

## Building Your Advocacy Network

### Step 1:

#### Who should be in your network?

You will want to get to know people and organizations that are working toward the same objective as you are. You will also want to include people who can influence decision makers in your network, and, if possible, the decision makers themselves. (See Module 4 for more information on identifying decision makers and “influentials.”) Finally, keep your eyes, ears and mind open for anyone else who could help you.

### Step 2:

#### How do you meet potential network members?

It is important to build an open and trusting relationship from the beginning. Here are just a few ways to start building trust with people:

- ◆ collaborate on projects of mutual interest;
- ◆ help bring attention to their work;
- ◆ assist them with special projects;
- ◆ share information with them;
- ◆ attend their meetings and invite them to yours.

### Step 3:

#### How do you get them interested in your advocacy objective?

As you get to know them, discuss your idea/objective with them. Be open to their suggestions and ideas; it is helpful when others feel that they have some ownership of the idea. When they support the objective, they will be much more interested in helping you.

### Step 4:

#### How can they help you?

When you are ready, ask them to do something *specific* to help you reach your objective. Start small, e.g., “Could you mention to the director that you heard about this idea and think it has merit?” As your relationship is strengthened, you can ask them to do more, e.g., “Could you arrange for us to meet with the director and present the proposal together?” But remember that it is a two-way street and the more they do for you, the more you should do for them.

## Sharing experiences with the group

① List some of the people in your current network who could help you with advocacy:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

② Who else should you network with?



### Case Study

#### **A Networking Success<sup>1</sup>**

Dr. Deneen Onyango works for the National Institute for Education (NIE), an NGO dedicated to improving the primary education system of Monega. NIE conducts both research and programs on education and has close ties to the government of Monega. It also receives a large share of its budget from the government and international donors.

<sup>1</sup>This case study is entirely fictional.

Five years ago, NIE began a large scale project to build primary schools and train teachers. It is funded jointly by the Government of Monega and the United World Education Programme. The goal of the program is to provide one primary school per 1000 children in the country and to increase primary school enrollment by 50 percent over ten years.

Dr. Onyango, as a mid-level researcher at NIE on girls' and women's education, found through recent investigations that 90 percent of the students attending newly built NIE schools were boys. When she traveled to several diverse regions of the country to conduct routine evaluations, she interviewed parents and teachers about the gender disparity in school attendance. The findings surprised her: many parents wanted to send their girls to the new schools, but they thought that the new schools were only for boys. Numerous parents stated that they had this impression because the new teachers were men and because the brochures and posters announcing the opening of the new schools showed boys in the classrooms.

With these new findings in hand, Dr. Onyango returned to NIE and reported to her supervisor, the director of research. She urged the director to meet with NIE's president immediately with a

proposal to increase the number of women teachers and redesign the information about the new schools. She was disappointed when her supervisor rejected her request because he had more important issues to discuss with the president.

Slowed, but not defeated, Dr. Onyango began to discuss her findings informally with her colleagues in the research division, friends in the program department of NIE, and several people from women's organizations that she had met at a conference. They were all surprised by the parents' perceptions and agreed with Dr. Onyango that the solutions were both obvious and critical.

During the same period that she was discussing the issue with colleagues, Dr. Onyango was also spending many extra hours in the office assisting her supervisor with the issues he had pending before the NIE president. She made sure that he had the most recent statistics and charts, and useful talking points for his meetings. After several weeks of doing extra work for her supervisor, she brought up the girls' enrollment issue again. He agreed to mention it in his next meeting with the president. Several days later, he called Dr. Onyango into his office and informed her that the NIE president was extremely inter-

ested in the findings, especially as he had received letters from several women's organizations on the same subject. The NIE president wanted to be briefed fully on the situation at the next senior staff meeting.

The meeting went extremely well until the director of the New Schools Project expressed concern that the government would stop funding the project if it became a "girls' education" project. Because of his concern, the NIE president decided to delay any actions until he could meet with Ministry officials.

Dr. Onyango got busy. She discreetly talked with the women's organizations who then went to their friends at the Ministry of Education. One week later, a letter came from the Ministry asking NIE to review the enrollment rates of boys and girls in the new schools and to make recommendations to the Ministry based on the findings.

Dr. Onyango then met with the director of the New Schools Project and convinced him that the Ministry supported the idea of educating girls, and in the long term, more girls in school meant more new schools. And more new schools meant extending his tenure at NIE.

It did not take Dr. Onyango long to submit her report and recommendations to NIE's president.

He discussed the report with the research director and director of the New Schools Project, who gave their support. The NIE president approved the recommendations and they were sent to the Ministry. Six months after Dr. Onyango's initial findings, NIE began a pilot program to train more women teachers and has redesigned its outreach materials for the new schools.



