HIV/AIDS Networking Guide

A comprehensive resource for individuals and organizations who wish to build, strengthen or sustain a network.

HIV/AIDS Networking Guide

Second Edition

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Preface

The community response to HIV/AIDS is a legacy of action. Within this rich history, we have accumulated the knowledge and capability to confront the evolving and complex challenges posed by this pandemic. From Thailand to the Republic of Congo, and from Poland to Peru, community action is making a difference.

Among the major challenges faced by community-based organizations working in HIV/AIDS throughout the world are dwindling resources and rising expectations. In effect we are expected to do more with less. Networking, by individuals and organizations at all levels — local, national, regional, and international — is one of the ways we are learning to operate more strategically. This is a powerful testament of our commitment to building solidarity and uniting in common cause.

From this spirit of solidarity, and in response to hundreds of requests for practical assistance to establishing and maintaining networking approaches, ICASO decided to produce this Guide. The Guide is, essentially, a tool to enable individuals and organizations to improve their ability to build and sustain a successful networking approach.

We also produced the Networking Guide with the hope that people and organizations will freely copy and share it with others in their local communities. As a basic tool, you can adapt it to your specific needs by adding sections relevant to your development. We encourage you to complete it with a resource list for your own country. And we would like to hear your opinions on the Guide so please complete and send to us the evaluation form at the end of the Guide. Good luck and continued strength and solidarity.

About This Guide

Why This Guide Was Developed

The guide has it origins in several discussions between members of the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO) on how to respond effectively to the numerous requests for assistance from members and other groups on networking issues.

Many of the inquiries were from people or organizations who simply wanted to know more about the experience of others in networking, either in an informal sense, or in a formal or structured network. Other requests were more specific in nature and focused on the mechanics of starting or keeping a network going.

Responding to these requests was sometimes difficult because of the absence of written information on the "networking experience" in HIV/AIDS work, the diverse subject matter of many of the requests, and the lack of easily accessible information on many networking issues.

The development of a resource to address many of the commonly asked questions about networking was seen as a practical response by ICASO to a need for information on this subject.

What This Guide Will Do

The Guide is a basic resource for individuals and organizations who wish to build, strengthen or sustain a network. It will assist you or your organization in understanding what motivates people and organizations to network; important steps to take in making the network work for its members; and action that can be taken to address some of the challenges that are typically encountered in networks.

The Guide was written to be useful to those who are involved in both informal and formal networks. Only Chapter 5 — Governing Body and Staff Issues in Formalized Networks — is specific to formal networks.

What This Guide Will Not Do

Many factors other than those presented in this Guide are known to influence the capacity of individuals and organizations to start and keep networks operating smoothly. It simply was not feasible to address in detail the activities which networks typically undertake, such as advocacy, policy development, skills building, capacity building and sharing information. Each of these activity areas are important aspects of networking but beyond the scope of this guide. The guide is, therefore, intended as a basic resource, not as "the authority" on network building.

It must also be said that there is nearly always more than one approach to addressing any challenge, including those associated with networking. The information presented in this publication is not a "blue print" but a guide to assist you.

How This Guide Is Organized

The rest of this Guide is divided into six main sections:

1. Networking for A More Effective Response to HIV and AIDS explains some key terms in the field of networking, provides a brief overview of the characteristics of a network, looks at what the benefits of networking are and the activities which are normally undertaken by networks, the organizational features of AIDS networks, and the advantages of significant PHA involvement in networks.

2. Networking: What Makes it Work? gives the nuts and bolts of planning for building and sustaining a network. Eight key actions are presented.

3. Change and Challenges provides suggestions on how to address the networking challenges of sustaining commitment, resolving conflict, and communication.

4. Other Networking Issues explores some aspects of networking which can have a negative impact on the development of a network development, presents some basic information on how to mobilize resources for network activities and looks at the benefits and possible constraints of electronic communication in networking.

5. Governing Body and Staff Issues gives guidance on how to meet the organizational development challenges associated with formal networks. It looks at selecting a governing body, models for the structure of a governing body, and the importance of defining the responsibilities of the governing body and staff.

6. Lessons Learned About Networking presents the reflections of people actively involved in networking on factors which can make or break a network.

Networking for a More Effective Response To HIV and AIDS

Introduction

Those of us who are involved in HIV/AIDS work network because the problems that we are trying to address are too large for any of us as individuals or organizations to face on our own. We need help, we need encouragement, we need to feel that we are not alone. Yet it is not for moral and psychological support that we seek out others engaged in similar pursuits. The ethical, technical, and managerial demands of the challenges of HIV and AIDS are on such a scale that we can only address them by cooperating as much as possible.

This chapter gives background information on the process of networking and networks. It includes:

- What Do We Mean by Networking;

- Characteristics of a Network;

- What are the Benefits of Networking;

- Network Activities;

- Organizational Features of AIDS Networks; and

- PHA Involvement in AIDS Networks.

What Do We Mean by Networking?

There are no fixed definitions for "networking." The term is used in many ways and has a variety of meanings to different people. Here is our working definition.

Networking is a process by which two or more organizations and/or individuals collaborate to achieve common goals.

We use the term "network" to refer to the set of organizations and/or individuals that join in collaboration.

Characteristics of a Network

Most networks have some or all of the following characteristics. They are:

- a group of organizations and/or individuals who come together to pursue joint goals or common interests;
- venues for social action through exchange and mutual learning;
- sustained through some form of communication;
- committed to a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; and
- they are based on member-ownership and commitment to shared objectives and means of action.

What Are the Benefits of Networking?

AIDS organizations and people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs) network because the problems and issues that we face are too large for any of us as individuals or as organizations to face on our own.

Networking is a means of giving greater regional, national or international impacts to the activities of community-based organizations. To use a fashionable term, networks have a "synergy effect."

"Synergy" means that the total effect of things done together is greater than the sum of individual activities. That is, cooperation between various AIDS organizations gives the groups involved "more."

Successful networking also helps to:

- accomplish something together which you could not accomplish alone;
- strengthen advocacy;
- influence others — inside and outside the network;
- broaden the understanding of an issue or struggle by bringing together different constituencies;
- share the work;
- reduce duplicating efforts and wasting resources;
- promote the exchanges of ideas, insights, experiences and skills;
- provide a needed sense of solidarity, and moral and psychological support; and
- under certain circumstances, mobilize financial resources.

Why Network?

The following is a reflection on the value of networking in AIDS work by Elizabeth Reid, former director, HIV and Development Programme, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

In the process of creating these networks, we are learning that they are fragile entities, difficult to get established and to sustain. They require much commitment and patience from their members, particularly their founding members. But we are also learning that they form an essential part of the community response to the epidemic. Without them, people are often merely told what others think they should do. With them, we can strengthen the process of questioning, reflection and learning. They are the places in which an individual in search of help can go, spaces in which communities can seek to understand how, wisely and humanely, they can respond.

Source: "Networks on Ethics, Law and HIV: Providing a Framework for Difficult Discussions," in Newsletter of the African Network on Ethics, Law and HIV, No. 1, June 1996.

Network Activities

AIDS networks are diverse. They are formed by different groups and individuals for a variety of reasons and they operate in distinct ways. There are, however, some basic activities which are typical to most AIDS networks. The following are presented as examples of the typical activities undertaken by AIDS networks.

Generate and Share Information and Analysis

Networks provide a structure for members to establish and maintain essential communications with each other. It is important to exchange information and to analyze it to achieve common goals and objectives. Occasionally, networks will undertake research on behalf of members including: policy matters; member needs assessments; member activity surveys; and evaluations.

Advocacy

Networks often coordinate advocacy action on matters of mutual concern to members. Networks have been quite successful at influencing decision-makers* both within and without the network.

* A decision-maker is a person who is in a strong position of power and/or influence.

Skills and Capacity Building

Many networks provide both informal and formal opportunities for enhancing the skill levels of members. Informally, members benefit from the general sharing of information and experience. Networks often provide an opportunity to find mentors among peers. Networks also provide formal "skills building" opportunities for members when they organize workshops and seminars or produce educational tools such as manuals, guidebooks, or resource guides.

Building Solidarity

Networks are often mindful of the need to build a sense of solidarity among its members so that they are better able to achieve their goals and objectives. Networks also help to assure members that their work is important, particularly when the social and political environment is not hospitable to work in the area of HIV/AIDS.

Organizational Features of AIDS Networks

AIDS networks differ in terms of geographical scope, thematic focus, structure, and membership.

Geographical Scope

Networks exist at the national, sub-regional, regional, and international levels. For example:

National

- Zimbabwe AIDS Network (ZAN)
- Liga Colombiana de lucha contra el SIDA
- Pakistan AIDS Prevention Society

Sub-regional

- Southern African Network of AIDS Service Organizations (SANASO)
- Caribbean Regional Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (CRN+)

Regional

- African Council of AIDS Service Organizations (AfriCASO)
- Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organizations (APCASO)
- Latin America and the Caribbean Council of AIDS Service Organizations (LACCASO)

International

- International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO)
- Global Network of People Living With HIV/AIDS (GNP+)
- International Community of Women Living With HIV/AIDS (ICW)

Thematic Focus

There are numerous AIDS networks organized around specific themes or issues which constitute their members' areas of action. A few examples are listed by category:

THEME	EXAMPLE
Children & Youth	Children and AIDS International NGO Network European Forum on HIV/AIDS, Children and Families
Ethics & Law	Latin American and Caribbean Network on Law, Ethics and HIV Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network
Homosexuality	Gay Health Network Colectivo Sol
Injection Drug User	Asia Harm Reduction Network
Migrants	AIDS & Mobility European Project

Northern International Development	Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development
	UK NGO AIDS Consortium
	HIV/AIDS International Development Network of Australia
Positive People	Network of African People with HIV/AIDS
	Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS
	UK Coalition of People Living with HIV & AIDS
Religion	International Christian AIDS Network
Sex Workers	Network of Sexwork Projects
Treatment	European AIDS Treatment Group
Women	Women and AIDS Support Network
	Fundación Para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer
	Society for Women and AIDS in Africa

Network Structure

Networks can be informal or formal in nature. The difference is that the latter has a formal coordinating structure, whilst the former does not. There is a spectrum between very informal and very formal networks.

The structure that a network will choose depends on many factors, the most important of which are:

- what is your network trying to achieve?;
- what resources do you have (time, money and people); and
- how do your members want the network to be organized?

Often the reason why a group of individuals and/or organizations agree to collaborate does not require an elaborate structure. For example, the purpose of some networks is simply to exchange information on topics of common interest (e.g., human rights). These exchanges of information do not require a complex administrative or managerial arrangement.

Some networks, however, do require a more formal structure to accomplish their goals. This is particularly

true if they are trying to coordinate activities of member organizations with the aim of avoiding duplication of services.

The International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO), for example, has over time developed a highly structured coordination mechanism. It is governed by a body composed of members, has a central secretariat, paid staff, regional secretariats and has guidelines for the network's operations at the central, regional and national levels.

Typically most AIDS networks fall somewhere along a continuum between a loose single purpose network for information exchange and a highly formalized network. It is also important to note that network structures are not static: they tend to change over time. For example, some networks start with a loose structure and gradually become more formal. Other networks may move from a formal structure to a looser structure over time.

Membership

Some AIDS networks are composed entirely of individuals while others are composed entirely of organizations. Other AIDS networks are a combination or individual members and organizational members.

Note: See Chapter Two for more discussion of network structures.

The ICASO Story

The International Council of AIDS Service Organizations is an international network that exists primarily to strengthen the response of the community sector. The ICASO mission is to promote and support the work of community-based organizations (CBOs) around the world in the prevention of HIV/AIDS, as well as care and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs). ICASO places particular emphasis on strengthening the response in communities hit hardest by the pandemic, and in communities with fewer resources.

Through the ICASO networking process, organizations establish and maintain essential communication with each other, ensuring the active exchange of information that is vital to the evolution of the community response. At the regional level, ICASO draws from networks of community experts who provide training and skills development, advocate for sound public policies and services, facilitate and support the creation of other groups, monitor the application of human rights, and promote the changes necessary for the creation of supportive legal and social

environments for viable and effective prevention and care services.

ICASO is anchored by five Regional Secretariats and coordinated through a Central Secretariat. To maximize effectiveness and to minimize cost, each Secretariat is housed within an existing organization: AfriCASO (Africa) is hosted by ENDA Tiers Monde in Senegal; APCASO (Asia/Pacific) is hosted by the Malaysian AIDS Council in Malaysia; EuroCASO (Europe) is hosted by Groupe sida Genève in Switzerland; LACCASO (Latin America and the Caribbean) is hosted by Acción Ciudadara Contre el SIDA in Venezuela; NACASO (North America) is hosted by the Canadian AIDS Society in Canada; and the ICASO Central Secretariat is hosted by the AIDS Committee of Toronto in Canada.

Although the core activities vary by region, the overall goal is to facilitate network building and coordination, information sharing, and advocacy. The Secretariats have also produced guidelines outlining a generic regional programme and structure. The Networking guidelines work as a framework to assist with regional activities which are guided by principles established by "grassroots" organizations. The guidelines promote the ongoing development of national networking processes.

