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Practical Guide

To

Networking, Lobbying and Advocacy

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INTRODUCTION

Networking, lobbying and advocacy are fundamental practices for a sustainable and functioning non-governmental organisation. Moreover, the tasks of representing civil society in the democratic policy making process and fighting for more social justice demand a professional understanding of both the concepts of networking and lobbying.

The concepts of networking, lobbying and advocacy are often mentioned interchangeably, ignoring the fact that they have to be understood as single actions, each with its own logic and rules. Very often advocacy and lobbying are based on networking but this is not a pre- condition. Networking brings to NGOs more advantages than only fighting for a given cause.

In order to help NGOs develop a more professional approach when undertaking networking, lobbying and advocacy activities, this module focuses on both the theoretical background and practical applications. By giving advice on best practices as well as examples of networking and lobbying activities of NGOs in the EU and Lebanon, it proposes simulation exercises on how to set up a network and plan concrete lobbying/advocacy activities.

The theoretical part includes a common understanding of concepts, objectives, principles, instruments and working methods.

The practical part includes best practices and examples of networking and lobbying activities of NGOs in Europe and Lebanon, as well as simulation exercises for practical applications.

This practical guide's overall objective aims at helping NGOs in:
- Better understanding the concepts of networking, lobbying and advocacy
- Increasing their competences in initiating actions towards
  - Building networks
  - Undertaking lobbying activities
  - Planning advocacy campaigns

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Module I: Networking

Lesson 1:   Basics on networking

At present, the terms "network" and "networking" are widely used in the NGOs sector. However it should be noted that networking practices are probably as old as mankind.

Networking is based on peoples' need to take measures to **"capitalize"** on their social relations in order to deal with the challenges of life. Transposed into professional life (business, politics, etc.), **networking is about seeking multilateral co-operation with other persons or organisations**.

The concept of networking is based on the will to co-operate and identify mutual interests. Networking implies the possibility of "trading" and the existence of a common goal.

"Trading" means that partners give something and get something in return.

The existence of a common goal brings partners together and reinforces the necessity to join forces in order to achieve the set goal.

Complete clarity in defining a network's aim and objectives is crucial to its success.

REASONS FOR NETWORKING

Networking mainly intends to cluster the provision of services, promote participatory learning and strengthen advocacy and management. The common problem-solving approach of networks helps in the development of new ways of understanding and intervening in circumstances that are complex and defy simple analysis.

Networking makes room for articulation of alternative approaches and allows for the sharing of diagnoses, reflections, clarification of meanings and coordination at a strategic level, thus transcending isolation.

Some good reasons for networking:

- Dissemination of information
- Dissemination of know-how
- Co-ordination of activities in terms of synergy
- Technical guidance and co-ordination
- Seek social well-being and social progress
- Make use of partners' skills and resources and seek more specialisation
- Stimulate competition in terms of bringing together resources

Module I: Networking

Lesson 2: Building a network

Building a network requires a democratic attitude, both at the level of knowledge of the issues at stake and an appropriate expertise.

Pre-conditions

Before setting up a network a certain number of pre-conditions should be taken into consideration:

- Understand that a network is a means and not an end in itself
- Understand that networks are temporary creations
- Understand that networks are not built over-night
- Networks should be built on the basis of prior feasibility studies and a sound rational
- Networks need to rely on their own resources
- Networks need diversity of membership
- Networks need flexible management and an ability to adapt over time to changing circumstances
- Networking needs formal basics
- Networks need solid anchors in local communities
- Networking is more important than networks' formal structures

Four steps for setting a network

After having agreed on setting up a network, the following steps should be taken:

1-Decide on the coordinator and partners

2-Analyze the problems and define the objectives

3-Determine the means to be used and the measures to be taken

4-Plan the working model and set rules

Basic rules for good planning

Networks should be planned in a **participatory** manner and not be dictated by the top.

Planning should not only concentrate on the implementation of activities, but also on the development of the network itself.

If needed, ask for the opinion and advice from outsiders. Be careful however, that no political or personal interests affect your plan.

Clarify the role and contributions of partners and actors involved in the network. It is also important for participants to specify their perception of the potential network.

The added value of the network to the partner organisations needs to be identified in order to avoid conflict of interest between the network's purpose and that of its members.

Size of networks

The size of a network depends on the aim and nature of the mission of the network.

An average network consists **of five to twenty partner organisations**. In the case of a larger number of partners the common goal may be difficult to define.

Networks can be enlarged after a first round of successful work and good experiences.

Very often practice shows that it is much easier to strengthen "old networks" or build on existing working relations, than to try and build a totally new network.

