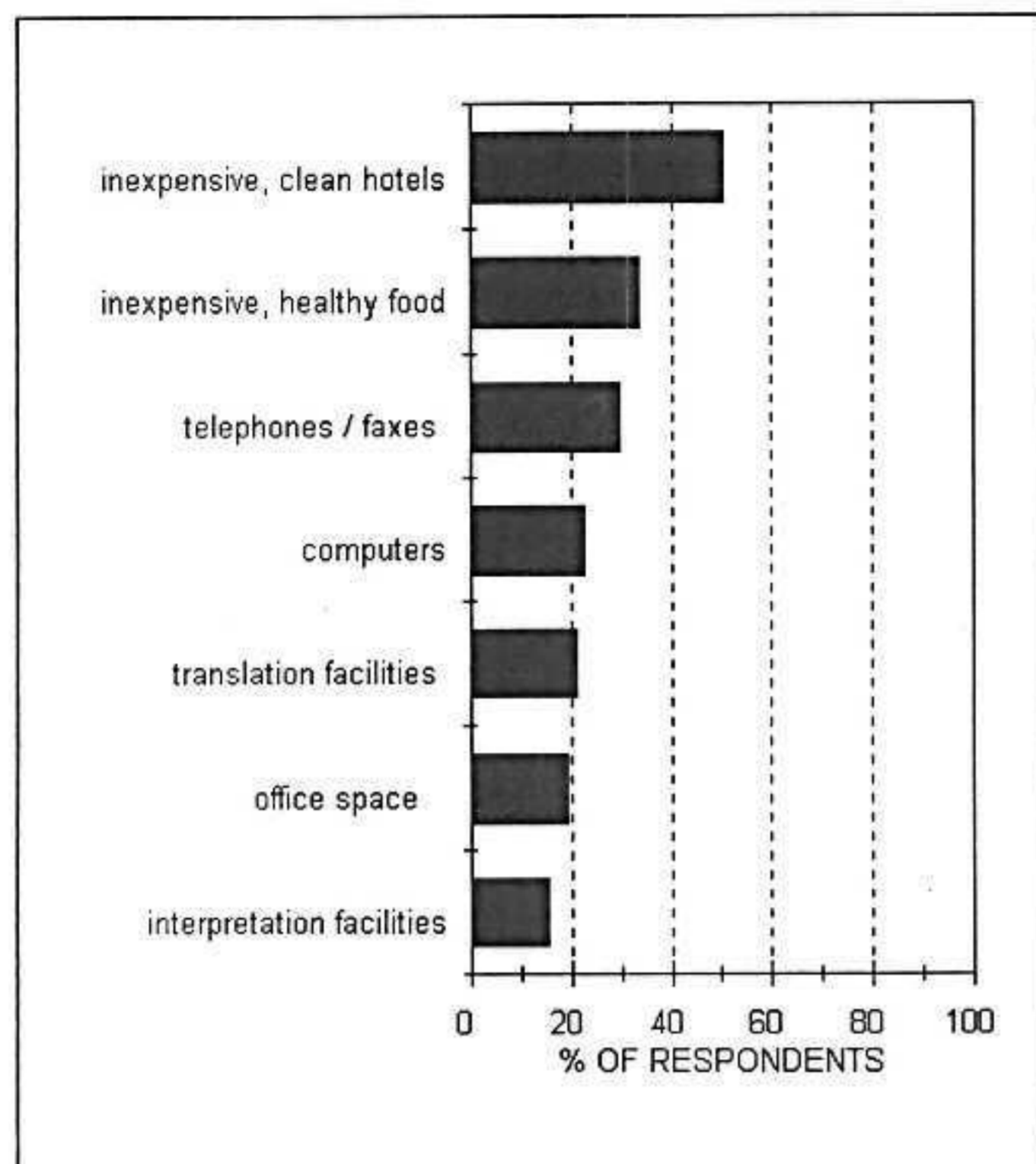
In some way the effort to prioritize these functional requirements may have been inappropriate for some respondents. At a given event, one or another physical barrier might be greater than another; a most recent pleasant or unpleasant conference experience could have influenced the response.

#### *Major messages from the statistics*

International conferences in general are held in expensive cities. The argument is that this cannot be helped: an international conference has to have an international airport and a conference infrastructure to support the delegates, UN staff, media personnel, NGOs and others who typically attend. The strongest requirement from respondents is for increased access to inexpensive hotels (45%). This need is more strongly felt by respondents from developing country NGOs than developed country NGOs.<sup>2</sup>

These strong requirements for basic needs are significant and should be recognized. NGO participation rates and their effectiveness at the conferences might both rise significantly if over-all accommodation costs were reduced (or at least the certainty of the maximum cost became better known). These are functions that could be taken up by the UN or the NGO leadership. Group rental arrangements or block reservations for NGOs at appropriate hotels may be a useful service for conference organizers.

Figure 1. Respondents most need access to:



Food is the second largest cost barrier. There are no significant variations within the sub-populations on this choice, and it should be recognized as a general priority for NGOs. Inside the official conference food prices and quality are monitored and in many cases subsidized. NGO participants also need assured access to reasonably priced food within walking distance of the international event. It is significant that issues of food and shelter ranked higher among respondents than access to technology.

Close to one-third (30%) think that telecommunications facilities were crucial, and over 20% of respondents prioritize access to computers. These technologies are especially important in light of the clear need NGO representatives have to communicate with their colleagues at home (see chapter 5). Telephone and other communication links are provided to Governments and to journalists; telephone and other communication links need to be equally available to NGOs. Citizen links to their own organizations are particularly important to strengthen the representativeness of the individual as conferences consider new or unexpected issues, and to decrease the cost to NGO organizations. Given the possibilities of new technology, for example, it is theoretically quite possible for one individual at the conference to have instant access to their own or a group of NGOs

at home, and to 'represent' them on one or a range of issues.

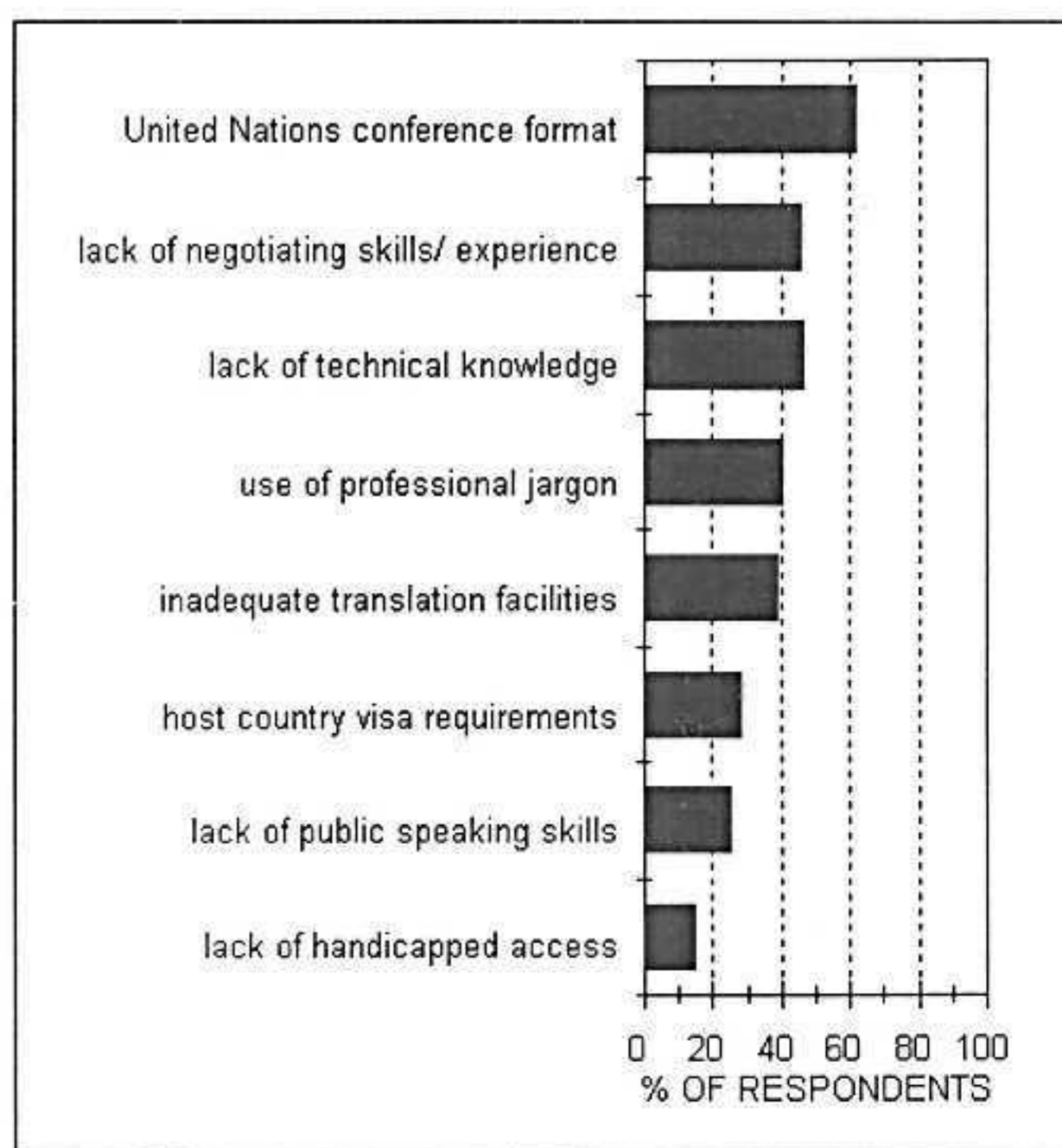
### Technical obstacles at the intergovernmental conference

#### Summary of the issue

In addition to food, shelter and communication technologies, other technical obstacles can be a real impediment to effective NGO participation. In some cases, host country visa requirements exclude some NGO individuals, organizations or nationals. This is particularly evident in the preparations for the upcoming women's conference in Beijing, where Chinese national political policy is dictating which NGOs can or cannot come to the conference. Assuming that they get to the conference, a physical presence could even then be futile if there is no adequate translation facility or handicapped access. Some NGOs might lack technical knowledge or negotiating skills or experience in public speaking. For others, the UN conference format could be an inhibitor.

The survey contained one set of yes/no questions regarding limitations and obstacles to achieving goals at intergovernmental and at NGO meetings. The questions were tailored to potential problems at the specific type

Figure 2. At intergovernmental conferences, respondents generally feel limited by:



of meeting. The questions on the intergovernmental requirements focussed both on negotiation and communication skills:<sup>3</sup>

- lack of technical knowledge
- use of professional jargon
- lack of negotiating skills /experience
- lack of public speaking skills
- inadequate translation facilities
- lack of handicapped access
- host country visa requirements
- United Nations conference format

### *Major messages from the data*

There are several items in this question that are felt to be strong inhibitors on NGO access. Nearly two-thirds of those surveyed feel limited by the UN conference format (61 %). There are no significant variations on this opinion within the sub-communities, so it is clear that the UN conference format is perceived by international NGOs as a significant inhibitor to their access to the international political process. The conference format could have many elements that inhibit or facilitate NGO access, and this questionnaire did not explore these. It is significant, though, that this element received so much attention from the respondents despite the fact that they could have highlighted more specific elements such as translation facilities or negotiating skills.

Close to half believe that their success was limited by a lack of negotiating skill (46 %) or the lack of technical knowledge (46 %). Forty percent are limited by communications problems caused by the use of professional jargon or inadequate translation facilities. Over one-quarter are limited by host country visa requirements – a figure that most likely does not represent the opinions of those unable to fill out the survey because they could not get to Copenhagen, New York or the other conference cities where most surveys were collected.

Some of these obstacles seem to diminish with the age/experience of the NGO. Respondents over sixty years of age feel least limited by any of the categories,<sup>4</sup> respondents who attended their first international conference during the 1970s report feeling less restricted in their negotiating skills than any other age group,<sup>5</sup> and respondents under 30 years old feel the lack of technical knowledge and negotiating skills more than other age groups.<sup>6</sup>

### *Variations within sub-communities*

- Women feel more strongly than men that they are limited by host country visa requirements.<sup>7</sup>
- Respondents from developing countries feel more limited than developed country NGOs by the use of technical jargon, inadequate translation facilities, lack of handicapped access, and host country visa requirements.<sup>8</sup>
- There are no outstanding variations across accreditation or membership sub-communities.
- Younger respondents indicate feeling more limited by all the general categories than did older respondents.
- Respondents who attended their first international conference between 1990–1993 feel most limited by all the categories compared to their colleagues. Respondents attending their first international conference in 1994 or 1995 feel least limited by the categories.

### **Technical obstacles at the NGO conference**

#### *Summary of the question*

In its original concept, the *raison d'être* of the NGO event was the intergovernmental event, which was the catalyst of the NGO conference. This is no longer the case: the NGO event has taken on an importance in its own right. In many cases, more NGOs go to the NGO event than to the intergovernmental conference, and lobbying the intergovernmental event is only one element of NGO strategy. In asking about obstacles at the NGO forum, we therefore get a concept of what priorities NGOs have. Possible obstacles at the NGO conference are that they do not gain entry to the UN conference, that NGO networking is facilitated or impeded and so on.

This question asked respondents whether, at international NGO events, they generally feel unable to do a number of key things (yes/no answers):<sup>9</sup>

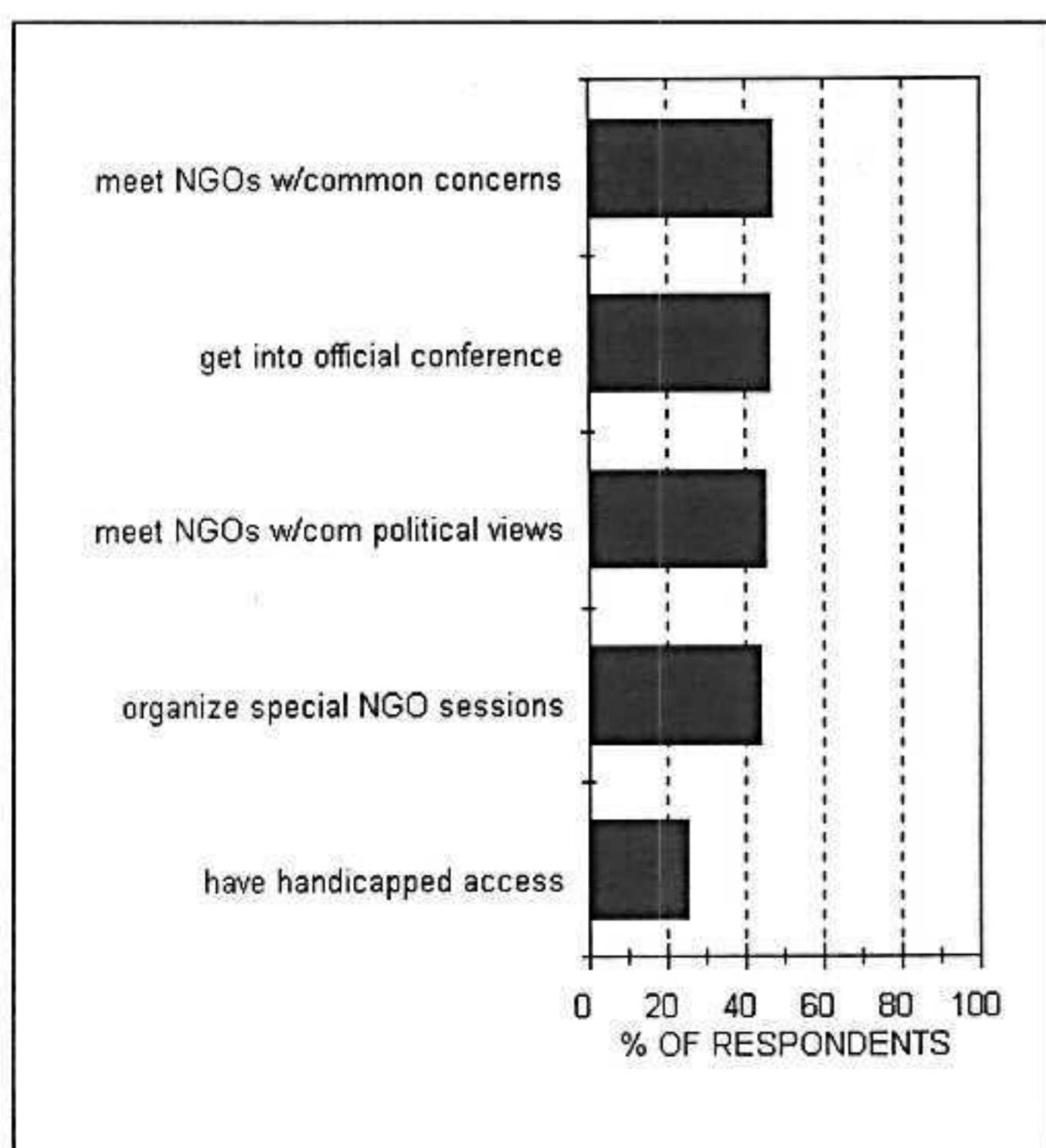
- organize special NGO sessions
- get into the official conference building
- have handicapped access in the official conference building
- locate NGOs with similar political interests
- locate NGOs with similar thematic interests

### Major messages from the statistics

Even if NGO participants are able to overcome the hurdles and arrive in the city where a UN conference is held, 46% of those responding to the survey question feel they are unable to get into the official conference building. As might be expected, this response comes mainly from non-accredited NGOs.

Close to half the respondents feel unable to locate NGOs with similar thematic interests (47%) or similar political interests (45%). Given how crucial the need is from NGOs interested in new forms of representation to network with other NGOs, this is a very significant response. In several of the other questions, NGOs emphasize how important it is at these events to meet with sister NGOs. Elsewhere, this is expressed as a need for those NGOs interested in both the intergovernmental events (the lobbying model of participation) and those that are focussed more on the NGO arena and the exploration of global civil governance models. However, this response indicates that it is hard to set up these opportunities. In the responses to this question, respondents from developing country NGOs feel less able to organize special NGO sessions than respondents from developed countries.<sup>10</sup> This may be an area where resource could be allocated with a relatively small investment cost and significant yield for these NGOs. Special atten-

Figure 3. At NGO international events, respondents generally feel unable to:



tion may be given to scoping out the needs of developing country NGOs separately from developed country NGOs, as these may not completely overlap. There is a role here for both the conference organizers and the NGO leadership.

### Other variations within sub-communities

- Women respondents generally feel less able to get into the official conference buildings than male respondents.<sup>11</sup>
- Respondents from non-accredited NGOs feel less able than accredited NGO respondents to get into the official conference building.<sup>12</sup>

### Information needs at the intergovernmental conference

#### Summary of the issue

The capacity of an NGO to prepare for and effectively participate at an international event depends heavily on knowing how the conference is organized and what structural options exist to convey views to the UN process. The objective of an international intergovernmental conference is to formulate a consensual document on a particular theme, through a formal process of drafting and redrafting that starts months before the conference itself, in various preparatory meetings. For NGOs acting in the lobbying model, it is crucial to understand the procedures that guide where, when and with what status information is generated and distributed, both before and at the conference.

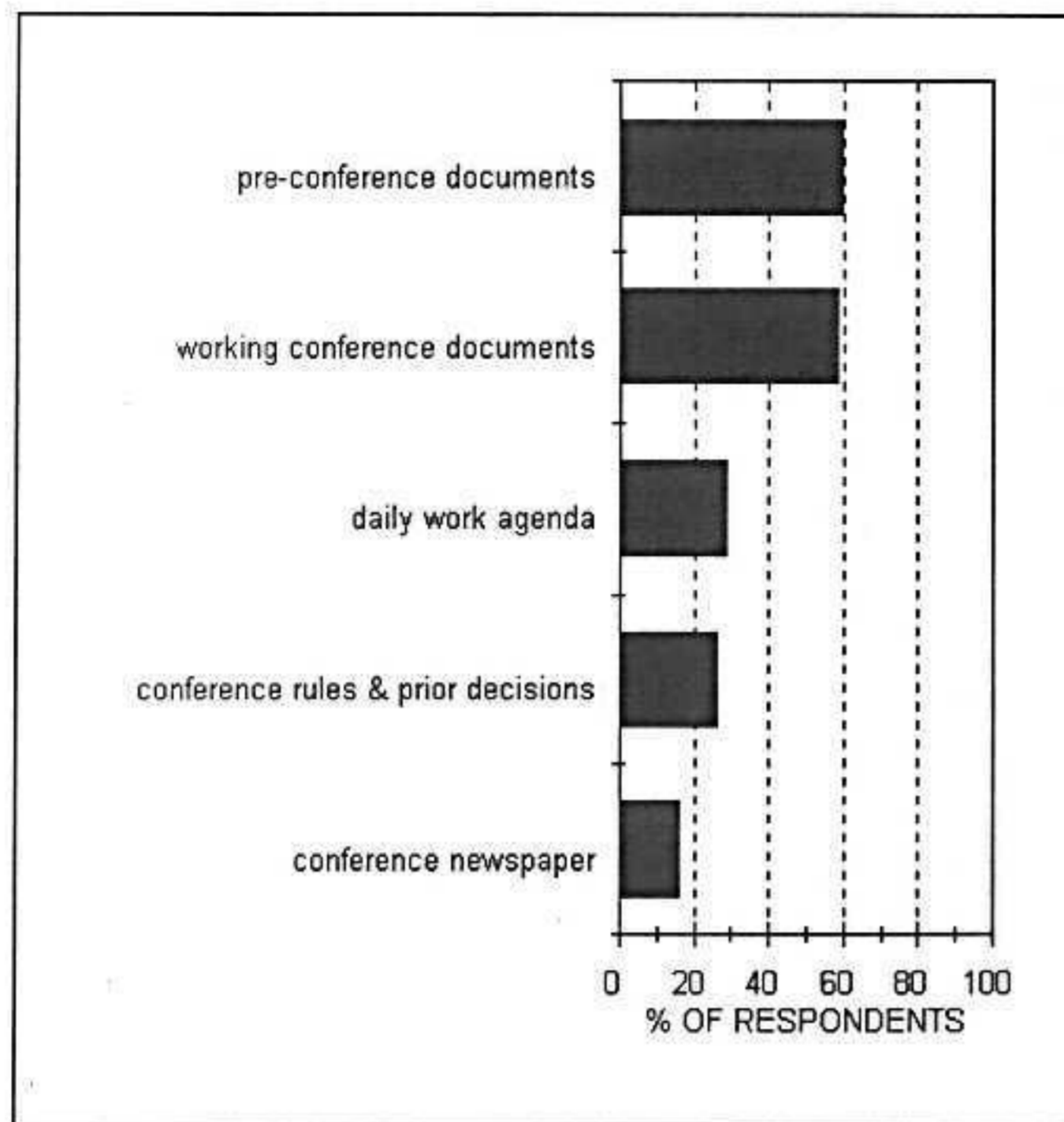
Respondents were asked to select the two types of information they most need, from the following list:<sup>13</sup>

- the conference rules and prior decisions
- the pre-conference documents
- the working conference documents
- the daily work agenda
- the conference newspaper

### Major messages from the statistics

To effectively convey political views, NGOs report that they need very practical information: 59% of respondents select access to pre-conference documents; 58.5% need access to working conference documents.

Figure 4. At intergovernmental conferences, respondents most need information in:



These two choices far outweigh the requirements for the three other options, and are likely not different from the choices that government delegates may have made, given the same question. This pragmatic approach of respondents to get the procedural rules and working papers demonstrates that NGOs appreciate the need to get down to basics and to review the detailed working proposals and rules in order to have the greatest impact on their lobby efforts. Clearly, whether the focus of the NGO at a particular conference is the intergovernmental debate or the NGO arena, NGOs in general do feel that formal information relating to the issue of the conference is key.

#### Variations within sub-communities

- Respondents from ECOSOC-accredited organizations express stronger interest in comparison to un-accredited groups in their need for access to conference documents.<sup>14</sup> This may reflect the experience that ECOSOC accredited NGOs have had in the lobbying approach to participation in international events, as well as their relatively greater experience of the intergovernmental process.
- Respondents from organizations whose membership ranged 10–99 express stronger interest than

those from groups of differing size in their need for access to conference documents.<sup>15</sup>

- In contrast, respondents with less personal experience – whose first international conference was in 1995 – are less interested in access to working conference documents.<sup>16</sup>
- For the two major choices, there are no other significant variations within the other sub-communities on types of information needed.

#### Information needs from the NGO leadership

For NGO meetings running parallel to UN conferences, the survey asked what information was expected from the NGO leadership, on the assumption that the dissemination of this information should help NGOs be active participants in the decision-making process. Intergovernmental and NGO international conferences are paper and meeting driven. Without adequate pre-conference and conference documentation and timely notice of the agendas and procedures, NGOs will be less effective. This is far more the case for NGO than for government delegates, as many NGOs try to cover two conferences, frequently some distance apart. Without adequate information, they will be unable to prioritize: they will go to conferences they hear about at the last minute rather than meetings that are central to their personal or organizational mission and they will miss important meetings.

Respondents were asked what information they most needed (top two priorities) from their NGO leadership:<sup>17</sup>

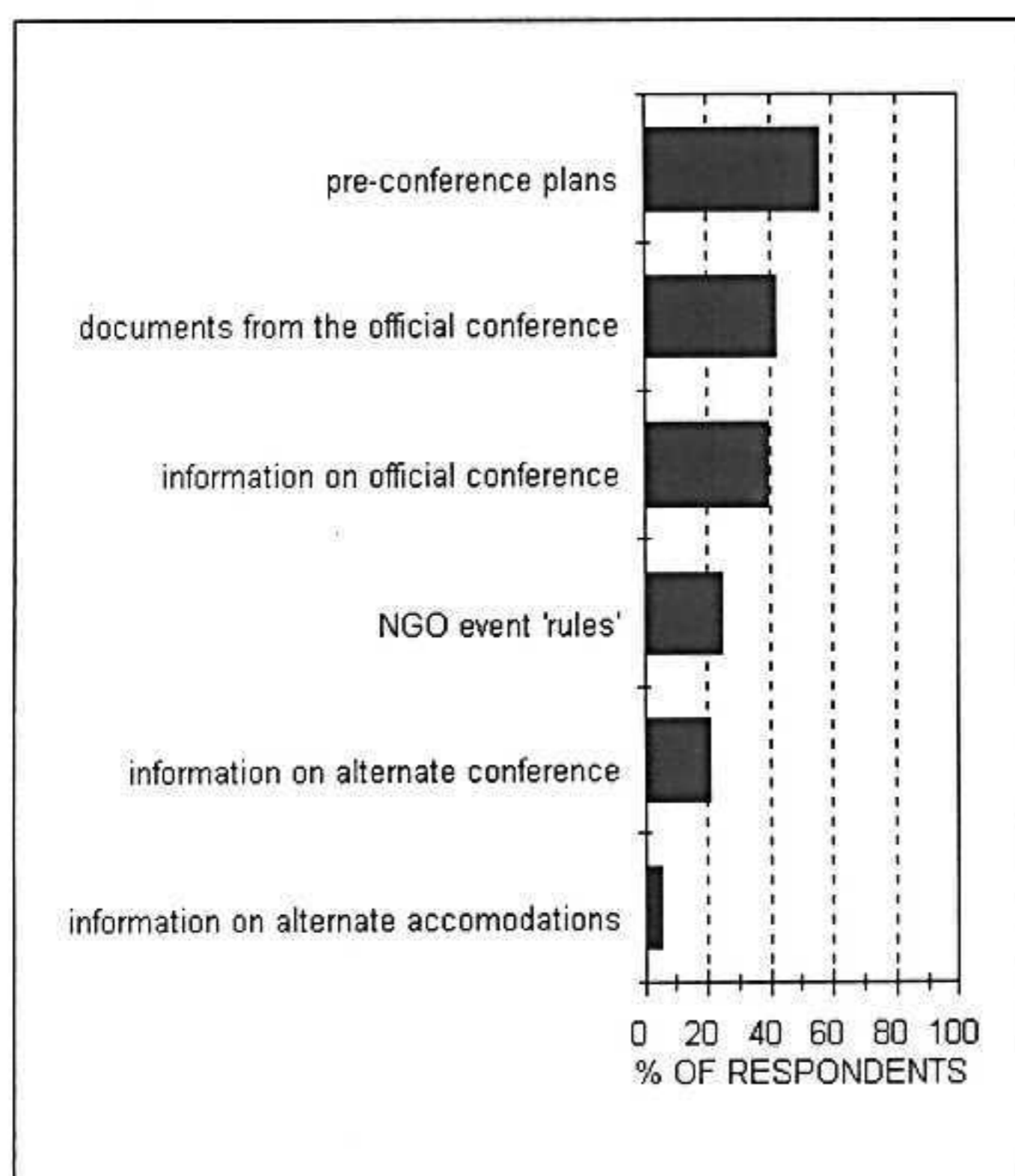
- information on pre-conference plans
- announcements of NGO event 'rules'
- information on the official conference
- information on the alternative conference
- documents from the official conference
- information on alternative accommodations

#### Major messages from the statistics

Access to information remains crucial to NGOs in the NGO fora, and they look to their leadership to provide the very documents they indicated they need to be effective at the intergovernmental event. 56% of respondents think that leaders should provide pre-conference plans; and 42% think that leaders should be conduit for documents from the official conference or for informa-



Figure 5. Respondent needs from 'NGO leadership':



tion on the official conference. Developed country and ECOSOC-accredited NGOs have a greater requirement from their leadership for conference documents. This is consistent with data elsewhere that shows that developed country NGOs and accredited NGOs understand the rules and procedures of the intergovernmental political process better than their developing country counterparts, and participate more strongly in the lobbying model of participation.

In contrast, developing country NGOs appear to prioritize documents from official conferences more than developed countries. This indicates that developing country NGOs have a high need for information, but a low expectation of influencing the process of that generates the documents – the official conference. Once again, this suggests a more passive developing country interaction within the intergovernmental conference as compared to the more active role played by developed country NGOs.

NGOs do not look to the NGO leadership for information on the alternative conference in general (21%) or for information regarding the NGO pre-conference plans (25%). This is interesting in light of the strong feeling expressed above that NGOs do not feel able to network effectively at international NGO conferences – that they are unable to locate NGOs with similar the-

matic or political interests. Only 5% of participants prioritized information from NGO leaders on accommodation over information on issues in the intergovernmental forum – despite the fact that accommodation ranked so high in the list of priorities for NGOs at the event. NGO priorities are clearly to get hold of the key documents, either to organize their lobbying work effectively, or for purposes of information.

This is mirrored by actual developments. Over the past several years, NGO networks have become the major mode for getting information to the public on developments at UN conferences and meetings. There are two probably interpretations of this development: on the one hand the expectation that the NGO parallel events should be the public source of information on the UN official event could be the result of the failure of the UN system to provide adequate support to citizens groups interested in the themes and procedures of the international event. On the other, it may also be that the NGO leadership of the parallel event are seen as legitimate international leaders in the new representativeness movement and are reasonably being asked to be the lead conduit between the citizen movements and the official conference.

#### Variations in the sub communities

- Respondents from developed countries prioritize obtaining official conference documents from their NGO leadership more than respondents from developing countries.<sup>18</sup>
- Respondents whose organizational membership ranged between 10–99 have a greater need for documents from the official conference from the NGO leadership than respondents from organizations of other sizes.<sup>19</sup>
- Respondents from non-accredited NGOs have less need for information on pre-conference process from their NGO leadership than respondents from accredited NGOs.<sup>20</sup>
- Respondents whose first international conference was in the early 1990s have a greater need for information on the official conference from the NGO leadership.<sup>21</sup>

## Working the floor

### Restrictions on participation

#### Summary of the issue

Participants arrive at the conference and start to work. By the end of the meeting, some have achieved their objectives; others may have been less successful. This question was designed to elicit opinions on external influences that had restricted NGO effective participation. The set of questions was composed of two groups, each a series of yes/no statements.