PHA Involvement in AIDS Networks

In order for AIDS networks to be truly representative of and responsive to the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs) it is imperative that they find ways to ensure the involvement of PHAs in a meaningful way.

The main advantages of PHA participation in AIDS networks are summarized below.

PHA Empowerment: As PHAs become more mobilized throughout the community-based AIDS movement, they have demanded to speak on their own behalf. AIDS networks with no serious PHA involvement have been challenged to stop speaking on behalf of PHAs.

Vision and Leadership: As the needs of PHAs change, and grow, some PHAs have provided AIDS networks with the necessary leadership for expanding policy and program directions to meet the needs of an expanding and changing pandemic.

Skills and Knowledge: PHAs have enhanced every aspect of the AIDS movement, including networks, with their considerable and varied skill sets.

Motivation: PHAs bring a high degree of personal investment, motivation, dedication, compassion, and commitment to networking.

Credibility: PHA involvement in AIDS networks legitimizes these networks. Networks with greater PHA involvement are usually more attuned to the changing needs of PHAs and therefore are more effective advocates.

Adapted from <u>Living and Serving: Persons with HIV in the Canadian AIDS Movement</u>, *by Charles M. Roy (D.S.W), 1996. Charles, presently the Executive Director of the AIDS Committee of Toronto, tested HIV positive in 1987. He has worked extensively in the AIDS movement, both as a volunteer and as an employee.*

Ensuring the Inclusion of People with HIV/AIDS in AIDS Networks

Emily Chigwida, Chairperson of the Zimbabwe National Network of People Living With HIV/AIDS (ZNNP+) and Mick Matthews, who until recently participated in the UK NGO AIDS Consortium, were asked to reflect on how AIDS networks benefit by ensuring the inclusion of people with HIV/AIDS.

Emily Chigwida

"It is important for any organization working in the field of HIV/AIDS to include people living with the virus because it is we who have first hand experiences of the problems that we face. We are the ones who face periods of ill-health, who struggle to provide for our families, who face hostility and stigma in the communities in which we live and who try to hold down employment in the face of discrimination.

For example, in 1995, the Zimbabwe AIDS Network (ZAN) introduced a system whereby the Chairperson of Zimbabwe National Network of People Living With HIV/AIDS (ZNNP+) became a member of the ZAN National Executive. This has led to better relationships between various NGOs/ASOs and PWA support groups. Some NGOs/ASOs have employed people living with HIV/AIDS on their staff. ZAN itself provides office accommodation for the ZNNP+ secretariat.

I believe that we need to work together and that people living with HIV/AIDS should be involved in all activities to overcome the virus."

Mick Matthews

"Quality of life is improved when people are able to contribute to both their own and their families welfare, through economic or practical activities.

Any sustainable response to the epidemic must recognize and make use of the knowledge accumulated by people and communities living with HIV and AIDS.

The involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS in the ongoing development of networks increases effectiveness by enabling participants to identify how to focus activities better. Meaningful involvement helps to establish mutual respect and understanding and channels the often vital and spontaneous contributions from people living with HIV/AIDS through more formal and sustainable community infrastructures.

Also, for networks to maintain the integrity and relevance of their reason for being, the full and meaningful involvement of people living with HIV or AIDS is essential."

Networking for Mutual Support

The following article reflects the experiences and opinions of its author, El Hadj As Sy, concerning the role and relevance of AIDS networks in the overall response to the global AIDS pandemic. The article originally appeared in AIDS/STD Health Promotion Exchange, 1995, No 1.

Whenever an individual, family or organization is confronted with the HIV/AIDS epidemic, they always react. In many cases, the first reaction is spontaneous and does not necessarily respond effectively to the epidemic. Many community-based and non-governmental organizations (CBOs & NGOs) have therefore gone through a process of "learning by doing" in order to move from a simple reaction to a true response.

This process is ongoing because the HIV/AIDS epidemic continually confronts us with challenges which profoundly affect different aspects of human life and which necessitate a deep understanding of social and economic issues in the broadest sense. These issues are quite similar in essence but vary in their expressions in different parts of the world. Consequently, the responses vary but each one constitutes an interesting experience which can inspire others.

Ten years into the epidemic, CBOs and NGOs around the world are quite familiar with these kinds of experiences. Convinced more than ever of the importance of their contribution in combating HIV/AIDS, they are becoming increasingly active in networking in addition to implementing their respective programmes. By doing so, they can draw lessons from successful programmes as well as failures in order to improve their own responses.

Creating space

At the local, national, regional and international levels, spaces are being created by CBOs and NGOs to share experiences, circulate information, provide mutual assistance and fill gaps. Together, they are giving a voice to those who are silent, influencing policies and programmes through strong united action and advocacy for funding. All of these objectives are pursued in order to support and strengthen an effective response to HIV/AIDS.

The spaces are organized in different ways, including informal consultations and exchanges, loose and flexible coordinating mechanisms and structured national and international bodies. Individuals are also devoting time, energy and skills to linking and connecting people, organizations and institutions without being in any structured networks. There are specific thematic networks covering women's and youth issues, homosexuality, culture and development, all in relation to HIV/AIDS. There are also geographical networks with a national or international dimension which cover the different themes constituting their members' domain of action. All these valuable efforts involve support and altruism so as to provide efficiency and strength.

Solidarity and collaboration

Around the world we live and work in differing conditions and these affect our efforts. Solidarity can sometimes be somewhat constrained by circumstances. Communication, for example, may be extremely difficult even though it is the most important means of working and networking. Working together may entail a certain measure of competition for recognition and funding. Militancy may compete with professionalism and there is often some strain related to altruism versus guarding over organizational interests. Issues raised by CBOs/NGOs and in networks quite often encounter resistance from government or cultural factors. In short, we may encounter many tensions and networking demands that we balance between them.

Networking also implies that CBOs and NGOs are involved in a movement for social change. Such a movement will naturally intersect with other actors (e.g. decision-makers, donors), whose agendas and priorities sometimes affect CBO/NGO networks. The HIV/AIDS epidemic is revealing in that it reaffirms the necessities which put CBOs/NGOs in the spotlight. It is important that the other actors acknowledge that the participation of CBOs/NGOs in civil society — in the process of socio-economic development is vital. For their part, CBOs/NGOs need to strengthen themselves and one another so as to contribute what they can, while remaining

vigilant so that all of the burden is not shifted to their shoulders.

Networking is extremely important but we must "de-mystify" it first. It is obviously not a panacea but it is certainly a way to establish alternative means of cooperation. These different ways of working together will continue to lead to the creation of different networks, where solidarity and respect are needed so that competition does not become destructive. Indeed, networking is more important than the networks themselves. Let us remind ourselves each instant that our efforts only make sense if they combat HIV/AIDS and contribute to the well-being of people and their communities.

Source: AIDS/STD Health Promotion Exchange, 1995, No 1.

Networking: What Makes it Work?

Introduction

Networking at its best is a dynamic, creative process that is so efficient that everything appears effortless. This masks, of course, the hard work, careful planning, management and the occasional frustration that underlines it. Anyone involved in networking or building and sustaining a network can testify to that. And we all know that some networks are more successful and better run than others.

There is no magic that will create a well-run network. Nevertheless, a few tried techniques can help.

This chapter presents eight key steps to help you build and sustain a network:

- ❍ Prepare a Statement of Purpose;
- ❍ Define Goals and Objectives;
- ❍ Create an Action Plan;
- ❍ Establish Ground Rules;
- ❍ Define a Decision-Making Process;
- ❍ Prepare a Communications Plan;
- ❍ Choose an Organizational Structure; and
- ❍ Secure Resources.

Eight Steps to Building and Sustaining a Network

This chapter will look at key steps in network building. Before looking at these key steps, however, it is important to stress that most networks do not systematically work through these steps right at the beginning of the network's existence. Indeed it may be detrimental for a network to get caught up in process issues until the members of the network actually have created a sense of solidarity through collaboration and action.

The steps elaborated below are most relevant to networks that are at the point where its members agree that the network would be more effective if it formalized its operations to a greater degree.

Step one: Prepare a Statement of Purpose

What is a Statement of Purpose?

The Statement of Purpose is a precise and agreed upon statement of the reason for your network's existence, the values which underline your network and what you ideally want to accomplish.

Statements of purpose often become public descriptions of what your network is about, so it is crucial that the statement be accurate and acceptable. It should be simple, brief, and broad enough to win the support of a range of organizations and/or individuals.

The importance of keeping the network to a single purpose cannot be over-stressed. Attempts to stray from the straight and narrow path leading to the network's goals and objectives can result in fragmented efforts and, ultimately, failure.

Why do you need a Statement of Purpose?

- to provide a framework for the scope and direction of your priorities and activities;
- to give network members a shared sense of purpose: the basis for the collaboration;
- to ensure that everyone understands and agrees with the purpose of the network; and
- to act as a reminder of the network's purpose or the social justification for its existence. This helps to ensure that the network does not become an end unto itself — in business just to be in business.

Writing a Statement of Purpose

If your network does not already have a Statement of Purpose you should prepare one. You could use the following exercise as a guideline.

Exercise to Develop a Statement of Purpose

1. Organize a face-to-face meeting of your membership. A small group of no more than 25 members is the ideal number for this exercise.

2. Brainstorm and list important phrases or words that begin to describe the purpose of the network. Record the responses on a flip chart or blackboard. A flip chart or blackboard greatly eases the process of creating a statement of purpose because members can "see" what they "say." They can also see common themes emerge.

3. As a group, look over these responses and underline the most important words — the key words.

Examples

- Our purpose is to <u>promote</u> and <u>protect the rights of people with HIV/AIDS</u>.
- Our purpose is to <u>educate</u> decision-makers and the public on issues of concern.
- Our purpose is to provide <u>accurate information</u> on how to prevent the spread of HIV.
- Our purpose is to <u>advocate</u> for programs and policies that <u>ensure</u> the <u>quality of life</u> for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

4. Look closely at the key words in each response. Then agree on the most important factors and begin to refine the statement.

5. Next, ask a small subgroup to take responsibility for producing a draft of the mission statement. The subgroup should ensure that the draft statement includes the following elements:

- who are we?
- why do we exist?
- what would we ideally like to accomplish, and where and for whom we will achieve our purpose?
- how are we unique? and
- what do we believe in — our principles and values?

6. Reconvene a meeting of the larger group to review the work of the subgroup. Discuss the Statement of Purpose against the following checklist.

■ Does the Statement of Purpose clearly describe the work of the network, including what, for whom and how?

■ Does it describe the uniqueness of the network?

■ Is it realistic and forceful?

■ Does everybody understand the Statement of Purpose?

■ Is it clear and simple?

Depending on the extent of comments, the subgroup may need to meet again to incorporate agreed upon changes.

7. Discuss and try to come to a consensus on the Statement of Purpose. If you have not included the general membership of the network in this exercise, you should at this point.

Step two: Define Goals and Objectives

With clear goals and objectives, you will have a good idea of what your network wants to accomplish.

First it is important to identify the difference between a goal and an objective.

A **Goal** is a broad statement that describes the changes you want to have happen because of your action. **Objectives** are specific, measurable statements of the desired change(s) that a network or organization intends to accomplish by a given time.

Setting Goals

Some pointers to consider as you set goals:

■ You may need more than one goal. Each goal should focus on one change. Write each goal separately so that you can see how they differ, and why you may need different strategies to accomplish them.

■ Goals are not wishes. Make your goals realistic and attainable by breaking them up into smaller, more manageable chunks. They are more attainable when they are smaller.

■ Each goal may take a different amount of time to be accomplished.

■ If you have more than one goal, place them in order of importance.

Setting Objectives

Some pointers to consider as you set your objectives:

■ Many people confuse objectives with activities. **It is very important to understand that objectives are the outcomes of activities, not the activities themselves.**

■ Objectives have three characteristics:

1. They are specific: an objective tells exactly which problem is to be addressed.

2. They are measurable: an objective is framed in terms of how much and how many. It states the extent of the problem that will be resolved.

3. They include a time frame: an objective gives a specific date for its achievement.

If you have more than one goal, you will need different objectives for each goal.

To help identify the specific objectives of the network, it is useful to ask: What are we trying to change?

Once the areas of change have been identified, it is important to ensure that they are measurable. There are five important elements to consider when creating objectives that are specific and measurable. These elements are listed below in random order:

■ the date by which the change will occur;

■ the specific change desired;

■ a measure (e.g., number or percentage);

■ the target group; and

■ the location.

Adapted from <u>Guide to Project Evaluation: A Participatory Approach</u>, Health Canada, 1996. With permission of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997; and <u>Making a Difference in Your Community: A Guide for Policy Change, 2nd edition</u>, Ontario Public Health Association, 1996.

Examples of Network Statements of Purpose and Goals

Southern African Network of AIDS Service Organizations (SANASO)

SANASO's Statement of Purpose

SANASO's overall goal is to ensure that its members fulfill their roles in complementing Government's AIDS Control Programmes through information exchange, co-operation and coordination of activities to promote effective AIDS programmes and avoid wasting scarce resources.

Objectives

1. To facilitate the sharing of information, ideas, experiences and resources in AIDS related work between NGOs at National, Regional and International levels;

2. To promote cooperation and collaboration in AIDS work among NGOs within member countries, Regionally, and Internationally.