### Sharing experiences with the group

- ① Did Dr. Onyango's network assist her in reaching her goal? If so, how?
- ① How could her strategy have been improved?
- ① What kinds of networks do you have through your work? List other types of networks to which you have access.

## B. Building Coalitions

### Definition

#### **What is a coalition?**

A coalition is a group of organizations working together in a coordinated fashion toward a common goal.

The organized coalition is another option for your advocacy effort. Coalitions require far more work than networks, but the results can also be much greater. Coalition-building should augment, not replace your existing networks. Before you decide to join or start a coalition, consider the following advantages and disadvantages:

## Advantages and Disadvantages of Working in Coalitions<sup>2</sup>

### Advantages

- ◆ Enlarges your base of support; you can win together what you cannot win alone.
- ◆ Provides safety for advocacy efforts and protection for members who may not be able to take action alone.
- ◆ Magnifies existing resources by pooling them together and by delegating work to others in the coalition.
- ◆ Increases financial and programmatic resources for an advocacy campaign.
- ◆ Enhances the credibility and influence of an advocacy campaign, as well as that of individual coalition members.
- ◆ Helps develop new leadership.
- ◆ Assists in individual and organizational networking.
- ◆ Broadens the scope of your work.

### Disadvantages

- ◆ Distracts you from other work; can take too much time away from regular organizational tasks.
- ◆ May require you to compromise your position on issues or tactics.
- ◆ May require you to give in to more powerful organizations. Power is not always distributed equally among coalition members; larger or richer organizations can have more say in decisions.
- ◆ You may not always get credit for your work. Sometimes the coalition as a whole gets recognition rather than individual members. Well-run coalitions should strive to highlight their members as often as possible.
- ◆ If the coalition process breaks down it can harm everyone's advocacy by damaging members' credibility.

<sup>2</sup>Adapted from the Midwest Academy, *Organizing for Social Change*.

## Types of Coalitions

Like advocates, coalitions come in all shapes and sizes; each type serves a purpose. These categories are not mutually exclusive; for example, a coalition can be a permanent, formal, single-issue coalition, or an informal, geographic, multi-issue coalition. Coalitions range from being very fluid to highly structured. Different types of coalitions will attract different organizations.

### Definition

#### **Permanent:**

Permanent coalitions are incorporated organizations with a staff and board of directors. Decision-making is structured and systematic. Members often pay yearly dues. Many coalitions start as temporary and informal groups and can take years to mature into a permanent coalition such as an association, trade union, or federation.

#### **Temporary:**

Temporary coalitions come together for a specific purpose or goal. When the goal is achieved, the coalition disbands. Sometimes the coalition can remain intact if it takes on another goal.

### Definition

#### **Formal:**

Members formally join the coalition, pay dues, and are identified as coalition members on letterhead, coalition statements, etc.

#### **Informal:**

There is no official membership in these coalitions, therefore members constantly change. With membership turnover, the issues and tactics of the coalition may also shift.

#### **Geographic:**

The coalition is based on a geographic area such as a school district or a region of the continent.

#### **Multi-Issue:**

The coalition works on a number of issues or advocacy objectives during the course of its existence. However, for strategic and organizational purposes, the coalition may choose to work on only one objective/issue at a time.

#### **Single Issue:**

The coalition works on one issue or objective. Sometimes strange alliances can evolve between organizations which usually oppose one another, but can agree to work together on a single issue.

## C. Participating in Coalitions

### Joining Coalitions

The following hints will help you benefit from any coalition you join.

- ◆ Understand clearly who is running the coalition, who the members are and what the goals and positions are *before* you join.
- ◆ Be sure you understand clearly the financial, programmatic and staff support you and your organization will be expected to contribute.
- ◆ Make sure you and your organization have the time and resources to participate.
- ◆ Find out exactly how your organization will benefit by being involved. Learn what the coalition will offer you; e.g., will your organization have opportunities to present its work through the coalition? Will you gain access to decision makers or the media?
- ◆ Do not miss meetings. A coalition will not be responsive to your needs and requests unless you are committed to participating. In addition, you cannot have a voice in decisions unless you are at the meeting to speak up.

### Sharing experiences with the group

- ① Do you know any coalitions in your country or locality in which you could participate?
- ② Which ones would you join? Why?

### Forming Coalitions

You may decide to take on the responsibility and effort of organizing a coalition to help reach your advocacy objective. Consider two different ways to form coalitions:

#### ◆ **Have an open meeting**

This is one of the most common ways to organize a coalition quickly; it is usually used for informal coalition building. Only use this technique for coalition formation if your advocacy issue and objective are flexible. Usually diverse coalitions form first; the specific agenda is set later depending on who has joined and what interests are represented. You can issue an invitation to a broad array of organizations or publish an announcement of the meeting in specific newsletters. Tailor your invitation to reach as broad or narrow a group as required.