One set of questions related to perceived restrictions at intergovernmental events: the inability to pass information to the 'right' people. The questions focused on restrictions felt by NGOs from:<sup>22</sup> (yes/no answers)

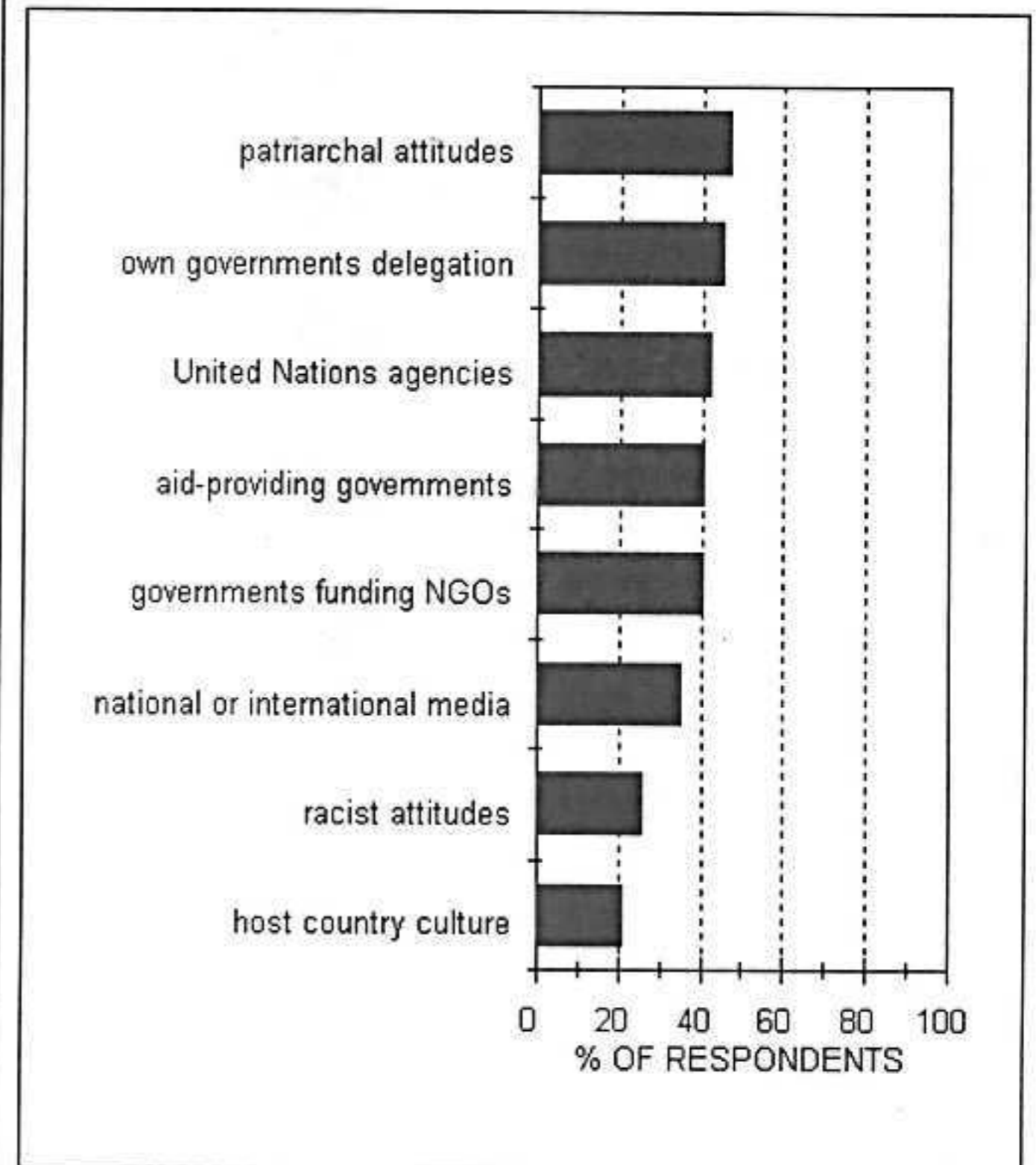
- their own government's delegation
- Aid-providing governments funding NGOs
- UN agencies
- national or international media
- host country culture
- racist attitudes
- patriarchal attitudes

A second set of questions examined involvement at international NGO events. NGO events provide an opportunity for a limited exchange of views. The number of issues, the number of participants, and time constraints prevent full discussion of all related issues. These events are organized and carried out by the non-governmental community, and there is no set format or rules of procedure. The organizers, therefore, must use their best judgement in planning and setting the agenda. As a result, certain NGOs must play a leading role in conference activities – sometimes a role that can be perceived as overly dominant.

This set of questions asked respondents if certain types of NGOs have dominated the NGO conferences in which they participated:<sup>23</sup> (yes/no answers)

- northern NGOs
- larger NGOs
- UN-accredited NGOs
- male-run NGOs
- white-run NGOs
- English-language NGOs

Figure 6. At intergovernmental conferences, respondents generally feel restricted by:



#### Major messages from the statistics

At both the intergovernmental and NGO fora, one-third to one-half of participants believe that they are restricted at intergovernmental conferences by most of the issues identified in these questions.

At intergovernmental events, patriarchal attitudes are considered significant inhibitors by 47% of the respondents. A close second is the perception that their own government's delegation (45%) is restrictive. Although the intergovernmental arena is overwhelmingly male, it is disturbing that *patriarchy* is so strongly perceived as an inhibitor at the intergovernmental event – by 53% of women respondents and 47% of men respondents. This is presumably less a consequence of UN structures and more a consequence of an old boys 'way of doing things'.

It is interesting too that the home country government is perceived as restrictive to the NGO. This is a crucial perception because NGOs also perceive home country governments as the most crucial audience to influence, as will be seen later in this chapter. Clearly there are improvements that can be made in the relationships between international NGOs and their home governments. This is particularly true of non-accredited

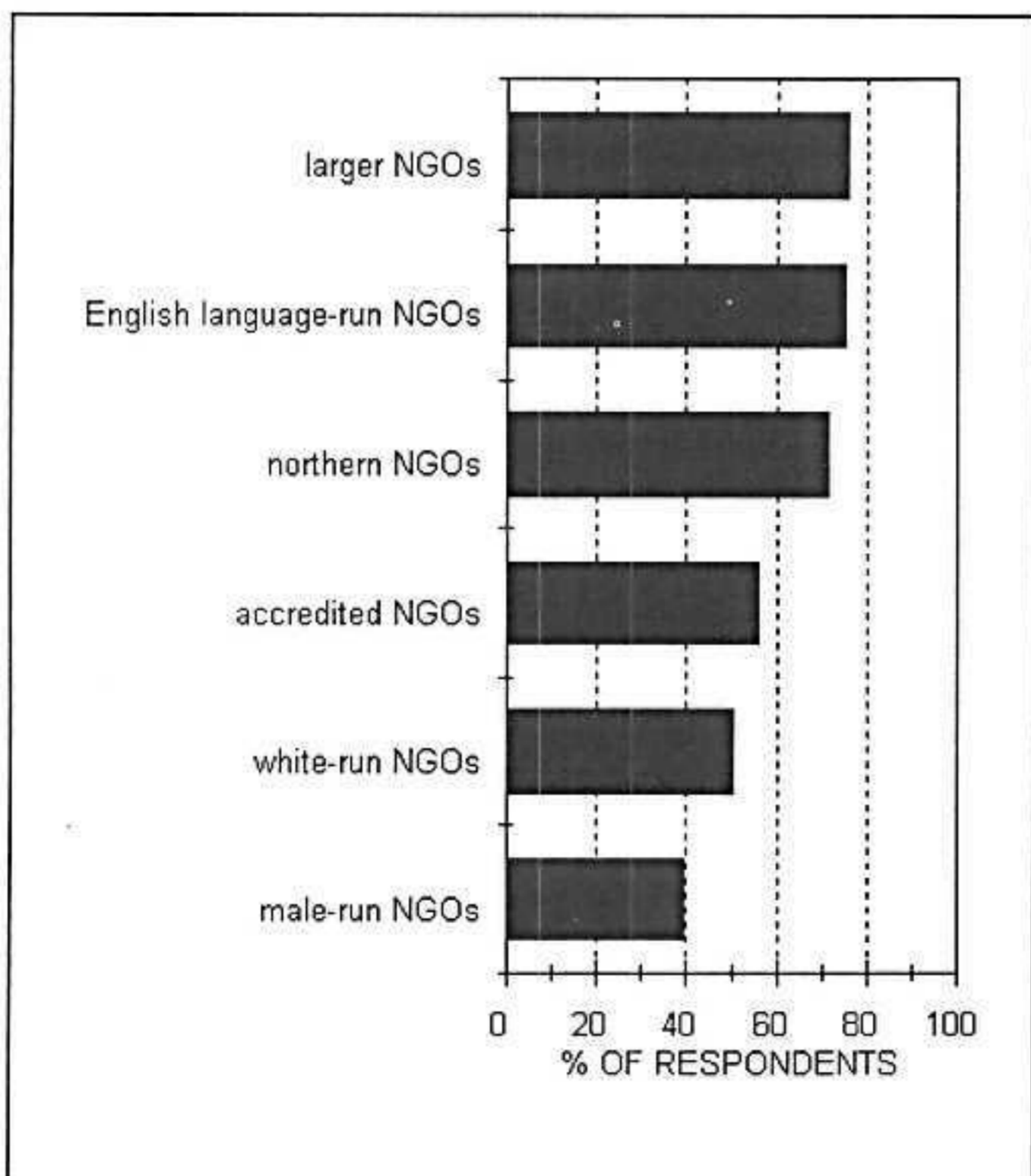
NGOs, who feel more restricted by their own government's delegation than accredited NGOs.<sup>24</sup>

Three more issues followed as restrictive: UN agencies (42%), aid-providing governments (40%) and governments funding NGOs (40%). On the other hand, racism (26%) and host country culture (21%) are less frequently cited as problems. Host country culture may be relatively insignificant because so many international meetings are held in major conference centers or hotels in fairly international cities.

At international NGO events, participants believe larger NGOs, English language-run NGOs and Northern NGOs are dominant (76%, 75% and 71% of the respondents respectively). These outcomes are not surprising. Larger NGOs typically are more established and their staff has greater experience in the international community. The working language for many NGO meetings is English, and in Northern countries the funding sources available to NGOs to finance their operations and participation are more advanced from foundations, private gifts, and special government status (eg non-profit organizations).

For NGOs working in the lobbying model, the dominance of a particular set of NGOs from other countries

Figure 7. At international NGO events, respondents generally feel the potential dominance of:



may not be very significant. After all their primary target is to influence the views of their own national Government. However, for NGOs working to expand the scope of representativeness, the imbalance in power within the NGO community is very troubling. A finding explored in Chapter 5 is that, given the resources, a strong NGO preference would be to work with other NGOs pursuing similar thematic interests. The responses to this question indicate that some of the obstacles to this objective come not from the UN and the UN conference structure but from within the NGO movement itself. At the embryonic stage in development of a new system of civil global governance, the NGO community has not adequately addressed internal power issues related to language, political, and size dominance.

That racism ranks so low in respondent perceptions of both the intergovernmental and the NGO fora is a welcome finding. However, in the intergovernmental forum, patriarchy is the major issue, whereas at the NGO forum, the dominance of male-run NGOs is ranked at bottom of the list. This contrast is striking and needs to be better understood. Is patriarchy really so minor in the NGO forum compared to the intergovernmental forum? The absolute percentage (47% vs 40%, respectively) would suggest that this is not altogether so. It may be unimportant in the NGO forum *relative* to the other choices. The generally higher scores for all choices offered for the NGO forum may indicate that respondents are more critical of key actors at the NGO forum than at the intergovernmental forum.

#### Variations within sub-communities

re: restrictions at international government events:

- Women more than men respondents feel that patriarchal attitudes were restricting their full participation at intergovernmental conferences.<sup>25</sup>
- Respondents from developing country NGOs feel more restricted than developed country NGOs by aid-providing governments and governments funding NGOs.<sup>26</sup>
- Respondents from small organizations (those with memberships of 10–99 ) are less concerned about issues of patriarchy than respondents from organizations of other sizes.<sup>27</sup>

- Individuals in their 30s feel restricted by their own government delegation and aide providing government delegations<sup>28</sup> and less restricted by national or international media<sup>29</sup> than other age groups.
- Respondents who attended their first conference in the period 1990 – 1993 are generally more sensitive to all these issues with responses, averaging over 7% more than respondents who attended their first conference in any other period.

re: potential dominance within NGO events:

- Individuals between 40–49 generally express feeling dominated by the listed institutions compared to other age groups. Individuals slightly older, 50–59, least feel the dominance of these institutions overall compared to the other age groups.
- There are no significant variations based on gender, base country of operations, accreditation, size of membership, or first year attending an international conference.

## Communication

### Speaking out

#### *Summary of the issue*

NGO representatives must have or find a mechanism whereby they can convey their organization's views to others. For NGOs working in the lobbying model, they need to find ways to reach their own government during what is often a busy inter-governmental negotiating and social schedule. NGOs that see their role as providers of professional or technical advice need to discover effective ways to provide their specialized advice amid the competing claims for attention at intergovernmental events. For NGOs with a broader international agenda, there are different sets of challenges in finding effective mechanisms to convey their views.

ECOSOC accredited NGOs (and increasingly non-accredited NGOs) can get permission of the presiding officer to make a brief oral statement at plenary meetings. However most of the exchange of views takes place at informal meetings, working groups, and conversations in the hall. Printed material may be distributed prior to or at a given conference. ECOSOC accred-

ited NGOs can have their statements distributed through the UN document distribution service, while other NGOs can use tables placed outside conference rooms to distribute their literature.

Respondents were asked to select two from six options of how they wished to convey their views to governmental officials at UN-sponsored events:<sup>30</sup> (first and second choices)

- through documents distribution
- through display of posters
- through addressing plenary sessions
- through 'official' NGO newspapers
- through face-to-face discussions with individual delegates
- through street demonstrations

This seemed to cover the extremes of the options while offering respondents an opportunity to differentiate between choices within the format of existing intergovernmental conferences.

A second set of questions asked respondents to rate, using the same system as above, their preferred mechanism to convey views to other NGOs at international events. They were offered six choices analogous to the set of options at the intergovernmental forum, although in this case the 'street demonstrations' option was replaced by 'small group discussions.' The options were:<sup>31</sup> (first and second choices)

- circulation of documents
- using NGO exhibition space
- addressing NGO sessions
- using the NGO newspapers
- individual face-to-face discussions
- small group discussions

This range seemed to cover the means employed by most groups participating in NGO events.

#### *Major messages from the statistics*

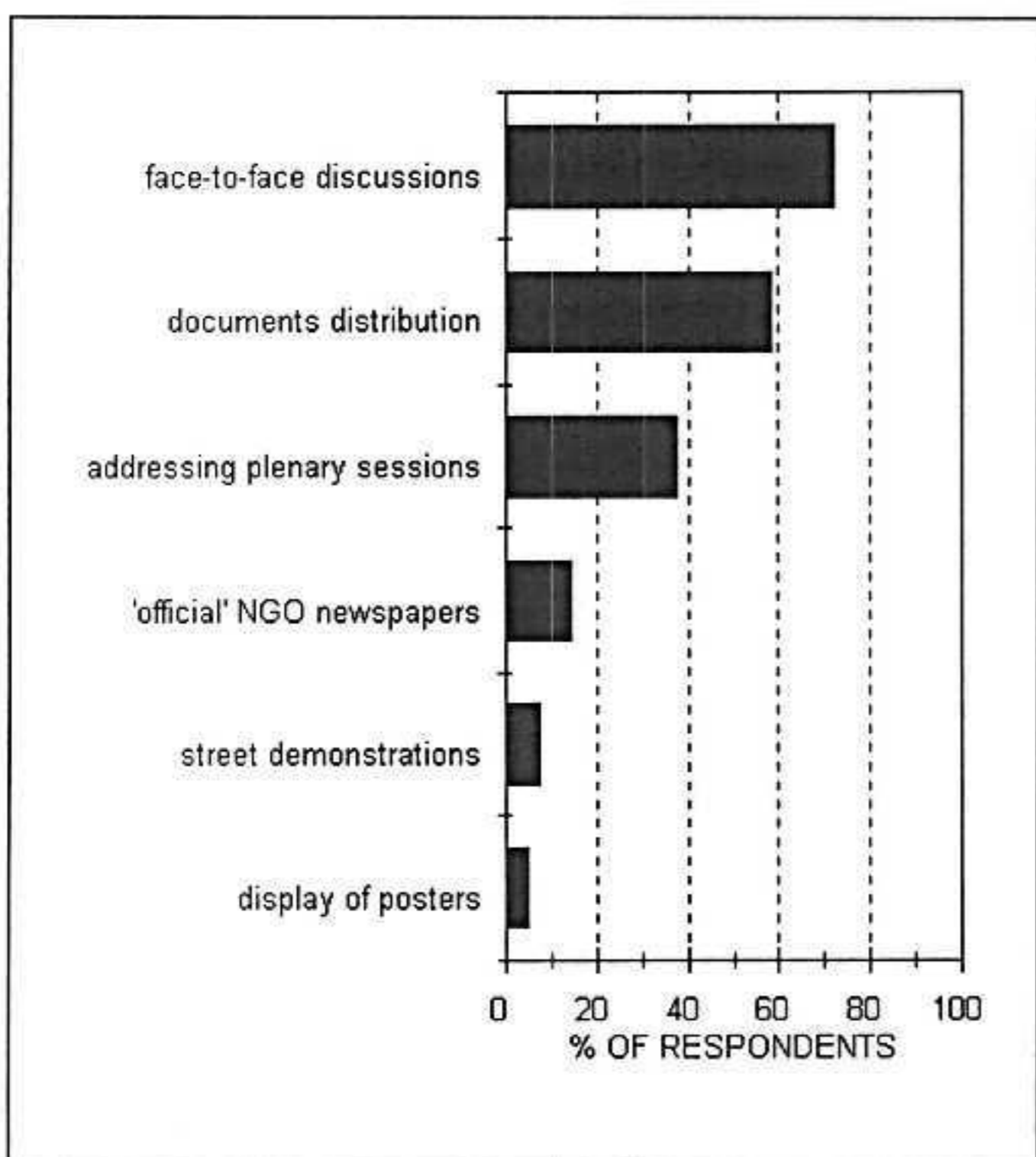
At intergovernmental events, respondents prefer to convey their views through face-to-face discussions with individuals (72%) and through documents distribution (58%), while 38% favor addressing plenaries. Other options – through official NGO newspapers, through street demonstrations and through poster display, are less popular strategies – 14%, 7% and 5% respectively. For the two first choices for conveying views – face-to-

face discussion and document distribution – there is no significant distinction between any of the sub-communities. This is interesting in light of the significant degrees of variability among the sub-populations in their NGO event choices, as will be seen below, even though those choices are similar to those of the governmental forum.

At NGO events, respondents as a whole had preferences that are strikingly similar. Their strongest preference is for small group discussions (47%) – an option not offered in the set of options for the intergovernmental forum, but similar to direct personal interaction, a separate option. The second and third preferences for methods to convey views at the NGO forum are the same as the top choices in the intergovernmental forum: there is a strong preference for face-to-face discussions with individuals (44%) and document circulation (44%). Again, as in the intergovernmental forum, 38% favor addressing NGO sessions. Use of an NGO newspaper and NGO exhibition space are minority choices (14% and 10% respectively).

For meetings at the NGO forum, there are several statistically significant differences among those who wished to have face-to-face meetings. Men appear to be more interested than women to convey their views to other

Figure 8. Respondents prefer to convey their views at official intergovernmental conferences through:



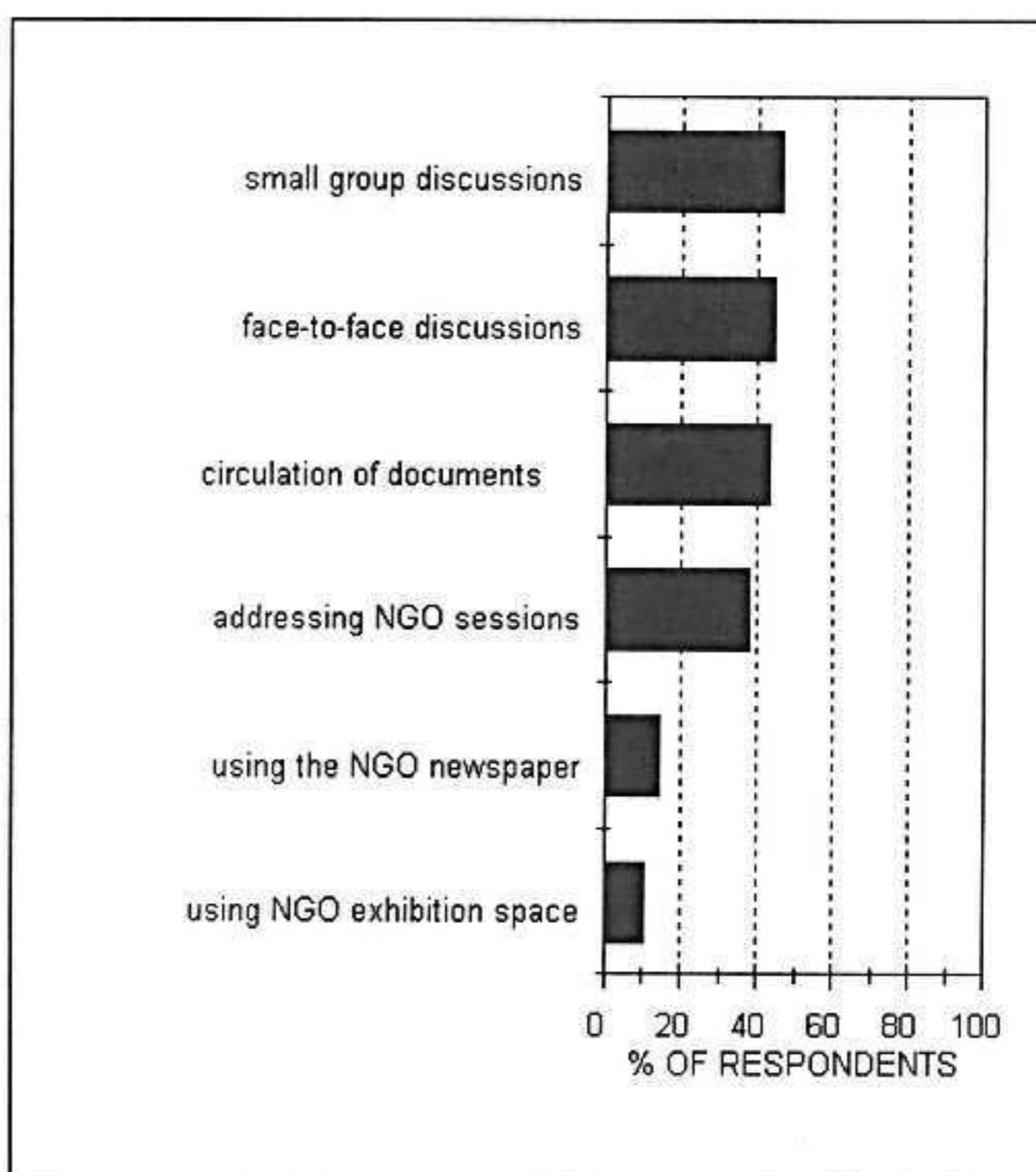
NGOs by individual face-to-face discussions.<sup>32</sup> Smaller organizations, those with memberships of 10–99, are less interested than respondents from other sized organizations for face-to-face communication at international NGO events.<sup>33</sup> Respondents from organizations in developing countries also are less interested in face-to-face dialogue<sup>34</sup> and more interested in circulating documents<sup>35</sup> than the developed country respondents.

At international conferences, in the intergovernmental or the NGO fora, respondents clearly prefer to communicate through direct dialogue rather than through the pen, the poster or the placard. Although they clearly welcome the opportunity to speak to plenaries, they also feel that they can exercise more influence by direct interpersonal communication – the conventional tool of the lobbyist. This is consistent with NGO indications that their interest in access to government delegates, because lobbying is crucial to many of them.

#### Variations within sub-communities

- Respondents from organizations with 100 – 250 members are less interested than the reference population in small group discussions at international NGO events.<sup>36</sup>

Figure 9. At NGO events, respondents prefer to convey their views to other NGOs by:



- Respondents from organizations with 1,000 – 10,000 members are less interested than the reference population in circulation of documents at international NGO events, and more interested in small group discussions.<sup>37</sup>
- Individuals who attended their first international conference in the early 1990s express a higher preference for small group discussion at the NGO event than the reference population.<sup>38</sup>

### Getting heard: access to decision-makers

#### Summary of the issue

NGO representatives have opportunities throughout the year to communicate with leaders in government by writing and distributing reports, letters, press releases, etc. Organizations based in their national capital may, with minimal financial outlay and if given the opportunity, meet with government leaders or ministerial staff. Intergovernmental conferences give participants a unique opportunity to meet personally with leaders from other countries as well as from other parts of their own country.

On the assumption that face-to-face discussions would be crucial to a significant number of respondents, an assumption strongly borne out by the responses outlined above, the questionnaire specifically enquired which type of individuals respondents saw as their primary focus at UN meetings. Depending on their strategy for influencing the event, respondents may well have clear preferences on who they most need unrestricted access to, in order to get their views reflected in the final outcome of the intergovernmental event. In this question, respondents were asked to select their top two choices from the following:<sup>39</sup>

- their own government delegation
- other government delegations
- UN conference staff
- media representatives
- NGO support staff

#### Major messages from the data

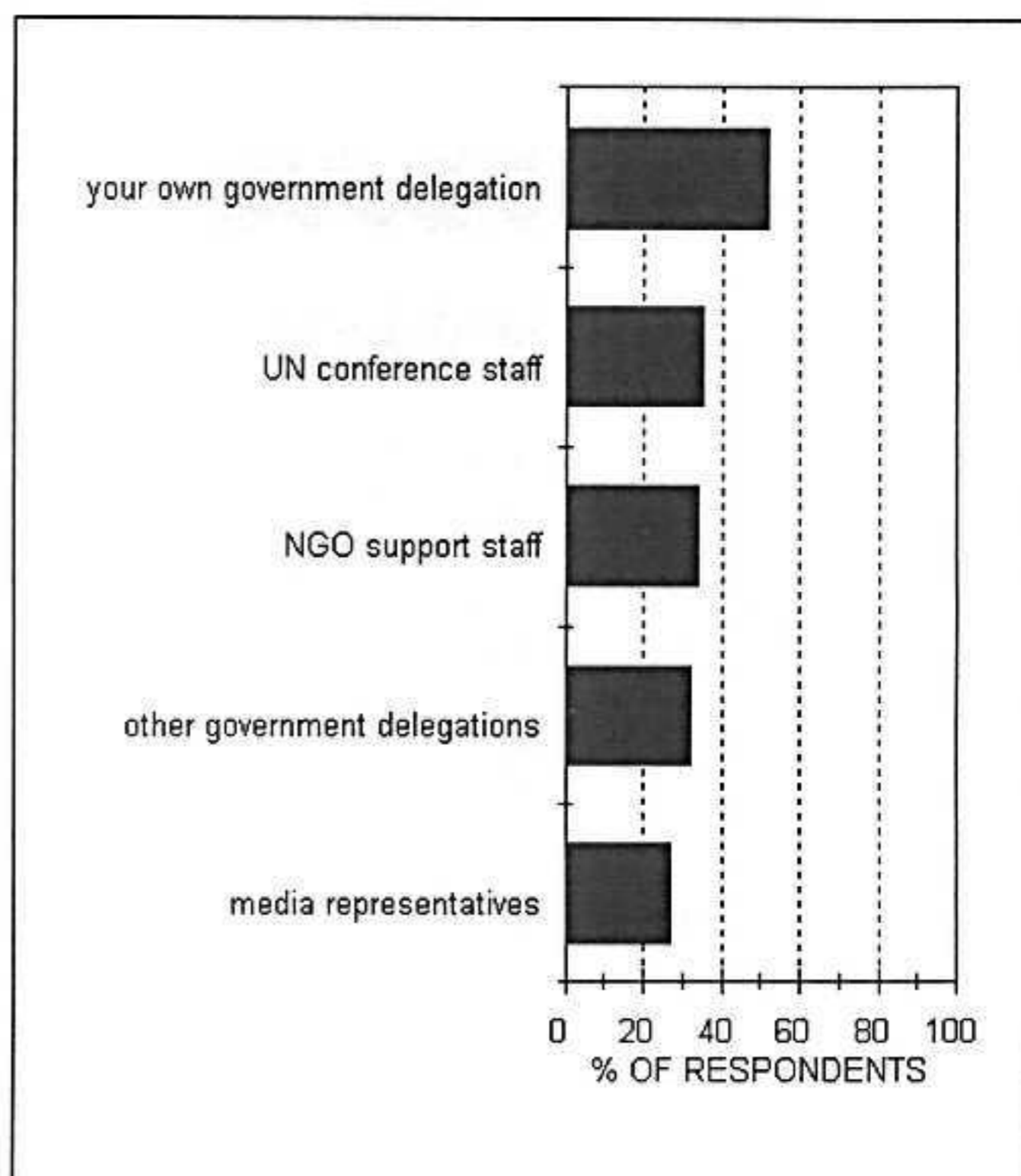
At intergovernmental events, respondents most need access to their own government delegation (52%). This priority far outweighed the next choices, and is a clear

indication of the NGO need to have the ear of their national government – despite the fact that they characterize themselves as international NGOs at international events. It is not clear whether respondents chose this option because they feel it is the most effective in the intergovernmental forum (it is the obvious choice of the lobbying model for national NGOs) or because they feel it is the most pragmatic. It is clear that this is the strategy of choice for developed country NGOs, who have the most experience and trust in the lobbying model of democratic participation: respondents from NGOs based in developed countries are relatively more interested in gaining unrestricted access to their own government delegation than respondents from developing countries.

It is a measure of the relative confidence of developed country NGOs that they have a stronger interest than developing country NGOs in access both to their own government *and* other government delegations.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, respondents in general are least interested in gaining the ear of other governments or the media, two direct channels of access to an international audience.

Access to NGO support staff and UN conference staff (34 % each) are second priorities at intergovernmental events, an indication of how important these nodes of

Figure 10. At official intergovernmental conferences, respondents most need unrestricted access to:



communication are to NGO participants at the intergovernmental forum. Respondents from NGOs based in developing countries exhibit a strong need for unrestricted access to NGO support staff. This is the largest deviation from the reference population.<sup>41</sup> In contrast to developed country NGOs that are trying to be heard by governments and have chosen a direct approach, the developing country NGO preference is strategically much weaker. At the intergovernmental conference, the most that good NGO support staff can do is help NGOs understand what is happening, where, and with what significance – a role that is probably better played by UN conference staff, whom developing country NGOs do not perceive as their first source for resources. This preference may suggest that developing country NGO strategies at the intergovernmental events are more passive than their developed country counterparts. It is a measure of the relative confidence of developed country NGOs that they had a stronger interest than developing country NGOs in access both to their own government and other government delegations.

#### *Variations within sub-communities*

- Women respondents report the more need than male respondents for unrestricted access to NGO support staff.<sup>42</sup>
- Respondents from large NGOs (over 10,000 members) have less interest in access to the NGO support staff than respondents from smaller NGOs.<sup>43</sup>
- NGOs in their 50s have a stronger preference for help from NGO support staff than their reference population.<sup>44</sup>

#### **Concluding observations**

Food and shelter are the most crucial for NGOs at international events. Although the need for cheap accommodation come more from developing than developed country respondents, the majority of all respondents indicate a strong need for cheap and healthy food. Despite the strong needs that the NGO community could be expected to have for access to communications technology to stay in touch with their home offices, when this is ranked against basic needs it was lower down the list. Among the several higher order findings of this survey, this elemental message should not be forgotten: government delegates to international confer-

ences have access to a range of resources that are hard to get for NGOs. There is uneven access to the playing field, and an uneven turf when NGOs get there.