3. To coordinate common AIDS related activities and functions undertaken by NGOs and other relevant bodies within and outside the Region;

4. To promote coherent and supportive non-disciplinary policies on medical, social, economic, political, legal, ethical and religious matters affecting people living with HIV infection and AIDS.

5. To articulate to the rest of the world the needs and achievements of the region with respect to HIV/AIDS;

6. To defend the rights of HIV infected individuals and persons with AIDS and to lobby governments to enact legislation which will address the plight of these persons; and

7. To liaise closely with National AIDS Control Programmes.

Global Network of People Living With HIV/AIDS (GNP+)

GNP+'s Statement of Purpose

The Global Network of people living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+) is a global network of and for people living with HIV/AIDS, and the overall aim of GNP+ is to work to improve the quality of life for people living with HIV/AIDS.

GNP+'s Objectives

This is done on all levels by:

❑ Lobbying: for inclusion of people living with HIV/AIDS for interests of people living with HIV/AIDS.

❑ Linking: linking people with HIV/AIDS with each other at various platforms such as international/regional conferences and via communication.

❑ Sharing: creating the opportunity for PHAs to share ideas, knowledge and expertise through capacity building and regional and country level focal points.

Step three: Create an Action Plan

Once you have written your statement of purpose and established your goals and objectives you need to create an action plan. An action plan is a specific set of steps which are developed to achieve a specific objective.

At a minimum an action plan should:

1. Identify the activities needed to accomplish an objective

Some pointers to help you decide what activities you will take to fulfill your stated purpose and accomplish each objective.

■ Activities should flow naturally from goals and objectives.

■ Be specific. State the action you will take clearly.

The activities your network chooses should always be ones your members feel comfortable doing. Do not ask people or organizations in your network to do things they feel are inappropriate.

2. Identify resources

You need to take stock of the resources — people, money and in-kind contributions — which your network and its members can contribute. Begin by considering:

■ How much money and in-kind contributions (for example: office space, supplies, equipment) can participating organizations contribute?

■ How much staff time can members of the network and/or their organizations commit?

■ How many volunteers can we recruit?

- Do we have the skills needed for the activities we will undertake?

Once you know what your resources are you need to assess if you have enough resources to accomplish your objectives.

3. Designate responsibilities to persons in your group

Identify who is responsible for each action to be undertaken. Make sure that those who are implementing the action know what is expected of them. Actual job descriptions or terms of reference may help.

4. Set a timetable for the actions that must be undertaken

Specify the start and end dates for each activity. Individual activities should have end-points so that people can see results.

5. Implement, Monitor and Evaluate

Much thought, research, time and energy has gone into developing your action plan. And now you must begin to implement it.

Once you have begun to implement your plan of action you will find that keeping records of the results of action taken will help you learn from your successes and failures.

This process is known as monitoring: the act of recording the results of your actions in a systematic way. The data gathered through monitoring your action plan can be used in the evaluation.

It has been proven that what gets measured gets done — a good reason in itself to engage in evaluation. Evaluation is the process of determining if objectives have been met and which factors helped or hindered the process. An evaluation should help you answer some or all of the following questions:

- Have you moved ahead? By how much?
- Is the situation better than before?
- How have your efforts changed the big picture? Have you accomplished your objectives?
- If you have accomplished what you set out to do, did it go as you had anticipated? If not, what caught you off guard, or made you re-think and re-plan your strategy?

- If you did not accomplish what you had intended, why not? What would you do differently another time?
- Did you exceed your expectations? What does this mean for any future plans?
- What have you learned about the issue?
- Are the people and organizations involved in the network happy with the results of their actions? Are they happy with the process? Are they satisfied with their participation in the process?

Many networks have found it useful to build in evaluation on a regular basis so that it is part of the process, as opposed to something that only happens at the end of a project or when something goes seriously wrong. Practising evaluation regularly teaches people to look at work more honestly, reduces individual defensiveness about particular tasks, and helps organizations and individuals grow. Your work will improve if you practice regular evaluations.

Note: See Chapter 3 for more information on how evaluation helps to strengthen member commitment to the network and a framework for an evaluation strategy.

Adapted from Making a Difference in Your Community: A Guide for Policy Change, 2nd edition, *Ontario Public Health Association, 1996.*

Step four: Establish Ground Rules

Early on in the process of networking it is important to address the issue of how members of the network are to interact with one another. Many networks have developed "Ground Rules" and agree that they be adhered to in meetings and other interactions between members.

Ground rules help to create a safe space for members to work with each other. An atmosphere of safety and mutual respect must be developed and sustained throughout the life of the network. This is particularly so with networks because individuals often represent larger groups of people. Suspicion and mistrust will readily reduce productivity, discourage participation and alienate members.

Here are some suggestions for inclusion in Ground Rules.

- Attend and participate in all network meetings.
- Be on time for meetings.

- Come to meetings prepared to listen, ponder, debate and question.

- Do not interrupt while people are speaking.

- By all means come with a point of view, but be prepared to change it if the evidence suggests change is in order.

- Show respect for each other. Challenge statements, not the person making them.

- To enable the creation of a safe space where everyone can participate equally, please consider the language you are using. Racist, sexist, homophobic or any other oppressive terms or behaviour are not appropriate.

- Respect the need for confidentiality. No information should be shared without the permission of the person who volunteered the information in the first place.

- Always be prepared to act in the best interests of the total network, not just a single interest or distinct geographical region.

- Use your role in the network to build group strength, to facilitate decision-making with which everyone can feel comfortable.

- Once a decision is taken by the network, act as a spokesperson for the network as a whole to explain and defend the final position of the group, even if you originally objected.

- Stay informed about issues related to the work of the network, building your knowledge and understanding of all sides of the issue.

- Keep abreast of changing needs in your constituency and see that those are reflected within the network.

This is not an exhaustive list. You can either add your own ideas or alternatively brainstorm a list with your members.

Adapted from The Group Member's Handbook by Marilyn Mackenzie and Gail Moore, Heritage Arts Publishing, 1993 and Transforming Word into Action: A Training Manual, by the UK Coalition of People Living with HIV and AIDS.

Step five: Define a Decision-Making Process

Every network needs to accomplish an agreed upon task or set of tasks. Invariably this involves making decisions. Deciding how those decisions will be made gives members a clear idea of how to participate in the network and builds confidence in the process.

Discussing how the members of the network want to make decisions early on in its formation helps the group determine not only how it will operate but reduces conflicts that can surface when the rules of the game are unclear or not enforced.

Decisions can be made in many different ways. Lets look at three typical forms of decision-making in networks: Command, Consultative and Consensus (or Collaborative).

Command

Command decisions are made by the leader of the group in times of emergency when fast action is required. For example, when an article requiring comment appears in the local newspaper. While perhaps the most efficient of the three decision-making approaches, there are risks to command decisions. If command decisions are made too often, the membership feels left out of decision-making which builds resistance and reluctance to support initiatives. For this reason, command decisions should be made only when time is short or if the need for commitment by others is small.

Consultative

A Consultative approach is used when the buy-in and support of members is more important. For example when deciding to change a network policy, goal or process, members and committees are consulted about the proposed change and feedback is requested. A number of variables determine the final decision:

- the view of the majority;
- perceived benefit of proposals vs. perceived losses;
- the amount of resistance;
- other barriers to implementation; and
- external forces that press for change.

Decisions made this way may not please everyone but members will feel heard. This process is much slower than the command decision.

Consensus

A third type of decision-making is Consensus building or Collaborative decision-making. Buy-in is a critical requirement in this type of decision and as a result participants are prepared to invest considerable time to see that all parties can support the final decision. For example, it is important that all members agree with the mission of the network. Reaching consensus does not mean total agreement but rather comfort with the decision. The question posed is "Can you live with this statement," not "Are you in complete agreement with it?"

To gain consensus networks must seek to:

- get agreement on the purpose and value of the decision;
- brainstorm a list of possible methods to accomplish the goal of the decision;
- eliminate the truly unacceptable options in full group discussion;
- identify consequences of the acceptable alternatives;
- name the barriers that make it uncomfortable for the committee members to agree with one or the other approach;
- identify what changes you need;
- decide either to make the requested changes, to review another alternative or walk away; and
- develop commitments and expectations that are clearly defined, well thought out and realistic.

Adapted from The Group Member's Handbook by Marilyn Mackenzie and Gail Moore, Heritage Arts Publishing, 1993.

Step six: Prepare a Communications Plan

The biggest challenge of most networks is effective communications — the timely transmission and receipt of information. Good communications are absolutely critical to the success of a network. For formal communication within the network you may choose to establish regular meetings and/or newsletters as your primary vehicle of communication. Alternatively, faxes, e-mails, letters, phone calls, conference calls, or memos reporting the most recent developments from one committee or member to the others can serve the same purpose.

Whichever way you do it, establish firm procedures for information to be circulated promptly to all those who need it to perform their functions effectively.

Following these steps will help you map out a communications plan.

- List the key people in the network who are to receive communications and or participate in decision-making pertaining to a given task (e.g., developing an advocacy strategy or organizing a skills building workshop).
- Outline who will receive specific communications, when they will receive them, who will be asked for feedback, and how to obtain their feedback.
- Decide who in the network involved in each task will have responsibility for making sure that the communication between key people involved in each task happens.
- Set up communications within the network so all members are informed.

Informal communications between members by their very nature, are less structured than formal communications — the kind described above. Informal communications between members are, however, just as important as formal communications. Few guidelines can be given to facilitate the process of informal communication between members, except to say that it must be encouraged and never thwarted.

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Step seven: Choose an Organizational Structure

Deciding on a suitable structure for your network will be a major milestone in your network's development. This section will provide information which will help you to understand more fully the principles which underline network development and identify key considerations to take into account when you want to define the organizational structure of your network.

Principles of Structure

A formal network is much more than a series of boxes and lines neatly arranged on an organization chart. Structure reflects the way a network delivers its

programs and services and achieves its goals. There are several principles which guide network structure.

- a network's structure enables the organization to fulfill its statement of purpose and plans;

- networks are designed to meet human needs and achieve a purpose;

- a network's structure must be appropriate to its goals, objectives and plans, the environment in which it exists, the technology available to it and its human and financial resources;

- an appropriate structure will effectively control the allocation and application of resources; and

- the network's structure should enhance decision-making and problem-solving processes in a way that reduces power struggles and interpersonal conflicts.

Structural Development

The overriding principle governing the design of network structure is that the structure should help the network to achieve its goals.

The focus of any effort to design a structure is the need to divide up the work. This requires the creation of organizational units. These units may include committees (also known as task forces, working groups), a coordination unit (this could be a Secretariat(s), office staff — paid or unpaid) and a decision-making body.

Create only those units needed to assure the achievement of the Statement of Purpose.

Considerations when you get to the point of deciding on a structure are:

When you are ready to start the process of defining the structure for your network you should ask yourself:

- What work needs to be done?

- What kind of groups or committees do we need to form to do the work?

- What are the roles and responsibilities of each group or committee?

- How do we want to govern and/or manage ourselves within the groups and the network as a whole?

- Who will be in charge of what parts?

- Where are network members located? What will help us work together as efficiently as possible?

- How do we want to communicate and cooperate between the various groups that make up the

network? How do we ensure communications between the groups that make up the network and the decision-making body happens?

- Do we want to hire staff? If so, for what functions? Where will they be located?

Once you have reached agreement on these questions you can detail the structure by drawing a diagram of the groups that make up the network, and listing lines of authority for doing the work and managing the network.

And do not forget that networks tend to change their structures over time to meet their evolving needs.

Adapted from Effective Organizations: A Consultant's Resource, by Judy Kent, Skills Program for Management Volunteers, 1992; and Adapted from Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining and Enjoying the Journey, by Michael Winer and Karen Ray. Copyright 1994 Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. Used with permission. For more information on Wilder Foundation publications, call 1-800-274-6024 (USA only) or 1-612-659-6024.

Some Thoughts on How Networks Organize Themselves

How networks organize themselves is a difficult concept to explain. Perhaps this is because there are so many networks with unique structures and functions that it is difficult to generalize.

The following two examples offer different but complimentary explanations of network structures. The first example is taken from *Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining and Enjoying the Journey*, by Michael Winer and Karen Ray, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1996; and the second from "Networking Strategies: The Experience of IRED," in *IRED-Forum*, No. 23, 1987.

If you find the models helpful in understanding the structures of networks you may want to adapt them to the needs of your network.

Example 1

Collaborations usually adopt one of two structures: a table or a wheel. In the table structure, everyone comes together to make the necessary decisions (such groups are usually seated around a table). In the wheel, small groups take more independent action. A group at the hub coordinates information and activities, but the small groups may have little contact with each other.

However, no structure is pure. The table model may have task forces or subcommittees that act like spokes on the wheel, making recommendations

back to the larger group or taking action on behalf of the "table". On the other hand, the spokes on the wheel may each operate like a "table" where all members make the decisions.