Working tools

Networks rely on communication skills and technologies. They operate through:

- The use of e-mail and telephone for daily communications
- The use of Internet or intranet based forums and other information systems
- Planning and holding numerous face-to-face meetings, crucial for a good understanding between network partners

Remember that:

- *Networking is based on social relationships, not on technology only*
- *It is more important to practice networking than to have a network*

Necessary skills and competences for successful networking

Successful networking demands from its coordinator(s) and its members a set of core competences and skills:

1. Communication skills
2. Co-ordination skills
3. Decision-making capacity
4. Diplomacy
5. Leadership skills
6. Management skills
7. Negotiation skills
8. Persuasion competences
9. Planning competences
10. Analytical skills

Module I: Networking

Lesson 3: Good governance of network

Setting rules and defining the mode of operation of a network is crucial for its success. However, the definition of rules should be subject to a broad consultation among the partners.

The following rules should be considered as guidelines for good governance in networking:

- Inform yourself constantly about the needs and expectations of your target group
- Respect the partner's culture and his way of working
- Be attentive and listen to each other
- Create a good and trustful atmosphere
- Make sure that decisions are taken in a democratic manner, everybody should participate
- Listen before acting and take the time to decide even under pressure
- Communicate regularly with the partners and always convey the aims and the results
- Action has to reflect the added value of the partnership
- Prepare a schedule for all activities
- Constantly check if the commonly defined objectives are still valid and if all the partners still support them
- Handle financial procedures, simply, correctly and transparently
- Handle resources carefully and economically
- Avoid heavy bureaucracy
- Use your humour when things go wrong

Common obstacles and weaknesses in networking

The most common obstacles and reasons for a network's failure can be summarised as follows:

- Social mismatch between partners and actors
- Social mismatch between problem analysis and network definition
- Lack of resources, mostly in terms of time
- Lack of know-how on the process and functioning of networks
- Lack of common and clear goals
- Lack of confidence regarding the network's influence and power as well as the very feasibility of the network itself

Module I: Networking

Lesson 4:   Examples and practical application

1-YES – European Network on Youth and European Social Work

Overall objectives:

- Combat social exclusion of young people
- Develop and exchange innovative approaches
- Learn from each other and create synergies
- Influence European youth and social policy actively

Members:

YES-Forum includes 14 member organisations (NGOs and non-profit organisations) from 9 EU countries working in the field of vocational and social integration of young persons.

Activities and services:

- A European news service
- Facilitated exchange and discussion forums
- Contacts and support in finding trans-national partners/opportunities
- Seminars, conferences, training
- Project development and consultancy
- Expertise in lobbying and analysis of policy positions
- Activities with and for young people such as youth exchange, youth conferences, voluntary services, online-magazines, chat meetings and multi media projects

Reasons for setting up the network:

- Increased policy coordination on a European level
- Access to information and funding schemes on a European level
- Access to training and consultancy
- Exchange information and good practices
- Build permanent cooperation structures
- Participate in policy making and programme design at the EU level
- For prestige – profiles the organisation as an important player

Taking into account diversity of gender, ethnic origin, ability, sexual orientation and cultural heritage, YES-Forum works with:

- Young people facing difficult issues at school or with training
- Young people who are unemployed
- Young people from refugee or black and minority groups
- Ethnic communities' homeless young people
- Young people affected by substance abuse and violence

2-LNF – Lebanese NGO Forum

The LNF was founded during the Lebanese war to help in emergency situations. Although LNF-Forum is still operating, it has changed in terms of structure and objectives.
The following refers to LNF activities during the war.

Overall objectives:

- To consolidate social cohesion and integration in Lebanon
- To assist in emergency situations through helping and coordinating the work of humanitarian and social associations
- To work at upholding the rights of the underprivileged and vulnerable groups
- To collaborate with state institutions on complementary activities
- To cooperate with UN agencies and foreign humanitarian and voluntary organisations

Members:

LNF is made up of 10 non-governmental organisations working at the national level, in various fields including: social, health, education, culture, relief, environment and more. These NGOs are representative of Lebanon's diverse range of communities, religious and secular groups.

Activities and services:

- The **Rights Programme** provides services to and information on vulnerable social groups, including the displaced, refugees, migrant workers, the stateless and undocumented persons, particularly women and children.
- The **Institutional Development Training Programme** improves the performances of different Lebanese NGOs and allows them to develop human resources through organising training sessions and workshops on technical and administrative matters.
- The **Social Legislation and National Causes Programme** focuses on defending and advocating social causes affecting the Lebanese civil society, in particular vulnerable and underprivileged groups.
- The **Lebanese Parliamentary Centre Programme** provides a forum for dialogue and exchange between elected representatives, representatives of civil society and government officials.