Practical constraints for NGOs are serious. These kind of tangential issues distract NGO delegates. They result in a loss of time and/or a loss of focus and the depletion of already sparse resources. Some of these inhibitors can be more easily remedied than others. Pre-conference and conference information (for both the intergovernmental and the NGO conferences) is one clear requirement that could be met at relatively little additional expense. These are requirements similar to those governments would of the conference secretariat, and an infrastructure exists to party meet this need from NGOs.

On the NGO conference side, there is a strong sense from NGOs that they cannot locate other NGOs having similar political or thematic interests. As NGO fora have become more popular and are given more weight in the international policy arena, structures are being created at every conference that are unique. Although experimentation has some benefits, the lack of standardization may also hamper the abilities of some NGOs to achieve their goals. This is an area where there is presumably not a lack of will, but a lack of focus. The survey may be helpful in pointing out this priority at NGO conferences, and hopefully this need can be addressed by conference organizers in the future.

In general, NGOs propose the same communication methods for the NGO forum as for the intergovernmental forum: small group discussions, face to face meetings with individuals and document circulation. The strong preference for small group discussion is consistent with the message that the NGO forum is a place for NGOs to meet and share ideas and campaigns. It is interesting to contrast this with their perception that it is difficult to accomplish these at international NGO events. There are differences between the sub-populations in this arena. Once again, developing country NGOs favor passive communication (document distribution) more than developed country NGOs; and appear less interested in active communication (face-to-face communication) than developed country NGOs.

This is borne out in the final issue addressed in this chapter. When asked what group NGOs most need access to at the intergovernmental forum, most respondents stressed the need for access to their own government delegation. Developing country NGOs are less

interested in access to their own government than developed country NGOs. These distinctions between developing and developed country NGO perceptions and strategies need to be better understood.

Two major messages from this chapter concern inhibitors that are significant and will require major changes if they are to be improved: the UN conference format and patriarchy. The meaning of these findings is not immediately obvious. Each is too broad a criticism to be turned into a policy recommendation. Additional research could examine the way these obstacles work. For example, it would be illuminating to explore what alternate visions NGOs have for the intergovernmental conference format, or specific ways that a dominant culture of patriarchy could be mitigated.

### Chapter endnotes

(For variations within sub-communities it is of course possible that the observed differences between groups could be caused by statistical accidents. The footnotes below provide the probabilities that this is not the case. A 'p' value that is .0200 means that within a 98% confidence level it is possible to state that the differences are real and not caused by some statistical abnormality. The associations listed in the text have a confidence level of greater than 90%).

1. Questions 16m-16s
2.  $p = 0.0109$
3. Question 10i -10p
4.  $p = 0.0331$
5.  $p = 0.0003$
6.  $p = 0.0010$  and  $p = 0.0565$ , respectively
7.  $p = 0.0172$
8.  $p = 0.0049$ ,  $0.0002$ ,  $0.0066$ . and  $0.0000$  respectively.

9. Question 17g – 17k
10.  $p = 0.0001$
11.  $p = 0.0712$
12.  $p = 0.0005$
13. Question 9l – 9p
14.  $p = 0.0096$
15.  $p = 0.0093$
16.  $p = 0.0000$
17. Question 16a-16f
18.  $p = 0.0230$
19.  $p = 0.0764$
20.  $p = 0.0405$
21.  $p = 0.0030$
22. Question 10a-10h
23. Question 17a-17f
24.  $p = 0.0403$
25.  $p = 0.0002$
26.  $p = 0.0417$  and  $p = 0.0054$  respectively
27.  $p = 0.0552$  .
28.  $p = 0.0027$  and  $p = 0.0032$  respectively
29.  $p = 0.0489$
30. Question 9f-9k
31. Question 16g-16l
32.  $p = 0.0225$
33.  $p = 0.0764$  Figure 9. At NGO events, respondents prefer to convey their views to other NGOs by:
34.  $p = 0.0034$  Figure 9. At NGO events, respondents prefer to convey their views to other NGOs by:
35.  $p = 0.0486$  Figure 9. At NGO events, respondents prefer to convey their views to other NGOs by:
36.  $p = 0.0120$
37.  $p = 0.0090$  and  $p = 0.0168$  respectively
38.  $p = 0.0116$
39. Question 9q-9u
40.  $p = 0.0478$  and  $p = 0.09177$  respectively
41.  $p = 0.0003$
42.  $p = .00034$
43.  $p = 0.0754$
44.  $p = 0.0156$



## Chapter 3: Representativeness

### Introduction

From homeless people to human rights; Rotarians to right-to-life, international crime rings to wildlife protection, freemasons to fundamentalists: 'international NGOs' can represent a diverse collection of issues large and small, of organizations from all sides of the political (or democratic) spectrum. The claim they make at international events to represent their community or interest needs to be carefully explored.

There are many different types of non-governmental organizations which claim varying degrees of representativeness. A brief listing would include the following:

- NGOs that have an international political position that they seek to have reflected in the conference outcome. Some of these NGOs have formulated this position by a clear internal organizational system while others may have a formal process of policy making that involves the membership of the organization as a whole.
- NGOs with technical competence on a specific topic who, in the original conception of a non-government organization in the UN Charter want to share this expertise with governments, make little or no claim to representativeness.
- NGOs that wish to 'observe' international governments in action with the belief that transparency and openness are significant guarantees of honest decision-making. These observer NGOs, who were also recognized in the original UN Charter, generally do not have an explicit political objective for the meeting or event.
- Individuals who make it to international events and assert that their presence alone ought to be sufficient for them to be full participants in the conference and in its outcome. The nomenclature for NGO is interesting again. In many cases, individual NGO representatives declare, by way of introduction, 'I am an NGO.' While this is strictly speaking impossible – an individual cannot be an organization – the statement is indicative that, for some, the term 'NGO' denotes a perspective, a political or

philosophical affiliation rather than just an organizational one.

These diverse kinds of representativeness are confounding for the intergovernmental system that is looking for formal democratic indicators. This is further confused by the fact that the UN system has, at different times and in different circumstances, found ways to incorporate NGOs in all these ways. When it comes to formally and structurally incorporating NGOs into the international decision-making process, however, the diversity of claims to 'representative-ness' has inevitably been complex and controversial. One respondent to the survey noted:

The great question is representation and how global decisions can be best arrived at. NGOs do not really represent people, but then, governments don't either. This is a period of confusion, as a new global system of governance and of the organization of social life struggle to be born. NGOs have much to contribute, but may have their limits. We must think about how to introduce popular voices into the cacophony, not by rule, necessarily, but by creative new institutional initiatives.<sup>1</sup>

Does the NGO have a long-standing connection with a particular issue, or is a new, relatively unknown NGO? Does it operate in a visible fashion in the national or international arena, or is the NGO participant seen as a quiet but reliable source of advice? How does one determine which of the groups most truly represent the interests of those for whom they claim to speak? Is a large local organization more representative than a small one having a geographically diverse membership? What role does an organization's decision-making structure play in determining if it adequately represents members? What if the group represents components of nature and not persons? Each of these questions has an impact on how others perceive an NGO and what that NGO represents. The following insight was offered by a respondent:

It is nearly impossible to fill the survey in as an organization of NGOs working together for a UN conference. NGO's can be of the greatest importance but there is no 'standard' of the democratic

content of an NGO and it is not up to a government to decide which NGO is 'more democratic' or 'more official' than others. But of course that creates a situation in which 'ripe and green' can call themselves 'NGO' and speak on behalf of who knows what.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter examines the concept of representativeness through the lens of several of the survey questions: why do NGO delegates go to international events – what do they seek to accomplish as individuals and as representatives of their organizations? What are NGO objectives in attending official UN conferences? What or whom do they claim to speak for and how do they think other conference participants view their organization? Other questions in this survey also touch on this issue, but are included in other chapters. Of particular interest for this theme are responses to the questions of what authority respondents have to co-sign a final governmental consensus document and a final NGO declaration.<sup>3</sup> These questions appear in Chapter 5 under the discussion of decision-making capabilities.

## **Do NGOs and NGO activists take part in international events for the same reasons?**

### **Actors to influence**

#### *Summary of the issue*

The first issue the survey set out to examine is, why do NGOs go to international events? Who do they want to influence? After all, the decision to attend an intergovernmental event generally involves a political commitment and a considerable outlay of money. This decision is influenced by the motivation of the individual (the NGO delegate) as well as that of their organization, and those rationales may be different. At the conference their ability to influence governments and other actors may hinge on whom or what the person represents: a distinct organized entity, a loosely affiliated organization, or their personal technical competence. Accreditation and representation, however, would only become a concern when the NGO was officially interacting with governments and international agencies.

A series of questions were developed to determine the rationales and background for participation in intergovernmental events and, as a side result, the need to address this representation concern. For certain NGO

activities at intergovernmental meetings, the foundation of an organization would not be a concern. Therefore, respondents were asked to identify the two most important actors to influence at international events from the point of view of their organizations, from the following list:<sup>4</sup>

- own national government
- intergovernmental organizations
- governments in general
- other NGOs
- international media
- other

As a check to the above results, a second question posed a similar series of choices for the individual, not their organization. The survey asked, which are the two most important actors that the respondent personally wants to influence at international events?:<sup>5</sup>

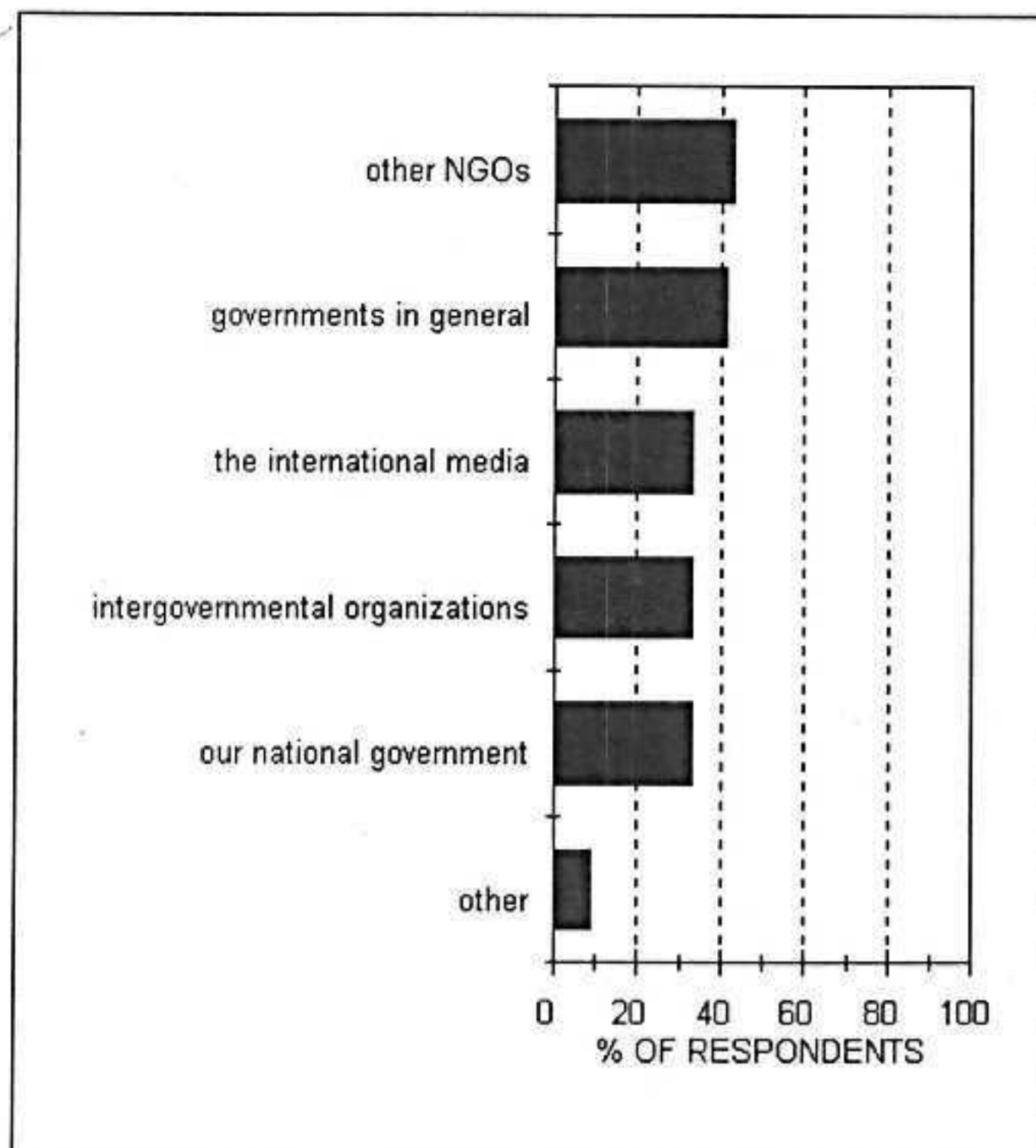
- their own government
- governments in general
- the international media
- intergovernmental organizations
- other ngos
- related professionals and friends
- other

#### *Major messages from the statistics*

A large number of NGOs are seeking to influence governmental entities, indicating that clarity must be reached regarding how NGOs represent their constituents. While 43% of the respondents believe that one of the two foci for their NGO is influencing other NGOs – an interaction where concerns about 'representation' has a different quality – 42% of respondents choose governments in general, 33% choose national government and 33% choose international organizations as one of the top two groups that their organization seeks to influence at international events. Thus, the NGOs seeking to influence the international political process are clearly using the international event to represent their message to governmental entities, and in this respect, their strategy parallels that of national governments – to use the international political process to deal with supra-national issues.

The lobbying strategy to influence governments at an intergovernmental event has a well understood out-

Figure 1. For my NGO, the two most important actors to influence at international events are:



come: an impact on the conference document and/or the international decision. This outcome is well understood in the lobbying model, by governments as well as NGOs, and has a legitimate concern regarding representation. Significantly, however, 43% of respondents identify influencing 'other NGOs' as their organizational strategy. In contrast, what is the strategic outcome of influencing other NGOs for the global civil governance model?

Clearly, the strategic choice to influence other NGOs occupies a great deal of NGO time and energy. Here, it is not as clear what activities are engaged in or what outcomes are sought. It should not be assumed that issues of 'representativeness' are moot in the NGO forum. They emerge frequently, for example, in conflicts within the NGO forum about the relative status of international NGOs with respect to grassroots Southern NGOs. Conflicts about representativeness within the NGO community are shaped by strong perceptions of uneven access to power and funding (see Chapter 2, figure 7). The international event has created a new opportunity for NGOs that didn't exist in any other forum: to meet and strategize with other NGOs. This kind of investment is clearly helping to hammer out a more coherent view of global civil governance. Issues of NGO representativeness are likely to become more

rather than less important as NGOs increasingly develop common statements at NGO fora and as global civil governance in general becomes more clearly defined and developed.

From their personal perspective, respondents strongly believe that the most important actor to influence is governments (59%). From their personal perspectives, it is also of importance to influence other NGOs and the international media, although these scored only 38% each. It is interesting that, wearing either their personal or organizational hat, respondents identify their target groups to influence as governments in general, and other NGOs.

It is intriguing that individual perceptions strongly favour influencing governments over influencing other NGOs, whereas their organizational strategies are far more diffuse. This may be a consequence of the question format: in the organizational strategies question, respondents could choose between influencing governments in general and influencing their home government. When only one choice was presented, more respondents may have made this selection.

In the analysis of the sub-communities, the strategies of influencing NGOs and influencing governments are similarly divided in both individual and organizational choices. Generally, developed country NGOs (in their personal and organizational capacities) favour influencing governments more than developing country NGOs, while developing country NGOs (in their personal or organizational capacities) favour influencing other NGOs. That developing country NGOs appear to be more interested in NGO relations needs to be better understood. Greater traditions of national democracy in developed countries has clearly given developed country NGOs greater experience, competence and trust in the lobbying model of democratic participation. As a result, developed country NGOs feel that they can 'represent' their issue or their organization to governments at intergovernmental events. Developing country NGOs may feel their capacity to speak to the intergovernmental conference is hampered by intra-NGO power structures. Some groups of developing country NGOs have made a strong argument that the question of who represents NGOs needs to be decided within the NGO community. At its most extreme, this perspective castigates developed country NGOs lobbying governments 'on behalf of' global NGO issues as paternalistic and perpetuating underdevelopment.

The honesty of the replies is apparent in that respondents differentiated between their personal and their organizational interest. For while individual NGOs give a high rank to their personal interest in influencing other NGOs; they rank higher their personal commitment to targeting governments as their prime actor to influence. It may be that on a personal basis activists see that they need to reach out and try to change governmental positions through effective lobbying but that organizationally the most beneficial role may be in building a long-term internationally linked citizen organization movement.

#### *Variations within sub-communities*

- NGOs based in developed countries are more likely than developing country NGOs to identify governments in general as the most important actors to influence at international events.<sup>6</sup>
- NGOs based in developing countries are more likely than developed country NGOs to identify other NGOs as the most important actors to influence at international events.<sup>7</sup>
- Respondents whose organizations were accredited by ECOSOC are more likely than non-accredited NGOs or NGOs accredited to another UN agency, to identify governments in general as the most important actors to influence at international events.<sup>8</sup>
- Respondents from organizations with memberships exceeding 10,000, more than organizations of other sizes, identify governments in general as the more important actors to influence at international events.<sup>9</sup>
- From a personal perspective, respondents from organizations based in developed countries are more likely to indicate that governments were the most important actor to influence at international events<sup>10</sup> than respondents from developing countries.
- From a personal and an organizational perspective, respondents from organizations based in developing countries are more likely to identify other NGOs as more important actors to influence at an international event than respondents from developed countries.<sup>11</sup>

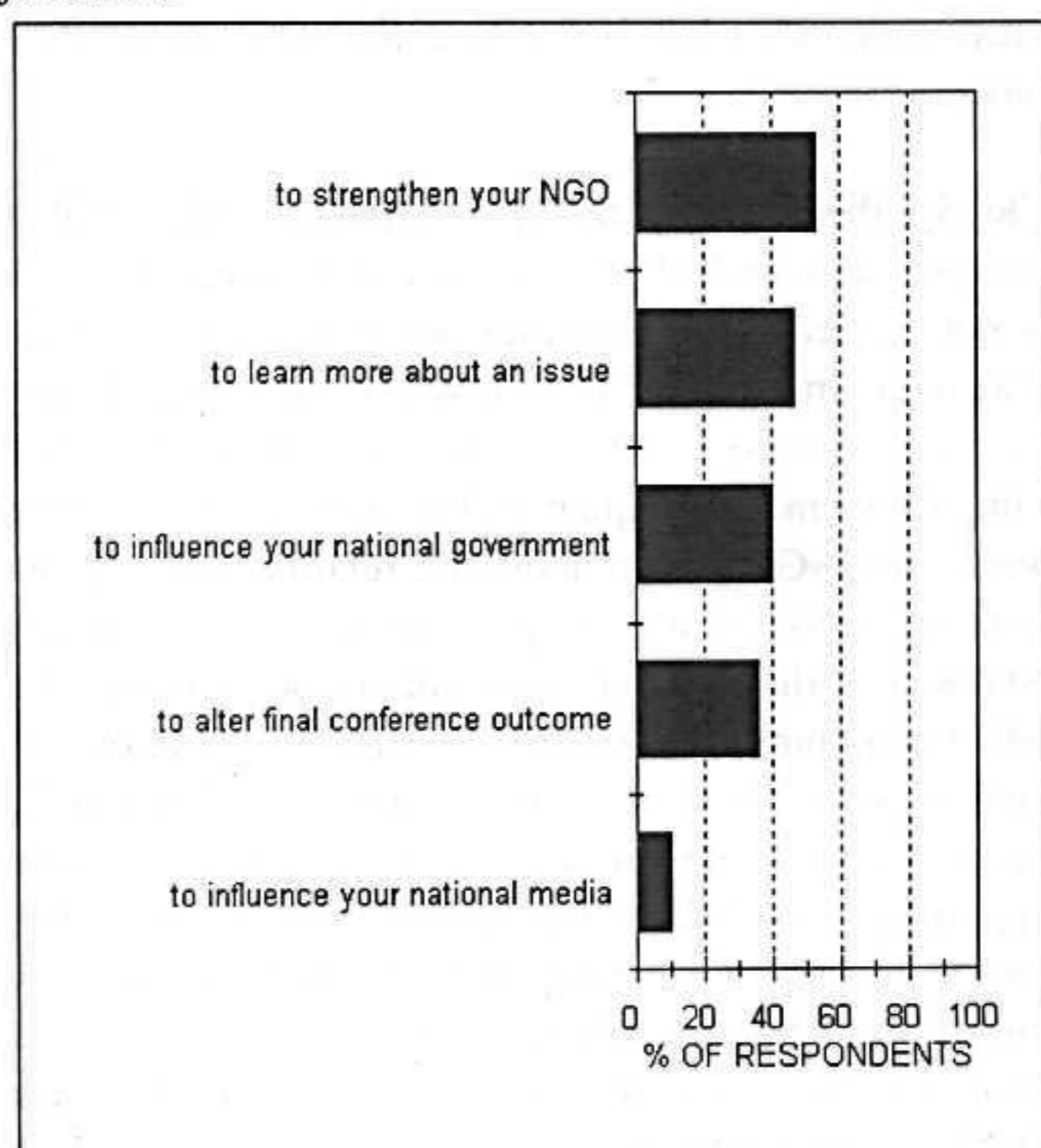
### **Objectives in attending**

#### *Summary of the issue*

A second subject area on the question of representativeness was, what are NGO objectives in attending official UN conferences? Although government, NGO, and other representatives go to international events to influence the outcome, there are in fact a plethora of other objectives that are pursued and/or accomplished at these events. Following the lobbying model, one might expect NGOs to work through their most obvious channel, their national government. However, as we have seen from the answers to the questions above, NGOs go to a range of international events with the aim of influencing both governments and other NGOs, and that there are crucial differences between NGO strategies and between developing and developed country NGOs. The objectives may also be influenced by the strength of their voice, as seen by others. What are NGO objectives at international events? The survey asked respondents to identify their two prime reasons for attending, from the following choices:<sup>12</sup>

- to influence your national government
- to influence your national media
- to strengthen your NGO

*Figure 2. Why do respondents attend official UN conferences?*



- to learn more about an issue
- to alter final conference outcome

### Major messages from the statistics

The responses to this question support the responses to the other questions in this chapter, but nevertheless they are surprising. The strongest reason given for attending an official UN conference is tangential to the conference focus – to strengthen their own NGO (52%). Learning more about an issue, chosen by 46%, is in the same category. It is not clear whether the intention is to strengthen the NGO in the eyes of governments or the NGO community. In any case, participation at a number of conferences on the same theme can give that NGO clout within the NGO community and helps build expertise and technical competence that may be valued by the governments.

The objectives in attending that are chosen less frequently are ones where representation does play a role: 'to influence their own national government (40%), and 'to alter the final conference outcome' (36%). Although the reason for going to international events may not involve official interaction with governmental entities, the previous question noted the general importance for NGOs of influencing them. Thus, the level of interest in attending an international event to strengthen the NGO was unexpected, particularly as it rated so much higher than the interest in influencing national government and altering the conference outcome. Some NGOs may feel that they have no hope of influencing governments or the outcome of major inter-governmental events – in part because governments do not know who or what they truly represent – but that they might be able to influence other citizens groups and build over time an international constituency reflecting their particular point of view.

From the point of view of the global civil governance model, however, a different interpretation can be made. It may be that a significant number of NGOs recognize in practice the growing citizen-based global governance process and are indicating in their replies a commitment to build this new informal decision-making network. If this is the case, then the international event needs to be recognized as one of multiple opportunities for NGOs, where NGOs come to represent a range of issues, and that NGO success or failure cannot be measured only against their impact on the actual intergovernmental conference result.

### Variations within sub-communities

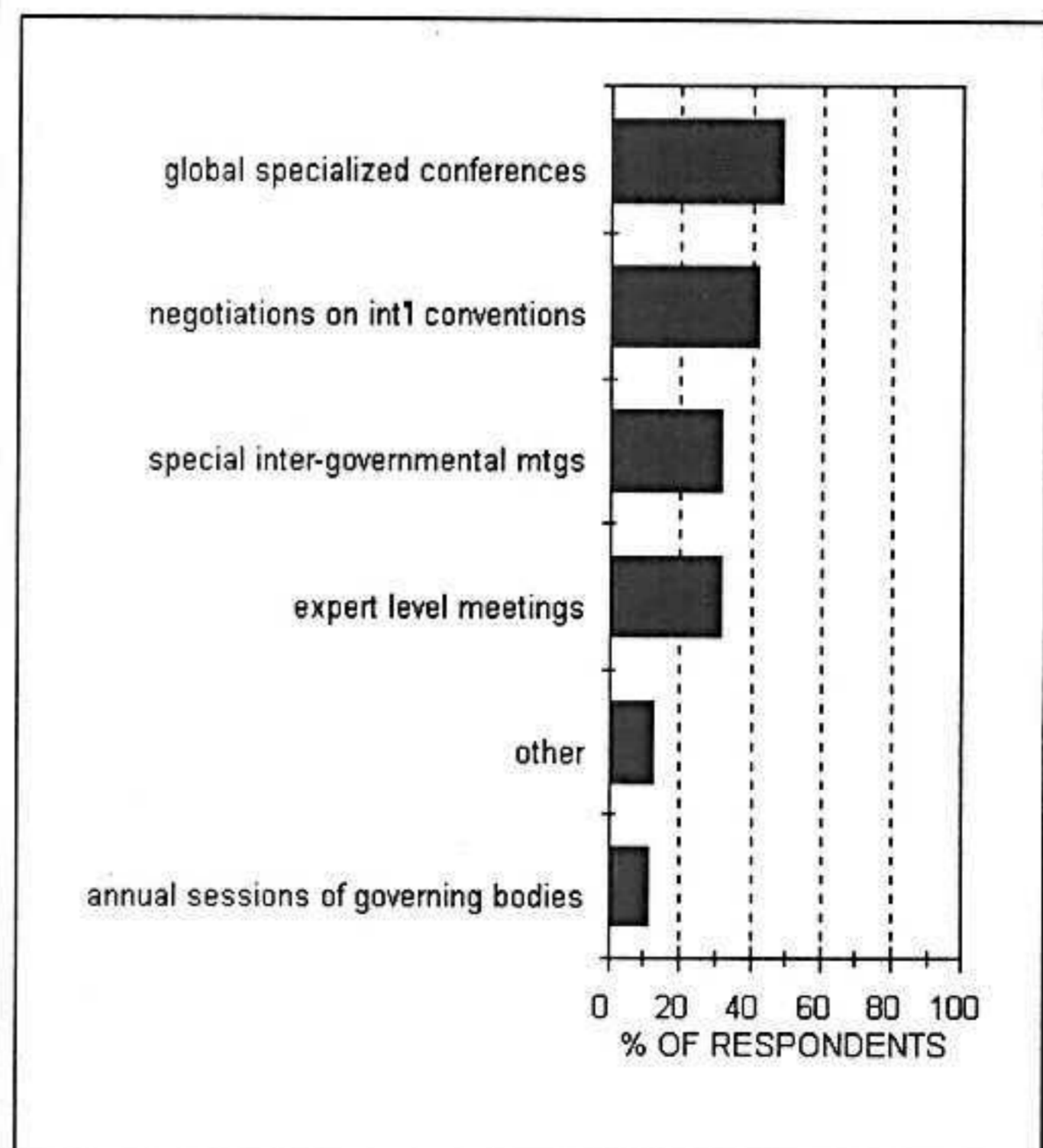
- Respondents from developing countries more than developed countries strongly indicate their reason for attending the official UN conference was to strengthen their NGO.<sup>13</sup>
- Individuals from organizations with 10–99 members strongly prefer to learn more about an issue.<sup>14</sup>
- There are no other significant variations in the other three sub-communities regarding their priority of attending UN conferences to strengthen their NGO or to learn more about an issue.<sup>15</sup>

### Events to attend

#### Summary of the issue

Which international events does the international NGO seek to affect? As above, the type of event chosen would depend in part on the goals of the NGO. Those operating as 'watchdogs' or having a voice on a specific subject might be more interested in meetings of decision-making bodies, while other participants might prefer participation in deliberative bodies where the message itself is more important than the strength of their

Figure 3. For my NGO, the two most important types of international events are:



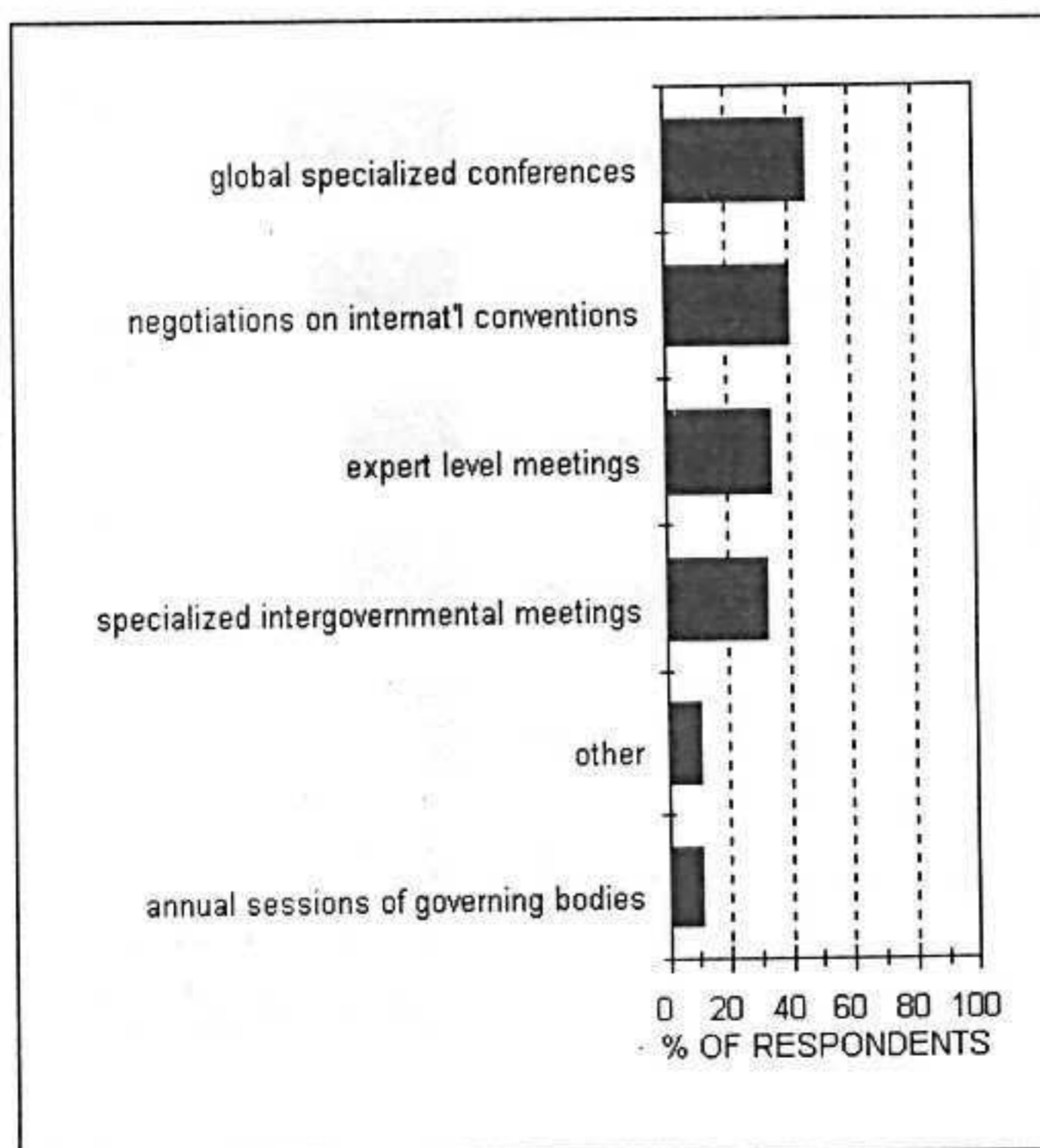
organization. Once again, the question separated out responses of the individual and the person as a representative of their NGO. The questionnaire asked for two priorities from the following list:<sup>16</sup>

- large global specialized conferences
- specialized inter-governmental meetings
- expert level meetings
- annual sessions of governing bodies
- negotiations on international conventions
- other

### Major messages from the statistics

Respondents views are that, for their organization, the two most important types of international events are large global specialized conferences (49%) and negotiations on international conventions (42%). The same preferences are found for themselves as individuals, where the two most important types of international events for are large global specialized conferences (45%) and negotiations on international conventions (40%). Specialized intergovernmental meetings and experts meetings are seen as somewhat less important, 30–35% for the individual and for the NGO. Annual sessions of governing boards is listed as among the top two by only for 10% of respondents, in part perhaps

Figure 4. Personally, the two most important types of international events are:



because NGOs do not have a history of gaining access to these types of events.

