

7 CIVIL SOCIETY AND NETWORKS

Networks strengthen advocacy's power by multiplying the number of voices and the spectrum of representation for taking action on a particular issue. Networks become increasingly important for movements like MSM and HIV advocacy, which can very often be isolated and cut off from support structures in their local environments. Networking within the movement for MSM rights with organizations working directly with MSM and HIV issues is as important as networking outside the movement and building alliances with groups working in different areas. The power of groups and coalitions to leverage decision makers is oftentimes much stronger than individual group power. For example, MSM groups have built very strong connections with political parties, women's rights organizations, and sex worker collectives, to name a few.

Another important aspect of civil society and networks to keep in mind when working with MSM is the conflict that can occur when many organizations are competing for the same funding or services. Relationships between MSM groups can and do become strained, especially in situations when limited funds become available to a large number of groups, causing competition. At all costs, MSM groups should keep networks with other MSM groups healthy and strong, which requires groups to develop a clear mandate moving forward to avoid hostility and territorialism between groups, to encourage sharing and support, and to avoid reduplication of efforts and wheel reinvention.

This chapter trains participants in the importance of networking, instills within participants an understanding of networking as it relates to advocacy, and provides the resources for MSM to do network mapping for their locale to identify viable networking directions in which to navigate. It also brings participant attention to the issues of territorialism.

Key points:

- Networks have a multiplying effect on advocacy's power.
- Groups should network with preexisting networks.
- Groups should forge networks with existing agencies and bodies working on MSM and HIV issues, such as the Global Fund's Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM).
- Communities should consider forming their own networks.
- Territorialism and work reduplication are not inevitable and can be avoided.
- The MSMGF Web site is a "1-stop shop" for valuable information and resources.

Chapter goals:

Upon completing the exercises in this chapter, participants will be able to:

- Understand the importance of networks to achieving an advocacy goal
- Understand the Yogyakarta Principles, and how they came about through networking
- Differentiate between an advocacy target and an ally
- Identify local allies and potential network partners
- Map challenges within individual organizations and networks that prevent work from happening effectively
- Brainstorm ideas for dealing with these challenges
- Identify next steps for networking

EXERCISE 7.0

BENEFITS OF NETWORKS

Purpose:

To give participants a solid example of how advocacy networks can yield very positive results.

Goals:

At the end of the exercise, participants will be able to:

- Understand the importance of networks to achieving a goal
- Understand the Yogyakarta Principles, and how they came about through networking

Materials:

- Synthetic yarn (different colors)
- Chair or other common heavy object
- Handout 7.0

Process:

- ① Distribute 1 single long piece of yarn to each participant. Ask participants to attempt to hang the chair (or other heavy object) with the yarn. The yarn should snap every time.
- ② Ask participants to come up with a way to hang the chair without snapping the yarn. Wrapping multiple pieces of yarn together to form a stronger twine can accomplish this.
- ③ Distribute copies of Handout 7.0 and have participants read the story of the creation of the Yogyakarta Principles.

After reading the materials, have the group answer the following:

- What is the connection between the yarn exercise and the handout reading?

- Give 2-3 examples of network advocacy in the examples you just read.
- How did networking add special value to a process?
- What are some examples of networking you have engaged in?

Some responses might include:

- Accomplish something together that you could not accomplish alone; more effective research
- Influence others inside and outside the network
- Broaden the understanding of an issue or struggle by bringing together different constituencies (human rights groups, health/medicine organizations, students, academics, men and women, gay and straight, etc).
- Share the work
- Reduce duplication efforts and wasting resources
- Promote the exchanges of ideas, insights, experiences, and skills
- Provide a needed sense of solidarity and moral and psychological support
- Under certain circumstances, mobilize financial resources
- Enhance legitimacy—many united voices calling for action collectively can be more powerful than a single individual's statement¹

EXERCISE 7.1

NETWORKING AND ADVOCACY

7.1

Purpose:

To give participants specific ideas about how networking can work, through role play.¹

Goals:

At the end of the exercise, participants will be able to:

