In recent years, the NGO sector has placed greater emphasis on building the management or technical capacities of indigenous NGOs, as opposed to providing services and running projects directly. Northern NGOs frequently have ongoing relationships with southern institutions in the form of twinning or similar arrangements. NGO twinning arrangements have proven to be among the biggest success stories in host institution capacity-building and are now widely emulated within the governmental sector.

Northern NGOs are diverse in their philosophies and ambitions. They include:

- relief and humanitarian organizations (primarily church-related);
- more directly developmental NGOs with projects and collaborations designed to increase the productive capabilities and health and educational levels of villages and neighbourhoods (some of these are full-time development NGOs, others are only partially involved in development, such as universities, coops, and unions);
- organizations active in fields such as human rights and the environment; and
- public education and advocacy NGOs attempting to enlighten public opinion in the North but having frequent contacts with southern colleagues.

In the South, there is a wide range of charitable and self-help NGOs, both project-oriented and frequently with more "radical" aims in community organization and political empowerment.

Expatriate NGO volunteers do a wide variety of jobs, which can be illustrated by some examples from a recent Annual Report of the Canadian International Development Agency. These included training managers of southern NGOs, teacher training, a twinning between the Canadian Home Economics Association and the Gambian equivalent to upgrade the home skills of early school leavers, assis-