It is clear from practice that NGOs and individual activists show up in greatest number at international specialized conferences and at events where they may influence a concrete global outcome. And where there are likely to be more sister NGOs, these global specialized international conferences provide more occasions to accomplish multiple organizational and personal goals – particularly the strategic goal of influencing other NGOs identified above. These are also events where parallel NGO meetings allow participation even by those who have no standing to represent organizations before the deliberative body.

The impact of NGOs on the decision-making process may, in fact, be more limited than is hoped, as the respondents do not prioritize the expert meetings and the annual governing councils where the agenda and scope for larger international events is set. This result may be an artifact of the survey sample. It also could signify the fact that few NGOs feel they can participate in a decision-making process because they lack a process whereby they can truly represent their community in a negotiation.

### Variations within sub-communities

- Men (and men's perception of their own NGOs) give more priority to large global specialized conferences than women.<sup>17</sup>
- Respondents from developing countries have a higher interest than their developed country counterparts in participating in negotiations on international conventions.<sup>18</sup>
- Respondents from organizations who maintain memberships exceeding 10,000, more than respondents from organizations of different sizes, indicate that large global specialized conferences were important types of international event for their organizations to attend.<sup>19</sup>
- From a personal perspective, respondents from organizations with memberships exceeding 10,000, more than respondents from organizations of different sizes, feel that large global specialized conferences are important types of international events.<sup>20</sup>

- Respondents who attended their first international conference in 1995, more than respondents with greater experience at international conferences, personally feel that large global specialized conferences are important international events.<sup>21</sup>
- Respondents from developing country NGOs, more than respondents from developed country NGOs, identify negotiations on international conventions as an important type of international event.<sup>22</sup>

## Perceptions of representativeness

### *Summary of the issue*

The opening questions in the questionnaire itself examined perceptions of representativeness: who does the NGO claim to speak for and how do NGOs feel their claim to represent a given constituency is understood by other NGOs and governments.

These perceptions are a result of how the NGO projects its image to others during day-to-day operations in their home country as well as their interaction with other participants at a given meeting. Sometimes governments and other NGOs make stereotypes from their limited knowledge of a given NGO or generalize widely in characterizing a particular NGO representative. The NGO perception of how other NGOs and governments see their claim to speak on behalf of a constituency can be learned by listening to the observations made during the course of a meeting or reception. NGO views of how other NGOs and governments understand them can also be based on their own stereotypes of government officials and other NGOs.

These views effect an NGO's ability to lobby and to work with other NGOs when addressing civil governance concerns. If an NGO represents a narrow community or interest, it can be seen as unimportant. If it is overly-broad in scope, it can be accused of being unrepresentative. With the intent to see if representation is clear to NGOs and governments, the survey asked three interrelated questions regarding the persons or issues that their organization represented.

- At international events, who does your Organization claim to speak for?
- Who do you think other NGOs feel your organization speaks for?

- Who do you think Governments feel your organization speaks for?

### *Major messages from the responses*

#### **Whom do NGOs claim to represent?**

In the survey, most of the respondents made a broad claim to speak on behalf of a human or natural 'constituency'. Very generalized claims to constituencies are difficult to substantiate (see Box 1 for examples from respondents). The constituencies claimed are often ones that are marginal or under-represented in many countries. However well intentioned, governments, businesses, and other NGOs may find it difficult to engage

*Box 1:* Examples of overly vague claims to represent a human constituency by respondents.

«poor women»  
 «the oppressed»  
 «rural population»  
 «children»  
 «civil society»  
 «peasants»  
 «youth and nature»  
 «immigrant workers»  
 «people of the world»  
 «the old»  
 «the workers»  
 «the excluded»  
 «students»  
 «tenants»  
 «ordinary citizens»  
 «unemployed people»

in direct negotiation with NGOs who make such broad claims. The NGO involved cannot refer back to the membership of the constituency for guidance, cannot agree or disagree with certain specific language for that constituency and cannot arrange for the constituency to do any follow-up actions. Even more importantly, there is no clear way to resolve differences in views between two NGOs that each claim to 'represent' an equally broad constituency.

**Box 2:** Examples of claims to represent 'Nature' by respondents.

«Wild Nature»  
«Nature»  
«Cetaceans (Whales & Dolphins)»  
«Animals»  
«Migratory Birds»

Often this situation seems to occur for two reasons. The first is when an NGO is at an international event seeking to focus more attention on certain issues affecting people, and discovers that there are not 'official' spokespeople for such issues at the conference. To gain visibility for that constituency, the NGO 'self-appoints' itself as a spokesperson for the broad constituency. A second possible explanation is that small NGOs may wish to project a larger political base in making its points with key government or UN officials in order to feel on a more equal political basis. In these circumstances, the primary goal may be quite singular: to gain a positive reference in the conference text to their particular issue placed in a text, for use in a national political context. A qualitatively different type of broad generalized claim to representativeness is when a NGO declares it speaks as humans on behalf of 'Nature' (see box 2 for examples from the respondents). 'Nature' can be seen as represented by governments when it is a natural resource within the territory of the country or within the bounds of the 200 mile exclusive economic zone. There are, however, aspects of 'Nature' that are not effectively covered by any state claim, e.g. marine mammals in international waters, ozone layer of the atmosphere, and the earth's core below the crust. There are also aspects of 'Nature' which may be under state jurisdiction, but NGOs see them as inadequately represented by official delegations, e.g. Antarctica; biodiversity, and migratory birds. Some of the NGOs attending international events see themselves as human spokespeople for these 'natural constituencies'. These NGOs, while they clearly lack any direct accountability, have played key roles as articulate representatives of 'Nature' in intergovernmental fora. These NGOs are making claims to representativeness that can make negotiations difficult but need to be accepted on their own unique merits.

Other respondents make the opposite claim to a constituency. They defined themselves extremely precisely

and in a limited form (for examples from the respondents see Box 3). These claims are generally that the respondent represents a specific organization and its members. These claims to representativeness by the respondents are clear to other NGOs and governments. However as international agreements drafted by intergovernmental bodies are generally written, it is sometimes difficult to know how to incorporate these specific, very narrow claims of constituencies in the final document. At the same time such clear claims to representativeness provide a way for the NGO delegate to confirm agreement with the relevant constituency, to seek the advice and guidance of the constituency during the negotiation process and to make an undertaking that the constituency will follow-up on the decisions of the conference.

### **Whom do others think the NGO represents?**

A majority of those who participated in the survey responded to all three questions – whom do they represent, whom do other NGOs think they represent, and whom does Governments think they represent – with the same answer. They saw no distinction in how they or others saw their organization. On the surface, this might suggest that they have been extremely successful in broadcasting their claim to represent a given constituency in a clear and consistent manner.

**Box 3:** Example of clear focused claims to constituencies by the respondents

«The Philippine Cooperative Movement»  
«Alternative Development Initiatives»  
«United Church of Christ»  
«NGOs in Aotearoa, New Zealand»  
«Consularies & Consular Assn»  
«Ecuadoria Committee on Human Rights»  
«Anglican Church»  
«International Council on Archives»  
«World Federalist Union»  
«Rotary International»

In fact, the replies from the NGOs with broad, vague claims to human constituencies suggest the opposite: NGOs so want to be seen as legitimate representatives of the an overly broad community they presume that



governments and other NGO accept their claim to represent-ativeness. This is probably the source of the greatest difficulties for governments and international organizations in working out a procedure for effective consultation.

A second group of respondents provided some important examples of the differences in perception between the NGO itself, the NGO as seen by other NGOs and the NGO as seen by governments. This difference in per-

ception between the two groups can cause significant difficulties for NGOs trying to work with governments and other NGOs. Within this second group, there were two major areas of difference.

First, some NGOs saw themselves as representing specific issues but felt that governments dismissed their identities either by generalizing their constituency or by seeing them as speaking as individuals not an organized group (See Box 4 for examples from respondents).

**Box 4:** Examples from respondents of differences in perception regarding constituencies

NGO claim to a constituency	NGO perception of other NGO view of their to constituency	NGO perception of government view of their constituency
The entire human race	Peace educators everywhere	Just the members of the organization
the oppressed	the masses	ourselves
evicted people	same	poor people
Africa	same	NGO's
Its members	its members	a vague image of «NGO's «
People of Pakistan	For our local people only	For ourselves!
world public opinion	large sectors of national opinion	some individuals
Platform of Dutch NGO	myself	couple of groups and individuals
Rural women	same	nobody
ourselves only	same	no one
grassroots women	same	a small sector of population
Older people	same	I don't think they know we exist.
Indigenous Aborigine	Aborigine	nothing
Minorities		

This form of differentiation may be directly attributed to the very broad claims for representativeness discussed earlier in this section. One can perhaps sympathize with governments that perceive an NGO claiming to speak on behalf of 'the entire human race' as 'just members of the organization.'

As noted earlier, the broad constituencies which NGOs claim to represent are generally under-represented in national political fora and even more under-represented at global conferences. At the same time the global parliamentary fora can provide some leadership in how to operate more inclusive decision-making processes.

The second group of NGOs that reported differences between their claim to representativeness and their perception of how governments and other NGOs viewed

them generally felt that governments stereotyped them as left-wing or communist (See Box 5 for examples from respondents). Negative sloganing against advocates of change is not new. In many of the major national democracies there is currently an upsurge in such forms of public attack. While delegations and foreign affairs spokespeople seldom engage in such public attacks on NGOs, NGOs are sensitive to this message from government officials.

These responses show the significant differences between NGOs and their ability to work at or influence international meetings and negotiations. Some NGOs want their broad issues to addressed or want their general opinions heard, while others claim to have specific expertise and are available to give advice to governments, and perhaps to NGOs.

**Box 5:** Examples of political stereotyping in the differences in perception by respondents

NGO claim to a constituency	NGO perception of other NGO view of their to constituency	NGO perception of government view of their constituency
Psychology & its research Education/Communication marginalized people NGO's in Aotearoa, NZ People in the grassroots the grassroots Peace civil society ordinary citizens only our research institute Workers and peasants	– Economic & Social Development women / the poor delegated by them grassroots people same – democracy same academics progressive organization	Left wing Psychologists Opposition to the government by solidarity leftists non – government activists the left minority groups Communism anarchy opposition groups leftist academics for anarchy and disorder

### Concluding observations

'Representativeness' is fundamental to democracy. Fifty years ago, the assumptions of the UN architects was that governments were fundamentally representative of all citizens, but right from the start they created rules and procedures to facilitate international decisionmaking that included NGOs who were recognized as authentic, longstanding 'representatives' of citizens' issues.<sup>23</sup> Continuing over the past several decades, NGO groups have represented international issues that fall outside the province of governments, either for practical reasons – because they transcend the nation state (like the environment) – or for political ones, because the NGO represents an anti-government position, for example, human rights NGOs protesting the activities of certain governments.

NGOs have clearly played a major role in framing supra-national issues, and in both these cases could claim a 'representative' status equal to or more than governments. In these cases, the assumption of the UN about representativeness and the democratic process have been legitimately questioned.

NGOs are clearly not representative in the same way as government are -- and it may be inappropriate to require that they be so. NGOs that try to prove they are representative in the classic sense may find that they play on

the sidelines of two major fields of play: the UN on the one hand, and the movement toward a new model of democratic global civil governance on the other.

The issue of representativeness is a crucial question in formulating a new set of ECOSOC rules and procedures. A single UN policy for NGOs will fail to recognize the diversity of NGOs and the diversity of some of their claims to representativeness. The issue also is crucial for NGOs in understanding their efforts to create a new form of civil governance. This issue needs careful fleshing out before new rules and procedures are adopted. ECOSOC and the NGO fora need to create a multi-faceted NGO policy that reflects different types of claims to representativeness. In addition, governments and the United Nations should recognize that NGO activists have their own agenda at international events that only partially overlaps with that of the official conference.

As the survey results were being reviewed, it became clear that this issue of representativeness was only partially addressed in the questionnaire. In the future, additional surveying might be done at a range of inter-governmental events to develop more clearly the claims to representativeness by individual NGOs and how those claims could be more fully and honestly recognized by the international system.

## Chapter endnotes

(For variations within sub-communities it is of course possible that the observed differences between groups could be caused by statistical accidents. The footnotes below provide the probabilities that this is not the case. A 'p' value that is .0200 means that with a 98% confidence level it is possible to state that the difference are real and not caused by some statistical abnormality. The associations listed in the text have a confidence level of greater than 90%).

1. Respondent is Director of a non-membership UN monitoring group, with 2 years active in the international NGO community (No.285)
2. Respondent is president of an organization that 'represents NGOs', with 23 years active in international NGO community. (No.136)
3. Questions 14 and 21 in the survey.
4. Question 7a
5. Question 7c
6.  $p = 0.078$

7.  $p = 0.0182$
8.  $p = 0.0009$
9.  $p = 0.0859$
10.  $p = 0.0007$
11.  $p = 0.0039$
12. Questions 9a -9e
13.  $p = 0.0292$
14.  $p = 0.0074$
15. Question 9a -9e
16. Questions 7b and 7d
17.  $p = 0.0141$  and  $p = 0.0657$  respectively
18.  $p = 0.0182$  and  $p = 0.0001$  respectively.
19.  $p = 0.0106$
20.  $p = 0.0035$
21.  $p = 0.0271$
22.  $p = 0.0005$
23. Dorothy Robins, *Experiment in Democracy: The Story of U.S. Citizen Participation in Forging the Charter of the United Nations*, Parkside Press, New York, 1971.

## Chapter 4: Perception of NGO impact on conference outcomes

### Introduction

In the last few years, international NGOs have had a dramatic success in bringing global issues to the attention of the UN. It was NGO activity that catalyzed governments to consider issues of global environment, population, social development and women. If their contribution to international conference *input* is indisputable, what impact do NGOs perceive they have on the *results* of an international event? Depending on the orientation of the NGO, an NGO might see success as affecting the internal activities of the intergovernmental conference (e.g. altering the final communique), the external perception of a issue or conference (e.g. changing the media focus on an issue), their national domestic political landscape (e.g. getting their Government to pay attention to an issue), and/or the international support and network NGO structure (e.g. finding other foreign NGOs who share their political enthusiasms). The diversity of successful outcomes for NGOs is really quite remarkable.

For governments, intergovernmental conferences and meetings are framed by a formal set of goals and objectives based on an earlier intergovernmental decisions or, sometimes, the recommendations of the sponsoring international organization. Government too have a variety of national and/or ministerial goals and outcomes that can define an event as 'successful'.

For many NGO parallel meetings, there are often a series of small planning meetings that attempt to define a constructive outcome for the NGO event. Although many important operative decisions are made prior to the actual meeting, NGOs can – and believe they can – have an impact on the meeting outcome.

Persons attending international UN and NGO meetings must be able to present their message and have that message heard, weighed, and – in some cases – acted upon. Airing opinions is a key component of democratic process. Therefore, meetings must allow for substantive inputs by persons who did not have insider access during the planning stages of the meeting. If all important decisions are made prior to the conference, the opinions of outside participants are neither heard nor adopted; thereby reducing the level of success nec-

essary for participants to justify future allocation of time and money to the issues.

This chapter explores this self-evaluation of a successful conference outcome in a number of ways. The opening question in the survey asked respondents for an overview judgement of how successful they perceived their actions were and how much they believed governments were incorporating their input. A series of questions than asked respondents about how they judged success at intergovernmental and NGO conferences and how they planned to build on their accomplishments after they left the conference site.

This chapter focuses not on the activities *per se*, but on a sense of accomplishment from the activities undertaken: the purposes behind them, efforts to lobby and operate within the existing structure and efforts to work within the emerging civil governance mechanism.

### How are we doing? Are we being heard?

A key goal for most persons attending international events is having a certain message heard and adopted by others. In presenting the message, participants may be representing themselves, or acting as a surrogate voice for groups of people or for aspects of nature. Most do not lobby in their capacity as individuals, though personal reputation can have a significant influence on the effectiveness of their message.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, the survey started off with some broad-based questions seeking to get respondents' general impressions of whether their issues are 'heard at international events.'

Respondents were asked if they believe the voices of civil society, of nature, and of the respondent's NGO in particular – are being heard at international events<sup>2</sup>. Respondents were given an informal scale of one to five, with 1 as 'well', 3 as 'so-so' and 5 as 'awful'.<sup>3</sup>

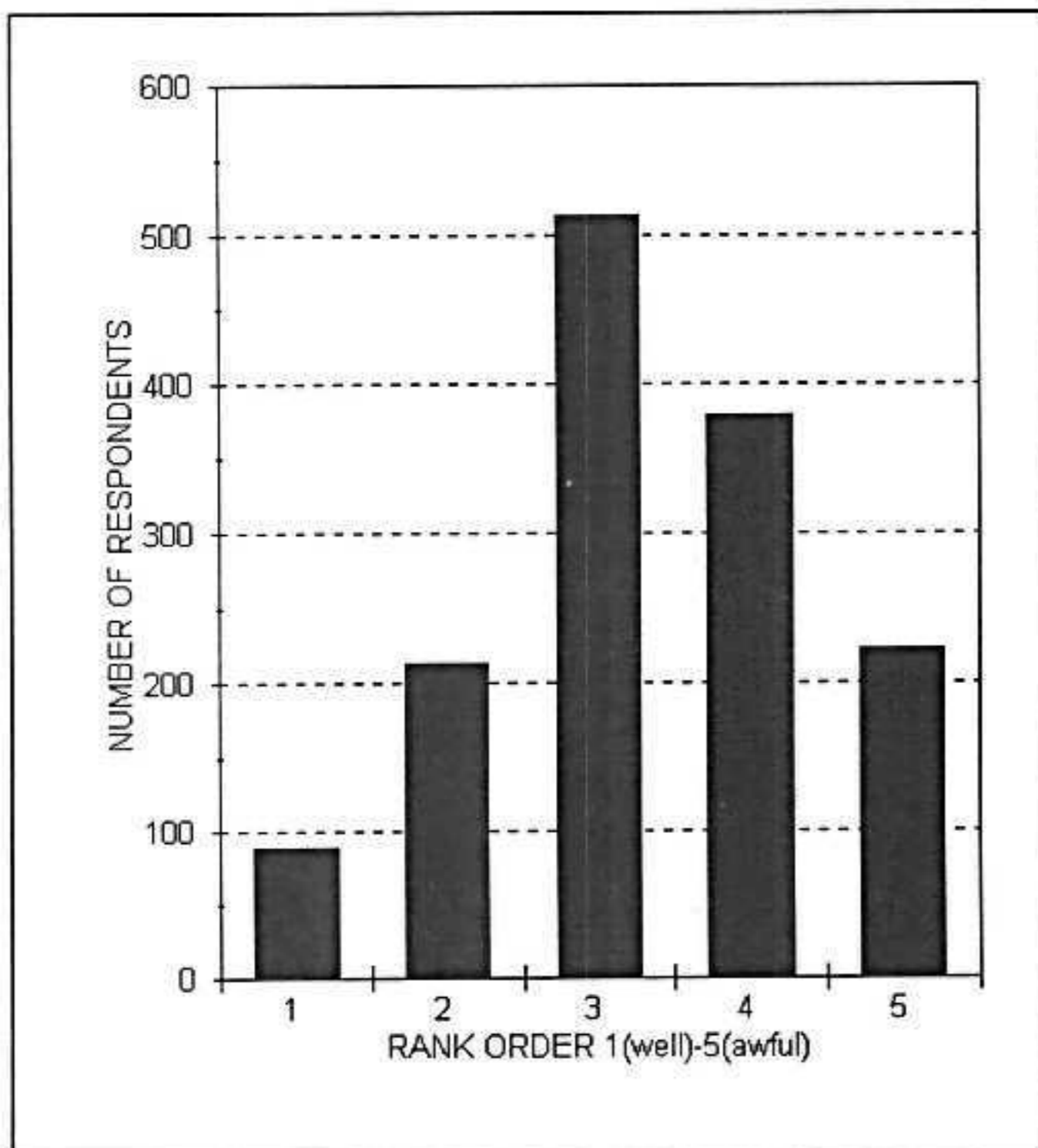
Respondents were then asked if, in their perception, governments believe they hear the views of the 'people', the views of 'Nature', or the views of the individuals NGO. Respondents were given the same informal scale with 1 as 'well', 3 as 'so-so' and 5 as 'awful'.<sup>4</sup> The question was also designed to capture the differences NGOs may see in how they judge their own

performance at international events, versus how they see the concerns of the people of the world, or of Nature, are taken into account.

*Major messages from the statistics*

NGOs believe their voices are not well heard at international events.<sup>5</sup> Further, they believe that governments think that they are more attentive to NGO issues than NGOs think they really are. Respondents have almost exactly identical average judgements to the three questions on how are *peoples* voices heard, how well *Nature's* concerns are heard, and how well they are heard. On the one-to-five scale, each of these questions have a means of nearly 3.3: a sound 'so-so' judgement.<sup>6</sup> At the same time respondents reply with almost exactly identical average judgements to the three questions on how well they believe governments are listening. With a remarkable consistency (average score of 2.7<sup>7</sup>), respondents give a nearly 20% more positive appraisal of the process from the government point of view. NGOs clearly express the view that they believe that governments think that people/nature/their NGO are being listened to, far more than NGOs judge they actually being heard.

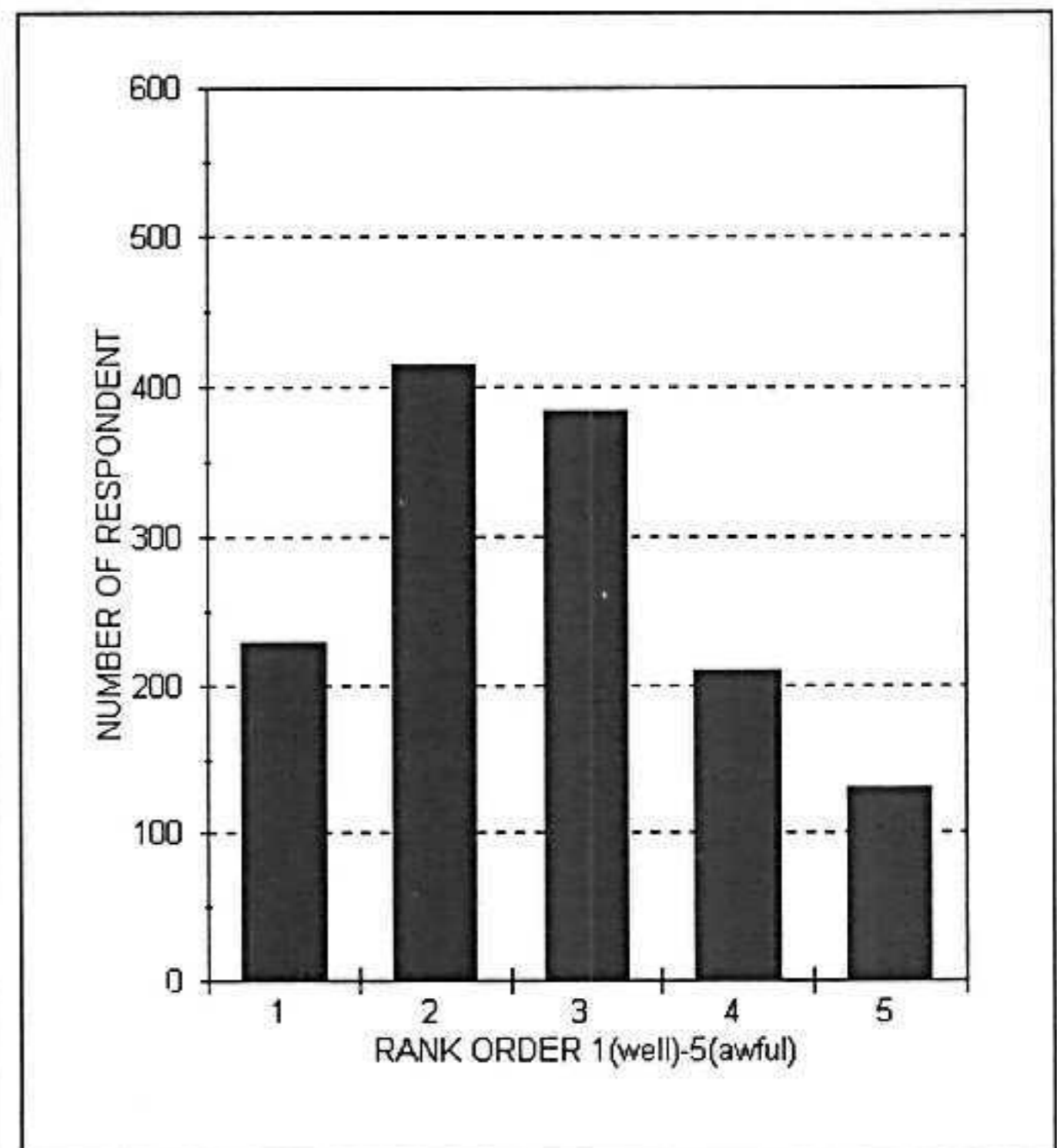
Figure 1. Do Governments think the voice of the 'people', Nature', and NGOs is heard?



In general respondents believe that governments are complacent: that they claim to hear NGO issues, but don't. Further, that when they do 'hear' NGOs, they hear a general cacophony but not a particular voice. NGOs think that governments understand them as a general and rather undifferentiated group, whereas they believe that they are often quite specific in their areas of focus. This supports the NGO perception reported in Chapter 3, that governments see NGOs as general, progressive or radical forces – too broadly focused to be representative; or only representing a few individual spokespeople.

There is no major difference in this broad perception between any of the independent demographic variables.<sup>8</sup> All the independent variables show a clear split between the scoring for the first three questions and the scoring of the last three questions. For some sub-communities there is a difference of emphasis within each of the two three question groups. There is a contradiction here in how NGOs position themselves. In Chapter 1, the point was made that NGOs do make broad claims to representativeness. While they may perceive this as having some strategic advantage, it could be confusing to the UN conference procedures and perhaps to governments.

Figure 2. Is your voice, the voice of the 'people', and 'Nature' heard at international events?



### *Variations within sub-communities*

- Women consider the concerns of 'Nature' are heard by governments, more than men do.
- Compared to those from developing countries, respondents from developed country NGOs feel more strongly that governments think the voices of all constituencies, peoples, 'Nature', and NGOs are heard.
- Respondents whose organizations are ECOSOC accredited, more than non-accredited NGOs, perceive that all NGO voices are heard by governments.
- Respondents from organizations whose membership ranged between 10–99 consistently indicate that peoples, 'Nature', and NGOs voices are less well heard by governments, compared to the perceptions of respondents from other sized organizations.
- Respondents less than 30 years old are less likely to perceive that the voices of the peoples, 'Nature', and themselves are heard at international events, compared to older respondents.
- Respondents less than 30 years old and more than 60 perceive that governments are more likely to hear the voices of the peoples, 'Nature', and themselves compared to those aged 30–60.
- Respondents who attended their first international conference before 1970 are least inclined, compared to respondents of different levels of experience, to perceive that the voice of the peoples, 'Nature', or themselves are heard at international events.
- Respondents who attended their first international conference during the 1980s perceive more strongly than groups with different levels of political experience, that the voices of people, 'Nature', and their own voice are heard.
- Compared to groups with other levels of experience, respondents who first attended an international conference during the early 1990s have the smallest perception that governments hear the voice of the people, 'Nature', or NGOs.

### **Accomplishments from participation at inter-governmental events**

#### *Summary of the issue*

Participants have a number of ways to gauge their impact on a conference. Some successes are more readily measurable than others. NGO representatives return home with business cards, each one the material representation of a new contact in the governmental or NGO community. They might have added, or helped to add, specific language to the final conference text. They may have influenced the media or the public.

In the survey, participants provided information on what, in their view, makes a successful conference by responding to a series of yes/no questions. Some of these choices were issue oriented (was success determined by changes in the development of an international issue) and others were process oriented (was success seen as building relationships for future activities). These measures are indicative of the person's or organization's means of operation, be it in the lobbying model or civil governance model. At the intergovernmental forum, participants were offered six possible measures of success:<sup>9</sup>

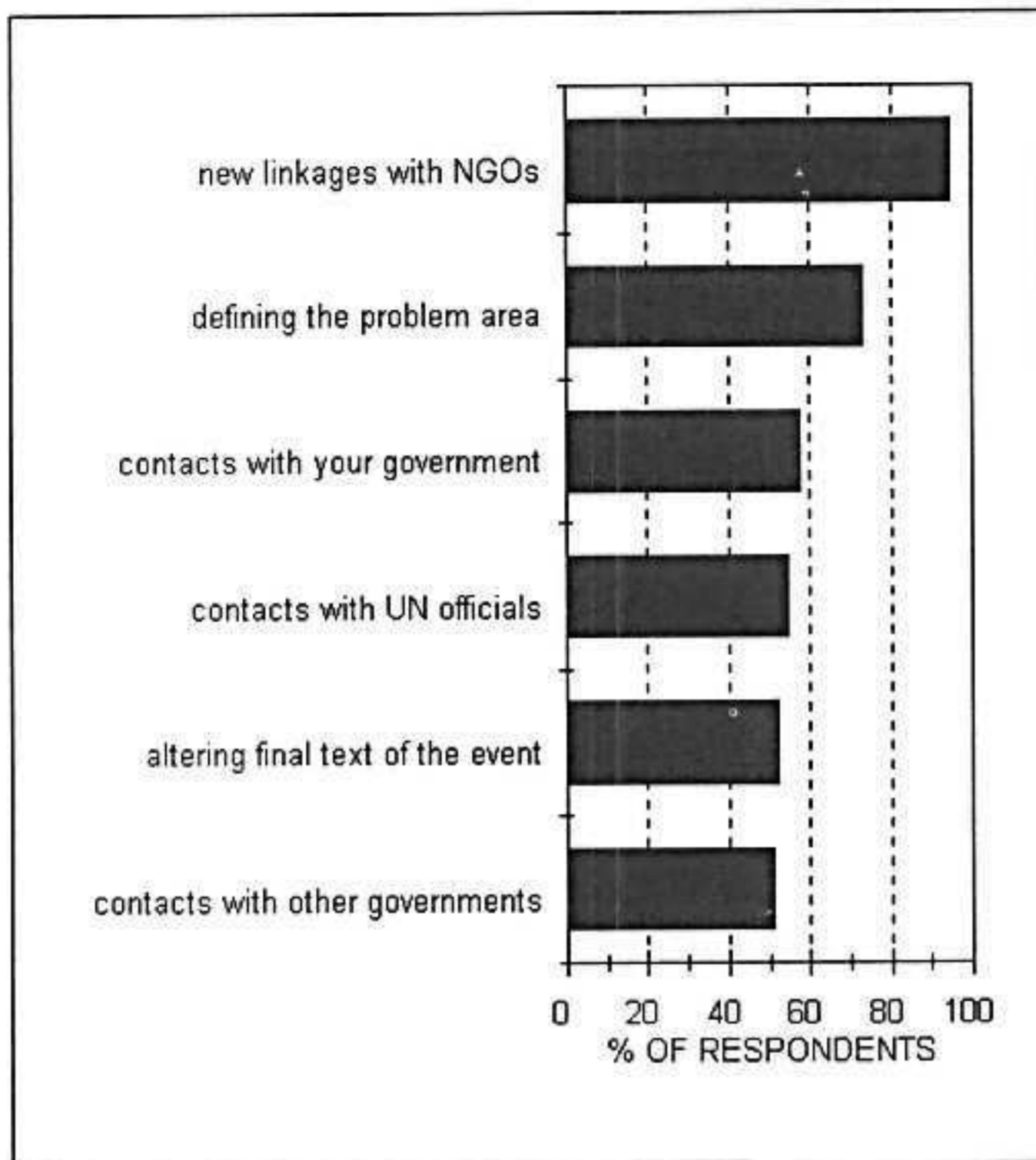
- defining the problem area
- altering the final text of the event
- contacts with their government
- contacts with other governments
- contacts with UN officials
- new linkages with NGOs

#### *Major messages from the statistics*

On process-related successes, linkages between and among NGOs and governments are needed both for lobbying purposes and for establishing a foundation for global action programmes apart from traditional governmental activities. The statistics demonstrate that the respondents are very aware of the need to coordinate activity in order to have a more positive impact on the meeting or conference. Respondents are most pleased by their success on the process oriented results. They feel they had the strongest impact in establishing new linkages with other NGOs at UN conferences (94%).