- Understand how networking specifically relates to advocacy campaigns

Materials:

- Masking tape

Process:

Set up a role play with the following roles:

- Three persons to play members of the Local Council Committee, which is considering whether to set up an MSM clinic where integrated services will be provided—they are not necessarily opposed to it, but are concerned about what the local community will say.
- Three persons to play activists who are trying to influence the committee members to decide in favor of the clinic (increase or decrease the number in this group depending on the total number of participants but it should be about a third or less of the total number).
- The rest should be paired up to represent other NGOs, which, while also involved in HIV/AIDS, did not arrive at this meeting in support of initiating services for MSM—this could be for a number of different reasons. Assign different perspectives and considerations (eg, we do not have time, we do not have enough staff/funds, we will be seen as anti-government, we represent a different constituency, we want a clinic in our area, we are worried about losing donor funding if we work with this marginalized group, etc)

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or ask them to come up with their own excuses. Encourage participants to take on an excuse that they often hear given to them in their own home communities.

Put a line down the middle of the room using masking tape to separate the 3 activists from the rest of the NGOs. The task is for the 3 activists to convince others to cross over and join them in getting the Committee to agree to the clinic being set up. Let this go on for about 15 minutes.

As the facilitator, you can introduce changes midway through the role play (eg, turnover of staff, executive director has decided that he or she does not like the 3 activists because they are too vocal, etc). Put a little pressure on the activists by telling them that they really need to get at least half of the representatives to join them if they want to convince any of the Local Council Committee. Announce the time loudly so that they feel some pressure, too. Extend the time if you feel they have just gotten into their respective roles. Halfway through the exercise, allow the 3 activists to call on 1 ally each to help them appeal to the other groups. They get to name their ally according to who they think would be most useful.

Stop the role play when you think enough issues have surfaced for a discussion. Ask for a round of applause and thank everyone.

Processing the role play:

- a. Ask each person to describe his or her experience. How did they feel playing their assigned role?
- b. Was it difficult? Easy? Frustrating? Why?
- c. Why bother getting the others in? Why didn't the 3 activists simply go in alone?
- d. What were your biggest considerations in crossing the line (changing your mind)?
- e. By the way, what was the line?
- f. What would it take for you to cross the line? Why do you think the NGOs did not want to cross the line? Did any of the activists go toward the NGOs to ask them why they were reluctant to cross?
- g. Did you do more talking than listening, or more listening than talking? Did you ever tell the group on the other side of the line that you agree with 1 of their points?
- h. What different sets of skills are required in doing networking? How do we go about building these skills?

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- i. Is this something we see in our own networking experiences?
- j. What were the challenges?

While this discussion is taking place, have a volunteer write key words used in the discussion on flipchart paper.

After the discussion is over, reflect as a group, circling key challenges, skills, and advantages related to networking.

What the group will recognize are the challenges of building and sustaining a network, but also, more importantly, how critical it is for effective advocacy.

7.2

EXERCISE 7.2

NETWORK MAPPING

Purpose:

To map local networks of allies.²

Goals:

At the end of the exercise, participants will be able to:

- Understand the difference between an advocacy target and an ally
- Identify local allies and potential network partners

Materials:

- Handout 7.2

Process:

- ① The facilitator should first clarify the difference between a target and an ally, and how some allies can also be indirect targets.
- ② Facilitate a discussion with the participants to share their experiences of working in non-advocacy-related partnerships or coalitions for their work.

Focus the discussion on working in partnerships specifically for advocacy.

Questions might include:

What are your experiences of work with others?

What were the main advantages and disadvantages you identified in working with others?

Have you worked with others on advocacy projects?

What are the differences and similarities between partnerships for advocacy and partnerships for other activities?

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- ③ Distribute Handout 7.2 and ask the participants to draw their potential allies in the diagram provided, as well as their targets. Give them the following guideline questions:

Who else could have a positive impact on the issue that has been chosen?

Who else is already working on this issue?

Who are usually your “natural” allies? Are they true allies for this issue?

Are they happy to work in a coalition?

- ④ Ask the participants to include in their diagram, for each ally:

What will they gain by joining your alliance?