Other activities and services include:
- Studies and research programmes
- Seminars, conferences, training sessions

Reasons for setting up a network:
- Build a link between communities and citizens separated by the war
- Coordinate the activities of Lebanese NGOs concerned with relief and development
- Build a permanent cooperation structure
- Participate in policy making and programme design at national level (LNF fills one of the five seats reserved for NGOs at the United Nations Economic and Social Council)

LNF works with:
- Young people, women and children
- Vulnerable social groups
- Displaced persons
- Refugees
- Migrant workers

SIMULATION EXERCISES -PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

This section highlights the planning of a network targeted towards the following:

1-Integration and access of persons with special needs into the labor market

2-Integration of delinquent youngsters via alternative measures

3-Developping equal opportunity between women and men through the promotion of good practices

The planning of a target orientated network demands answers to core issues as a basis for initiating this network, including:

- Overall objective/s
- Specific objectives
- Results
- Indicators
- Assumptions
- Members
- Activities

Overall objectives: What are the overall broader objectives to which the network will contribute?

Specific objectives: What specific objectives does the network intend to achieve to contribute to the overall objectives?

Results: The results are the outputs envisaged to achieve the specific objectives. What are the expected results?

Indicators: What are the indicators to measure whether and to what extent the network achieves the objectives and expected results? What are the sources of information and data for these indicators?

Basic performance indicators are used to assess the network's development with regard to objectives. They incorporate objectively verifiable indicators of achievement.

Indicators can be either defined or described in qualitative and quantitative terms.

Indicators are used for overall objectives but can be defined for specific objectives and results as well.

Assumptions: These are forecasted situations to be found during the period of the implementation and after the completion of the network's mission.

Members: Which NGOs have to be included in the network in order to best achieve its objectives? Should there be associated partners? If yes, with what intentions?

Activities: What are the key activities to be carried out and in what sequence, in order to produce the expected results? What are the means required to implement these activities, e.g. personnel, equipment, training, studies, supplies, operational facilities, etc.

How to proceed in decision-making?

What pre-conditions are required before the actions start?

What conditions outside and inside the network's direct control have to be met in order to ensure implementation of the planned activities?

Module II: Lobbying

Lesson 1:   Basics on Lobbying

Lobbying and advocacy are often understood and used as having the same meaning. This is a mistake. Lobbying and advocacy refer to two different fields of action.

Lobbying is an action undertaken by private advocacy groups to ensure that an individual's or organization's point of view is represented in the government.

Through lobbying interest groups try to influence legislation.

In many countries lobbying is a regulated activity. Rules place limits on its methods of action, in an attempt to prevent political corruption.

A lobbyist is a person who works professionally on influencing legislation.

Civil society, lobbying, and good governance

Lobbying has to be seen as part of the broader concept of good governance.

Lobbying is recognized as a core activity of civil society in the policy making process and as an important element of participation.

Civil society plays an important role in giving voice to the concerns of the citizens and the delivery of services that meet people's needs.

Civil society increasingly sees lobbying as a good platform to change policy and social orientations.

Lobbying is about getting citizens more actively involved in achieving political and social objectives through a structured channel for feedback, criticism and protest. In this context, civil society organisations play an important role as facilitators of a broad policy dialogue. In general this

specific role of civil society organisations in modern democracies is closely linked to the fundamental rights of citizens.

Lobbying as part of good governance needs a set of basic conditions provided by policy and law making institutions. **Lobbying has to be seen as part of the broader concept of good governance.** It is respected as a core activity of civil society in the policy making process and an important element of participation.

Lobbying as part of good governance needs a set of basic conditions to be provided by policy and law making institutions. Policies and action must be coherent - there should be a will for a wide participation throughout the policy chain - and openness and accountability should be ensured.

Policies must be effective and timely, delivering what is needed.

The policy actors: legislators and decision makers

The theory on lobbying distinguishes five main categories of legislators and decision makers:

1. **The Champions:** These are the committed advocates of your cause. Their contribution is to bring the case to their colleagues, help develop a strong "inside" strategy and be visible spokesmen to the public.
2. **The Allies:** These are legislators that are on your side but should be pushed to do more and speak up in party meetings or on the floor.
3. **The Fence Sitters:** These are uncommitted persons regarding the issues with potential to vote either way.
4. **The Mellow Opponents:** These legislators stand against your cause, but are not inclined to be active on the issue. Here the issue is to keep them from becoming more active.
5. **The Hard Core Opponents:** These are the lawmakers who are leading the opposition. What is important here is to isolate them, to highlight the extremes in their positions, rhetoric and alliances and try to influence other lawmakers and make them hesitate to join them.