Furthermore, 58% of respondents believed they are successful in making contacts with their national government, a good reflection of the strength of the national

Figure 3. After intergovernmental conferences, respondents generally feel pleased by success in:



lobbying model. At the same time 51% are pleased with the contacts their established with other governments, an almost equally good reflection of the development of a new form of civil/governmental governance. It is reassuring to see that a 50–60 percent of NGOs feel that they are successful in achieving their goals through meetings and contacts with government officials.

Of the respondents, 55% are pleased with their contacts UN officials. As UN officials can often be a primary source of information on the intergovernmental process or have a significant affect on the definition of an issue, it is also encouraging to see that just over half of the respondents feel satisfied with their working relationships with the secretariat.

In the case of both contact with governments and contact with the secretariat it may be important to pursue why 40 to 50 percent of the do not feel that they had developed a successful relation with one of the key constituencies. In addition, the data in Chapter 2 reveals that access to UN staff in intergovernmental conferences is a strong need for NGOs.

Regarding their sense of success with issue-oriented goals at intergovernmental meetings, respondents are most pleased by their success in defining the problem

area (73%). However some 20% less (52%) feel successful in altering the final text. As representatives of interest groups, NGOs work toward getting their own concepts and proposed solutions accepted in the international agenda. This data suggests that NGOs are far more satisfied with setting the terms of debate and creating the recognition of a international problem than with the specific solutions that come out of the intergovernmental process. This reflects a reality. Environment, social development, and women's movements are global themes and their related conferences were catalyzed by the NGO movement, not governments. While the international NGO movement is deeply aware of its role in framing global problems, it also must operate despite its lack of capacity to affect specific solutions within the UN process.

#### Variations in sub-communities

- Male respondents are more pleased than female respondents by their contacts with other governments and their contact with UN officials.<sup>10</sup>
- Respondents from NGOs in developing countries are more pleased than respondents from NGOs in developed countries by their contacts with other governments and their contact with UN officials.<sup>11</sup>
- Respondents from medium sized NGOs (membership 100–250) are more pleased than respondents from any other sized organization by their success in altering the final text of the event, by contacts with their government, by contacts with other governments, and by contacts with UN officials.<sup>12</sup>

#### Accomplishments from participation at NGO events

##### Summary of the issue

As strategies at the NGO forum are less structured and less well understood in comparison to an intergovernmental conference, the survey asked where participants felt their greatest impact lay. The choices included a range of options to cover issues relating to lobbying and to civil governance. The possible areas of impact were:<sup>13</sup>

- in networking with other NGOs
- on their national media

- on potential fundraising contacts
- on other NGO's views
- in future official conferences
- on the public

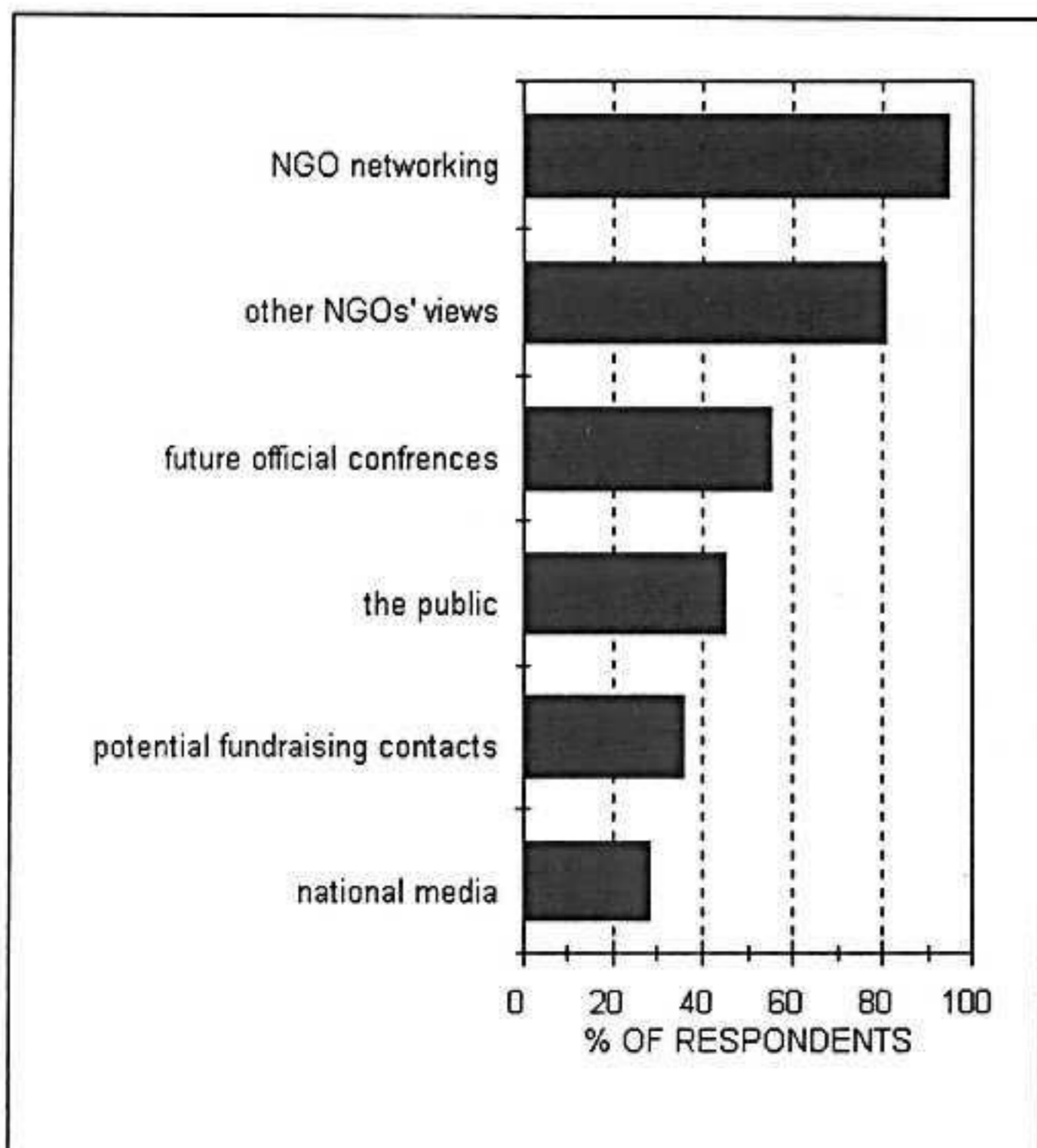
The survey also offered respondents five areas where they could measure success. Since NGOs play a leadership role in these meetings, the options were different from those offered for intergovernmental meetings. The five possible measures of success were as follows:<sup>14</sup>

- defining the scope of problem
- helping to word a common NGO text
- contributing strategies to impact the official conference
- setting future NGO work plans
- setting the structure for future NGO linkages

*Major messages from the statistics*

Figure 4 shows that in assessing potential impacts of their efforts at NGO conferences, the respondents focus on their ability to network with NGOs (95%) and to influence the views of NGOs (80%). These two choices rank far higher than the other options in this question. By far the largest impact of NGOs is felt to be on other NGOs.

Figure 4. After an international NGO conference, respondents generally feel their biggest impact was on:



Regarding success, NGOs are most pleased in their ability setting structures for future NGO linkages (80%). These replies suggest a strong effort by NGOs in working toward alternate mechanisms separate from the existing governing structures, especially since only 67% feel successful in contributing strategies to impact the official conference (see figure 5).

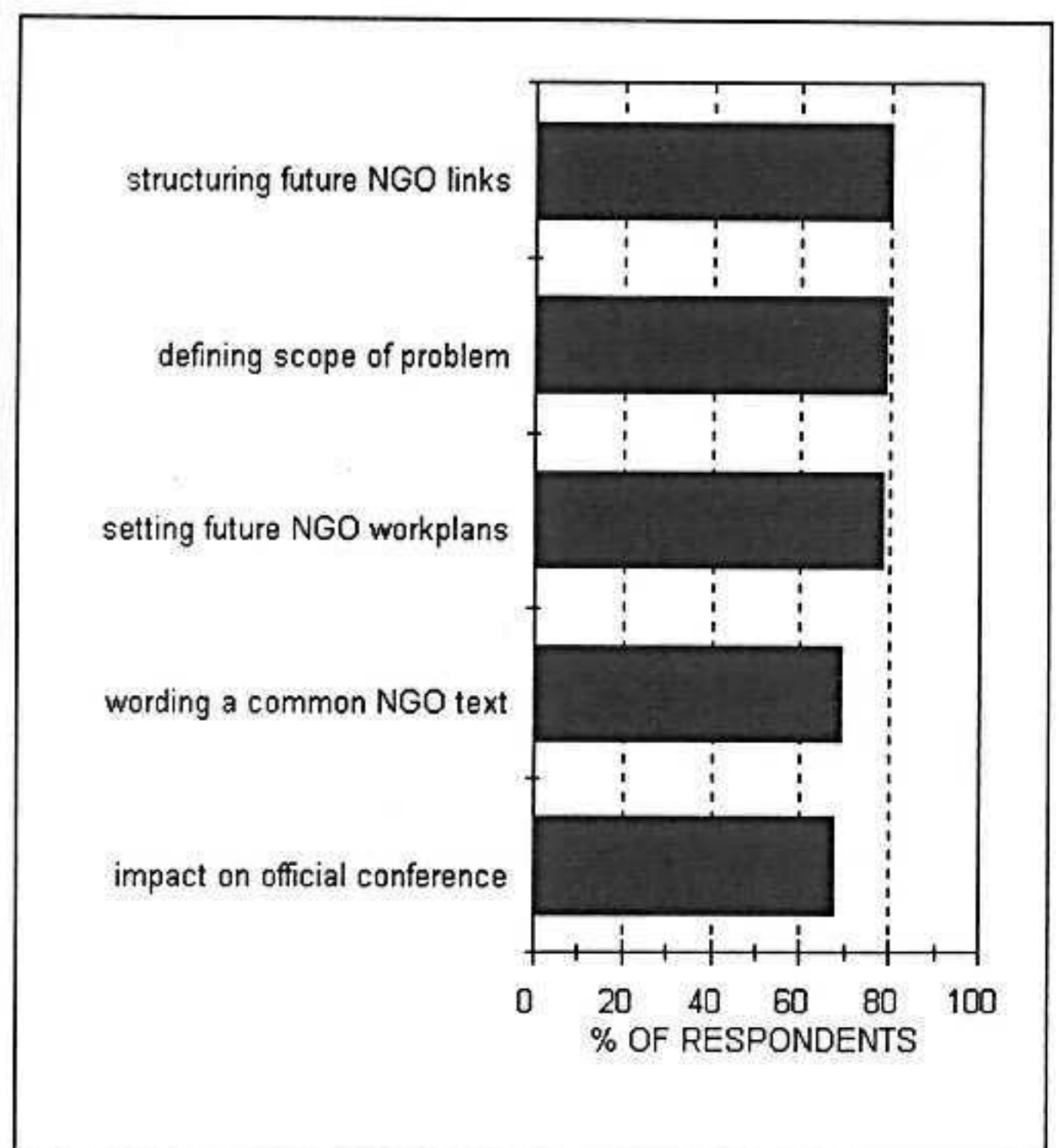
Over three-quarters are pleased by efforts toward setting future NGO workplans (78%). Despite the interest in cooperation and planning, only 69% are pleased by success in helping word a common NGO text. Unlike the established procedures for drafting and negotiating an official intergovernmental text, the NGO texts generally are produced by ad-hoc groups. It is, in fact, surprising that so many NGO participants are positive about their ability to participate in NGO texts.

*Variations within sub-communities*

re: their biggest impact

- Women more than men feel their biggest impact in networking with other NGOs.<sup>15</sup>
- Men generally feel they had a bigger impact on the public than did women.<sup>16</sup>

Figure 5. After an international NGO conference, respondents generally feel pleased by success in:





- Respondents from developing countries feel more than respondents from developed countries that their biggest impact is on their potential fundraising contacts, on other NGOs' views, in future official conferences, and on the public.<sup>17</sup>
- Respondents from the largest NGOs (over 10,000 members) feel less impact on potential fundraising and least successful in setting the structure for future NGO linkages than respondents from NGOs of other sizes.<sup>18</sup>
- Respondents from medium-sized NGOs (membership 100–250) feel less impact on their national media than did respondents from NGOs of other sizes.<sup>19</sup>
- Respondents who attended their first international conference between 1990–93 generally feel they had made a larger impact in all areas compared with any other group. Respondents whose first international conference was in 1995 generally feel they had made the least impact in all areas compared to the other groupings.

are: being pleased by their success

- There are no significant variations across the gender sub-community.
- Respondents from developing communities generally feel more pleased than their counterparts in developed countries by success in helping to word a common NGO text, contributing strategies to impact the official conference, setting future work plan, and setting structure for future linkages.<sup>20</sup>
- Respondents from non-accredited NGOs feel less pleased in defining the scope of the problem than respondents from ECOSOC accredited NGOs and NGOs accredited to other UN agencies<sup>21</sup>
- Respondents who attended their first international conference between 1990–993 generally feel more pleased by success in all areas compared with any other group. Respondents who attended their first international conference in 1995 generally feel least pleased by their success in all areas compared to the other groupings.

## **Post-conference activity: what do NGOs hope to do at home**

### *Summary of the issue*

Attending an intergovernmental conference can give many participants a 'high,'. This feeling is brought back to their home base, providing a stimulus for further action. During the conference itself, lobbying efforts and other activities are conducted with the knowledge that followup activity will be necessary after the close of the conference. Thus, the anticipated conference outcomes provide direction during the meeting itself, while the final results provide a framework for post-conference activity, be it in cooperation with or in opposition to governments and/or other organizations.

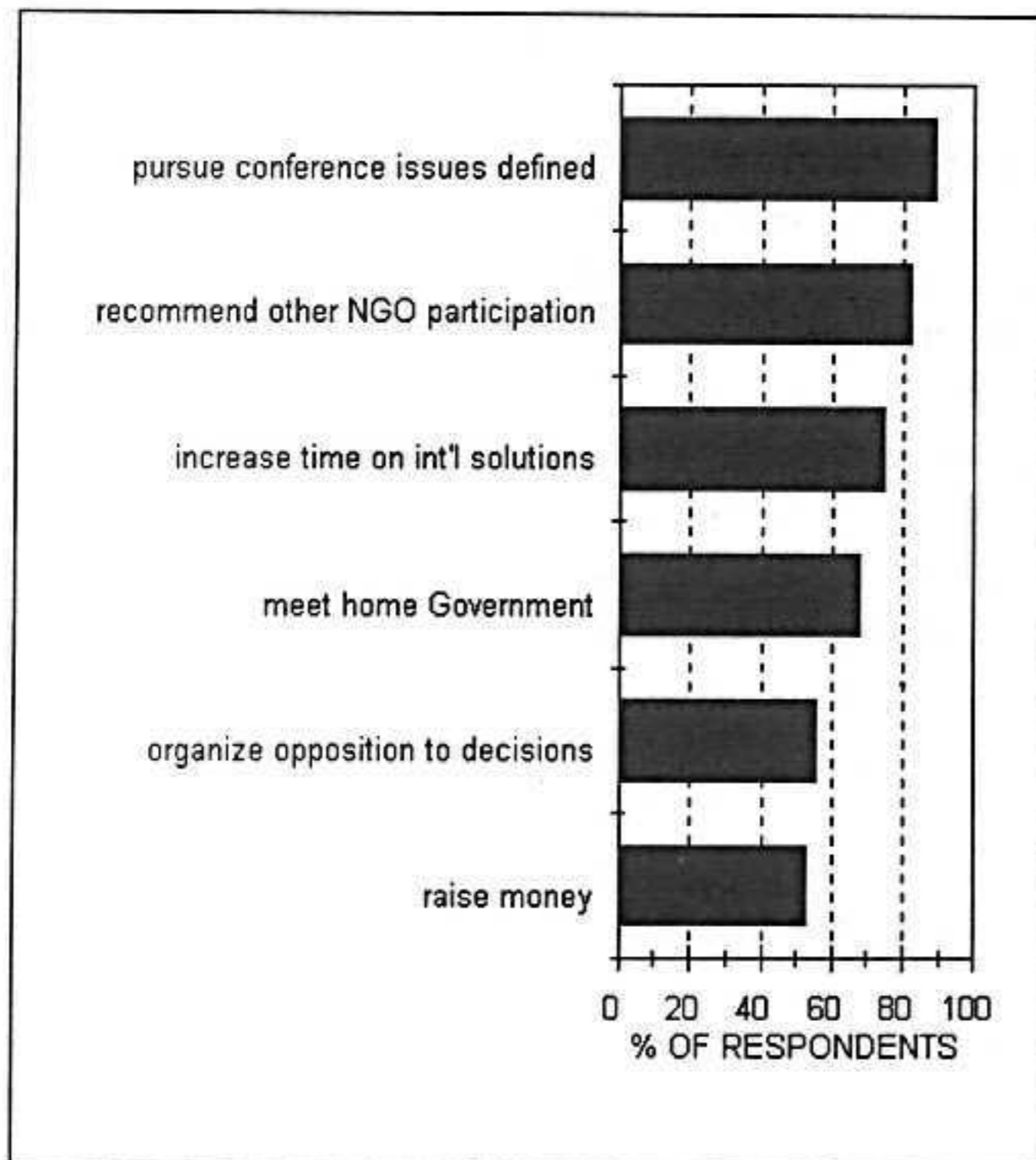
From among a set of six options of possible follow-up action, respondents were asked to reply yes/ no to those that they plan to undertake after a conference. The survey did not take into consideration possible barriers to such action; therefore, some 'no' replies may be a function of inability to do so, not a lack of interest in that type of follow-up. These followup activities were offered:<sup>22</sup>

- meet your government at home
- raise money for the next conference
- recommend other NGOs participate in future conferences
- increase your time on international solutions
- pursue issues defined at the conference
- organize opposition to the decisions

### *Major messages from the statistics*

Nearly 90% want to pursue issues defined at the conference and 82% would recommend that other NGOs participate in future conferences (see figure 6). The activity that might arise from pursuing issues could range from national and international research to lobbying and campaigning. The recommendation that other NGOs attend future conferences is consistent with a significant wish expressed in Chapter 5 to increase the numbers of NGOs at these conferences, particularly new NGOs. Increasing the amount of time dedicated to seeking international solutions was chosen by 75% of the respondents, even though only half say they are stimulated to raise money for the next conference. Arranging a meeting with government officials in their home country is identified by 68% of respondents, but it is not known if this meeting would focus on cooperative or confrontational action.

Figure 6. After intergovernmental conferences, respondents generally feel stimulated to:



Just over half (56%) of the participants say that they are motivated to organize opposition to the decisions of the intergovernmental conference. This may reflect a feeling that the main mechanism for NGO input is through the use of negative advertising as a means of steering the debate. NGOs, nevertheless, strongly believe that participation followed by ongoing work and lobbying of home governments is beneficial to the organization, its staff, and their mission.

#### Variations within sub-communities

- Respondents from developing countries are particularly stimulated to recommend raising money for the next international conference.<sup>23</sup>
- Respondents from developed country NGOs are more inclined than developing country NGOs to organize opposition to the conference decisions.<sup>24</sup>
- Those respondents representing smaller organizations (membership ranging from 10–99) are less stimulated to raise money for the next conference while respondents from organizations with 100–250 members are more stimulated to raise such funds than other sized organizations.<sup>25</sup>

#### Concluding observations

A very high number of respondents feel that they 'got something' out of their participation in the international process. The strong recommendation to bring other NGOs to the conferences serves to emphasize how important this sense of accomplishment is. NGOs are positive about the 'conference experience'. This is a very remarkable outcome considering the amount of anxiety and criticism of the 'uselessness' that has often been directed to the UN system and international conferences.

Moreover, there is a large disparity between the strong capacity NGOs have to put a global issue on the intergovernmental agenda and their limited capacity to influence the issue when it gets there. This must be highly frustrating. Nevertheless, NGOs feel positive about their success at international conferences. Whereas success for a government delegate may be measured against their influence on a specific conference text, NGOs measure 'success' more broadly.

In order of magnitude, the primary arena where NGOs feel 'success' is in working with other NGOs, not with governments or international agencies: 94% of respondents say that their biggest impact at the intergovernmental conference was in new linkages with other NGOs; 95% feel that their biggest impact at the NGO conference was in networking with other NGOs. The strongest priority for work after the conference is to pursue the issues defined at the conference (92%) and to recommend that other NGOs attend future conferences (82%), above meeting their government or organizing opposition (68% and 56% respectively).

This is quite intriguing. International organizations and governments organize major governmental meetings that are attended by NGOs, who in turn feel that their biggest success is not with the sponsors of the intergovernmental event but with the citizen groups who also came to the same conference event. Research could usefully be undertaken to examine in more detail how international conferences, with all their detailed planning and logistical difficulties, are providing a forum for the development of an alternative concept and system of global civil governance.

Additional research could explore several additional ideas. Given the feeling of success from contact with NGOs, why do they appear hesitant to creating an NGO decision-making policy body at international events?

Research could examine the extent to which NGOs build on contacts developed at international events to support their own organizational agenda, find related NGOs as useful links for their own organization, and how momentum is maintained for NGOs between international events in their areas of interest.

### Chapter endnotes

(For variations within sub-communities, it is of course possible that the observed differences between groups could be caused by statistical accidents. The footnotes below provide the probabilities that this is not the case. A 'p' value that is .0200 means that with a 98% confidence level it is possible to state that the difference are real and not caused by some statistical abnormality. The associations listed in the text have a confidence level of greater than 90%).

1. This phenomenon of prominent leaders, acting together or separately, is prevalent in governmental and nongovernmental arenas. See Kennedy Graham, 'Leaders concerned with the greater good: prominent individuals in action,' paper presented to the conference, Non-governmental Organizations, the United Nations and Global Governance, 10–11 April 1995, York University, Ontario. Sponsored by the Academic Council on the United Nations System at Brown University and the Centre for International and Strategic Studies.
2. Question 1a – 1f
3. Question 1a – 1c
4. Question 1d – 1f
5. Rating of 3.23 to 3.34 on a scale of 1–5 for Q1a-c.
6. The means to two significant figures for Question 1a was 3.34; for Question 1b 3.23; and for Question 1c 3.34
7. The means to two significant digits for Questions 1d was 2.75; for Question 1e 2.75; and for Question 1f 2.58.
8. Response of participants showed no significant differences (all  $p > 0.1000$ ).
9. Question 11a – 11f
10.  $p = 0.0012$  and  $p = 0.0030$  respectively
11.  $p = 0.0002$  and  $p = 0.0000$  respectively
12.  $p = 0.0539$ ,  $p = 0.0334$ ,  $p = 0.5660$  and  $p = 0.0070$  respectively
13. Question 18a -18f
14. Question 18g – 18k
15.  $p = 0.0396$
16.  $p = 0.0091$
17.  $p = 0.0000$ ,  $0.0016$ ,  $0.0387$ , and  $0.0151$  respectively.
18.  $p = 0.0169$  and  $p = 0.0009$  respectively
19.  $p = 0.0228$
20.  $p = 0.0006$ ,  $0.0001$ ,  $0.0004$ , and  $0.0009$  respectively
21.  $p = 0.0724$
22. Question 11g – 11i
23.  $p = 0.0070$
24.  $p = 0.0670$
25.  $p = 0.0541$  and  $p = 0.0376$  respectively

## Chapter 5: Towards new structures for democratic participation

### Introduction

The international NGO process gradually is having an impact on the creation of an alternate system for global civil governance. Previous chapters examined the numerous potential barriers to effective participation by NGOs in international events and the assessments of outcomes of international events by NGOs. This chapter explores what choices NGOs would make if they could create a more democratic structure for both intergovernmental meetings and NGO international conferences.

Out of the diverse community of NGOs, some are clearly more interested in creating a new structure for global civil governance. Those NGOs committed to the international lobbying model may be reasonably satisfied with the basic structure of the intergovernmental system, if they have sufficient access to their own government. Those NGOs most interested in new structural relations may be those addressing inherently 'global' issues such as biodiversity, feminism, climate change, sustainable development, poverty and non-military solutions to global problems.

In recent years there have been a number of innovative, experimental formats for conference decision-making. The Norwegian Government hosted in 1990 the ECE regional preparatory meeting on sustainable development in preparation for the Rio conference. This conference in Bergen, Norway, experimented openly with a new consensus format between major social groups. The Bergen Conference Committee authorized separate preparations by five different social sectors: government, business, youth, labor, and environmental NGOs. In a marked departure from any prior or subsequent event all five sectors were given equal weight in drafting the final Bergen Conference text. Before Bergen, each sector had at least one preparatory meeting. During the Bergen Conference each sector continued a series of parallel meetings. Under an agreed procedure, a limited number of representatives from each sector 'negotiated' a common consensus text covering a number of the major pre-Rio issues. The negotiation structure allowed ample opportunity for 'representatives' of each sector to make sure that the other sectors knew their views in an open discussion process. While the feeling from the immediate participants was that this process was ex-

tremely conducive to consensus building, none of the other pre- or post-Rio conferences adopted this approach.

Several other recent intergovernmental conferences have also experimented with new structural arrangements to engage government representatives with NGO representatives in innovative formats. Amongst the approaches used are: a separate evening forum for a Government-to-NGO dialogue; a series of government sponsored receptions for NGO participants and sometimes vice-versa; and briefing sessions by governments for NGOs informing the NGOs of the day's informal and off-the-record consultations.

In order to continue with this experimental approach, the survey posed a number of questions seeking to understand the degree to which NGOs were self-consciously aware of creating a new mode of governance and the degree to which NGOs are evaluating, even in an *ad hoc* fashion, internal decision-making and coordination at NGO sponsored events. In drafting the questionnaire, the authors assumed that the existing UN and NGO conference process are not perfect and that most respondents would have criticisms or suggestions for change. The questionnaire posed a series of options designed to elicit views on alternative structural arrangements, on the ability to sign a final communique, and on the types of democratic activities NGO would undertake if they had additional resources.

### Enhanced participation

#### Alternative structure arrangements

##### *Summary of the issue*

ECOSOC-accredited NGOs have certain limited rights to participate in the intergovernmental component of a conference or meeting. They can distribute position papers through the UN's distribution channels along with official documents, can attend all open plenary sessions of ECOSOC or its committees, and may be invited by the chair of a meeting to address the session. In the past five years, non-accredited NGOs and NGOs accredited to other UN agencies have been able to distribute their

publications to delegates through an informal display table and have been asked on occasion by meeting chairs to express their views to the plenary sessions.

Any proposed restructuring must consider the reasons behind the existing system. The procedures and format of UN conferences are determined by parliamentary procedure, protocol and tradition, leading to a fairly formal conference structure with potentially significant barriers to entry even for smaller national delegations. Some changes to the intergovernmental process as it relates to NGO participation could be undertaken with ease. Other changes to the intergovernmental process could be much more involved as they may affect what some governments consider their rights and obligations.

This component of the survey asked participants how they would restructure the format of UN conferences so that the meetings could involve all delegations and NGOs in a more democratic structure. It then asked similar questions regarding restructuring of NGO alternative conferences. In each case, the selection of alternative arrangements offered were practical short-term choices, not theoretical and speculative options. This may have limited some important long-term replies from respondents or hindered the expression of their grander structural re-alignment recommendations.

As a means to broaden participation in intergovernmental conferences, survey participants were asked to select the top two most important changes they would select from the following:<sup>1</sup>

- have NGOs as regular members of official delegations
- have small work groups of delegations and NGOs within the official conference
- host off-the-record pre-conferences between NGOs and government delegations
- arrange daily Government-NGO sessions to review proceedings and to hear NGO views
- form a consensus between Government/ NGO/ Business/ Youth/ Labor (the Bergen Model)
- vote in NGO plenaries for a common citizen's position before governments debate an issue
- use video conferencing to broadcast the meeting to your home office
- other

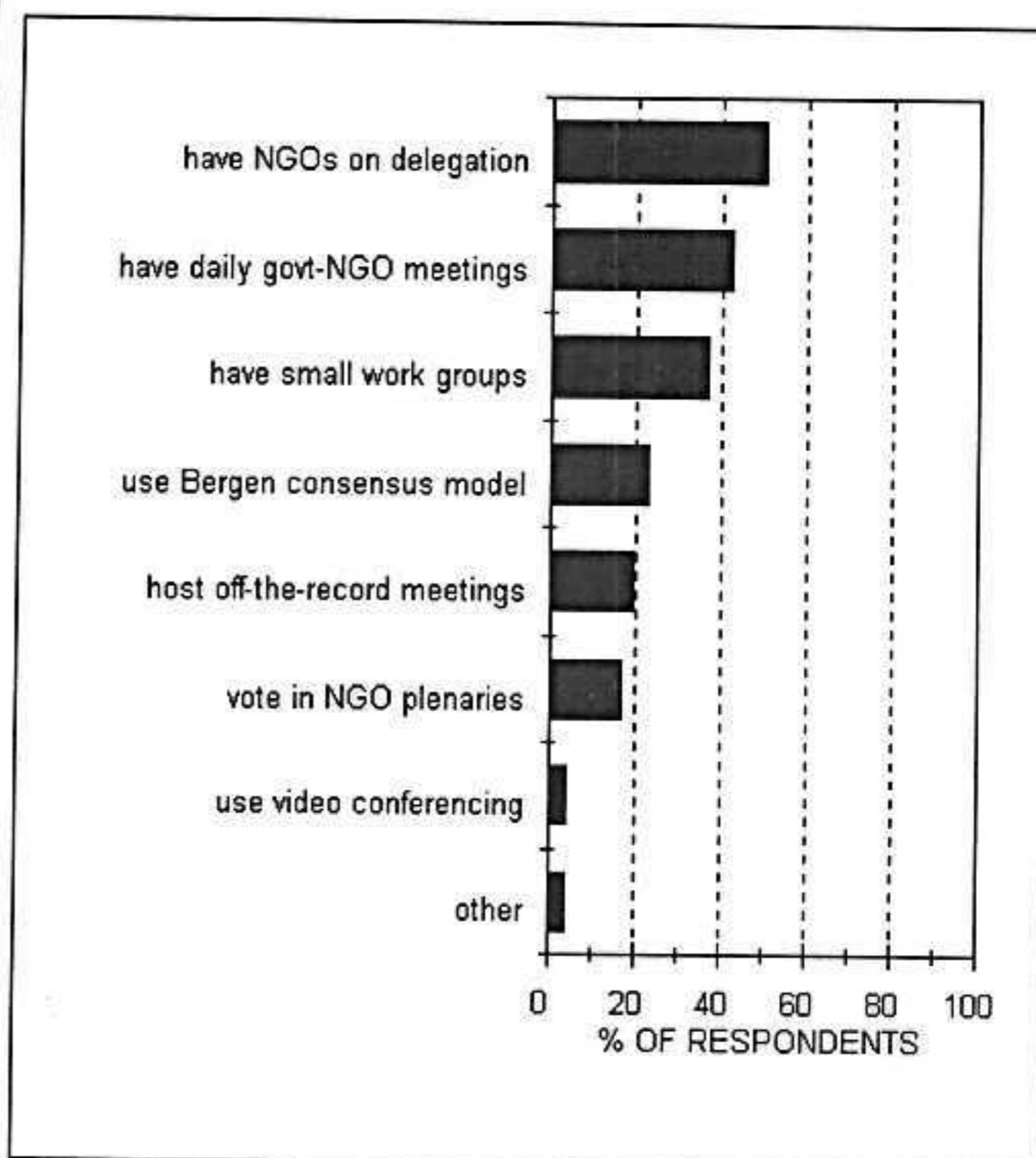
The questionnaire in another section posed a set of choices for restructuring NGO conferences. These choices were:<sup>2</sup>

- insist on gender/racial balance in NGO delegations
- provide documentation/translation in additional languages
- schedule a series of NGO policy panel discussions
- arrange voting in NGO plenaries based on membership size
- have open editorial board meetings for the NGO newspaper
- book all NGO participants into the same hotel/district
- remove the podium and arrange chairs in a large circle
- other

### Major messages from the statistics

The first choice, that of half of the respondents, is that NGOs should be made members of official delegations (see figure 1). Business and industry oriented NGOs often have been invited to participate as part of official delegations, and some governments have begun to include citizen groups as well. Clearly, from the point of view of lobbying government, being a member of an official delegation is seen as the best strategic position.