DIAGRAM OF TABLE   DIAGRAM OF WHEEL

"Table" structure

"Wheel" structure
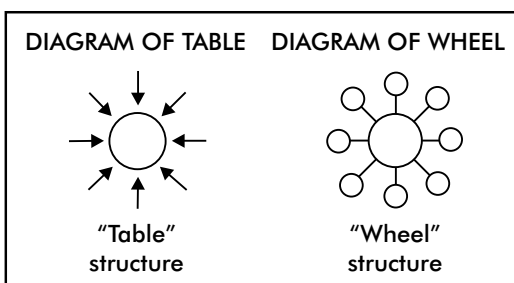
Example 2

There are many types of networks. Here are the three major ones:

In diagram A, all information, support and exchanges go through the Centre, a secretariat or a Committee. If the partners communicate, they do so through the Centre.
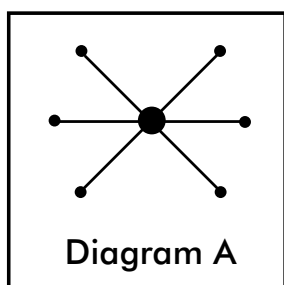
Diagram A

In diagram B, there is a better balance. The nucleus is the centre of the network; it will always play a major role but the partners begin to collaborate directly, without referring to the Centre.
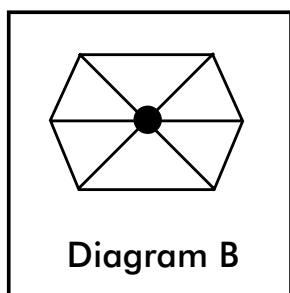
Diagram B

In diagram C, there is direct and systematic communication between the different members of the network. The Centre is a support service for action carried out by partners.

Diagram C
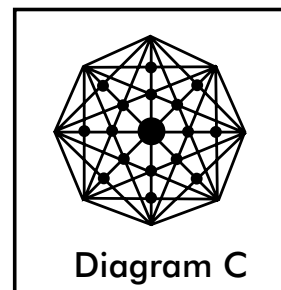
Please note that the above represent only a few of the many models which exist for structuring a network. When developing a structure keep in mind that every network has unique organizational and communication needs. The main criteria for developing a structure should be need rather than the existence of "proven" models.

Also, experience has shown that network structures are rarely static: they change over time. To help ensure that the structure of your network remains relevant to needs and changing circumstances, it is a good idea to formally review your structure at regular intervals (i.e., every one or two years) and make the necessary changes.

Adapted from Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining and Enjoying the Journey, by Michael Winer and Karen Ray. Copyright 1994 Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. Used with permission. For more information on Wilder Foundation publications, call 1-800-274-6024 (USA only) or 1-612-659-6024; and the second from "Networking Strategies: The Experience of IRED," in IRED - Forum, No. 23, 1987.

Step eight: Secure Resources

Secure Resources

What a network is able to do and how network members are able to work together depends directly on its resources. It is important to have an accurate assessment of the resources available to your network or you may inadvertently sabotage your efforts, or at least diminish your impact.

There are three major forms of resources: money, people and in-kind contributions. When assessing your resources you should consider the following.

Money

Lack of money is probably not going to be your biggest problem, but it can certainly hold you back. Ask yourself:

- How much money do we need and how much do we have? Do we need to secure more money or can we continue without additional funds?

- Where can we get money for our cause? Are there sources that we already know about or does fundraising have to be a priority?

People

The skills, energy, and commitment of people are probably your greatest resource. Start with your own group; explore their talents before starting to look beyond. This can save you time and the task of bringing a stranger "on board". You may be surprised to find what hidden skills people have. The people involved need to ask themselves:

- Which tasks do we need done?

- Which particular skills do we need to do them?

- Who has these skills?

- How many people do we need?

- Are there others who have expressed interest in helping us?

- Do we need someone with influence in the community? Who can we ask?

- How much time and energy will we need from each person?

In-kind Contributions

Other individuals or agencies may be willing to provide support such as office space, photocopying, faxing and mailing assistance.

Adapted from Making a Difference in Your Community: A Guide for Policy Change, 2nd edition, *Ontario Public Health Association, 1996.*

Crucial Steps in Network Building

While networking is quickly becoming an integral part of the work of most AIDS organizations, we certainly did not invent the concept. Other social action movements — including other health focused movements — have a rich experience in networking. The following is extracted from an article detailing the experiences of a network of organizations dedicated to sustainable agriculture. This extract features what the organizations involved in this network felt were the keys to developing an effective network. The article, "Networking for Sustainable Agriculture," by Bertus Haverkort, Laurens van Veldhuizen and Carine Alders, originally appeared in GATE, *No.4/92.*

Networks are emerging at all levels at rapid speed. Although this is a positive process, it is realized now that one needs to spend some time defining the network's objectives before jumping into large-scale structures and activities. In some cases, the network organizers may have a clear vision of their objectives, but have not formally articulated or communicated these objectives to other participants in the network. The result is that the network has a difficult time in determining its direction or activities, lacks a unifying theme and cannot sustain the interest of its participants.

A number of questions could be formulated which need to be answered before a network is started. These include:

- Are there concrete common problems and constraints faced by potential members and are they aware of these?

- Are there relevant results/experiences that could be shared?

- Do potential members have a good idea of what a network is and what it would mean to them?

- Are they prepared to spend the necessary time and energy in sharing and networking at the expense of their own programmes?

- Is there an atmosphere of openness among potential members which allows them to admit mistakes?

Only when the initiators have taken these issues into consideration, can the development of a network proceed.

Change and Challenges

Introduction

The constantly changing nature of the global AIDS pandemic demands an evolving response. To remain a relevant force in this environment AIDS networks must adapt accordingly. Consequently, networks rarely stay the same for long. They are constantly changing in terms of what they seek to achieve and how they work together to achieve their purpose.

Change is never easy and there are no formulas to ensure success. This section of the Guide will look at five factors to help your network remain relevant and vital while operating in a changing environment. The factors are:

❍ Sustaining Commitment;

❍ Evaluation;

❍ Resolving Conflict;

❍ Responding to Conflict; and

❍ Communication.

Sustaining Commitment

Waning commitment — we all know the signs: missing meetings, people not doing the things that were agreed to, negative attitudes, infighting, and reluctance to contribute significant resources to name a few.

Many of the reasons for declining commitment by members to a network can be addressed during the start-up phase of network development. We have already looked at some of the key ingredients for sustaining commitment to a network in Chapter 2 of this Guide.

Steps one to three of the eight key actions to building and sustaining a network, as presented earlier, stressed that a good planning process will give a network a shared understanding and acceptance of a statement of purpose, goals and objectives. Clarity of purpose, goals and objectives helps to motivate network members. And the development of an effective action plan helps to ensure mutual accountability of network members to each other by clearly defining who is responsible for which actions within an agreed upon time frame. Networks that make clear what is expected of members are more likely to sustain commitment among members than networks that do not.

How members work together in pursuit of their mutually held sense of purpose (see Steps Four to Seven in Chapter 2) also impacts on member's commitment to a network. Setting ground rules for how network members want to interact, for example, helps to establish an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Trust and mutual respect helps build group cohesiveness. Similarly, defining a clear and open decision-making process, developing an effective communication plan, and choosing an organizational structure that is appropriate to the needs of the network and its members, are essential ingredients in the process of building and sustaining commitment among members to the network and to its purpose.

One important element of sustaining member commitment to a network that we have yet to look at in-depth is the need for ongoing evaluation. A thorough review of the concept of evaluation is beyond the scope of this Guide but the information offered below will help you to understand what evaluation is and how it helps to renew member commitment. A practical tool to help your network plan an evaluation is also provided.

Evaluation

What is an Evaluation?

Evaluation is a means of assessing the process and outcomes of an activity. It looks at what and how; it compares what you expected to happen with what really happened, and it looks at how things were done. Evaluation should be part of the very first plans your network makes. Although it is frequently overlooked, it has to be an integral part of your entire action plan right from the start.

There are two kinds of evaluation: process and outcome. Process evaluation measures how you are doing things. Outcome (or product) evaluation measures your progress and how well you have accomplished your goals. Some groups evaluate both process and outcomes, and others only one or the other. Networks should do both.

How Evaluation Helps Build Commitment

Evaluating how well a network functions (process) and what a network achieves (outcome) is essential in preserving enthusiasm and commitment to a network from its members. People and organizations involved in networking need proof that their efforts are having an impact. Without proof that the network is having any impact, interest in the network tends to wane. If there is no evidence upon which to validate the value of a network to its members and the people it wishes to serve, there are no clear reasons to continue devoting resources to the network or the networking process. Evaluations provide the proof network members need to justify their participation in the network. They also provide information on how to make the network more efficient and relevant to member needs and to the needs of people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

Why Evaluate?

Effective evaluations can:

- account for what has been accomplished;
- promote learning about what action strategies are working and which do not;
- provide feedback to inform decision-making within the network;
- assess the cost-effectiveness of different strategies;
- position high quality projects for future funding opportunities;

- increase the effectiveness of network management; and
- contribute to policy development.

Developing an Evaluation Framework

An effective network will have a systematic, network-wide evaluation program. The network should target all services, programs and activities for regular, periodic evaluation.

In any evaluation, fundamental issues must be addressed. These would include:

- Rationale - Why did we take this direction or action in the first place?
- Impacts and Effects - What has happened as a result of this activity?
- Goal Achievement - Has the activity achieved what was expected?
- Value for Effort - Was the outcome of the activity worth the expenditure of effort and resources?
- Alternatives - Are there better ways of achieving the desired result? If we made mistakes or encountered problems, how can we avoid them next time?
- Next Steps - How do we plan to use the evaluation findings for continuous learning?

Evaluation Process

The evaluation process involves several steps: design, data collection, analysis, feedback and action. There are many decisions to be made. Answers to the following questions may help guide the evaluation process:

- Should an evaluation be done? Why?
- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- What decisions will be made?
- What information is required?
- What is the source of the information?
- How can the information be collected and analyzed?
- Who will do the information gathering?
- Who will write the evaluation report?
- How will the information be communicated?
- How and when will the decision-makers use the report?

There are many methodologies and tools for conducting an evaluation. The following steps set out an evaluation process for an overall review of a specific service, program, or activity.

1. Design the Evaluation Plan

- Determine who will conduct the evaluation.
- Prepare a clear description of the desired outcomes of the evaluation.
- Survey a sample of the participants or users to validate this description.
- Determine exactly what elements (all or which parts) will be evaluated.
- Clarify what results or outcomes are intended.
- Determine the method to be used for the evaluation.
- Determine what human and financial resources are required.
- Acquire and confirm the required resources.

2. Design Evaluation Tool

- Determine what information is required and what will be done with the information after it is collected.
- Specify the people who will be asked to participate in the evaluation.
- Specify what questions must be asked in order to obtain the information wanted. Include questions that are both quantitative (objective) and qualitative (subjective).
- Design a format(s) which will encourage participation and completion, e.g., questionnaire, interview.
- Test the evaluation tool (e.g., survey questionnaire, reaction sheet, face-to-face interview) on a small sample of those who will be participating in the evaluation.
- Make any necessary changes to the evaluation tool.
- Develop a procedure for collating the information that you collect.

3. Implement Evaluation Program

- Deliver the evaluation instrument to the selected participants or users.
- Follow up with the participants or users to encourage a prompt return of the completed evaluation.
- Compile the collected evaluation information.

4. Analyze Evaluation Results

- Conduct an analysis of the evaluation results.
- Form conclusions from the analysis.
- Develop recommendations.
- Validate the recommendations with a small sample of those who participated in the evaluation.

■ Prepare a full report of evaluation results and recommendations for the organization.

Source: Effective Organizations: A Consultant's Resource, by Judy Kent, Skills Program for Management Volunteers, 1992.

Letters of Commitment

Some networks, particularly those which have organizational members, feel a need to define what is expected of their member organizations more explicitly. One practice that is increasingly popular is the "Letter of Commitment," whereby each member representing an organization is asked to obtain a letter from their Governing Body or senior staff person that outlines the nature of the organization's commitment to the network.

A Letter of Commitment should state:

❑ The organization's commitment to the purpose, goals, objectives and activities of the network.

❑ What the organization expects in return for its participation in the network.

❑ How much time the organization's representative may commit to the network.

❑ That the organization recognizes that this commitment is part of the representative's job.

❑ The level of resources that the representative and the organization can commit: funds, in-kind contributions, and other staff and volunteer time, connections and expertise.

Letters of Commitment clarify authority and helps to mobilize the needed resources to achieve goals and objectives. Pushing for commitment may scare potential partners. Yet, without the letters, partners may not fully commit to the network.

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Resolving Conflict

Although members of a network are committed to a common purpose, they may approach tasks and decisions quite differently. This is particularly true when the network is going through a process of change: deciding what and how they are going to do things differently. And, as was noted above, constant change is a feature of networking in the field of AIDS. Conflict in networking and networks is, therefore, inevitable. A constructive approach to this reality is to expect it and develop the skills to resolve it.

In order to understand conflict in networks it is helpful to give it a definition and to look at the potential sources of conflict:

A conflict is a problem involving at least two parties, both with emotional allegiance to a different point of view.

The potential sources of conflict include:

Assumptions and Perceptions

Different people view the same situation and see it differently, because their past experiences and personal beliefs and values differ.

Individual Values, Needs and Goals

The values, needs and goals of an individual may be in conflict with another's values, needs and goals.