Module II: Lobbying

Lesson 2:   Basic activities for effective lobbying

In order to achieve effective lobbying the following actions should be accomplished:

- The monitoring and observation of political processes and developments, with special focus on those sectors that are relevant to the lobbyist's or organisation's themes/fields of action
- The analysis of political processes and their potential impact on position taking
- Define the objectives for the action
- Choose the most appropriate lobbying instruments
- Implementation of lobbying activities and presentation of one's positions
- Widen the range of public relations (PR)
- Monitor and analyze the effects of lobbying activities
- Control of lobbying effects

Furthermore, effective lobbying demands coordination between two very different kinds of lobbying activities:

"Inside" Lobbying

"Inside" Lobbying is a form of lobbying that takes place within the legislative bodies or institutions (National Parliament, Regional Parliament, etc.) through:

- Meetings with lawmakers and legislative staff
- Providing analysis and information to committees and legislative offices
- Testifying in committee's consultations
- Negotiating with policy makers and other lobbying groups

"Outside" Lobbying

An effective lobbying campaign also requires activity outside the parliamentarian structures, aimed at shifting the politics and pressure around the issue.

Some of these activities include:

- Media activity including news conferences, editorial board visits, and assisting reporters with stories
- Local lobbying visits to legislators
- Building broad and diverse coalitions
- Letter writing campaigns to legislators
- Grass root activities such as rallies

It is important that these two forms of lobbying activities - "inside" and "outside" - be coordinated to ensure that they make strategic sense in terms of timing, targeting, sending messages, etc.

Module III: Advocacy

Lesson 1:   Basics on advocacy

Basics on advocacy

Advocacy fights for more social justice. It is about advocating, that is gaining access and voice in the decision making of relevant institutions. It seeks to change the power relationships between institutions and the people affected by their decisions.

The aim of advocacy is to bring a clear improvement in people's life.

Advocacy seeks change on the political, social and structural levels of society. Change is multi-dimensional. Small changes occur simultaneously, ultimately building toward long-term transformative changes within institutions and their power relations with the citizens.

Advocacy not only addresses legislation but also all the players who are in the position to influence change in favour of social justice. These include:

- Citizens
- Law making institutions
- Key actors (social partners, religious communities, etc.)
- Media
- The NGOs sector
- Other actors

Preconditions for a successful advocacy campaign

Successful advocacy is based on the following set of preconditions:

- The existence of a concept and a vision on social justice
- The monitoring, observation and analysis of political and social processes and developments and their impact on the development of social justice
- The monitoring and analysis of progress and control of advocacy effects
- The defining of objectives
- The defining of an advocacy strategy
- The building of advocacy coalitions

Definition of objectives

A clear definition of common objectives is crucial. **Misleading objectives are a clear cause for an unsuccessful advocacy campaign.**

In determining objectives, both short-term and long-term objectives should be considered.
Short-term objectives help draw people in and make them believe that change is possible. Long-term objectives build on the momentum of short-term victories, thus leading to a bigger vision.

Objectives should be defined for the outer as well as the inner circle. Objectives that address people and institutions have the power to bring about change.

Inward directed objectives help to develop a strong grass root group that can monitor policy implementation.

Objectives can focus on action at multiple levels: local, national and international.

The statement of objectives should focus on positive effects on individuals, organisations, communities and civil society.

Module III: Advocacy

Lesson 2:   Advocacy strategy

An advocacy strategy defines a long-term plan with goals and instruments to be used for achievement.

The development of an advocacy strategy depends on the answers to the following questions regarding:

- The objectives: What do you want?
- The audiences: Who can give it to you?
- The message: What do they need to hear?
- The messengers: Whom do they need to hear it from?
- The delivery: How can we get them to hear it?
- The resources: What have we got?
- The gaps: What do we need to develop?
- The first efforts: How do we begin?
- The evaluation: How do we tell if it is working?

Advocacy coalition

In most cases, NGOs and other civil society organizations come together in order to cooperate.

Advocacy campaigns develop a stronger public image, bring together diverse resources and ideas and avoid duplication of efforts.

One of the basic conditions in forming coalition groups is the development of an effective coalition structure.

An effective coalition structure includes a clear set of responses to the following questions:

- Membership: Who can join and according to which criteria?
- Participation: How are these members expected to participate?
- Leaders: Which criteria determine the choice of the leaders?
- Decision making: What type of decision making structure and procedures should be applied?
- Dealing with tensions and conflict: What strategy?

