

**HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up**  
A Toolkit for Strengthening Local Responses

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# 3

## **Building Networks for Advocacy**

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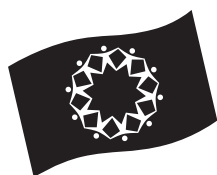


# HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up

## A Toolkit for Strengthening Local Responses

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An APCASO Community Advocacy Initiative



**A P C A S O**  
ASIA PACIFIC COUNCIL OF  
AIDS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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**Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organizations (APCASO)**

No. 12, Jalan 13/48A

The Boulevard Shop Office

Off Jalan Sentul

51000 Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia

T: +603 4045 1033

F: +603 4044 9615

E: [apcaso@pd.jaring.my](mailto:apcaso@pd.jaring.my)

W: [www.apcaso.org](http://www.apcaso.org)

## Cover design rationale

The cover design is inspired by the visual of pegboard used to store and organise tools such as hammers, screwdrivers and spanners, making them readily accessible as and when it is needed. The cover is UV finished except for the evenly spaced circles which have been intentionally left untreated to resemble holes and simulate the tactile effect of a pegboard. The toolkit is divided into four books, each with a different colour to distinguish and guide the content.

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# 3.1

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**Building Networks for  
Advocacy**  
1. Introduction

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## Introduction

The overall objectives of this publication are to examine:

- The need and benefits of networking.
- The essential components of networking.
- The challenges in networking.
- Strategies to overcome these challenges.

### Note to facilitator

While we may be convinced that networking is necessary to ensure that our advocacy work becomes more effective, not all participants may agree or be aware of this. They may see no link whatsoever between their issues and the need to network. Or perhaps they do see the importance but feel there are already too many challenges within their own organisations to take on other, demanding work. They may be opposed to the identity or objectives of other groups in the network (for example, groups who disapprove of LGBTIQ groups) or feel that they do not have the necessary skills or knowledge about the work of other groups in order to network.

You will need to assess where your participants are before proceeding with this session on networking. Unless you know your participants are already keen to take up networking, you may not wish to conclude the workshop with a network action plan.

Please reflect on the following questions:

1. Do the participants recognise the need to network? If not, include ideas about it in the workshop but leave networking planning for a future networking meeting.
2. Are they already at this stage of doing actual networking? Will this networking be around a specific activity with a finite timeline or should it be a longer-term networking strategy aimed at a particular discourse or ideology?
3. Are they already in a network but needing additional certain skills in order to be effective?

This publication will not be able to capture all the skills necessary to do effective networking but will examine the need to network and some of the challenges faced in doing networking. Content from this book is sourced mainly from *HIV/AIDS Networking Guide* from the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Available for downloading at [www.icaso.org/docs/ICASONetworkingGuide\\_EN.pdf](http://www.icaso.org/docs/ICASONetworkingGuide_EN.pdf)

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**Building Networks for  
Advocacy**  
2. The Benefits of Networking

## The Benefits of Networking

### Objective of exercise

- To highlight the need to network to complement advocacy efforts.

### Duration

- 1 to 1½ hours, depending on the choice of exercise.

Below are several suggestions for exercises and activities to get the participants thinking about issues related to networking. Choose according to the amount of time you have. Distribute **Handout 1** found at the end of this chapter.

### Group exercise

#### Suggestion 1

Ask the participants to form several small groups. Choose several case studies that, while relevant to different types of organisations, are linked to each other and address different facets of a similar issue such as access to health services. Ensure that the cases are not too complex but that there is a common thread in all the case studies. In processing the case studies it will become apparent that the issues are not only linked but they may even have common targets of advocacy, e.g. the Minister of Health or the director of the hospital.

Ask the participants in their working groups to discuss their case studies for about 20 minutes and to write down:

1. Their advocacy targets.
2. Some immediate actions they could undertake.

This would lead to a further processing of the importance of networking.

Looking at the outcomes of the different group discussions, ask the group:

1. What commonalities do you see in the strategies, targets and allies? What differences do you note?
2. In what ways will networking increase the effectiveness of our advocacy? What are the benefits, what are the drawbacks?
3. What will we need to consider if we are going to be working with one another in a network?
  - a. As a member of the network.
  - b. Within our own organisation.

#### Suggestion 2

Show a video of a successful networking activity or get a speaker from a network that can give an inspiring account of how networking can increase the effectiveness of advocacy work.

In plenary, ask the following questions:

1. What are your reactions to the video you have just seen (or experience you have just heard about)?
2. What were the reactions of the network members when the advocacy worked?
3. In what ways were they networking?
4. What were the skills required in getting the network off the ground?
5. What were the challenges they faced?
6. If you were a network member, what would be your considerations as to whether your organisation stayed in the network or not?

**Suggestion 3**

Set up a role play with the following roles:

- Three persons to play members of the Local Council Committee that is considering whether to set up a clinic where anonymous testing can be done – 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 favour 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 who, which while also involved in HIV/AIDS, are not part of the network – they may have other perspectives and considerations. Assign different considerations (we do not have time, we do not have enough staff, funds, we will be seen as anti-government, etc.) or ask them to come up with their own excuses.

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

As the facilitator, you can introduce changes mid-way through the role play (turnover of staff, Executive Director has decided that they do not like the three 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.

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:

1. Ask each person to describe their experience. How did they feel playing their assigned role?
2. Was it difficult? Easy? Frustrating? Why?
3. Why bother getting the others in? Why didn't the three activists simply go in alone?
4. What were your biggest considerations in crossing the line (changing your mind)?
5. By the way, what was the line?
6. What would it take you to cross the line? Why do you think the NGOs did not want to cross the line? Did any of the activists go towards the NGOs to ask them why they were reluctant to cross?
7. What different sets of skills are required in doing networking? How do we go about building these skills?
8. Is this something we see in our own networking experiences?
9. What were the challenges?