Organizational Values, Needs and Goals

The values, needs and goals of an organization may be in conflict with the values, needs and goals of the network or other members.

Emotions

Powerful emotions such as fear, anger, anxiety and frustration, often block communication or distort perceptions to the point of conflict with others.

Competition

Struggles for time, money, attention, performance and personal or group success can be healthy or destructive.

Lack of Information or Clarity

Members perceive that they do not have all the information or do not understand the information. Alternatively, individuals may possess the information but fail to understand it. People understand differently and this can result in conflict.

Individual Communication and Influence Style

Insensitive or inappropriate interaction with others can create resistance. An aggressive approach which belittles

others usually causes conflict. An over-accommodating passive nature can also cause frustrations which lead to conflict.

Responding to Conflict

Individuals react to conflict in a variety of ways. There are three basic response strategies.

Avoidance

Some people try to avoid conflict entirely. They suppress their reactions or remove themselves from the troublesome situation (e.g., resign from the network). They prefer to ignore or deny the existence of a problem and/or may lack the skills needed to deal with the conflict. The response will work if escape is possible. Overall, it is not an effective response strategy.

Defusing

Defusing is a delaying action. Individuals using this approach will either put off dealing with the conflict (until another time), or focus on minor points while avoiding the major issues. Like avoidance, this response will work if delay is possible, but it is not an effective response strategy.

Confrontation

This response involves confrontation of the differences between people. The member with the most power wins. This strategy is effective from the point of view of the "winner." From the "loser's" point of view, the conflict is not over.

Negotiation

Effective negotiation is based on concern for others, mutual respect, and a focus on the purpose, goals and objectives of the network. Members resolving a conflict in a "win-win" style think this way: "You and I have a conflict. I respect your needs and I respect my own as well. I will not use my power over you so that I may win. But I cannot give in and let you win at the expense of my needs and goals. Let's work together for a solution that will satisfy both our needs. That way, we both win."

The win-win method results in faster decisions, of higher quality. The method builds better interpersonal relationships and a stronger commitment to carrying out the decisions reached. Each party is clear on its position; there is mutual respect for abilities, values and expertise, and all parties work toward a win-win solution.

The following steps could serve as a guideline for a conflict resolution process using the "win-win" principle.

1. Decide who will facilitate the process for resolving the conflict. Ask a group member or a third party facilitator, mediator, or arbitrator to lead the group. Or hold an outside session just for those directly involved in the conflict.

2. Review the current situation, define facts and revisit the results you need to achieve. Ask, "If we want to achieve these results, what must we do about this conflict?" Then determine which issues the network must resolve to do its work.

3. Ask the parties involved in the conflict to define their needs.

4. Search for alternatives and their implications; and

5. Decide on the solution and action steps for implementation.

Source: Effective Organizations: A Consultant's Resource, by Judy Kent, Skills Program for Management Volunteers, 1992.

What if this does not work?

Sometimes personal hostility and other conflicts cannot be resolved. Here it is important to explore alternative approaches.

Confront the situation outright. Call a meeting and insist that the disagreeing individuals agree on a process to settle the dispute. Consider an outside facilitator. If settlement is impossible, create a working agreement and agree to disagree while working together in the network. This can and does work.

Confront the situation through people of influence. Collectively, ask important people (Members of the Governing Body, other members) associated with each of the warring individuals and/or organizations to intervene. This option allows the conflicting parties to fight in another and more appropriate arena than the network.

Alert funders and donors to the problem. While the network might not want to admit that it has a conflict, many funders are knowledgeable enough to know what is really happening. They can influence people who may otherwise seem immune to change. Still, funders give money at their discretion, so weigh carefully the relative advantages and disadvantages of this option.

Work without the fighting parties. Prolonged periods of conflict between specific members can be stressful for all network members and it can damage the network itself. When all else fails consider working without the people and/or organizations involved in the seemingly unresolvable conflict. Few networks are so dependent on one or two people or organizations that it would not survive asking the fighting parties to leave the network.

Adapted from Collaboration Handbook: Creating, Sustaining and Enjoying the Journey, by Michael Winer and Karen Ray. Copyright 1994 Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. Used with permission. For more information on Wilder Foundation publications, call 1-800-274-6024 (USA only) or 1-612-659-6024.

Communication

In Chapter 2 we looked briefly at the significance of communication within a network. The focus was on developing a communications plan as a method of ensuring effective internal communication. How information is exchanged is a vital activity in networking. This is especially true when the network is undergoing change in why and how it does its work.

Below we will look at factors that have an important impact on the process of information exchange including the frequency of communication; and, the amount of information. Understanding these factors will help members make better choices about the who, what, why, when, where of their communications.

Frequency of Communication

How often people communicate within the network has a significant impact on motivation, productivity and how they feel about being involved. Although most networks tend to communicate less frequently than they need to, it is just as detrimental to be in touch too often.

When planning the frequency of communication in a network, keep the following points in mind:

■ The larger the network the greater the need for formal guidelines;

■ The more specific the task the more frequent the interaction. (e.g. When organizing a special event

such as a workshop that requires the coordination of a large number of details, frequent communication is required to ensure efficiency);

■ Match the frequency of communication with the delegation style of the communicator (e.g., if people have been asked to take responsibility for a certain area, they should be allowed to do it without constant review);

■ Match the frequency of communication with the purpose for communicating;

■ For every task or project, outline clearly how people will communicate while they are working together.

Amount of Information

How much information is communicated has a significant impact on how those receiving the information feel about it and what they do with it. Large packages of written material rarely motivate people to take immediate and enthusiastic action; long telephone conversations packed with a variety of facts, figures, gossip and general discussion are not likely to result in a clear track for decision-making. Brief communications have their own pitfalls, including opportunities for miscommunication and misinterpretation.

Keep the following suggestions in mind when deciding how much information people need:

■ Distinguish between what people need to know and what would be nice for them to know. If you have a lot of information, include only the "need to know."

■ When you are sharing a lot of information, include a one-page summary or a one-minute overview that announces succinctly what the content is all about;

■ Pay attention to how the information is packaged and distributed. Make the information manageable so it is enticing to the receiver. Two inches of paper in a brown envelope will probably be moved to the bottom of the reading pile.

■ Include specific instructions about how people should deal with the content. Should they read and critique? Respond immediately? When? How?

Source: Effective Organizations: A Consultant's Resource, by Judy Kent, Skills Program for Management Volunteers, 1992.

Other Networking Issues

Introduction

The content of the HIV/AIDS Networking Guide was developed, in part, on the basis of consultation with people and organizations actively involved in networking. We wanted to know what people involved in AIDS networking considered to be major issues facing their network.

This chapter looks at two "hot" issues in networking today. They are:

❍ Mobilizing Resources for Action; and

❍ Electronic Communications and Networking in AIDS.

Each of these issues is described below, and whenever appropriate, information is presented to help readers either understand or address the issue more fully.

Issue 1 - Mobilizing Resources

Networks need adequate and consistent resources to support their operations. Obtaining the means for operating must be a priority in forming and sustaining a network. Networking may be particularly expensive in the start-up phase so money should be available at the outset.

Also, a network's membership, whether individual or organizational, cannot depend solely on support from donors. Therefore, those attracted by a network's potential service to their aims and interests must be prepared to contribute, financially or otherwise, to help it function efficiently and effectively.

Begin by taking stock of the resources — people, money and in-kind contributions — which your network and its members can contribute. Begin by considering:

- How much money and in-kind contributions (for example: office-space, supplies, equipment) can participating organizations contribute?
- How much staff time can members of the network and/or their organizations commit?
- How many volunteers can we recruit?
- Do we have the skills needed for the activities we will undertake?

Once you know what your resources are you need to assess if you have enough resources to undertake your planned activities. If you need to look outside your network for resources there are many sources of additional funding such as governments, foundations, businesses, charitable organizations and service clubs. The challenge is to identify a funder that is suitable to your network.

Here are some basic tips to keep in mind when you are looking for the right donor.

Identify Donors

Do some preliminary research to find out what types of donors will give funds for the activities you want support for. Find out what the donor's areas of interest are, who the contact person is, and what their telephone number and/or address are.

Be sure to retain this information in a binder or on computer for future reference.

Target Donors

From all the information you have collected, you must choose which of the funders are most likely to be interested enough in what you do to give you money. Go through your list, look for those which seem to have the "best fit." In other words, your network must fit the funder, and the funder's priorities and program must fit you.

Write or call and ask for a copy of the donor's funding guidelines, an application form and annual report, if applicable. Be courteous, be specific about what you want to know, identify yourself and be brief. You are looking for information at this stage, not a lengthy dialogue. You are looking for specifics about priorities, guidelines, and who is responsible for administering the application process.

Information Call

When you have determined that a certain funder has a granting program which appears to fit your activity, your next step is to contact the person responsible. This may be by telephone or a personal visit. (The choice depends on geography, degree of importance you place on this funder, time available, and the preference of the funder.)

Preparing a Funding Application/Proposal

Some funders will require that you complete a relatively simple application form, instead of a more elaborate Project Proposal. Make sure you read all the directions and follow the form. Fill in all the blanks that are applicable to your situation, accurately and completely. If some questions are not applicable to your situation say so with a simple n/a (not applicable).

In any event, whether there is a form or not, your application will contain the following sections: title, introduction, statement of problem/need, goals and objectives, methods, evaluation, budget and attachments. Each section is described in more detail below.

Title

The title should reflect what the project is about and can be devised to market the program.

Introduction

This section will include information about your network, including your past history with the target

population — the people who will benefit from the project, primarily people infected or affected by HIV/AIDS — and any other necessary information that will tell the funder that you are qualified to carry out the program.

You should also describe demographic characteristics of the target population and, whenever possible, provide statistical/surveillance information. You should stress connections with the target population and to what extent you will have members of the target population included in the design of the program.

Statement of Problem/Need

This section should describe in detail the problem that the proposed program is going to address. Whenever possible, assertions and descriptions of the problem should be substantiated with statistical rather than anecdotal information. This section must:

■ describe the population to be served and the needs of that population;

■ define the needs or problems faced by the target population as they relate to the objectives of your project;

■ suggest and discuss the action you propose to address the needs or problems you have identified;

■ indicate the benefits your project will realize in terms of measurable improvements; and

■ relate how your network's ability to carry out the project will contribute towards a solution.

Goals and Objectives

Your statement of goals and objectives should contain measurable objectives that the donor can use to determine the feasibility of your approach.

Use the information presented in Chapter 2 on Goals and Objectives to help you prepare objectives that are specific and measurable.

Methods

This is the section of your proposal where you describe the activities to be conducted to achieve the desired results. Make sure the information in this section of the proposal:

■ has stated activities which flow logically from the problem/needs and objectives stated earlier;

■ clearly describes the program activities;

■ states the reasons for the activities presented;

■ describes the sequence of activities;

■ describes how the project will be staffed; and

■ presents a reasonable scope of activities that can be conducted within the time-frame and resources of the project.

Evaluation

This section must discuss the methodology by which you will be able to demonstrate that your project has achieved the desired goals and objectives. This is quickly becoming the most essential part of project develop-ment. There is an increasing demand to demonstrate that projects are effectively achieving their objectives. (See Chapter 4 for more information on evaluation)

Budget

The budget section should concisely state how much funding you are seeking and for what purposes. The total budget should be broken down into "line items" or details of the expenses you expect the project to have. The budget should state the amount requested from the funder and clearly indicate costs to be met by the funding source and those to be provided by other parties.

Attachments

Provide all support materials which the funder requests. In addition, whether you have been asked for them or not include:

■ your last annual report;

■ list of the network's Governing Body and who they are;

■ list of the network staff; and

■ most recent internal financial statement.

Adapted from "How to Write a Successful Proposal," National Minority AIDS Council Technical Assistance Newsletter, March/April 1992.

Issue 2 - Electronic Mail and Networking in AIDS

Introduction

Among the people involved in AIDS networking, there are many who have discovered the practicality and usefulness of electronic mail, or, as it is more commonly referred to "E-mail." For those who have access to affordable E-mail services and in countries where the communications infrastructure makes it practical, E-mail can provide a quicker and easier method of communication among colleagues. Every day more and more people are adding E-mail addresses to their business cards as another way of staying in touch with one another.

The focus of this section will be on E-mail, which is the most commonly used method of communication available through the Internet. For many organizations and individuals this is a good starting point for those interested in computer communications. Once you are comfortable with E-mail there are many other forms of computer communication which you may be interested in pursuing, including the World Wide Web, Chat Rooms, Newsgroups, etc. For many, having access to E-mail may be the only step your organization wishes to take for financial reasons or because of time restraints.

What are computer communications?

Computer communications refers to the exchange of messages and information using computers and telecommunications equipment, such as telephones and modems. As with using a phone to call overseas, distance is not a factor in how or with whom you can communicate.

Imagine sending an entire report, typed and formatted, half way around the world. It travels through the phone line from your computer to that of a colleague's who can work directly on the document and send it back to you. Is E-mail that easy? It can be, depending on the computers used, reliability of phone lines and other important features that you will need to research when considering this new technology.

What is the Internet?

The Internet is a world wide electronic connection of computers (servers) and networks operating 24 hours per day. More simply, it is a system that lets computers all over the world communicate with each other. Picture a great spider web with each of the web links connected to a computer.

