



The TOS into the future: planning for the next five years

**A compilation of further ideas for advancing the work of the TOS,
from the second plenary session of the International TOS Conference, July 2013**

Area	Possible international TOS actions	Possible national or local TOS actions
<p>1. Development of International TOS Charter/Constitution/Guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Communicate the <i>Principles of Organisation</i> document as widely as possible within the TS, including to TS Sections where the TOS does not exist. * Translate the <i>Principles of Organisation</i> document into local languages. * Encourage as close and harmonious a relationship between the TS and TOS as possible. * Review existing policies and materials in terms of promoting theosophical action in the wider community, and using a sustainable business model for large projects. Explore the potential for new projects along these lines. * Set a limit on terms of office for those appointed. <p><i>POLICY MATTERS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Don't be restrictive in the areas of service designated for TOS activities. * There is a need for flexibility to allow structured and unstructured approaches to service to walk side by side. * Be sensitive to local situations/cultures and allow for differences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Collaborate with the International TOS to translate the <i>Principles of Organisation</i> document into local languages. * Develop as close and harmonious a relationship as possible between the TS and TOS at branch and Section level. * Consider making TS members automatically TOS members, as in USA. <p><i>POLICY MATTERS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Don't be restrictive in the areas of service designated for TOS activities. * There is a need for flexibility to allow structured and unstructured approaches to service to walk side by side. * Be sensitive to local situations/cultures and allow for differences.
<p>2. Staffing International Secretariat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Map the worldwide organisational structure. Identify gaps in personnel using flow charts. * Seek volunteers to assist in duties: publicise needs. * Appoint regional secretaries/'liaisons' in areas of the world where they are not working already. * Identify more experienced TOS workers to tour regionally and give talks to both TOS and TS groups. These touring speakers (or 'ambassadors') should be certain to explain how the TOS differs from other philanthropic organisations. * Mentor national TOS leaders. * Explore the possibility of paying staff – develop professional staff. * Identify a financial advisor (or team) for the TOS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identify more experienced TOS workers to tour regionally and give talks both to TOS and TS groups. These touring speakers (or 'ambassadors') should be certain to explain how the TOS differs from other philanthropic organisations. * Mentor local TOS leaders.

Area	Possible international TOS actions	Possible national or local TOS actions
3. Increasing awareness of the TOS's existence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Place a big button saying "TOS e-newsletter" on website homepage for people to sign up to receive it. Also include the button on Facebook. * Place "What we stand for" as key words on the home page. * Awareness of the TOS at TS Section level is critical: encourage a TOS presence at TS conventions/regional and federation conferences. * Encourage TS/TOS collaborative projects and community outreach. * Request information on TOS on all TS websites and in magazines. Encourage the starting of new groups through feature articles. * Organise regular communication and networking between National TOS leaders to build community. * Support National TOS leaders in developing and co-ordinating TOS teams and activities within their countries. * Encourage National TOS leaders to organise national conferences for TOS members where there are enough members to warrant it and where such gatherings do not already take place. * Using Skype, "go-to" meetings or Adobe Connect, create an idea pool to share experiences. * Increase use of video and U-Tube. * Use social media to demonstrate TOS in action. Find a volunteer to activate a Facebook page and keep it active. Twitter to be used to announce and inspire e.g. daily inspirational quotes. * Write articles about TOS activities and the philosophy behind it for non-TS/alternative magazines. * Consider the communication obstacles faced in reaching out to communities where illiteracy is high and where internet access is impossible e.g. rural areas, especially India. * Look more closely at the UN NGO status. * Develop films, internet and TV programmes to demonstrate that the TOS work and the spiritual goals and multi-ethnic and interdenominational activities pursued by the TOS can show brotherhood in action. * Provide a standard international TOS presentation letter to which local groups can add the particular project for which they are wanting sponsorship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identify TOS members to act as 'TOS representatives' in connecting with community groups. * Awareness of the TOS at TS Section level is critical: encourage a TOS presence at TS Conventions/regional and federation conferences. * Encourage collaborative projects between TS and TOS. * Request information on TOS on all TS websites and in magazines. Encourage the starting of new groups through feature articles. * Try to include specific TOS page in national TS magazines. * Encourage local TS branches to incorporate TOS presentations in their programming, making them fun and joyful. * National TOS leaders communicate with one another as regularly as possible to build community. * Encourage National TOS leaders to visit their groups. * Create national coordinating teams to encourage groups to participate and have key workers to activate work. * Organise national conferences for TOS members where there are enough members to warrant it and where such gatherings do not already take place. * Using Skype, "go-to" meetings or Adobe Connect, create an idea pool to share experiences. * Increase use of video and U-Tube. * Use social media to demonstrate TOS in action. Find a volunteer to activate a Facebook page and keep it active. Twitter to be used to announce and inspire e.g. daily inspirational quotes. * Use personal and professional contacts to develop interest in the TOS. * Write articles about TOS activities and the philosophy behind it for non-TS/alternative magazines. * Explore the placing of ads and stories about the TOS in printed non-TS publications. * Do e-mail campaigns to all TS members and other interested people. * Contact corporate and local companies about sponsorship and the volunteering of their employees' time. (Write TOS presentation letter to local manager or Chief Executive Officer to invite their participation.)