Figure 1. How respondents would restructure the format of official conferences?



Over 40% of the respondents want to have daily Government-NGO briefings to review the proceedings and to hear NGO views. These responses suggest that NGOs are willing to cooperate with government delegations in the international setting, even when they may be sparring at home over international and domestic issues. The response also may reflect the strength of national patriotism in NGO respondents, which is surprising given over-all NGO insistence of speaking for a broader global goal.

Over 35% recommend having small work groups of delegations and NGOs within the official conference. However, as several respondents noted, it is not clear from the phrasing of the question if 'delegations' referred to one's own delegation or to delegations from all the countries.

It is interesting to note that the recommendation for NGO voting in plenaries for a common citizen's position before governmental debate was not well received. Only 17% of the respondents appear willing to take the responsibility to create an NGO decision-making plenary procedure at NGO conferences. On one hand this may represent an unwillingness to grapple with the responsibility of global decision-making; it may also indicate an unwillingness to surrender their own NGO position for a consensus NGO position in lobbying with governments at the official conference. While the NGO movement is interested in unity and capacity building within the NGO forum, it shies away from presenting a collective political voice at the intergovernmental forum in preference for influencing their own governments. The implications of this merit further study.

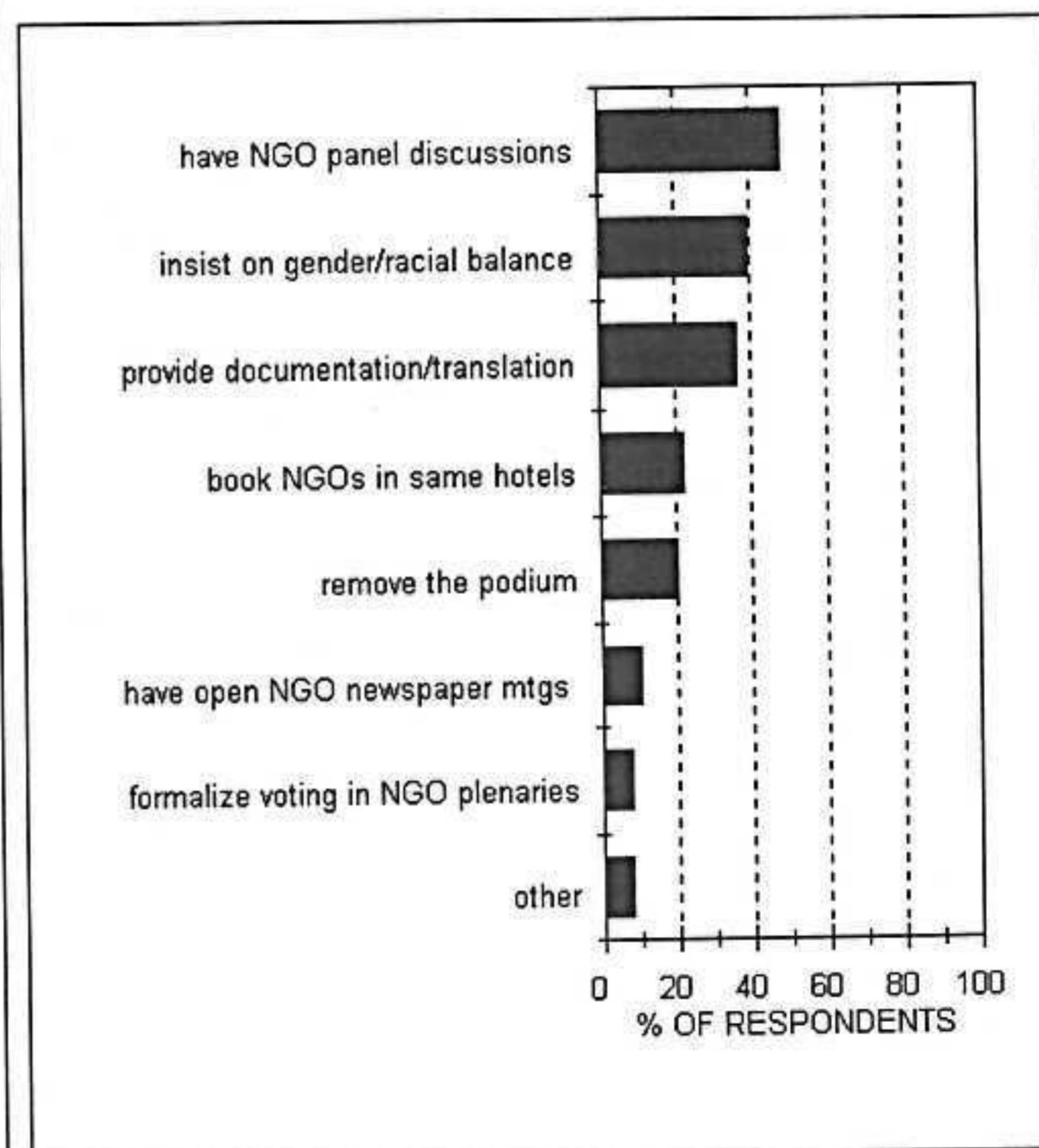
It is also interesting to note that high-tech meeting is not yet high on the agenda, even with NGOs. For an NGO community that is generally computer literate and relatively enthusiastic about Internet connections, only 4.2% chose using a video conference facility to transmit the meeting to their office as one of their top two options for restructuring official conferences. In light of other responses in the questionnaire, it seems likely that they are seeking opportunities for direct contact between people at international events, opportunities that a teleconference would have prevented. Respondents may be indicating their skepticism about the technological possibilities of such teleconferencing; nevertheless, one-in-twenty saw the use of technology for information collection and dissemination as important, and for NGOs it certainly could be a means of saving travel,

hotel and other costs of attending conferences located in foreign countries.

The first recommendation from respondents regarding restructuring NGO conferences is to increase the number of NGO policy panel discussions (25%) (see figure 2). These meetings essentially are an alternative parliamentary assembly without any implementation authority, so the call for greater deliberation should not be unexpected. They support findings in earlier chapters where NGOs showed strong concern for networking with NGOs of similar political or thematic interests.

The second most common recommendation for NGO meetings is to insist on a gender/racial balance in NGO delegations (21%). Respondents from organizations based in developed countries are more insistent upon greater gender/racial balance in NGO delegations as compared to respondents developing countries.<sup>3</sup> This may be because participants from developing countries are more concentrated on getting to the meeting and gaining entrance: gender equity is a subsidiary concern. Female respondents indicated a higher priority for gender/racial balance as one of their two concerns when compared to the survey sample.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 2. If respondents could restructure an NGO alternate conference, their first two actions would be:



This recommendation is of interest, given the strong NGO perception that patriarchy presents the greatest restriction on their participation at intergovernmental conferences.<sup>5</sup> This call for equal gender representation is an indication of one of the elements of the new model of democratic participation in the global civil governance model.

Efforts to discuss problems and proposed solutions are hampered by language barriers, especially since NGO meetings often cannot afford adequate interpretation, so the third most common recommendation, at 19% of respondents, is a call for efforts to provide NGO documentation/ translation in additional languages. The very low priority accorded to voting in NGO plenaries is important. As in the previous questions, NGOs seem to shy away from opportunities to express collective opinion. This should be further examined.

#### *Variations within sub-communities*

re: restructuring the intergovernmental conference

- There is no variation in sub communities when compared to reference populations regarding the two preferred methods of restructuring official international conferences to democratize the participation of interested parties.<sup>6</sup>

re: restructuring the NGO conference

- Women indicate a higher priority for gender/racial balance in NGO delegations<sup>7</sup> while men preferred to have documentation and translation in additional languages.<sup>8</sup>
- Developed country NGOs are more insistent upon greater gender/racial balance in NGO delegations than NGOs from developing countries.<sup>9</sup>
- Respondents with experience starting in the 1980s are more interested in greater gender/racial balance in NGO delegations than respondents who started their international experiences at other times.<sup>10</sup>

## **Decision-making capabilities**

### **Signatory authority**

#### *Summary of the issue*

Citizens of a country are represented by governments who send delegates to international conferences where the procedures for governmental and intergovernmental decision-making is thoroughly formalized. Statements made to the meeting reflect the official position of the government, and the concluding document of the conference will represent a consensus of those government interests. The lead member of a national delegation has the power to negotiate and to commit her/his delegation to a range of followup actions.

The governmental method empowers the delegate to make decisions on behalf of his or her government, subject to confirmation with appropriate national ministries. Although characterized as democratic, this procedure does not necessarily fit the definition being sought by a number of NGOs. The NGO representation model may or may not demand direct accountability and a close relationship and consultation process between the leadership and the members. However, from the point of view of the national democratic model, attempts to conform with this alternate model of democratic behavior could be interpreted as indecisive and time-consuming. It may, ironically, confirm feelings that the NGO delegate is 'unrepresentative' because he or she lacks the authority to act on behalf of the people they represent.

Few rules govern the selection of NGOs as representatives of their interest groups; therefore, if NGOs are to expand beyond their advisory role and participate more fully in meetings and negotiations, a process must be developed that addresses representation issues, including the authority for NGO representatives to commit to action by their organization and/or by their members. Under current practice, non-governmental participants to UN meetings and NGO events may represent the leadership of an international NGO or may merely be attending as a staff member of a small local NGO. Although the opinions of these individuals may 'represent' those of their organization, the participant usually must be flexible in terms of commitments made to the meeting as they typically have not been vested with any negotiating authority. Even if commitments are made, there are rarely mechanisms for enforcement.

NGO participants at UN and other intergovernmental events may be offered an opportunity to sign a governmental consensus document. This raises the question of whether they are empowered by their organizations to do so – and what the level of their representativeness is. Respondents were asked, in a situation where they are asked to co-sign a final governmental consensus document, what their level of authority would be. They were offered seven choices and could identify all applicable options:<sup>11</sup>

- authorized to commit their organization
- be able to sign only in their own name
- need to call/ fax home for authority
- need to submit the document to a formal adoption process
- be unable to sign on behalf of their organization
- refuse to sign a document with governments
- another response

Similarly, international NGO events often produce one or several declarations. They usually are written by a committee comprised of conference organizers and NGO participants, but the actual structure and mechanism is highly variable. Declarations can vary from formal documents that are widely circulated for comment before the conference and subject to a drafting process during the conference, to spontaneous declarations by small groups at a conference-specific event.

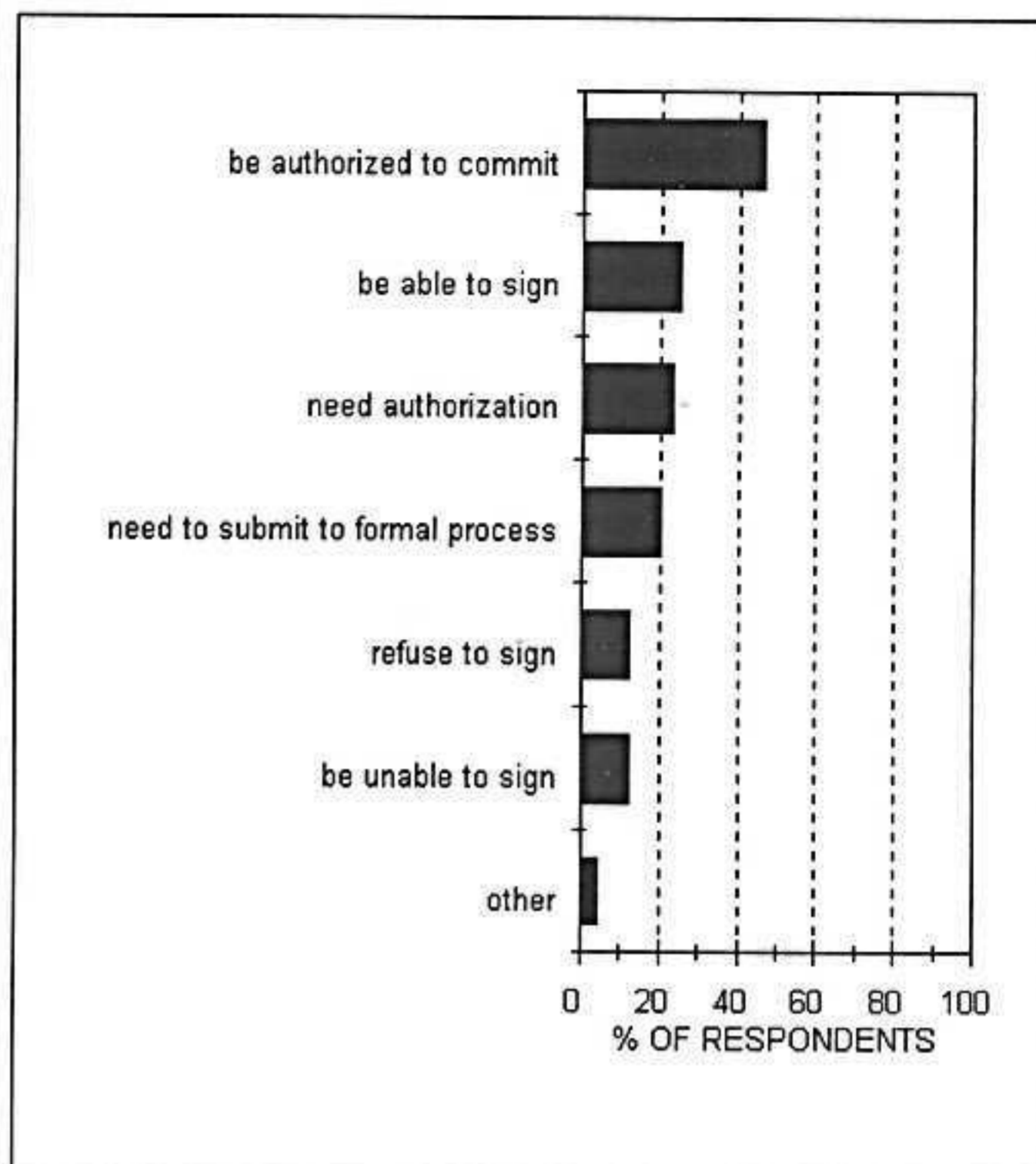
Respondents were asked a parallel but shorter question about their capacity to represent their organization to governments. If asked to sign a final NGO declaration, respondents were asked whether they had the authority to do any number of four options:<sup>12</sup>

- need to call/ fax home for authority
- able to sign only in their own name
- authorized to commit their organization
- refuse to sign a document with other NGOs

#### *Major messages from the statistics*

The majority of respondents operating in the intergovernmental arena did not believe that they could act on behalf of their organizations. It could also be an indication of NGO delegate sensitivity to the need to integrate non-participating members of their organizations in conference decisions. Fewer than half of the respondents are authorized to commit their organization if asked to co-sign a final government consensus docu-

*Figure 3. If asked to co-sign a final governmental consensus document, respondent would*



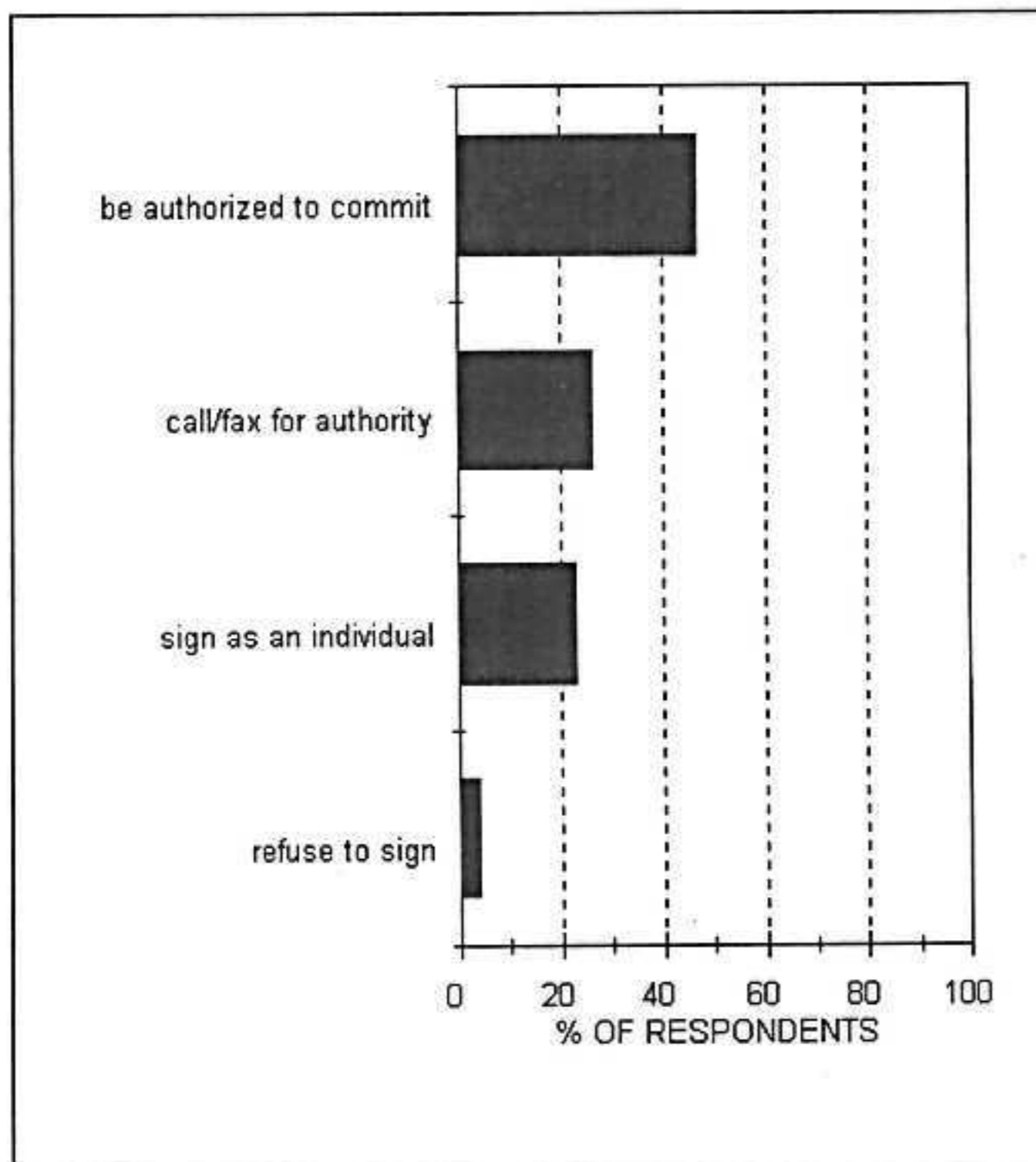
ment (46%). In some cases (23%), this requires some consultation with the home base. A similar number could sign in their name only (25%). 12% are unable to sign a statement with governments and 12% would refuse to sign any document with governments.<sup>13</sup> The result is that most of the respondents are unable to have their NGO participate in official decision-making, except in advisory roles to others who have such powers.

Men respondents indicate they had more authority to commit their organization than did women respondents.<sup>14</sup> In many countries, men still hold a greater proportion of leadership positions, so this result is not unexpected. Respondents affiliated with organizations based in developing countries are twice as likely to be authorized as developed country NGOs to sign a governmental consensus document.<sup>15</sup> This might be explained if developing country participants were executives in their organization while northern NGOs are merely sending staff, but this was not explored in this report.

At non-governmental meetings, NGO participants appear to have greater flexibility, but nevertheless remain diffident about their capacity as delegates to represent their organizations. Nearly half of those surveyed said they could commit their organization in a declaration with other NGOs (47%). Approximately twenty percent



Figure 4. If asked to sign a final NGO declaration, would you:



of the respondents have a requirement to communicate with their home office before signing with other NGOs (26%) or may only commit themselves personally (23%). The number refusing to co-sign NGO documents is a third of that refusing to co-sign documents with governments (4% vs. 12%), perhaps because NGO statements tend to be less binding.<sup>16</sup>

Respondents from organizations based in developing countries indicate having a greater authority to commit their organization to NGO declarations,<sup>17</sup> and respondents from organizations based in developed countries strongly indicate their need to call/fax home for authority to sign an NGO declaration.<sup>18</sup> This parallels the results for signing intergovernmental documents (see above).

#### Variations within sub-communities

re: signing a final governmental consensus document

- Male respondents indicate they had more authority to commit their organization than did female respondents.<sup>19</sup>
- Respondents affiliated with organizations based in developing countries are twice as likely to be autho-

rized as those in the North to sign a governmental consensus document.<sup>20</sup>

- Respondents from organizations with 1,000 to 10,000 members are more likely to be able to sign in their own name than respondents from other size organizations.<sup>21</sup>

re: signing a final NGO consensus document

- Men claim to be more able to commit their organization than did women<sup>22</sup> while women would need to call/fax home for authority more than men.<sup>23</sup>
- Respondents from organizations which maintain memberships between 10–99 are less interested than organizations of different sizes to call/fax home for authority to sign an NGO declaration.<sup>24</sup>
- Respondents from organizations which maintain memberships greater than 10,000 would be unable to commit their organization to an NGO declaration.<sup>25</sup> These same respondents indicate a greater need to call/fax home for authority to sign an NGO declaration than respondents from smaller NGOs.<sup>26</sup>

#### Future needs

##### Additional cash resources

##### Summary of the issue

This section was introduced as, 'What if the constraints of money were removed?' Most NGOs have extremely limited funding, be it for staff, office equipment, research materials, or travel. When funds are short, travel expenses for attending meetings are usually the first to be cut. By hypothetically removing the money constraint, the concept was to establish the preferred patterns for enhancing NGO participation at intergovernmental events, such as additional staff, greater time for preparation, enhanced communication. The idea was radical to some respondents who were not sure how to respond to the question.

Respondents also were asked how their NGO would spend US\$20,000, if given it to improve NGO involvement (1) in an intergovernmental conference and (2) in a NGO conference conducted parallel to an intergovernmental conference. Participation can be improved, for

example, through collective strategic work, enhanced communications, or increasing the level of NGO experience in international events.

For improved involvement at a UN or intergovernmental conference the options were to spend a total of \$20,000 on any mix of the following:<sup>27</sup>

- special pre-meeting with other NGOs to develop common positions
- additional equipment (faxes, computers)
- additional publications to distribute to delegations
- financing a demonstration at the conference
- lobbying your home government
- travel and expenses for additional participants
- travel and expenses for an NGO that has never attended a global event
- other uses

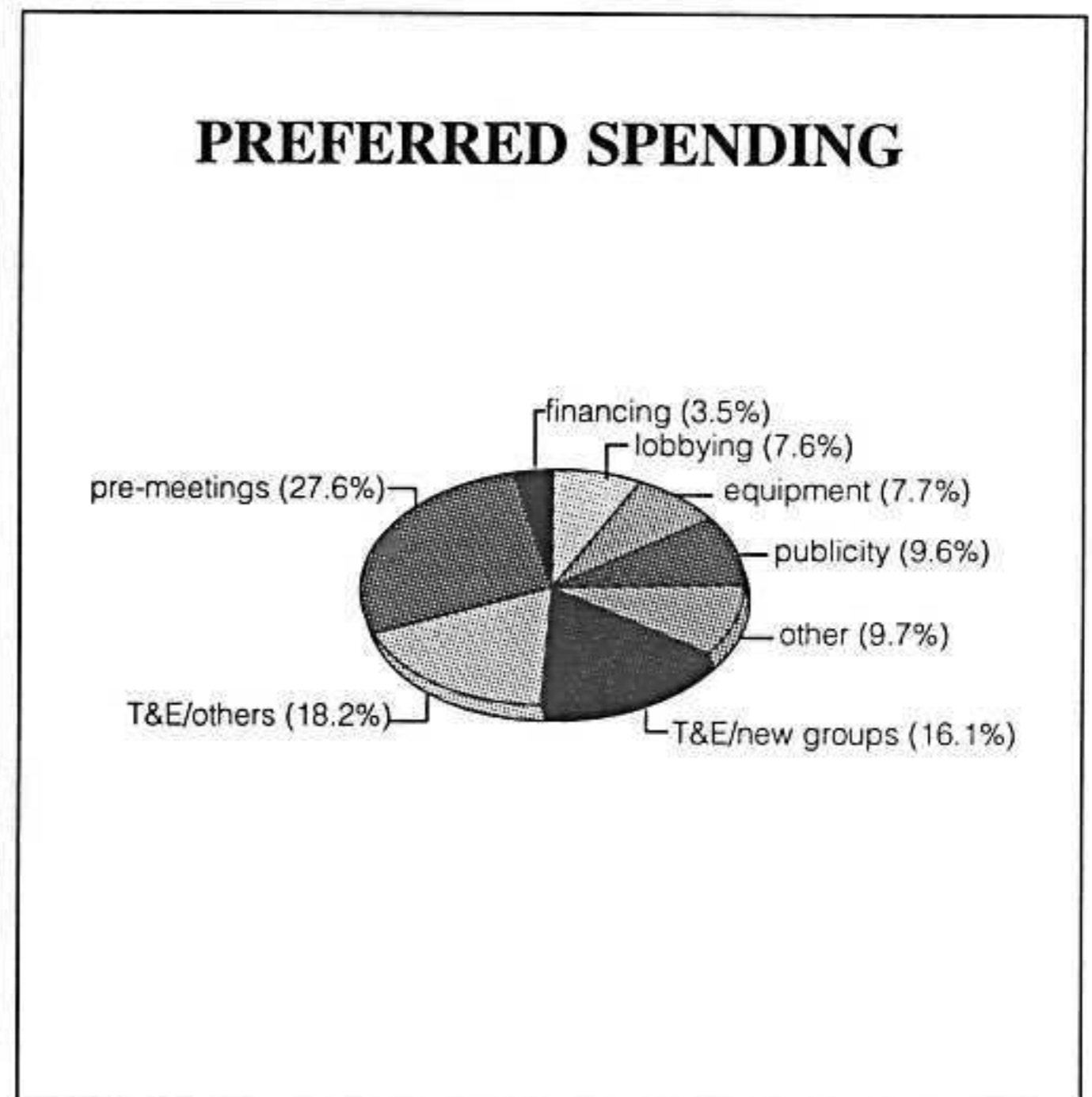
For improved involvement at NGO related international conferences, the respondent could spend \$20,000 on any number of the following:<sup>28</sup>

- increased education of national NGOs in international issues
- additional equipment (faxes, computers)
- additional publications for other NGOs
- travel and expenses for additional representatives of your NGO
- travel and expenses for a grassroots NGO with no prior international experience
- post-conference reporting back session with other local NGOs
- other uses

#### *Major messages from the statistics*

In splitting the hypothetical additional \$20,000 grant to improve participation in intergovernmental meetings, the highest share of funds would go toward a special pre-meeting to develop a common position (28% of the resources; average of US\$5,545.00). The second highest amount would be allocated towards providing NGOs with funds so that they could send for additional participants (18%; average of US\$3,640.00) and 16% or an average of US\$3,220.00 to facilitate the participation of NGOs that have never attended a global event. Together, these represented just over one-third of the total monies (34%) that would be allocated to bring more NGOs to international conferences. An additional po-

Figure 5. If your NGO was given US\$20,000 to improve NGO involvement in an intergovernmental conference, how would you recommend it be spent?



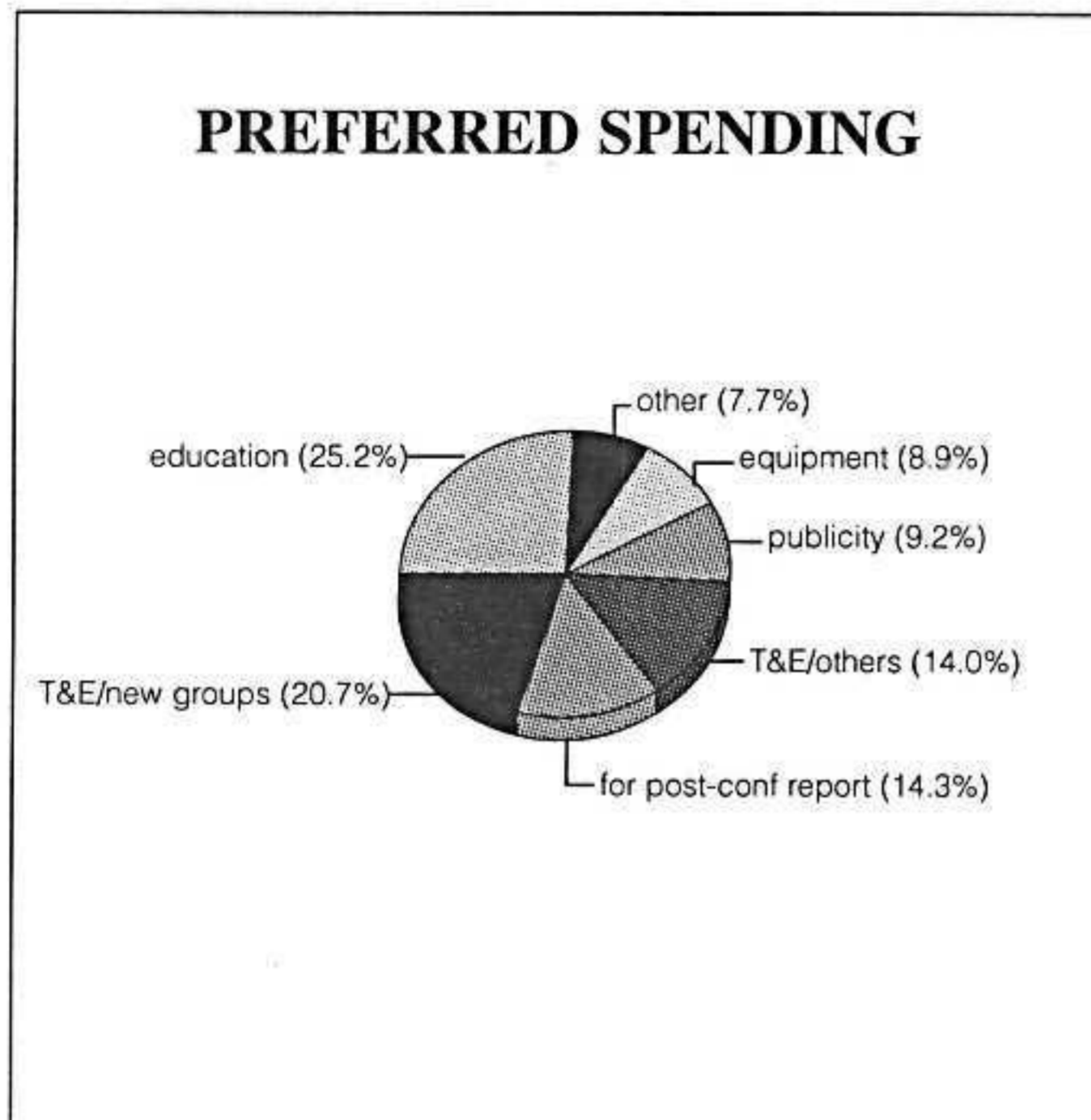
tion would go toward production of educational materials for distribution at the meetings (US\$1873.00).