There is no central office, just millions of computers sitting on this web exchanging information. If one section of the web/system breaks down, then information just finds another route in order to deliver its information. When E-mail is sent, it is similar to making a phone call but instead of a voice, you send written material. Each person or organization has its own unique E-mail address to make sure the information reaches the right person, e.g., to contact ICASO you only need to type in icaso@icaso.org

The most important point to remember is that the Internet is constantly changing and improving. What may be difficult or impossible today, may be improved within months. For those already on the Internet, there is always something new to learn and fortunately there are many people who are willing to share new discoveries or help you with any problems you may encounter.

What exactly is electronic mail (E-mail)?

By using E-mail, people can send messages to one or several colleagues at the same time. They can receive the message within a few seconds to a few hours, depending on the telephone lines and the type of Internet service being used.

Many organizations use E-mail as the main form of communication. When compared to long-distance fax and telephone charges, you will probably find E-mail saves you money and time. In some cases this can result in a major decrease in expenses for your communication budget.

What can I send by E-mail?

There is virtually no limit to the type of material that you can send, including graphics, computer software and other more complicated and larger files.

What are the advantages of E-mail?

E-mail has many advantages over conventional mail, telex, telegram or cable, fax and telephone. It is impossible to list them all, but it is clear that E-mail:

- saves time and resources: letters do not have to be printed on paper, placed in envelopes and transported over long distances to their destination;
- if you have access to an Internet provider, E-mail can be used in place of a fax machine for communication. In seconds one can send a document to many destinations instead of standing at a fax machine feeding paper for hours;

- allows you to exchange messages at all hours regardless of time zone differences and in most cases the messages are delivered within minutes regardless of distance;

- provides flexibility for exchange of messages between recipients when traveling or working in another country;

- makes it possible to reach individuals, funders, institutions or the public at little or no additional cost;

- allows you to use text-based material received via E-mail without retyping it into the computer;

- lets you exchange formatted documents for use in publications anywhere in the world (writing a final document, or producing a newsletter collaboratively when people live in different parts of the world);

- allows you to gather, store and disseminate vital information.

What are some of the problems of using E-mail?

The telecommunications infrastructure needed to support E-mail is inadequate in some countries. Furthermore, though the use of computers is gathering momentum in developing countries, the necessary equipment is not always affordable or available.

The following factors limit the widespread use of e-mail and other forms of computer communications:

- computer technology may be culturally alien, causing a fear of technology or a reluctance to use computers;

- computer communications can end up excluding those who are not computer literate;

- the equipment needed for computer communications is not always easy to operate or affordable;

- training and other resources in local languages have yet to be developed or become widely available;

- computer programs for communications are not always user friendly. Instruction manuals are often published only in English and, worse, can be poorly written;

- software tends to support very few languages for communications. One has yet to see easy-to-use programs in most Asian languages, for example. Support for other languages such as Spanish or French is also limited;

- some of the above factors often combine to make this technology expensive and exclusive. In the

absence of both local computer technology educators and wide-spread availability of computers, computer communications remain inaccessible in many countries, and often appear irrelevant to those dealing with the harsh realities of daily life.

How do I decide whether I should use computer communications?

Your decision will be influenced by a number of factors which you will need to consider carefully, such as the quality of phone lines, an erratic electricity supply, and access to computers, software, or e-mail service providers and expert advice on how to use the system.

Here are some situations in which you might need access to e-mail:

- you or your organization have major communications needs which are not being met. This is particularly relevant if you need faster and cheaper communications with colleagues, friends, or partner organizations, whether locally, regionally, or internationally;

- you experience severe difficulties using traditional forms of communications (fax is too expensive, unreliable postal services, etc.);

- you need to communicate regularly with others inside and outside the network; while keeping within certain budget and time limits;

- you need to access information relevant to your activities.

What do I need to use E-mail?

The basic requirements are:

- A computer;

- Modem (the faster the modem speed the quicker your system will work);

- Software that lets you send or receive information (e.g., Eudora software used exclusively for e-mail);

- A telephone line (but remember, you can not use the phone and E-mail at the same time);

- A "dial-up" account with a service provider — the company, university or not-for-profit organization that will connect you to the Internet. It is very important to shop around for the best price and service. Make sure you know how much they charge for being on-line and if they provide technical support if you run into problems. Check if they charge for this service or if they have staff who will answer your questions for free.

What do I need to know about modems if I want to use E-mail?

Modem stands for MOdulator-DEModulator. The modem works like a translator. It takes the information received through the telephone line and translates it for your computer because the two systems do not use the same "language".

A modem must be connected to your computer to send and receive e-mail and computer-transmitted faxes. The modem must also be connected to a telephone line.

Modem speed refers to how fast the modem can send and receive data over the telephone line.

Higher speed modems present many advantages, since they:

■ can exchange more data per second;
■ are usually more reliable, and provide higher quality connections;
■ are cheaper to use (the higher the speed the lower the communication costs).

On the other hand, higher speed modems

■ cost more money, at least initially.

What do I need to know about communications software to use e-mail?

You need communications software to use a modem. These are programs which help you connect your computer to a modem, enable your computer to contact the service provider (or host computer), and send and receive data over telephone lines.

There are a multitude of communications software packages available. When you get your account with an Internet provider they usually provide the software for free or for a minimal charge for set-up. Software packages are also accessible via the Internet but since accessing the Internet requires some practice, you should try to become comfortable with basic Internet communication before exploring more complicated systems.

Regardless of the software package you use, you will need to install it in your computer. If you do not have the skills to install the software yourself consider hiring an experienced professional or talk to another organization near you that is already connected and seek their advice and assistance.

Telephone Tips

Your ordinary telephone line is all that is required to use e-mail. You do not need a separate telephone line for e-mail unless you decide that it is necessary because it interferes with telephone communication. The telephone line is only busy when it is actually being used by the modem and in the case of e-mail this generally requires a few minutes each day to receive and send messages.

About Service Providers

To send and receive e-mail messages (and use other computer communication services, including the Internet), you must first open an account with a service (or access) provider. This is commonly referred to as getting "on-line".

There are many such service providers, each offering slightly different services. Some are commercial, others are not-for-profit and some are offered out of universities or colleges. Costs vary, but most providers charge a sign-up fee, then a fixed monthly or annual fee.

Do your research before selecting a service provider. A good source of information and advice are other NGOs in your city or country who are already set up to use e-mail.

Adapted from At Ease with E-mail: A handbook on using electronic mail for NGOs in developing countries, by the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 1995.

Listservs and Mailing Lists

A listserv is an electronic mailing list, typically used by a broad range of discussion groups. When you subscribe to a listserv, you will receive periodic e-mail messages about the topic you have requested. You can also send out messages to other people who participate in the listserv.

The benefits of electronic networking through discussion forums are as follows:

■ Promotes coordinated and informed debate and participation by members in developing as well as developed countries;
■ Reaches out to a large number of people by virtue of the relatively low-technology approach (i.e., email vs. full internet access);

- Allows discourses on health and development to be framed by an increased number of organisations and countries;
- Adds value to face-to-face meetings by making them accessible to people unable to attend in person, and by generating a collective memory of discussions, declarations and conclusions.

Adapted from Health and Development Networks (HDNET) website http://www.hdnet.org/home2.htm, 2000.

Viruses

A computer virus is a small program written to alter the way a computer operates, without the permission or knowledge of the user. It can damage programs in your computer and cause you to lose important files. A virus can get inside your computer through e-mail attachments or through using an infected disk. The best way to avoid viruses is to avoid opening attachments from people you don't know and to be careful when sharing disks with other people.

Personal Testimonials: E-mail and Networking

In preparation for this Guide we asked a number of people involved in AIDS networks and networking to comment on their experiences with e-mail. The following is a sample of the responses.

"There is no doubt: electronic networking brings us all closer together and makes our work more efficient. E-mail has become part of my life, my work. It satisfies my desire to communicate, to learn, to find solutions. I cannot imagine living without it."

"I was resistant to learning e-mail at first because it seemed difficult to learn. I asked a friend who was using e-mail to show me how it worked and it was not difficult to learn as I had thought. All it took me was about three hours to learn how to use it. Now I use it every day."

"I find that e-mail allows me to be in more frequent contact with members and funders and vice-versa."

"For me one of the best things about e-mail is its informality. You can write short messages which get right to the point without spending too much time on the formalities associated with normal letter writing."

"E-mail has certainly helped us with our advocacy efforts, particularly at times when we are dealing with time sensitive issues."

"It [electronic mail] makes it much easier for me to contact members of my Steering Committee who are spread out across the country. They are now all on e-mail so whenever I need a quick decision or response from them I usually get it."

"The turn around time on e-mail is very quick so I am able to work more closely with contributors to our newsletter — who are also on e-mail — on

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Glossary of Terms:

Address: the location of an internet resource. It can be an email or web address.

Attachment: an attachment is any type of file that is sent with a message electronically.

Download: the process of copying data file(s) from a remote computer to a local computer. It is similar to opening a file on your computer, except you are opening it from a website. For instance, this Networking Guide can be downloaded from ICASO's website.

Home Page: the first page of a Web Site. It is similar to the title page of a document.

Internet: the internet is a world wide electronic connection of computers (servers) and networks operating 24 hours a day.

Listserv: an electronic mailing list typically used by a broad range of discussion groups. When you subscribe to a listerv, you will receive periodic e-mail messages about the topic you have requested. You can also send out messages to other people who participate in the listerv.

Mailing List: a list of email addresses to which messages are sent. You can subscribe to a mailing lists typically by sending an email to the contact address with the following in the body of the message: the word subscribe, the name of the list, and your email address.

Search Engine: a search engine allows you to search a website or the internet for information on a topic you choose. For instance, typing in the words "AIDS Service Organizations" will bring a long list of webpages that include information on ASOs.

Webpage: a webpage is a single file that can be displayed on the web. It can be a few lines of text or it can have as much text as several printed pages.

Website: a collection of one or more webpages.

www: this is a short form for the world wide web, which is another name for the Internet.

adapted from the Square One Technology Glossary website. http://www.squareonetech.com/glossary.html, 1997.

edits of their materials. We are also thinking of distributing our newsletter electronically to all members with e-mail addresses and sending hard copies only to those members without e-mail. This will help us save money on printing, postage and the time it takes to do a mail out."

"E-mail has made it much easier for me to remain in contact with the many people and organizations I hooked up with at the Vancouver AIDS conference. Also, I was able to get a lot of information and papers from people who had given me their e-mail address in Vancouver."

"E-mail communications proved to be a big help while we were planning for a recent workshop. It allowed me to have daily communications with members of the planning committee who were spread out across the city and the province.....We

were able to plan the entire event without having to meet face-to-face."

"E-mail has saved a lot of money on a project we have been working on. We significantly underspent the project's communications budget because we used e-mail to contact people, instead of long distance phone calls or faxes, whenever possible. This allowed us to use the savings on other project expenses."

"Our e-mail system is set up so that I can even access my e-mail when I am traveling. I travel a lot and this allows me to keep current with correspondence and network matters while I am away."

"Now that we have e-mail, I don't spend nearly as much time using the fax machine. This has freed up time for other duties."

Governing Body and Staff Issues in Formalized Networks

Introduction

In Chapter 1 a distinction was made between informal and formal networks. Informal networks are often set up for the purpose of sharing information and need comparatively little administrative structure. Formal networks, on the other hand, often require a greater degree of structure, coordination and accountability because they often have more than one objective and/or activity.

This section looks at features of network development in formalized networks. It includes:

❍ Selecting a Governing Body;

❍ Models for the Structure of the Governing Body;

❍ Model 1: The Working/Administrative Governing Body;

❍ Model 2: Collective;

❍ Basic Functions of Governing Bodies;

❍ Sample Terms of Reference for a Member of a Governing Body; and

❍ Defining the Role of Staff.

Selecting a Governing Body

One of the earliest, if not the first, milestones on the way to formalizing a network is the formation of a governing body. Most typically the governing body is composed of network members who are elected by members or participants in the network. The governing body is, in turn, accountable to members of the network.

Things to consider when selecting a governing body:

Numbers. How large do you want the governing body to be (i.e., how many positions)?

Composition. Do you want to ensure that the governing body includes: a specified number of men and women; a specified number of PHAs; or a specific number of members from a geographical location?

Length of Term. How long will the term of members of the governing body be (i.e., one year, two years, etc)?

Election Procedures. Who gets to nominate a candidate for the governing body? Do you want the members of the governing body elected by an open show of hands or by a secret ballot? Who gets to vote?

Models for the Structure of the Governing Body

Another key decision for the members of a formalized network is determining the role it wants the governing body to play. The following two models are the most common among groups which want to preserve a flat structure where the emphasis is on group decision-making.

It is important to keep in mind, however, the primary rule of organizational development: the structure (form) of an organization is designed and adapted to ensure effective decision-making in carrying out an organization's mission and plans (function). The following models are presented as a guide only. You will likely need to adapt them to your specific functions and needs.

Model 1: The Working/Administrative Governing Body

A working or administrative governing body has some responsibility for the operations of the network. In addition to providing policy and general direction, members of the governing body may help in practical ways such as drafting documents or planning the content of a skills building workshop.