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

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**Handout 1: What are the benefits of networking?**

Many of us are involved in HIV/AIDS network because the problems that we are trying to address are too large for us as individuals or organisations 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 with each other as much as possible.

Networking is a means of securing greater national, regional or international cooperation which can strengthen the impact of activities carried out by community-based organisations.

To use a fashionable term, networks have a 'synergistic effect'. Synergy means that the total effect of things done together is greater than the sum of individual activities. Successful networking 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 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; and
  - under certain circumstances, mobilise financial resources.
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**Building Networks for  
Advocacy**  
3. What Makes an Effective  
Network

## What Makes an Effective Network?

### Objective of exercise

- To identify what makes networks effective and sustainable.

### Duration

- 30 minutes for brainstorming.
- 30 minutes for discussion, debriefing and reading.

1. Form several small groups, and provide the groups with Meta cards and marker pens.
2. Ask the participants to reflect the following question, “Assuming several organisations and individuals decide to form a network, what do you think they should consider in order to make their network successful?”
3. Ask each group to brainstorm and write their responses on the Meta cards (remember the rule, one idea per card so that they can be rearranged).
4. Ask the groups to stick their responses on a wall or flipchart.
5. Get two or three participants to cluster the responses into similar categories, and together with the other participants, agree on a heading for each of the clusters.
6. Affirm and/or clarify the different categories, and distribute **Handout 2** which contains the 8 Steps to Building and Sustaining a Network. The handout provides a basic summary of what the essential steps are.

## Network structure

A number of questions could be formulated which need to be answered before starting and sustaining a network. 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.
- Is there efforts to develop second liners who can also represent the organisation in the network?

Networks are sometimes organised according to geographic location (local, national, sub-regional, regional, international), and can be made up of organisations, individuals or a combination. While some networks are an on-going basis for information-sharing, solidarity-building, resource mobilisation, others may form around certain topical issues or themes, and can be time-bound depending on the nature of the activity that they have chosen to undertake. These are sometimes referred to as joint action groups, working groups, taskforces or coalitions. We choose to name to ours ‘synergy building’, and the common underlying principle is ‘strength in unity’.

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 organised?

Typically most HIV networks fall somewhere along a continuum between a loose single purpose network for information exchange and a highly formalised 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.

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This section will look at key steps in network building. Before looking at these 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 formalised its operations to a greater degree.

#### **Step 1: Prepare 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 organisations 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.

#### **Step 2: 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 organisation intends to accomplish by a given time.

#### **Step 3: 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.
2. Identify resources.
3. Designate responsibilities to persons in your group.
4. Set a timetable for the actions that must be undertaken.
5. Implement, monitor and evaluate.

#### **Step 4: 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 at 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.

#### **Step 5: 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.

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**Building Networks for Advocacy****3. What Makes an Effective Network**

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**Step 6: Prepare a communications plan**

The biggest challenge of most networks is effective communication – the timely transmission and receipt of information. Good communication is 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 clear procedures for information to be circulated promptly to all those who need it to perform their functions effectively.

**Step 7: Choose an organisational structure**

Deciding on a suitable structure for your network will be a major milestone in your network's development. A formal network is much more than a series of boxes and lines neatly arranged on an organisation chart. Structure reflects the way a network delivers its programmes and services and achieves its goals. There are principles which guide network structure.

**Step 8: 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.

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## HIV Advocacy from the Ground Up

A Toolkit for Strengthening Local Responses

# 3.4

## Building Networks for Advocacy

### 4. The Challenges in Networking

## The Challenges in Networking

### Objectives of exercise

- To examine some of the challenges in networking.
- To explore strategies for overcoming the challenges.

### Duration

- 45 minutes for group discussion.
- 25 minutes for plenary discussion.

1. Ask the participants to get back into 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 organisations 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.

Challenges/considerations within <b>individual organisations</b> that may prevent them from networking	Challenges within the <b>networks</b> that may hinder effective advocacy

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.

Challenges/considerations within <b>individual organisations</b> that may prevent them from networking	Short term actions that can be taken immediately to address the challenges	Longer term strategies that need to be adopted by the organisation to facilitate networking in the future

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**Building Networks for Advocacy**  
4. The Challenges in Networking

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Challenges within the <b>networks</b> that may hinder effective advocacy	Short term actions that can be taken immediately to address the challenges	Longer term strategies that need to be adopted by the organisation to facilitate networking in the future

**Plenary discussion**

Discuss in plenary the outcomes of the groups' discussions.

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This comprehensive toolkit on advocacy is designed to build capacity of NGOs and CBOs who have garnered valuable information and data that could better inform and influence policymakers but who often lack the specific skills, understanding or experience to do so effectively.

Objectives of the toolkit are two-fold:

1. A tool to facilitate a process for NGOs and CBOs to identify their policy and/or advocacy aims.
2. A tool to provide training on developing action plans on advocacy to enhance the role of NGOs and CBOs in the national response to HIV/AIDS.

The Toolkit is divided into four books. They are as follows:

1. Understanding Advocacy
2. Integrating Advocacy Into Your Organisation
3. Building Networks for Advocacy
4. Advocacy Action Tools



**A P C A S O**  
ASIA PACIFIC COUNCIL OF  
AIDS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organizations (APCASO), is a key regional network of non-government and community-based organisations which provide HIV/AIDS services within the Asia and the Pacific region. Its main strategies are to increase the capacity of NGOs and CBOs to respond to HIV/AIDS, and to develop a coordinated regional response through capacity building, advocacy and networking.

For more information please go to [www.apcaso.org](http://www.apcaso.org)

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