◆ **Assemble the coalition by invitation only**

This method is used to create more solid, long-term coalitions. Creating a coalition by invitation means the issue and agenda are more likely to stay focused on your objective and you can select the groups that will bring prestige, power, resources and energy to your effort. The disadvantage of this technique is that the coalition will not be as broad or its members as numerous.

You will want to meet with each group individually to introduce the coalition idea and discuss their possible participation. Once you have met with all the potential members, you can hold the first meeting to officially kick-off the new coalition.

### **Running an Effective Coalition**

At the first meeting of a new coalition you should clearly state the purpose for forming the new coalition, the goals, what is expected of each member, and the benefits of membership. There should be plenty of time on the agenda for groups to introduce themselves and for initial discussion about the issues, objectives, strategies and tactics of the coalition. At this point groups will decide whether to join the coalition.

Once you have formed a coalition, the work begins. Below are some hints to strengthen your coalition and keep it running smoothly and effectively.

- ◆ Keep in personal contact with key coalition members and make sure that all members are informed regularly of developments on your issue, actions taken by the coalition, or other items of interest. Most organizations join coalitions to have access to information on a timely basis, so continual information flow is essential.
- ◆ Get to know all the coalition members well so as to be properly informed about their positions and opinions. These might be quite different from yours.
- ◆ Achieve consensus among coalition members on short- and long-term goals. Do not set goals and objectives that are too ambitious. Choose an objective which the coalition can achieve in a timely manner. An early success will help build confidence, credibility, and support for your group. Your coalition can use Module 3 to help select a good advocacy objective.

- ◆ Involve powerful coalition members in all decision-making. If a key organization or individual is left out of a decision, you may have to revisit the decision and, in extreme cases, you risk losing that group.
- ◆ Keep coalition meetings brief and on a regular schedule. Lengthy meetings will discourage people from attending; meeting too often can cause “meeting fatigue.” Have a time limit and clear agenda for all meetings. In addition, facilitate discussion to make sure that all are heard. Always circulate a sign-in sheet.
- ◆ Develop subgroups strategically to take on specific tasks. Do not let the number of subgroups grow uncontrolled—your members will be spread across too many groups or will burn out.
- ◆ Do not avoid troublesome issues. Difficult issues *must* be discussed openly at meetings or they will split apart your coalition. If the issues are too contentious, you can talk individually to the parties that disagree and try to develop a solution. Or, you can involve an outside mediator or facilitator.



## Case Study

### **A Coalition Catastrophe<sup>2</sup>**

The Association for the Advancement of Education (AAE), a formal, multi-issue coalition consisting of the top ten children’s, teachers’ and education organizations in the country, began its campaign to increase education funding for secondary school development last January.

AAE had previously succeeded in increasing the number and quality of primary schools and felt it should now turn its attention to secondary education. In October, the group had debated the relative benefits of two advocacy objectives: increased funding for new secondary schools, or increased funding for teacher training, curriculum development and supplies/infrastructure for existing schools.

The consensus of the members present (several of the teachers’ organizations could not attend the October coalition meeting) was to pursue increased funding for new secondary schools and to work on improving quality later. At the next coalition meeting in November, the teachers’ associations objected to the decision and felt left out of the

<sup>2</sup>This case study is entirely fictional.

process. They were particularly upset that the coalition leaders had neglected to ask them for their opinions before a decision was made, and that they were not informed of the results of the discussion held in October. After several apologies and explanations the teachers' groups were quieted and reluctantly accepted the chosen advocacy objective.

The campaign progressed nicely during the following months in which AAE released an outstanding report on the need for more secondary schools, held several well-attended press conferences and met with key officials in the government. The coalition management also paid special attention to the needs of the teachers' associations which improved relations.

In February, as the funding increase gained substantial government support, the coalition learned that the government's plan was to raise a portion of the funds for the increase by decreasing teachers' pensions. Knowing that the teachers' associations would not accept this trade-off, the director of AAE held a private meeting with the associations to see whether some alternate source of funding could be found. They explored options such as drawing from military or higher education budgets and agreed that these ideas should be conveyed to key government staff on the committee working on the education funding increase.

When the AAE director met with the committee staff to propose paying for the increase with funds from other budgets, he learned that AAE's proposal came too late; the committee had already decided to present the original proposal to parliament.

The powerful teachers' associations then began a massive campaign to defeat the funding increase for secondary schools. The education and children's groups steadfastly supported the increase despite the cut in teachers' pensions, arguing that only 10 percent of the increase was coming from pensions and that government was going to cut pensions anyway. AAE itself could no longer play an advocacy role because its membership was now split on the issue.