Thus, the strongest priority for participants is to have a special pre-meeting to develop a common position. This is clearly a need. The point was made in Chapter 3 that NGOs have a bifurcated strategy at intergovernmental conferences, and this dilutes their energy in both. Dedicated NGO pre-meetings would be helpful in mitigating this occurrence. The priorities following are addressed to capacity building, to increase the awareness of NGO colleagues about international negotiations, either by way of increased participation or through information exchange with other NGOs or distribution of materials to conference participants, including government officials.

In the context of the strong presence of other data indicating a significant number of NGOs are acting as in the national lobby model, only 7% of the supplemental resources would be given to increased lobbying of home government officials. At the same time it is very interesting that the lowest resources (3.5%) would be directed toward organizing a demonstration at the international event.

In splitting the hypothetical additional US\$20,000 grant to improve participation in NGO international meet-

Figure 6. If your NGO was given US\$20,000 to improve NGO involvement in NGO related international conferences, how would you recommend it be spent?



ings, 25% of these resources (average US\$4,907.00) would be spent preparing additional educational material for national NGOs on international issues. The second largest use of this supplemental funds would be to facilitate the travel and expenses of other NGOs to international events (28% – average US\$4071). Once again, the combined allocation of monies to bring more NGOs to the conference (34% – the same as the result for the intergovernmental conference) exceeds any other funding choice.

Interestingly, respondents chose to allocate on the average over US\$1,300.00 additional monies to bring other members of NGOs rather than additional individuals from their own NGO. Respondents are clearly reflecting their need to network and build capacity and getting around an identified problem: that NGOs have difficulties meeting with other appropriate NGOs at NGO meetings. In this age of high technology, it is interesting that proposed expenditures on this item were low (average US\$1,718.00). As above, these figures suggest that direct face-to-face information exchange among NGOs and increasing their capacity for action are priorities, through activities prior to the meeting and at the meeting itself.

#### Variations within sub-communities

re: supplemental resources for intergovernmental events

- Women respondents allocate 26% more for lobbying national governments than do male respondents. Male respondents allocate 45% more for organizing demonstrations at international events.
- While developed and developing country NGO respondents select the same first two priorities the relative shares for all the remaining choices are considerably different.
- Respondents from organizations accredited to other UN system organizations allocate over \$1000 more on average to bringing new participants to intergovernmental events than do ECOSOC accredited NGOs and \$800 more on average than respondents from non-accredited NGOs.
- Respondents under 30 allocate more money than other age groups for the organization of demonstrations.
- Respondents under 30 or between 50–60 allocate a greater share for more technology and equipment than other age groups.
- Older respondents are more likely to allocate resources for additional travel than are younger participants.
- Respondents who attended their first international conference since 1990 are more inclined to spend resources on demonstration than those whose first conference was before 1980.

re: supplemental resources for NGO events

- As with the intergovernmental conference, developed and developing country NGO respondents have the same first two priorities but the relative share for the remaining choices is considerably different.
- Women respondents are more inclined to spend supplemental resources for additional members of their NGOs to attend the international NGO event and for the sponsorship of a post-conference reporting back session.

- Men respondents are more inclined than women to spend their supplemental resources to increase the representation from other NGOs.

### Additional preparatory time

#### Summary of the issue

Most NGOs have small number of staff covering a large number of domestic and international concerns. Very few organizations can dedicate a staffperson to follow the development of a particular issue, and these groups typically are clearinghouses specializing in information dissemination to other NGO colleagues. Therefore, a major barrier to many NGOs is giving staff that extra time necessary to prepare for and attend international meetings. In a manner analogous to the hypothetical \$20,000 in extra resources for intergovernmental meetings, respondents were asked how they would use an additional 10 days for preparation. The survey offered six options and respondents could divide the ten days between any or all of the following activities:

- lobby you own government
- arrange internal meetings on your international strategy / tactics
- write a formal policy statement to present at the event
- co-ordinate with other NGOs in your region
- co-ordinate with other NGOs sharing same thematic interest
- attend pre-conference meetings with other NGOs.
- other uses.

#### Major messages from the statistics

Given extra time to prepare for an international event, most NGOs would spend it coordinating action with other NGOs, either those sharing similar thematic interests (20% of the total time allocated by all respondents) or those from their home region (17% of the time). Regional coordination is given a higher rating than thematic coordination, an interesting result in light of recent regional networking initiatives such as by the UN DPI and national commissions on sustainable development, for example the Asian Council of Sustainable Development. Pre-conference meetings and intra-organizational meetings to develop strategy and tactics also would be given strong consideration (17% and 15% of the additional days, respectively). Writing pol-

icy statements and lobbying governments would not be emphasized in the time devoted to tasks, at 1.3 and 1.2 days, respectively, with half a day devoted to other uses.

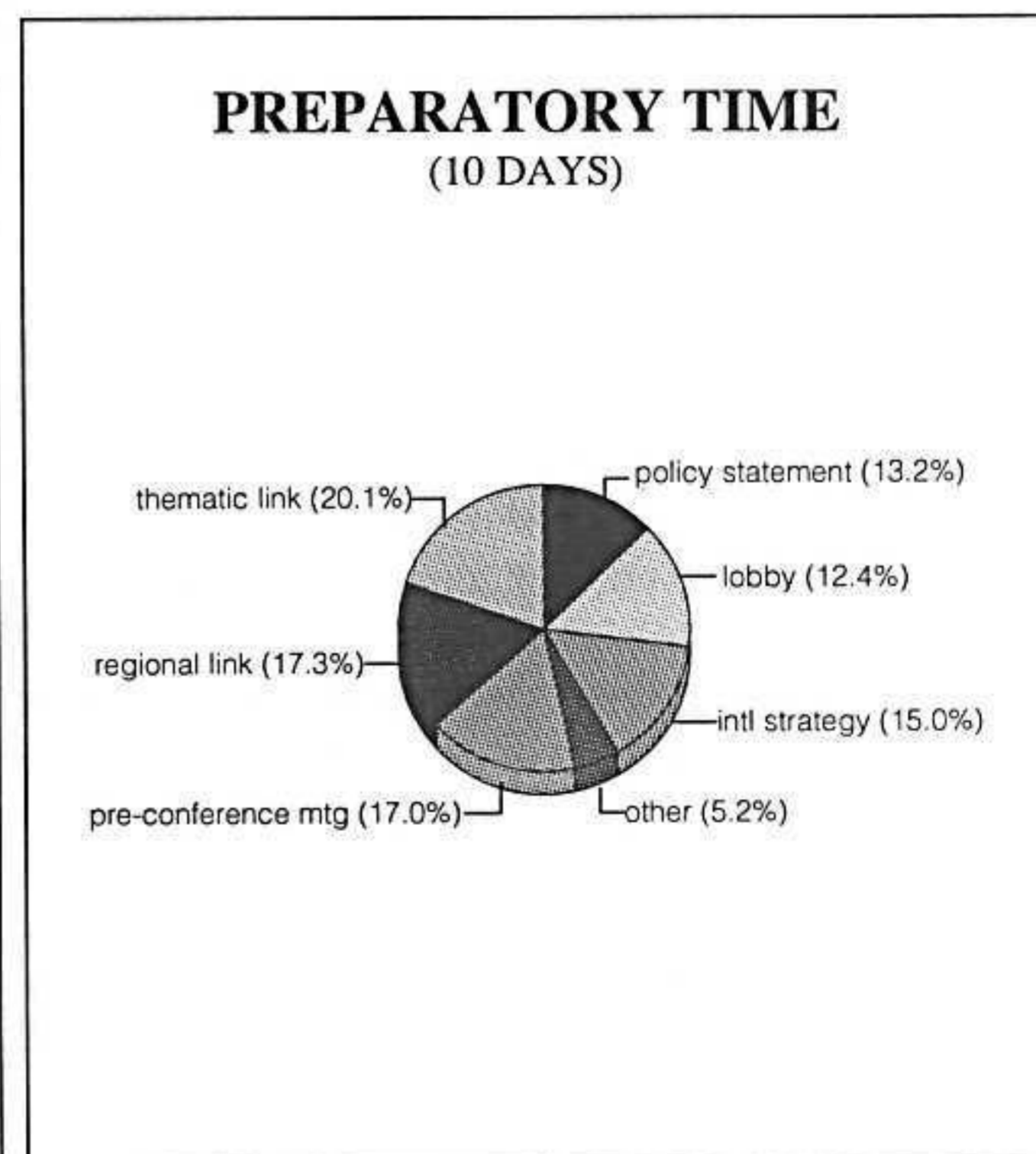
These responses are consistent with the replies to the previous question on disbursing extra monies. As before, there is a focus on information exchange and NGO capacity building in the NGO world generally (with sister NGOs). Surveys were collected from NGOs that operate on a regional as well as thematic basis, so these 'sister' organizations include NGOs having both interests.

### Additional NGO staff at conferences

#### Summary of the issue

Small national delegations and NGOs generally remark that they cannot possibly cover all the events and negotiations going on simultaneously at major international events. Because of such concerns by small governments, the number of parallel formal sessions are more frequently being limited to two concurrent sessions. As with small governments, for a given NGO there may well be a need for smaller delegations to be larger, or for more diversity in a group's delegation. Respondents

Figure 7. If your organization could give you 10 extra days to prepare for an international event, how would you use it?



were asked, 'If money was not a constraint, how many members of your organization would have attended an international conference in the last year?' They were given the following options:<sup>29</sup>

- no change
- 1 to 2 more
- 3 to 5 more
- 5 to 10 more
- more than 10 more

### *Major messages from the statistics*

Nineteen percent said that 10 or more staff members would have attended additional international conferences if funds were not an issue. This figure suggests that there is a large demand among certain NGOs to send more staff to international conferences and meetings, but the lack of funds is a major constraint. 28% would have sent 3–5 staff, 31% 1–2 staff and 11% were satisfied with the number of staff sent to international conferences. Once again, the international event is seen by international NGOs as a major opportunity for NGO capacity building. Despite the obvious possibilities of communication technology, the need is consistently repeated that the early architects global civil governance need to find fora to meet and learn from each other.

### **Concluding observations**

Phenomena in progress are difficult to capture for purposes of surveying and statistical analysis. Minor changes in the wording can influence the response, responses recorded in one context could be different in another. In this set of questions, possibilities were presented to NGOs who may not have thought in terms of surplus resources before. Consequently more caution needs to be exercised in extrapolating from data in this chapter than from other chapters in this report.

NGOs can envisage some of the new forms of global civil governance. However they remain firmly tied to many of the existing intergovernmental institutional structures. The strong preference by NGOs to join governmental delegations is contradictory in the extreme. Additional research needs to be done to determine if it indicates a fundamental desire by some NGOs to become part of their government, if it is some conspiratorial effort to learn from the 'inside' what the government delegation is doing for future expose type lobbying, or if there is another objective. The low level of

interest expressed in using the hypothetical \$20,000 or the hypothetical 10 days to organize demonstrations and protest at international events is also indicative of an underlying support for existing international structures. Additional research might examine if this apparent lack of interest in organizing demonstrations reflects a pragmatic realization of the difficulties of pre-organizing street events in a distant and often foreign city or that those NGOs inclined to demonstrations have given up on the UN as a viable and influential political actor in global economic and social affairs.

Nevertheless there are clear signs of the emerging system of global civil governance. The very high and consistent request for using the hypothetical \$20,000 to bring more citizen groups to international events is heartening. In addition, NGOs first choice for the use of their hypothetical 10 days was to work with other NGOs with similar thematic interests. Furthermore, the primary structural change respondents want at NGO conferences is to increase the number of NGO policy sessions. These responses indicate a strong effort to create some new forms of global civil governance. Additional research might focus on how NGOs perceive the experimental efforts by governments and international organizations to improve the Government/NGO dialogues and how NGOs would structure their own policy-making sessions in light of the uncertainty reported by many respondents whether they could formally endorse joint NGO policy declarations on behalf of their own organizations.

### **Chapter endnotes**

(For variations within sub-communities it is of course possible that the observed differences between groups could be caused by statistical accidents. The footnotes below provide the probabilities that this is not the case. A 'p' value that is .0200 means that with a 98% confidence level it is possible to state that the difference are real and not caused by some statistical abnormality. The associations listed in the text have a confidence level of greater than 90%).

1. Question 15a- 15h
2. Question 22a-22h
3.  $p = 0.0126$
4.  $p = 0.0002$
5. See Chapter 2.
6. Question 15a and 15d.

7.  $p = 0.0002$
  8.  $p = 0.523$
  9.  $p = 0.0126$
  10.  $p = 0.0005$
  11. Question 14a-14g
  12. Question 21a-21d
  13. Since the survey allowed persons to check more than one response, the replies could add to over 100%. Thus some could, for example, sign in their own name and sign for their organization after contacting their head office for authorization.
  14.  $p = 0.0005$
  15.  $p = 0.0000$ .
  16. As above, the survey allowed persons to check more than one response, so replies could add to over 100%.
17.  $p = 0.0000$ .
  18.  $p = 0.0004$
  19.  $p = 0.0005$
  20.  $p = 0.0000$ .
  21.  $p = 0.0982$
  22.  $p = 0.0058$
  23.  $p = 0.0190$
  24.  $p = 0.0041$
  25.  $p = 0.0032$ .
  26.  $p = 0.0117$
  27. Question 12a-12h
  28. Question 19a-19g
  29. Question 20

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

The Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway, commissioned this study in the context of highly focused international attention to the role of NGOs in international society. Not surprisingly this debate and reflection is taking part in a number of independent international arenas.

For the first time since the end of Cold War, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has grappled directly with the future role of NGOs in the UN system. Ironically, it was the UN Charter that created 'non-governmental organizations' as a political category and authorized the Economic and Social Council to seek the advice of these organizations when it was appropriate during its deliberations. The ambiguity of the term, non-governmental organization, has been both its strength and its curse. Under this title, any organization without 'direct' governmental participation could apply to work with the inter-governmental Economic and Social Council.

ECOSOC is now faced with a multifaceted challenge: how to put coherence around the definition of NGO, how to best classify types of NGOs and the rights and opportunities of the different types, and how to set an example, during a period of proliferating national democracies, of the way to involve the general public in decision-making. ECOSOC must contribute to the public debate on popular participation while being respectful of the history of NGOs that began with ECOSOC in 1947.

However, in the end ECOSOC can define the NGO role through only one side of the democratic equation. The inter-governmental body can set its external rules governing the relationship between inter-governmental meetings that authorizes and the way that it wishes to allow citizen groups to influence the inter-governmental process. NGOs on the other hand can define for themselves how they will seek to influence the inter-governmental process, irrespective of the procedural decisions of the UN body, and in addition they can define for themselves how they operate in the now regular parallel international NGO events held concurrently with major inter-governmental meetings, that draw thousands more NGOs than government delegates.

One of the findings of the Survey is that indeed the international non-governmental community is highly diverse. It ranges from the local community organization that feels a stake in the outcome of international economic negotiations, to organizations with over 25 million members created on an international basis; it includes international organizations with a membership of a handful of individuals with a narrow focus on a particular topic, to inter-organizational arrangements of national development organizations with a general commitment to improve life for people; it includes organizations that work internationally as if they were domestic lobbying organizations within the traditional scope of a free society, to organizations that seek to be «allies» internationally with governments to counter-weight global corporate power.

This diversity remains all too frequently ignored by governments and in many cases by NGOs. Attempting to formulate a set of rules for non-governmental interaction with governments at international events may well be futile unless careful attention is paid to the significant differences in the democratic aspirations of the 'non-governmental community' and the significant differences in the way governments at home encourage and support citizen participation in decision-making.

This survey set out to take the temperature of the NGO community on NGOs perception of the state of democracy at global international events. Global international events are perhaps only one place where there are attempts to create a system of global governance, but these events were the foci of this survey.

The attempt to measure a process in transition is inherently risky. At the best of times, the specific questions posed in the questionnaire may influence the way respondents reflect on the issues. The set of potential concerns may not reach deeply enough into the process to elicit true feelings and meanings. And the survey may well have failed to capture the dynamics of the process by its orientation or approach. Of course, every effort within resources was used to make the survey instrument a sensitive social science tool and to make the process as widely participatory as possible. The specific efforts are described in Annex 1. But the broader dilemma is how to measure and report on a process that many

of the participants are only beginning to understand themselves. NGOs frequently will deplore with strong language specific rules and actions that create in their minds obstructions to their sense of full participation in an intergovernmental event, but have not for the most part engaged directly in reflective thinking on the form of global citizen participation that most reasonably meets the needs of the international community.

A difficulty in collecting completed surveys is that without previous reflection by respondents on global civil decision-making by NGOs it often took considerably longer than expected to fill out the questionnaire and consequently fewer replies came than we might have liked. At the same time an unexpected benefit from the survey process is that a good number of individuals and NGOs began to discuss in broader terms precisely what form of civil global governance made sense to individual NGOs. In this way the 50,000 copies that were distributed of the survey contributed to the broader process initiated by the Global Commission on Civil Governance. Several respondents commented specifically on the opportunity the survey had given them to reflect in a structured way on these issues.

The international community is struggling to define a new modality for global decision-making while the older political institutions of power and decision-making are struggling to retain their leverage in the new global decision-making structures. In a sense there already exists an operating, integrated, international decision-making system. The commercial market currently involves individual transnational corporations that make decisions on the allocation of capital resources well beyond the budgetary deliberations of most parliaments of the world. Transnational corporations are the de facto global decision-making bodies of the day. They can move human food around the world with minimal public review, they can extract natural resources and ship them thousands of miles to branches of their own firms without requesting governmental approvals; they can exercise disproportional influence the prices and availabilities of socially necessary housing, water, clothes and medicines; and they have established centralized and decentralized internal firm decision-making structures that have no parallel in the governmental or intergovernmental world. This international market structure now operates under the new intergovernmentally approved and expanded system through the World Trade Organization. The institutions of global governance are thus currently led by a strong economic deci-

sion-making body without a public policy counterweight.

On the governmental and inter-governmental side, the debate on new political arrangements for global civil governance that was triggered off by the Secretary General's Agenda for Peace and the UN's 50th Anniversary celebrations, is in its infancy. The inter-governmental structures that are part of the UN system are, in comparison with the global commercial market, weak and highly fragmented; and the nation states that are its members are struggling to preserve their traditional role in the face of challenges from all sides that are more powerful or beyond their scope – the speed of technological change, the integration of the global economy, the homogenization of global cultural and consumption patterns, structural unemployment, endemic poverty, and transboundary environmental concerns.

In the last few years, the international NGO community has consistently brought global issues to international attention, and the UN has responded with a series of international conferences seeking to address these issues. The survey sought to see how citizens and citizen organizations now participate in and define a democratic system of global civil governance. The first characteristic of a new global system is that it incorporates democratic practices of the national level. The domestic lobbying model is based on the physical extension of the national efforts to influence one's own government taking place at and during intergovernmental events that happen outside of one's own country. The strength and resilience of the national lobbying model is quite amazing. Given in the survey an opportunity to describe how NGOs should relate to governments at international events, the dominant reply is that NGOs should be part of their own governmental delegations at international events.

A competing characteristic of the new global system is that NGOs are more interested in creating direct citizen-to-citizen links at and around international events than in attempting to alter what apparently is perceived to be the relatively weak or weakening existing inter-governmental machinery. This finding is supported by the activities that NGOs engage in at international events. A good number of NGOs define the success of an international event not by whether government policies changed, or whether the international agencies had a stronger assignment to solve a global problem, but by whether they met and worked with other important



NGOs at the international conference. Very high numbers of survey respondents report that one of the very important reasons they went to intergovernmental events was to find other NGOs who shared their interest in, and commitment to, a given topic, this reason being of greater importance than influencing governments at international events.

One of the major policy messages from the survey is that the diversity of NGO objectives and structures must be re-examined. An NGO 'policy' may no longer make sense for intergovernmental agencies and meetings. It may be more appropriate to consider a set of different NGO policies that reflect the diversity of NGO intentions. For those NGOs that wish to observe an international political process, with the view that democracy should be in the public domain, rules only need to be developed to allow sufficient access to watching and witnessing international processes. On the other hand, for those NGOs that wish to continue to lobby their own governments, procedures should be in place to allow these organizations to find and meet with their government delegations in a relatively convenient manner. For NGOs that are focused on building a network between other NGOs, there are probably few specific official procedural practices that are needed. For NGOs working to define and implement a global agenda that wish to participate actively in international deliberations, a different set of procedures and rules need to be developed. In short, a single NGO – UN set of rules cannot reflect accurately the diversity of current NGOs and their objectives vis-a-vis intergovernmental meetings.

Another major policy message from the data is that there are a good number of institutional barriers that operate at intergovernmental meetings that unnecessarily preclude effective citizen participation in intergo-

vernmental events. Admission to conference buildings; access to inexpensive food and accommodation; assistance with visa requirements and a reduction in patriarchal practices would go a long way to facilitating citizen participation with the UN system. The UN one-nation/one-vote system is seen by many in the world as a model of public democracy. While there is an upsurge in national democratic practices, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition, the UN is looked upon as a model that needs to stay ahead of public expectation. The survey has identified a good number of areas where with relatively minor changes there could be a considerable improvement in the international working space for citizen organizations.

Surveys are interesting instruments. In this case, the 1995 NGO Benchmark Survey canvassed non-governmental organizations for their perception of the state of democracy in international decision-making. The audience for the questionnaire was a wide range of citizen, business, professional, and community organizations. With the usual cautions about generalizing from statistical data, Benchmark Environmental Consulting feels that a good range of their opinions have been captured through this data and analysis process. What is missing is the perceptions of democracy by the other global actors: governments, multinational corporations, and international agencies. It would be an important scientific development to poll key officials from these three other globally important arenas on how they perceive the state of democratic participation by the citizen groups in international events. Only by challenging equally all members of the international community will it be possible to fully appreciate the developments necessary to move the international community into a more clearly perceived global democratic structure.

## Annex I: Methodology

### Survey distribution

Benchmark distributed 10,000 surveys through various mechanisms in three languages: English, French and Spanish. Printed on bright yellow paper, they stood out from other materials NGOs get at conferences or in the mail. After they had been at a few international conferences, they became well known as 'that yellow survey.' An additional 40,000 copies were included as an insert in the WSSD edition of the Earth Times, and the English version also was posted and available to Internet users worldwide.

The 'yellow survey' was distributed by mail, by inserts in major NGO media, and at international conferences by being put out conspicuously at tables within the NGO areas, sometimes supported by one or two consultants handing them out and encouraging people to respond; and, at the World Summit for Social Development where a team of twelve local graduate students were employed to get responses filled in on the spot.

The questionnaire itself was placed at as many international conferences as possible in the period from August 1994 to April 1995, either through a Benchmark consultant or through an NGO contact who agreed to take them there. NGO distributors ranged from those who simply placed them on a table at the conference to those who were more active about distribution.

The distribution of the survey was educational in itself. Originally, the intention of the project was to help elevate the issue about democratic participation in the international process. The primary object of the survey is to get information on the NGO perceptions, so that plans to improve or change the current structure would be based on a rigorous understanding of the perceived needs. A secondary object emerged in the first months of the project, which also served the project's intention, namely, to raise the issue in a systematic way, internationally. In many cases, NGOs who have seen the questionnaire reported that the questions are crucial, made them see the problem in a fresh and useful way, or became the basis of a discussion within their organization.

The survey took on a life of its own. Some NGOs who may not have filled it in nevertheless found the survey

itself to be of enormous value. In part there is a 'good feeling' about the fact that the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway has seen fit to ask and investigate the question. In addition, the form of the survey and the nature of the questions are both raising the level of thinking among NGOs. Some of the phrasings give a legitimacy to issues that do affect NGO access to the process but are difficult to 'pin down', for example, cultural differences and physical access to resources. Others, in particular the invitation to respondents to use resources (time and money) that they normally don't have, are refreshing and provocative for respondents. The structure of the questionnaire, and the questions, are receiving very positive reviews. NGOs who see the questionnaire feel that the issue is urgent and the questions raise themes that they consider to be important and new themes that they could consider.

### Chronology of inserts in major NGO media

#### August 1994: ECOFORUM

The Nairobi-based Environment Liaison Centre International journal, *ECOFORUM*, inserted the survey into its edition on the theme: 'Do international conventions work?' This was supported with an article about the survey taking up the whole center spread. *ECOFORUM* has a circulation of 4,000, with a strong focus on Africa and India

#### September – October 1994: Newsletter of WEDO

A notice was placed in the Newsletter of the Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO), an international women's network based in New York City, with a circulation of 15,000

#### September – October 1994: Go-Between

A notice was inserted in the Geneva-based UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service journal, *Go-Between*, with a circulation of 5,000 to UN accredited NGOs.

#### December 1994: The Reporter (DPI)

The UN Department of Public Information NGO committee contacted us with enthusiasm for this project (despite some criticism about the questionnaire itself). They organized for the insertion of the questionnaire into their magazine, *The Reporter*, in December 1994.

This is sent to the headquarters office of their 1400 DPI members. This list is inclusive of all the ECOSOC headquarters offices.

### December 1994: ECOFORUM

A second notice was published in *ECOFORUM*.

### March 1995: The Earth Times

*The Earth Times* has a circulation of 30,000 and a distribution of 40,000 if the magazine is targeted at an international conference. Distribution is largely to US-based NGOs, but a large number reach the international arena. A copy of the survey was printed as the center spread in the *Earth Times* edition for the opening of the Social Summit. 4,000 were distributed on the opening Sunday of the Summit.

### June 1995

Benchmark produced a Press release for distribution at the ECOSOC review meeting at the UN offices in New York City.

These surveys were distributed at several major conferences involving NGOs. Copies of the questionnaire were placed at the following international conferences:

- World Social Summit Preparatory Committee II, New York, August/ Sept 1994 1,000
- NGO/ DPI meeting, New York, August 1994 300
- 50 Años Banos, Madrid, October 1994 150
- Conference on Ecological Economics, Costa Rica, October 1994 50
- The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal on Industrial Hazards and Human Rights, November/December 1994 150
- European Environmental Bureau, 30th Anniversary AGM, Brussels 100
- Annual Meeting of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) on Long Island, December 1994 200
- World Social Summit Preparatory Committee III, New York, January 1995 1,000
- the World Social Summit in Copenhagen, March 1995 5,000

### Response rate

Just over 500 responses were returned. Despite a high degree of enthusiasm from NGOs worldwide and a substantial visibility at international events over the months

August 1994 to April 1995, responses were low in relation to distribution effort.

Records regarding responses to all individual meetings or published announcements were not maintained, but the exercise holds lessons for future exercises of this sort, and general observations are shared here:

### Inserts in NGO media

The *Reporter* and the *Earth Times* yielded extremely low response rates. *ECOFORUM* was more successful, yielding some 5% of responses received. Responses continued to trickle in for up to six months after they appeared in an NGO journal *Notices* in the WEDO newsletter and in the NGLS *Go-Between* resulted in a small number of requests through E-Mail and letters.

### Conference presence: Prepcoms and theme-related conferences

Prepcoms and issue-focussed conferences appear to be too exhaustive of NGO delegates time. One consultant working full time to get responses from the WSSD Prepcom III, for example, yielded 25 responses over four and a half days, using personal persuasion and a conspicuous mailbox in a major NGO meeting room, and announcements at the women's caucus and other meetings over that period. This was the result even though the questionnaires were well-known to this group as they had been circulated at the previous Prepcoms. The conclusion from this experience is that Prepcoms should be avoided for survey collection purposes.

### Conference presence: a survey team at the NGO forum of an international conference

The most successful survey collection period was in a single week at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March 1995. A team was recruited of twelve local postgraduate students working on issues of NGOs and civil governance. They were paid incrementally more for each survey collected per day, and collected nearly 300 surveys from NGOs at the NGO forum. They concentrated all their energies on the NGO Forum, as they were not allowed into the official conference area. It is not clear whether their success related to the fact that this was a relaxed NGO atmosphere at an international conference, not a Prepcom; or the method of having a very motivated and talented team intent of getting surveys filled in on the spot. It may have been a mixture of both. The learning from this

is that this method is clearly far more efficient as a way to collect survey data from the NGO community, and could be replicated in similar survey exercises.

Although largely distributed at the international gatherings of NGOs, some individuals contacted Benchmark directly for copies. During the month of February and March approximately 70 follow-up calls were made to individuals whom Benchmark had sent surveys to previously.

### *Definitional issues*

«Inter-governmental events» is the expression used throughout the questionnaire to cover global special issue conferences, inter-governmental negotiation sessions, inter-governmental conferences, inter-governmental governing councils, and expert group meetings. While responses may have varied between these types of events, it was necessary to have a generic expression to allow for the breadth of international activities involving NGOs without prejudging the particular form of participation or its structure. The questionnaire was divided into sections inviting respondents to consider their participation in the inter-governmental official meeting from their replies on their participation in the NGO-related forum, the implication does favor the larger international global conferences that have associated and independent NGO forums.

«Non-Governmental Organization» was interpreted broadly to include any non-governmental body. Under this approach no distinction was made between international NGOs and domestic NGOs or between any of the major groups separately identified in Agenda 21, section 3. Because of the survey format and language, NGOs with no experience of international conferences may have had difficulty in completing it. This was not a concern, as the goal was to poll those NGOs who are trying to make an international impact and are operating in this arena.

### *Demographic results*

The project has collected just over 520 responses from respondents in 100 countries. There is really no way to know the size of the universe of NGOs that are or have been active in international events. At large international global conference there can be thousands of different NGOs but there is generally only one such conference per year. The specialized meetings and pre-conferences

can attract scores of NGOs and there may be 10–15 of such meetings per year. Then there are domestic NGOs who never attend a international event but follow carefully the international events and report on their outcomes to their membership. In this context it is simply not possible to have a reasonable estimate of the universe of NGOs active in international events. Although the total numbers and demographic contours of this community are unknown, our survey has yielded roughly equivalent numbers of the key variables: men and women, North and South. Given the diversity of the respondents (see Annex 3) and the size of the sample, the authors are confident that important and interesting results can be extracted from the collected data. However, caution must be exercised in generalizing the statistical finds of this study beyond its legitimate bounds

Six demographic data variables were used in the data analysis : gender, regions of base country of NGO, accreditation status, size of membership of NGO, age of respondent, and year of first international conference. Demographic data was collected for six other potential independent variables but has not been analyzed at this time.

### *Statistical Analysis*

During October 1994 a spreadsheet format and coding strategy was developed to easily and clearly enter the data into an organized format. The survey responses were tabulated on a spreadsheet program, QuattroPro. The tabulated data was transferred to a statistics program, SPSS 6.1, for recoding and analysis. For all variations across the six independent variables cited in the text, a (p) value is contained in the chapter endnotes. The graphics throughout the text were generated from QuattroPro.

An analysis of each question was made across each of the six demographic variables separately, i.e., gender, base country of operations, size of organizational membership. An analysis of responses across more than one demographic variable simultaneously (e.g., a 54 year old man, or a 38 year old woman who attended in their first international conference in 1984 and whose organization is based in a developing country serving more than 10,000 members) was not developed at this time.

Each demographic variable has been identified as a sub-community group in the text. Each sub-community is composed of population segments. For example, the

gender sub-community is composed of two segments, male and female. Our total sample of respondents included in this report was 501. However, four hundred and seventy four respondents indicated their gender in the survey. Of those 474 individuals, 42% were female and 58% male.

responses to all the questions were analyzed according to the frequency of responses and the percent of total number of respondents to the question. Each question was then compared against each sub-community, i.e., gender, base country of operations, accreditation, etc.