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3. Increasing awareness of the TOS's existence (continued)	<p>FOR YOUTH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Highlight and share stories about young people involved in TOS projects. * Create a "Youth TOS". * Provide information about affiliated ceremonial/service organisations such as The Round Table. * Facilitate networking between TS/TOS Sections to connect young people wherever they travel or go to school. * Create a certificate of merit for children participating in writing or art activity on a service-related topic provided by TOS. Enquire of Vic Hao Chin how to promote the activity without competitiveness. * Publish youth contributions on the website. (Ensure that the child's full name is not given for protection reasons. Pen name can be used, for example.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Explore the possibility of issuing TOS membership cards. * Consider the communication obstacles faced in reaching out to communities where illiteracy is high and where internet access is impossible e.g. rural areas, especially India. * Involve local community leaders and opinion-makers in TOS functions. * Submit reports on the activities of the TOS to local newspapers. <p>FOR YOUTH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Engage young people in schools, colleges, universities to become involved in TOS projects. * Create a 'Youth TOS'. * Encourage children to participate in the ceremonial work of the affiliated ceremonial/service organisation called The Round Table. Create Round Table groups. * Network with other Sections to connect young people wherever they travel or go to school. * Read stories to children in libraries. Use 3-D printing in instruction. * Create a certificate of merit for children participating in writing or art activity on a service-related topic provided by TOS. Enquire of Vic Hao Chin how to promote the activity without competitiveness. Publish youth contributions on website. (Ensure that the child's full name is not given for protection reasons. Pen name can be used, for example.) * Identify retired TOS members able to mentor needy children or unemployed youth in trade skills and to donate trade tools.
4. Development of international TOS publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Explore existing resources/publications from likeminded groups. * Produce more booklets like Nelda Samarel's <i>Helping the Dying</i>. * Produce an international magazine available to all countries in the different languages. * Translate TOS publications into local languages where useful. * Sign up TOS members for (free) E-news. * Publicise our E-newsletter. * Develop international tri-fold brochure suitable for any country. Place on website to be printed locally. * Explore website (RSS) linking mentioned by Vic Hao Chin. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Collaborate in translating TOS publications into local languages where useful. * Sign up TOS members for (free) E-news. * Publicise our E-newsletter.

Area	Possible international TOS actions	Possible national or local TOS actions
5. Increasing awareness of the nature of the TOS's work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Include on the website and in magazines more personal stories on how theosophical ideas help people cope in their lives. They will make the reading more meaningful to the public. * Provide information and resources to help groups coordinate TOS activities with existing UN themes – it provides a readymade framework of ideas for activities. * Coordinate with governing agencies such as European Union and UN. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Include on national websites and in publications more personal stories on how theosophical ideas help people cope in their lives. They will make the reading more meaningful to the public. * Coordinate TOS activities with existing UN themes – it provides a readymade framework of ideas for activities. * Offer workshops for the general public.
6. Development of support materials for different lines of service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Develop web conference facilities. * Provide PowerPoint templates and logos in colour to download. * Expand lists of materials with a theosophical theme in all categories (children, ecology, etc.) on website, linking to outside resources. * Make available on the website an automatic translation service. * Add more information about animal welfare to the website – on how to find cruelty-free products, on vegetarianism, etc. with links to articles and source websites such as a vegetarian society. * Show the sacredness of life by using pictures of children, animals and workers doing TOS work. * Highlight each week a feature article on the website home page. * Offer Apps (phone applications). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Network with like-minded national organisations in the animal, social welfare and environmental areas and share and promote appropriate resources. * Promote international TOS resource material to TS and TOS members and the wider community. * Add appropriate material and links to national TOS websites.
7. Skills and inner development programmes and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Encourage TOS groups to hold leadership seminars for the workers to strengthen the organisation. Skills to be developed should include decision-making as a team. * Mentor and network National leaders. A skills matrix is needed: whom do we have? Build relationships. * Provide training in technology and resources to help those who want to volunteer their services; identify mentors. * Encourage National TOS leaders to promote the inner transformative work with local groups. * Emphasise the three 'pillars' of the theosophical life (study, service and meditation) to ensure a balanced approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identify potential leaders in local groups. Encourage TOS groups to hold leadership seminars for the workers to strengthen the organisation. Skills to be developed should include decision-making as team. * Mentor local groups. A skills matrix is needed: whom do we have? Build relationships. * Provide training in technology and resources to help those who want to volunteer their services; identify mentors. * Encourage local TOS groups to include specifically the inner transformative work in their programmes. * Emphasise the three 'pillars' of the theosophical life (study, service and meditation) to ensure a balanced approach. * Organise spiritual retreats for youth.

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8. Development of financial management policy and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Provide templates for reporting monies. (Of course national and local groups' needs will vary.) * Examine the usefulness of an Intranet coordinated accounting system. * Provide assistance for grant writing and help in the writing skills necessary to record/report on the use of donated money. * Develop an official policy of accepted ways of operating for groups receiving donations for their projects, specifying conditions for this financial support: the necessity of sending receipts and regular progress reports, showing a budget where applicable, undergoing an annual audit, etc. * Legal advice could be sought on charitable organisation status for the TOS in certain countries. * Where possible, encourage meetings between donors and beneficiaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Provide local groups with templates for reporting monies. (Of course local groups' needs will vary.) * Work with local groups receiving donations for their projects to help them meet the conditions for continuing support from other TOS groups – sending receipts and regular progress reports, showing a budget where applicable, undergoing an annual audit, etc.