In addition, a clear and strong coalition identity, the member's autonomy as well as an appropriate communication strategy are essential.

Module III: Advocacy

Lesson 3:   Examples and practical application

EXAMPLES OF LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

1-AGJ- Child and Youth Welfare Association Germany (Office based in Berlin)

Objectives:

- Establish a platform and forum for exchange and experts discussions in order to improve child and youth welfare services
- Provide service and information for members (publications, magazines, books, www.agj.de)
- Activate cooperation with child and youth welfare organisations on an EU level
- Lobby for child and youth welfare policy on the national level
- Establish a national coalition for child and youth welfare and policy

Members:

NGOs

- Federal youth organisations and Länder Youth Councils
- Social welfare organisations
- Child welfare organisations
- Institutions and organisations that are dealing with the staff and the qualification of staff for child welfare services

Statutory bodies:

- Ministries which are responsible for child/youth welfare at the regional (Land) level
- The Working Committee of the Youth Offices of the Federal Länder

Working structure:

- General Assembly (gathers once a year)
- National Board (gathers five times a year)
- Executive Committee (gathers six times a year)
- Six Working Groups (gather three times a year each):
  - Legal questions
  - Europe
  - Qualification/research/staff
  - Childhood/family
  - Youth/education/employment
  - Social work

AGJ advocates through:

- The writing and creation of position papers and their distribution to relevant parties
- Organisation of regular meetings with Members of Parliament
- Invitation and involvement of political representatives to AGJ conferences and events
- Awarding of a National Youth Welfare Prize
- Organisation of the biggest national child and youth welfare event every 4 years

2-GMME- Gathering for Municipal and *Mukhtar* elections (Office based in Beirut)

Objectives:

- Launch a national and popular campaign to exert pressure on the Lebanese political authorities towards holding municipal and *Mukhtar* elections
- Assert the democratic right of individuals to practice their citizenship within the municipal elections
- Launch a wide national, political and developmental debate about the role of municipalities and decentralization

Members:

- Human rights associations, women associations, environmental associations, associations for the handicapped, students and youth associations, etc
- Social welfare associations
- Institutions and organisations that are dealing with municipal issues, political participation and social development
- National networks: political parties, labor federations, syndicates, professional orders
- Traditional networks: family, neighbourhood and village associations, etc.

The number of supporting associations participating in the GMME has reached 150.

Working structure:

- General Assembly (gathers once a month)
- Executive Committee (gathers weekly)
- Six Working Groups (gather weekly)
    - Legal questions
    - Media group
    - Women participation group
    - Students and youth participation group
    - Sectors group
    - Regional group

How does GMME advocate?

- The advocacy campaign is mainly based on a national popular petition
- An information campaign instigated by various media and the press (2 television channels, 2 radio stations and 7 newspapers)
- Sit-ins and public demonstrations
- Members of Parliament working on the legal issues within the Constitutional Council
- Organisation of regular regional meetings and conferences with individuals, social and political groups as well as NGOs
- Invitation and involvement of political figures in the campaign

The campaign lasted from April 1997 until June 1998 when it was dissolved following the last stage of the municipal elections.

SIMULATION EXERCISES- PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

How to define a campaign message: what is the core message to be addressed to the audience?

Examples from Lebanon:

No Crime is Honourable

This campaign's main objective has been to amend article 562 of the Lebanese Penal Code which considers crimes of honour as a reason for lesser punishment.

Bridge to Life

The Bridge to Life campaign aimed at the construction of a pedestrian bridge in order to increase road safety for children and people.

Exercise

1- Choose one issue that has direct implication on the rights of Lebanese citizens and try to plan an advocacy campaign.

2- While planning the advocacy campaign, answer the following guideline questions:

- What are the objectives of the campaign?

- Who is/are your audiences? Who can answer your call?

- Who are/should be your campaign coalition partners?

- What should the different partners contribute in terms of knowledge, power, contacts and resources? How should they participate?

- Who are the special supporters you want to address your message to?

- Who is/are your messengers?

- In what ways do you want to run the campaign? What kind of activities, i.e. public awareness activities, media campaigns, letter writing actions to policy makers, sit-ins, rallies and other grass-root activities. What are your sub-messages, expected results and timing?

- What types of co-ordination and management structures are to be selected in order to plan and implement the campaign?

- What are your weak points in terms of co-ordination and management? What do you need to develop before starting the campaign?

- What kind of evaluation system do you intend to establish in order to measure your success?

- What are your weak points regarding the implementation of the campaign?

- How do you begin the campaign? What would the first steps be?