The percent distribution of responses in each sub-community was compared against the percent distribution of total responses to the question. For example, 42% of the total survey sample are women. If 46% of the responses to a specific question (10a.) are answered by women respondents, the difference is -4%. Similarly, 44% of the total survey sample indicated that their organization was based in a developing country. If 39% of the responses to a specific question (10a.) were answered by individuals whose organizations are based in the South, the difference is +5%. This difference between these populations was then measured to determine if the difference was statistically significant, such that the difference reflects a real difference in the populations and did not occur by chance. Measurements determined to be statistically significant at the 0.01 level (90% confidence) were recorded in the endnotes ( $p=0.0100$ ) of each chapter. Segments of the sub-communities which exhibited statistically significant differences are presented in the text under '*variations within sub-communities*' headings in each chapter, or integrated into the body of the text, where appropriate.

Segments of the sub-communities were prescreened before determining the statistical significance of their differences. Specific groups within the various sub-communities (e.g., individuals whose age ranges between 30–39) that exhibited differences of more than 4% from the total sample distribution were checked to determine the significance of the difference. Those groups that exhibited a significant difference were noted in the text.

In several circumstances, specific groups (i.e., individuals who attended their first international conference between 1990–1993) exhibited consistent positive or negative differences in their replies to all the components (a-h) of a specific question compared to the replies from total sample. These trends were also stated in '*var-*

*iations within sub-communities*'. Measurements of significance were not necessarily performed on all of these differences.

In several questions, respondents were asked to indicate a value for rank order, preference, dollars, and days. For these questions, a mean value was determined for the various sub-communities based on the total number of respondents to the question. Outstanding variations in the mean values between segments of the sub-communities were analyzed in the text.

### *Recoding of Data*

The survey format chose to collect some forms of demographic information from participants via open ended questions. Giving the categories on the survey form would lead to some loss of the richness and diversity that the global community represents. Also the amount of space required in the questionnaire in order to provide all the possible choices would not have been practical. Based on the responses received Benchmark then categorized demographic information in a manner which appropriately and fairly represents the international NGO community responding to the survey.

Survey participants were asked to indicate the base country from which their NGO operates. Respondents identified 100 countries which were then reclassified by following UN statistical definitions into three groups: developing countries (DC), developed countries (DME), and countries in transition (CIT). However, too few responses were collected from CIT countries and the cell size for CIT countries was too small for statistical analysis.

Survey participants were asked to indicate their approximate age. Most indicated a specific age and these were easily reclassified into 5 groups, <30, 30s, 40s, 50s, and >60.

Survey participants were asked to indicate, among several, which UN agencies their NGO was accredited with. Accreditation status was classified into three categories; NGOs reporting that they had ECOSOC accreditation; NGOs reporting that they were accredited to another UN system organization but not ECOSOC; and NGOs reporting that they were not-UN accredited. Individuals responses' included 1) circling one of the listed agencies, 2) listing another agency, either accredited or not, 3) writing no, none, or NA, and 4) leaving this

question blank. All additional institutions written in by respondents listed were included with either other UN agencies or with non-accredited agencies. Assuming that survey respondents would know and indicate a UN agency which their organization was accredited with, those who did not reply were tabulated with non-accredited responses.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the year they attended their first international conference. The years were regrouped into six categories: those who first conference was (1) before 1970, (2) in the 1970s, (3) in the 1980s, (4) between 1990–1993, (5) 1994, and (6) 1995. 1990–1995 was broken out into three separate categories in order to be able to analyze the experiences and perceptions of individuals who only recently began participating in international conferences compared to those with extensive and moderate experience. In addition to asking about the first international conference, the survey also asked for the number of years active in the international NGO community. In the final analysis, this statistic appeared less robust, in particular since the focus of the survey related to personal experience at conferences. By uniting the first two categories of the first international conference statistic into a combined set of those who have participated since at least 1980, the survey data then provided a sufficient sample from the different age categories to analyze possible differences in opinion based on the length of experience.

In a number of questions respondents were asked to rank order their first and second choice. After tabulating the responses in that manner, Benchmark instead choose to aggregate the respondents selections such that our analysis discusses the total frequency of selections, not first and second choices.

#### *Other comments on data collection*

The survey response form expected respondents to answer in several different ways:

- a checkmark to indicate agreement
- a value to indicate preference
- a yes/no indication
- a value reflecting a dollar amount or number of days
- written commentary

In each case, comparisons are made only to other respondents to the particular question and not to the survey sample, as some respondents did not reply to all questions.

For those questions which expected a checkmark, responses were tabulated as frequencies. Individuals which did not respond to a specific question were tabulated as no checkmark (did not agree with the statement).

Individuals were asked to rank-order their preference in a number of questions. A number of respondents checked their preferences without order. Our analysis combines first and second preferences with checks to include all responses. Our analysis makes no differentiation from first or second choice. Third choices indicated were eliminated.

For questions which were presented in yes/no format, yes answers were analyzed.

Question numbers 12 and 19 asked for ways to distribute \$20,000 dollars. The mean of those values was analyzed across sub-communities. Numerous people appropriated less than \$20,000 and several appropriated more.

## Annex II: Questionnaire

# The Benchmark Survey of NGOs: Who speaks for the People? Who speaks for Nature? Who speaks for You?

## How effective is NGO access to intergovernmental decision-making? How it can be made more democratic?

**Democratic decision-making** has long been an undercurrent of concern in the international NGO movement. Who is an NGO? Who decides which NGOs can attend international meetings? How are 'NGO statements' adopted? Which NGO representatives can speak before intergovernmental meetings? The common consensus is that the ability NGOs have to affect the intergovernmental process depends on their ability to influence the formal governmental process and on their ability to have a process of collective NGO decision-making during inter-governmental conferences. The Norwegian Department of Development Cooperation Programmes has commissioned this poll to learn the views of the international NGO community on these issues. It is hoped that the results will also be helpful to other Governments during the current ECOSOC review on NGO status and to the international NGO community as it evolves its own independent views.

**Some history:** As originally conceived in the UN Charter discussions, NGOs would be recognized by the Economic and Social Council as important participants in considering issues before the Council and that's all. Subsequently, large numbers of NGOs arrived at official UN conferences and made their presence felt through counter-conferences, parallel events, and demonstrations.

A **period of diverse** and ad hoc special arrangements started. During the 1970s experts and individuals from leading NGOs were 'invited' in to expert group meetings, specialized conferences, and UN staff planning meetings. At the UNCTAD negotiations for a New International Economic Order, NGOs were given the ability to produce in-house newspapers during inter-governmental meetings in order to inform Governments about the on-going proceedings. Under the discussions of the Human Rights Commission, NGOs were 'asked' to monitor the behaviour of Governments and to report back to inter-governmental bodies on the compliance of Governments to the relevant international standards. In the World Health Organization, NGO expertise was given a prominence in drafting international guidelines and standards on infant formula sometimes equal to or greater than individual Governments. The Bergen conference on sustainable development experimented with a five sided formula : Governments, business, youth, labour, and environmental groups had to agree on a common statement. The European Union has now held ministerial / NGO level consultations. And the UNCED process formally defined a new the role of NGOs in the preparation for global conferences and their follow-up.

**This poll** is an attempt to gather the views of a wide diversity of NGOs. Your experiences and views can help cast the framework for the next phase of NGO / intergovernmental relations. We hope that you will take the time to make your crucial contribution to this process.

**French and Spanish** versions of this questionnaire are available on request.

## Overview

**1. In general, how are we doing? Please rank #1 (well) #3 (so-so) #5 (awful)**

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Are the 'peoples' voices heard at international events :     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Are the concerns of 'Nature' heard at international events : | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Are you heard at international events :                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. Do Governments think 'peoples' voices are heard :            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. Do Governments think 'Nature' is heard :                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. Do Governments think NGOs are heard :                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**2. At international events, who does your organization claim to speak for : \_\_\_\_\_**

**3. Who do you think other NGOs feel your organization speaks for : \_\_\_\_\_**

**4. Who do you think Governments feel your organization speaks for : \_\_\_\_\_**

**5. If you were to think of the most and least democratic cases in your experience of NGO participation at intergovernmental negotiations / conferences / expert meetings / prep-conferences and their associated NGO events, which would rank as the best and worst ? [list up to three events]**

Three most democratic events (title, year, city)

Three least democratic events (title, year, city)

(i).

(i).

(ii).

(ii).

(iii).

(iii).

**6. What were the good and bad elements of these events ?**

Good elements :

Bad elements :

(i).

(i).

(ii).

(ii).

(iii).

(iii).



**7. Organizations and people go to international events for various reasons:**

- a. For my NGO, the two most important actors to influence at international events are (1st & 2nd):
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Our national Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Intergovernmental organizations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Governments in general  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other NGOs                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The international media | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                     |
- b. For my NGO, the two most important types of international events are (1st & 2nd):
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large global specialized conferences    | <input type="checkbox"/> Annual sessions of governing boards       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specialized inter-governmental meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiations on international conventions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expert level meetings                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                               |
- c. Personally, the two most important actors to influence at an international event are (1st & 2nd):
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Governments                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-governmental organizations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other NGOs                        | <input type="checkbox"/> The international media          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Related professionals and friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                      |
- d. Personally, the two most important types of international events are (1st & 2nd):
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large global specialized conferences    | <input type="checkbox"/> Annual sessions of governing boards       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specialized inter-governmental meetings | <input type="checkbox"/> Negotiations on international conventions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expert level meetings                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                               |

**8. Please tell us something about your NGO:**

Size of your current NGO (circle answer)

membership	< 10	10 - 99	100 - 250	250 - 1,000	1000 - 10,000	10,000+
full-time staff	< 5	5 - 15	15 - 25	25 - 100	100+	
Int'l oriented staff	< 1	2 - 3	4 - 9	10 - 20	20+	

Which UNCED Major Group best describes your organization (please circle) :

Women, Children&Youth, Indigenous People, NGOs, Local Authorities, Workers and Trade Unions, Business & Industry, Scientific and Technological Communities, Farmers

Is your NGO accredited to ECOSOC, CSD, WHO, UNEP, ILO, FAO, UNESCO, other \_\_\_\_\_

Geographic location of NGO : Base country \_\_\_\_\_ Number of foreign branches, if any \_\_\_\_\_

Thematic focus/foci of your NGO \_\_\_\_\_

**Please tell us something about yourself:**

Age (approx!) \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Nationality \_\_\_\_\_ Status within your NGO \_\_\_\_\_

Years with current NGO \_\_\_\_\_ Years active in int'l NGO community \_\_\_\_\_ First int'l conference 19\_\_\_\_

How did you receive this questionnaire ? \_\_\_\_\_

August 16, 1994

# NGO Involvement in Intergovernmental Events

The following are a list of things that could have made you feel included or excluded from the proceedings of **official intergovernmental conferences**. These questions are designed to learn what 'made' or 'broke' your sense of participation in these events.

## 9. Please indicate your 1st and 2nd choices of the items in the following lists :

Why do you attend official UN conferences?

- a. \_\_\_ to influence your national government
- b. \_\_\_ to influence your national media
- c. \_\_\_ to strengthen your NGO
- d. \_\_\_ to learn more about an issue
- e. \_\_\_ to alter final conference outcome

You prefer to convey your views

- f. \_\_\_ through documents distribution
- g. \_\_\_ through display of posters
- h. \_\_\_ through addressing plenary sessions
- i. \_\_\_ through 'official' NGO newspapers
- j. \_\_\_ through face-to-face discussions with individual delegates
- k. \_\_\_ through street demonstrations

You most need information in

- l. \_\_\_ conference rules & prior decisions
- m. \_\_\_ pre-conference documents
- n. \_\_\_ working conference documents
- o. \_\_\_ daily work agenda
- p. \_\_\_ conference newspaper

You most need unrestricted access to

- q. \_\_\_ your own Government delegation
- r. \_\_\_ other Government delegations
- s. \_\_\_ UN conference staff
- t. \_\_\_ media representatives
- u. \_\_\_ NGO support staff

---

You are halfway through! Stay with us! Use this box for any comments on the issues so far ...

---

## 10. At intergovernmental conferences, do you generally feel

restricted by

- |                                    |          |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| a. own Government's delegation     | Yes / No |
| b. Aid-providing governments       | Yes / No |
| c. Governments funding NGOs        | Yes / No |
| d. United Nations agencies         | Yes / No |
| e. national or international media | Yes / No |
| f. host country culture            | Yes / No |
| g. racist attitudes                | Yes / No |
| h. patriarchal attitudes           | Yes / No |

limited by

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| i. lack of technical knowledge            | Yes / No |
| j. use of professional jargon             | Yes / No |
| k. lack of negotiating skills/ experience | Yes / No |
| l. lack of public speaking skills         | Yes / No |
| m. inadequate translation facilities      | Yes / No |
| n. lack of handicapped access             | Yes / No |
| o. host country visa requirements         | Yes / No |
| p. United Nations conference format       | Yes / No |

## 11. After intergovernmental conferences, do you generally feel

pleased by success in

- |                                     |          |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| a. altering final text of the event | Yes / No |
| b. defining the problem area        | Yes / No |
| c. contacts with your Government    | Yes / No |
| d. contacts with other Governments  | Yes / No |
| e. contacts with UN officials       | Yes / No |
| f. new linkages with NGOs           | Yes / No |

stimulated to

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| g. meet your Government at home                           | Yes / No |
| h. raise money for the next conference                    | Yes / No |
| i. recommend other NGOs participate in future conferences | Yes / No |
| j. increase your time on international solutions          | Yes / No |
| k. pursue issues defined at the conference                | Yes / No |
| l. organise opposition to the decisions                   | Yes / No |

**12. If your NGO was offered \$20,000 to improve NGO involvement in an intergovernmental conference, how would you recommend it should be spent:**

- a. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for a special pre-meeting with other NGOs to develop common positions
  - b. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for additional equipment (faxes, computers)
  - c. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for additional publications to distribute to delegations
  - d. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for financing a demonstration at the conference
  - e. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for lobbying your home Government
  - f. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for travel and expenses for additional participants
  - g. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for travel and expenses for an NGO that has never attended a global event
  - h. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for other uses \_\_\_\_\_
- \$ 20,000 total

**13. If your organization could give you 10 extra days to prepare for an international event, how would you use it:**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ lobby your own Government
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ arrange internal meetings on your international strategy / tactics
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ write a formal policy statement to present at the event
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ co-ordinate with other NGOs from your region
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ co-ordinate with other NGOs sharing same thematic interest
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ attend pre-conference meetings with other NGOs
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_ for other uses \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 days

**14. If asked to co-sign a final Governmental consensus document, would you (check any number)**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ be authorized to commit your organization
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ be able to sign only in your own name
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ need to call / fax home for authority
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ need to submit it to a formal adoption process
- e. \_\_\_\_\_ be unable to sign for your organization
- f. \_\_\_\_\_ refuse to sign a document with Governments
- g. \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

**15. If you could re-structure the format of official conferences so that they involved all delegations and NGOs in a more democratic structure, your 1st and 2nd choices would be to:**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ have NGOs as regular members of official delegations
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ have small work groups of delegations and NGOs within the official conference
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ host off-the-record pre-conferences between NGOs and Government delegations
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ arrange daily Government - NGO sessions to review proceedings and to hear NGO views
- e. \_\_\_\_\_ form a consensus between Government/NGO/Business/Youth/Labour (Bergen model)
- f. \_\_\_\_\_ vote in NGO plenaries for a common citizen's position before Governments debate an issue
- g. \_\_\_\_\_ use video conferencing to broadcast the meeting to your home office (no actual meeting)
- h. \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

August 16, 1994

## Your NGO at International NGO Events

The following are a list of things that could have made you personally feel included or excluded from the proceedings of the **NGO events held in conjunction with intergovernmental meetings**. These questions are designed to learn what 'made' or 'broke' your participation in the NGO-related events.

### 16. Please indicate your 1st and 2nd choices of the items in the following lists:

You most expect from the 'NGO leadership'

- a. \_\_\_ pre-conference plans
- b. \_\_\_ NGO event 'rules'
- c. \_\_\_ info on official conference
- d. \_\_\_ documents from the official conference
- e. \_\_\_ info on alternate conference
- f. \_\_\_ info on alternate accommodations

You prefer to convey your views to NGOs

- g. \_\_\_ by the circulation of documents
- h. \_\_\_ by individual face-to-face discussions
- i. \_\_\_ by small group discussions
- j. \_\_\_ by addressing NGO sessions
- k. \_\_\_ by using the NGO newspaper
- l. \_\_\_ by using NGO exhibition space

You most need access to

- m. \_\_\_ inexpensive, clean hotels
- n. \_\_\_ inexpensive, healthy food
- o. \_\_\_ computers
- p. \_\_\_ telephones / faxes
- q. \_\_\_ office space
- r. \_\_\_ translation facilities
- s. \_\_\_ interpretation facilities

---

Use this box for any additional comments on the issues ...

---

### 17. At NGO international events, do you generally feel

the potential dominance of

- a. northern NGOs Yes / No
- b. larger NGOs Yes / No
- c. accredited NGOs Yes / No
- d. male-run NGOs Yes / No
- e. white-run NGOs Yes / No
- f. English language-run NGOs Yes / No

unable to

- g. organize special NGO sessions Yes / No
- h. get into official conference building Yes / No
- i. have handicapped access in the official conference building Yes / No
- j. locate NGOs with similar political interests Yes / No
- k. locate NGOs with similar thematic interests Yes / No

### 18. After an international NGO conference, do you generally feel

your biggest impact was

- a. in networking with other NGOs Yes / No
- b. on your national media Yes / No
- c. on your potential fundraising contacts Yes / No
- d. on other NGOs' views Yes / No
- e. in future official conferences Yes / No
- f. on the public Yes / No

pleased by success in

- g. defining scope of problem Yes / No
- h. helping to word a common NGO text Yes / No
- i. contributing strategies to impact the official conference Yes / No
- j. setting future NGO work plans Yes / No
- k. setting structure for future NGO linkages Yes / No

August 16, 1994

19. If your organization received \$20,000 to improve NGO involvement in NGO related international conferences, how would you recommend it be spent

- a. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for increased education of national NGOs in international issues
  - b. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for additional equipment (faxes, computers)
  - c. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for additional publications for other NGOs
  - d. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for travel and expenses for additional representatives of your NGO
  - e. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for travel and expenses for grassroots NGOs with no prior international experience
  - f. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for a post-conference reporting back session with other local NGOs
  - g. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for other uses \_\_\_\_\_
- \$ 20,000 total

20. If money was not a constraint, how many members of your organization would have attended an international conference in the last year :

no change \_\_; 1 - 2 more \_\_; 3 - 5 more \_\_; 5 - 10 more \_\_; more than 10 more \_\_\_\_?

21. If asked to sign a final NGO declaration, would you (check any number)

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ be able to call/fax home for authority
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ be able to sign only in your own name
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ be authorized to commit your organization
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ refuse to sign a document with other NGOs

22. If you could re-structure an NGO alternate conference, the first two things you would do are:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ insist on gender / racial balance in NGO delegations
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ provide documentation / translation in additional languages
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ schedule a series of NGO policy panel discussions
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ arrange voting in NGO plenaries based on membership size
- e. \_\_\_\_\_ have open editorial board meetings for the NGO newspaper
- f. \_\_\_\_\_ book all NGO participants into the same hotel / district
- g. \_\_\_\_\_ remove the podium and arrange chairs in a large circle
- h. \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like a copy of the final report, please provide :

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Questionnaires should be returned to:

**Harris Gleckman / Riva Krut**  
**Benchmark Environmental Consulting,**  
**33 Bartlett Street, Portland, ME 04103 USA.**  
**Tel: 207-775-9078 Fax: 207-772-3539 Email: Harris\_Gleckman@together.org**

**PLEASE COPY AND REDISTRIBUTE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE**

August 16, 1994

NOW IS YOUR CHANCE TO  
**SPEAK OUT!!!**

---

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Harris Gleckman / Riva Krut  
Benchmark Environmental Consulting  
49 Dartmouth Street  
Portland, ME 04101 USA

## Annex III

### SUMMARY OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

#### Gender (Q8J)

##### ABSOLUTE PERCENT

female	200	42.19%
male	274	57.81%
	474	100.00%

##### BY BASE COUNTRY OF OPERATIONS PERCENT

	CIT	DC	DME	TOTAL
female	0.71%	15.00%	26.19%	41.90%
male	0.95%	29.05%	28.10%	58.10%
N=420	1.67%	44.05%	54.29%	100.00%

##### BY ACCREDITATION STATUS PERCENT

	ECOSOC	Other UN	NONaccr	TOTAL
female	10.34%	5.27%	26.58%	42.19%
male	11.81%	10.76%	35.23%	57.81%
N=474	22.15%	16.03%	61.81%	100.00%

##### BY SIZE OF MEMBERSHIP PERCENT

	<10	10-99	100-250	250-1000	1k-10k	>10k	TOTAL
female	1.44%	7.93%	5.29%	7.45%	5.53%	13.70%	41.35%
male	1.44%	13.94%	9.62%	12.02%	8.89%	12.74%	58.65%
N=416	2.88%	21.88%	14.90%	19.47%	14.42%	26.44%	100.00%

##### BY AGE PERCENT

	<30	30-39	40-49	50-59	>60	TOTAL
female	5.34%	10.68%	13.68%	5.34%	5.34%	41.67%
male	6.62%	13.89%	19.02%	11.11%	6.41%	58.33%
N=468	11.97%	24.57%	32.69%	16.45%	11.75%	100.00%

##### BY YEAR OF FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PERCENT

	<1970	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1993	1994	1995	TOTAL
female	1.72%	3.93%	11.06%	7.62%	7.37%	10.32%	42.01%
male	4.18%	6.88%	13.27%	16.46%	8.11%	9.09%	57.99%
N=407	5.90%	10.81%	24.32%	24.08%	15.48%	19.41%	100.00%

## ANNEX III

**Base country of operations (Q8F)****ABSOLUTE PERCENT**

CIT (1)	8	1.82%
DC	193	43.86%
DME	239	54.32%
	440	100.00%

**BY ACCREDITATION PERCENT****ECOSOC Other UN NONaccr TOTAL**

CIT	0.00%	0.68%	1.14%	1.82%
DC	6.36%	7.50%	30.00%	43.86%
DME	17.73%	8.64%	27.95%	54.32%

N=440                      24.09%      16.82%      59.09%      100.00%

**BY SIZE OF MEMBERSHIP PERCENT****<10      10-99      100-250      250-1000      1k-10k      >10k      TOTAL**

CIT	0.00%	0.50%	0.25%	0.25%	0.25%	0.50%	1.75%
DC	1.25%	11.53%	8.27%	11.03%	5.51%	6.77%	44.36%
DME	2.01%	10.53%	6.02%	7.02%	9.27%	19.05%	53.88%

N=399                      3.26%      22.56%      14.54%      18.30%      15.04%      26.32%      100.00%

**BY AGE PERCENT****<30      30-39      40-49      50-59      >60      TOTAL**

CIT	0.23%	0.47%	0.23%	0.47%	0.47%	1.86%
DC	3.73%	15.15%	16.32%	6.76%	2.10%	44.06%
DME	9.09%	9.09%	13.99%	10.26%	11.66%	54.08%

N=429                      13.05%      24.71%      30.54%      17.48%      14.22%      100.00%

**BY YEAR OF FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PERCENT****<1970      1970-1979      1980-1989      1990-1993      1994      1995      TOTAL**

CIT	0.26%	0.26%	0.26%	0.26%	0.79%	0.26%	2.09%
DC	0.79%	2.88%	13.09%	12.30%	8.12%	6.81%	43.98%
DME	4.71%	7.07%	12.04%	12.30%	7.33%	10.47%	53.93%

N=382                      5.76%      10.21%      25.39%      24.87%      16.23%      17.54%      100.00%

(1) CIT      COUNTRIES IN TRANSITION  
 DC      DEVELOPING COUNTRIES  
 DME      DEVELOPED MARKET ECONOMIES



## ANNEX III

**Accreditation (Q8E)****ABSOLUTE PERCENT**

ECOSOC	109	21.76%
Other UN agencies	80	15.97%
Not UN accredited	312	62.28%
	501	100.00%

**BY SIZE OF MEMBERSHIP PERCENT**

	<10	10-99	100-250	250-1000	1k-10k	>10k	TOTAL
ECOSOC	0.23%	3.42%	2.28%	3.42%	4.11%	10.27%	23.74%
Other UN agencies	0.91%	3.88%	2.74%	2.97%	2.05%	3.88%	16.44%
Not UN accredited	1.83%	14.38%	9.36%	13.01%	8.68%	12.56%	59.82%
N=438	2.97%	21.69%	14.38%	19.41%	14.84%	26.71%	100.00%

**BY AGE PERCENT**

	<30	30-39	40-49	50-59	>60	TOTAL
ECOSOC	3.08%	3.08%	6.16%	3.70%	6.16%	22.18%
Other UN agencies	1.85%	4.93%	3.29%	2.67%	3.08%	15.81%
Not UN accredited	7.80%	16.02%	23.00%	10.88%	4.31%	62.01%
N=487	12.73%	24.02%	32.44%	17.25%	13.55%	100.00%

**BY YEAR OF FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PERCENT**

	<1970	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1993	1994	1995	TOTAL
ECOSOC	2.14%	2.14%	4.93%	5.57%	3.21%	2.78%	20.77%
Other UN agencies	0.64%	2.14%	3.85%	3.64%	2.36%	2.36%	14.99%
Not UN accredited	2.36%	5.14%	13.28%	15.20%	9.42%	18.84%	64.24%
N=467	5.14%	9.42%	22.06%	24.41%	14.99%	23.98%	100.00%

ANNEX III

**Size of membership (Q8A)**

**ABSOLUTE PERCENT**

under 10	13	2.97%
10-99	95	21.69%
100-250	63	14.38%
250-1000	85	19.41%
1000-10,000	65	14.84%
over 10,000	117	26.71%
	438	100.00%

**BY AGE PERCENT**

	<30	30-39	40-49	50-59	>60	TOTAL
under 10	0.47%	0.47%	1.41%	0.00%	0.71%	3.06%
10-99	2.12%	5.65%	7.76%	4.24%	1.88%	21.65%
100-250	1.41%	3.06%	6.35%	2.59%	1.18%	14.59%
250-1000	2.35%	5.88%	6.35%	2.59%	2.35%	19.53%
1000 - 10,000	1.41%	3.06%	6.12%	2.35%	2.12%	15.06%
over 10,000	5.65%	4.47%	5.41%	4.94%	5.65%	26.12%
N=425	13.41%	22.59%	33.41%	16.71%	13.88%	100.00%

**BY YEAR OF FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PERCENT**

	<1970	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1993	1994	1995	TOTAL
under 10	0.26%	0.79%	0.53%	1.06%	0.00%	0.53%	3.17%
10-99	1.58%	2.37%	4.75%	5.01%	4.49%	3.17%	21.37%
100-250	0.53%	0.79%	4.75%	2.90%	2.90%	2.90%	14.78%
250-1000	0.53%	1.58%	3.96%	6.60%	3.43%	3.69%	19.79%
1000 - 10,000	0.26%	1.85%	4.22%	3.69%	1.58%	3.69%	15.30%
over 10,000	2.37%	2.37%	5.80%	6.60%	2.64%	5.80%	25.59%
N=379	5.54%	9.76%	24.01%	25.86%	15.04%	19.79%	100.00%

ANNEX III

Age (Q8I)

**ABSOLUTE PERCENT**

<30	62	12.73%
30-39	117	24.02%
40-49	158	32.44%
50-59	84	17.25%
>59	66	13.55%
	487	100.00%

**BY YEAR OF FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PERCENT**

	<1970	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1993	1994	1995	TOTAL
<30	0.00%	0.00%	0.98%	3.44%	0.49%	4.67%	9.58%
30-39	0.00%	0.25%	6.63%	8.11%	4.42%	5.90%	25.31%
40-49	0.74%	4.67%	10.57%	8.60%	3.69%	5.65%	33.91%
50-59	1.23%	2.70%	4.18%	3.93%	3.19%	2.46%	17.69%
>59	3.69%	3.19%	2.46%	1.47%	0.98%	1.72%	13.51%
N=407	5.65%	10.81%	24.82%	25.55%	12.78%	20.39%	100.00%

*Year of first international conference (Q8O)*

**ABSOLUTE PERCENT**

<1970	24	6%
1970-1979	44	11%
1980-1989	101	24%
1990-1993	106	24%
1994	65	16%
1995	83	19%
	423	100.00%



## EVALUATION REPORTS

- 2.86 Mali - matforsyning og katastrofebistand
- 3.86 Multi-bilateral Programme under UNESCO
- 4.86 Mbegani Fisheries Development Centre, Tanzania
- 5.86 Four Norwegian Consultancy Funds, Central America
- 6.86 Virkninger for kvinner av norske bistandstiltak
- 7.86 Commodity Assistance and Import Support to Bangladesh
  
- 1.87 The Water Supply Programme in Western Province, Zambia
- 2.87 Sosio-kulturelle forhold i bistanden
- 3.87 Summary Findings of 23 Evaluation Reports
- 4.87 NORAD's Provisions for Investment Support
- 5.87 Multilateral bistand gjennom FN-systemet
- 6.87 Promoting Imports from Developing Countries
  
- 1.88 UNIFEM - United Nations Development Fund for Women
- 2.88 The Norwegian Multi-Bilateral Programme under UNFPA
- 3.88 Rural Roads Maintenance, Mbeya and Tanga Regions, Tanzania
- 4.88 Import Support, Tanzania
- 5.88 Nordic Technical Assistance Personnel to Eastern Africa
- 6.88 Good Aid for Women?
- 7.88 Soil Science Fellowship Course in Norway
  
- 1.89 Parallel Financing and Mixed Credits
- 2.89 The Women's Grant. Desk Study Review
- 3.89 The Norwegian Volunteer Service
- 4.89 Fisheries Research Vessel - "Dr. Fridtjof Nansen"
- 5.89 Institute of Development Management, Tanzania
- 6.89 DUHs forskningsprogrammer
- 7.89 Rural Water Supply, Zimbabwe
- 8.89 Commodity Import Programme, Zimbabwe
- 9.89 Dairy Sector Support, Zimbabwe
  
- 1.90 Mini-Hydropower Plants, Lesotho
- 2.90 Operation and Maintenance in Development Assistance
- 3.90 Telecommunications in SADCC Countries
- 4.90 Energy support in SADCC Countries
- 5.90 International Research and Training Institute for Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)
- 6.90 Socio-cultural Conditions in Development Assistance
- 7.90 Non-Project Financial Assistance to Mozambique
  
- 1.91 Hjelp til selvhjelp og levedyktig utvikling
- 2.91 Diploma Courses at the Norwegian Institute of Technology
- 3.91 The Women's Grant in Bilateral Assistance
- 4.91 Hambantota Integrated Rural Development Programme, Sri Lanka
- 5.91 The Special Grant for Environment and Development
  
- 1.92 NGOs as partners in health care, Zambia
- 2.92 The Sahel-Sudan-Ethiopia Programme
- 3.92 De private organisasjonene som kanal for norsk bistand, Fase I
  
- 1.93 Internal learning from evaluation and reviews
- 2.93 Macroeconomic impacts of import support to Tanzania
- 3.93 Garantiordning for investeringer i og eksport til utviklingsland
- 4.93 Capacity-Building in Development Cooperation Towards integration and recipient responsibility
  
- 1.94 Evaluation of World Food Programme
- 2.94 Evaluation of the Norwegian Junior Expert Programme with UN Organisations
  
- 1.95 Technical Cooperation in Transition
- 2.95 Evaluering av FN-sambandet i Norge
- 3.95 NGOs as a channel in development aid
- 3A.95 Rapport fra presentasjonsmøte av "Evalueringen av de frivillige organisasjoner"
- 4.95 Rural Development and Local Government in Tanzania
- 5.95 Integration of Environmental Concerns into Norwegian Bilateral Development Assistance: Policies and Performance
  
- 1.96 NORAD's Support of the Remote Area Development Programme (RADP) in Botswana
- 2.96 Norwegian Development Aid Experiences. A Review of Evaluation Studies 1986-92
- 3.96 The Norwegian People's Aid Mine Clearance Project in Cambodia
- 4.96 Democratic Global Civil Governance Report of the 1995 Benchmark Survey of NGOs