Organizational Structure

In a working/administrative governing body, the work is often done in committees that either make decisions or bring recommendations to the board as a whole.

In the diagram below, the dotted line between the governing body and the senior staff person indicates a supporting relationship. Solid lines indicate reporting relationships.
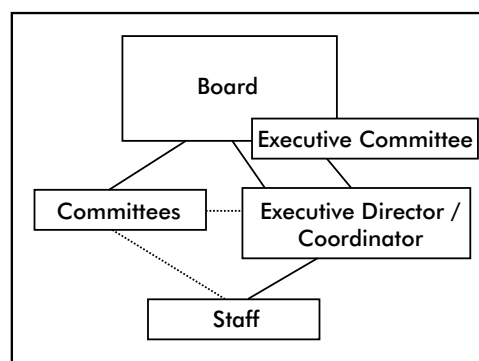
Staff

A Coordinator or Executive Director is often the senior staff person. The emphasis for the senior staff role is on communication and coordination among staff and between staff and the governing body.

A team management or participatory management style is compatible with this model.

When is this model effective?

Consider this model when:

- governing body members have management skills;
- governing body members have organizational skills in specific areas where there are committees;
- the network is small;

- there is a strong governing body committee structure with clear lines of communication and terms of reference; and

- governing body members are able to volunteer a significant amount of time.

Things to watch for:

1. Workload for members of the governing body is becoming more demanding.

> **Possible Danger:**
>
> The governing body becomes overwhelmed by the amount of work and burns out.
>
> **Response:**
>
> Provide clear procedures and terms of reference for committees.
>
> When recruiting, outline the responsibilities and time commitment expected of governing body members.

2. Confusion is apparent between members of the governing body and staff about their respective roles.

> **Possible Danger:**
>
> There can be gaps and/or overlaps in the delivery of service or administration of the network.
>
> **Response:**
>
> Provide clear job descriptions that recognize some tasks can be done either by members of the governing body or by staff.

3. Members of the governing body are doing jobs for which they do not have the requisite skills.

> **Possible Danger:**
>
> Effectiveness of the network and the quality of its work will deteriorate.
>
> **Response:**
>
> Recruit for special skills and interest.
>
> Provide opportunities for members of the governing body to acquire and utilize new skills.

Adapted from Boards Basics Manual for Leadership Development Programs, United Way of Canada-Centraide Canada, 1995.

Model 2: Collective

A collective is a group of like-minded people working towards a specific goal. The individuals within the collective have a responsibility to define and support the basic philosophy of working as a collective.

For a collective to work, each individual must have a highly developed feeling of responsibility and commitment to the achievement of the organization's goals and objectives.

Organizational Structure

In a true collective the staff and the governing body work together to achieve the goals of the organization. Responsibility for policy, management and operational functions is shared. This model is usually found in self-help groups and organizations with few or no staff.

True Collective   Modified Collective
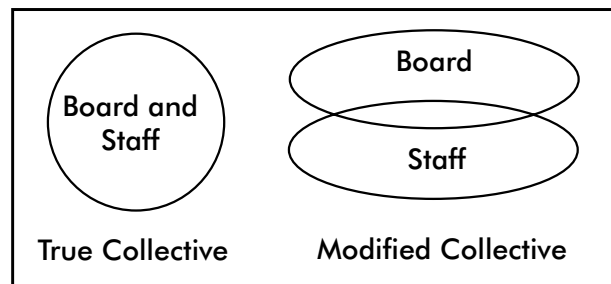
Staff

In both the true and modified collective, there is no management hierarchy although some people may be performing what would traditionally be viewed as management functions. Management functions are often rotated.

In practice, however, there are networks that originally started out as true collectives but now have coordinators with management responsibilities. These are still referred to as collectives because they work to equalize the contributions of board and staff, promote egalitarian status for board and staff and practice consensus decision-making.

When Is This Model Effective

This model is effective:

- where there is a high level of agreement about, and commitment to, the organization's values, goals and objectives;
- where team work is valued;

■ when all the members are willing to do their part to carry out the work of the network;

■ where members are highly skilled and able to invest a good deal of time to make collective decisions;

■ when the network is small; and

■ where there is a high commitment to one another as individuals.

Things to Watch for

1. Some members might assume non-hierarchy means no structure.

Possible danger:

The network may be continually reinventing the wheel and certain functions may be overlooked.

Response:

Identify the functions that must be performed and assign them to individuals or teams. Develop clear terms of reference.

2. Cliques or informal hierarchies might arise in the absence of a formal hierarchy.

Possible danger:

Groups or individuals may gain more power than other because of their skills, assertiveness, or class.

Response:

Acknowledge the existence of these informal power imbalances.

Share the responsibilities and rotate jobs to break down these informal power hierarchies.

Become aware of the factors that influence decision-making and develop appropriate ground rules.

3. Burnout and overwork.

Possible dangers:

The network may lose people or people will become ineffective.

The network may have trouble recruiting new members if there is a perception that they will be overworked.

Individuals who, for personal reasons, are unable to contribute as much time to the organization as others have their commitment questioned.

Response:

Set realistic expectations and respect people's personal needs.

An efficient structure and decision-making process for routine and maintenance activities will help reduce the individual's time commitment.

The group values individual capacities to contribute in different ways.

Adapted from <u>Boards Basics Manual for Leadership Development Programs</u>, United Way of Canada-Centraide Canada, 1995.

Tips to Help Distinguish Between the Role of the Governing Body and Staff

Once the decision is taken to hire staff the key tasks will be to determine the difference between the role of the network's governing body and staff.

Let's examine some options.

In order to decide on an appropriate structure, the governing body must ask three basic questions.

1. What decisions do we want to make ourselves, and what decisions do we want to delegate to our staff?

2. How much do we want to be involved in the day-to-day operation of the network?

3. How will we define the reporting relationship between ourselves and our staff?

Depending on how you answer those questions, you can come up with several different pictures of how a governing body operates.

Basic Functions of Governing Bodies

Defining the responsibilities of the governing body is necessary to give them a clear idea of what the network members expect from them. It helps to put these ideas in writing. For the most part, these written expectations will allow members of the governing body to see how they can contribute effectively to the organization. This also helps them to be responsible for their own commitments.

Although there are different types of governing bodies, it is possible to list their basic functions.

They are to:

- monitor that the actions of the network are in line with its Statement of Purpose;
- develop policies to guide the network and its management;
- determine direction (strategic planning);
- secure and monitor effective management of the network's financial resources;
- monitor operations and evaluate results;
- manage human resources (staff and volunteers);
- provide continuity for the ongoing governance and management of the network; and
- fulfill the basic legal responsibilities of a governing body (this applies only if the network has a legal entity).

Sample Terms of Reference for a Member of a Governing Body

Primary Role:

To oversee the development and implementation of policies consistent with the purpose of the network.

Responsibilities:

- Attend and participate in meetings of the governing body and serve on its committees as required.
- Read minutes and reports and be aware of the network's activities.
- Actively help the governing body to reach group decisions on policy.
- Advocate for the network in the community.
- Listen to and evaluate opinions with an open mind.
- Be aware of changing needs in the community.
- Be knowledgeable and responsible regarding finances of the network.
- Represent the network at outside meetings (as needed and if possible)
- Support and participate in fundraising for the network.

Qualifications:

- Knowledge of and interest in HIV/AIDS issues.
- Knowledge of HIV/AIDS issues pertaining to the network.
- Tact and ability to work with others.
- Time and willingness to serve.

- Skills and knowledge to support the management process of the governing body.

Time Parameters:

- Two year term.
- Meeting of the governing body usually once a month requiring two hours each.
- Committee meetings usually once a month requiring two hours each.
- Special events such as conferences, planning sessions requiring about three hours every two months.

Terms of Reference for the Governing Body of an Existing AIDS Network

The following is the actual terms of reference for the "Advisory Board", the governing body of Kenyan AIDS NGOs Consortium. You might find it useful to use them as a guide should you need to develop the Terms of Reference for your governing body.

Kenyan AIDS NGOs Consortium

Terms of Reference for the Advisory Board

The board members will include:

- 4 individuals from the NGO consortium members elected at the annual meeting;
- Co-ordinator of the Secretariat;
- Assistant to the Co-ordinator;
- co-opted members/advisory selected by the board.

Roles

The board will be the policy arm and oversee the activities of the Consortium. The role of the board will be to:

- provide financial accountability to consortium members and donors;
- suggest ideas/concepts for consortium activities and proposals;
- determine sustainability strategies and give final approval for proposals;
- provide advice and guidance on overall direction of the consortium;
- recruitment and management of staff;
- acquire any moveable or immovable property and any building or commodities whatsoever and sell, dispose or mortgage, lease or otherwise deal with all or any part of the property or right of the Consortium.

Tenure of Office

❑ board members shall for be elected for a 2 year term and shall be eligible for re-election for one more term.

Defining the Role of Staff

While many networks are able to function on a purely volunteer basis, most networks will at some time face the question of whether to employ staff. Some networks hire staff right at the beginning of their collaboration to ensure that things "get off the ground." Others wait until they reach a point where they realize that the volunteer efforts of their members will no longer sustain the network. And still other networks would like to hire a staff person to free members up for other roles but simply cannot afford to.

Hiring staff is a milestone in the existence of an organization. It changes the nature of the collaboration among members and can lead to certain problems unless the relationship between the governing body and the staff are clearly defined.

Hiring a senior staff person for the network is one of the most important tasks facing a governing body. Finding the right person can take considerable time and effort. A structured approach to the employment process makes the experience efficient and effective. The process includes the following steps:

1. Develop a Job Description

The job description is the foundation of the employment process. A job description includes four components:

■ a general description of the job, including the purpose of the job and the basic functions;
■ identification of the immediate supervisor(s);
■ a definition of the authority of the position, e.g., expenditure limits; and
■ a list of specific responsibilities and tasks.

The job description must be related to the network's purpose and goals. The job description also provides a clear outline of what is expected. The obligations of all parties are set out clearly.

Preparing a job description and writing down the various tasks and responsibilities will reveal whether the job is realistic. Can one person do the job? What skills are needed to perform essential functions? Answers to these questions will help to determine the position requirements.

2. Define Position Requirements

The job description does not provide the information needed to make the employment decision; rather, it provides a framework for identifying desirable qualifications and personal suitability. These candidate requirements should include:

■ desired personal qualities and aptitudes
■ job knowledge, skills and abilities
■ types of previous work experience
■ formal and informal education.

3. Decide on Compensation

The compensation package must define not only salary range, but also benefits and conditions of service. Benefits may include:

■ bonuses;
■ overtime;
■ allowances;
■ a medical plan;
■ a dental plan;
■ life and disability insurance;
■ paid holidays and vacation; and
■ the provision of sick days to be used when the staff member is ill and unable to work.

Conditions of service may include:

■ leave of absence;
■ probation period;
■ notice; and
■ grievance procedure.

An upper and lower salary limit should be established so that compensation appropriate to the experience of the successful applicant can be determined objectively. If it is a network of organizations, the salary and benefits of the staff person must be in line with those of members.

The job description and position requirements can be used to determine a fair level of compensation. Reference to salary levels and compensation packages for similar positions in comparable organizations may be helpful benchmarks.

Once the job description has been prepared there are a number of important steps to take which are listed below. We are not going to go into detail about what is involved in each of these steps, but you should give every one of them careful thought.

The next steps are to:

- advertise the position;
- set up an interview committee;
- identify a short list of applicants with good potential;
- interview those on the short list; and
- choose your preferred applicant.

Hiring a senior staff person is only one approach to staffing a network. Two other possibilities are:

- Seconding or "borrowing" a staff person from a member organization; and
- hiring a network administrator to handle routine administrative functions while maintaining all other aspects of the work of the network as voluntary.

Adapted from <u>*Effective Organizations: A Consultant's Resource*</u>*, by Judy Kent, Skills Program for Management Volunteers, 1992*

Job Description of Network Senior Staff Person

The following is the actual job description of the senior staff person of the Southern African Network of AIDS Service Organizations (SANASO). You might find it useful to use this example as a guide should you need to develop a job description for a senior staff person of a network.

Job Description

Position: Executive Secretary

Duration: Full Time

The Executive Secretary shall be the chief administrative officer of SANASO. The Executive Secretary shall report to the Coordinating Committee of SANASO through the Chairman of SANASO.

Duties and Responsibilities

It shall be the duty of the Executive Secretary of SANASO:

1.1 To contribute to the advancement of the objectives of SANASO.

1.2 To facilitate the sharing of information, ideas, experiences and resources in AIDS related work between NGOs within the region and the world at large through the following mechanisms:

- circulation of quarterly newsletter;
- circulation of any pertinent materials;
- compilation and maintaining an inventory of the activities of members of SANASO;
- pay contact visits to SANASO member NGOs in order to appreciate what they are doing and offer the necessary assistance/support.

1.3 To promote cooperation and collaboration in AIDS work among NGOs in the region.

1.4 To attend Coordinating Committee meetings as an ex officio member, liaise with the Chairperson and Secretary in the preparation of the agendas of such meeting and circulate minutes to all members.