In March, the increase for secondary school development was defeated in parliament by a narrow margin.

The coalition survived this episode, but relations between the teachers' associations, other coalition members, and AAE are strained, at best. In addition, the credibility of AAE is diminished as officials in the government are uncertain whether AAE speaks clearly for its membership.



## Sharing experiences with the group

- ① What went wrong? How could AAE have avoided these problems?
- ② What could coalition leaders do to fix the situation now?

## Exercises



Allies and Opponents: This exercise will help you identify possible allies and opponents. Your allies could be included in your network or in a coalition should you decide to create one. Answer the following questions:

### Allies

Who will gain if your objective is achieved? What will be gained?

Who will benefit from your efforts?

Who supports the issue/objective already?

Will somebody benefit financially if the objective is achieved? Who?

Which agencies, ministries or departments in government institutions will gain if the objective is reached?

Could any religious groups support the objective?

Would any government officials gain politically or financially from the objective?

Do any officials philosophically support the issue/objective?

Who could be your ally from the private/business sector? NGO sector? Entertainment sector?

### Opponents

Are any organizations or individuals opposed to your objective? Who? Why?

Which groups will lose if your objective is achieved?

Will anybody lose financially if the objective is achieved? Who?

Why might religious groups oppose the objective?

Which government agencies, ministries or departments will lose if the objective is reached?

Would any government officials lose politically or financially if the objective is reached?

Do any officials philosophically oppose the issue/objective?

Who might be your opposition from the private/business sector? NGO sector? Entertainment sector?



### Creative Coalition Building

This exercise works backwards to help you identify key groups which, when they join your effort, can almost guarantee its success.

First, imagine that you have just succeeded in reaching your advocacy objective with the help of a large, diverse and powerful coalition. In a newspaper interview, the journalist asks you: “Your coalition was so successful in bringing together powerful interests from the business, NGO, development and social sectors. Who were the key members of your coalition and how did you get them involved?”

Your answer: “I knew our success would be guaranteed if we had these groups involved. Our key coalition members are.....”

“We got them involved by building a bridge between their interests and our goals. For example.....”



### Meeting Agenda

Create an agenda for your first coalition meeting:

(Name of Coalition)

(DATE)

(Meeting time: From — To)

I.

II.

III.

IV.

V.

VI.

# 8

## Making Effective Presentations

Meeting with decision makers or other important audiences is where preparation meets opportunity. Often, these opportunities are brief and you may have only one chance to make your case, so making a presentation that will persuade and inspire your audience requires solid preparation.

## Objectives

In this module, we will:

- A. examine **the importance of relationships**;
- B. explore **persuasive presentation techniques**.

### A. The Importance of Relationships

*“It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.”*

A large part of effective advocacy depends on the relationships advocates develop with decision makers, influentials and other key audiences. The stronger the ties of trust, mutual support, and credibility between advocate and audience, the more effective that advocate will be.

How do you build good relationships with key individuals? Although no set formulas for human relationships exist, you can examine the following list for some hints on developing good ties with decision makers.

- ❖ Offer to help with causes or issues about which they care (and which do not conflict with your interests);
- ❖ find out how you can help them accomplish their job;
- ❖ be a trustworthy, credible and reliable source of information;
- ❖ be sociable. Develop personal friendships if you are able;
- ❖ keep in regular contact and be patient. It takes time to create lasting relationships.

## B. Persuasive Presentation Techniques

### **Establish “Points of Entry”**

First, think creatively about how you can get a meeting with the audience you need to reach. Is there something you have in common which would help you connect? For example, a friend of yours attends the same church as the decision maker. Maybe your friend could arrange for you to make a presentation at the church.

### **Schedule a meeting**

Getting a meeting with a decision maker or key audience is in itself the first successful step in reaching your advocacy goal.

### **Send a letter of invitation**

The most common way to set up a meeting is to send a letter explaining what your advocacy goal is and why you would like a meeting. (A sample letter to a decision maker is located in Module 5). After sending the letter, follow-up with a phone call. Often you will not get a meeting with the official but with a staff person. Always meet with the staff, and treat them in the same way you would treat the decision maker.

### **Invite them to visit your project**

Another way to meet with and persuade people is to invite them to view your facility or project. This way you can show them what is working and why they should support it. If the decision maker cannot visit your project, try taking your project to them. Bring several project beneficiaries with you to your meeting, show a short video tape of your project or take a few photos with you.

### **Make the invitation through an influential friend**

If you have a friend or colleague who knows the decision maker or someone on his or her staff, have your friend send the letter or make the phone call. Decision makers will be more likely to meet with you and will likely give more credence and attention to your matter if the invitation comes from someone the decision maker already knows and trusts.