What can they offer to the advocacy work?

What are their limitations?

7.3

EXERCISE 7.3

NETWORK TROUBLE

Purpose:

To get groups thinking about potential challenges that may hinder effective networking. Careful attention is given to territorialism and work reduplication.

Goals:

At the end of the exercise, participants will be able to:

- Map challenges within individual organizations and networks that prevent work from happening effectively
- Brainstorm ideas for dealing with these challenges
- Identify next steps for networking

Materials:

- Handout 7.3

Process:

- ① Ask the participants to return to their small groups.
- ② Reflecting on the last exercise, ask the groups to list down the challenges that they observed and whether these are from within their organizations or from within the networks (15 minutes). Are there other challenges that may not have come up during the case studies or role plays? Ask that they write these down as well.¹

Examples:

Challenges/considerations within individual organizations that may prevent them from networking	Challenges within the networks that may hinder effective advocacy
Insecurities Lack of a clear advocacy objective Scattered leadership Single issue focus Lack of resources	Territorialism Narrow work focus Scattered work focus Lack of consensus

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- ③ Ask the group to discuss strategies to overcome these challenges, both short-term, immediate actions and longer-term strategies that need to be adopted. Distribute Handout 7.3 and ask participants to fill it in.
- ④ Rejoin as a group and discuss.
- ⑤ The facilitator should ensure the discussion touches upon territorialism, as this is a very common problem in spaces where funding is as limited as it is for MSM. Explain that groups should expect a bit of competitiveness and territorialism when it comes to getting grants. Encourage groups to develop a plan of action for when this occurs, either now for a short time in the session or once they return to their locales. Some ideas are:
 - Organizations should develop a plan for when 1 group or more is working in the same area to avoid reduplication. One option would be to make a policy that organizations will not work on the same issue in the same locale. Another solution would be to insist on weekly meetings and build partnerships with groups working in close proximity.
 - Sometimes funding and resource agencies offer monetary and in-kind incentives for participation in projects. MSM community groups should develop a method for handling these handouts, ie, participate in studies/accept incentives insofar as they are not divisive to the community. Communities should be aware that incentives dry up quickly and they are certainly not worth fighting over.
 - Encourage MSM community groups to develop a regular monthly meeting plan that is independent of outside funding agencies and projects. When communities strengthen core systems independently, they build up a strength that is less easily swayed and divided by outside forces. Allow the shared lack of resources and services to be a point of bonding around which to cohere, rather than a source of division and competition.
- ⑥ Close session by distributing Handout 7.1. Explain to participants that these are organizations with which they should ensure they are connected. They can fill it out immediately, or use it as a checklist to guide networking later.

NETWORKING RESOURCES

ADVOCACY FROM THE GROUND UP: A TOOLKIT FOR STRENGTHENING LOCAL RESPONSES

Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organizations (APCASO), section 3

http://apcaso.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=66

The toolkit provides a guide to a wide range of activities with resources and reference materials for both trainers and participants. It is intended to broadly elaborate on the concept of advocacy and how it plays a key role in effective HIV interventions and AIDS services. It is currently being used to structure advocacy capacity initiatives for the ongoing Community Advocacy Initiative (CAI) project.

NETWORKING FOR POLICY CHANGE: AN ADVOCACY TRAINING MANUAL BY POLICY

The POLICY Project

<http://www.policyproject.com/pubs/AdvocacyManual.cfm>

The manual is based on the principle that advocacy strategies and methods can be learned. The building blocks of advocacy are the formation of networks, the identification of political opportunities, and the organization of campaigns.

CHAPTER 7

REFERENCES

1. Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organisations. Advocacy from the ground up: a toolkit for strengthening local responses. http://www.apcaso.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=66. Published November 2008. Accessed June 23, 2010.
2. International HIV/AIDS Alliance and the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations. Advocacy in action: a toolkit to support NGOs and CBOs responding to HIV/AIDS. <http://www.hivpolicy.org/Library/HPP001465.pdf>. Published June 2002. Accessed June 23, 2010.