1.5 To maintain a register of assets acquired and donated to SANASO.

1.6 To keep a register of member NGOs and send them reminders and make arrangements on the collection of membership dues and to ensure affiliation of SANASO to relevant bodies.

1.7 To attend and represent the SANASO at Conferences related to Networking in the region and internationally, in consultation with the Chairperson. During such meetings, to inform other members on SANASO's position on social, political and economic matters affecting AIDS work in the region, particularly SANASO's needs and achievements.

1.8 To maintain a high standard of professional ethics and confidentiality.

1.9 To maintain financial discipline in SANASO and ensure that accurate records are kept of all financial transactions and to produce regular financial reports for the Coordinating Committee and annual financial reports for the Congress and Donor Organisations.

1.10 To manage business transactions of SANASO in consultation with the Chairperson and Treasurer including that of all finances and ensure that an annual report and a financial statement is produced for the Congress and SANASO Donors.

1.11 To carry out such additional duties as reasonably requested by the Coordinating Committee through the Chairperson or authorised member.

1.12 To organize SANASO Conferences and workshops in conjunction with the host country NGO networks.

1.13 To prepare SANASO funding proposals, circulate them to donors and to meet all requirements for grants to SANASO.

1.14 To supervise other SANASO employees.

Lessons Learned About Networking

Introduction

Networking in the area of AIDS is increasingly recognized as an essential component of a more effective response to the challenges of HIV/AIDS. Unfortunately, however, little has been written about the lessons learned in building and sustaining a successful network. This is regrettable as networking in the area of AIDS could only be strengthened if networks reflected more on their successes, failures, capacities and weaknesses and shared this information with others.

This chapter presents three articles which examine lessons learned about networking. The first article looks at factors and conditions which influence networking dynamics. The second piece is a summary of an evaluation of an unsuccessful network of indigenous people in Asia. It is included here as the lessons learned from this experience are also applicable to AIDS networks. The final article, written specifically for the Guide, is a reflection on the major challenges that must be addressed in the development of a network.

The articles in this chapter look at:

❍ Factors and Conditions Influencing Networking Dynamics;

❍ Why Networks Fail; and

❍ Networking Issues and Challenges.

Factors and Conditions Influencing Networking Dynamics

There are countless factors and conditions which influence the dynamics of networking. In preparation for this Guide, we collected a few examples of networking experiences and conditions which reflect various stages of a networks growth. This list of obstacles and challenges illustrate key points and reminders of what makes networks work well, and what puts them at risk.

- The process of networking is important, including the development of a network culture in which members come to realize an awareness of themselves as part of a group, sharing a common purpose and mutual rights and responsibilities. That culture needs to be acknowledged, supported and nurtured as much as the reasons and content of the network itself because it is about people trying to find a way to work together against a common threat.

- Having clear goals is an important condition for a network's success. It should be noted, however, that few networks, if any, begin life with clearly defined goals. It takes time to build consensus among members on what the goals should be. Accordingly, during the start-up period of a network it is only reasonable to expect some ambiguity in the network's stated goals. This situation is fine as long as the goals provide a focus for the network's activities and serve as a reasonable basis for others to join the network. Moreover, during the start-up phase of a network it is important to acknowledge that at this point in the network's development the goals need to be refined and to encourage the membership to be active in this process.

- No network can be all things to all people and all organizations. Be realistic and begin with those who want to participate in a process. Although it is important to be inclusive, it is equally important to remain pragmatic. It can be strategic to begin with a core group of organizations who feel comfortable with the goals and process at the beginning by concentrating your energies and resources on those who do want to work together. Otherwise there is the danger of trying to satisfy everyone, and in the end, the network pleases no one. However, this should not be viewed as a way to exclude organizations that may be more difficult to integrate. Sometimes some organizations just need more time to see the benefits of the network before they commit to it themselves.

- Networks may go through phases that reflect a change in members' interests, changing priorities, or quality of leadership. Differences and disagreements among organizations may become stronger than the common goals that originally brought them together. Networks may weaken or dissolve as a result of these differences. However, this does not always have to be seen as negative: sometimes networks do form and fade away, membership does rise and fall, and goals and objectives do evolve.

- Networks need to be flexible. Members will put more effort into a network when it has potential for meeting their needs. It is important to allow for change in network priorities as members' own priorities change. It is also important to plan for these changes with regular reviews of the mission statement and goals.

- It is vital that the network is not in competition with its members. For example, some members may have specific skills and specialties, and their involvement in the network can benefit all members. However, if a network tries to carry out activities, which a member could equally well carry out, it may be in competition with its own members for funds, people, resources and influence. Competition between the network and its members can readily lead to the demise of the network.

- Network members need to have a clear understanding of where ownership of the network lies. For instance, members must feel that they are contributing to the ongoing development of the network. If members do not feel that they "own" the network, their commitment to the networking process will be weak.

- An egalitarian relationship between members of a network must be maintained. It can be damaging if any one member or group of members dominates to the exclusion of others. Some networks experience problems when the larger members are favoured over the smaller members. Every member needs to feel that their voice is as important as the other members.

- Many networks do not have sufficient funds to support an effective administration. In lieu of "hired help", the expectation is that the networks administrative functions will be undertaken by a volunteer work force. While this idea may be practical in a context where funds are scarce and spare time is a luxury, it doesn't always work. Volunteers are often busy with their paid jobs and generating incomes, and only get to the voluntary activities when they have time.

❏ A network's membership, whether individual or institutional, cannot depend solely on support from donors. Those attracted by a network's potential to assist them with their aims must be prepared to contribute, financially or otherwise, to help it function efficiently and effectively. This is a real test of the networks viability: can it exist, even informally, during the periods when donors or funders are difficult to attract.

❏ Communication is a common problem. Disseminating critical information, answering queries, soliciting input to decision--making and developing collective strategies all take an enormous amount of time. There needs to be a commitment of staff time and funds to cover these communication costs. In addition there is the problem of unreliable communication infrastructures, e.g. poor telephone connections, equipment breakdown, and lack of technical support. It may take days to get a message through to an organization, while those on the receiving end may feel they are being left out. Both sides can feel frustrated. Don't let this discourage you. Building an effective network takes time and patience by everyone.

Why Networks Fail

The following article looks at the reasons why a network failed. The article, titled "The Impact of Regional Development Programs on Indigenous Minorities", by Jean Michaud, originally appeared in <u>IDRC Networks: An Ethnographic Perspective</u>, by Anne K. Bernard, International Development Research Centre, 1996.

This review of the Regional Development and Indigenous Minorities Network in Southeast Asia (RDIMSEA) studies the impact of regional development programs on indigenous minorities in Thailand, Continental and Insular Malaysia, and the Philippines. RDIMSEA was an externally conceived network that grouped NGOs, academics, and a coordinating office.

The RDIMSEA network had a difficult and troubled existence from the start. A major source of confusion was an early change in key personnel. The main initiators of the network quit and were hastily replaced by individuals with no previous working relationship. This was likely the most important factor in the subsequent problems that were experienced. The project was concerned with the participation of representatives of indigenous minorities and attempted to involve researchers who were themselves members of the minority groups. Efforts to recruit membership from minority groups met with limitations of language, insufficient levels of education, absence of

administrative and political structures with which to work, and, generally low interest in the venture. It is likely that the initial motivation for many participants was primarily their own interests. When questioned about taking part in this network, none expressed any excitement about actively cooperating with other components of the network. Because this network was not internally grown, it did not receive the necessary push from enthusiastic recipients to become an operational and durable network.

The regional nature of the project also presented some problems. Linguistic, cultural, religious, political, and economic differences existed between the researchers and the minority groups and an important cultural gap existed between the members themselves. The network wrongly assumed that organizations studying similar people were similar. Networks imply that groups must work with each other. The wider the gap between participants, the more difficult the building of cohesiveness, and the more likely the development of opposition.

Major conclusions and recommendations of the study include:

1. The project failed to define a specific role for the coordinator of the network.

2. There was a lack of common understanding, about how the network should operate, a lack of transparency, and there was competition with the donor.

3. A focus on a single ecoregion, or on groups with closer cultural identity, would have been helpful.

4. Active participation of indigenous minorities in the research process and in decision-making could have been more clearly addressed in the project.

5. A mix of institutions in the same project requires a genuine mutual understanding of basic similarities and differences between components and requires discussion between participants.

6. If networks are to reduce workload among participants, instead of increasing it, this may only occur after a certain amount of time is invested by the participants. Fragile organizations may not have the necessary "energy capital" to be able to wait for the intended results. The network mechanism therefore must be developed in close conjunction with the realities of its prospective members.

7. Coordination is always a key issue in a network. A lack of coordination was singled out as the main reason for the collapse of the project.

8. At the earliest stages of discussion, all potential participants should have an opportunity to meet and express their motivations and expectations. Donor representatives should take the initiative to discuss with all participants.

9. Two key questions were not addressed when the network was conceived: What is the utility of networking as a specific form of action in this context? What is the operational value of a concept such as "indigenous minorities" in Southeast Asia?

Source: *IDRC Networks: An Ethnographic Perspective*, by Anne K. Bernard, International Development Research Centre, 1996.

Networking Issues and Challenges

Roger Drew, Projects Director, Family AIDS Caring Trust, Zimbabwe, has been involved in several AIDS networks in the Southern African region. This article presents the authors assessment of key factors which influence network development and the dynamics between network members.

How can we define a successful network? Perhaps as one that it is seen to be of benefit to its major stakeholders. These would include members, funders and regulatory bodies such as government. What challenges might a network face in trying to achieve this?

Differing Visions

A network will face problems if the stakeholders have differing visions for it. For example, the funders might see the network as an advocate with government whereas the members want it to raise funds for their individual organisations. Often the vision is not clearly articulated. Each stakeholder simply assumes that the other shares their vision!

Networks should identify their key stakeholders and what their vision for the network is. A network will only succeed if it has a well-focused vision to which all the stakeholders agree. Networks should restrict their stakeholders to people who share their agreed vision. This may involve refusing some resources and/or limiting membership. Having a clear vision will avoid stakeholders having unrealistic expectations of the network.

Dealing with Conflict

Conflicts may occur within a network for a number of reasons. Competitive relationships between members and inter-organisational "politics" may affect the network adversely. Decisions may be made for politically expedient reasons rather than with a view to making the network more effective.

Examples of decisions which may be influenced in this way include location of secretariat offices, choice of sites for workshops/conferences, representation on the decision-making body, etc.

There needs to be a way of dealing with conflicts within the network. However, at times, the problem may be something that is larger than the network itself.

Communication

Communication is a major challenge to all networks, particularly when distances between stakeholders are very great and communicational infrastructure is very poor. As one of the major goals of many networks is to improve information exchange, there is a need to give this issue special attention. Particular issues to be considered are:

❑ frequency, content and quality of newsletters

❑ frequency and purpose of meetings

❑ sub-divisions of the network into geographical localities

❑ programmes to improve communication infrastructure

Decision-making

Problems will arise if key stakeholders feel that they are excluded from the decision-making process. Different processes may work for different networks and for the same network at different times. It is important that the process be clearly defined and reviewed periodically.

Finances

Finances affect networks in a number of important ways. First, networks need financial resources to function. These may be sourced from members themselves or from an external body. It needs to be recognised that the organization providing funds will have a powerful voice in the dealings of the network. As a result networks should choose their funders carefully.

Secondly, in resource poor settings, organisations and individuals may be attracted to networks in order to benefit financially. Failure to recognize this may result in frustration and unmet expectations.

Finally, networks need to establish systems for handling finances. This may be difficult as the network has other priorities and people involved in networks may lack management skills. Failure to do so may result in financial mismanagement or fraud. Networks using donated funds may face very high expectations from donors in this area.

Management of Change

Networks do not remain static. They change as do the situations in which they operate. A successful network will be able to adapt to changing internal and external environments.

One of the major changes experienced by a network is when it employs its first member of staff. This is usually motivated by a recognition that volunteers are unable to cope with the increasing workload. However, in most cases the workload on volunteers actually increases when staff are first employed and the nature of the work changes. If volunteers are unprepared for this the result can be disastrous. Inadequate thought is often given to conditions of service and related issues. The respective roles of volunteer committee and staff members need to be defined.

Invitation to comment on the HIV/AIDS Networking Guide

There has been a marked growth in the number of AIDS networks at all levels: local, national, regional and international, in recent years. This phenomena is largely attributable to the need for greater cooperation and collaboration to address the complexities of the global AIDS pandemic and a growing awareness of the value of collaborative action.

The HIV/AIDS Networking Guide is intended as a contribution to help ensure that AIDS networks remain vital and dynamic and that they fulfill their potential as agents of social change.

The International Council of AIDS Service Organizations would like to hear reader's opinions of this publication. Your comments and suggestions would greatly contribute to and become part of shared knowledge. They will be incorporated in possible future editions of the Guide, as well as other materials using part of it.

We invite you to share with us:

❍   which parts of the HIV/AIDS Networking Guide did you find the most useful?

❍   have you used parts of the Guide to help you build, strengthen or sustain a network or networking experience?

❍   whether you missed particular issues or topics?

❍   any other comments, criticisms or recommendations?

❍   anyone else you think would benefit from receiving a copy?

Please send your comments to:

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